

Remembering Abraham

*Culture, Memory, and History
in the Hebrew Bible*

RONALD HENDEL

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To Ann

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*And my Gideon was left
with no army no battle no glory at the Spring of Harod. And he drank
kneeling down and he drank lapping, and he
drank and remembered and forgot.*

—Yehuda Amichai, *Open Closed Open*
trans. Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld

*I will open my mouth with a parable,
I will utter enigmas of the past,
things that we have heard and known,
that our fathers have told us.*

—Psalm 78:2–3

*We sometimes imagine the oldest remembrances to be the most
immediate; or, rather, they are all illuminated in a uniform light, like
objects blending together in the twilight.*

—Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*

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Preface

According to an old tradition preserved in the Palestinian Targums, the Hebrew Bible is “the Book of Memories” (ספר דוכרניא).¹ The sacred past that is recalled in this book serves as a model and well-spring for the present. “Remember the ancient days,” Moses counsels the Israelites in the Song of Moses (Deut 32:7), for the present is rooted in the constitutive events of the past.

The remembered past is the material with which biblical Israel constructed its identity as a people, a religion, and a culture. In its formative years these memories circulated orally in the context of family and tribe. The Song of Moses specifies this place of collective memory: “Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will relate it to you” (Deut 32:8). Over time these memories came to be crystalized in various written texts. The Hebrew Bible is a vast compendium of writings, spanning a thousand-year period from roughly the twelfth to the second centuries B.C.E., and representing perhaps a small slice of the writings of that period. The texts are often overwritten by later texts, creating a complex pastiche of text, re-interpretation, and commentary. The religion and culture of ancient Israel are expressed by these texts and, in no small part, also created by them, as various texts formulate new or altered conceptions of the sacred past.

The task of the modern scholar of the Hebrew Bible is to negotiate the complex circulation of meanings in and among these texts, attending to matters of language, history, religion, literature (includ-

ing composition and reception), and culture. This task is nearly infinite, since each of these areas has distinctive procedures and objectives, new knowledge is continually gained from archaeological excavations, advances in method come from other fields of the humanities and social sciences, and the biblical text itself is endlessly suggestive and abounds with startling perceptions and dense obscurities.

The essays in this book approach a central set of themes: the interplay of culture, history, and memory in the Hebrew Bible, particularly as they relate to issues of the formation and transformations of religious and ethnic identity. This mode of inquiry was initiated in the nineteenth century with Ernest Renan's argument that national identity depends on "the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories," even as those memories are inevitably laced with the unhistorical: "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation."² National, ethnic, and religious identities are founded on this dialectic of memory and forgetting. This avenue of research has been enriched in the last century by the work of the *Annales* school on the social functions of the past and the nature of collective memory.³ My own inquiries have also been influenced by Yosef Yerushalmi's reflections in *Zakhor: Jewish History, Jewish Memory*, where he explores the "web of delicate and reciprocal relationships" of "meaning in history, memory of the past, and the writing of history" in Jewish sources, beginning with the Hebrew Bible.⁴ The following essays are aimed at articulating, albeit partially and imperfectly, this web of relationships in the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter 1 provides an orientation to the vicissitudes of ancient Israel's cultural and religious identity as it perpetually defined itself in response to its forebears and neighbors, articulating its memory as it discovered itself. Chapters 2–5 address the ways that culture, history, and memory interweave in the biblical accounts of the patriarchs, the Exodus, and the united monarchy, picking up various threads in the current scholarly discussion. Chapter 6 essays a wider engagement with the biblical ways of conceptualizing the past. An appendix situates the age of the biblical writings in the wake of recent controversies.

History is never neat and easily accessible in these texts; rather the Hebrew Bible presents us with various representations and perspectives on the past. To follow the meanings of these texts closely involves awareness of the cultural horizons of the texts and of the ways that political and religious interests and literary effects color the biblical memories. The past in the Bible is the represented past, not the past itself. These essays are an effort to revisit the past as it still lives in the Hebrew Bible, a past that is a marvelous blend of public memory, religious vision, and literary brilliance.

Several of the following essays are revisions of earlier publications. Chapter 1 is a revision of “Israel Among the Nations: Biblical Culture in the Ancient Near East,” in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 43–75. Chapter 3 is a revision of “Finding Historical Memories in the Patriarchal Narratives,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 21/4 (1994), 52–59, 70–72. Chapter 4 is a revision of “The Exodus in Biblical Memory,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 (2001), 601–22. Chapter 5 is a revision of “The Archaeology of Memory: King Solomon, Chronology, and Biblical Representation,” in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays in Honor of William G. Dever*, ed. Seymour Gitin, Edward Wright and J. P. Dessel (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, forthcoming). My thanks to these publishers and editors for granting permissions. Chapters 2, 6, and the appendix are previously unpublished.

I wish to thank the following friends and colleagues for their valuable comments on portions of this book at various stages in their growth: Bob Alter, David Biale, Mary Douglas, Dan Fleming, Randy Garr, Erich Gruen, Bill Propp, and Dina Stein. This book is far better for their attentions, though I remain culpable for its many flaws and gaps. I also wish to acknowledge the research support of the Norma and Sam Dabby Chair in Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies.

Finally, this book is dedicated to Ann, who still doesn’t have to read it. And honorable mention to the bumblebee boys, Eddie and Natty.

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Remembering Abraham

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I

Israel Among the Nations

Biblical Culture in the Ancient Near East

This book is dedicated to exploring the Hebrew Bible's portrayal of Israel and its past, and to correlating the biblical past with our sense of the past. The past as perceived and the past as reconstructed will be held together, even if incompletely, to yield its intricate story. To begin this tale of history and biblical narrative—of the past and Israel's self-fashioning—Israel was a people of the ancient Near East, but a self-consciously unique member of that cultural family. Israel differentiated itself from its ancient neighbors by constructing and maintaining a variety of cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries. From its beginning and throughout its history, these boundaries were subject to negotiation, critique, and revision. One of the earliest descriptions of Israel's sense of distinctiveness in the ancient Near East is, perhaps surprisingly, attribute to a foreign seer, Balaam. The prominent role of this Aramean prophet provides an entry into the complex interplay of Israel's collective identity, its perceptions of the past, and its place in the ancient world.

Balaam's Voice

After defeating King Og of Bashan, whom biblical tradition remembers as a giant,¹ Moses and the Israelites camp in the plains of Moab,

east of the Jordan River. Frightened at their numbers, the King of Moab summons the foreign seer Balaam to curse this people, but instead of a curse, Balaam pronounces God's blessing. As Balaam tells the story:

From Aram has Balak summoned me,
 the king of Moab from the eastern mountains.
 "Come, curse Jacob for me,
 come, condemn Israel!"
 But how can I curse what God has not cursed,
 how can I condemn what Yahweh has not condemned?
 For I see them from the top of the mountains,
 from the hills I gaze upon them.
 Behold, it is a people dwelling apart,
 not counting itself among the nations.
 Who can count the dust of Jacob,
 who can number the dust-cloud of Israel? (Num 23:7–10)²

Balaam perceives that Israel is a unique people whom God has blessed, a people set apart from the usual run of ancient Near Eastern nations.

My theme is taken from Balaam's description of Israel as "a people dwelling apart, not counting itself among the nations." Israel was a nation and a culture of the ancient Near East, yet it saw itself as different and somehow incommensurate with the other nations. On one level, this sense of uniqueness is far from unique: it is the root of nationalism and ethnicity in its many forms.³ The Greeks denoted non-Greeks as barbarians (*barbaroi*) because they did not speak Greek, the language of civilized people. The Egyptians referred to themselves as "people" (*remet*), implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—evoking the nonpeoplehood of others. But, on another level, the ancient Israelite claim to uniqueness was more forceful than most peoples' and more central to its self-definition.⁴ Indeed, it is arguable that this claim to uniqueness was in some measure self-fulfilling, enabling the Jewish people to outlive all the other cultures of the ancient Near East. By persisting in its claim to uniqueness, and by routinizing this claim in its religious and cultural habits, the Jewish people made that uniqueness a historical reality. The fact of its being alive today, roughly three millennia later, seems to ratify Balaam's perception that this is a people apart.

The boundaries that biblical culture set about itself were in a sense more permanent and decisive than those of its ancient peers. Elsewhere in the ancient Near East, one could identify one's own gods and religious practices with those of other nations.⁵ For example, the Egyptians could adopt Canaanite gods and their mythology into the Egyptian religious system simply by equating

them with native gods (Baal = Seth, El = Ptah, etc.). The standard formula of international treaties required that both party's gods participate as witnesses, acknowledging a degree of communication and mutual recognition among the gods of different cultures. Although the names, languages, and local practices might differ, there was a consciousness of a basic cultural translatability in the ancient Near East. Ancient Israel seems to have been the exception to this rule.⁶ Israelite writings from the earliest period repeatedly sound the theme of nontranslatability, of the birth of something new and different.

The choice of the seer Balaam to announce this basic difference reveals some interesting aspects of Israel's claim to uniqueness. Balaam is a foreigner—he is identified as an Aramean from the eastern mountains—and we now know that he was a figure of some repute in other neighboring cultures. In 1967 a Dutch excavation at Tell Deir ʿAlla, not far from the plains of Moab, discovered an inscription from the eighth century B.C.E. that relates the oracular vision of “Balaam, son of Beor” (בלעם ברבער), the “man who was a seer of the gods” (אש חזה אלהן הא).⁷ The language of this inscription is a Northwest Semitic dialect not hitherto known, sharing some distinctive features with Ammonite and Aramean. This is an inscription of one of Israel's neighbors, showing us the continuity of religious and literary traditions—and their *dramatis personae*—in the West Semitic cultural sphere. Balaam, it seems, was an exemplar of the virtuous foreign seer. His dual status as a true seer and a foreigner makes him an apt figure to proclaim the uniqueness of Israel in the biblical narrative. As a foreigner he is not prone to Israelite partisanship, and as an inspired seer he speaks only the truth. But, at the same time, the fame of Balaam in West Semitic traditions shows that Israelite traditions were not unique, that is, they shared a common root and repertoire with Israel's neighbors. The voice of Balaam subtly proclaims that Israel was not wholly a nation apart.

In contrast to this early portrait of Balaam, later biblical traditions had trouble assimilating the idea of him as a virtuous foreign seer. The doctrine of cultural and religious uniqueness, which Balaam announces, led perhaps inevitably to a reevaluation of his character. In later biblical writings, this righteous Gentile is recast in the common stereotype of the dangerous and/or stupid foreign Other. In the Priestly source—dating from roughly the sixth century B.C.E.⁸—Moses blames Balaam for inciting Israelite men to have sex with foreign women, a grievous sin in God's eyes, and Balaam dies in battle as his just punishment (Num 31:8, 16). In a later postexilic supplement to the story, Balaam is derided as more stupid than his donkey, since even the donkey can see the angel of God (Num 22:22–35).⁹ The foreign seer who sees truly has been transformed into an agent of sin and a blindly blundering fool. These are

typical biblical tropes for the foreign Other: obtuse, seductive, and/or evil. The bitter side of Israel's claim to uniqueness is revealed by its inability to preserve Balaam's virtue in its narrative traditions. The righteousness of the foreign seer was lost in translation.

Interestingly, the chief exceptions to the disparagement of foreigners in the Bible are foreign women. Tamar in Genesis 38, Rahab in Joshua 2, Jael in Judges 4–5, and Ruth in the book of her name are the paradigm examples of the righteous foreigner, and all are women. This situation turns the table on Balaam's sin of inciting Jewish men to have sex with foreign women, since in at least two out of these four instances, the virtuous act of the foreign women involves having sex with Jewish men. (The Rahab story is ambiguous on this issue, though she is a prostitute by profession.) Tamar's seduction of Judah and Ruth's seduction of Boaz result in the restoration of an Israelite lineage that would otherwise have been lost—the lineage that produces King David. Without their exceptional actions, the line of Judah would have been forfeit, and David would have never been born. The virtues of these foreign women have to do with their preservation of the tribal patriline. Because they are foreigners, their virtues are extraordinary, and their seduction of Jewish men is, in these cases, a moral good. Tamar and Ruth are the antitheses to the late portrayal of Balaam.

The Bible presents many ways of defining and negotiating the boundaries between Israel and the foreign nations. In this essay I will address some of the ways that biblical culture approached the differences between Israel and its Others. The questions involved—Who is an Israelite? What are the distinctive structures of Israelite religion? What are the implicit boundaries of Israelite culture?—are both historical and hermeneutical, that is to say, they touch upon what really happened in the history of ancient Israel *and* how these events and circumstances were interpreted in the biblical writings. But first a caveat—history does not come neat or plain in these writings; the Hebrew Bible consists in large part of interpretations and reflections on history—more a mid-rash on the times than the times themselves. But, of course, this is part of what makes the Bible a timeless book. Interpretation or commentary is, as Gershom Scholem observed, part of the essence of Judaism.¹⁰ This process of making sense of texts and things begins in the interpretations and contested meanings within the Hebrew Bible.

One of these conflicts of interpretation, we shall see, concerns the nature of Israel's relations with its foreign Others. Balaam's statement is not the last word on Israel's distinctiveness in the Hebrew Bible. A dialectic of sharing and distancing, of inclusion and estrangement, characterizes biblical culture from its earliest sources to its latest.

The Cultural Construction of Israel

The origins of Israel in history are obscure. In the year 1207 B.C.E., the Egyptian pharaoh Merenptah stated in a royal inscription that he had conquered Israel (among other peoples) in a military campaign through Canaan. The key line reads in Egyptian: “Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more.”¹¹ Merenptah overstated the case, as was conventional in royal inscriptions, since Israel continued to exist. In spite of its pharaonic hyperbole, the Merenptah stele provides the earliest textual evidence outside of the Bible for Israel’s existence as a people in the Near East.

The archaeological evidence shows that beginning in the late thirteenth century B.C.E.—around the time of this inscription—there was significant population expansion in the central highlands of the land of Israel.¹² This new group of highland settlers was presumably the people Merenptah called Israel—or possibly Israel was one of several groups in the highlands at this time. The settlements excavated by archaeologists share a number of similar cultural features. They are small, unwalled villages, some probably no more than the dwellings of extended families. There are no signs of social stratification or permanent military establishments. The material culture in general is a local, rural development of Canaanite culture.

This evidence indicates that early Israel was largely a local culture, a variant of regional Canaanite or West Semitic cultural traditions. If this was so—if Israel was a frontier society in the now habitable highlands—then how did being an Israelite differ from being a rural Canaanite or an Ammonite or a Moabite? (Ammon and Moab were neighboring cultures coming into being at roughly the same time as Israel.) This essential question concerns the construction of ethnic identities and cultural boundaries in this period.

Recent research has demonstrated that culture and ethnicity are more matters of belief and custom than they are proof of common descent. In the memorable title of one such study, nations or ethnic groups are “imagined communities,”¹³ imagined into existence by those who believe in the group and participate in its social interactions. In the case of ancient Israel, the imagination that flows into the construction of a cultural identity is, at least in part, preserved for us in the biblical portrayal of Israel’s origins. The most important of these imaginative constructs are the stories of the Exodus-Sinai-Wanderings period, related in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy.

These stories can be regarded not only as a national biography,¹⁴ but also as a historical engine for the construction of cultural identity. That is, the stories not only narrate the life of a nation, but they also functioned in historical time

as a key agent in the formation of the nation they narrate. Early Israel included, in the words of the biblical story, “a mixed multitude” (Exod 12:38). Many of the people who settled in the early highlands community would have fit this description—they probably included peasant farmers and pastoralists, fugitives and bandits, and escaped slaves. How did they become incorporated into a cohesive social community? In no small part this transformation of identity was created by shared belief in a common story—the Exodus from Egypt, the revelation at Sinai, the wanderings in the wilderness, and the passage as a unified people into the Promised Land. These stories, in their aggregate, constitute a collective rite of passage for the people of Israel, transforming a mixed multitude from their former identity as slaves in a foreign land into a new identity as a free people—God’s people—in a land of promise and plenty.¹⁵

Even if some or many of these formative events did not really happen in the way that they are told, they were—and still are—felt and understood to be a shared memory of a collective past. Such stories of an epic past function as a symbolic shaper of community, joining people together around a common ethnic, cultural, and religious identity. The celebrations and tales of the Exodus create and periodically reaffirm this common identity. The most obvious example is the Passover meal, the Seder, which includes the retelling of the Exodus story as an expression of the continued collective significance of the deliverance from Egypt. Jewish identity, from its beginnings to the present day, is formed in no small part by the recitation of these stories.

The function of ethnic identity-formation bound up with these stories is at times directly indicated in the biblical writings. In the midst of the plague narratives, God tells Moses that he is performing these deeds “so that you will tell your children and your children’s children how I dealt with Egypt and how I brought my signs upon them, so that you [plural] will know that I am Yahweh” (Exod 10:2). Knowing God’s power and identity seems to be the point of these deeds and the point of preserving their memory in stories. But knowing God’s identity also has a social correlate—knowing that Israel is God’s people. This is emphasized in God’s repeated promise: “I will be your God and you will be my people.” In his command that the Israelites recount the story to their children and grandchildren, God seems to acknowledge that the stories of his great deeds on behalf of his people are a narrative that binds the people together as a cohesive religious community (similarly Exod 12:24–27, 13:8). The command to tell these stories in each generation is, in a sense, a self-fulfilling command that constructs the cultural identity of its primary audience.

The cultural boundaries of early Israel were, at least in part, constructed by the dissemination of stories about the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage and the birth of a free people in the Promised Land. It is important

to note that even Israelite settlers who had never been slaves in Egypt could easily participate in this narrative memory, for Egypt had been the overlord of Canaan for several centuries previously (ca. 1500–1150 B.C.E.). Egyptian rule during this period had often been harsh, including the regular export of Canaanites to Egypt to serve as slaves.¹⁶ With the waning of the Egyptian Empire in Canaan, the memory of oppression and slavery and the concomitant memory of deliverance to freedom would have resonated in the drama of the Exodus story.¹⁷ By adopting this story as their own, the villagers in the highlands became Israelites, and a mixed multitude crystallized its collective identity as the people of Yahweh.

Genealogy and Differences

One of the ways that the ancient Israelites joined together was by forming genealogical alliances. In so doing, they defined who was an Israelite and who was an outsider. The difference between inside and outside inevitably became charged with moral difference, with the insiders superior to the outsiders. This is a universal human trait, egoism on a national scale.

Sigmund Freud once commented, somewhat diffidently, on the reasons that closely related peoples disparage one another:

I once interested myself in the peculiar fact that peoples whose territories are adjacent, and are otherwise closely related, are always at feud with and ridiculing each other. . . . I gave it the name of “narcissism in respect of minor differences,” which does not do much to explain it.¹⁸

This trait of cultural narcissism is strongly at work in the genealogical stories in the Bible, primarily in Genesis, in which the relations between Israel’s ancestors and the ancestors of other nations are recounted. In these stories, the cultural boundaries of Israel are continually endangered by the presence of the ancestors of other peoples, and the Israelites survive the slings of fortune by varying means—including virtue, guile, and divine intervention. Before we turn to these stories, let us examine more closely the importance of genealogies and genealogical narratives in the construction of cultural identity.

A genealogy shows, in a memorable way, who is related to whom. In many small-scale societies, including early Israel, genealogical relations are the internal boundaries of society. That is, person X and person Y are both members of the same society because at some level of the national or tribal genealogy they descend from a common ancestor. The degree of distance from the com-

mon ancestor determines the particular status of the relationship between the two persons. For example, in a patrilineal society such as ancient Israel (where descent is measured on the male side), two siblings are related because of a common father, two cousins by a common grandfather, two members of the same “clan” (משפחה) by a common ancestor of the clan, two tribesmen by a common ancestor of the tribe, and two Israelites by common descent from the ancestor, Israel, father of the twelve tribes. The closer the common ancestor to the generation of X and Y, the closer their relationship to each other. The degree of closeness determines their mutual obligations and responsibilities.

The idiom of descent or genealogy is itself a cultural construction, that is to say, one doesn’t need to be related by blood to be genealogically related. It is a regular rule in patrilineal societies that women enter into their husband’s lineage at marriage. At times in the Bible, we can see whole clans or villages changing their places in the genealogy because of a change of historical circumstances. For example, the clans or villages of Hetzron and Carmi are both sons of Reuben in some texts (Gen 46:9; Exod 6:14; cf. 1 Chr 5:3), but are elsewhere listed as sons of Judah (1 Chr 4:1). This shift in genealogical affiliation probably provides a glimpse of tribal history, as Reubenite clans were absorbed into Judah. Even foreign villages and clans could become Israelite and enter the genealogy. The foreign clan of Jerahmeel later became a clan of Judah, again reflecting the tribal expansion of Judah and the absorption of foreign clans into its lineage (cf. 1 Sam 27:10 and 1 Chr 2:9, 25). A group can change its status from outsider to insider by assuming a new social identity and entering the genealogy. One’s place in the genealogy is a sign of cultural self-definition more than it is a sign of biological descent.

With the social function and historical fluidity of genealogies in mind, let us see how they are used in the Bible to mark the boundary between inside and outside, between Israel and the nations. In Genesis, these boundaries are fragile and contentious. The legal status of the first-born son to carry the main line of the genealogy is highly contested, most obviously between Jacob and Esau, but also between Sarah and Hagar (on behalf of their sons, Isaac and Ishmael), Perez and Zerah, Joseph and his brothers, and even Cain and Abel. Usually the younger son prevails and the older son is denigrated in some way, as if the first-born were unworthy of carrying the lineage that issues in the people Israel. In these lineage conflicts, the Israelite ancestors are extolled and the ancestors of its cultural neighbors disparaged. While the genealogical stories acknowledge Israel’s relatedness to its neighbors, the relationship is colored by various stereotypes of the Other. Through a dialectic of structural opposition, Israel asserts in its genealogical stories that it is a righteous and

civilized people, in contrast to the foreigners who more often than not are seen as creatures of nature: wild, stupid, sexually licentious, or violent.

In the primeval narratives of Genesis 1–11, three peoples are singled out for genealogical derision: the Kenites, the Canaanites, and the Babylonians. Cain (originally *Qayn*) is clearly, by his distinctive name, the eponymous ancestor of the tribe of Kenites (originally *Qaynī*).¹⁹ Cain, of course, is a fratricide whom God curses to wander without home or refuge (Gen 4:12). This is an attribution of a shameful, violent ancestral origin. The Israelites, in contrast, are descended from Adam and Eve’s third and youngest son, Seth. The next people disparaged is the Canaanites, whose ancestor is Canaan. He is cursed for his father’s sexual transgression—“Ham, Canaan’s father, saw his father’s nakedness”—and is consigned to servitude (Gen 9:20–27). Canaan’s curse in this story is, as Rashi noted, a justification for God’s decision to reassign the land of Canaan to the children of Israel. This too is a shameful origin for this foreign people and a warrant for Israelite domination. The third people disparaged in the primeval narratives is Babylon, whose city becomes a watchword of cultural arrogance and disaster (Gen 11:1–9). The Tower of Babel story deflates the cultural pretensions of Babylonian civilization. In all three of these ethnographic tales, a foreign people is colored with shameful origins.

In the patriarchal narratives of Genesis 12–50, the genealogical contrast of wild foreigners with the civilized precursors of Israel is both heightened and complicated. The three generations of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—each portray a different set of genealogical oppositions. In the first, Abraham’s righteousness is contrasted with his nephew Lot’s flaws. Lot’s most egregious fault occurs in Genesis 19, when he offers his daughters to the lustful townsmen of Sodom in an attempt to protect his guests. In an apt and shameful turnabout, his daughters later seduce Lot, and they become pregnant and bear the ancestors of Moab and Ammon (Gen 19:30–38). Lot’s incest with his daughters is a grievous sin, which stains the ancestry of the peoples of Moab and Ammon. Though Israel is related to its Transjordanian neighbors, and is at times on good terms with them, these peoples are denigrated by their ancestors’ shameful sexual origins.

The next generation juxtaposes Ishmael, the son born of the slave woman Hagar, and Isaac, the son born of Abraham’s wife, Sarah. Ishmael, who is cast out at Sarah’s insistence, becomes the ancestor of the Arab peoples. Though an angel of God gives him the promise of a great nation, the angel also promises that “he will be a wild ass of a man, his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him” (Gen 16:12). Later Ishmael prospers as a hunter in the wilderness and marries an Egyptian woman (Gen 21:20–21). The story

of Ishmael gives a mixed portrait; he is blessed by God, but he ends up as a predator on the outskirts of civilization, violent as a wild ass and marrying a foreign woman. In terms of the story, Ishmael—and by implication his descendants—are less civilized than the line of his younger half-brother, Isaac.

It is illuminating to note how Islamic and Christian traditions later revise the structural opposition of Abraham's two sons in accord with their cultural and genealogical preferences. In post-Quranic Islamic tradition, Ishmael is exalted as the beloved son whom Abraham almost sacrifices, and Ishmael and Abraham together build the holy shrine of the Ka'ba in Mecca.²⁰ In the New Testament, Paul identifies the child of the promise, Isaac, as the symbolic precursor of the Christians, and the slave's child, Ishmael, as the symbolic precursor of the Jews (Gal 4:22–31). In all three Abrahamic religions, the genealogical process of cultural self-definition is at work in the portrayal of Abraham's sons.

The third generation of the patriarchal lineage in Genesis contrasts Jacob, the younger son, with Esau, the firstborn. While Jacob is a smooth man—a term that applies both to his body and his deceptive strategems²¹—his brother Esau is hairy, a wild man like Ishmael, more at home in the wilderness than in human settlements. “When the boys grew up, Esau was a man skilled in hunting game, a man of the open country; but Jacob was a civilized [literally, “pure, whole”] man, dwelling in the tents” (Gen 25:27). Esau is a man of nature, in contrast to Jacob, the man of culture.²² Esau's brutish simplicity makes him an easy mark for Jacob's wives when he sells his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup (Gen 25:29–34). At the end of this tale, Esau doesn't even seem to realize what he has done: “He ate and he drank and he rose up and he walked away”—he is a man who thinks with his belly.²³ Because Jacob is the intelligent one—and is favored by his intelligent mother—he also tricks his father and obtains the patriarchal blessing and promise (Gen 27). Later he resourcefully wins from God the name Israel (Gen 32:29), sealing his identity as Israel's ancestor. In contrast, Esau is identified as the ancestor of Edom (*ʿēdôm*) because he is unable to think of the correct name for the lentil soup, referring to it stupidly as “this red red stuff” (*hāʾādôm hāʾādôm hazzeh*; Gen 25:30). In these stories, the Edomites are collectively stereotyped by their simple and brutish ancestor.

In the processes of genealogical self-definition expressed in these stories, the foreign Other is generally described as, to varying degrees, uncivilized or immoral. One would expect that the hero of the Israelite patriline is, in contrast, civilized and just. Such is the case with Abraham versus Lot and perhaps Isaac versus Ishmael (though Isaac is not a major character). But the case of Jacob versus Esau is more complicated, for Jacob, while clearly civilized, is not wholly

moral. There is a slippage in the case of Israel's eponymous ancestor. Jacob is morally challenging—a man of culture, but not consistently presenting the best face of human culture. His wives (and his mother's) win him the birthright and patriarchal blessing. But he pays for his trickery when Laban substitutes his first-born daughter Leah for the younger daughter Rachel on Jacob's wedding night (Gen 29:23). In this turnabout, the father tricks the son-in-law in a manner that mirrors the son's earlier trick of his own father. The older child is now substituted for the younger, and Laban justifies the deception in words heavy with literary irony: "It is not done in our place to give the younger before the first-born" (Gen 29:26). Later, in Genesis 37, Jacob's sons avenge themselves on their precocious younger brother, Joseph, and deceive their father by cleverly manipulating Joseph's special cloak. This trick also echoes Jacob's deception of his father, which involved wearing his brother's best clothes. Jacob pays the price for his tricks several times over, though he retains his status as the eponymous ancestor, Israel. Even Esau seems to grow in maturity by the end of the story (see Genesis 33), while Jacob is still a trickster in old age (see his deception of Joseph in Genesis 48), in spite of having grown wiser.

In the stories of Jacob/Israel, the cultural narcissism of genealogical self-definition is turned, at least in part, into a self-representation of impropriety and guilt. The complexities of the Jewish soul are foreshadowed by this ambiguous characterization. On the one hand, Jacob/Israel is the man of the promise and blessing, who has "striven with God and with men and has prevailed" (Gen 32:29). On the other hand, he suffers for his triumphs and pays a price for taking the name "Israel." Though he prevails, he also limps (Gen 32:32).

The Canaanite Matrix

The prophet Ezekiel, in a message of divine wrath against Israel, castigates her genealogical origins: "Your origins and birth are from the land of the Canaanites. Your father was an Amorite, and your mother was a Hittite" (Ezek 16:3). Formulated in the same idiom as the genealogical stories discussed above, this is an attribution of shameful origins, leading to the application of the proverb "Like mother, like daughter" to Israel's infidelity (Ezek 16:44). Although this genealogical insult is intended to inspire shame and guilt, it also seems to be a fairly accurate portrayal of Israel's origins. There is a deep ambivalence in Ezekiel's angry speech—even though there were marked continuities between Canaanite and Israelite culture, the principle of nontranslatability applies. Anything Canaanite is foreign and abominable in the prophet's eyes.

The extent of the Canaanite matrix of Israelite culture has become clearer over the last several decades. The twin turning points have been the archaeological finds discussed earlier, and the discovery of religious texts from the ancient city of Ugarit on the coast of modern Syria, beginning in the 1930s and continuing to the present day.²⁴ Ugarit was a flourishing Canaanite city-state in the Late Bronze Age (1500–1200 B.C.E.), and most of the texts come from this period. This is the period immediately prior to the rise of Israelite civilization farther to the south.

The texts from Ugarit are in a language closely related to Hebrew. They tell stories whose themes, diction, and characters are often familiar from the Bible. For example, the following passage from the Ugaritic myth of Baal stands in close relation to a passage from the book of Isaiah written over half a millennium later:

When you killed Lotan, the fleeing serpent,
 finished off the twisting serpent,
 the mighty one with seven heads,
 the heavens withered and drooped . . . (CAT 1.5.i.1–4)

On that day, Yahweh will punish
 with his fierce, great, and mighty sword
 Leviathan, the fleeing serpent,
 Leviathan, the twisting serpent,
 he will slay the dragon of the sea. (Isa 27:1)

In this instance, as in many others, the Ugaritic and biblical texts draw on a common West Semitic cultural tradition. The monster Lotan/Leviathan (variants of the same name)²⁵ is destined to die at the hand of the great Divine Warrior, Baal at Ugarit and Yahweh in Israel. In Isaiah 27, this myth is projected into the future, when all the forces of chaos will be defeated, and God's rule will be established forever. The defeat of chaos at the dawn of time will recur at the dawn of the hoped-for new era.²⁶ In the comparison of these two passages, we can see plainly the continuities and the transformations of tradition in Canaan and Israel.

Israelite culture inherits and transforms not only the mythology of the Divine Warrior, but also the stories and traits of other figures of the Canaanite pantheon. Perhaps the most surprising survivals and transformations belong to the mythologies of El and Asherah, the father and mother of the Canaanite gods. In the Bible and in several recently discovered Hebrew inscriptions, we can see how aspects of these deities were woven deeply into Israelite conceptions of the divine.

El is the high god of the Canaanite pantheon at Ugarit. His name simply means “God.”²⁷ El is described as wise and gracious; he is called “El, the kind and compassionate one” (*ltpn ʿil dpʿid*). He is an elderly god with a gray beard and is depicted in reliefs and statuary seated on a royal throne. His image is comparable to the description of the God of Israel in Dan 7:9: “As I looked, thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days sat down. His garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head was [white as] pure wool.” In other Canaanite and Phoenician texts, El is called “creator of earth,” just as the God of Israel is called “El most high, creator of heaven and earth” by Abraham (Gen 14:22).²⁸ El is the father of the gods, who are appropriately called the “Children of El” (*bn ʿil*), just as the subordinate deities or angels in the Bible are called the “Children (or Sons) of God (El)” (*bēnē ʿēl*, *bēnē ʿēlōhīm*, and similarly). El lives on a mountain or, alternately, at the “source of the two seas.” Similarly, the God of Israel dwells on a mountain (Sinai or Zion), and his divine garden (“Eden, the garden of God” on “the holy mountain of God” in Ezek 28:13–14) is the source of the four rivers (Gen 2:10). In name, character, and locale, Canaanite El and the God of Israel are closely affiliated.

El is also the “Father of Humans” (*ʿab ʿadm*) and “Creator of Creatures” (*bn bnwt*), and he blesses his favored worshipers by granting them sons when they lack heirs. The similarities to the biblical stories of the creation of Adam and the granting of sons to Abraham and the other patriarchs are apparent. The decrees of El, promulgated from his mountain home, also remind us of the laws that the God of Israel grants from his holy mountain. The Law at Sinai, in some respects, echoes old cultural memories of the wise decrees of El. Even the name “Israel” (*yīsrāʿēl*) seems originally to mean “El rules.” The fact that Israel’s God is often simply called “El,” as for example in the titles *ʿēl ʿōlām*, “El the Ancient One” (Gen 21:33), or *ʿēl šadday*, “El the One of the Mountain” (Gen 17:1, etc.), underscores the continuity of divine traits shared by Canaanite El and the God of Israel.²⁹

The mother of the gods in the Ugaritic texts is Asherah, whose name derives from the word for “trace, path, or place.”³⁰ She is the “Creatress of the Gods” (*qnwt ʿilm*) and is probably referred to as the “Holy One” (*qdš*). As El’s wife, she effectively appeals for his blessing on behalf of other gods. In the Baal myth, she approaches El for his permission to grant Baal a palace, using sweet and well-balanced words:

Lady Asherah of the sea replied:

“Your decree, O El, is wise,
your wisdom is eternal,

a fortunate life is your decree.” (CAT 1.4.iv.40–43)

With such elegant poetic diction—note the interwoven sounds and sense of *thmk* (“your decree”), *hkm* (“wise”), and *hkmk* (“your wisdom”)—El easily accedes to her request.

Asherah is also a beneficent goddess for her earthly worshipers. The wise King Kirta makes an oath to Asherah at one of her temples, promising great tribute if Asherah grants success to his quest for a wife.

They arrived at the holy shrine of Asherah of Tyre,
and of the goddess of Sidon.
There the noble Kirta made a vow:
“As Asherah of Tyre lives,
and the goddess of Sidon,
if I take Hurraya into my house
if I bring the maiden to my court,
I will give double her (weight?) in silver,
triple her (weight?) in gold.” (CAT 1.14.iv.34–43)

This passage shows that Asherah had local shrines and worshipers and that she was appealed to for her blessings, including matters of marriage and the accompanying expectation of offspring. Such matters seem appropriate for the wife of El and mother of the gods.

In the Bible, Asherah is known as a goddess who was imported into Israel from Phoenician culture (Phoenicia was a direct descendant of old Canaanite culture). The dread Queen Jezebel seems to have brought the “prophets of Asherah” into Israel from her Phoenician homeland (1 Kgs 18:19). The evil king Manasseh is said to have erected some sort of statue to Asherah in the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kgs 21:7), and there were special rooms in the Temple where women wove embroidered garments for this statue (2 Kgs 23:7).³¹ The Queen Mother Maacah is also said to have made an “abominable thing” for Asherah (1 Kgs 15:13), which suggests some sort of statue or image. Interestingly, these references to the worship of Asherah are restricted to royal families, who are thereby marked as wicked and corrupt.³²

Elsewhere in the Bible, Asherah (or asherah with small “a”) is used as a word referring to a wooden pole or tree that is part of the cultic furniture of the local shrines in Israel.³³ This “asherah” is a common noun, not a personal name, and, perhaps curiously, has a masculine plural ending. It is not clear whether this asherah-object was conceived as a symbol of the goddess Asherah, or whether it had become somehow denatured as a holy symbol of the God of Israel. The prominence of holy trees in various foundation stories of local shrines—including Shechem (“the oak of the Teacher” in Gen 12:6, probably the same as “the oak in the sanctuary of Yahweh” in Josh 24:26), Beersheba

("a tamarisk tree," Gen 21:33), and Ophrah ("a terebinth tree," Judg 6:11)—suggests a diversity of Israelite interpretations of the symbolism of trees at shrines. In these texts, the sacred trees are an unproblematic part of ordinary Israelite worship. In Deuteronomy and other related texts (see ahead), the holy trees, asherahs, and related cultic objects are castigated as foreign abominations, along with the local shrines themselves.

The discovery of several Hebrew inscriptions from the eighth century B.C.E. that mention Asherah—or asherah—has highlighted the prominence of this goddess and/or holy object in ancient Israelite religion.³⁴ From a local shrine at Kuntillet ^cAjrud, a stop on an ancient trade route in the northern Sinai, come the following inscriptions on pots and plaster, some quite fragmentary:³⁵

1. "I bless you by Yahweh of Samaria and by his asherah"
2. ". . . by Yahweh of Teman and by his asherah . . . and may Yahweh grant him his desire"
3. "I bless you by Yahweh of Teman and by his asherah. May he bless you, protect you, and be with my lord"
4. "[let them] say(?), 'By Yahweh of Teman and by his asherah. . . . Do good, O Yahweh.'"

Another inscription from the same general period, from a rock tomb at Khirbet el-Qom, also mentions Asherah:³⁶

5. "May Uriah be blessed by Yahweh, my protector, and by his asherah. Deliver him . . ."

These inscriptions share the same general blessing formulae that we find in the Bible and other Hebrew inscriptions, with the notable addition of the appeal to "his asherah" (אשרתה). But who or what is "his asherah"? There are several possible ways to read this reference, and none is entirely satisfactory.

The simplest way to construe "his asherah" is as a reference to the wooden pole or tree that was part of a shrine. This would cohere with the references to the local cults of Yahweh—"Yahweh of Samaria" (the capital city of the northern kingdom), and "Yahweh of Teman" (probably a reference to the region of Kuntillet ^cAjrud—תבן means "south"). Each of these local shrines plausibly had an asherah-object or sacred tree beside its altar. This object is perhaps called upon here as an aspect of the sacred presence of Yahweh that is manifested in these places. The "asherah," in this reading, is a symbol of Yahweh's presence, not a separate deity. This coheres with the requests that follow in four of the five blessings, in which it is Yahweh alone who acts: (2) "may Yahweh grant him his desire"; (3) "May he bless you, protect you, and be with

my lord”; (4) “Do good, O Yahweh”; (5) “Deliver him.” All of these verbs are in the masculine singular, clearly referring to Yahweh.

A slightly more difficult construal is to read “his Asherah” as the goddess Asherah, appealed to in these blessings as a distinctive deity and object of worship. In this reading, Asherah is Yahweh’s wife, just as she was El’s wife in Canaanite religion. The chief problem for this reading is that the pronominal suffix, “his,” is not used for proper names in classical Hebrew. To see the goddess clearly in these blessings requires that the blessing formula be ungrammatical, which seems unlikely. A way around this grammatical objection is to read “asherah” as a generic word for “goddess,” which is plausible but not elsewhere attested.

A third way to read this reference combines the meanings of the asherah-object and the goddess Asherah. The reference may be to the asherah-object, but the object may have been generally understood to be a symbol of the goddess. In this reading, the goddess is implicit in the object. There can be no grammatical objection to this reading, but it still encounters some difficulty in the absence of the goddess in the invocations following, which are limited to the masculine singular, “may *he* bless you, protect you,” and so on. One way out of this difficulty would be to see Asherah as a mediating deity between the worshiper and Yahweh, who is the effective bestower of blessing.

We still do not possess a conclusive understanding of these blessings “by Yahweh and his asherah.” One way or another, however, it seems to shed further light on the Canaanite matrix of Israelite religion. Matrix literally means “womb,” from the Latin word for “mother.” Perhaps in the legacy of Asherah in Israelite religion, we see the trace of the Mother of the Gods in the worship of Yahweh, who, though male, is the one who grants the “blessing of breasts and womb” (Gen 49:25). Asherah’s blessing persists in some measure in the character of this God and his A/asherah.

Ritual Boundaries: The Body, Food, Time

Israelite religion and culture were not monolithic. There were, to borrow William James’s phrase, varieties of religious experience in ancient Israel.³⁷ Recent scholarship has brought to light regional, chronological, and sociological differences in religious practices and beliefs. One of the primary sociological differences is that between family religion and state religion, which at times clashed in the turmoil and social upheavals of Israelite history.³⁸ Family religion centered on marriage, offspring, and good fortune—as exemplified in the family stories of the patriarchs and others. State religion often centered on national

wars and the ideologies of kings—as exemplified in many of the narratives of Judges, Samuel, and Kings.

In the differences between the one religion and the other, we find the natural locations of the legacies of El, the gracious god of the fathers, and Baal, the Divine Warrior. In the patriarchal stories, God is a beneficent divine patriarch. In the national battles of the Exodus and Conquest, he is a warrior and king. For example, the patriarch Jacob blesses his son Joseph by “the God of your fathers, who helps you, the God of the mountain [literally, ‘El, the One of the Mountain’], who blesses you” (Gen 49:25).³⁹ But in the context of great national events, as after God’s victory at the Red Sea, the divine portrayal is in a different register: “Yahweh is a warrior” who “will rule forever and ever” (Exod 15:3, 18). The two divine ‘types’—beneficent patriarch and warrior-king—emerge in these differing social contexts.

Although the varying internal boundaries in Israelite religion and culture suggest a real cultural pluralism, there were also external boundaries that demarcated, more or less clearly, where Israelite culture began and ended. These external boundaries determined whether one was or wasn’t an Israelite. One such common cultural ground was, of course, language, though there is evidence of dialectal variation within Hebrew.⁴⁰ Another source of shared identity was the recitation of traditional stories of the past, such as the Exodus story discussed previously. A third source was the web of genealogies, in which one’s family and clan were explicitly related to everyone else in the lineages of Israel. And fourth was the body of shared rituals. In the practices of everyday life, Israelites enacted their cultural identity in symbolic actions, whether offering animal sacrifice at local shrines, making pilgrimages on the major festivals, or undergoing rites of healing or passage.

A range of ritual practices served to mark the implicit boundaries of cultural identity. Some of these were identical in origin to the practices of neighboring peoples, but over time they came to be understood, by insiders and outsiders, as distinctively Israelite. Among these many acts, three that were—and still are—singled out as distinctive are circumcision, food laws, and the observation of the Sabbath. The domains of these practices—the body, food, and time—are exemplary for showing the effective symbolism of rituals as markers of cultural boundaries.

The Body

In ancient Israel, a patrilineal society, the male body was ritually marked by circumcision, called a “sign of the covenant” (Gen 17:11).⁴¹ By so marking the male organ of procreation, each Israelite family was covered with a sacred sign.

Various kinds of symbolism—patrilineal descent, sexual fertility, male initiation, cleansing of birth impurity, and dedication to God—are intermingled in this mark. It has been elegantly described as “the fruitful cut.”⁴²

For this bodily mark to serve as a cultural boundary, there must be contrasting male bodies which lack it—the uncircumcised. Curiously, the evidence indicates that most of the males in Israel’s immediate vicinity were also marked by circumcision. The prophet Jeremiah informs us that many of the peoples of the ancient Near East practiced circumcision, including “Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all the desert dwellers who clip the corners of their hair” (Jer 9:25). Textual and pictorial evidence from outside the Bible also indicate that the practice went back thousands of years.⁴³ The only males among Israel’s immediate neighbors that lacked this mark were newcomers—the Philistines.

The Philistines were peoples from the Greek Aegean region who invaded and settled in the eastern Mediterranean shortly after 1200 B.C.E., precisely the period of the cultural formation of Israel in the highlands of southern Canaan.⁴⁴ The Philistines, with their superior technology, became the dominant political and military force of the region, as recalled in the stories of Samson, Saul, and David. This was probably the major impetus in the transformation of Israel from a tribal society to a unified kingship with a permanent standing army. The Philistines were the dominant foreign Other in this crucial period, and their male bodies were uncircumcised.

In the biblical stories about this period, the term “uncircumcised” is often used as a synonym for “Philistine” (e.g., Judg 15:18; 1 Sam 14:6, 31:4). In David’s lament over Saul and Jonathan, killed in battle against the Philistine army, he cries:

Do not tell it in Gath
Do not recount it in the streets of Ashkelon,
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised exult. (2 Sam 1:20)

It is interesting to note in this regard that the bride-price that Saul had earlier requested of David was a hundred Philistine foreskins (1 Sam 18:25). By this means Saul not only managed to endanger David’s life, but also to highlight the sign of the Philistines’ abominable otherness.

It appears that the origin of circumcision as a cultural boundary of the Jews was facilitated by the dangerous presence of the uncircumcised Philistines.⁴⁵ Uncircumcision as a sign of the dangerous and dominant Other was later associated with the Assyrians and Babylonians, and later still the Greeks. Perhaps in response to the hegemony of these foreign powers, ancient Israel

developed the belief that the uncircumcised had a particularly gloomy place reserved for them in Sheol, the underworld, alongside the unburied (Ezek 28: 10, 31:18, 32:19–31). To have a foreskin was to be barbarous, cruel, and doomed to the “death of the uncircumcised” (מותי ערלים).⁴⁶

Curiously, the cultural boundaries drawn by this opposition between circumcised and uncircumcised—involving the contrast of civilization versus barbarism—are in tension with those constructed in the genealogical stories already discussed. Circumcision was a shared cultural trait of other neighboring peoples (Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Phoenicians, Arameans, etc.), who were thus grouped on the inside of this boundary. A kinship with these peoples as similarly circumcised and (therefore) civilized is implicit.

By this logic a foreign people could become kin of the Israelites on the condition of their being circumcised. So Jacob’s sons say to the Hivites of Shechem: “Only on this condition will we agree with you (to marry our sister), if you become like us, to have every male among you circumcised” (Gen 34: 15). Jacob’s sons don’t intend to go through with the bargain, but their pledge seems to show how the rite worked as a cultural boundary in matters of kinship. To be circumcised—or to be a daughter of a circumcised father—is to be a potential Israelite. So David can marry an Aramean princess (2 Sam 3:3); Solomon can wed an Egyptian princess (1 Kgs 3:1) along with Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Phoenician, and Hittite women (1 Kgs 11:1); Ahab marries the Phoenician Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31); and Chilion marries the Moabite Ruth (Ruth 1:4)—they are all eligible brides on account of their male kin’s circumcision. This ritual logic was apparently later overruled by the postexilic ban on intermarriage with “the peoples of the land” (Ezra 9–10; Neh 10:31, 13:23–27). In this revision of custom, national boundaries replaced the older ritual boundaries. Or to be more precise, the nation or ethnos replaced the tribal system as the locus for kinship relations.⁴⁷

The expansive cultural boundaries of circumcision seem to be restricted to Israel in God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17, in which circumcision is a sign of the covenant. This is a Priestly text, probably written around the sixth century B.C.E. This mark, which previously was a general sign of West Semitic culture, crystallized into one of the most prominent boundary markers of Jewish identity. At some time during the Second Temple period, the rite became obsolete in other West Semitic cultures.⁴⁸ By this fruitful cut, the identity of the Jewish male body—and the Jewish social body—came to be distinguished from the bodies of other cultures.⁴⁹

Food

Another daily reminder of cultural identity is food. Ethnic foodways develop in varying degrees in different cultures, but food is always a sign of home—certainly in Judaism. What one eats and with whom one shares food are visible expressions of social bonds and boundaries. The biblical food laws are, like circumcision, reminders of God’s covenant with Israel. The theological issue is holiness, as God commands in the conclusion to the food laws in Leviticus: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:45). To be holy with respect to food means to eat what is allowed and to abstain from what is prohibited. As the anthropologist Mary Douglas demonstrated in her classic essay, “The Abominations of Leviticus,” the biblical food laws have to do with boundaries—cultural, theological, and conceptual.⁵⁰

The earliest trace of these food laws in Israelite material culture comes from the era of Philistine hegemony, the same period when circumcision seems to have become an ethnic boundary marker. Recent archaeological excavations of early Israelite and Philistine sites show a remarkable contrast in the presence and absence of pig bones. The archaeologist Lawrence Stager reports that “In the highland villages [of early Israel] of the Iron I period, the bones of pigs are rare or completely absent, but in Philistia they constitute a significant proportion of excavated faunal remains.”⁵¹ This contrast is not explicable on ecological grounds, but rather rests on cultural ones. The archaeological evidence indicates that pig production was scarce in West Semitic culture,⁵² but in Mycenaean Greek culture pigs were a valued source of meat. The Philistine preference for pork was apparently imported from their Aegean homeland. It was arguably the catalyst for the explicit avoidance of this food in early Israelite culture.⁵³

With this dietary law, as with the rite of circumcision, a general West Semitic practice crystallized into a mark of Israelite cultural identity. The dangerous presence of the Philistines was the foil for the formation of a “counter-identity” in Israel; a traditional foodway became transformed into a theological and cultural affirmation. Holiness was endangered by taking pork into the Israelite body, just as Philistine culture was a threat to the wholeness of the Israelite social body. The ritual boundaries of the Israelite meal celebrated and maintained the boundaries of society.

Time

The way that time is measured is another mark of cultural boundaries and group authority. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each have different religious

calendars, counting time from different foundational events (creation, the birth of Christ, the exodus from Mecca). In biblical writings, time is marked according to key moments such as the Exodus or the reigns of Israelite kings. In the later era of the Second Temple, the Essenes proclaimed their cultural boundaries by advocating a calendar based on the solar year, in contrast to the traditional lunar (or lunisolar) calendar.⁵⁴ The high priest of Jerusalem even seems to have journeyed to Qumran to discipline the wayward community for deviating from the official calendar. Since then, Jewish groups and authorities have continued to vie over calendrical issues—the beginning of the day, the times and durations of festivals, intercalation, etc.

One of the distinctive ritual marks in biblical time is the Sabbath. It is, like circumcision, a “sign of the covenant” (Exod 31:12–17), and like the food laws, it is a matter of holiness. God commands: “You shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holy to you” (Exod 31:14, similarly Exod 20:8–11). Just as God rested on the seventh day of creation, Israel shall rest every seventh day. Time becomes sacred, periodically, in this fruitful temporal cut.

The institution of the Sabbath is an Israelite innovation, as is the division of time into weeks.⁵⁵ It is impossible to tell when this system was invented, but a Hebrew inscription of the seventh century mentions the Sabbath,⁵⁶ and it is prominent in writings of the eighth century prophets.⁵⁷ It is plausible that such a mark of temporal distinctiveness—involving cultural and religious difference—derived from an early era of Israelite culture, perhaps the same formative period when circumcision and food laws began to be ritual identity markers. At minimum we can say that the Sabbath was an important pre-exilic institution.⁵⁸

The divisions of time, along with demarcations in foodways and the body, have long marked the external boundaries of the Jewish body politic. In ancient Israel, these were part of the growing system of ritual practices that served to display the inclusions and exclusions of Israelite cultural identity. Such clear external boundaries have long provided a protective cover for the plurality of religious experience within Judaism.

Revisionism and Tradition

Ancient Israel shared many cultural features with its neighbors in the Near East. In matters of ethics, law, architecture, medicine, poetry, theology, and ritual, Israel belonged to a family of West Semitic cultures.⁵⁹ Differences there were, and these were made emblematic of a perception of cultural uniqueness, of a people dwelling apart. Yet, as we have seen, differences also existed within

Israelite culture. Over time, some of these internal differences were felt by some to be problematic. Certain biblical authors came to reject some of the ancient customary features of Israelite religion, labeling them as foreign, and therefore corrupt and irreligious. Native practice was reinterpreted as a foreign assault on Israel's cultural boundaries, following the idiom of the dangerous and seductive Other.

During the eighth to sixth centuries B.C.E., a powerful revisionist movement developed among various prophets, priests, and sages. The result was a far-reaching upheaval in the boundaries and structures of Jewish identity. An argument began that has not yet ceased on what Judaism is, and who is an authentic Jew.

The first such critic known to us is Hosea, who prophesied in the Northern Kingdom in the mid-eighth century B.C.E. He abhorred many of the religious practices, institutions, and beliefs of his day. Prominent among these were the major northern shrines at Gilgal and Bethel (which he mockingly called Beth-Aven, "house of wickedness"):

Do not come to Gilgal,
and do not go up to Beth-Aven,
and do not swear: "As Yahweh lives." (Hos 4:15)

These shrines and their cultic practices—including sacrifices⁶⁰ and oaths—were illegitimate in Hosea's eyes. He also objected to the multiplicity of local religious shrines, which typically featured sacrificial altars, standing stones, and holy trees or asherah-objects. He associates the worship at these shrines with illicit sex and promiscuity.

On the mountaintops they make sacrifices,
and on the hills they burn offerings;
Beneath oaks, poplars, and terebinths
whose shade is good.
That is why their daughters have illicit sex,
and their daughter-in-laws commit adultery. . . .
And they too turn aside with prostitutes,
and sacrifice with sacred whores.⁶¹ (Hos 4:13–14)

The equation of religious and sexual misconduct provides the background for the cautionary story of Hosea's marriage to a prostitute (Hosea 1 and 3) and the metaphor of Yahweh's marriage to promiscuous Israel (Hosea 2).⁶² The language of sexual misconduct—whether historically accurate or not—gives Hosea a broad brush to paint Israel's depravity.⁶³

But when we look at earlier portraits of Israelite religious practice, the local



Phoenician sacred place with (l.–r.) flaming incense altar, standing stones, and tree. The inscription reads “ambrosial stones.” Tyrian coin, third cent. C.E. From G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phoenicia*. London: British Museum, 1910. Pl. 33.14; illustration from A. B. Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940. Vol. 3/2, 980, fig. 785.

shrines are depicted as perfectly orthodox and innocuous. For example, Abram’s first act when he enters the Promised Land is to build such a shrine:

Abram traveled across the land to the site of Shechem, to the Oak of the Teacher. The Canaanites were then in the land. And Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And he built there an altar to Yahweh, who had appeared to him there. (Gen 12:6–7)

Abram next builds an altar on a hill between Bethel and Ai, and he prays to Yahweh there (Gen 12:8). Later Yahweh appears to Jacob at Bethel, and Jacob makes a vow and erects a standing stone to mark it as a holy site: “And this rock, which I have set up as a standing stone, will be a temple [literally “house”] of God (*bêt ʿĕlōhîm*)” (Gen 28:21). From these and many other examples, we can see that these were normal shrines in the Yahwistic cult. Why should Hosea disparage them with such a blanket denunciation?

While there were probably many factors at play in the prophet’s rejection of the legitimacy of the local shrines, one was likely the fact that these were cultic features shared with Israel’s neighbors. Local shrines with altars, standing stones, and trees were a common phenomenon in West Semitic culture, probably going back to the Stone Age.⁶⁴ Phoenician coins clearly depict the iconography of such shrines (figure 1). One of Hosea’s objections is that the shrines were devoted to “Baal” (or “the Baals”), even though he admits that the sacrifices and oaths were offered to Yahweh.⁶⁵ The elision of the local shrines with “the Baals” seems, at least in part, to follow the same logic of nontranslatability that we saw in the castigation of the seer Balaam. A trait that

is shared with non-Israelites is damned as foreign and illicit and is redescribed as conducing to illicit sex.

Baruch Halpern has described this phenomenon, which Hosea begins and which bears fruit in Deuteronomy and other biblical books, as “the elite redefinition of traditional culture.”⁶⁶ The old religious practices and ideas—which shared features with neighboring cultures—were derided as alien, foreign, and corrupting. The new religious elite developed a critique that at times extended to all traditional forms of religious ritual, setting in its place the primacy of individual ethics and interior piety. This critique, when implemented following the reforms of Kings Hezekiah and Josiah, transformed the local aspect of Israelite religion from family religion to personal, interior devotion.⁶⁷ Hosea captures the direction of this movement by posing ritual and ethics as antithetical, a contrast that would have seemed strange and radical to most Israelites:⁶⁸

For I desire love, not sacrifices,
knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hos 6:6)

The old practices are empty, and inner religion becomes ascendant. This gives rise to Jeremiah’s later formulation of the “new covenant,” which is purely interior: “I will put my teaching within them, and I will write it in their hearts, so that I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Jer 31:32).

According to the biblical accounts, the elimination of the local shrines was adopted as public policy by Kings Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Kings 18 and 23).⁶⁹ Among the circumstances that made possible the rejection of these shrines and the uprooting of traditional religious practice was the devastation wrought by the Assyrians in the Judean countryside in the campaign of 701 B.C.E.⁷⁰ With only Jerusalem left, the decision to abolish local shrines and transform kin-based religion was perhaps inevitable—the Assyrian armies had already done the work of demolition. In the wake of this calamity, Jerusalem and its Temple became the primary locus of Israelite religion.

More than any other biblical book, Deuteronomy (seventh–sixth centuries B.C.E.) defines the new course of Judaism as a religion of interior choice and commitment.⁷¹ The object is to love God and to obey the law that God has planted in our hearts. Priests, prophets, and other religious intermediaries are rarely mentioned; rituals are mere reminders of God’s gracious laws. God is transcendent and One, not a multiplicity of local phenomenon, as might be gathered by the multiplicity of shrines (note the local divine titles “Yahweh of Samaria” and “Yahweh of Teman” discussed previously).⁷² These emphases of Deuteronomy are aptly captured by the Shema:

Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is One. You shall love Yahweh, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These things that I command you today shall be upon your hearts. You shall repeat them to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. (Deut 6:4-7)

This is classic Jewish spirituality, nurtured by Deuteronomy and transmitted through the centuries.

The obverse side of this interior spirituality is the condemnation of the old shrines as foreign and corrupting, inevitably leading to sex with foreigners.⁷³ Rather than be seduced by foreign culture, Moses in Deuteronomy commands the Israelites to destroy it:

This is what you shall do to them: pull down their altars, break their standing stones, cut up their wooden pillars [asherahs], and burn their idols in fire. For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God. Yahweh your God has chosen you to be his precious people, over all the peoples on the face of the earth. (Deut 7:5-6)

The language of cultural distinctiveness is here joined to the alienation of native tradition. The local shrines are now defined as foreign Canaanite snares, on the far side of Israelite identity. Because Israel is different, it must spurn the practices of the nations. So the old-time religion became stigmatized as the foreign Other. Only Jerusalem, “the site that Yahweh your God will choose” (Deut 12:5, cf. 1 Kgs 8:16), is hallowed as the place of God’s true name.

Deuteronomy’s revisionism ushers in a new Jewish theology and identity. God is transcendent, uncontained by heaven and earth, having no shape or form, “for you saw no form when Yahweh spoke to you on Horeb out of the fire” (Deut 4:15). He demands that Israel love and obey him, each by his or her free choice: “choose life . . . by loving Yahweh your God” (Deut 30:19-20). Wherever one is—whether in Jerusalem or not—God is there: “If you look there for Yahweh your God, you will find Him, if you seek with all your heart and soul” (Deut 4:29). Yahweh’s law, which is wise and perfect, exists within the individual: “It is not too wonderful for you or too distant . . . but the word is very close to you, it is in your mouth and your heart, to do it” (Deut 30:14). And as God is wise and profound, so is his people, as the nations—obtuse no more—proclaim: “This great nation is indeed a wise and profound people” (Deut 4:6). Thus do the nations add their assent to the revision of the traditional

structures of Judaism. For a brief moment, the foreign nations, like the early portrayal of Balaam, are truthful seers of Israel's wisdom.

The way that Deuteronomy revises Jewish tradition is also fraught with significance. The book is presented as Moses' farewell discourse to Israel, in which he recounts the instructions that God gave to him at Mount Horeb.⁷⁴ Moses recalls that God said to him: "As for you, stand here before me so that I may tell you all the commands, the laws, and the statutes that you will teach them" (Deut 5:28). Forty years later on the threshold of the Promised Land, Moses finally teaches the Israelites "all that Yahweh had commanded him concerning them" (Deut 1:3) at the holy mountain. By means of this narrative frame, the book of Deuteronomy authorizes its version of Israelite laws and traditions as תורה מסיני, "Torah from Sinai," to use the later rabbinic term (though it is "Torah from Horeb" in this case). Deuteronomy begins a process that will become central in rabbinic Judaism, that is, attributing all revisions and interpretations of biblical law and religion to the original revelation at Sinai.⁷⁵

Deuteronomy makes interpretation of the law a fundamental way of constructing Jewish culture, and it does so by placing its interpretation in the foundational setting of God's revelation at the holy mountain. In this process, the Torah becomes an interpreted artifact, with the chain of mosaically authorized interpretations stretching to the horizon. A later rabbi drew out some of the more extravagant consequences of this idea: "Torah, Mishnah, Talmud, and Aggadah—indeed, even the comments some bright student will one day make to his teacher—were already given to Moses on Mount Sinai."⁷⁶ All interpretation is always already there in the initial revelation at Sinai. From the precedent of Deuteronomy, interpretation has become both essential and interminable in Jewish culture. Every new boundary or relationship, every freshly redrawn inclusion or exclusion, is already implicit in God's original discourse, according to this ancient hermeneutical key. As a fascinating text from the Talmud puts it: "What is Torah? The interpretation [literally, 'midrash'] of Torah" (b. Qiddušin 49a–b). Revision has come home to roost.

Neighbors and Fences

Robert Frost famously observed that "good fences make good neighbors." A clear sense of the differences between oneself and others can conduce to a true neighborly relationship. But fences are often barbed, and a moral difference tends to inhere in the separation of inside from outside. Such is the case in many of the instances of genealogical, ritual, narrative, and revisionist self-

definition in ancient Israel. Moral claims are often asserted in the differentiation of the collective self from the Other, Israel from the nations.

Some biblical writings protested against this process of drawing the boundaries so that Israel is, by definition, on the side of good and the nations on the side of evil. They pointedly confused and problematized these simple moral boundaries, providing a legacy of cultural self-critique within Judaism. I have mentioned previously the stories of foreign women—Tamar, Rahab, Jael, and Ruth—who are, as Judah says, “more righteous than I” (Gen 38:26). The book of Job presents a uniquely righteous man who is a foreigner (from “the land of Uz”).⁷⁷ Job, like Abraham, argues with God about issues of morality—though the outcome is more ambiguous than in Abraham’s case. Most important, the classical prophets also tended to criticize the ethnocentric claims of Israel. Amos warns:

Are you not like the children of the Cushites to me, O children of Israel, declares Yahweh? Did I not bring Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir? (Amos 9:7)

This universalizing tendency offset the ethnocentrism implicit in a “chosen people” and created the potential for a powerful cultural critique, one of the great legacies of the biblical prophets.⁷⁸ The prophetic writings are not fond of the cultural fences that divide neighbor from neighbor.

The moral problem of nationalism and ethnic boundaries is most directly addressed in the book of Jonah, in which the reluctant prophet is angry and despondent when Yahweh forgives the people of Nineveh.

This seemed like a great evil to Jonah, and he was very angry. He prayed to Yahweh, saying, “O Yahweh, isn’t this what I said when I was in my own land, and why I earlier fled to Tarshish? For I know that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and renouncing evil. Now, Yahweh, take my life from me, for I would rather die than live.” (Jonah 4:1–2)

In the end Yahweh teaches Jonah his lesson, that the nations are precious in God’s eyes, and cultural narcissism is irrational and immoral. Notably, in view of the prominence of humor in later Jewish self-critique, God accomplishes this with a dash of humor. God’s final comment—and the last word in the book—refers to the “many cattle” (Jonah 4:11), who too had fasted and worn sackcloth alongside the Ninevites (Jonah 3:7–8).⁷⁹ The comic image of penitent cows drives home the point that Israel has no intrinsically superior claim to God’s love than the other nations. Or even their cows.

Biblical Israel shows many faces in its relations with its neighbors and fences in the ancient Near East. It is a member of a larger cultural family, but a self-consciously unique member of that family. It constructed its self-image out of the rich traditions of prior ideologies, narratives, and rituals, but it made something new out of the old worlds.⁸⁰ One of the leitmotifs in modern biblical scholarship has been the recovery of the cultural context of ancient Israel, allowing us the opportunity to read the biblical writings anew. When read in the context of the ancient Near East, the Bible shows itself to be more complex, variegated, and even self-contradictory than we knew before. Moral and philosophical issues are debated in this book and often not settled. Cultural identities are constructed in one part, only to be deconstructed in another. A culturally and historically alive Bible may be unsettling to some, for whom its meanings require the stable sediment of tradition. But tradition is itself unstable, and interpretation goes on, without end.



2

Remembering Abraham

The past always speaks as an oracle.

—F. W. Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*

Sites of Memory

Special circumstances—a starry night, a feast, a mood—tend to evoke special memories of the past. Times of crisis bring to mind memories that can serve as a spur for reflection or resolve. Places too can be sites of memory that recall scenes from an individual's past or from the collective past of a family or culture.¹ But such memories are not stable; they change subtly over time as the rememberer changes. In the Hebrew Bible, the memory of Abraham inhabits many such times, places, and habits, and changes from one rememberer to another. The memory of Abraham serves in varying measures to articulate Israelite identity, to motivate the remembering agent to take appropriate actions, to give solace, and to activate social, religious, or political ideals. These memories also serve to mask ambiguities and to create new fissures and oppositions where none were apparent previously. Some of these conditions of memory obtain when God is the rememberer, others when humans are; the importance of remembering Abraham embraces both God and Israel. The implications of remembering Abraham are mutable

and subject to reinterpretation, pointing to different nuances of Israelite religion and ethnicity and different understandings of Israel's collective past.

Consider the following scenes of memory in biblical narrative, poetry, and law.² When Pharaoh is crushing the Israelites under the yoke of Egyptian slavery, "God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (ויזכר, "אלהים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב", Exod 2:24), whereupon he conceives his great plan of rescue. The act of remembering Abraham and his successors is a turning point in the story, motivating God's salvific actions. Similarly, when God is about to destroy the rebellious Israelites during their worship of the Golden Calf, Moses implores God to "remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel" (זכר לאברהם ליצחק ולישראל), Exod 32:13), and God's wrath abates. In a later crisis, when the Israelite exiles are dwelling in Babylon, a prophet exhorts the displaced people to "consider Abraham your father and Sarah who bore you" (הביטו אל אברהם אביכם ואל שרה תחוללכם), Isa 51:2). The memory of Abraham and Sarah provides a paradigm for the people that illuminates God's decision to comfort his people and lead them back from Mesopotamia to the Promised Land. In this text, the memory of Abraham is a model of hope and expectation for the exiles.³ In a text contemplating future devastation and exile, God predicts, "I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham I shall remember" (ויזכרתי את בריתי יעקב ואף את בריתי יצחק ואף את בריתי אברהם איזכר), Lev 26:42).⁴ This promise of future memory intimates a future restoration of Israel, providing solace for the exiles, both past and present.⁵ The movement in memory from Jacob to Isaac to Abraham (reversing the usual progression of the three patriarchs) draws us back in time to the distant past, far from the trauma of exile.

In each of these dangerous times, the memory of Abraham induces a turn of mind and opens a possibility for overcoming a dire crisis. To the Israelites in exile, the memory of Abraham gives new hope for a return to the Promised Land, with the exiles resuming Abraham's original journey from Babylon to the Promised Land. To God in the stories of Exodus and Sinai, the memory of Abraham reawakens his original commitment to Israel, which had wavered in the interim. God's promise of future memory ensures that this original commitment will never be extinguished, even when all seems hopeless. To both God and humans, Abraham's memory restores a link between past, present, and future, providing a catalyst for reflection and action.

The force of Abraham's memory is also encoded in Israelite geography, which serves as an "ethnoscape" in biblical religion.⁶ Abraham's presence inhabits the cult sites that he founded in the hill country and in the Negev.⁷ The blasted region of the Dead Sea is a vivid reminder of Abraham's attempt to

rescue Sodom and Gomorrah and the fate of its citizens who swerved from the “way of Yahweh.”⁸ Jerusalem is marked with the memories of Melchizedek’s blessing of Abraham and the dramatic episode when Abraham brought Isaac as a sacrifice to Mt. Moriah.⁹ Mamre, near Hebron, is where Abraham was “gathered to his people.”¹⁰ The landscape of Israel—which is one of God’s promises to Abraham—silently attests to Abraham’s memory.

The body too is a site of Abraham’s memory. The command to circumcise all Israelite males leaves a memorious mark on the male body and serves as its rite of passage into the Israelite nation. In the display of this “sign of the covenant,” particularly in the context of being fruitful and multiplying, the covenant is remembered—perhaps most importantly by God¹¹—activating the promise of many descendants. The promises to the patriarch, which are inherited by patrilineal descent, are signified by the circumcised phallus through which the patriline is constituted. In this respect, the male body—and the collective social body—are strongly marked by the memory of Abraham.

In the Hebrew Bible, the memories of the past exert powerful claims on the present. In many respects, the religious culture of ancient Israel is characterized by a perpetual negotiation with its memories and representations of the past. The effects of the past are changeable and multifaceted, since memories can refigure earlier memories, and representations of the past can express clashing interests. In the following, I will explore some subtle and far-reaching aspects of the remembrance of Abraham in the Hebrew Bible: the social ties that implicate Abraham in the present, the narrative strategies by which he is represented in biblical narrative, and the conflicting claims asserted by competing memories and representations of Abraham. Abraham may be a distant figure of the past, but his presence is made known by those who remember.

Ancestral Ties

The memory of Abraham in the Hebrew Bible always implies his role as founding father. The word “father” (*ʿab*) is part of Abraham’s name, which God etymologizes as “father of many nations” (אֲבִי הַרְבֵּי גוֹיִם, Gen 17:5).¹² This is a performative utterance in which God makes Abraham the ancestor par excellence.¹³ Through his children and grandchildren, Abraham is the ancestral father of the Arabs (Ishmael and the children of Keturah), the Edomites (Esau), and most important, Israel. From the Israelite point of view, the patrilineal sequence of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob is the apex of their tribal genealogy, and Abraham combines in himself the authoritative status of culture hero, religious founder, and patriarch (literally, “first father”). Whereas Jacob is the direct fa-

ther of the twelve tribes, his authority derives from his inheritance of Abraham's patriarchal blessing and promise. As the first patriarch, Abraham is the lineal and ethnic ancestor of every Israelite household.¹⁴ From his status as apex of the genealogy, the memory of Abraham derives immense authority. The claims exerted by his memory involve the social functions, juridical power, and religious imperatives of the Israelite genealogical system.

In ancient Israel, as in many tribal societies, the relationships among individuals and households are organized by the idiom of genealogy.¹⁵ One's rights and responsibilities vis à vis others are determined by the degree of kinship according to the genealogical system. The household (בית אב), the clan (משפחה), and the tribe (שבט) are the major nested units of the genealogical relationships of the people Israel, with local and regional groupings among them. The ethnic and genealogical boundary of the people as a whole is defined by descent from the three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The individual is a point of intersection among many genealogical relationships, both to living relatives and dead ancestors. In this type of genealogical system, the past serves to define the roles and identities of the living. An individual is the child of X, of the clan of Y, of the tribe of Z, of the people of Israel. The individual has little social or legal status outside of this web of genealogical relationships.¹⁶ Hence, being cast out of the household or clan is a kind of social death; one is "cut off" (כרת) from kin and culture, and the promise of descendants is annulled.¹⁷ In this respect, the collective past, as encoded in the genealogy, is a regulative presence in daily life, a constitutive charter of rights, obligations, and identity.

Religion too is encoded in this genealogical system. As Karel van der Toorn notes in his masterful study of family religion in the ancient Near East, "patrilineal kinship entails a common religious devotion."¹⁸ Family religion in the patriarchal narratives centers around devotion to the "God of the Father," that is, the god of the patriline, also called the "God of Abraham" (אלהי אברהם, Gen 31:53, Ps 47:9).¹⁹ The God of Abraham is the divine benefactor of Abraham's family—he grants them blessings and offspring, heals disease, guides them on journeys, and at key moments communicates with them directly. This close relationship with the God of the Father is the basis of family religion in ancient Israel, and it persisted in varying forms throughout the biblical period. Patriarchal religion, as Rainer Albertz observes, "is to be defined not as a preliminary stage but as a substratum of Yahweh religion."²⁰ It is the patrimony of Father Abraham to each family in the Israelite genealogy, joining family devotion in the present to its normative model in the patriarchal past.

The idiom of genealogy relates the past to the present not only in social and religious life but also in the literary structures of the biblical stories. The

narratives of the collective past in the Pentateuch are organized by the genealogical continuum from Adam to the tribes of Israel, in which Abraham is the turning point as the chosen recipient of God's promises.²¹ The narrative structure of the past is a complex genealogy, an extension of the kinship structures of Israelite society. In this sense the categories of collective memory correlate with the categories of social organization in a Durkheimian sense,²² via the memorable structures of genealogy. Society and history are bound together in the idiom of genealogical reckoning.

The ethnologist Andrew Shryock comments insightfully on the nature of genealogical narratives among the modern bedouin tribes of Jordan:

[Tribal] genealogies are both a structure and a history. It would be wrong to conclude from this fact (as so many ethnographers do) that tribal history is not really about the past; more to the point, the past, for tribespeople, is obviously inseparable from the present. History is *now* as it happened *then*.²³

The memories of Abraham and the narratives about him in Genesis obey this condition of tribal genealogies—they involve the present in the past and look to the past as a model and warrant for the present. The remembered past is not merely a glorified projection of the present, but a conflation of past and present in which history, folklore, and ethnic self-fashioning are thoroughly entangled. Like language itself, genealogies have present meanings and performative functions, while also having complex and deeply embedded histories.²⁴

The representation of the past as genealogy is emphasized in the redactional framing of the stories in Genesis as תולדות, usually translated “generations” or “descendants.” The term literally denotes those whom the father has “begotten” (הוליד)—in anthropological terms, the patriline. The repeated phrase “these are the generations (patriline) of X” functions as a structuring principle in Genesis from the stories of creation (“these are the descendants of heaven and earth,” Gen 2:4) to the descent of the tribal ancestors into Egypt (“these are the descendants of Jacob,” Gen 37:2), segmenting the past according to the structure of genealogical time.²⁵ There are ten such framing repetitions in Genesis, five in the Primeval Narrative and five in the Patriarchal Narrative.²⁶ The ten repetitions are perhaps formally related to the ten generations of the ancestors before the flood (Genesis 5) and again after the flood (Gen 11:10–26), culminating in the begetting of Abraham. The birth of Abraham is a turning point in the structure of the genealogical past, ending the sequence of primeval generations and beginning the patriarchal generations. The call of Abraham is also a thematic turning point in the biblical representation of the

past, from the dismal curses of the primeval narratives to the blessings and promises granted to Abraham and fulfilled in the people of Israel.

Not only the form but also the contents of the Abraham stories are suffused with genealogical matters. Problems of inheritance and patrimony, marriage and family relationships, are basic to virtually every story about Abraham. The survival of his lineage is the initial problem, signaled by the terse notice, “Sarah was barren, she had no son” (Gen 11:30). This problem is not finally resolved until God spares Isaac’s life in the story of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22. In between occur dangers to Abraham and his family—Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Lot—all of whom are potential agents in the patriarchal succession. God’s blessing and promises to Abraham depend crucially on his having a son, who will be the immediate genealogical link to the future nation. These problems, turning points, and resolutions in the stories of Abraham are predicated on the social reality of a genealogy that traces its ethnic origin to Abraham.

An important implication of the past organized as a genealogy is that it is clearly goal oriented, pointed toward a particular future. It is a teleological form of history, consummating in the present of the patriline, and including its future prospects. It is, in Claude Lévi-Strauss’s phrase, “history-for,” a history whose facts are constituted by the interests of a particular community.²⁷ The implied audience is the great nation promised to Abraham, and their present existence colors the twists and turns of the narrative. Meir Sternberg has pointed to a striking literary effect of this teleological focus—when the narrative is about to leave a male who is not a lineal ancestor of Israel, the temporal orientation often swerves into the future to list his descendants, and then doubles back to the time of the Israelite ancestor.²⁸ Hence the descendants of Cain are introduced before returning to the birth of Seth (Gen 4:17–26), and similarly for the collateral kin descended from the sons of Noah (Genesis 10).²⁹ Closer to home, the descendants of Nahor (Gen 22:20–24), Ishmael (Gen 25:12–16), and Esau (Gen 36) are related before returning to the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respectively. This zigzagging progression “foregrounds . . . the suspended [Israelite line] rather than the unfolded line of descent. It implies a need to glance down each bypath, for the record and goodbye, before returning to the highroad of history.”³⁰ The representation of past time is structured by the temporal branching of the genealogical tree, punctuated by prospective and resumptive moves in the historical emergence of the Israelite present from the ancestral past.

The teleological nature of the narrative also provides a degree of perspective on the interpretive and theological questions of why God calls Abraham, why he grants Abraham and Sarah a son, and why he rescues Abraham’s descendants from Egypt and brings them to the Promised Land. These events

may be savored as mysteries of God's ineffable will,³¹ but in the genealogical structure of the past they are also inevitable. The combination of inevitable outcome and seemingly insoluble crises produces powerful drama in the patriarchal narratives. Through this drama, the primary consumers of the stories—the people of Israel—are allowed to savor the miracle of their very existence. The future too is implicit in the past, since God's promises are unconditional and extend to Abraham's seed forever.³² This future aspect becomes prominent in exilic and postbiblical times, as in the Babylonian exiles' hope to return to the Promised Land, recapitulating Abraham's journey (see Isa 41:8–9, 51:1–2). The present and the future are built into the structures of the past, and hence its memory is both familiar and compelling.

The ties that bind each Israelite to each other and to Abraham present an organized model for thought and action, but also exhibit some internal contradictions. Ishmael (the Arabs) and Esau (Edom) are also descendants of Abraham, but Israel coexists uneasily with them in this web of kinship. Both Ishmael and Esau were the first-born sons and hence had a historical right to primacy, but things worked out differently in the biblical unfolding of events. Israel is the teleological fruit of the genealogy, yet there are other fruit too, which exert legitimate and perhaps troubling claims to Abraham's memory.³³ Within the Israelite kinship structure there were also latent internal fissures, as between the northern and southern tribes, which the appeal to a common lineage could not keep from spinning apart. On the level of the domestic household too, conflicts over inheritance and rivalry among siblings and spouses are a fact of life, as in Cain's murder of Abel, the expulsion of Hagar, and the sale of Joseph into slavery. Sometimes kinship cannot contain the messiness of history and human behavior.

Representing Abraham

Even as the past is organized as a genealogical structure, Abraham is represented within this structure in multiple ways. Commentators have long noted that Abraham shows different faces in Genesis—sometimes a humble shepherd, sometimes a warrior-chief, sometimes a shrewd dealer, sometimes a prophet.³⁴ There are also different shadings in the ways the stories are told, variations in style, characterization, narrative strategy, and emplotment. Some of these differences derive from the complex literary history of Genesis and its identifiable literary sources—J, E, and P, plus redactors and a few unknown sources.³⁵ In its plurality of representations, the patriarchal narratives yield a complex literary memory of Abraham, which at some points is fraught with

contradictions. The memory of Abraham, while authoritative in terms of genealogical prestige, is also frictional and problematic in its literary representations.

Consider, for example, two of the most memorable scenes in the stories of Abraham: Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22), and Abraham's dialogue with God before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:16–33). In the former, which Kierkegaard regarded as sublime and unfathomable, Abraham displays his absolute obedience to God's command in the most extreme of circumstances, while in the latter Abraham argues with God—and prevails—over the moral imperatives of justice and compassion. In the former, Abraham silently and willingly commits his son to death, while in the latter he questions and prods God to save the lives of the people of Sodom, both the righteous and the wicked. These are, in certain respects, two profoundly different portraits of Abraham.

The virtues of Abraham in these two stories are related to the differing narrative strategies and modes of emplotment in the J and E sources.³⁶ The J source, to which the Sodom and Gomorrah story belongs, tends to give wide scope to human agency, often presenting the conflicts and reversals in the stories as generated by clashing human wills, with God subsequently discovering the problem and intervening to resolve it.³⁷ So at Sodom and Gomorrah, Yahweh announces before Abraham, "Let me go down and see whether they have done everything according to the outcries that have come to me, and if not, then I will know" (Gen 18:21). Yahweh's decision to make an inquiry ("Let me go down and see," אֵרְדָּה נָא יֵאֲרֶאֱהָ see," echoes the diction of the similar divine inquiry at the Tower of Babel ("Yahweh went down to see," יֵרֵד יְהוָה לִרְאֹתָהּ, Gen 11:5), and both scenes thematically echo Yahweh's inquiries into the human misdeeds in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:11–13). In this mode of emplotment in the J stories, the humans are allowed sufficient agency and leeway to commit mayhem before Yahweh joins the story and resolves the crisis.

The wide scope for human agency in the J stories is powerfully represented in Abraham's appeal for compassion and justice in his dialogue with Yahweh in Genesis 18. Abraham speaks with courage and rhetorical subtlety:

Far be it from you to do such a thing, to execute the righteous with the wicked, so that it should be the same for the righteous and the wicked. Far be it from you! Should not the judge of all the earth act justly? (Gen 18:25)

Abraham compels Yahweh to accept his argument by the force of his cogent appeal to the principles of justice and compassion. In so doing, Abraham adopts the self-deprecating eloquence of the courtier, while simultaneously

adopting the perspective of the “judge of all the earth,” framing the issues as they ought to appear to Yahweh’s eyes. As a result of this superb rhetorical and moral performance, Yahweh promises to relent from destroying the wicked cities for the sake of the righteous within them, even if there are only ten righteous inhabitants. As it happens, there are not even ten righteous inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Yahweh only rescues Lot and his family. In the P comment on this story, Lot’s family is saved because “God remembered Abraham” (Gen 19:29). Remembering Abraham is raised to a theme of the story, reminding God to save the innocent people.

Abraham’s eloquent appeal for justice and compassion in the face of Yahweh’s potential wrath is a sublime moment, defining Abraham as an exemplar of great virtue. His passion on behalf of moral principle is part of what Yahweh expects from Abraham and is in fact the reason that Yahweh initiates the dialogue with Abraham. Yahweh says to himself:

Shall I hide from Abraham what I am going to do? I have known him so that he will command his children and his descendants after him, that they may keep the way of Yahweh, to do what is right and just. (Gen 18:19)

Yahweh expects Abraham to command his descendants “to do what is right and just” (לעשת צדקה ומשפט), described vividly as “the way of Yahweh” (דרך יהוה). In the ensuing dialogue, it is both ironic and apt that Abraham displays his commitment to this moral imperative by instructing Yahweh in this task, imploring the judge of all the earth to “do what is just.” In order to show that he will instruct his children in the way of righteousness and justice, Abraham first instructs Yahweh in “the way of Yahweh.” Yahweh’s expectations are fulfilled, even as he receives moral guidance from his human protégé.

In contrast to the wide scope for human agency in the J source, the E source characteristically provides divine motives and sanction for important human actions. In the Abraham narrative, the E stories are clustered in Genesis 20–22. Two of these stories have close parallels in the J source, so the contrasts in narrative strategy are easily drawn.³⁸ In the J source, Abraham agrees to expel Hagar and Ishmael because Sarai browbeats him to do her will. He replies to her, “Your slave-woman is in your hands. Do with her as you see fit” (Gen 16:6). In contrast, the E story grounds Abraham’s decision in God’s will: “God said to Abraham, ‘Do not be afraid for the boy and your slave-woman. Whatever Sarah tells you, obey her voice, for through Isaac will your seed be called’ ” (Gen 21:12). Abraham bears no blame in the E version of Hagar’s expulsion because the decision was God’s. God’s beneficent hand is at work in this and other E stories,³⁹ sheltering the patriarchal families from harm and

dishonor, and at key moments revealing the divine plan behind the plot (as previously: “for through Isaac your seed will be called.”)

In the E story of the binding of Isaac, these narrative motives are starkly intensified. Abraham is a perfectly righteous man, without blemish, because of his absolute fidelity to God’s will. The angel of God commends his virtue in these terms: “Now I know that you are a God-fearing man, for you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Gen 22:12). Abraham is tested to see if he has the supreme virtue of absolute faith and obedience to God, and he passes the test stunningly. Because he is willing to risk all for God, Abraham receives his son back and returns home with his honor and family intact.

Characteristically for E, Abraham does not speak a false word in this story.⁴⁰ Part of the subtle irony of the narrative is that Abraham seems to deceive but in fact does not. First he informs his servants, “I and the boy will go there, and we will worship, and we will return to you.” This is a deceptive statement on its face, since if Isaac is sacrificed (a fairly extreme form of worship), only one person “will return to you.” In fact, as the audience already knows (since the story is part of their genealogical past), both father and son will return after performing an ordinary burnt offering, and Abraham’s statement is fully true. In the dramatic irony of the scene, Abraham does not know that he is telling the truth, but the narrator and the audience know.

Similarly, in Abraham’s reply to Isaac’s heart-rending question, “Where is the sheep for the sacrifice?” Abraham unknowingly speaks the truth: “God will see to the sheep for the sacrifice” (Gen 22:7–8). Abraham speaks these seemingly duplicitous words to shield Isaac from realizing that he is the “sheep” for the sacrifice. But in retrospect, we know that Abraham’s words are true—God does provide a ram (lexically, a subtype of sheep)⁴¹ for the sacrifice (Gen 22:13). Even though Abraham intends the words to deceive, the narrator intends them to be true.⁴²

Abraham is represented in strikingly different ways in these powerfully memorable stories. In Genesis 18 and 22, he is the exemplar of great virtue, and in both he lives up to God’s expectation for him. But the virtue of arguing with God over the injustice of taking innocent lives, and the virtue of sparing wicked lives, seems askance from the virtue of unquestioning obedience to God’s will to the point of being willing to take the life of one’s own son. In these two representations of Abraham, the moral imperative of the “way of Yahweh” (דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה; Gen 18:19, J) is in tension with the ethical ideal of “God-fearing” (יִרְאָה אֱלֹהִים; Gen 22:12, E). Yet in the plural representations of the biblical narrative, Abraham embodies both. The conflict of representations becomes, in the redacted Torah, a challenge for the reader to integrate both ideals

into the moral psychology of a single character. The text preserves both representations—presumably because they both had cultural authority—yielding a complex pastiche of memory. Part of the unfathomability of Abraham, to speak in a Kierkegaardian voice, may be that his actions are incommensurate, mutually contradictory, from one turning point to another. But in the plural representations of the text, it is all one Abraham. We strain and waver to understand him, and he exceeds our grasp.

Memory and Countermemory

The memory of Abraham in the Hebrew Bible exerts a variety of powerful claims—some explicit, some implicit—on the ones who remember. In times of crisis, God and Israel are awakened to their mutual obligations and hopes, derived from and modeled after God's relationship with the patriarch. Abraham's memory reinforces the authority of the genealogical structures of Israelite social life, which serve to articulate the ethnic and religious unity of Israel and regulate the identities and interactions of its people. These genealogical structures also provide the template for representations of the past in the narratives of Genesis. The stories about Abraham make a variety of claims about, among other things, the ideals of religious virtue and the relationship between human affairs and God, varying according to their subtly divergent modes of emplotment and narrative poetics.

All of these facets of memory are subject to revision, counterclaims, and reinterpretation. The differing representations of Abraham in the Pentateuchal sources, for example, may reflect regional or temporal variations as well as the differing sensibilities of the narrators. They may also reflect conscious opposition to prior representations. The relationship of E's Abraham to J's Abraham may be one of deliberate revision, a casting aside of a strong precursor, a correction of a distorted memory.

We might call such a deliberate recasting of memories of the past a countermemory.⁴³ The intention of a countermemory is to refute, revise, and replace a previously compelling or accepted memory of the past. The book of Deuteronomy is a prime example of a countermemory in the Hebrew Bible, designed to retell a major chapter of the past with a deliberately revisionist agenda.⁴⁴ It is probable, but not clearly demonstrable, that the E and P sources were motivated by similar revisionist concerns vis à vis their predecessor texts and traditions.⁴⁵

The book of Ezekiel presents a notable countermemory of Abraham in the

exiled prophet's argument with the Judeans who remained in the land after the destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel learns that the people of the land are claiming that they, and not the Jews in exile, will inherit the Promised Land:

The word of Yahweh came to me, saying, "Son of Man, the inhabitants of the wastes in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham was one, and he inherited the land, but we are many, and the land is given to *us* as an inheritance.'" (Ezek 33:23–24)

This countermemory claims that the people of the land are the true heirs of Abraham and that the exiles have been excised from the genealogy. The statement that "the land is given to us as an inheritance" (reported also in Ezek 11:14) intends to repudiate the exiles' status as legitimate children of Abraham and to redefine them as an out-group, no longer within the charmed circle of the seed of Abraham.⁴⁶ This is a breathtaking revision of Israelite ethnic identity, replacing the principle of common Abrahamic descent by residence in Abraham's land.

When various groups of exiles later did return to Jerusalem, this countermemory seems itself to have been countered. The book of Ezra defines the "children of the exile" (בני הגולה) as the true Israel, effectively disenfranchising the people of the land as an apostate out-group (Ezra 4:1, 10:7).⁴⁷ Now only those who left the land and returned are the true seed of Abraham. From these clashing claims and countermemories emerged the sectarianism of the Second Temple period, with various groups claiming to be the true Israel, the righteous remnant, the seed of Abraham. True kinship is reserved for those with the right history, or the right set of doctrines, or the right leaders. The most influential countermemory of Abraham from the Second Temple period is that articulated by the Apostle Paul, for whom the followers of Christ are the true heirs of Abraham, "the children of the promise, like Isaac," and the non-Christian Jews are relegated to the status of Ishmael, "the children of slavery," a collateral lineage condemned to be cursed under the weight of the law (Galatians 3:6–18, 4:21–5:1). Of course, in later Muslim tradition, it is the descendants of Ishmael who are the true seed of Abraham, another turn in the clash of countermemories.⁴⁸ The teleological quality of these memories is highlighted by their continual revision to express the identity and destiny of the people telling the story.

To remember Abraham is to enter into this ages-long history of memory and countermemory. The memories of the patriarch continue to exert powerful claims as part of the deep root of Western culture and of modern Jewish,

Christian, and Muslim identities. For many they remain a salve in times of crisis, a powerful presence in our cultural genealogy of knowledge and aspiration. As the classical Arabic poetess Umaima wrote of her beloved kin:⁴⁹

They are my root and they my branches,
Theirs is the pedigree when mine I recite.

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3

Historical Memories in the Patriarchal Narratives

In every literature a society contemplates its own image. Yet, along with the memory of old events, distorted and imperfect though it was, traditions genuinely derived from the past have filtered down; and the traces of these we shall encounter over and over again.

—Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*

Clues and History

The search for the historical background of the patriarchs of Genesis has taken some dizzying turns in the last half-century. In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars proclaimed that the patriarchal age of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph had been found among the mass of new data recovered from the second millennium B.C.E. William F. Albright, the most eminent of these scholars, stated that “there is scarcely a single biblical historian who has not been impressed by the rapid accumulation of data supporting the substantial historicity of patriarchal tradition.”¹ In the 1970s and 1980s, the tide turned, and the patriarchal age was lost again, as the arguments of Albright and others were shown to be overinterpretations of the data, compounded with wishful thinking.² Though there are still a few embattled defenders of the Albrightian position,³ most scholars nowadays regard the patriarchal period in Genesis as no more than a “glorified mirage” concocted by the Pentateuchal writers.⁴

Though I grant the force of the criticisms of earlier views, I do not think that the “glorified mirage” assessment is quite right. It oversimplifies and distorts the complex relationship between history and cultural memory. In a culture’s self-representation of the past, one expects to find a mixture of early and late elements, a palimpsest of past and present, as Marc Bloch observed for medieval traditions.⁵ Among the wreckage of past scholarship, there are some bits of data and historical arguments that show the antiquity of at least some aspects of the patriarchal traditions. I will try to untangle and refine the best of these arguments to show that some traditions about the patriarchs clearly predate the major biblical writers (J, E, and P), and that some traditions predate the formation of Israel in the early Iron Age (ca. twelfth–eleventh centuries B.C.E).

First I wish to clarify the nature of this historical task. I am not trying to prove or falsify the patriarchal narratives of Genesis 12–50. Rather, I am trying to clarify the relationship between the patriarchal narratives and ancient Near Eastern history. In this relationship, we are not limited to the simple contrast between true and false, or between history and fiction; rather the true relationship is somewhere in between, where history and imagination intermingle. In my understanding of the text and the historical facts, the patriarchal narratives of Genesis are a composite of historical memory, traditional folklore, cultural self-definition, and narrative brilliance. To inquire into the historical memory in the stories is to address a different aspect of the stories than their folklore or literary art. Yet each of these dimensions of the patriarchal narratives—the historical, the folkloric, the cultural, and the literary—is important to a sympathetic understanding of the whole. When we address historical questions, we need to realize that we are, at least for a time, neglecting the other dimensions of the text and that a full investigation will relate all the dimensions together. Therefore, a historical inquiry is only a first step in paying attention to the patriarchal narratives. History is necessary, but it is not sufficient for a nuanced understanding of the patriarchal narratives.

Having indicated the limitations of historical inquiry into the patriarchal narratives, let us consider what is gained. If we find clear indications of historical memories that antedate the biblical writers, then we have falsified the basic claim of the minimalist view that everything is late and purely fictional. If we find clear evidence that the stories as we have them preserve traces of ancient traditions, then we have gained an understanding of the nature of the stories and of their historical presence in Israelite culture. We may gain insight into the ways the stories, as a common inheritance, articulated a national, religious, and ethnic identity for the Israelites. We may even gain new perspective on the history of that ethnic identity. Finally, we may better perceive

the sacral quality of the stories, as they reflected and informed the religious life of the people. In sum, we gain a better sense of what the stories are and how to understand them.

But do we find the patriarchs or the era when they lived? I don't think so. In the present state of our evidence, historical arguments only bear on the nature of the stories and their traditions. There is no clear evidence concerning the original Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, or any of the other characters of Genesis. We do not know when or if any of these persons ever existed in history. All we can say is that *traditions* about these figures existed, and we can date some aspects of these traditions. There is another important point to consider. If there did exist a historical Abraham and we could verify his existence, this fact would not solve any of the other historical questions about the patriarchal stories. We still would not know if the historical Abraham did any of the things recounted in the stories. This is a common situation in narrative traditions: even when the protagonist is historical, as with Gilgamesh, King Arthur, or George Washington, this fact doesn't tell you whether the story is historically true or preserves authentic historical memories. The story of George Washington and the cherry tree is a classical American example (it never happened).⁶ The same caution must extend to the biblical patriarchs.

If we cannot find the patriarchs or the patriarchal era, then let us try to find at least the patriarchal traditions in history. Do they predate the major biblical writers? Do they predate the era of Israelite society? In the following, I will marshal three bodies of evidence to show that some aspects of the traditions are old, extending in some instances to the mid-second millennium B.C.E. This is not to say that all aspects of the tradition are that old, only that some are. The patriarchal stories, as with other narrative traditions, consist of elements of varying antiquity. The relatively later elements include: the memory of boundary conflicts with Aram in the region of Gilead (mid- to late ninth century B.C.E.);⁷ the Chaldean association with "Ur of the Chaldees" (ca. eighth–seventh cent. B.C.E.);⁸ and the names and geography of the Ishmaelite tribes (eighth–sixth cent. B.C.E.)⁹ and other ethnic groups (e.g., the Arameans, the Philistines). For writings that were likely composed during the 8th–6th centuries (J, E, and P),¹⁰ these are natural reflections of current situations. Let us consider the indications of earlier memories.

Fort Abram

Around the year 925 B.C.E., the Egyptian Pharaoh Sheshonq I (biblical Shishak) mounted a military expedition into Judah and Israel. Sensing a moment of

weakness, Sheshonq's forces devastated the land. The biblical accounts describe the impact of the campaign:

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, King Shishak of Egypt marched against Jerusalem. He carried off the treasures of the Temple of Yahweh and the treasures of the royal palace; he carried off everything. He even carried off all the golden shields that Solomon had made.
(1 Kgs 14:25–26)

The longer account in 2 Chr 12:2–12 states that Shishak's invading army had 1,200 chariots, 60,000 horsemen, and innumerable troops. They "captured the fortified towns of Judah and advanced on Jerusalem," where Rehoboam averted disaster by giving Shishak the Temple treasury. While these biblical accounts may not be entirely reliable, the general picture they portray is corroborated by contemporary Egyptian evidence.

Upon his triumphant return to Egypt, Sheshonq had a victory stela carved into a wall of the Temple of Amun in the city of Karnak.¹¹ On this stela were carved the names of perhaps 150 sites (many now eroded or illegible) in Judah and Israel that Sheshonq's army conquered. Roughly 70 of these sites are in the Negeb. One of these Negeb sites is called, in Egyptian syllabic writing: *p³ ḥa-q-ru-²a ²i-bi-ra-ma*.¹² Most Egyptologists read the last word in this place-name as the equivalent of Hebrew "Abram" or "Abiram." ("Abram" and "Abiram" are variations of the same name, literally, "the [or, my] Father is exalted.")¹³ A recent comprehensive treatment of Semitic words in Egyptian syllabic writing concludes that the reading of this word as "Abram" or "Abiram" is "entirely certain."¹⁴

The first sign of this place-name is "the," and the following word means either "fort, fortified" (from Hebrew *ḥgr*, "to gird"), or "field" (from Semitic *ḥql*). I think "fort, fortified" is more likely, since the other word is not found in Hebrew.¹⁵ The place-name would then be "The Fort (or Fortified Town) of Abram," or simply "Fort Abram."

Who is the Abram of Fort Abram? There are two possibilities. Either it is the Abram famous from the biblical stories of the patriarchs, or it is another Abram whom we have never heard of. Some scholars prefer the second option. For example, John Van Seters, in his important book *Abraham in History and Tradition*, notes the name "Abram" in this tenth century B.C.E. place-name but argues "there is no reason to suspect that the name has any connection with the patriarch."¹⁶ This is a possible position. But is it plausible? Let us consider the other possibility, that Fort Abram was named after the patriarch Abram. Are there any reasons to prefer this possibility? I think so.

(1) *Geography*. The place-name “Fort Abram” is located in Sheshonq’s list among sites in the Negeb. The biblical Abram lives in the Negeb and southern Judah. Fort Abram was located in a region that the Bible associates with the patriarch Abram.

(2) *Chronology*. Fort Abram existed in the tenth century B.C.E., shortly after the division of the kingdoms. Numerous scholars have found indications in the Bible of royal ideology in the stories of Abram, such as the unconditional promises granted to Abram and David.¹⁷ It would make sense that a fortified site in the Negeb, perhaps fortified during the United Monarchy, would be named by royal officials after the father of the nation, whose stature would glorify the Davidic king.

(3) *Archaeology*. Excavations in the Negeb have revealed a high density of sites during the tenth century, in accord with the numerous Negeb sites in Sheshonq’s stela.¹⁸ Only a few sites can be clearly identified with place-names in Sheshonq’s list, such as Arad, which in the stela is called “the Fort of Great Arad.” Most of these Negeb sites were fortified by casemate walls surrounding the village, hence the probable sense of the word *ḥagr* as “enclosure, fortification, fort.” One motive in the construction of fortified settlements in the Negeb in this period was to create a line of defense against Egypt. This is the archaeological context for Fort Abram. It was probably a new site, built perhaps under the authority of David or Solomon, whose fortifications were intended for the defense of the kingdom. When a government builds fortifications, it is natural to name them for illustrious local or national heroes. Abram of biblical fame surely fit the bill.

A further possible argument under the heading of archaeology was suggested by Yohanan Aharoni, the excavator of Arad, Beersheba, and other Negeb sites. Aharoni noted that Arad is mentioned in Sheshonq’s list but that Beersheba is not. This omission is strange, since Beersheba was a prominent site in the region at the time. He suggested, therefore, that Fort Abram was the term the Egyptians used to refer to Beersheba.¹⁹ In biblical traditions Beersheba was founded by Abraham (see Gen 21:22–33), so the identification of Fort Abram with the unlisted site of Beersheba is an attractive possibility.

There are several good reasons to think that the tenth century B.C.E. Negeb site called Fort Abram was named for the patriarch Abram. The place is right, the time is right, the political setting is right, and the archaeological data from the region are right. To be sure, we cannot prove that Fort Abram is testimony to the traditions of Abram. But it is a reasonable historical argument that simply and elegantly explains the facts. In light of the reasons for and against, the identification of Fort Abram with biblical Abram is very probable. In this

case, we seem to have credible extrabiblical evidence for the vitality of traditions about Abram in the tenth century B.C.E.

Patriarchal Names and El

Are there any data that take us back before the tenth century, or even before the Israelite settlement? I would suggest that two sets of evidence, both consisting of names, plausibly take us to the pre-Israelite period. The first body of evidence consists of the patriarchal names. The important point to consider is not the form of these names, but the absence of the divine name Yahweh in them. Commonly, ancient Semitic names were compounded with the name of a god. In Genesis, the divine name found in personal names of the patriarchal lineages is never Yahweh and almost exclusively El (before Abraham: Mehi-jael,²⁰ Methushael, Mahalalel,²¹ Abimael; after Abraham: Ishmael, Kemuel, Bethuel, Eldaah, Adbeel, Reuel, Magdiel, Jemuel, Elon, Jahleel, Malchiel, Jahzeel, and most notably, Israel).²² The only other god mentioned in personal names of the patriarchal lineages is Baal Hadad, found in Ishmael's son Hadad and Benjamin's son Ashbel.²³ Names compounded with Yahweh are found beginning in Exodus (Jochebed, Joshua). This is a striking difference that deserves an explanation.

Albrecht Alt argued that the absence of Yahweh-names in the patriarchal narratives is one of several features that indicates a pre-Yahwistic origin for the patriarchal traditions:

The well-known restriction of the name of Yahweh to the period from Moses on, in the Elohist and Priestly treatment of the sagas, can hardly be explained as simply the result of later theories about Israel's prehistory without any basis in the tradition, although there is no doubt that it was quite consciously seized on by the authors of these narratives in order to mark off different eras in the past. And while the Yahwist consistently calls Yahweh by this name from the very earliest times, this expresses his dominating conviction that Yahweh has always been God not only over Israel, but over the whole of history as well. . . . The names of the tribes and their forefathers do not give a single reliable indication of [Yahweh's] existence; this does not tell us a great deal, since they are comparatively few in number, but it is worth noticing nevertheless.²⁴

Alt frames the textual evidence very carefully. I would add that the names are particularly worth noticing because of the evident contrast between the data

and the explicit intent of J, the earliest major biblical writer of the patriarchal narratives.²⁵ Let me unpack this argument further.

Both E and P hold the theory that the patriarchs called their god El or Elohim (with various titles or epithets). In both sources, the name Yahweh is first revealed to Moses (Exodus 3 in E; Exodus 6 in P). Therefore, it is consonant with the intentions of these writers that the patriarchal names are not compounded with Yahweh. If some patriarchal names had been Yahweh-names, these writers could have changed the names to fit their theory.

J holds a different theory. According to the J narrative, the name Yahweh was known from the time of Enosh, son of Seth (Gen 4:26), and was known to all the patriarchs. The fact that the patriarchal names are not compounded with the divine name Yahweh is contradictory to J's understanding of the history of the divine name. For J to have only El-names and not Yahweh-names goes against the writer's intentions. There can be no question, then, of J altering the patriarchal names to fit his theory. They must have been already there in the tradition. What Alt points out is that the absence of Yahweh in the patriarchal names casts doubt on J's theory that the god of Israel's ancestors was called Yahweh.

In other words, the absence of Yahweh-names from the patriarchal names in Genesis may be seen as evidence for the validity, or at least antiquity, of the theory shared by E and P. According to E and P—and the evidence of the patriarchal names—the god of the ancestors was called El. Only after many generations was this god identified as Yahweh.

This analysis of the biblical evidence correlates with the historical and archaeological data from Canaanite religion and culture of the pre-Israelite period. The evidence indicates that during the second millennium B.C.E., the high god of various local Canaanite pantheons was named El. This evidence is found from Ugarit in the north to the Sinai in the south.²⁶ Accordingly, we may conclude that the implication of the patriarchal names on this point is historically correct. There is knowledge in the patriarchal names—against the grain of the oldest major Pentateuchal source—of the El religion of Israel's ancestors (including the name "Israel" itself, which originally meant something like "El rules"). This coheres with the memories embedded in place-names such as Bethel, "House/Temple of El" (Gen 28:19, 35:15) and Penuel, "Face/Presence of El" (Gen 32:31–32), and in divine titles such as "El most high, creator of heaven and earth" (Gen 14:19, 22).²⁷ In other words, the El religion of the patriarchal narratives has authentic pre-Yahwistic historical memories in it.²⁸

The Ancestral Homeland

The second body of evidence that can take us to pre-Israelite times consists of the names of Abram's close kin and the place where they settled. As scholars have long noted, there is a durable link between Abram's family and the region of Syro-Mesopotamia between the Euphrates and Ḥabur rivers, around the city of Ḥaran (Ḥarrān in Akkadian).²⁹ This is where Abram's immediate kin live (Gen 11:31; 24:10; 28:2; 29:4-5).

Abram's direct ancestors are Teraḥ (father), Naḥor (grandfather, also the name of Abram's brother), and Serug (great-grandfather). Teraḥ and his household come to dwell in Ḥaran, where Teraḥ later dies. All of these personal names correspond with place-names in the Euphrates-Ḥabur region of Syro-Mesopotamia. These place-names, in various forms, are known in texts from the second and first millennia B.C.E. Naḥur, known from Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian texts, was located east of Ḥarrān by the Ḥabur river. Niḥriya, known from Old Babylonian texts, and Tell Naḥiri, known from Neo-Assyrian texts, are both in the immediate vicinity of Ḥarrān.³⁰ Til (ša) Turaḥi and Sarūgi, in the neighborhood of Ḥarrān, are known from Neo-Assyrian texts.³¹ Even the name Abram, listed in Old Assyrian texts, is a place somewhere around this area, though its precise location is uncertain.³² These extrabiblical place-names seem to cohere with the biblical evidence in associating Abram's lineage with this region of Syro-Mesopotamia. Why?

The historical answer to this geographical linkage is far from clear. The problem is that during the Israelite period this area was Aramean. In Genesis, this region is identified as Aramean by the terms Aram-Naharaim ("Aram of the two rivers," Gen 24:10, J) and Paddan-Aram ("Plain of Aram," Gen 28:2-7, P). Laban is explicitly called an Aramean (Gen 28:5, P). But, as the biblical text amply testifies, the Arameans were enemies of the Israelites from the time of the early monarchy.³³ Why would this be the ancestral homeland if it is the home of Israel's political enemies?

Yet this is the ancestral region where Abraham's kin live, where Abraham sends for a wife for Isaac, where Rebekah instructs Jacob to flee, and where he marries. These marriages, in kinship terms, are endogamous (literally, "in-marriage") alliances within the patriarchal lineage. Rebekah and Isaac are second cousins on their fathers' side. Rachel and Leah are Jacob's second cousins on his father's side and also first cousins on his mother's side (so they are doubly related within the patriline). The importance of patrilineal kinship ties in the patriarchal narratives is clear. The patriarchs, the Arameans, and this region are linked together in the self-identification that begins the ritual prayer

of the first-fruits: אֲרַמְי אֲבִי אֲבִי, “My father was a wandering (or perishing) Aramean” (Deut 26:5).³⁴ (Note the fine assonance in this sequence—^ʾ*arammī* ^ʾ*ōbēd* ^ʾ*ābī*—of word-initial ^ʾ*alep*, medial *bet*, and word-final long *î*, which coalesce in the key word ^ʾ*ābī*, “my father.”) This poses a striking historical puzzle—why would the patriarchs be identified with the enemy Arameans?

The only plausible solution to this problem is to look at the Bronze Age of the second millennium B.C.E., when this region was not Aramean but Amorite. It is entirely possible, as some scholars have argued, that there is some historical connection between the patriarchal traditions and the Amorite culture of Syro-Mesopotamia during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.³⁵ As we can gather from the texts from Mari and other sites, the social organization of Amorite culture was tribal, including urban, rural, and mobile pastoralist populations.³⁶ The language was an early form of Northwest Semitic. A number of cultural traits common to the Amorite tribes and the later Israelite tribes have attracted the attention of scholars, including social forms and religious customs. The key point in the present discussion is that the region around Ḥarrān and the upper Euphrates was part of the Amorite heartland in this period. A recently published letter from Mari indicates that Ḥarrān was a tribal center for one of the major groupings of Amorite tribes.³⁷ This is the place so strongly associated with Abram’s lineage.

It seems likely, then, that the names of Abram’s lineage and the geographical location of the patriarchal homeland refer to the Amorite culture of this area during the second millennium B.C.E. Why does the Bible identify this area as Aramean? Because it was Aramean during the time of the nation of Israel (though Ḥaran was not a prominent Aramean center). In other words, the patriarchal traditions were updated to reflect current geographical and ethnic reality, even though this introduced a problem into the patriarchal identity. The patriarchs became Arameans because the ancestral land was now Aramean. But behind this logical contradiction we can detect the original ethnic identity of this region as Amorite. In other words, the biblical terms identifying the ethnic affiliation of this area as Aramean may be seen as a first-millennium updating of a second-millennium tradition.³⁸

In this understanding, the confession that “My father was a wandering (or perishing) Aramean” makes sense, as do the patrilineal marriages in Ḥaran. It is the Aramean dress that makes the references confusing and problematic.³⁹ If these references are modernizations of ancient memories of the Amorite homeland, then the problem disappears. Again, I would stress that we cannot prove that the names of Abram’s lineage and the associated geographical references preserve a historical link to the Amorite culture of the second millennium, but the data cohere best in this understanding, and some long-standing

problems are resolved. As a historical theory, it has scope and simplicity, and it fits the facts.

Memory and Tradition

What's in a name? In the case of the patriarchal traditions, I have argued, the names of certain places and persons provide the best evidence for tracing the historical roots of the patriarchal traditions. Fort Abram in the Negeb of the tenth century is good evidence for the power of tradition at that time. The absence of Yahweh in the patriarchal names indicates a second-millennium date for at least some features of the patriarchal worship of the god El. The geographical references in the lineage of Abram and the other references to the patriarchal homeland in Ḥaran preserve traces of Amorite memories from the mid-second millennium B.C.E. These are the best clues we have for the history and origins of the patriarchal traditions.

These clues also illuminate aspects of the historical roots of Israel's religious and ethnic identity. The memory of the Amorite homeland suggests that some portion of the population of early Israel descended from Amorite tribal culture. This historical memory became generalized at some point as part of common Israelite identity and may have influenced aspects of Israel's tribal and kinship-based society. Similarly, the worship of El, which is rooted in Canaanite religion, was at some point supplanted by the worship of Yahweh. Yahweh took on the name El, and what may have been originally two different deities became one. El-worship was remembered as a stage in the self-revelation of Yahweh. These lines of continuity with earlier history did not determine the form of Israelite religion and culture, but they were arguably part of the complex mix of features that crystallized into a new religious and ethnic identity.

Is it plausible that the patriarchal narratives, written down probably no earlier than the eighth century B.C.E. (the probable time of J, though there are some earlier texts, e.g., the tribal blessings of Genesis 49), could preserve memories of pre-Yahwistic El religion? Is it plausible that they recall the kinship ties of at least some early Israelites to the old Amorite homeland in Syro-Mesopotamia? This is another matter that many scholars would dispute, claiming that oral tradition cannot preserve historical memories for any significant length of time.⁴⁰ Is it possible that some memories in the patriarchal narratives are over 500 years old? I think so, though one must be cautious, since collective memory is selective and refashions the past in the light of the present. A striking example illustrating the potential for historical memory in Israelite

tradition is found in Amos 9:7, as Abraham Malamat has astutely noted.⁴¹ Amos states that Yahweh brought the Israelites out of Egypt, just as he brought the Philistines from Caphtor (Crete and the Aegean region) and the Arameans from Qir (probably in the Middle Euphrates region).⁴² Archaeological and textual evidence shows that for the Philistines this historical memory is accurate. In the early twelfth century B.C.E., the Philistines did arrive from the Aegean region.⁴³ This historical memory was 400 years old at the time Amos recited it. This is a good biblical parallel for the occasional longevity of historical memory in oral traditions. There are many other striking examples from cultures in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Native America, perhaps most famously the reminiscences of the second millennium B.C.E. in the Homeric epics.⁴⁴ The claim of some biblical scholars that oral tradition cannot retain historical memories for more than 150 years is simply untenable.⁴⁵

We may conclude that the biblical traditions of the patriarchs have some ancient memories in them, stretching back to the pre-Israelite times of the second millennium, mingling memories of El and the old Amorite tribal home. The patriarchal traditions have ancient roots. From these roots the stories grew and changed, adapted and embellished by storytellers of each age, until they came to be written in brilliant form by the biblical authors. We can perceive the antiquity of these traditions only occasionally, but the sense of the power and authority of the past pervades the stories.

When is the patriarchal era? In the most obvious sense, it is the time forever recreated in the biblical narratives of Genesis 12–50. This era consists of myth and memory, mingled in a way far more compelling than ordinary history. It is an era in sacred time.

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4

The Exodus in Biblical Memory

tradition (which is a product of oblivion and memory)

—Jorge Luis Borges, *El Aleph*

Mnemohistory

The Exodus from Egypt is a focal point of ancient Israelite religion. Virtually every kind of religious literature in the Hebrew Bible—prose narrative, liturgical poetry, didactic prose, and prophecy—celebrates the Exodus as a foundational event.¹ Israelite ritual, law, and ethics are often grounded in the precedent and memory of the Exodus. In the Decalogue, Yahweh identifies himself as the one “who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exod 20:2 = Deut 5:6). In the covenantal language of this passage and many others, the deliverance from Egypt is the main historical warrant for the religious bond between Yahweh and Israel; it is the gracious act of the great lord for his people on which rests the superstructure of Israelite belief and practice. In some texts (and featured prominently in the Passover Haggadah), the historical distance of the Exodus event is drawn into the present by the elastic quality of genealogical time: “You shall tell your son on that day, ‘It is because of what Yahweh did for me when he brought me out of Egypt’ ” (Exod 13:8; cf. Deut 6:20–25). In its existential actuality, the

Exodus, more than any other event of the Hebrew Bible, embodies Faulkner's adage: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."²

Given the centrality of the Exodus, it is not surprising that scholars have expended much energy trying to ascertain its historical content. Recent decades have seen a diminution of William F. Albright's confidence that the Exodus was undoubtedly a historical event.³ He thought it "quite unreasonable to deny its [viz. the biblical account of the Exodus] substantial accuracy" and assigned to the Exodus a date of ca. 1297 B.C.E.⁴ This position contrasts, for example, with the recent history of ancient Israel by John Hayes and Maxwell Miller, which consigns the Exodus to the shadowy realm of folk tradition into which critical historiography cannot penetrate.⁵ While the designation of folk tradition or folk history is apt for the general picture of the Exodus, it does not necessarily follow that critical historiography has no point of entry into this tradition. Rather, I would suggest, the historian has much to investigate regarding the collective memories of a culture.⁶

Cultural memories tend to be a mixture of historical truth and fiction, composed of "authentic" historical details, folklore motifs, ethnic self-fashioning, ideological claims, and narrative imagination.⁷ They are communicated orally and in written texts and circulate in a wide discursive network. For the collective memories of the Exodus, the Bible is our primary written source (including its constituent documentary sources), but we may plausibly assume that the written texts depend in various ways on earlier discourses, both oral and written. The collective memory of the Exodus is, in this sense, situated in a history of discourses.

In a recent book, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*,⁸ the Egyptologist Jan Assmann advocates an approach to cultural memories that he calls "mnemohistory."

Unlike history proper, mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It surveys the story-lines of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic continuities and discontinuities of reading the past. Mnemohistory is not the opposite of history, but rather is one of its branches or subdisciplines, such as intellectual history, social history, the history of mentalities, or the history of ideas. . . . Mnemohistory is reception theory applied to history.⁹

The data for mnemohistory are texts, artifacts, and other evidence of cultural discourse about the remembered past, and its object is to discern how such discourses are constituted and how they serve to inform and influence the cultural present. Assmann emphasizes that this kind of study focuses on the

ways a culture “shap[es] an identity by reconstructing its past.”¹⁰ The habits of cultural life and the multifarious interests of the present exert selective pressures on collective memories of the past, creating a version of the past with present relevance. How the past becomes a meaningful frame for the present is the particular burden of mnemohistory.

In biblical studies, this type of inquiry has some analogues in the “history of religions” school of Hermann Gunkel and Hugo Gressmann, particularly in its focus on the products of tradition and not primarily on the reconstruction of critical history. Moreover, like much of Gunkel’s work, it seeks to locate the discursive settings of such traditions, their *Sitze im Leben*, in order to explore the social and institutional structures in which they circulate. This kind of inquiry also takes its bearings from the *Annales* school of historiography, which emphasizes the social contexts and functions of history. Lucian Febvre stated that “organizing the past in accordance with the needs of the present, that is what one could call the social function of history.”¹¹ Mnemohistory is concerned with the social function of history in this sense.

The past and the present are interrelated in collective memory, and the task of mnemohistory is to chart the forces, strains, and transformations in this relationship. The analytic movement is from history to discourse and back again, rather than holding the memories still as “evidence” for critical historical reconstruction. A mnemohistory of the Exodus will survey history and memory to discern their mutual and interrelated traces, to see how the remembered past is constructed and reinterpreted and how collective identity hinges on the remembered past.

Pharaohs and Slaves

The Pharaoh of the Exodus is not named. This is a point of frustration for the historian, but for the task of mnemohistory it is a potentially fruitful sign of selective memory. Why should the name of Pharaoh be a blank, with no surrogate name inserted in its place? This may be a case of inadvertent forgetting, with no guiding motive, just as one effortlessly forgets the names of past presidents or prime ministers. Or it could be a sign of the stock function of this figure, as in the nameless Pharaoh who takes Sarah into his harem (Gen 12: 15–20) or the Pharaoh who exalts Joseph (Genesis 41).¹² But, in the Exodus, the blank of Pharaoh’s identity may also function as a strategic feature of the tradition, providing a moveable boundary of inclusion for those who share this memory.

The oppressive rule of Pharaoh and the enslavement of the ancestors—

these are memories that could have been shared by many segments of the population of early Israel. It is plausible that some people in early Israel had indeed escaped from slavery in Egypt. The Egyptian names of Moses, Phineas, and Hophni are perhaps testimony to the Egyptian origin of some of the Levite lineages.¹³ But—and this is the important point—for the Exodus story to take root in early Israel it was necessary for it to pertain to the remembered past of settlers who did *not* immigrate from Egypt.¹⁴ By leaving the name of Pharaoh a blank, the memory of Egyptian oppression could extend to all who had felt the oppression of Pharaoh at any time in the remembered past. This extension of reference extends broadly throughout Canaan during the Egyptian Empire of the Late Bronze Age.

From the conquests of Thutmose III (1479–1425 B.C.E.) through the reign of Ramesses III (1186–1154 B.C.E.) or Ramesses IV (1154–1148), the land of Canaan was a province of the Egyptian Empire.¹⁵ Egyptian power manifested itself in various ways and with varying degrees of intensity throughout this period.¹⁶ The Egyptian administration was largely concerned with control of trade routes and the appropriation of resources from its northern province. The objects of taxation and tribute included wood, precious metals and copper, gemstones, glass, foodstuffs—and also people. Slaves were demanded as tribute from the rulers of the Canaanite city-states, who presumably rounded them up from the local population or captured them from other towns. The correspondence between Canaanite rulers and the Egyptian Pharaoh discovered at El Amarna (dating to ca. 1360–1335) record the following human tribute sent to or requisitioned by Pharaoh:¹⁷

10 women sent by °Abdi-Ašarti of Amurru (EA 64)

46 females and 5 males sent by Milkilu of Gezer (EA 268)

[x] prisoners and 8 porters sent by °Abdi-Ḥeba of Jerusalem (EA 287)

10 slaves, 21 girls, and [8]0 prisoners sent by °Abdi-Ḥeba of Jerusalem (EA 288)

20 girls sent by Šubandu (place unknown; EA 301)

[x +] 1 young servants, 10 servants, and 10 maidservants sent by an unknown ruler (EA 309)

[2]0 first-class slaves requisitioned by Pharaoh (along with the ruler's daughter in marriage; EA 99)

40 female cupbearers requisitioned by Pharaoh of Milkilu of Gezer (EA 369)

Comparable shipments of human tribute, we presume, continued before and after the brief period of the Amarna archive.

A second, apparently larger category of Canaanite slaves consisted of pris-

oners of war captured and brought to Egypt by military campaigns.¹⁸ The Egyptian term for such foreign captives was *sqr.w-^cnh*, literally, “bound for life.” Thutmose III, the founder of the Egyptian Empire, claims to have taken over 7,300 Canaanite prisoners of war, and his son, Amenhotep II, claims to have taken over 89,600 Canaanite captives. In Ramesside times, the capture of Canaanite prisoners was a regular anthem in accounts of military conquests, as in the following account of Ramesses III:

I have brought back in great numbers those that my sword has spared, with their hands tied behind their backs before my horses, and their wives and children in tens of thousands, and their livestock in hundreds of thousands. I have imprisoned their leaders in fortresses bearing my name, and I have added to them chief archers and tribal chiefs, branded and enslaved, tattooed with my name, and their wives and children have been treated in the same way.¹⁹

Along with the capture of prisoners of war, there is evidence of the deportation of sizeable Canaanite populations to Egypt.²⁰ The huge number of captives listed by Amenhotep II has been interpreted as a deliberate policy of mass deportation of subject peoples, aptly described by Donald Redford as “tactics of terror.”²¹ An inscription of Thutmose IV notes that the captured Canaanite inhabitants of Gezer were resettled in Thebes.²² A letter from Akhenaten to the ruler of Damascus requests the deportation of a group of ^cApiru to Nubia.²³ An inscription of Ramesses II boasts of displacing Asiatics to Africa, and vice versa:

He has placed the Shasu Asiatics into the western land,
he has settled the Libyans in the hills (of Asia),
filling the fortresses that he has built
with people captured by his mighty arm.²⁴

It has been argued that the deportation of local populations was a regular tool of Egyptian imperial policy.²⁵

In addition to Canaanites taken into Egyptian slavery by means of vassal tribute, military conquest, and mass deportation, Canaanites were sold into slavery for purely financial reasons.²⁶ In the Amarna letters, Rib-Hadda, ruler of Byblos, repeatedly reminds Pharaoh that his people have sold their sons and daughters in order to buy grain.²⁷ A tantalizing Egyptian record, reminiscent of the Joseph story, states: “His porters sold him to the Egyptians, and they seized him and took his goods.”²⁸ During the Ramesside period, there were slave merchants in Egypt who dealt in foreign slaves, and legal systems were developed to regulate the purchase and sale of slaves by private individuals.

Though Egyptians could become “servants” (*bzk*) for financial or legal reasons, the legal status of “slave” (*hm*) was reserved for foreigners.²⁹

Many of the foreign slaves ended up working on the vast estates of the Egyptian temples. A regular motif in Ramesside inscriptions is the boast of “stocking (the temple’s) workhouse with male and female slaves of His Majesty’s captivity.”³⁰ Egyptian temples also owned land and towns in Canaan. According to records from the last years of the Empire, the temple of Amun owned 56 Canaanite towns and the temple of Re owned 103.³¹ Natural resources and slaves were presumably among the benefits that accrued to the temples from their Canaanite properties.

The evidence surveyed here suggests that many of the local settlers in early Israel had memories, direct or indirect, of Egyptian slavery.³² These memories were linked to no single Pharaoh, but to Pharaoh as such, that is, to the array of Pharaohs whose military campaigns, vassal tributes, mass deportations, and support of the slave trade forced many Canaanites into Egyptian slavery. Not all of these slaves need to have escaped with Moses—or to have escaped at all—to create the bitter memory of Egyptian slavery among the early population of Israel. In this cultural setting, the story of a miraculous deliverance from Egyptian slavery would find ready ears. The indefiniteness of the memory of *which* Pharaoh may be a sign of the widespread resonance of this collective memory.³³

The Egyptian Empire was crumbling during the early decades of Israelite culture, and it is no surprise that the settlers defined themselves, at least in part, as former victims of an oppressive regime. Memories of shared suffering are potent ingredients in the formation and persistence of ethnic identity.³⁴ The nameless Pharaoh of the oppression is, in this sense, an emblem of collective memory.

Signs and Wonders

The redemption of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt is, according to Exodus, effected by a series of plagues. Yahweh calls these plagues “my signs and wonders” (אֲתֹתַי וּמוֹפְתֹתַי; Exod 7:3). Through these signs and wonders, the Egyptians will know Yahweh (Exod 7:5), and the Israelites are instructed to recount the story of these wonders to future generations so that they too will know Yahweh (Exod 10:1–2). The plagues are also called collectively מִגִּפּוֹת (Exod 9:14) and נִגַע (Exod 11:1), literally, “injury, wound.” In their present form and redaction, the plagues are best comprehended as products of Israelite folklore and narrative imagination.³⁵ But it is also possible that the Egyptian plagues are, at

least in part, a transformation and elaboration of the memory of real plagues, such as often occurred in the ancient world.³⁶ In the terms of mnemohistory, event and motif may intersect in the tradition of the plagues.

The idea that Yahweh has the power to send deadly or debilitating diseases—as in the plagues of pestilence (דבר) and pox (שחין)³⁷—is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. A pestilence (דבר) is sent upon Israel because of David's census (2 Samuel 24); a deadly plague (מגפה) afflicts the Philistines when they capture the Ark of the Covenant (1 Samuel 5–6);³⁸ and “great plagues” (גנעים גדלים) befall Pharaoh's house because of the abduction of Sarai (Gen 12:17).³⁹ In the poem of Habakkuk 3, Yahweh is accompanied on his fearsome march by דבר and רשף, a doubled personification of “pestilence, plague.”⁴⁰ The “destroyer” (משחית) sent by Yahweh in Exod 12:23 to kill the Egyptian firstborns is probably a variant of these plague demons.⁴¹ In his ability to inflict devastating diseases, Yahweh shares the role of other more specialized gods of disease, such as Canaanite Resheph or Mesopotamian Nergal.⁴²

Debilitating diseases similar to those in Exodus are also included among the covenant curses in biblical and other texts. In a clear reference to the Exodus story, the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28 include the “Egyptian pox” (שחין מצרים; Deut 28:27) and the “Egyptian diseases” (מרוה מצרים; Deut 28:60). Extrabiblical treaties often invoke a panoply of diseases among the treaty curses.⁴³

Several of the Egyptian plagues that belong to the category of natural calamity rather than disease are also paralleled elsewhere. The Sefire inscription (eighth century B.C.E.) relating a treaty between two Syrian kings includes the following curse:

[May Ha]dad [pour (over it)] every sort of evil (that exists) on earth and in heaven and every sort of trouble; and may he shower upon Arpad [hajil-[stones]! For seven years may the locust devour (Arpad), and for seven years may the worm eat.⁴⁴

As scholars have noted, the sequence of hail and locusts in this inscription is the same as in Exodus 9–10 (and recalled in Ps 105:32–35), perhaps suggesting a common pool of West Semitic curse formulae.⁴⁵ The plague of darkness (Exod 10:21–23) is also found in biblical and extrabiblical documents, particularly in prophetic oracles of judgment.⁴⁶

Given the availability of such plague motifs—including diseases and natural calamities—in the religious and literary traditions of Israel, it is not necessary to conjecture that the plagues are memories of actual plagues in Egypt. It is sufficient to observe that the plagues may have been introduced into the Exodus story at any time as the effective “signs and wonders” of Yahweh. But

it is also possible that the Egyptian plagues reflect, at least in part, collective memories of real plagues during the period of the Egyptian Empire. There is ample evidence for a devastating outbreak of disease—and its collective trauma—during this period.

Assmann has pointed out the similarity of the plagues motif in Exodus to some late Egyptian traditions in which diseases are associated with ancient heresies.⁴⁷ In one version of this tradition, attributed to Manetho (an Egyptian priest of the third century B.C.E.), king Amenophis removed all the lepers and other impure people of Egypt to the city of Avaris, whereupon these people joined with the “shepherds” from Jerusalem (who had previously been expelled from Avaris) in revolt against the king. The victorious lepers and shepherds ruled Egypt in lawless and heretical fashion for thirteen years.⁴⁸ As Egyptologists have noted, this tradition seems to conflate the despised memory of the heretic king Akhenaton (born Amenhotep IV, who ruled at Amarna for thirteen years) with the hated rule of the Hyksos (literally, “foreign ruler”) dynasty, who ruled in Avaris and were remembered as “shepherd-kings” from Canaan.⁴⁹ The disease—leprosy in Manetho, unspecified in other accounts—may be, as Redford and Assmann have argued, a distorted memory of an actual epidemic that swept across the Near East during and after the reign of Akhenaten for at least twenty years in the mid- to late fourteenth century B.C.E.⁵⁰ A contemporary Egyptian medical text (see ahead) calls this disease “the Canaanite illness.”⁵¹

The following texts, from archives at Amarna, Ugarit, and Boğazköy, plus a possible reference in an Egyptian stele, indicate the extent of this deadly fourteenth-century epidemic:

Letter from Cyprus (EA 35)

“Behold, the hand of Nergal is now in my country; he has slain all the men of my country. . . . The hand of Nergal is in my country and in my own house. There was a young wife of mine that now, my brother, is dead.”⁵²

Letter from Şumur (EA 96; quoting a letter from Byblos)

“As to your saying, ‘I will not permit men from Şumur to enter my city. There is a pestilence in Şumur.’ ”⁵³

Letter from Megiddo (EA 244)

“Behold, the city is consumed by pestilence, by plague.”⁵⁴

Letter from Byblos (EA 362)

“As to his having said before the king, ‘There is a pestilence in the lands,’ the king, my lord, should not listen to the words of other

men. There is no pestilence in the lands. It has been over for a long time.”⁵⁵

Ugaritic letter (RS 4.475 = CTA 53 = CAT 2.10)

“Concerning Tarǧaudassi and Kalbiyu, I have heard of the blows (with which) they have been stricken. Now if they have not been stricken, then send (word) to me. Also, the hand of a god is here, for death (here) is very strong.”⁵⁶

Letter from environs of Tyre (RS 34.167)

“Since the month of Hiyyar, [my son has been] very sick. . . . This sickness is the *li³bu*-disease, and I have seen it well, whoever is sick like th[is] dies. I had to leave him in Tyre [to escape] the plague.”⁵⁷

Hittite royal inscription (KUB 14.8 = CTH 378.2; the “Plague Prayers of Murshili II”) “Hatti has been very badly oppressed by the plague. People kept dying in the time of my father, in the time of my brother, and since I have become priest of the gods, they keep on dying in my time. For twenty years now people have been dying in Hatti. Will the plagues never be removed from Hatti? . . . My father sent infantry and chariotry and they attacked the borderland of Egypt, the land of Amqa. . . . [H]e defeated the infantry and the chariotry of Egypt and beat them. But when the prisoners of war who had been captured were led back to Hatti, a plague broke out among the prisoners of war, and [they began] to die. When the prisoners of war were carried off to Hatti, the prisoners of war brought the plague into Hatti. From that day on people have been dying in Hatti.”⁵⁸

Egyptian royal inscription (Tutankhamen’s “Restoration Stela”)

“The land was in grave disease (*sni-mnt*).
The gods have forsaken this land.”⁵⁹

Wolfgang Helck notes that “this epidemic seems at that time to have afflicted the whole Near Eastern world.”⁶⁰ Assmann calls it “the worst epidemic which this region knew in antiquity.”⁶¹ Though it is impossible to identify the disease, it seems to have been virulent and lethal, on the order of smallpox or the bubonic plague.⁶²

Two Egyptian spells against the “Canaanite illness” give access to contemporary subjective responses to this disease. A spell from a medical papyrus contemporary with the fourteenth century B.C.E. epidemic instructs the healer to recite a chant from Keftui (Crete), “Saantaka-papiuaia-aiamaantarakukara,”

over a poultice of fermented drink, urine, and *sd.t*.⁶³ A somewhat more illuminating spell is from an earlier outbreak of this disease, from a medical papyrus of the sixteenth century B.C.E. The healer is instructed to say, “Who is wise as Re, who is wise as Re?” and to “blacken the body with charcoal to capture the god [the cause of the disease]” and say, “Just as Seth fought against the sea, so Seth will fight against you, O Canaanite, so that you shall not enter into the son of such-and-such.”⁶⁴

In the mythical rhetoric of this spell, the Canaanite god responsible for the disease is homologized with the chaos monster Sea, whom Seth vanquished. This is an allusion to the well-known Canaanite myth in which Baal (whom the Egyptians equated with Seth) vanquished Sea, thereby establishing order in the cosmos and securing his eternal kingship.⁶⁵ The disease is conceived by the Egyptians according to a mythic pattern—remarkably, a *Canaanite* mythic pattern—and, as required by the myth, order prevails over chaos. The patient is cured, at least according to the performative theory implicit in the spell.⁶⁶

I would suggest that this subjective reading of the cause and cure of the “Canaanite illness” illustrates how such a trauma may have been appropriated by the Canaanite precursors of Israel. The Egyptians blamed a Canaanite god for this disease, and some Canaanites may have construed its source similarly. But from the Canaanite point of view, the cultural signs of this mythic pattern would have been reversed—the divine agent of the disease would not be the evil “Canaanite,” a force of chaos, but the righteous Divine Warrior who sends his deadly plague against the chaotic enemy.⁶⁷ The enemy, from the Canaanite point of view, would most plausibly be identified as Pharaoh, the ruling power of the Egyptian Empire. Note that plagues are often conceived as divine punishment for royal sins, as in the sin of Shuppiluliuma in the Plague Prayer of Murshili (see earlier).⁶⁸ The chain of causality that accounts for the plague implicates the king, as is a common understanding of the nature of plagues in the ancient world.⁶⁹

At the time of the fourteenth-century epidemic, the Egyptian Empire in Canaan was well established, and the despotic policies outlined previously were in force. Was the deadly epidemic remembered as God’s rebuke for the oppressive rule of Pharaoh? Were the “signs and wonders” by which Yahweh defeated Pharaoh a distant memory of the trauma of epidemic, turned against the Egyptian enemy by “the hand of Yahweh”⁷⁰ and elaborated in Israelite tradition? In the biblical account, the plagues are shaped by narrative strategies and ethnic boundaries, limiting the most deadly plague to the Egyptian first-born sons, with the Hebrew sons saved by the sign of paschal blood, a rite more effective than Egyptian magic.⁷¹

If the outbreak of the “Canaanite illness” was as widespread and deadly as the textual data indicate, it must have made an impact on popular memory. Egyptian memories of the outbreak seem to have persisted until Hellenistic times and later.⁷² It may be that an Israelite version of these memories left its traces in the “Egyptian diseases” of Exodus—a cultural inversion of the “Canaanite illness”—among the signs and wonders that the Israelites are instructed to remember in story.

Moses: Mediator of Memory

Yahweh’s “signs and wonders” are sent through the agency of Moses, the incomparable man “whom Yahweh knew face to face” (Deut 34:10). The story of Moses’ birth, life, and death forms a frame for the stories of the Exodus and wanderings, the long transition from slavery in Egypt to freedom as Yahweh’s people on the threshold of the Promised Land. The genre of the Pentateuch as a whole has been characterized as “the biography of Moses.”⁷³ In the ancestral history recounted in the Pentateuch, Moses is the savior and founder of the people. Of what, we may ask, is Moses the memory?

A recent treatment of this question by Rudolf Smend concludes, convincingly in my view, that the details of Moses’ life that best withstand historical scrutiny—and hence are the most likely to be historical—are his name and his marriage to a Midianite woman.⁷⁴ Everything else about Moses’ life is so interwoven with narrative motifs and religious ideology that it is impossible to disengage the history from the tradition.⁷⁵ But Moses’ name and his wife’s ethnicity are details that, in Smend’s judgment, are unlikely to have been invented by tradition. The name is Egyptian, a fact that has been forgotten in biblical tradition.⁷⁶ And the Midianite affiliation seems too peculiar to have been invented by folklore or ideology.⁷⁷ These items meet the test of “dissimilarity,” that is, they go against the grain of Israelite culture and tradition and so may plausibly be regarded as accurate historical memories. From these details, Smend draws a plausible minimal sketch:

The bearer of an Egyptian name, presumably living or having lived in Egypt, linked with a bedouin tribe encamped in the region of Sinai-southern Palestine-northern Arabia by marriage to a priestly family, therefore with one foot inside and the other outside Egypt.⁷⁸

If the historical Moses remains, for the most part, obscured from view, this minimal sketch is extremely suggestive for the mnemohistory of Moses. In these few details, Moses presents the figure of a mediator, someone betwixt-

and-between, “with one foot inside and the other outside Egypt.” This aspect of his character recurs in many of the narratives about Moses in the Pentateuch. Moses’ multiple roles in biblical memory may best be linked together by his status as a mediator, one who bridges differences and frictions among various categories of biblical thought and experience. Moses is the unique man, the likes of whom “never again arose in Israel,” in large part because he combines the traits of so many opposed and even incompatible categories. Because he is the multifaceted man, he is able to unite together all of the stories of Exodus, Sinai, and wanderings into a coherent collective memory. The functions of Moses as a mediator are extraordinarily rich, perhaps allowing a glimpse into the relation between memory and history in the figure of Moses.

The clashing and often contradictory domains mediated by Moses in biblical memory include the following (with other mediating terms in parentheses):

<i>social status</i>	slave : free person
<i>ethnicity</i>	Egyptian : (Midianite) : Israelite
<i>ruling authority</i>	Pharaoh : Yahweh tribal elders : Yahweh
<i>geography</i>	Egypt : (wilderness) : Land of Israel
<i>theology</i>	Yahweh : Israelites/humans
<i>lineage relations</i>	tribe : (Levite) : tribe

In each of these domains, Moses is the mediator *par excellence*, the one who effects a crucial transformation or sustains a defining relationship.

(1) *Social status*. Moses delivers the Hebrews from bondage and makes them a free and independent people. This is the great passage of identity, the symbolic rite of passage that constitutes Israel as “the people of Yahweh” (*am yhw*). Moses is the human agent of this rite of passage, and, appropriately, he has already experienced this passage himself. In the story of his birth, he is born a slave, the son of Hebrews, who gains a new status as a free person as a result of his passage into and deliverance from the Nile.⁷⁹ The inner conflict between his status as a free man and his people’s state of slavery leads Moses to slay the Egyptian that he sees striking his fellow Hebrew (Exod 2:11). After this initial crude act of justice, Moses flees and later returns to finish the task of liberation. In his own story, Moses experiences and bridges the categories of slave and free man, making him an apt mediator for the transformation of his people. Ironically, the people don’t take well to this transformation, as the stories of the “murmurings” relate, so the transformation of the people is not

completed until the next generation, which grows to maturity in freedom (Num 14:20–35).

(2) *Ethnicity*. The story of Moses' birth also makes this child in some sense both Israelite and Egyptian. He is born a Hebrew but adopted and raised by Pharaoh's daughter as an Egyptian. The daughters of the Midianite priest relate, after Moses delivers them from their oppressors, "An Egyptian saved us from the hand of the shepherds" (Exod 2:19). By his upbringing he is an Egyptian, and he marries into a Midianite family, but by birth he is an Israelite. This blurred identity makes Moses an apt person to mediate between the Egyptians and the Israelites, to be Yahweh's appointed savior to "deliver my people Israel from Egypt" (Exod 3:10) and bring them to his holy mountain.

(3) *Ruling authority*. Moses delivers the people from one king to the authority of another, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. Both are presented as legitimate rulers in their domains, but Israel belongs to Yahweh's rule. Moses possesses traits that are associated with both ruling authorities. As the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, he is a member of Pharaoh's household, even a potential king. As Yahweh's chosen savior, Moses is placed in the position of "god" to Aaron, who becomes Moses' "mouth" (Exod 4:16). The authority of Yahweh devolves onto Moses, who functions as Yahweh's agent on earth. The mingling of traits—Moses as heir of Pharaoh and agent of Yahweh—makes Moses an apt mediator between these opposed authorities.

Moses also mediates between Yahweh's rule and the authority of the tribal elders. In Exod 19:7, "Moses came and called to the elders of the people and set before them all these words which Yahweh had commanded him, and all the people answered together. . . ." Moses is the link between Yahweh and the elders, who bring the people to the covenant. Moses leads the elders into the direct presence of Yahweh on the holy mountain, "and they saw God, and they ate and drank" (Exod 24:9), clearly signaling their sacral, authoritative status.

(4) *Geography*. The life of Moses spans the geographical opposition of Egypt and Israel. Born in Egypt, he flees to Midian and returns to Egypt at Yahweh's behest to lead Israel in its escape from Egypt. He leads the people back to the holy mountain, and thence through the desert to the land of Israel. As in the transition from slavery to freedom, Moses has already experienced the passage out of Egypt, making it appropriate for him to lead the rest of the people in their passage. Moses' death on the threshold of the Promised Land, after viewing the whole land, leaves him betwixt and between, neither in Egypt nor in the Promised Land.⁸⁰ Moses' geographical movements mark him as a mediator in the spatial transformation of the people.

(5) *Theology*. Moses' role as a mediator between Israel and Yahweh (and

concurrently between humans and Yahweh) is basic to his place in biblical memory. He is recalled as the only human whom “Yahweh knew face to face” (Deut 34:10). He ascends the sacred mountain to speak with Yahweh and receive his laws, which he relays to the people. At the theophany at the mountain, the people tell Moses in fear, “You speak with us and we shall hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Exod 20:19). Moses is the unique man who can speak with God and with the people, mediating the human domain with the divine. Jethro describes Moses’ position as a mediator aptly: “you must be in front of God (*mûl hāʾēlōhîm*) to the people” (Exod 18:19). Interestingly, as the divine-human mediator, Moses begins to partake of some aspects of divinity. He emanates God’s awesome aura after being in God’s presence, and he has to cover himself before the people because they fear his radiant face (Exod 34:29–35).⁸¹

(6) *Lineage relations.* Within the social structure of Israel, Moses is the mediator among the tribes. He joins the tribes together in the Exodus from Egypt and confirms their new sacred identity in the covenant at the sacred mountain. In the covenant ceremony of Exod 24:3–8, he builds an altar and twelve standing stones “for the twelve tribes of Israel” and joins the tribes in blood kinship under the covenant.⁸² Later he and the tribal elders command the people to build an altar and standing stones in the Promised Land for another covenant ceremony (Deut 27:1–8). In addition to forging a unity among the tribes as a “holy people” (*gôy qādôš*; Exod 19:6), Moses also adjudicates legal disputes (e.g., Exod 18:13–27) and assigns territorial allocations to the tribes (Num 32, 34–36).

The personal and institutional authority that enables Moses to mediate among the tribes in these various ways also pertains to his status as a Levite. Moses is a member of the tribe of Levi, which makes him a part of Israel, but this tribe itself has a betwixt-and-between status, both like and unlike the other tribes. It is a landless tribe, enabling Moses to assign territory without the taint of self-interest. It is also the tribe of priests, for whom the tasks of religious mediation between people and God are central duties. As a mediator within the lineage structures of Israel, Moses acts as an exponent of priestly roles and responsibilities.⁸³

An important and curious aspect of Moses’ role as mediator in many of these stories is the degree to which his mediation is incomplete or has serious slippage. With regard to social status, Moses does not wholly succeed in making the slaves free, for the people retain a “slave mentality” in their desire to return to Egypt whenever things get difficult (Exod 14:10–12; 16:1–3; 17:1–3; etc.). Similarly, Moses does not wholly establish a stable ruling authority linking the tribes and Yahweh, since the people and their leaders continually

rebel—including some of his fellow Levites (Exodus 32; Numbers 16). Geographically, his mediation from Egypt to the Promised Land is unfinished, since Moses is not allowed to complete the journey and dies in the plains of Moab (Deut 34:1–4). Even theologically, Moses' mediation between Yahweh and Israel is fraught with peril, with Yahweh occasionally threatening to destroy the people, or Moses asking to be relieved of his burden (Exod 32:9–14; Num 11:14–15). As the mediator *par excellence*, Moses is a complex and ultimately tragic figure, dying outside the Promised Land because of his own sin (Num 20:1–13) or because of the sins of the people (Deut 1:37).⁸⁴

As a figure of memory, Moses' role as mediator may be related to the “betwixt-and-between” qualities of a dimly perceived historical Moses. In biblical discourse, he becomes the mediator of many aspects of Israelite memory and identity. His end is also, in a different way, a mediating force. His death and burial outside the land—in a place that “no one knows” (Deut 34:6)—correlates on a symbolic level with the extraterritorial site of the sacred mountain, Sinai/Horeb. The twin memories of the sacred mountain and of Moses belong to all Israel. And yet the present location of these memories—Sinai/Horeb and Moses' tomb—are forgotten.⁸⁵ Perhaps to belong to all the people's memory it is necessary for both to be indeterminate, in no-man's land, absent to the present. These are memories that function in biblical thought as unifying principles, joining many different things together, but they are to be found only in the past.

Time and the Exodus

The collective memories that constitute the story of the Exodus include the Egyptian oppression, the plagues, and the towering figure of Moses. Each aspect of this complex tale may contain traces of historical events and persons, mingled together with mythic motifs, themes, and structures—the stuff that makes the past truly memorable.⁸⁶ The past uninterpreted would be a mere collection of facts. The past as people remember it is the meaningful past, the past as perceived and colored by subjective concepts, hopes, and fears. Memory is always selective, and it is organized and embroidered according to the desires of the present (i.e., the present situation of the memorious agent). The historically true and the symbolically true are interwoven in such a way that the past authorizes and encompasses the present. The Exodus, in this sense, is not a punctual past but ongoing, a past continuous.

A useful model for the temporal dimensions of the Exodus story is the tripartite rhythm of historical time outlined by Fernand Braudel—event, con-

junction, and *longue durée*.⁸⁷ The event belongs to the temporal rhythm of everyday life; it is history on a human scale. The conjuncture is a process on the scale of social time, such as the rise and fall of an empire or large-scale economic cycles. The *longue durée* is the largest scale of time, the scale of geological time or the lifespan of the human species. Seen from these multiple vantages, the memory of the Exodus partakes of all three time scales.

The historical events are the most difficult to isolate, since they have been transposed into the larger scales. I have observed previously that certain actions and policies of the Egyptian Empire in Canaan may be discerned in the portrait of the Egyptian oppression. A devastating epidemic in the late fourteenth century, interpreted as an act of divine punishment, may be distantly recalled in the story of the Egyptian plagues. A historical figure named Moses may have been transformed into the savior and mediator of all Israel, perhaps generalized from the memory of a smaller group.

The conjunctures of social time are somewhat easier to discern in the story. The Exodus is the story of the birth of a people, a social and ethnic unity, that emerges in Israel beginning in the Iron Age. This “forging of identity” is a process that extends over the lifetime of Israelite society. The processes of ethnic self-definition are evident in the symbolic rites of passage in the Exodus story: the people are separated and delivered from the house of bondage, transformed into a new identity as the “people of Yahweh” at the holy mountain, and reincorporated into the Promised Land with their new identity in place. The story as a whole defines the collective identity and ethnic boundaries of the people, providing a common foundation for social and religious life. The social function of history is evident in the processes of ethnic self-definition in the story and in the annual festival (Passover) that reenacts this collective memory.⁸⁸

The time scale of the *longue durée* in the Exodus story is appreciable in light of the continual resonance of this story in Western history.⁸⁹ As a story of deliverance from oppression, the birth of freedom, and the divine sanction of human rights and responsibilities, the Exodus story has served as a paradigm for over two and a half millennia.⁹⁰ From Second Isaiah to Nelson Mandela, the images and ideas of the Exodus persist. There is something in the story that pertains to the human spirit irrespective of cultural difference.⁹¹ The human condition is illuminated by the encounters of Moses and Pharaoh, Yahweh and Israel, the holy mountain and the Promised Land. The Exodus is a paradigm, or a congeries of paradigms, of human oppression and salvation in the temporal horizon of the *longue durée*.

The memory of the Exodus is not just a memory of historical events, but a conflation of history and memory that suits the conditions of different qual-

ities of time. To view the Exodus with an eye to only one of these—whether to historical events, social functions, or enduring themes—is to misjudge the complexity and multiplicity of the whole. The mnemohistory of the Exodus is a story of various pasts as they converge in the intersecting times of ancient lives, a particular people, and humanity writ large.

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5

The Archaeology of Memory

Solomon, History, and Biblical Representation

[History] aims at calming the dead who still haunt the present, and at offering them scriptural tombs.

—Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*

King Solomon's Riddle

Solomon, the king of a small state in the ancient Levant, still haunts our imagination. In the Bible, the Queen of Sheba tests him with riddles, and Solomon answers them all (1 Kgs 10:1–3), but in recent years Solomon has become a riddle himself. Biblical scholars are uncertain about the glories of his reign, or even about his existence, and archaeologists no longer agree on the chronology of the once assured “Solomonic” strata of Israelite sites.¹ In this time of disorientation, it is useful to reexamine what we know, or think we know, about the biblical representation of Solomon and its relation to history. It is an axiom of modern historiography that we should be aware of our biases in our research and reconstruction of the past, just as we should be aware of the biases in the ancient documents. Whatever we prefer to imagine about the biblical Solomon—great king, scoundrel, or fiction—we must ascertain why the Bible portrays him in the manner it does and no other.

The “effect of the real” in biblical writings is precisely that—an effect—and ought not be confused with the real itself.² The biblical

narrative of Solomon's reign is a perspective on the past—or better, a congeries or pastiche of perspectives—and is not the past itself. It is a testimony, and, as are all testimonies, it is compounded of true and false memories, shaped by political and psychological concerns, and influenced by prior testimonies. Like all historical writings, “it promotes a selection between what can be *understood* and what must be *forgotten* in order to obtain the representation of a present intelligibility.”³ In this respect, the modern historian is in the same boat as the ancient historian: we must forget some things and foreground others in order to produce our texts, just as the ancient writers did. When we look over our shoulders, we glimpse the ancient writers looking over theirs, and so on in the endless labyrinth of history.

To reach an adequate picture of Solomon in history and in biblical memory, it is essential, as William Dever has frequently admonished, that the scholar of the biblical text and the archaeologist of the southern Levant speak to each other.⁴ The times are past when one scholar could master both fields, and the number who even try are few. Rather than toil in splendid isolation, Dever envisions a dialogue between specialists in texts and in material culture. The following is an attempt by a biblical scholar to contribute to this dialogue about our fragile understanding of the past.

These are steps in what we might call the archaeology of memory, in which spade and brush reveal the ancient interrelations of discursive representations, political and religious interests and institutions, and historical change.⁵ It is primarily an archaeology of texts (what some would call an armchair archaeology), but it also relies on the advances and controversies in the study of material culture. I begin with the problem of the low chronology and its relevance to our understanding of the Solomonic texts, then turn to Albrecht Alt's proposal for discerning the traces of the historical Solomon, and then return to Solomon's riddle—the nature of the representation of Solomon in the biblical texts and the tangled relationship between biblical representation and history.

The Low Chronology: A Thought Experiment

In 1996, Israel Finkelstein proposed a revised chronology for the late Iron I and Iron IIA periods, lowering the conventional dates by 75–100 years.⁶ This means that the conventionally designated “Solomonic” strata at Gezer, Megiddo, Hazor, and other sites are actually post-Solomonic, and that the evidence of fortifications, public buildings, site hierarchy, and other features usually taken to be indicative of the formation of a centralized state are works of later

kings. A number of scholars have taken issue with Finkelstein's arguments and assumptions, and the jury is still out.⁷ There is, however, sufficient evidence (particularly of the radiocarbon kind) to indicate that this is a viable proposal.⁸ Although I am utterly incompetent to pronounce judgment on issues of stratigraphy, red-slipped pottery, sub-Mycenaean and proto-Geometric traits, and carbonized olive pits, I am able to comprehend that these are important matters. The down-dating of "Solomonic" sites to post-Solomonic times is potentially significant.

As a biblical scholar, I wish to perform a thought experiment and imagine what the implications for biblical studies would be if the low chronology were proven correct. In so doing, I am not expressing an expectation that this will prove to be the case, nor am I dismissing this possibility. I am merely entertaining this scenario and pursuing its implications. To anticipate, the implications for our understanding of the biblical text are not as great as one might initially imagine. The most direct implications concern our understanding of 1 Kings 9:15–19, the account of Solomon's building activities:⁹

This is the account regarding the forced labor which King Solomon imposed to build the House of Yahweh, his own house, the *millo*, Jerusalem's wall, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. Now Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had gone up and captured Gezer, burned it in fire, and killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, the wife of Solomon. Solomon built Gezer, Upper Beth Horon, Lower Beth Horon,¹⁰ Baalat, Tamar¹¹ in the wilderness of the land, all the garrison towns which belonged to Solomon, the chariot towns, the cavalry towns, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, Lebanon, and all the land of his kingdom.

If the low chronology is correct, then the claims of Solomonic building activity at Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, and other sites are unhistorical. Solomonic building activities in Jerusalem cannot be checked by archaeological means, since these strata are long destroyed or inaccessible; hence his most famous building project—the Temple—still remains historically plausible. But Solomon the great builder beyond Jerusalem becomes a false memory under the low chronology.

This passage—the only one directly touched by the low chronology—is arguably derived or quoted from one of the source documents used by the Deuteronomistic Historian to construct his history of Solomon's reign.¹² It is for the most part a list of Solomon's construction sites, governed by the verb "to build" (לְבַנּוֹת) in v. 15. The list is interrupted by an aside about Pharaoh's conquest and gift of Gezer in v. 16, and resumes with a resumptive repetition, ויבן שלמה את גזר ("Solomon built Gezer," v. 17), picking up from ויבן את גזר in v. 15.

This redactional technique of supplementation explains the awkward cadence and the repetition of Gezer.¹³

The formula that begins this text, וַיְהִי דָבָר (“this is the account regarding”), is described by Zipora Talshir as a “detailing formula,” which introduces details or elaborations of a more general statement.¹⁴ This formula occurs elsewhere in biblical and extrabiblical texts:

At the end of seven years you shall remit debts. This is the account (וַיְהִי דָבָר) regarding the remission of debts. (Deut 15:1–2)

. . . so that every murderer may flee there. This is the account (וַיְהִי דָבָר) regarding the murderer who flees there and lives. (Deut 19:3–4)

[Joshua] circumcised the Israelites at the Hill of Foreskins. This is the account (וַיְהִי הַדְּבָר) regarding when Joshua circumcised them. (Joshua 5:3–4)

[Jeroboam] raised his hand against the king. This is the account (וַיְהִי הַדְּבָר) regarding when he raised his hand against the king. (1 Kgs 11:26–27)

You shall consecrate them so that they may serve me as priests. . . . This is the account (וַיְהִי הַדְּבָר) regarding what you shall do to them to consecrate them to serve me as priests. (Exod 28:41, 29:1)

. . . the tunnel. This was the account (וַיְהִי הִיא דָבָר) regarding the tunnel. (Siloam Tunnel inscription, line 1)¹⁵

The consistent use elsewhere of this detailing formula suggests that 1 Kgs 9:15–19 originally followed a more general statement describing Solomon’s initiation of forced labor. As Talshir observes, this general statement is found in 1 Kgs 5:27, “King Solomon imposed forced labor on all Israel” (וַיַּעַל הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה) (מִסָּמֹכַל יִשְׂרָאֵל), and is followed by a number of details about the forced labor in preparation for the construction of the Temple (vv. 27–30). The relationship between 1 Kgs 5:27–30 and 9:15–19 is not entirely clear, but Talshir points out several aspects of the latter text that refer to or echo the former (the detailing formula, the identification of the laborers, and the number of the overseers).¹⁶ It is conceivable, as Nadav Naʿaman argues, that the two texts derive from a single pre-Deuteronomistic document.¹⁷

In this analysis, the source document would have been divided by the Deuteronomistic redactor of 1 Kings, with the material relevant for the Temple placed immediately before the account of the building of the Temple (1 Kings 6–9) and the other section immediately after. The latter portion was supple-

mented by the aside about Gezer (9:16), a brief summary (9:19b), and a disavowal that the Israelites were subject to forced labor (9:20–22).¹⁸ Another clue about the original shape of the document is the reading “and in Lebanon” in 9:19, which clearly refers to the forced labor of cutting and transporting cedar trees in Lebanon in 5:28. Na³aman proposes that “the original text encompassed 5:27–29 + 9:15, 17b–18, 23a + 5:30.”¹⁹ This is a plausible and attractive reconstruction of the source document, which would read as follows:

King Solomon imposed forced labor on all Israel, and the forced labor comprised 30,000 men. He sent them to Lebanon in shifts of 10,000 a month; they were in Lebanon for a month and were home for two months. Adoniram oversaw the forced labor. Solomon had 70,000 porters and 80,000 quarriers in the hills. This is the account (וַיִּהְיֶה דְבַר) of the forced labor which King Solomon imposed to build the House of Yahweh, his own house, the *millo*, Jerusalem’s wall, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, Lower Beth Horon, Baalat, and Tamar in the wilderness of the land. These were the chief officers who oversaw Solomon’s works, 550, besides Solomon’s chief officers who oversaw his works, 3,300, who were in charge of the people who did the work.²⁰

This is a reasonable approximation of the source document that the low chronology leads us to reexamine. Under the low chronology, this document is unhistorical. We would conclude that it attributes to Solomon the building activities of other kings, which occurred over a long time-span. The *millo*, if it is the retaining wall of the City of David, was probably built in pre-Davidic times,²¹ although it was no doubt restored many times thereafter. The impressive fortifications at Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer would perhaps be attributable to Ahab or Jeroboam II.²² The Temple and the royal palace may arguably still be Solomonic,²³ although they too were no doubt later restored. The numbers of laborers and supervisors are wholly hyperbolic, since there may only have been around 50,000–60,000 inhabitants of Israel at the time of Solomon.²⁴

One may reasonably suggest that this document preserves *some* historical memory of Solomon’s reign by recalling the complaint registered by the Israelite assembly to Rehoboam in 1 Kgs 12:4: “Your father made our yoke heavy.” This is the reason given in this chapter for the secession of the northern tribes, and it is historically plausible. (The Deuteronomist, it should be noted, gives a more explicitly theological explanation: Solomon’s apostasy.²⁵) Forced labor would naturally have been used in the construction of the Temple, the royal palace, and other projects in Jerusalem, and this, in conjunction with royal appropriation of other goods and labor, may have contributed to the alienation

of the northern tribes from their political union with the House of David. The memory of oppression is a powerful force in mobilizing social action and is often recalled and nurtured over many years.

The building of the Temple also seems to have been a significant public memory. Later writer(s) no doubt crystallized this memory with additional details, cities, and numbers of laborers. The text of Solomon's accomplishments as a builder expresses the ideology of the great king as builder, an ideology extant in the Near East from Gudea and Cheops to Herod the Great.²⁶ This text may have been composed and transmitted in scribal schools as an exercise in Israelite royal grandeur.²⁷ According to the low chronology, it cannot be a composition of the Solomonic era, but is a constructed memory ascribed to the Israelite king who may have been the first to build famous buildings and who would naturally have used forced labor to do so. The text itself is not at all critical of Solomon, although it does provide the *casus belli* for the dissolution of the Solomonic kingdom.

This thought experiment yields interesting yet uncertain results. The low chronology directly affects our understanding of the possible historicity of the text of Solomon's building projects. This text is a conflation of many historical memories, some perhaps harking back to Solomon's rule, others derived from the building projects of later kings. The ascription of all this work to Solomon adds luster to his reputation as the great builder, although he may actually have built or restored only the Jerusalem items in the list, most prominently the Temple, which is the centerpiece of the presentation of his times in 1 Kings 1–11. It is also possible that Solomon built nothing or that he did not exist, but this is unlikely to have been the case. If Solomon did not exist, or if he did not build the Temple, we would expect its construction to be attributed to David, the dynastic founder (a detail known from extrabiblical evidence).²⁸ The various excuses offered by the biblical writers as to *why* David did not build it attests to the somewhat uncomfortable memory that it was his successor Solomon who did so.²⁹ In this picture, the historical Solomon is less grand than the text claims, but he still holds a claim to exist as a king and builder.

Political Structures and Historical Change

In his classic essay, "Die Staatenbildung der Israeliten in Palästina," Albrecht Alt laid the groundwork for the modern critical study of the formation of the state in ancient Israel.³⁰ In light of the challenge to the existence of a centralized kingship in this period by the advocates of the low chronology,³¹ I would aver that Alt's model still retains its essential validity. His argument is not tied to

archaeological evidence for state centralization, but rather pursues an analysis of the political structures and processes that underlie the various textual memories regarding the rise of the Israelite state. Alt had keen insight into the nuances and complexities of the biblical text and the vicissitudes of cultural memory, and he had a broad knowledge of the political and social history of the ancient Levant. His attention to systemic relations in social change is exemplary and needs only a few revisions to retain its explanatory adequacy.

Alt opens his analysis with the following remark, which is still apposite today:

It seems, unfortunately, that many misjudgments made today about personalities and institutions in the history of the Israelite nation owe their existence to a failure to give adequate consideration to the principles of the national and political organizations to which men and affairs were subject at that period.³²

Alt is aware that the textual representations of the events belong to different historical periods and are driven by various and often conflicting political and religious motives. He attempts to tease out the deeper structures of the society and politics that are implicit in the texts, even where they conflict on surface issues. To use the terminology of the French *Annales* historians, Alt is concerned with social conjunctures, that is, the structures of social processes, as well as the history of events (*l'histoire événementielle*),³³ and he perceives that the latter are founded on the potentialities of the former.

Alt's analysis of the rise of the early Israelite state points to two major ruptures or transformations in the existing structures of social organization. The first is the effect of Philistine political domination, which forced a crisis in the acephalous or decentralized polity of the Israelite tribal system. The second is the eventual response to this crisis, the rise of charismatic leaders who instituted bonds of personal union with the existing tribal polities, resulting in the establishment of a nascent and loosely centralized state. Recent analyses have deepened the scope and nuance of Alt's analysis by bringing to bear recent anthropological and sociological research, in which the first focal point can be redescribed as an instance of social circumscription and the second as the formation of a tribal kingdom or patrimonial state.

Alt's description of the effect of Philistine domination is a careful extrapolation from the textual and historical data. He traces the intentions and effect of Philistine power on the Israelite tribes as follows:

[The weak] political organization of the Israelites . . . could only have constituted a temptation for the Philistines to assert in the Israelite

domain, i.e. in the mountainous hinterland, that superiority which the possession of the country's lowlands had placed in their hands. This would not have been done in order to extend their possessions—their possessions in the lowlands were ostensibly quite sufficient for them—but rather with the intention of establishing their overlordship along the lines of the former dynasty of the Pharaohs, and with the practical aim of exploiting the husbandry and agriculture of the mountain regions by exacting tribute. They would be a ruling military class; the Israelites and Canaanites would be their subjects and produce the food.³⁴

This rupture produced the circumstances of the second transformation:

The extent to which the conquered people were oppressed by the rule of the Philistines can best be judged by the reaction it finally provoked. It caused—naturally against the wishes of its participants—what neither the Israelites' entry into Palestine, nor their subsequent fortunes there, had been able to bring about: an organized state.³⁵

Hauer has pointed out that Alt's model, which takes into account environmental and political circumstances, corresponds closely to the circumscription theory that anthropologists developed in the 1970s.³⁶ The environment of the hill country was sufficient for subsistence agriculture among the Israelite tribes, but once an external political power began to exact economic and agricultural tribute, the circumscribed environment became insufficient. Hauer summarizes the logic of the circumscription model as follows:

In places where the losers in . . . warfare can simply withdraw a safe distance and reestablish their lives as before, they usually do so. In a circumscribed region, the losers have two choices. They may knuckle under to the winners and endure the consequences, or they may organize themselves for more effective resistance.³⁷

The social responses to such circumscription are either collapse or structural transformation.

In Alt's analysis, this social transformation exploited possibilities latent in previous social forms. He notes the phenomenon of charismatic temporary military leaders in the descriptions of military crises in the Israelite tribal era, arguing that Saul and David initially belonged to the same category, although they overcame institutional ephemerality by virtue of the enduring force of the Philistine threat and by the acquisition of personal armies. These features

supply by the simplest means conceivable the principal necessity in the interpretation of a historical phenomenon of this type: they maintain continuity between the past and the new features which appear, and yet, on the other hand, make ample allowance for new and original developments.³⁸

Alt gives particular weight to the strategic effects of Saul's and David's personal armies.³⁹ Saul's military retainers ("the servants of Saul," עֲבָדֵי שָׂאוּל) are described as members of his tribe (1 Sam 22:7), and their chief is Saul's cousin, Abner (1 Sam 14:50). To these retainers Saul redistributes wealth ("fields and vineyards," 1 Sam 22:7). Although he is not a member of Saul's tribe, David is also referred to as a member of Saul's military retinue (1 Sam 16:21–22). When David acquires his own personal army, they are members of "his father's house" (בֵּית אָבִי), supplemented by disaffected and rootless men (1 Sam 22:1–2). These men are enriched by his raids and are attached to him by personal loyalty. David's military chief is his nephew, Joab (2 Sam 2:13), with Benaiah, the son of a loyal retainer, serving as chief of a foreign mercenary force (2 Sam 8:18). When Solomon seizes power, it is Benaiah and his mercenaries who constitute Solomon's personal military squad (1 Kgs 1:33–38).

According to the biblical text, David acquires a series of fiefs with his personal army, which provide the geographical bases of his political power, first Ziklag and later Jerusalem. These fiefs belong to David as his personal property, hence the designation of Jerusalem as the "city of David." Alt emphasizes the extratribal location and personal ownership of David's capital, what anthropologists would call a "disembedded capital":

Only the king with his family and staff of officials and mercenary soldiers—or to use the Hebrew expression, with his slaves—moved into the city of the Jebusites, and established his seat amongst them; the free Israelites and Judeans could not and were not intended to follow him, but had to remain of the hereditary soil of their fatherland.⁴⁰

The king in his personal base, therefore, "never fully belongs to either of the kingdoms, and from his mediating position gains a superiority over both."⁴¹

An important principle for Alt's analysis is the "personal union" that bound the tribal polities to the king. Alt maintains that Judah and Israel remained two distinct polities throughout the reigns of David and Solomon, bound not to each other, but to the person of the king:

The Judeans, therefore, maintained their status as an individual state, and David continued as before as the recognized monarch of

their kingdom—even when he also became king of Israel, without any assistance from the men of Judah. This is the typical form of a personal union between neighboring states, and there is no lack of parallels in the ancient East.⁴²

He cites the parallel of the eighth-century Aramean king Zakkur, called “king of Hamath and Lu’ath” (מלך חמת ולעש).⁴³ Giorgio Buccellati has noted other instances of West Semitic kings who ruled over two or more distinct polities, including Yaḥdun-Lim, who bore the title “king of Mari and of the country of Ḫana,” and Idrimi, who claimed rule over “the countries Niṣ, Amaṣu, Mukish, and my city Alalakh.”⁴⁴ The Yaḥdun-Lim example is particularly apt, since the rural component, Ḫana, consisted of two distinct tribal groupings, the Simʿalites (“northerners”) and the Yaminites (“southerners”).⁴⁵ This is a nice parallel to David and Solomon, kings of (the northern and southern tribes of) Israel and Judah.

Alt astutely notes that in many instances, the terms “Judah” and “Israel” refer to distinct polities in the biblical accounts of David and Solomon:

[W]herever the sources sound like official documents, the two kingdoms are held distinctly separate. Thus we have this account of David’s accession, immediately after the report of his being recognized as king of Israel; “at Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.”⁴⁶

Similarly, when David designates Solomon as his successor, he states precisely: “I command that he be king-designate (נִייד) over Israel and over Judah” (1 Kgs 1:35).⁴⁷ The Davidic king ruled over the two polities by dint of force and personal union, until the fragile system came apart after the death of Solomon:

[I]mmediately after his death, when Israel broke loose from the throne of David, causing a breach of the centre, the whole system dissolved once more into the parts from which it had been constructed. Naturally in the light of what we have just learned, we cannot call this occurrence a split or division of the kingdom, as is customary. At first sight it is something of a far more limited nature, no more than the voluntary withdrawal of the kingdom of Israel from its form of personal union with the kingdom of Judah; a repetition, in fact, of what had already happened for a short period in the revolution led by Sheba, except that it had a more lasting effect.⁴⁸

Alt's analysis of early Israelite kingship as a "personal union" between a leader and one or more political units can be further refined.⁴⁹ This is not a large-scale or centralized bureaucratic state, but rather an early or nascent state.⁵⁰ It exhibits a type of social organization that anthropologists call a tribal kingdom or patrimonial state. Such polities are well known in the Near East, from the kings of Mari in Old Babylonian times, to the Canaanite kings of the Amarna period, to the kings and sheikhs of the premodern Middle East.⁵¹

Lawrence Stager and others have fruitfully applied the model of the tribal kingdom or patrimonial state to ancient Israel.⁵²

At the level of the state or, better, tribal kingdom, in ancient Israel and in neighboring polities, the king functions as paterfamilias, his subjects dependent on personal relationships and loyalty to him, in return for which allegiance they expect protection and succor . . . [T]he king presides over his house (*bayit*), which includes families and households of the whole kingdom. Thus in a ninth-century B.C.E. stela found at Dan and in another from Moab, the southern kingdom of Judah is referred to as the "house of David" (*byt dwd*), just as the northern kingdom of Israel is known as the "house of Omri" (*bīt Ḥumrī*) in Assyrian annals.⁵³

This model of the tribal kingdom or patrimonial state adds nuance and depth to Alt's analysis. In particular, Alt's principle of personal union is more accurately described as the patron-client relationship characteristic of the patrimonial state.⁵⁴ Each household, village, and tribe are nested parts of the "house of David" (בֵּית דָּוִד), each is dependent on the succor of the king, and the king expects their loyalty in return. The principle of personal union is more precisely a corporate or collective union, expressed by the idiom of kinship and lineage relations within the "house of the father" (בֵּית אָב). The king is the political father of the national household.

Notably, other West Semitic kingdoms of the Iron Age are referred to in Akkadian inscriptions by the same locution: the Aramean kingdom of Gozan is *bīt Bahīani*, Sam'al is *bīt Gabbāri*, Arpad is *bīt Agūsi*, Damascus is *bīt Ḥaza'ili* (= בֵּית חֲזַאִל in Amos 1:4), and the kingdom of Ammon is *bīt Ammāna*.⁵⁵ The Israelite kingdoms belong to the same sociological family as their neighbors.

These aspects of Alt's analysis, updated in some key respects, accord with the historical and archaeological data (such as they are) and display admirable sociological acuity. To bring his analysis fully up to date would require other modifications. For example, Solomon did not rule over "all the kings west of the Euphrates" (1 Kgs 5:4)⁵⁶ but was a patrimonial king over Judah and Israel

from his fief in Jerusalem. He was a king like many other Near Eastern kings, but he acquired a foothold in biblical memory like no other.

The Representation of Solomon

The traces of Solomon's kingship revealed by Alt's analysis are important for the archaeology of memory. Another key concern of this archaeology is the representation of Solomon in the biblical text. Even if there are traces of historical memory in the text, these are embroidered by other memories of other kings, both real and fictive. A prominent example is the list of building projects in 1 Kings 9:15–19, addressed previously, which arguably mingles Solomonic projects with those of later kings. Yet even beyond the level of the historicity of events, the biblical text is also fictive in a richer sense, in that it relates its facts in the form of a narrative. Historians have become increasingly aware that even the most empirical history writing is fictive in this sense, as Hayden White has particularly stressed:

[T]he facts do not speak for themselves, but . . . the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is—in its *representation*—a purely discursive one. Novelists might be dealing only with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the *object* of representation is a poetic process.⁵⁷

The poetics of the biblical discourse about Solomon is a necessary part of the archaeology of memory.

The compositional history of this representation is fairly complex. As best we can ascertain, the Deuteronomistic Historian assembled, arranged, and supplemented a variety of source documents to create the text of 1 Kings 1–11 (allowing for some later expansions), creating a composite textual discourse about Solomon.⁵⁸ The Deuteronomist had various goals and interests in creating this representation, which sometimes conflict or coexist uneasily with the goals and interests of the incorporated texts. The Deuteronomist's narrative design consists of a sweeping arc of Solomonic glory (1 Kgs 1–10) followed by a swift decline (1 Kgs 11).⁵⁹ An example of where this design conflicts with its incorporated texts is the issue of war and peace during Solomon's reign. First Kings 5:4–5 states that Solomon "had peace on all the borders round about, and Judah and Israel dwelled securely, each man under his vine and his fig

tree." This is the pinnacle of Solomonic glory.⁶⁰ But in 1 Kings 11:14–25, in the account of Solomon's decline, we are informed that Hadad, king of Edom, and Rezon, king of Damascus, had been in conflict with Solomon throughout his reign: Rezon "was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon, along with the evil caused by Hadad." The Deuteronomist's plot, in this instance, clashes with the plot of one of his source documents.⁶¹

Within the individual episodes, we can discern other effects of the poetics of representation. Even if Solomon is plausibly a historical figure, this figure is lost in the sands of time. In the text, he is a protagonist, an awesome figure who is, in turn, surpassingly great and greatly flawed. As an illustrative sample, I will trace the poetics of representation in one important scene, the fall of Adonijah (1 Kgs 2:13–25), which secures Solomon's claim to kingship. This is the first scene in which Solomon fully displays his wisdom and authority as king. The narration consists primarily of two dialogues, one between Adonijah and Bathsheba and the other between Bathsheba and Solomon, after which Solomon pronounces his judgment. The fine articulations of character and meaning in this scene are expressed in small variations and repetitions and in subtle emphases in the characters' speech, showing Adonijah to be ambitious and naive, Bathsheba resourceful and intelligent, Solomon wise and decisive. These are courtly speeches, in which coded meanings and refined indirection are the essence of the art.

Adonijah, son of Haggith, came to Bathsheba, mother of Solomon. She said, "Do you come in peace?" He replied, "In peace." He said, "I would have a word with you." She replied, "Speak." He said, "As you know, the kingdom was mine, and all Israel looked to me to rule, but the kingdom passed to my brother, yet it was from Yahweh that it become his. Now there is one question I would ask of you. Do not turn me aside." She said to him, "Speak." He said, "Ask of Solomon the king—for he will not turn you aside—that he give me Abishag the Shunammite as wife." Bathsheba said, "Good. I will surely speak on your behalf to the king."

Bathsheba came to King Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. The king rose before her and bowed to her, and he sat on his throne. A throne was brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. She said, "There is one small question I would ask of you. Do not turn me aside." The king said to her, "Ask, my mother, for I will not turn you aside." She said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah, your brother, as wife." King Solomon answered, saying to his mother, "Why do you ask for Abishag the

Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for the kingdom, since he is my older brother, and with him are Abiathar the priest and Joab, son of Zeruiah!”

King Solomon swore an oath to Yahweh, “So may God do to me and more, if Adonijah has not spoken this word at his life’s peril! Now, as Yahweh lives, who established me and seated me on the throne of my father David, and who has made a house for me as he promised, today Adonijah shall be put to death.” King Solomon sent for Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, who struck him down, and he died. (1 Kgs 2:13–25)

Until Solomon’s dramatic response to Bathsheba, the inner emotions and motivations of the characters are not overtly displayed. But the fine touches in the narration and in the terse dialogue convey hints of motive and conflict. As Robert Alter observes, this episode exemplifies the “fruitful ambiguity through narrative reticence” that is characteristic of biblical narrative style.⁶²

The first hint of conflict, masked by narrative reticence, is the identification of the characters in the first verse of the scene. Adonijah is the “son of Haggith” (בן חגיית), one of David’s other wives, while Bathsheba is the “mother of Solomon” (אם שלמה). Biblical characters are usually identified by their patronymic, which for Adonijah would be “son of David.” But here (as previously in 1 Kgs 1:5), Adonijah is identified as “son of Haggith.” Adonijah has lost the throne to his rival, the son of Bathsheba, and now he approaches Bathsheba as if he had some claim to her friendship and loyalty. But he does not; rather, he is Bathsheba’s political adversary. The brief capsule of their identities in terms of their respective mother-son alliances—“son of Haggith” and “mother of Solomon”—signals the struggle implicit in the rivalry over the kingship.⁶³

Bathsheba’s first words, “Do you come in peace?” (השלים באך), are both a simple greeting and a coy inquiry. Adonijah’s reply, “In peace” (שלום), can be taken either as a plain greeting or a devious pretense. He is either a fool smitten with the beautiful Abishag or a Machiavellian schemer planning to seize the throne by marrying David’s consort (compare Absalom’s possession of David’s harem in 1 Kgs 16:22).⁶⁴ The latter resonance is heightened by Adonijah’s confiding remark, “As you know . . .,” referring to his brief possession of the kingship before it passed to Solomon, although he tactfully grants that the outcome was Yahweh’s will. Is he sounding out Bathsheba’s willingness to betray Solomon? If so, his conspiratorial wink is as naive and self-destructive as his request for David’s woman. The stupidity of Adonijah’s request to his political adversary is stunning. As Meir Sternberg comments about this request, “Whom God wishes to undo, we say, he first strikes blind.”⁶⁵

The request is, on the face of it, audacious. But Bathsheba politely promises to convey it, in carefully chosen words: “Good. I will surely speak on your behalf to the king” (טוב אנכי אדבר עליך אל המלך, v. 18). Although her words are formal and responsive, they also suggest a second meaning. The evaluative comment, “Good,” may be more than a polite assent, since we may surmise that she recognizes the gift she has been handed—a cause for Adonijah’s execution (note Solomon’s previous warning to Absalom in 1 Kgs 1:52, “If fault is found in him, he shall die”). All she has to do is to convey Adonijah’s request, and she will have succeeded in her work of eliminating the rival to Solomon’s throne. Adonijah may be naive, self-absorbed, or clumsily conspiratorial, but Bathsheba is an intelligent political operator (as displayed in the previous chapter, 1 Kings 1).⁶⁶ With her terse approval and her emphasis on “I” (אנכי fronting the finite verb, rendered as “I will surely”), the Queen Mother willingly accepts the gift of Adonijah’s doom.

The courtly drama continues in the second dialogue. King Solomon elaborately rises and bows to Bathsheba, showing honor to his mother, who richly deserves it. She is not only the Queen Mother but has been instrumental in gaining Solomon the throne. By bowing to her and seating her at his right hand, he signals that Bathsheba is a partner to his rule. Her status as the king’s mother is expressed at various points in this sequence: she is “the king’s mother” (v. 19), “my mother” (v. 20), and “his mother” (v. 22). The mother-son alliance that was implicit in the previous exchange with Adonijah is a recurring motif in her exchange with Solomon.

Bathsheba’s speech to Solomon consists of a near verbatim repetition of Adonijah’s, although she tactfully omits his comment about his brief hold on the kingship (“As you know, the kingdom was mine . . .,” v. 15). Slight variation in the repetition of dialogue is a characteristic feature of biblical narrative style, usually carrying important nuances of meaning.⁶⁷ In this case, Bathsheba adds two small but significant words. Compare Adonijah’s speech in vv. 16–17 with Bathsheba’s in vv. 20–21:

Adonijah: “Now there is one question I would ask of you. Do not turn me aside. . . . Ask of Solomon the king—for he will not turn you aside—that he give to me Abishag the Shunammite as wife.”

Bathsheba: “There is one small question I would ask of you. Do not turn me aside. . . . Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah, your brother, as wife.”

The significant changes from Adonijah’s to Bathsheba’s words (aside from grammatical changes of person and the specification of the absent person) are

two seemingly insignificant words: “small” (קטנה) and “your brother” (אחיך). These changes exert subtle but important effects. Alter aptly notes the nuance of the first expansion from “one question” to “one small question”: “This is just a tiny request, she appears to say, fully knowing that Solomon is likely to see it, on the contrary, as a huge thing.”⁶⁸ By inserting the adjective “small,” she makes the request seem innocuous. But the audacity of the request is only highlighted by this diminutive. It is a “small” request to usurp the kingdom? This is sly irony on Bathsheba’s part, planted to make the enormity of the request appear that much greater.

The second addition is the description, “your brother,” after the identification of Adonijah as the aspiring bridegroom. This term is not strictly necessary to identify Adonijah to Solomon. It may be taken as a note of sympathy on Bathsheba’s part, appealing to Solomon’s brotherly favor.⁶⁹ A more sinister meaning, however, is also present. This expansion signals the fraught relationship between the brothers in their rivalry over the succession. In this conflict, as Solomon angrily observes, Adonijah has the greater legal claim—“Ask for the kingdom, since he is my older brother” (v. 22). Solomon perceives the political implications of his brother’s request, perhaps guided by Bathsheba’s small expansions. She uses Adonijah’s own words, with additional shadings, to convict him of treason.

There is one additional complication. Solomon promises Bathsheba, “I will not turn you aside” (לֹא אֲשִׁיב אֶת פְּנֶיךָ, v. 20), echoing her and Adonijah’s words. This idiomatically means “I will not refuse you” and therefore seems to bind Solomon to grant his mother’s request. But the words also allow for the literal sense, and so, although he rejects her request, he does not “turn her aside.” Rather, he rejects Adonijah, while keeping Bathsheba close at his side. Adonijah believes, perhaps rightly, that Solomon would not refuse his mother’s request, but the phrase “do not turn me aside” allows for other meanings, which Solomon and Bathsheba seem implicitly to communicate. Although Solomon rejects her explicit request, he keeps his implicit promise to his mother. Perhaps we may say that he keeps faith with his mother precisely by rejecting her formal request.

What Alter calls the “fruitful ambiguity through narrative reticence” in this scene allows for either a simple or a complex understanding of the characters of Adonijah and Bathsheba. As Jerome Walsh observes:

The character of Bathsheba in the episode, then, like that of Adonijah, is open to very divergent readings. She may be exactly what she appears to be: a woman trying to reconcile estranged brothers by arranging a marriage. Against this reading is the difficulty of harmo-

nizing such a Bathsheba with the shrewd conniver of chapter 1. Or she may be knowingly and gleefully bringing her son what he wants most: an excuse for disposing a dangerous rival.⁷⁰

The simple reading is available for the unsophisticated reader; this is what Sternberg calls the Bible's "foolproof composition," in which the text regulates a minimal understanding of its sense.⁷¹ The richer ambiguities are available for those who can savor them, for whom the silences and nuances of the text point to its narrative depth.⁷² It is appropriate that Solomon, the wise recipient of Bathsheba's message, perceives the deeper intent most clearly.

In his response to the implications of Bathsheba's speech, Solomon shows himself to be verbally and politically astute. In his double oath to Yahweh, he also shows himself to be pious and just. In the second oath, he swears by Yahweh, "who established me and seated me on the throne of my father David, and who has made a house for me as he promised" (v. 24). This sequence is a Deuteronomistic expansion, exalting Solomon explicitly as Yahweh's chosen king, and referring to Yahweh's promise in 2 Samuel 7:11-16.⁷³ This verse also serves to make explicit what is implicit in the source text, that is, that Solomon is indeed the divinely chosen king, as Adonijah had acknowledged earlier. Solomon is a wise king whose judgment flows from Yahweh's judgment, and he is also shrewd and effective. Solomon is represented as a king worthy of the throne that Yahweh has given him.

Many commentators perceive a menacing edge in this portrayal of Solomon. Like an ancient Israelite godfather, he turns to command his war chief Benaiah to eliminate the opposition—first Adonijah, then Joab, then Shimei, with a chilling repetition of violent effectiveness:

death of Adonijah: "King Solomon sent for Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, who struck him down, and he died." (2:25)

death of Joab: "Solomon sent for Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, saying: 'Go strike him down.' . . . Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, went up and struck him down and killed him." (2:29, 34)

death of Shimei: "The king commanded Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck him down, and he died." (2:46)

There is both glory and fear mingled in this representation of Solomon. His wisdom is his power, and the ways of the great king are awesome and effective. This representation of Solomon serves the royal ideology, in which the great king's enemies are to tremble in fear. Solomon's enemies deserve their fate, since they have conspired against him or shown disloyalty. In this

scene, Solomon shows himself to be a worthy king, in accordance with David's deathbed exhortation, "Be strong, and be a man!" (1 Kgs 2:2). His decisive behavior also accords with Yahweh's exhortation to the Davidic king, "You will smash them with an iron staff, you will shatter them like pottery" (Ps 2:9).

Ideology, Representation, and History

In the texts describing Solomon's building activities in 1 Kings 9:15–19 and the fall of Adonijah in 1 Kings 2:13–25, we detect a variety of motives, strategies, and meanings. What, we may ask, is the relationship between these texts and the historical Solomon, whose traces Alt's analysis exposes? The common axis for both texts is their exaltation of Solomon as an ideal king in the conceptual frame of ancient Near Eastern and Israelite royal ideology. The king is a great builder, whose monuments attest his glory, and is at the same time wise, decisive, and, when necessary, severe. The texts in this respect exemplify and project an ideal image of King Solomon. In the case of the building projects, it is entirely possible that many of these projects were actually undertaken by later kings, particularly if the low chronology prevails. Yet this, too, would conform to the royal ideology, for each king of the Davidic dynasty receives the reflected glory of its two great kings, David and Solomon, and these two kings reflect the glory of their successors. A Solomon whose greatness is magnified by later texts and traditions, attracting to himself the work of later kings, is exactly what we should expect. Moreover, these later works create a "reality effect" for the narrative, as Solomon's glory is evident in the great buildings and cities of the text's contemporary world.

The representation of Solomon in the account of the fall of Adonijah and the other events associated with his rise to power in 1 Kings 1–2 is more complex. He is indeed a wise and decisive king, but at the same time we may sense in the text a certain anxiety about his succession to the kingship. The only witnesses to David's acclamation of Solomon as his successor are Bathsheba, Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah—Solomon's supporters all—and the role of Benaiah's band of mercenaries in enforcing Solomon's claim seems embarrassingly obvious (1 Kgs 1:28–39). As Halpern tellingly observes:

The fact that the apology sets David's appointment of Solomon in the private chamber rather than in an audience hall is testimony that the conspirators could not claim that David endorsed Solomon's succession publicly. . . . [T]he apology hardly conceals the fact that Solomon's accession was a *coup d'état*.⁷⁴

As the oldest son, Adonijah has a legitimate claim to the kingship, which Solomon's party overcomes by guile and force. These political problems are evident in the very text that absolves Solomon of impropriety and exalts his kingship.

A number of scholars have observed that 1 Kings 1–2 has the political effect of a royal apology, a justification of the legitimacy of a king who has ascended the throne under suspicious circumstances.⁷⁵ As Kyle McCarter argues:

[T]here can be little doubt that Solomon began his reign in an atmosphere of public suspicion and mistrust. Nevertheless, the details of 1 Kings 1–2 yield the impression that the suspicious circumstances of the succession can be explained in a way favorable to the king. These circumstances, though presented forthrightly, are carefully hedged with information that tends to vindicate Solomon. Every occasion for doubt is addressed in a reassuring way. Every possible charge is provided with an alibi.⁷⁶

Hence the text admits that Adonijah and his chief supporters were either executed (Adonijah and Joab) or exiled (Abiathar)⁷⁷ but maintains that Solomon had just cause in each instance. The account of Adonijah's fall makes him seem either a fool or a conniver who causes his own downfall. Note that this scene, too, occurs behind closed doors, with only Bathsheba, the formidable Queen Mother, as witness to his request. One might rightly suspect that this private scene is a royal fiction, designed to inoculate the king against accusations of murder and fratricide. Yet as a fiction, it also exploits the possibilities of imaginative literature and presents Solomon as a fully realized character, the great king of biblical memory.

Once we recognize the relationship between the literary representation of Solomon in 1 Kings 1–2 and the political work of royal apologetics, we can perceive that the text reveals as much as it conceals about the historical Solomon. Because it manipulates the public memory of events, we can gain some purchase on the outlines of that memory and how it portrayed Solomon in a questionable light. This shady Solomon, because it conflicts with the otherwise idealized representation of Solomon, is probably as close to the historical Solomon as we are likely to get. The edgy representation of Solomon is an attempt to revise the historical memory of the time. When was the public perception of Solomon's accession to the throne a problem of sufficient magnitude to motivate a textual rebuttal? We cannot be sure, but it certainly was at a time when grudges could still be nursed, when doubts about Solomon's legitimacy were still a potential danger to his regime or to the legitimacy of his successors. In this instance, the representation of Solomon exists in a dialectical relation-

ship with the historical Solomon. Careful attention to each of the two Solomons—the dimly perceived historical king and the textual representation—is crucial to a coherent understanding of the other.

The archaeology of memory in the case of King Solomon follows the intertwining aspects of narrative discourse, public memory, chronology, and the structures of social change. It is an interdisciplinary program, like the material archaeology of ancient Israel. Its domain is the circulation of meanings, involving the careful sifting of culture, texts, and history.⁷⁸ In it we approach two King Solomons—one historical and the other discursive—who are not wholly separable. They pertain to different levels of reality, but they have a complementary existence, shadowing each other in the textual and material traces of the past.



6

The Biblical Sense of the Past

Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again.

—Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History”

The History of History

In the second volume of his *Untimely Observations*, Friedrich Nietzsche called for a critical analysis of the “problem of history.”¹ He argued that humans need to believe in illusion—especially religion—in order to live life fully and usefully, and that the prestige of historical consciousness in his time was suffocating this all-too-human need. In order to reduce this burden, he called for historical inquiry to investigate—and thereby destabilize—the authority of historical understanding: “The origin of historical culture . . . *must* itself in turn be historically understood, history *must* itself dissolve the problem of history, knowledge *must* turn its sting against itself.”² With this call, Nietzsche initiated what we might call the critical history of history.

The nature and rise of historical consciousness in the modern West has since been addressed in many important studies since, including the classic works of the 1930s, Paul Hazard’s *The European Mind* and Friedrich Meinecke’s *Historism*,³ and more recently and more self-consciously Nietzschean, Michel Foucault’s *The Order of*

Things and Hayden White's *Metahistory*.⁴ When one attends to the conceptual shifts and institutional constraints that shape the emergence of new fields of critical inquiry (Foucault), or to the implicit plots or tropes that generate meaning in historical narrative (White), historical consciousness becomes a complex and fascinating affair. It is no longer a single, stable thing, but a congeries of styles of thought and discourse, intimately allied with other forms of life—social, religious, political, and literary. Historical inquiry has responded to Nietzsche's challenge by dissolving the problem of history into an array of interconnected problems, not the least of which is how to conduct historical inquiry in an age of uncertainty, an ironic reversal of Nietzsche's historical situation.

The ancient roots of modern historical consciousness are ably exposed in Arnaldo Momigliano's posthumous study, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*.⁵ Momigliano begins with the Greek and Hebrew historians but grants at the outset that awareness and commemoration of the past are common human traits. He cites the words of an eighteenth-century Mongolian chronicler:

If the common man does not know his origins, he is like a mad ape. He who does not know his great and right family connections is like an outsize dragon. He who does not know the circumstances and the course of actions of his noble father and grandfather is like a man who, having prepared sorrow for his children, throws them into this world.⁶

To be human is, in this sense, to live historically. To discern the distinctive features of Greek and Hebrew historiography takes a finer-grained approach than the conventional view that they invented or discovered historical consciousness.

The Greek historians developed a critical perspective toward the truth-value of their evidence and their historical writings. In this they were influenced by the criticisms of received tradition advanced by Xenophanes and other philosophers. Perhaps as a consequence, the Greeks did not invest history with special religious or philosophical value, except as a series of exemplars or cautionary models. Momigliano observes:

[T]ypically Greek is the critical attitude towards the recording of events, that is, the development of critical methods enabling us to distinguish between facts and fancies. To the best of my knowledge no historiography earlier than the Greek or independent of it devel-

oped these critical methods; and we have inherited the Greek methods.⁷

The Greeks liked history, but never made it the foundation of their lives. The educated Greek turned to rhetorical schools, to mystery cults, or to philosophy for guidance. History was never an essential part of the life of a Greek—not even (one suspects) for those who wrote it. There may be many reasons for this attitude of the Greeks, but surely an important factor was that history was so open to uncertainties, so unlikely to provide undisputed guidance. To the biblical Hebrew, history and religion were one.⁸

In contrast to the Greek perspective, the past in the Hebrew Bible is a central religious drama. This is why, Momigliano suggests, the biblical presentation of the past begins at the beginning of the world and contains all the privileged events of the past, whereas Greek histories tend to focus on particular events of public importance.⁹ The past has a different scope and weight in the biblical perspective; it is an essential dimension of religious life.

Because of the normative quality of the past in the Bible, it is subject to different criteria than the Greek historical criterion of fact versus fancy. To the biblical writers, the traditional stories of the collective past are true, though these stories are subject to revision in order to maintain or revive their purchase on the truth. The biblical practice of historiography is one of interpretation and combination, rather than verification or falsification. This reliance on authority is similar to the practice of medieval historiography, as Peter Burke describes it:

Historical narratives tended to resemble “bricolage” compositions from ready-made fragments, for the historian would often incorporate the actual words of the “authority,” making a mosaic of the different authors.¹⁰

In the Hebrew Bible, interpretation and revision are joined to textual bricolage. For example, the book of Chronicles revises the presentation of the past in the books of Samuel and Kings by recombining and interpreting these texts to bring them into line with current understandings—embellishing events that are important, omitting episodes that are irrelevant or problematic, and harmonizing divergent presentations in the source texts.¹¹ Yet even as it revises the older representations of the past, Chronicles also seems to presume the existence and authority of these source texts. It positions itself as a guide or commentary on earlier histories, even as it revises those histories in its own

text. The later text does not displace the earlier but rather sets itself over it as an exegetical frame, bringing the older text into focus. Sara Japhet acutely describes this interpretive relationship:

The best way to define the author's purpose is through the concept of "corrective history": a thorough reformulating of ancient history from a new, "modern" perspective, responsive to its time. The new story should supplement the necessary facts where they were unknown or omitted, replace mistaken facts and explanations by historically probable and theologically valid ones, use all available sources and materials, and provide wholeness of form and meaning to the account of the past.¹²

This hermeneutic strategy of an authoritative reframing of history can be seen in the Deuteronomistic redaction of its source texts in the Deuteronomistic history (Deuteronomy through Kings) and arguably in the Priestly redaction or supplementation of the older sources of the Pentateuch.¹³ The J and E sources too are arguably revisions and recombinations of prior texts and traditions.¹⁴ The prior versions are not repudiated but are corrected, curtailed, revised, or supplemented, as warranted by the historical horizons and certainties of the biblical writer, including the writer's literary practices and theological motivations. The operative criteria are not truth versus fiction but rather interpretation and revision. To borrow Meir Sternberg's terms, biblical historiography moves between the truth and the whole truth.¹⁵ History carries the authority of sacred tradition.¹⁶ But tradition can be—and must be—revised in order to retain its truth.

Myth, Epic, History

The Greek comparison brings out some distinctive features of the biblical attitudes toward the past.¹⁷ The comparison with Israel's Near Eastern forebears is equally instructive. A previous generation of scholars tended to emphasize the contrast between the Bible's historical consciousness and the mythic consciousness of other ancient Near Eastern cultures.¹⁸ In this view, history and myth are seen as mutually exclusive categories or worldviews, with the Bible representing the crucial break from myth into history. A brilliant and influential book by Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History, Jewish Memory*, articulates this position eloquently:

It was ancient Israel that first assigned a decisive significance to history and thus forged a new world-view whose essential premises

were eventually appropriated by Christianity and Islam as well. . . . Suddenly, as it were, the crucial encounter between man and the divine shifted away from the realm of nature and the cosmos to the plane of history, conceived now in terms of divine challenge and human response. The pagan conflict of the gods with the forces of chaos, or with one another, was replaced by a drama of a different and more poignant order: the paradoxical struggle between the divine will of an omnipotent Creator and the free will of his creature, man, in the course of history.¹⁹

In this view, the myth of cosmic battle—“[t]he pagan conflict of the gods with the forces of chaos”—was rejected in favor of a new worldview in which historical events are the primary sites of meaning. There is certainly something to be said for this shift of attention in the Bible, but—as with all such stark binary oppositions—the shift is more complex and variable and to some degree is an effect of the Bible’s own rhetoric against its forebears and neighbors. As scholars have abundantly demonstrated, ancient Near Eastern cultures fully embraced the idea that the gods and humans were engaged on the plane of history, and the Hebrew Bible never wholly rejected the idea of the cosmic conflict between God and the forces of chaos.²⁰

Neither in the Bible nor in the ancient Near East is there a strong contrast between myth and history.²¹ Rather, the significant events in both temporal settings are often intertwined and intersignifying.²² A clear biblical example is Psalm 74, written in the wake of the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonian army in 586 B.C.E. In this psalm of lament, God is invoked to reverse the historical trauma precisely because he is the one who defeated the forces of chaos in primeval times:²³

O God, my king from of ancient times,
 who brings salvation throughout the land;
 it was you who roused the sea with your strength,
 who shattered the heads of the dragons of the waters;
 it was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan,
 and gave him as food for the creatures of the desert. (Ps 74:12–14)

God defeated the chaos monsters in primeval times, and he is called upon to defeat chaos once again, now redefined as a historical enemy, a destroyed Temple, and a ruined community. The distinction between biblical and ancient Near Eastern thought on the perennial clash of chaos and order is not whether there was a primeval divine battle with chaos, but *which* god it was who prevailed—and will continue to prevail in the present and future. The psalmist

asks God for a repetition of his victory over chaos, joining the primeval *Chaos-kampf* to the chaotic present. The struggle between divine and human wills in the turmoil of history is important in biblical writings, but it does not preclude the understanding that God has proven himself in cosmic battle. On the contrary, most biblical writings presume this knowledge of God's mastery in the primeval past.

The close relationship between myths of cosmic order and the orientations toward the past in the Bible can be clarified by the concept of collective memory—a topic first introduced by Maurice Halbwachs and refined in many studies since.²⁴ Cultures, like individuals, remember selectively and tend to assimilate historical events to traditional patterns, models, and themes. So, for example, the European encounter with the New World and its indigenous peoples was often conceived and represented through biblical paradigms—the New World was often seen as a New Eden, the refuge of the Lost Tribes, or a topic of biblical prophecy.²⁵ Similarly, modern conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, are often seen through the prism of hallowed narratives, such as God's promise of the land in Genesis, or the relationship between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina in the Qur'an.²⁶ These examples illustrate how collective memory interprets and represents events in terms of authoritative narrative models or schemata. Burke calls this "the process by which the remembered past turns into myth."²⁷

The dynamics of collective memory can be illustrated in one of the earliest texts in the Hebrew Bible, the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15.²⁸ Frank Cross has explored the deep continuities between the Canaanite myth of Baal's victory over Sea and this classic portrayal of Yahweh's victory over Pharaoh's forces and the exodus of Israel.²⁹ In brief, this archaic biblical text is suffused with the diction and themes of the myth of divine conflict. The remembered past is represented and shaped by inherited discursive forms, investing the constitutive events of the past with mythic significance.

The Song of the Sea begins with Moses and the Israelites invoking Yahweh in his role as divine warrior, an old Near Eastern divine type:

Yahweh is a warrior,
Yahweh is his name. (Exod 15:3)

Although Yahweh's adversary is a human opponent ("Pharaoh's chariotry and his troops"), Yahweh's victory has cosmic implications; hence the Song exalts him over all the gods:

Who is like you, O Yahweh, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,³⁰
awesome in praises, working wonders? (Exod 15:11)

The victorious God leads his newly redeemed people to his sacred mountain, after which Yahweh is proclaimed eternal king:

You brought them, you planted them
 in the mountain of your heritage,
 the foundation of your throne,
 which you made, O Yahweh,
 the sanctuary of my lord,
 which your hands created.
 Yahweh will rule
 forever and ever. (Exod 15:17–18)

The mountain is Yahweh's, but he allows his newly redeemed people to dwell there, under the gracious care of the divine king.

The Canaanite myth of divine combat features the divine warrior Baal and a series of adversaries, first Sea (*Yammu*), then Death (*Môtu*). In the first movement, Baal battles and defeats Sea, after which a palace is constructed for Baal on his holy mountain, where he is enthroned as king. The general pattern of events is shared with the biblical text. The continuities of themes and diction are illustrated by the following passages from the two texts:

In my holy place, the mountain of my heritage (*gūri nahalatiya*),³¹
 In my pleasant place, in the hill of my might. (CAT 1.3.iii.30–31)

In the mountain of your heritage (*har nahālātēkā*),
 The foundation of your throne. (Exod 15:17)

[Baal's weapon] struck the head of Prince Sea (*yammu*),
 Between the eyes of Judge River.
 Sea collapsed and fell to the earth. (CAT 1.3.iv.24–26)

He cast them into the sea (*yām*). . . .
 The primeval waters covered them. (Exod 15:4–5)

I alone rule over the gods (*ʔilīma*). (CAT 1.4.vii.49–50)

Who is like you, O Yahweh, among the gods (*ʔēlīm*)? (Exod 15:11)

You shall take your eternal kingship (*mulka ʿālamika*)
 Your everlasting rule. . . .
 Baal will rule (*baʿlu-mi yamlu[ku]*). (CAT 1.2.iv.10, 32)

Yahweh will rule (*yhw h yimlōk*)
 forever (*lēʿōlām*) and ever. (Exod 15:17–18)

Even from these brief lines, it is clear that the earliest biblical representation of Israel's emergence as a people is informed by traditional mythic language and concepts. The divine warrior dwells on "the mountain of your/my heritage." The adversary is defeated at the "sea" (probably the Red Sea in Exodus 15), a symbolic displacement of Canaanite divine "Sea" (probably the Mediterranean). After his victory, the divine warrior proceeds to his palace sanctuary on his sacred mountain, where he rules as eternal king, exalted above the gods. The ordered cosmos is secure.

The Baal myth relates the victory of the divine warrior over the forces of chaos in primeval time. In the Song of the Sea, the scene of divine victory and cosmic kingship has shifted from the primeval era to the time of human history, and the adversary is not a god but a king's army—yet the dynamics of the divine victory over chaos persist. The biblical text presents a scene of divine deliverance using the traditional resources of the myth of cosmic battle. The defeat of chaos by the divine warrior and his ascent to cosmic kingship are the schemata that animate this hymn of God's victory and his redemption/creation of the people Israel.³² Ethnogenesis recapitulates cosmogenesis.

The transposition of the defeat of chaos from mythic time to historical time highlights a distinctive feature in the concept of national and ethnic identity in ancient Israel. Israel was different in that it knew it was a recent arrival in the ancient Near East. Perhaps, as Amos Funkenstein suggests, Israel's conviction that it was God's chosen people was a compensation for its awareness of its belatedness on the historical scene.³³ Its lateness was turned into a sign of special favor, like the exaltation of the youngest son in Genesis and elsewhere. Yet even as Israel recalled its recent origins, this was not a radical turn from myth to history, or a first discernment of "meaning in history." Cosmos and culture, myth and history, had long been intertwined in ancient Near Eastern self-consciousness. For instance, if a city or kingdom was destroyed in Mesopotamia, it was because of human impiety and the wrath of the gods. If cities were restored, it was because human sins were forgiven by the gods' gracious compassion. The gods warned and praised the king through prophets and diviners, and the enemies of the nation were equated with primeval adversaries.³⁴ The past and present were conceived as interpenetrations of cosmic forces and human events, such that neither the categories of myth or history adequately addresses the multidimensionality of our texts and representations. To cite another biblical example, just as other Near Eastern kings derived their authority from the cosmic victory of the divine warrior-king, so Psalm 89 depicts Yahweh inaugurating King David by setting "his hand on the sea, his right hand on the rivers" (Ps 89:26).³⁵ This symbolic rite makes

the Israelite king the victor over primeval chaos, just as Yahweh is earlier in the psalm (vv 10–15).³⁶ This is history conceived through the lenses of myth.

Cross has observed, “Characteristic of the religion of Israel is a perennial and unrelaxed tension between the mythic and the historical.”³⁷ I would qualify this to stress the ready interpenetration of the mythic and the historical, such that they are not antithetical domains in Israelite religion. This mixture or mediating category Cross opts to call “epic,” by analogy with key features of the Greek Homeric epics. These analogous features are the following:³⁸

- A crystallization in writing of stories, themes, and motifs drawn from oral tradition
- A pan-segmental or national orientation, incorporating local variants or multiforms
- A doubled level of action in which divine and human actors participate in tandem (dual causality)
- A description of an age conceived as normative, the events of which give meaning and self-understanding to a people or nation.

Cross’s proposal is usefully complemented by Paul Zumthor’s characterization of epic discourse as a type of narrative with distinctive semantic properties:

It is probably worthwhile to distinguish . . . between the *epic poem* as a culturally conditioned poetic form—hence variable—and *epic discourse* as a class of narrative discourse that is relatively stable and definable by its temporal structure, the position of the subject, and a general aptitude for assuming a mythical charge that makes it autonomous in relation to the event. . . . For its intended audience (which it intends for itself), it is autobiography, its very own collective existence that it recounts . . . a natural integration of past and present.³⁹

In its epic discourse, Israel combines the mythic and the historical in such a way that its collective past takes on the authority of sacred myth. This is what Hans-Peter Müller calls the “Historisierung der mythischen Funktionen” in biblical historiography.⁴⁰ This is one reason that the biblical writers never developed the critical methods of the Greek historians—the sacred function of the past precludes systematic doubt. Interpretation and commentary, as Gershom Scholem observed, became for the Jews what philosophy was for the Greeks, the preferred method for discerning truth.⁴¹

The characteristics of epic discourse inform not only the representation of the normative past in the the Pentateuch, but also extend into the more recent

past, the time of tribal leaders, prophets, priests, and kings.⁴² In particular, the principle of dual causality persists, in which God and humans are complementary causal agents.⁴³ This principle operates in texts that exhibit remarkably sophisticated historical perspectives, such as the Court History of David in 2 Samuel 9–20 and 1 Kings 1–2. Gerhard von Rad called it the “oldest specimen of ancient Israelite historical writing.”⁴⁴ At a key turning point in this narrative, David’s ally Hushai gives the rebellious Absalom bad strategic advice in order to delay his military campaign against David.⁴⁵ Because of Hushai’s reputation and eloquence, his advice seems compelling to Absalom and his men. But while Hushai is a cunning saboteur, Yahweh is also orchestrating events. After relating the intrigue at the purely human level, the narrator exposes the dual causality:

Absalom and all the men of Israel thought the advice of Hushai the Archite was better than the advice of Ahitophel, for Yahweh had determined to overturn the good advice of Ahitophel, in order that Yahweh would bring evil upon Absalom. (2 Samuel 17:14)

Events turn because humans and God act in complementary ways, even when God’s hand is unseen by the participants.

There are, of course, other degrees of relation between God’s will and human events in biblical literature. In some cases, God does not enter into the chain of human events—sometimes to the despair of the humans.⁴⁶ At other times, humans are seen as actors in a grand divine plan.⁴⁷ All of these are varieties of historical consciousness, but they are also animated by the forms and structures of myth and epic. Historical consciousness is abundantly in evidence in the Bible, as it is in previous and neighboring cultures, mingled with the revelations of prophets, the politics of kings, and the memories of previous divine interventions.

A further complicating factor in the biblical sense of the past is generic multiplicity: the ways that the Bible remembers the past are conditioned by the features of its discursive styles and genres—including narrative prose, didactic or legal prose, and poetry—each of which has its distinctive representational possibilities.⁴⁸ For example, in the poetry of the Song of the Sea, Yahweh is the sole agent of Israel’s salvation, and Moses is not even mentioned. But in the prose version of the same event, Moses is at the center of the narrative, and Yahweh and Moses act in tandem. The hymn of praise is concerned solely with divine agency, while the epic celebrates dual causality. In sum, the forms of the biblical past are multiple and complex.

At the beginning of his tetralogy, *Joseph and His Brothers*, Thomas Mann

muses about the biblical past, “Deep is the well of the past. Should we not call it unfathomable?”⁴⁹ That is to say (risking an awkward paraphrase), we cannot expect to measure it fully.

Genealogical Time

Whichever generic category one uses to describe the biblical accounts of the formative past—epic, legend, history, prose fiction, traditional narrative, or other—the biblical presentation of the past has its own distinctive qualities that are not exhausted by any particular classification. As a complement and corrective to these categories, one should also explore the Bible’s own categories, what Dan Ben-Amos calls its ethnic genres.⁵⁰ The only term used in the Pentateuch to refer to its own narrative of the past is תולדות, “generations” or “lineage,” a term found only in the P source.⁵¹ This term first appears at the end of the creation account of Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a pause and transition: “These are the תולדות of heaven and earth” (Gen 2:4). This statement of genealogical descent is used metaphorically here, signifying that what happens next is the temporal “offspring” of cosmic origins. The idiom of genealogy suggests a coherent connectivity of events, a causal relationship between God’s work of creation and what happens next.

The word תולדות literally means “begettings,” from the verb “to beget” (הוליד), used of a father. (A mother gives birth with the basic stem of the same verb.) This word refers to the offspring of the male head of the household: the patriline. By repeating the phrase, אלה תולדות, “these are the generations/patriline of X,” Genesis presents the past as a genealogy, starting with heaven and earth and ending with the tribes of Israel. Similar phrases with תולדות recur several times in Exodus and Numbers, culminating in the priestly lineage of Moses and Aaron (Num 3:1). By this framing technique, the normative past is represented as a genealogical narrative, and time is concentrated into the connective form of a branching lineage.

The book of Chronicles distills the idea of time as a genealogy to its essence. In 1 Chronicles 1–9, the entire past from creation to the line of Saul is presented as a concatenation of lineages, beginning with Adam. The past is pared down to its representational minimum, which is a complex genealogy. This is its connective tissue, that which provides structure and continuity to the past and which links the past to the present. The genealogical view of the past is perhaps a natural symbol for a lineage-based society such as ancient Israel; it expresses powerfully the authority and relevance of the past for the

world of the present. As Johannes Pedersen observes of this genealogical concept of time, “History is upheld by the generations, and it springs from primeval time, concentrated in the fathers in whom the life of the family lives.”⁵²

Genealogical time in the Bible is a model not only for the past and the present, but also for the future. A notable instance is the Blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49, in which Jacob, on his deathbed, foretells for his children (the ancestors of the twelve tribes) what will be their destiny. This is a curious change of character for Jacob, who once was a trickster and now becomes a seer. (This transformation begins in the previous chapter, when Jacob grants Joseph’s younger son, Ephraim, the blessing of the firstborn and announces with oracular foresight that he will be the greater son. This is a sly reversal of Jacob’s youthful deception of *his* old blind father in Genesis 27.) Now on his deathbed, having acquired the shadowy foresight of one who is on the boundary of life and death, Jacob summons his sons: “Gather, that I may tell you what will happen to you in the days to come” (Gen 49:1).

The future that Jacob foretells is a genealogical future, that is, the future situation for his sons’ lineages. The first three tribes will lose their genealogical status because of their sins: Reuben will diminish, and Simeon and Levi will be scattered in Israel. This corresponds to the historical disappearance of the tribes of Reuben and Simeon and the dispersed location of the Levites as priests. The genealogical status of the firstborn descends to the fourth son, Judah. He will be king, served by his brothers: “Your father’s sons will bow down to you. . . . The scepter will not turn aside from Judah” (Gen 49:8–10). The future is framed by the genealogical ascent of Judah to the status and authority of the firstborn, which yields a blessing for the kings from the tribe of Judah. In other words, future dominance and glory belong to the Davidic king, the apex of the patriline in the genealogical future.

The Blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49 probably stems from the early monarchy,⁵³ and Jacob’s prophecy may be designed precisely to authorize the Davidic king with the patriarchal blessing. In a later era, when there was no longer a Davidic king on the throne, the Blessing of Jacob came to be understood as a prophecy of a king to come, a new branch that will sprout from the stump of David. The phrase that Jacob uses to denote the future in his blessing is **אחרית הימים** (Gen 49:1), which in classical Hebrew means “days to come,” but which literally means “the end of days.” This phrase is taken in its literal sense in postmonarchic times,⁵⁴ and Jacob’s prophecy of the genealogical future becomes an eschatological prophecy.⁵⁵ At “the end of days” a new king will arise from the house of Judah, and at that time, “the sceptre will not turn aside from Judah.” This becomes a messianic prophecy, and the genealogical future becomes the eschaton, the End of Days.


This messianic expectation in genealogical time comes full circle at the beginning of the New Testament, which relates “an account of the genealogy of Jesus the messiah, son of David, son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1). This text expresses the purposeful direction of time and the messianic credentials of Jesus through the structure of genealogy. The future of the patriline, as foretold in the Blessing of Jacob, is resumed and consummated in Jesus’ genealogy. In this understanding of Jacob’s blessing, genealogical time culminates in the time of the messiah, the final scion of Abraham’s lineage. The messianic cusp of the biblical genealogy has been for millennia a shared feature of the structure of time in Judaism and Christianity and continues today in many communities.

Even for posteschatological Jews and Christians, for whom the messiah is an ideal rather than a real expectation, and for those for whom religion is an illusion (reverting to Nietzsche’s untimely observations), the genealogical time of the Bible still exerts its power and fascination. In recent years, we have learned to read the Hebrew Bible with attention to its literary brilliance and conceptual depth, and in so doing we are caught up in its web of genealogical forces. Even if we return to it as a literary or spiritual classic, we perceive that we are related, however distantly, to this ancestral root. It makes its claims on us, it inserts us into its genealogy, whether we wish it or not. As Erich Auerbach comments in his magisterial work *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*:

The world of the Scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be a historically true reality—it insists that it is the only real world. . . . All other scenes, issues, and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it, and it is promised that all of them, the history of all mankind, will be given their due place within its frame, will be subordinated to it. The Scripture stories do not, like Homer’s, court our favor, they do not flatter us that they may please us and enchant us—they seek to subject us, and if we refuse to be subjected we are rebels.⁵⁶

When we read the Bible attentively, we are drawn into its rich web of meanings. Even if we admit that we are rebels—which may be the burden of modernity⁵⁷—we take up a relation to the Bible, the ancient book that still rests on our shelves. Even if we ignore it or block it from view, the Hebrew Bible is part of our cultural and intellectual genealogy, our relation to the past, our ground and root. It is our old ancestor, and we are its descendants, though we may be wayward, prodigal, and forgetful.

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Appendix: Linguistic Notes on the Age of Biblical Literature

The question of the age of biblical literature has gained new prominence in recent years due to the claims of some scholars that the Hebrew Bible was written primarily or entirely during the Persian-Hellenistic periods¹ or during the Hellenistic period alone.² These claims fly in the face of the standard scholarly view that the biblical writings span a much greater chronological range, the earliest texts dating to the premonarchic era and the latest to the Hellenistic period. The arguments of the late-daters are often sketchy and impressionistic and have been refuted by several substantial studies.³ These revisionist claims do, however, serve a useful purpose in forcing us to reevaluate the data and the arguments based on them.

Perhaps the clearest data for the age of biblical literature are linguistic. Beginning with the crucial work of Wilhelm Gesenius, scholars have clarified the distinctive features of what we now call Classical Biblical Hebrew (CBH) and Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH).⁴ While the divide between these two phases of Hebrew is gradual, many of the changes seem to have taken root during the transition between the First and Second Temple periods. As Angel Sáenz-Badillos notes in his erudite and judicious book *A History of the Hebrew Language*:

The Babylonian exile marks the beginning of a new stage in the development of Hebrew. The spoken and written languages had been drifting apart before the exile, and the so-

cial and political turmoil brought about by the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the First Temple produced a significant change in the linguistic *status quo*.⁵

After the exile, CBH remained a model for imitation and emulation, but many changes—including the collapse of the CBH verbal system⁶—made the nuances of CBH difficult to capture in new texts. Some scholars suggest that it would have been possible to write a work in flawless CBH during the Persian-Hellenistic periods and that such a perfect imitation would be impossible to detect. This is a logical possibility, just as it is that a twentieth-century Frenchman could have written *Don Quixote*.⁷ But it is not very likely, and on methodological grounds we should eschew improbable possibilities when more probable historical reconstructions are available. The linguistic features and historical horizons of the CBH writings straightforwardly cohere in a pre-exilic setting.⁸

The following is a collection of a few striking linguistic details that indicate, with varying degrees of clarity, the pre-Persian period setting of CBH. Most have been advanced by other scholars, but it is useful to gather them together. The linguistic data that we possess are incomplete and imperfectly preserved, so it is important for us to value what pieces of diagnostic evidence we can discern.⁹ The details below fall into two overlapping categories: foreign or technical words that are chronologically distinctive; and features of CBH that are shared with pre-exilic inscriptions and absent or severely curtailed in LBH and other Hebrew dialects of the Second Temple period.

Philistine Words

סרנים. It has long been argued that the word סרן, which refers to Philistine rulers (and found only in the plural), is a Philistine loanword.¹⁰ It is probably related to the Luvian *tarwanis* (“justice”), a title used by Neo-Hittite rulers, and Greek τύραννος (“tyrant, ruler”).¹¹ As indicated by the Hebrew construct form *sarnê*, it was borrowed into Hebrew as either a **qatal* form, **saran*, or a **qatl* form, **sarn*. The *samekh* at this time was pronounced as a palatal affricate, something like [ts],¹² yielding a pronunciation like [tsaran] or [tsarn], which is close to the phonetic shape of Luvian *tarwan-*. Since the pronunciation of *samekh* became [s] by the time of LBH, becoming homophonous with *śin*,¹³ the borrowing of this word into Hebrew cannot have been as late as the Persian era. Moreover, a distinctive Philistine culture had long disappeared by the Second Temple Period. This word is best understood as a borrowing from the

Philistines during the flourish of Philistine culture. It may be significant that in the seventh century B.C.E. inscription from Ekron (one of the main Philistine cities in the biblical texts), the Philistine ruler calls himself a שר,¹⁴ perhaps indicating that the term סרן had fallen out of use among the Philistines by then.

כובע/קובע. The word for “helmet” in 1 Samuel 17: 5, 38 and elsewhere is also probably a loanword from the Philistines, related to Hittite *kupahi*, Hurrian *kuwahi*, and Greek κούβαλλος.¹⁵ The variation of word-initial כ/ק indicates a foreign loanword, in which the initial sound was not precisely captured by either Hebrew phone. The borrowing of this word also points to the period of the Philistine flourish, when their native language was still intact. (Note that the Ekron inscription and other Philistine texts of the seventh century B.C.E. are written in Phoenician or a related local Northwest Semitic language.)¹⁶

Old Aramaic Phonology

רצין and נתר/נשור. Baruch Halpern has noted that some biblical “renditions of Aramaic names conform to early Old Aramaic systems of consonantal representation”¹⁷ and therefore have implications for linguistic dating. Two of these instances seem particularly strong: the name Gešur in Joshua and Samuel (and its counterpart Geter in Genesis) and the name of the Aramaic king Rešin in 2 Kings and Isaiah.

Gešur (נשור) is a region of Aram mentioned several times in Joshua and Samuel, probably located in the southern Golan Heights.¹⁸ Geter (נתר, Greek Γαθερ) is listed in Genesis 10:23 (P) as a son of Aram. These two names are probably variants of the same place-name, as several scholars have noted.¹⁹ These names may be analyzed as forms of the root **gtr* (“to be strong”), which is represented as *gšr* in Old Aramaic, and as *gtr* in Imperial Aramaic. The place-name would mean something like “stronghold, fortress.” In Old Aramaic, the spelling with ש represents the phoneme *t̄*, which merges with *t* in Imperial Aramaic. The change from ש to ת, representing the phonemic merger **t̄* > *t*, is clearly attested in Aramaic inscriptions of the seventh century B.C.E. and becomes regular by the sixth century B.C.E.²⁰ In the paired sequence of Geshur/Geter, we have a good example of this Aramaic phonological change preserved in the Hebrew. Even if the P form is unrelated to Geshur (which seems unlikely), the etymology from **gtr* indicates that נשור represents the orthography and phonology of the Old Aramaic period.

רצין. The name of the eighth century B.C.E. Aramean king Rešin (named in 2 Kgs 15–16 and Isa 7–9) also corresponds to Old Aramaic phonology.²¹ The

original form is **raḏyān*, which is represented in Neo-Assyrian texts as *ra-ḥi-a-nu* and *ra-qi-a-nu*. The former may be the Assyrian approximation of the sound of Old Aramaic *ḏ*, and the latter reproduces the Old Aramaic spelling רִקִּין, in which ק represents the sound of *ḏ*.²² The phoneme *ḏ* is represented in Hebrew by צ, hence biblical רִצִּין (which should probably be read *raṣyān* or *raṣyōn*, cf. IQIsa^a רִצִּיאַן and LXX Ραασσων).²³ In Imperial Aramaic, the pronunciation and representation of the *ḏ* phoneme merges with the phoneme ^c(= ע) and would be represented in Aramaic and Hebrew of the Persian-Hellenistic era as רִעִין.²⁴ The Hebrew רִצִּין reflects a time when the *ḏ* phoneme was still pronounced in Old Aramaic,²⁵ which matches the time of this eighth-century king.

Neo-Assyrian Titles

תרתן, רב סריס, רב שקה, רב. 2 Kings 18:17 relates: “The King of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah.” These three Assyrian officers are known from Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts as the *tartānu*, the *rab ša rēši*, and the *rab šaqē*, respectively.²⁶ These terms are found elsewhere in Kings, First Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel as titles of Assyrian and Babylonian officials.²⁷ Since all three terms are found in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts, and only *ša rēši* in later Akkadian texts, the borrowing of these terms into Hebrew must have occurred during the Neo-Assyrian and/or Neo-Babylonian periods.²⁸ (The term in Dan 1:3, רב סריסים, is clearly dependent on the earlier Hebrew texts, revising the collective סריס to the plural סריסים, a common modernization in LBH.) There are additionally other Neo-Assyrian words, expressions, and topoi in 2 Kings 18–19 and First Isaiah that indicate a Neo-Assyrian historical context.²⁹

Weights and Measures

גרה, בקע, פים. William Dever has recently emphasized the implications of the weights and measures used in ancient Israel for the dating of biblical texts.³⁰ As Raz Kletter has shown, the kingdom of Judah used a distinctive system of inscribed weights from the late eighth century B.C.E. to the fall of the kingdom in 586 B.C.E.³¹ The inscribed weights—all fractions or multiples of the shekel—include the terms גרה ($1/20$ or $1/24$ shekel), בקע ($1/2$ shekel), and פים ($2/3$ shekel). These three terms have eight attestations in the Hebrew Bible:

גרה: Exod 30:13; Lev 27:25; Num 3:47; 18:16 (all P); Ezek 45:12

בקע: Gen 24:22; Exod 38:26

פיים: 1 Sam 13:21

As Dever notes, these terms were not used in the Persian and Hellenistic periods but were transmitted in these biblical texts. The conclusion that these references stem from a period when these weights were still used or remembered is inescapable. During the Persian period, coins came into use, rendering such a system of weights (used to weigh precious metals for payment) obsolete. Note that in Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, payment is counted in darics or drachmas.³² The Septuagint, which is a valuable source for linguistic knowledge in the Hellenistic period,³³ renders גרה as ὀβολός, a small coin (1/5 drachma), presumably a guess from context, not recognizing its meaning as a weight. It similarly renders בקע as δραχμή, “drachma,” unaware of the older value. The Septuagint term corresponding to פיים in 1 Samuel 13:21 is “ready” ἔτοιμος = כּוּן?), which reflects either a corrupt text or a conjecture, the ancient term having long been forgotten.

The Infinitive Absolute

The infinitive absolute becomes rare in LBH.³⁴ Two categories of usage in particular become rare or extinct: the paranomastic infinitive construction (of which the most common construction is infinitive absolute + finite verb), and the use of the infinitive absolute as a command.³⁵ In Chronicles, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and some Qumran biblical manuscripts, these uses of the infinitive absolute in CBH biblical texts are sometimes modernized, the infinitive absolute replaced by other forms, as in the following examples:³⁶

PARANOMASTIC INFINITIVE

בָּנָה בְּנִיתִי בַּיִת זָבֵל לָךְ (“I have surely built an exalted house for you,” 1 Kgs 8:13)

וְאֲנִי בְּנִיתִי בַּיִת זָבֵל לָךְ (independent pronoun in place of inf. abs.; 2 Chr 6:2)

כִּי בָרַךְ אֲבָרְכֶךָ (“I will surely bless you,” Gen 22:17, MT)

כִּי בְרוּךְ אֲבָרְכֶךָ (passive participle in place of inf. abs.; Gen 22:17, SP)

INF. ABS. AS COMMAND

הֵלֹךְ וּדְבַרְתָּ אֶל דָּוִד (“Go and say to David,” 2 Sam 24:12)

לֵךְ וּדְבַרְתָּ אֶל דָּוִד (imperative in place of inf. abs.; 1 Chr 21:10)

לָקַח אֶת סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה (“Take this book of the Law,” Deut 31:26, MT)
 לִקְחוּ אֶת סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה (imperative in place of inf. abs.; Deut 31:26, SP)

These two CBH uses of the infinitive absolute are attested in pre-exilic Hebrew inscriptions. The paranomastic infinitive construction is found in the Murabb^cat papyrus (seventh century. B.C.E.) and also in pre-exilic texts in Ammonite, Moabite, and the local language of Deir Alla:

לְשַׁלַּח לְבֵיתְךָ שְׁלֵמִים אֶת שְׁלֵמֵי בֵיתְךָ (“I have surely sent greetings to your house.”)
 Murabba^cat papyrus, Hebrew, 7th cent. B.C.E.³⁷

כָּל מִסְבֵּב לְךָ מֵת יָמָתָךְ (“All who surround you will surely die.”)
 Amman Citadel inscription, Ammonite, 9th cent. B.C.E.³⁸

וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל אֲבָד אֲבָד עַלְמֵי עַלְמֵי (“And Israel has surely perished forever.”)
 Mesha stele, Moabite, 9th cent. B.C.E.³⁹

וַיִּקָּם בַּלְעָם מִן מָחָר . . . וּבְכָה יִבְכֶה (“Balaam rose the next day . . . sorely weeping.”)
 Deir Alla inscription, 8th cent. B.C.E.⁴⁰

The infinitive absolute used as a command is found several times in the Hebrew letters from Arad (8th cent. B.C.E.), sometimes in sequence with an imperative form, as in the following letter:⁴¹

נָתַן לְכִתִּים יַיִן . . . וְכָתַב שֵׁם הַיַּיִן
 the name of the date,” Arad I.2–4)⁴²

These uses of the infinitive absolute in CBH and in pre-exilic inscriptions provide a clear benchmark for the composition of the CBH biblical texts. These uses are rare (for the paranomastic construction) or virtually extinct (for the infinitive absolute as command) in books clearly composed in the Persian-Hellenistic periods. The paranomastic construction of the type infinitive absolute + finite verb occurs around 450 times in the Hebrew Bible but occurs only eleven times in the clearly Persian-Hellenistic era books (six of these in Chronicles, two of which are reproductions of the source text in Samuel-Kings) and about a dozen times in non-biblical books.⁴³ This compares with 53 times in Samuel, 25 times in Kings, and an average of 36 times in each book of the Pentateuch.⁴⁴ The infinitive absolute as a command occurs around 40 times in the Hebrew Bible but not at all in the clearly Persian-Hellenistic era biblical books,⁴⁵ and only once in the other extant texts of the Second Temple period.⁴⁶ It is unlikely that these uses of the infinitive absolute were conjured out of

whole cloth during the Persian and Hellenistic periods, the very time when they were becoming extinct or had already been lost.

The Qal Passive

The Qal Passive (**qutīla*, **yuqtalu*) is a productive verbal form in Northwest Semitic languages of the Late Bronze Age (Ugaritic, Amarna Canaanite) and survives in attenuated form in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Phoenician.⁴⁷ In CBH the Qal Passive is generally replaced by the Niphal, though the Qal Passive still seems productive for the roots נתן, לקח, and ילד. In LBH the Qal Passive is extremely rare.⁴⁸ There are approximately 160 Qal Passive forms in the Hebrew Bible, the majority found in poetry, which often preserves archaic forms. Of the clearly Persian-Hellenistic era books, the Qal Passive occurs only four times (once in Chronicles, twice in Nehemiah, once in Qohelet).⁴⁹ This compares to 23 times in Genesis, 6 times in Samuel, 38 times in Isaiah, etc. Similar to the case of the infinitive absolute discussed previously, Chronicles, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and some Qumran biblical manuscripts sometimes modernize this linguistic feature to conform with current usage, replacing the Qal Passive with the Niphal, as in the following examples:

וּגַם הוּא יֵלֵד לְהַרְפָּה (“He too *was born* to the Rapha,” 2 Sam 21:20)
וּגַם הוּא נוֹלָד לְהַרְפָּה (Niphal in place of Qal Passive; 1 Chr 20:6)

כִּי גָנַב גְּנֵבְתִי מֵאֶרֶץ הָעִבְרִים (“For I *was surely stolen* from the land of the Hebrews,” Gen 40:15, MT)

כִּי גָנוּב גְּנֵבְתִי מֵאֶרֶץ הָעִבְרִים (Niphal in place of Qal Passive; Gen 40:15, SP)

גַּם שְׂבִי גְבוּר יִלְקַח (“The captive *shall be taken* from the warrior,” Isa 49:25, MT)

גַּם שְׂבִי גְבוּר יִלְקַח (Niphal in place of Qal Passive; Isa 49:25, 1QIsa^a)

Like the case of the infinitive absolute, it is not plausible that the Qal Passive was correctly introduced into the CBH biblical texts at a time when this form was virtually extinct. The Qal Passive died a gradual linguistic death in Hebrew, its function was replaced by the Niphal (which was originally a medio-passive verb), and it was eventually forgotten in the vocalization tradition. It was rediscovered by Hebrew grammarians of the tenth century c.e. and again by Semitists in the nineteenth century. On the basis of the linguistic history of this verbal form in Northwest Semitic, it is not credible that the

evidence of the Qal Passive in CBH texts was created in the Persian or Hellenistic periods. This too is a feature rooted in pre-exilic Hebrew.

The Imperfect in the Past

The use of the Imperfect to indicate imperfective aspect (an unbounded view of an event or process, such as durative or iterative) in the past is a standard feature of CBH but is “weakly attested in LBH.”⁵⁰ With the collapse of the CBH tense/aspect system in postexilic Hebrew,⁵¹ the Imperfect is restricted primarily to the future tense. Imperfective aspect in the past comes to be indicated either by context or temporal adverbs and generally uses participles (particularly the periphrastic construction: היה + participle).⁵² LBH texts sometimes modernize a CBH source text by replacing the Imperfect in the past with a Perfect, expressing simple (or unmarked) past tense, as in the following examples:

וְשָׂאוּם הַרְצִים (“the guards *would carry* them,” 1 Kgs 14:28)

בָּאוּ הַרְצִים וּנְשָׂאוּם (Perfects in place of Imperfect; 2 Chr 12:11)⁵³

וְהַבֵּית יִמְלֵא עֶשֶׁן (“and the temple *was filling* with smoke,” Isa 6:4, MT)

וְהַבֵּית נִמְלֵא עֶשֶׁן (Perfect in place of Imperfect; Isa 6:4, 1QIsa^a)

A revealing example of archaic quality in LBH of the use of the Imperfect in the past is Nehemiah 9:27–28. In this sequence of past actions, the text uses five Imperfects to express repeated action (יָשׁוּבוּ, וַיּוֹשִׁיעֵמוּ, תַּחֲן, תִּשְׁמַע, יִצְעֶקוּ), following classical usage, but prefaces and continues these repeated actions with Perfects and Converted Imperfects, which should express the simple past. This sequence indicates that the CBH system had broken down. A CBH text would have used an Imperfect followed by a sequence of Converted Perfects (cf. Gen 29:2–3; Exod 33:7–11; Exod 34:34–35), or, for more temporally complex sequences, a nesting of Imperfects and Converted Perfects (cf. Num 9:15–23; 1 Sam 2:22–25).⁵⁴ Other LBH texts betray a similar awkwardness in imperfective sequences (e.g. 2 Chr 24:11; 25:14; and often in the Damascus Document).

The location of this usage in pre-exilic times is attested by its use in the Mesha Stele, a Moabite text that is linguistically very close to CBH,⁵⁵ and the Kilamuwa inscription, a Phoenician text:

כִּי יֵאָנֶף כִּמֹּשׁ בְּאַרְצוֹ (“For Chemosh *was angry* with his land.”)

Mesha stele, Moabite, 9th cent. B.C.E.⁵⁶

יְהִלְכִין מִשְׁכַּבִּים כִּם כְּלָבִים (“the Muškabīm [a lower class] *used to go about* like dogs.”)

Kilamuwa inscription, Phoenician, 9th cent. B.C.E.⁵⁷

This usage is also found in older Northwest Semitic languages (Ugaritic, Amarna Canaanite) and in Arabic. The Moabite and Phoenician examples support the view that the CBH use of the Imperfect to express imperfective aspect in the past is at home in the pre-exilic period. In the Second Temple Period, this feature becomes unmoored and archaic, and other constructions take over its grammatical function.⁵⁸ It is not plausible that this verbal usage was created in the Persian or Hellenistic period, a time when this linguistic feature was rare and at times a labored imitation of classical syntax.

To sum up, any cogent argument concerning the age of biblical literature must reckon with the linguistic data. The standard scholarly view, that many portions of the Hebrew Bible are pre-exilic, is supported by the linguistic evidence. The Hebrew language has a history, which is a necessary touchstone in historical research. Other historical data are also relevant, such as correlations with ancient Near Eastern history. It is striking, for example, that Samuel-Kings is consistently accurate regarding the names and chronological sequences of foreign kings where we possess extrabiblical evidence as a measure,⁵⁹ compared with such references in the clearly Persian-Hellenistic books, which, with the exception of Chronicles (which is dependent on Samuel-Kings), “vie with each other in historical incompetence.”⁶⁰ We may conclude—in conjunction with other studies⁶¹—that the late-daters are mistaken and that the linguistic and cultural horizons of the books written in CBH are earlier than the Persian and Hellenistic periods. This conclusion rests on wider linguistic grounds than presented here,⁶² but this sample is a useful entry into the larger discussion.

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Abbreviations

- AB Anchor Bible
- ABD *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- AJSL *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*
- ANET *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- ARM Archives royales de Mari
- BA *Biblical Archaeologist*
- BAR *Biblical Archaeology Review*
- BASOR *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
- BDB F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.
- BN *Biblische Notizen*
- BR *Biblical Research*
- BTB *Biblical Theology Bulletin*
- CAD *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956–.
- CANE *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. M. Sasson. 4 vols. New York: Scribner's, 1995.
- CAT *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*, ed. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995.

- CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
- COS *The Context of Scripture*, ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, Jr. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002.
- CTH *Catalogue des textes hittites*, ed. E. Laroche. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971.
- DDD *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. 2nd ed. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- DUL G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- EA El-Amarna tablets
- EI *Eretz-Israel*
- HALOT L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
- HAR *Hebrew Annual Review*
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*
- IEJ *Israel Exploration Journal*
- IOS *Israel Oriental Studies*
- JAAR *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*
- JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
- Jouön P. Jouön, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. Translated and revised by T. Muraoka. 2 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993.
- JSOT *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
- KAI H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–69.
- KUB *Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi*
- MARI *Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires*
- RA *Revue d'assyriologie*
- RB *Revue biblique*
- RS *Ras Shamra*
- SJOT *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
- TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974–.
- TZ *Theologische Zeitschrift*

UF	<i>Ugarit Forschungen</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</i>
ZAH	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebräistik</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins</i>

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Notes

PREFACE

1. In most versions (Neofiti, Pseudo-Jonathan, Fragment Targums V and N) at Exodus 12:42, in others (Fragment Targum P, Geniza manuscript FF) at Exodus 15:18; see M. L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch*, 2 vols. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 1:23; and R. Le Déaut, *La Nuit Pascale: Essai sur la signification de la Pâque juive à partir du Targum d'Exode XII 42* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1963), 66–71 (though Le Déaut implausibly assumes that this celestial book is not the Torah). My thanks to Daniel Boyarin for clarifying the sense of this passage for me.

2. E. Renan, “What Is a Nation?” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. H. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 19, 11 (French original, 1882). Among the many recent studies of these issues, see particularly B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 187–206 (“Memory and Forgetting”); and A. D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

3. See L. Febvre, *A New Kind of History*, ed. P. Burke (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980); and the impressive collection of J. Revel and L. Hunt, eds., *Histories: French Constructions of the Past* (New York: Free Press, 1995). See also the overviews of J. Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), esp. 90–111; P. H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993); and K. L. Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (2000): 127–50.

4. Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 2nd ed.

(New York: Schocken, 1989), 14. Notable recent works on this topic in biblical studies include E. L. Greenstein, "Mixing Memory and Design: Reading Psalm 78," *Prooftexts* 10 (1990): 197–218; J. Blenkinsopp, "Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel," *BTB* 27 (1997): 76–82; M. Z. Brettler, "Memory in Ancient Israel," in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism*, ed. M. A. Signer (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 1–17; M. S. Smith, "Remembering God: Collective Memory in Israelite Religion," *CBQ* 64 (2002), 631–51; also the remarkable work of J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

CHAPTER I

1. According to Deuteronomy 3:11, Og was the last of the גרפאים, the aboriginal giants of Canaan, and his huge iron bed (or iron coffin) was on display at Rabbah, the capital city of Ammon. Its dimensions were $13\frac{1}{2}$ feet (9 cubits) long by 6 feet (4 cubits) wide. It is possible that the tradition of the giant stature of the aboriginal Canaanites was inferred from the huge ruined walls of Middle Bronze Age (2200–1500 B.C.E.) tells, combined with old traditions of the quasi-divine Rephaim; see recently H. Rouillard, "Rephaim," *DDD*, 692–700.

2. This passage belongs to the oldest stratum of biblical poetry; see recently S. Morag, "Layers of Antiquity: Some Linguistic Observations on the Oracles of Balaam" (Hebrew), in Morag, *Studies on Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), 45–69.

3. See A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

4. P. Machinist, "The Question of Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay," in *Ah, Assyria . . . Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. M. Cogan and I. Eph'al, *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 33 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 196–212; idem, "Outsiders or Insiders: The Biblical View of Emergent Israel and Its Contexts," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, ed. L. J. Silberstein and R. L. Cohn (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 35–60.

5. J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 44–47.

6. Assmann, *Moses*, 2–3.

7. Deir ʿAlla 1.1–4. See J. A. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā*, *Harvard Semitic Monographs* 31 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984); S. Ahituv, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1992), 265–86.

8. On the methods involved in dating the biblical sources, see R. E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); D. M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996); A. Rofé, *Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

9. A. Rofé, *The Book of Balaam* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Simor, 1979), 49–57; idem, *Introduction*, 93–94.

10. Gershom Scholem, “Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 289–90: “Not system but *commentary* is the legitimate form though which truth is approached. . . . Commentary thus became the characteristic expression of Jewish thinking about truth.”

11. P. K. McCarter, Jr., *Ancient Inscriptions: Voices from the Biblical World* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1996), 48–50; for the whole text, M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2, *The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 73–77; for recent discussion, A. F. Rainey, “Israel in Merneptah’s Inscription and Reliefs,” *IEJ* 51 (2001), 57–75.

12. See the recent syntheses of L. E. Stager, “Forging an Identity: The Emergence of Ancient Israel,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. M. D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 123–75; I. Finkelstein, “The Great Transformation: The ‘Conquest’ of the Highlands Frontiers and the Rise of the Territorial States,” in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, 2nd ed., T. E. Levy, (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), 349–65; W. G. Dever, “The Late Bronze-Early Iron I Horizon in Syria-Palestine: Egyptians, Canaanites, ‘Sea Peoples,’ and Proto-Israelites,” in *The Crisis Years: The 12th Century B.C. from Beyond the Danube to the Tigris*, ed. W. A. Ward and M. S. Joukowsky (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1992), 99–110.

13. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

14. See I. Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

15. On the Exodus stories as a symbolic rite of passage, R. L. Cohn, *The Shape of Sacred Space* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), 7–23; R. S. Hendel, “Sacrifice as a Cultural System: The Ritual Symbolism of Exodus 24:3–8,” *ZAW* 101 (1989): 375–79; W.H.C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, Anchor Bible 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 35–36.

16. D. B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1992), 221–27.

17. For further details, see B. Halpern, “The Exodus from Egypt: Myth or Reality?” in *The Rise of Ancient Israel*, ed. H. Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), 86–113; and ch. 4.

18. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 64 (German original, 1930).

19. The Kenites are mentioned in only a handful of biblical passages: Josh 15:57; Judg 4–5; Judg 1:16; 1 Sam 15:6, 27:10, 30:29; 1 Chr 2:55. See B. Halpern, “Kenites,” *ABD* 4:17–22.

20. R. Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990).

21. R. S. Hendel, *Epic of the Patriarch: The Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 42 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 84, 128.

22. Hendel, *Epic*, 128–31.

23. See R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 42–45.

24. The major studies are F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Translations of the religious texts are available in S. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); W. W. Hallo, ed., *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1, *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 239–375; N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); M. D. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978); and *ANET*, 129–55.

25. The vocalization of the Ugaritic name of the serpent is unclear. Ugaritic *ltn* and Hebrew *liwyātān* may be derived from the following feminine noun types: **qatalat*, **qatilat*, or **qitlat* (+ the affix *an*). Any of the three would yield Hebrew *liwyātān* (the first two with vowel reduction and the rule of *shwa*), and with contractions of the middle syllables could yield Ugaritic *Lôtan* or *Litan*; cf. the treatment of J. A. Emerton, “Leviathan and *ltn*: The Vocalization of the Ugaritic Word for the Dragon,” *VT* 32 (1982): 327–31, who assumes the derivation from **qitlat* without considering the alternatives.

26. Biblical allusions to the defeat of chaos monsters in primeval times include Ps 74:13–14 (the vanquished are Sea, Dragons, Leviathan), Isa 51:9–10 (Rahab, Dragon, Sea), Job 40–41 (Leviathan and Behemoth); see J. Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

27. On El in Canaan and Israel, see Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 13–75; Smith, *Early History*, 7–12; Day, *Yahweh*, 13–41; W. Herrmann, “El,” *DDD*, 274–80.

28. A Hebrew inscription from the eighth-seventh century B.C.E. reads [ל]קנארין (a trace of the *lamed* is readable), hence probably “[El], creator of earth”; see P. D. Miller, “El, The Creator of Earth,” *BASOR* 239 (1980): 43–46; Ahituv, *Handbook*, 22–23.

29. The term *šadday* is also used, in the plural, to denote the gods of the Deir ‘Alla inscription, discussed previously (n. 7). These gods are the שרין, the “mountain ones.”

30. On Asherah in Canaan and Israel, see Smith, *Early History*, 80–114; J. Day, “Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 385–408; idem, *Yahweh*, 42–67; S. M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 1–37; N. Wyatt, “Asherah,” *DDD*, 99–105; J. M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and n. 37.

31. On the *battim* woven for Asherah, cf. Akkadian *bētātu*, “a decoration used on garments and leather objects” (*CAD*, s.v.); and note the comparable function of the *bīt pirišti*, “a room in the Babylonian temple complex which was used to house the vestments of priests and the garments used to clothe the statues of deities” (L. T. Doty, “Akkadian *bīt pirišti*,” in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of*

William W. Hallo, ed. M. E. Cohen, D. C. Snell, and D. B. Weisberg [Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993], 87–89).

32. On the theme of cultic purity and impurity among Israel's monarchs in the books of Kings, see B. Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 220–28.

33. On the biblical passages, see especially Olyan, *Asherah*, 3–22.

34. The literature on these inscriptions is vast; see the thorough treatments and reviews of literature in O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 210–48; S. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of 'Asherah': A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia B.C.E.* (Neukirchen: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993); W. Dietrich and M. A. Klopfenstein, eds., *Ein Gott allein?: JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994); Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 358–405; and n. 30.

35. Aḥituv, *Handbook*, 152–60.

36. Aḥituv, *Handbook*, 111–13. Some of the words are indistinct or overwritten, and there are other possible readings.

37. W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longman's, 1902).

38. See K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); R. Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion: Religionsinterner Pluralismus in Israel und Babylon* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1978); idem, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 1: 25–39, 94–103, 186–95. M. Weippert and P. D. Miller usefully add a mediating category of “local religion”; Weippert, *Jahwe und die anderen Götter: Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel in ihrem syrisch-palästinischen Kontext* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 9–19; Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 62–105, esp. 76–79.

39. Reading אֱל שַׁדַי, “God (El), the One of the Mountain” with the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Syriac Pešitta (the Septuagint also reads אֱל); the Masoretic Text reads אֱח שַׁדַי, “with the One of the Mountain. . . .” The poetic parallelism of this line strongly supports reading אֱל here rather than the preposition אֶח (which is found predominantly in prose); the Masoretic text has apparently suffered a small scribal error.

40. For one such dialectal variation, see R. S. Hendel, “Sibilants and šibbōlet (Judges 12:6),” *BASOR* 301 (1996): 69–75.

41. M. Fox, “Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Light of the Priestly ʿōt Etiologies,” *RB* 81 (1974): 557–96.

42. H. Eilberg Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 141–76.

43. The earliest evidence is from ca. 2800 B.C.E. in Syria; see J. Sasson, “Circumcision in the Ancient Near East,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 473–76; W.H.C. Propp, “The Origins of Infant Circumcision in Israel,” *HAR* 11 (1987): 355; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961) 46–48.

44. L. E. Stager, “The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185–1050 BCE),” in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 332–48.
45. This is suggested in passing by Stager, “Impact,” 344.
46. Propp, “Infant Circumcision,” 363–66; on the intensive plural form, see *HALOT*, 563.
47. On this transformation, see S.J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 241–62.
48. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.257–58 (Edom), 318 (Ituria/Yeter); Judith 14:10 (Ammun). On the significance of circumcision in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see Cohen, *Beginnings*, 39–49, 120–25; J. J. Collins, “A Symbol of Otherness: Circumcision and Salvation in the First Century,” *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 211–35.
49. On the perhaps related symbolism of God’s body, see R. S. Hendel, “Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel,” in *The Image and the Book*, ed. K. van der Toorn (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 205–28.
50. Mary Douglas, “The Abominations of Leviticus,” in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 41–57; idem, “Deciphering a Meal,” in *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 249–75; and recently idem, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 134–75.
51. Stager, “Forging,” 165; see also idem, “Impact,” 344.
52. On the general rarity of pork production in the Levant in the second and first millennia B.C.E., see B. Hesse, “Pig Lovers and Pig Haters: Patterns of Palestinian Pork Production,” *Journal of Ethnobiology* 10 (1990): 195–225.
53. Stager, “Impact,” 344.
54. See S. Talmon, “The Calendar of the Covenanters of the Judean Desert,” in *The World of Qumran from Within: Collected Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), 147–85; J. C. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time* (London: Routledge, 1998).
55. W. W. Hallo, *Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 127–35 and references.
56. Ahituv, *Handbook*, 98–99 (the Yavneh Yam letter).
57. E.g., Amos 8:5, Hos 2:13, Isa 1:13, each in the context of a critique of public injustice or immorality, implying that the Sabbath was a well-entrenched religious tradition by this time.
58. M. Z. Brettler (“Judaism in the Hebrew Bible? The Transition from Ancient Israelite Religion to Judaism,” *CBQ* 61 [1999]: 436–38) offers cogent counterarguments to the view—originally rooted in religious apologetics—that circumcision and the Sabbath only became signs of Israelite identity after the exile.
59. See the excellent surveys of J.J.M. Roberts, “The Ancient Near Eastern Environment” and “The Bible and the Literature of the Ancient Near East,” in Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, Ind. Eisenbrauns, 2002), 3–58.

60. The prohibition, “do not go up” (אל תעלי), in the second line is also a word-play on “do not sacrifice.”
61. The sense of קדושה, lit. “sacred women,” in parallel with “prostitutes,” is uncertain; see K. van der Toorn, “Cultic Prostitution,” *ABD* 5, 510–13; and the following note.
62. M. J. W. Leith, “Verse and Reverse: The Transformation of the Woman, Israel, in Hosea 1–3,” *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. P. L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 95–108; P. A. Bird, “‘To Play the Harlot’: An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor,” in *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 219–36.
63. On adultery and nymphomania as metaphors for idolatry, see M. Halbertal and A. Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 9–20.
64. T. N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995), 168–91; Zevit, *Religions*, 256–65.
65. See B. Halpern, “The Baal (and the Asherah) in Seventh-Century Judah: Yhwh’s Retainers Retired,” *Konsequente Traditionsgeschichte: Festschrift für Klaus Baltzer zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. R. Bartelmus, et al. (Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1993), 115–54. Halpern argues that the “baals” in such denunciations often refer to the “heavenly host,” that is, the angels. On the denigration of the angels in biblical writings of this period, see also A. Rofé, *The Belief in Angels in Israel* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Makor, 1979).
66. B. Halpern, “Sybil, or the Two Nations? Archaism, Kinship, Alienation, and the Elite Redefinition of Traditional Culture in Judah in the 8th–7th Centuries B.C.E.,” in *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 291–338.
67. van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 375.
68. R. S. Hendel, “Prophets, Priests, and the Efficacy of Ritual,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 185–98.
69. P. K. McCarter, Jr., “The Religious Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah,” in *Aspects of Monotheism: How God Is One*, ed. H. Shanks and J. Meinhardt (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1997), 57–80.
70. B. Halpern, “Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century B.C.E.: Kinship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability,” in *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*, ed. B. Halpern and D. W. Hobson (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 41–49; idem, “Sybil,” 311–21.
71. On the date of Deuteronomy and its religious innovations, see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), esp. 191–243 (“Demythologization and Secularization”); Halpern, “Sybil,” 327–37; and B. M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
72. On the issue of multiple manifestations of Yahweh, see P. K. McCarter, Jr.,

“Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy: Biblical and Epigraphic Data,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, Jr., P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 137–43; idem, “Religious Reforms,” 57–80.

73. On the key texts, see G. N. Knoppers, “Sex, Religion, and Politics: The Deuteronomist on Intermarriage,” *HAR* 14 (1994): 121–41.

74. The name of God’s mountain fluctuates between Sinai (in J and P) and Horeb (in E and Deuteronomy).

75. On the exegetical issues raised by Deuteronomy, cf. M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 435–40; Levinson, *Deuteronomy*, 15–17.

76. Midrash Tanḥuma 2.58b; trans. Scholem, “Revelation and Tradition,” 289.

77. The land of Uz (Job 1:1) is probably to be located in the Arabian peninsula; see E. A. Knauf, “Uz,” *ABD* 6: 770–71.

78. See the illuminating discussion of M. Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 67–94.

79. Note that the object of the command “let them pray” (Jonah 3:8) can also be construed as including the cows; see J. M. Sasson, *Jonah*, Anchor Bible 24B (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 257.

80. R. S. Hendel, “Worldmaking in Ancient Israel,” *JSOT* 56 (1992): 3–18.

CHAPTER 2

1. On sites of memory and the collective past, see P. Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); J. Assmann, “Kollektive Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität,” in *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, ed. J. Assmann and T. Hölscher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 9–19; P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 43–59 (“History as Social Memory”); E. Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). A landmark in the modern discussion is M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980; French original, 1950).

2. Several of these texts are treated in passing in B. S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London: SCM, 1962), 42–44; and W. Schottroff, “Gedenken” im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament: Die Wurzel zākar im semitischen Sprachkreis (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1964), 195–206.

3. On the typological interpretation of Abraham in Second Isaiah, see M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 375.

4. On the irregular grammar (a threefold ellipsis of אֵת or עַם after בְּרִיתִי), see Joüon, §129a, n. 4.

5. On this exilic expansion in Leviticus 26, see B. A. Levine, “The Epilogue to the Holiness Code,” in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. J. Neusner, B. A. Levine, and E. S. Frerichs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 24–25; A. Rofé, “Promise and Covenant: The Promise to the Patriarchs in Late Biblical Literature,” in *Divine Prom-*

ises to the Fathers in the Three Monotheistic Religions, ed. A. Niccacci (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1995), 56–57.

6. See A. D. Smith, “Nation and Ethnoscape,” in *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 149–59.

7. Shechem (Gen 12:6–7); between Bethel and Ai (Gen 12:8); Beersheba (21:33); Moriah (Gen 22:9).

8. This aspect of the story is aptly emphasized by R. Alter, “Sodom and Nexus: The Web of Design in Biblical Narrative,” in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, ed. R. M. Schwartz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 157: “Sodom, firmly lodged between the enunciation of the covenantal promise and its fulfillment, becomes the great monitory model, the myth of a terrible collective destiny antithetical to Israel’s.”

9. Genesis 14:18–20; 22:1–19. The place-name Shalem (Gen 14:18) is an abbreviation for Jerusalem in Ps 76:3 (parallel with Zion). The identification of Mt. Moriah with the Temple Mount is explicit in 2 Chron 3:1 and may be implicit in the reference to “the mountain of Yahweh” (הַר יְהוָה) in Gen 22:14; cf. this designation of the Temple Mount in Ps 24:3; Isa 2:3, 30:29.

10. Gen 25:8–10; on the possibility that Abraham’s tomb was a site of pilgrimage in biblical times, see H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997), 269.

11. See M. V. Fox, “The Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in the Light of the Priestly *ʔdt* Etiologies,” *RB* 81 (1974): 594–95. Fox argues convincingly that in Genesis 17 “circumcision is a cognition sign—like the other *ʔdt* in P—whose function is to remind God to keep his promise of posterity” (italics in original).

12. The expansion of the name from Abram to Abraham is motivated in God’s speech by the word *hāmōn* (“many”), as if the name was *ābrā(m) + hām(ōn)*; on the logic of such “midrashic” etymologies, see M. Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1991), 18–21.

13. Note the transformation of identity implied in the name change from Abram to Abraham. The motive clause is best translated, “for I (hereby) make you a father of many nations,” using *נַחֲמִיךָ* as a performative perfect; cf. Gen 1:29; 23:11; and D. R. Hillers, “Some Performative Utterances in the Bible,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. D. P. Wright, D. N. Freedman, and A. Hurvitz (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 757–66, esp. 762 (on *נַחֲמִיךָ*).

14. The authority of Abraham may have something to do historically with the power of the tribe of Judah during the Davidic-Solomonic kingdom, a time when the patriarchal traditions were crystallizing. Note that the main geographical associations of Abraham are with Hebron and Beersheba, both in Judah (though he also founds cultic sites in the north), whereas Jacob’s main associations are with Shechem and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim/Manasseh; see P. K. McCarter, Jr., and R. S. Hendel, “The Patriarchal Age: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, ed. H. Shanks, 2nd ed. (Washington,

D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999), 13–14, 22–27. Another factor is Abraham's dominant image as an aged and venerable man, in contrast to Jacob, whose dominant image is as a younger and more enterprising man, and therefore of lesser status; see the apt remarks of J. L. Ska, "Essai sur la nature et la signification du cycle d'Abraham (Gn 11, 27–25, 11)," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History*, ed. A. Wénin (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 165.

15. Important treatments of this topic include N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), 293–337; R. R. Wilson, "Enforcing the Covenant: The Mechanisms of Judicial Authority in Early Israel," in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, ed. H. B. Huffmon, F. A. Spina, and A. R. Green (Winoona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 59–75; and L. G. Perdue, J. Blenkinsopp, J. J. Collins, and C. Meyers, *Families in Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997); and on the complementary functions of the vertical patriline of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob and the horizontal segmentation of Jacob's line (the twelve tribes), see R. A. Oden, *The Bible without Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 118–20. The classic work on this type of segmentary lineage structure is W. R. Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (2nd ed.; London: Black, 1903); and see recently P. Khoury and J. Kostiner, eds., *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

16. Hence, those with attenuated kinship ties, such as widows and orphans, may fall outside of the care of a household or clan, leaving them helpless and without public rights; see P. S. Hiebert, "‘Whence Shall Help Come to Me?’: The Biblical Widow," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. P. L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 125–41, esp. 129–30. On the embedding of the individual in the kinship structures, see further R. A. DiVito, "Old Testament Anthropology and the Construction of Personal Identity," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 221–25.

17. On the punishment of being "cut off" (כרת), see J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 457–60.

18. K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 256.

19. On the identity of the God of the Father as El—originally the Canaanite high god who assimilated with Yahweh—note the reference to "El, the god of (the patriarch) Israel" (אל אלהי ישראל) (Gen 33:20) and the numerous other El titles in the patriarchal narratives (El Olam, El Bethel, El Shadday, etc.); see F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 46–60; van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 257–61.

20. R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 29.

21. See n. 25.

22. E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Structures of Religious Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1915), 492: "Society supposes a self-conscious organization which is nothing other than a classification," and this classification often serves as a model for (and reproduction of) collective representations of time and space.

23. A. Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 35.

24. On the historical memories embedded in the patriarchal narratives, see ch. 3.

25. This structure is briefly resumed with the priestly genealogy (“these are the descendants of Aaron . . .”) in Num 3:1. On the תולדות structure, see O. Eissfeldt, “Biblos geneoseōs,” in *Kleine Schriften*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1966), 458–70; Cross, 301–5; D. Carr, “Βίβλος γενέσεως Revisited: A Synchronic Analysis of Patterns in Genesis as Part of the Torah (Part One),” *ZAW* 110 (1998): 159–72.

26. Primeval Narrative: Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10. Patriarchal Narrative: Gen 11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2. This structure is slightly complicated by the wording of Gen 5:1, **ספר תולדת אדם** (“this is the book of the descendants of Adam”), which is likely the original from which the formulaic rubrics were derived, and by the repetition of **אלה תלדות עשו** (“these are the descendants of Esau”) in Gen 35:9; see Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 302.

27. C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 257. Lévi-Strauss’s point is that all historiography is so conditioned: “History is therefore never history, but history-for. It is partial in the sense of being biased even when it claims not to be, for it inevitably remains partial—that is, incomplete.”

28. M. Sternberg, “Time and Space in Biblical (Hi)story Telling: The Grand Chronology,” in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, ed. R. Schwartz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 120. This effect was earlier noted by O. Eissfeldt, “Biblos geneoseōs,” 461–62; see now D. Carr, “Βίβλος γενέσεως Revisited,” 328.

29. The Shemite line directly ancestral to Abraham resumes in Gen 11:10.

30. Sternberg, “Time and Space,” 120.

31. So, e.g., G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 159, 245; and cf. the comments of Oden, *Bible without Theology*, 110–12.

32. See Ska, “Essai,” 163: “Le cycle d’Abraham est donc un récit qui renvoie massivement au-delà de ses propres limites, vers un temps qui est celui du lecteur et même plus loin encore, vers un temps indéfini (‘pour toujours’).”

33. Note the disparaging portraits of Esau and Ishmael as men of wild nature (Gen 16:12; 25:27–30), even as they are worthy of some measure of blessing (Gen 21:18–20; 27:40).

34. A warrior-sheik in Genesis 14, a shrewd dealer in Gen 12:10–20, a prophet in Gen 20:7.

35. E.g., Genesis 14–15 is not J, E, or P, nor is Genesis 49, and probably not Genesis 24. For recent discussion, see D. M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 163–66, 249–53; A. de Pury, “Abraham: The Priestly Writer’s ‘Ecumenical’ Ancestor,” in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible*, ed. S. McKenzie and T. Römer (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 163–81; T. Römer, “Recherches actuelles sur le cycle d’Abraham,” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History*, ed. A. Wénin (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 179–211; A. Rofé, *Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 91–95.

36. See R. S. Hendel, “Tangled Plots in Genesis,” in *Fortunate the Eyes that See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. A. B. Beck, A. H. Bartelt, P. R. Raabe, and C. A. Franke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 35–51; idem, “The Poetics of Myth in Genesis,” in *The Seductiveness of Jewish Myth*, ed. S. D. Breslauer (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 157–70.

37. In some J stories the resolution too is human driven, as in the Dina story in Genesis 34 or the Tamar story in Genesis 38.

38. See the fine treatment of S. E. McEvenue, “The Elohist at Work,” *ZAW* 96 (1984): 315–32.

39. Compare the wife-sister stories of Gen 12:10–20, J; Genesis 20, E; see Hendel, “Tangled Plots,” 42–43.

40. Compare Abraham’s defense of his claim that Sarah is his sister in E (Gen 20:12) to his conspicuous silence in J (Gen 12:19).

41. The word שׁה (“sheep”) can designate any small livestock, sheep or goat, so that an אֵיל (“ram”) counts as a שׁה; see *HALOT*, 1310.

42. Cf. Joseph’s revelation of the meaning of his brothers’ actions in Gen 50:20 (E): “You intended it as evil for me, but God intended it for good.”

43. The term is borrowed from M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 160, where he describes his own practice as a “counter-memory” in contrast to traditional historiography. I am also drawing on the sense of “counterhistory” in A. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 36: “Their function is polemical. Their method consists of the systematic exploitation of the adversary’s most trusted sources against their grain.”

44. See recently B. Levenson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

45. On E, see McEvenue, “Elohist,” 329–30. On P, see Carr, *Reading the Fractures*, 125–29; R. E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 188–206.

46. M. Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1–20* [New York: Doubleday, 1983], 189) comments on the basis of this claim: “Here expulsion from YHWH’s land is equated with a severance of ties with YHWH and hence of title to his land;” see further on the legal language of this claim, F. M. Cross, “A Papyrus Recording a Divine Legal Decision and the Root *rḥq* in Biblical and Near Eastern Legal Usage,” in Cross, *Leaves from an Epigrapher’s Notebook* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 68–69. See also S. Japhet, “People and Land in the Restoration Period,” in *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit*, ed. G. Strecker (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 106–8.

47. The seed for this view is Ezek 11:17; see Japhet, “People and Land,” 112–17; S. Talmon, “The Emergence of Jewish Sectarianism in the Early Second Temple Period,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 599–601.

48. See R. Firestone, “Jewish Culture in the Formative Period of Islam,” in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. D. Biale (New York: Schocken, 2002), 274–79.

49. From *Kitāb al-Aḡanī*, trans. J. Obermann, “Early Islam,” in *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, ed. R. C. Dentan (New Haven: Yale University, 1955), 264.

CHAPTER 3

1. W. F. Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra: An Historical Survey* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 2; see also idem, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957), 236–49.
2. The major critiques were J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); and T. L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974). Similar criticisms were earlier advanced by B. Mazar, “The Historical Background of the Book of Genesis,” *JNES* 28 (1969): 73–83, reprinted in Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies*, ed. S. Ahituv and B. A. Levine (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 49–62. For an insightful treatment of Albright’s method, see D. N. Freedman, “W. F. Albright as Historian,” in *Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: Selected Writings of David Noel Freedman*, ed. J. R. Huddleston, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 1:447–56.
3. E.g., A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman, eds., *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983); R. S. Hess, P. E. Satterthwaite, and G. J. Wenham, eds., *He Swore an Oath: Biblical Themes from Genesis 12–50* (Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1993); A. R. Millard, “Abraham,” *ABD* 1:35–41; K. A. Kitchen, “The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?” *BAR* 21/2 (1995): 48–57, 88–95. On the flaws in Kitchen’s arguments, see R. S. Hendel, “Dating the Patriarchal Age,” *BAR* 21/4 (1995): 56–57.
4. See G. I. Davies, “Genesis and the Early History of Israel: A Survey of Research,” in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History*, ed. A. Wénin (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 104–34; P. K. McCarter, Jr., and R. S. Hendel, “The Patriarchal Age: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,” in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, ed. H. Shanks, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999), 1–31. Davies astutely notes (107–8) that Julius Wellhausen did not regard the stories as inventions of the Pentateuchal writers, a position often attributed to him. Wellhausen was referring to the formative era of Israelite society in his oft-quoted remark (*Prolegomena to the History of Israel* [Edinburgh: Black, 1885; German original, 1883], 319): “we attain to no historical knowledge of the patriarchs, but only of the time when the stories about them arose in the Israelite people; this later age is here unconsciously projected, in its inner and its outward features, into hoar antiquity, and is reflected there like a glorified mirage.” This position is not materially different from that of Mazar (n. 2).
5. M. Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 1:92–102.
6. The story first occurs in the fifth edition of M. L. (Parson) Weems’s popular book, *The Life of Washington the Great: Enriched with a Number of Very Curious Anecdotes, Perfectly in Character, and Equally Honorable to Himself, and Exemplary to His Young Countrymen*, 5th ed. (Augusta, Ga.: G. F. Randolph, 1806), 9. Weems claims to have heard the story from “an aged lady, who was a distant relation.”
7. Genesis 31; on the ninth-century Aramean wars, see the Tel Dan stela and 2

Kings 8–13; E. Lipiński, *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 372–90; W. T. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus: A Historical Study of the Syrian City-State from Earliest Times until Its Fall to the Assyrians in 732 B.C.E.* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 107–60. The relevance of this probable correlation for the date of JE was noted by Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 323.

8. The Chaldean tribes became an important force in southern Mesopotamia beginning in the 8th century B.C.E.; two kings of Babylonia, Erība-Marduk (ruled 773–761) and Marduk-apla-iddina II (biblical Merodachbaladan, Isa 39:1; ruled 721–710 and 703), were from the Chaldean tribe of Bit Yākin, whose territory was the region around Ur; by the Neo-Babylonian period, the names Chaldea and Babylonia are used synonymously; see Lipiński, *Aramaean*, 415–22; R. S. Hess, “Chaldea,” *ABD* 1:886–87.

9. E. A. Knauf, “Ishmaelites,” *ABD* 3:513–20.

10. Wellhausen (*Prolegomena*, 338) argued for the Neo-Assyrian date of JE. In addition to the reference to Ur of the Chaldees, the listing of Nineveh as a major Assyrian city points in this direction (Gen 10:11–12, J), as perhaps the cultural identification of the Tigris River with Assyria (Gen 2:14, J). On the historical period of JE, see also Appendix.

11. On the Shishak stela, see K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 B.C.)* 2nd ed. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986), 294–300, 432–47; B. Mazar, “Pharaoh Shishak’s Campaign to the Land of Israel,” in Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 139–50; and Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 323–30.

12. J. E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 18, 205, 235–37, 568. The relevance of this text was first noted by J. H. Breasted, “The Earliest Occurrence of the Name of Abram,” *AJS* 21 (1904): 22–36; and W. Spiegelberg, *Aegyptologische Randglossen zum Alten Testament* (Strassburg: Schlesier & Schweikhardt, 1904), 14.

13. Compare the variations of Abner (1 Sam 14:51, etc.) with Abiner (1 Sam 14:50); Abshalom (2 Chron 11:20–21) with Abishalom (1 Kings 15:2, 10).

14. Hoch, *Semitic Words*, 18, 205.

15. See further A. F. Rainey, “Egyptian Evidence for Semitic Linguistics,” in *Past Links: Studies in the Languages and Cultures of the Ancient Near East*, ed. S. Izre’el, I. Singer, and R. Zadok, IOS 18 (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 445–46.

16. Van Seters, *Abraham*, 41.

17. See recently M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 222–64. Note that in the J and P stories, Abraham generally lives at Hebron, which is where David first ruled as king (2 Sam 2:1–4; cf. Gen 13:18 [J]; 23:2 [P]).

18. A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 390–97. On the disputes about dating the sites of this period, see ch. 5.

19. Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 329.

20. On the ν variation in מְחִיאל and מְחִיאל in MT of Gen 4:18, see R. S. Hen-

del, *The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 47–48.

21. Mahalalel and Methuselah (Gen 5:12, 21, P) appear to be variants of Meḥiyael and Methushael (Gen 4:18, J); see R. R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 161–63.

22. מַחִיאל (4:18), מְתוּשָׁאֵל (4:18), מְהַלְלָאֵל (5:13), אַבִּימָאֵל (10:28), יִשְׁמַעְאֵל (16:11), קַמְוִאֵל (22:21), בְּתוּאֵל (22:22), אֶלְדֵּעָה (25:4), אֶרְבָּאֵל (25:13), רְעוּאֵל (36:10), מְנַדָּאֵל (36:43), יִמּוּאֵל (46:10), אֵלּוֹן (46:14), יְהִלְאֵל (46:14), מַלְכִּי־אֵל (46:17), יִחְצַאֵל (46:24), יִשְׂרָאֵל (32:29). It has often been suggested that Jacob (יעקב) may be short for Jacob-El, found in topographical lists of Thutmose III, Rameses II, and Rameses III and located somewhere in northern Israel; see McCarter and Hendel, “Patriarchs,” 25–26 and nn. 67–69. This place-name may have some relation to early Jacob traditions.

23. הַדָּד (25:15), אֲשַׁבֵּל (46:21). Several Edomite kings have Hadad or Baal in their names (Gen 36:35–39) but are not directly linked to Esau’s lineage.

24. A. Alt, “The God of the Fathers,” in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968; German original, 1929), 7–8.

25. On recent debates about the nature of the J source, see A. de Pury, “Yahwist (‘J’) Source,” *ABD* 6: 1012–20; and the cogent defense of the ‘standard model’ by E. Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

26. See ch. 1, “The Canaanite Matrix.” On the proto-Sinaitic inscriptions with the name אֵל (“El”), see M. Dijkstra, “Semitic Worship at Serabit el-Khadim (Sinai),” *ZAH* 10 (1997): 92–93; and B. Sass, *The Genesis of the Alphabet and Its Development in the Second Millennium B.C.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 39 (the clearest examples are nos. 377 and 378; see also nos. 350 and 363). These date probably to the nineteenth century B.C.E., on the basis of similar finds at Wadi el-Hol. On the archaeological and textual evidence for a Temple of El in Shechem (ca. 1600–1100 B.C.E., see L. E. Stager, “The Fortress-Temple at Shechem and the ‘House of El, Lord of the Covenant,’” in *Realia Dei: Essays in Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Edward F. Campbell, Jr.*, ed. P. H. Williams, Jr., and T. Hiebert (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 228–49. Note that many second millennium references to אֵל are generic—“god” or “the god”—and without context it is difficult to distinguish between the generic and proper noun.

27. The title “El, creator of earth” is attested in West Semitic religion from the Late Bronze Age (the Hittite myth of Elkunirša) to the 2nd century C.E. (a neo-Punic inscription), including a partially broken 8th–7th cent. B.C.E. inscription from Jerusalem; see P. D. Miller, Jr., “El, The Creator of Earth,” *BASOR* 239 (1980): 43–46.

28. See further F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 1–75; M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 7–12; J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 13–41. See also the fine syntheses of R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 1:25–39; K. van der Toorn, *Family*

Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 236–65; and cf. the minimalist position of J. Van Seters, “The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis,” *Biblica* 61 (1980): 220–33.

29. See the important study of D. E. Fleming, “Mari and the Possibilities of Biblical Memory,” *RA* 92 (1998): 41–78; also J.-M. Durand, “Réalités amorrites et traditions bibliques,” *RA* 92 (1998): 3–39; G. Buccellati, “From Khana to Laqé: The End of Syro-Mesopotamia,” in *De la Babylonie à la Syrie, en passant par Mari: Mélanges offerts à J.-R. Kupper*, ed. Ö. Tunca (Liège: Université de Liège, 1990), 229–53; A. Malamat, *Mari and the Early Israelite Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 52–54; and the still valuable treatment of R. de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 193–200. In referring to this region as Syro-Mesopotamia, I follow Buccellati’s emphasis that during the Bronze Age there was a cultural continuum in this region including the rural Syrian steppeland west of the Euphrates; Fleming (“Mari,” 61–62) cites a Mari letter that describes the Yaminite pastoral range extending all the way to Qatna and Amurru, reaching southern Syria and Lebanon.

30. D. Frayne, “In Abraham’s Footsteps,” in *The World of the Aramaeans: Biblical Studies in Honour of Paul-Eugène Dion*, ed. M. Daviau, J. W. Wevers, and M. Weigl, 3 vols. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 1:225; B. J. Beitzel, “The Old Assyrian Caravan Road in the Mari Royal Archives,” in *Mari in Retrospect*, ed. G. D. Young (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 36, 38, 52; Fleming, “Mari,” 71.

31. Frayne, “Abraham’s,” 219–20, 229; de Vaux, *Early History of Israel*, 196.

32. Beitzel, “Old Assyrian,” 36–37.

33. On Aramean-Israelite relations, see Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, and his remarks on this issue on p. 86.

34. The nuance of the word ʾōbēd, “wandering, perishing,” is not entirely clear in this verse; see recently Lipiński, *Aramaean*, 55–58.

35. See n. 29.

36. R. M. Whiting, “Amorite Tribes and Nations of Second-Millennium Western Asia,” *CANE*, 1231–42; D. E. Fleming, *Democracy’s Ancient Ancestors: Mari and Early Collective Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

37. *Archives royales de Mari* XXVI.24, cited by Fleming, “Mari,” 69: “Asdi-takim and the kings of Zalmaqum, with the chiefs and elders of the Yaminites, have slain the ass together in the Sîn temple of Ḫarrân.” (The sacrifice of a donkey is an Amorite tribal rite that confirms a treaty relationship.) Fleming notes, “This is core Yaminite territory.”

38. The names of the descendants of Nahor in Genesis 22:20–24, including Aram and Chesed (i.e., the Chaldeans), are another indication of first-millennium updating, in the case of the Chaldeans reflecting conditions known from the ninth–eighth centuries B.C.E.

39. Note, for example, the difficulties Van Seters finds in accounting for “this feeling of kinship with the Arameans of Northwestern Mesopotamia” (*Abraham*, 34). He appeals, among other things, to the Assyrian mass deportations of Israelites to this region and to the importance of the trade route through Ḫarrân during the Neo-Babylonian period as possible factors encouraging a sense of kinship with Arameans.

These factors do not seem adequate to the prominence of this relationship in the biblical text, as the tentativeness of Van Seters's discussion seems to acknowledge.

40. E.g., Van Seters, *Abraham*, 159; P. G. Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 108–14; H. M. Wahl, *Die Jakobserzählungen: Studien zu ihrer mündlichen Überlieferung, Verschriftung und Historizität* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 58–62, 113–44, 289–96. For criticisms of Van Seter's treatment of oral tradition, see R. S. Hendel, *The Epic of the Patriarch: The Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 26–27; for criticisms of Kirkpatrick and Wahl, see n. 45.

41. A. Malamat, "The Proto-History of Israel: A Study in Method," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 306.

42. A recently published Akkadian text from Late Bronze Age Emar describes king Pilsu-Dagan of Emar as "king of the people of the land of *Qiri*," perhaps the land recalled by Amos as the Aramean homeland; for this interpretation, see R. Zaidok, "Elements of Aramean Pre-History," in *Ah, Assyria . . . Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed. M. Cogan and I. Eph'al (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 114.

43. See L. E. Stager, "The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185–1050 BCE)," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy, 2nd ed. (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 332–48.

44. On historical memories in the Homeric epics, see E. Vermeule, "'Priam's Castle Blazing': A Thousand Years of Trojan Memories," in *Troy and the Trojan War*, ed. M. Mellink (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Bryn Mawr College, 1986), 77–92; H. G. Jansen, "Troy: Legend and Reality," *CANE*, 1121–34. For other notable examples of centuries-old historical memories in oral traditions, see P. Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 85–86, 198; J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1973), 209, n. 48; and P. Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 76–82. See also the valuable overviews of R. Dorson, "The Debate Over the Trustworthiness of Oral Traditional History," in Dorson, *Folklore: Selected Essays* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 199–224; and R. C. Culley, "Oral Tradition and Historicity," in *Studies on the Ancient Palestinian World*, ed. J. W. Wevers and D. B. Redford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 102–16.

45. Kirkpatrick's conclusion (*Folklore*, 114) that 150 years is the upper limit for historical memories in oral tradition is contradicted by her citation of an African example of much older historical memory (p. 104). Wahl's claim (*Jakobserzählungen*, 296) that 50–70 years is the upper limit is similarly flawed; see the cogent criticisms of Wahl's study and a valuable appraisal of the oral prehistory of the Jacob cycle by A. de Pury, "Situer le cycle de Jacob: Quelques réflexions, vingt-cinq ans plus tard," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History*, ed. A. Wénin (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 213–41.

CHAPTER 4

1. See D. Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963); Y. Zakovitch, “And You Shall Tell Your Son . . .”: *The Concept of the Exodus in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991). The only significant exception is wisdom literature, which has led some scholars to view this genre as heterodox; but see J. J. Collins, “The Biblical Precedent for Natural Theology,” *JAAR Supplement* 45 (1977): 35–52; and J. Barr, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 90–94.

2. William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951), 92.

3. Recent valuable treatments of the Exodus and history include B. Halpern, “The Exodus and the Israelite Historians,” *EI* 24 (1993): 89*–96*; idem, “The Exodus from Egypt: Myth or Reality,” in *The Rise of Ancient Israel*, ed. H. Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), 86–117; A. Malamat, “The Exodus: Egyptian Analogies,” in *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, ed. E. S. Frerichs and L. H. Lesko (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 15–26; C. A. Redmount, “Bitter Lives: Israel in and out of Egypt,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. M. D. Coogan (New York: Oxford, 1998), 79–121; and n. 14. A vigorous defense of the Albrightian position is offered by J. K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), though he acknowledges “the absence of direct archaeological or historical evidence” for this position (p. x).

4. W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 164, the date is defended on p. 159. Albright’s views are codified in J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 118–25.

5. J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 67–68, 78; similarly, J. A. Soggin, *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1993), 26–27, 108–39.

6. A pertinent example is Yosef Yerushalmi’s subtle book, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Schocken, 1989), in which he explores the vicissitudes of Jewish memory and conceptions of the past from biblical times to the present. Other important recent contributions include A. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3–21 (“Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness”); and P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 43–59 (“History as Social Memory”). For biblical studies, see N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), 83–87 (“Tradition Formation as Sociohistorical Symbolization”); and recently J. Blenkinsopp, “Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel,” *BTB* 27 (1997): 76–82. See also the classic study of M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

7. An illuminating case study in the modern Middle East is A. Shryock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

8. J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); see my review in *BAR* 24/2 (1998): 68.

9. Assmann, *Moses*, 8–9.

10. Assmann, *Moses*, 14.

11. L. Febvre, “A New Kind of History,” in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre*, ed. P. Burke (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 41.

12. Cf. A. Reinhartz, “Why Ask My Name?” *Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (New York: Oxford, 1998), 139–41.

13. On these names, see recently D. B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 417–19.

14. This point is emphasized by the archaeological record of early Israelites sites, in which there is no obvious Egyptian influence on the material culture (pots, tools, architecture, village layout, etc.); nor is there any noticeable Egyptian influence on the Hebrew language or script. Such influences would be expected had there been any sizeable immigration of population groups from Egypt. On these matters, see the thorough survey of J. Weinstein, “Exodus and Archaeological Reality,” in *Exodus*, ed. Frerichs and Lesko, 87–103; and (in the same volume) D. B. Redford, “Observations on the Sojourn of the Bene-Israel,” 57–66; W. G. Dever, “Is There Any Archaeological Evidence for the Exodus,” 67–86.

15. The boundaries of Egyptian rule varied according to the fluctuating fortunes of the Mitannian and Hittite empires to the north but generally included the settled portions of what we call Syro-Palestine; see Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 166–69. The dates (from the “low chronology”) are cited from N. Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 392–93. On the chronology of the end of the Egyptian Empire, see J. Weinstein, “The Collapse of the Egyptian Empire in the Southern Levant,” in *The Crisis Years: The 12th Century B.C. from Beyond the Danube to the Tigris*, ed. W. A. Ward and M. S. Joukowsky (Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1992), 142–50.

16. See especially Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 125–237; J. M. Weinstein, “The Egyptian Empire in Palestine: A Reassessment,” *BASOR* 241 (1981): 1–28; I. Singer, “Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines in the Period of the Emergence of Israel,” in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, ed. I. Finkelstein and N. Na’aman (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 284–95; and C. R. Higginbotham, *Egyptianization and Elite Emulation in Ramesside Palestine: Governance and Accommodation on the Imperial Periphery* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

17. The following expands the data in W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1971), 348. The Amarna letters are cited according to the edition and translation of W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

18. On the following data, see Helck, *Beziehungen*, 342–47; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 221–27; A. Loprieno, “Slaves,” in *The Egyptians*, ed. S. Donadoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 200–12.

19. Harris Papyrus I; trans. Loprieno, “Slaves,” 204–5.

20. See Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 207–09; idem, *Egypt and Canaan in the New Kingdom* (Beersheva: Ben-Gurion University, 1990), 37–39; A. Amer, “Asiatic Prisoners Taken in the Reign of Amenophis II,” *Scripta Mediterranea* 5 (1984): 27–28.

21. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 164; so proposed by Amer (“Asiatic Prisoners,” 27): “Such an unusually large number of captives (including whole families) may have been taken for the purpose of reducing the population and breaking its morale through mass deportation.”

22. “The settlement of the fortification of *Mn-hprw-r^c* with Kharu whom his majesty captured in the city of Gezer;” trans. Weinstein, “Egyptian Empire,” 14; cf. *ANET*, 248.

23. Kamid el-Loz 1: “Send me the ‘Apiru of the pastureland(?) concerning whom I wrote you as follows, ‘I will place them in the cities of the land of Kush to dwell in them, inasmuch as I have plundered them;’ ” trans. Redford, *Egypt and Canaan*, 38–39.

24. Trans. E. Bresciani, “Foreigners,” in *Egyptians*, ed. Donadoni, 235.

25. Amer (“Asiatic Prisoners,” 27–28) compares this New Kingdom practice with the policy of mass deportation in the Hittite and the Middle Assyrian empires and later, greatly expanded, in the Neo-Assyrian empire.

26. See Helck, *Beziehungen*, 348–49; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 221; Loprieno, “Slaves,” 205–6.

27. “For two years I have been repeatedly robbed of my grain, we have no grain to eat. What can I say to my peasantry? Their sons, their daughters, the furnishings of their houses are gone, since they have been sold in the land of Yarimuta for provisions to keep us alive” (EA 85); trans. Moran, *Amarna*, 156; cf. EA 74, 75, 81, 90.

28. Trans. A. F. Rainey, apud Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 221.

29. Loprieno (“Slaves,” 209) notes that *b3k* can designate Egyptians or foreigners, but *hm* designates only foreigners.

30. Trans. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 209.

31. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 209.

32. On the Canaanite origins of a significant portion of these settlers, note that the Philistine incursions and settlement in the early twelfth century B.C.E. may have displaced many Canaanites from the plains into the highlands of early Israel; see L. E. Stager, “The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185–1050 BCE),” in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy, 2nd ed. (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 348.

33. It is worth noting that Egyptian control over Canaan grew more pervasive and oppressive in the later imperial period, the thirteenth and early twelfth centuries B.C.E.; see Weinstein, “Egyptian Empire,” 17–22; Singer, “Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines,” 284–94.

34. See M. Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 10–17, 112–29, for ethnicity as a social-psychological construction of shared difference and a “refuge for the embattled”; see also the insightful treatment of these issues in antiquity in A. D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). On issues of ethnicity in ancient Israel, see the articles in M. G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

35. See the exemplary treatment of folkloristic, compositional, and redactional aspects of the plagues in W. H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 286–354.

36. On the evidence for epidemics in the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean, see W. H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 77–81, 99–109.

37. “Pestilence” (רִבָּר) kills the animals in Exod 9:1–7 (JE); “pox” (שִׁחִי) afflicts human and animal in Exod 9:8–12 (P). Probably also connected with the biblical concept of disease is the “destroyer” (מִשְׁחִיָּה) who kills the firstborns of human and animal in Exod 12:23 (JE); see following.

38. This disease is often identified with the bubonic plague because of the association of rodents and “buboes” (עִבְלִים) in 1 Sam 5–6; see P. K. McCarter, *1 Samuel* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 119–26.

39. The latter is a literary foreshadowing of the plagues on Pharaoh’s house in Exodus; see U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part 2, From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1964), 334–37; and recently M. Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995), 51–55.

40. See J. Day, “New Light on the Mythological Background of the Allusion to Resheph in Habakkuk iii 5,” *VT* 29 (1979): 353–55; G. del Olmo Lete, “Deber,” *DDD*, 438–39; P. Xella, “Resheph,” *DDD*, 1324–30.

41. S. A. Meier (“Destroyer,” *DDD*, 458): “the Destroyer in Exod 12:23 belongs to the class of plague deities broadly attested in the ancient Near East.”

42. These gods also share complementary aspects as gods of battle and the underworld; see Xella, “Resheph,” 1325–26; A. Livingstone, “Nergal,” *DDD*, 1170–72.

43. See D. R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964); and S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (Helsinki: Helsinki University, 1988).

44. Sefire 1.25–28; trans. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1995), 45.

45. Fitzmyer, *Sefire*, 85.

46. Amos 8:9; Micah 3:6; Joel 2:10, 3:4, 4:15. Note also the prophetic oracle delivered by Balaam in the seventh century B.C.E. inscription from Deir ‘Allā (1.5–7): “The g[ods] gathered together; the Šaddayin took their places as the assembly. And they said to [?], ‘Sew up, bolt up the heavens in your cloud, ordaining darkness instead of eternal light;’” trans. J. A. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1980), 29.

47. Assmann, *Moses*, 39–41.

48. This account is preserved in Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.227–53; other versions of this tradition are attributed to Hecataeus of Abdera (fourth century B.C.E.); Chaeremon, an Egyptian priest (first century C.E.); and others; see the recent thorough treatment of E. S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 41–72.

49. See D. B. Redford, “The Hyksos Invasion in History and Tradition,” *Orientalia* 39 (1970): 48–50; idem, *Pharaonic King Lists, Annals and Day-Books: A Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History* (Mississauga, Ontario: Benben, 1986), 276–96; Assmann, *Moses*, 29–39. Note Redford’s conclusion (*King Lists*, 294): “What the tale does prove is that the Amarna debacle, with all its characters and events, had not been lost to the collective memory of Egypt, but had survived in some form.” Pseudo-

Manetho (see previous note) explicitly associates this story with Moses and the Exodus.

50. Redford, “Hyksos,” 44–51; Assmann, *Moses*, 25–27; see also Helck, *Beziehungen*, 183.

51. See H. Goedicke, “The Canaanite Illness,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 11 (1984): 91–105; Assmann, *Moses*, 27; H. Klengel, “Epidemien im spätbronzezeitlichen Syrien-Palästina,” in *Michael: Historical, Epigraphical and Biblical Studies in Honor of Prof. Michael Heltzer*, ed. Y. Avishur and R. Deutsch (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center, 1999), 187–93. The Egyptian term is *t-nt-^cmw*, literally, “that of the Canaanites.”

52. Trans. Moran, *Amarna*, 107–8. On the idiom, “hand of DN,” as a reference to plague, see the Ugaritic letter ahead, and J. J. M. Roberts, “The Hand of Yahweh,” in Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 95–101 (esp. 97–98 for a discussion of EA 35 and CTA 53).

53. Trans. Moran, *Amarna*, 170.

54. Trans. Moran, *Amarna*, 298 and nn. 1 and 5 (translation slightly adapted in accord with Moran’s notes).

55. Trans. Moran, *Amarna*, 360.

56. Trans. D. Pardee, “As Strong as Death,” in *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope*, ed. J. H. Marks and R. M. Good (Guilford, Conn.: Four Quarters, 1987), 66. E. Lipiński has noted (“Allusions historiques dans la correspondance ougaritique de Ras Shamra: Lettre de Ewri-Šarri à Pilsiya,” *Ugarit Forschungen* 13 [1981]: 123–26) that the context of this letter is plausibly the epidemic considered here, allowing the identification of its author, Ewri-Šarri, with the equivalently named 𐎗EN-LUGAL, a “servant” of Niqmaddu II (ca. 1380–1340) named in RS 16.247. Lipiński suggests that Ewri-Šarri may have been a Ugaritic diplomat at the Hittite court making inquiries about two missing merchants. For other treatments of this letter, see A. Caquot, J.-M. de Tarragon, and J. L. Cunchillos, *Textes ougaritiques*. Tome 2, *Textes religieux, rituels, correspondance* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), 275–80 and references.

57. Trans. after F. Malbran-Labat, in *Une bibliothèque au sud de la ville: Les textes de la 34e Campagne (1973)*, ed. P. Bordreuil (Ras Shamra-Ougarit VII; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1991), 59; see Klengel, “Epidemien,” 187–88.

58. Trans. I. Singer, *Hittite Prayers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2002), 57–58; see also G. Beckman, COS 1: 157–58; A. Goetze, *ANET*, 394–95; R. Lebrun, *Hymnes et prières hittites* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Centre d’histoire des religions, 1980), 192–239; and T. Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 223–25.

59. Trans. Assmann, *Moses*, 27; see also Redford, “Hyksos,” 46. It is uncertain whether the term *sni-mnt* refers to an actual disease in this instance or whether it is meant metaphorically; Redford and Assmann incline to the former.

60. Helck, *Beziehungen*, 183.

61. Assmann, *Moses*, 27.

62. Goedicke (“Illness,” 92, 95) identifies this illness with bubonic plague because of the reference to charcoal color in the spell (see following); so also Klengel, “Epidemien,” 189. Interestingly, two Egyptian mummies of the twelfth century B.C.E.

(one of which is Ramesses V) have been diagnosed with smallpox; see A. T. Sandison, "Diseases in Ancient Egypt," in *Mummies, Disease, and Ancient Cultures*, ed. A. and E. Cockburn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 32; J. E. Harris and K. R. Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs* (New York: Scribner's, 1973), 166.

63. London Medical Papyrus 11.4–6; trans. Bresciani, "Foreigners," 240; cf. translations in Goedicke, "Illness," 102; J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 37 (no. 57). Goedicke ("Illness," 101 n. 49) notes G. Möller's assignment of this papyrus to the reign of Tutankhamen (ca. 1336–1327 B.C.E.).

64. Hearst Medical Papyrus 11.12–15; trans. E. Bresciani, "Foreigners," *Egyptians*, 240; cf. translations in Goedicke, "Illness," 94; and Borghouts, *Magical Texts*, 37 (no. 56). Goedicke ("Illness," 99) dates this papyrus to ca. 1520 B.C.E.

65. CAT 1.1–1.6; see the recent translation by M. S. Smith, "The Baal Cycle," in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. S. B. Parker (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 81–180. On the knowledge of the mythology of Baal in Egypt, see R. Stadelmann, *Syrisch-palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 32–47, 125–33; and translations of the "Astarte Papyrus" by J. A. Wilson, *ANET*, 17–18; and R. K. Ritner, in *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 35–36.

66. See the apt comments on the performative and mythical aspects of Egyptian magic in J. F. Borghouts, "Magical Practices among the Villagers," in *Pharaoh's Workers: The Villagers of Deir el Medina*, ed. L. H. Lesko (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 120–22.

67. On the righteous wrath of the Divine Warrior—a role of Canaanite Baal and Israelite Yahweh—see F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 91–163.

68. "My father sinned and transgressed against the word of the Hattian Storm-god, my Lord. But I have not sinned in any respect. It is only too true, however, that the father's sin falls upon the son" (trans. Goetze, *ANET*, 395).

69. Cf. Gen 12:17; 2 Samuel 24; the Egyptian memory of Akhenaten (see previous); and the sins of Agamemnon (*Iliad* I) and Oedipus in Greek tradition.

70. Exod 9:3, 15 (יהוה יד ירי). On the "hand of DN" as the agent of plague, see Roberts, "Hand of Yahweh" (n. 52), and cf. the role of the "destroyer" (משחית) as the hand of Yahweh in Exod 12:23.

71. On the thematics of the death of first-born (and other) sons in the Exodus story, see Exod 11:15–22; 4:22–26; 13:2, 11–15; and Propp, *Exodus*, 454–59.

72. See n. 50.

73. R. P. Knierim ("The Composition of the Pentateuch," in *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Method and Cases* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995], 372–79) argues that the genre and subject of the Pentateuch as a whole are best described as "the biography of Moses." This oversimplifies but correctly emphasizes the centrality of Moses.

74. R. Smend, "Mose als geschichtliche Gestalt," *Historische Zeitschrift* 260 (1995): 1–19.

75. For some traditional themes and patterns in the life of Moses, see Propp, *Ex-*

odus, 32–34, 155–60, 241–43; R. S. Hendel, *The Epic of the Patriarch: The Jacob Cycle and the Narrative Traditions of Canaan and Israel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 137–65; D. Irvin, “The Joseph and Moses Stories as Narrative in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Narrative,” in *Israelite and Judaeon History*, ed. J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 180–209; T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 223–35.

76. The Egyptian name “Mose,” was common in the era of the Ramesside kings; it is part of the names of the New Kingdom pharaohs, Ahmose, Thutmose, and Amenmose; see Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 417–18. Note that the š in *mōšeh* reflects an early phase of phonetic correspondence for Egyptian s; cf. the normal first millennium correspondence with s as in *ra^camsēs* (Exod 1:11) and other loanwords; see Y. Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 259–64, with the review of J. F. Quack, *Review of Biblical Literature* [<http://www.bookreviews.org>] (2000). On the likelihood that “Mose” was a royal nickname for the reigning pharaoh during the Ramesside era, see A. H. Gardiner, “The Egyptian Origin of Some English Personal Names,” *JAOS* 56 (1936): 193; R. O. Faulkner, “Egypt: From the Inception of the Nineteenth Dynasty to the Death of Rameses III,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History* II/2, ed. I. E. S. Edwards et al., 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 236. It is, I think, a historical irony that the name of Moses may also signify his (unnamed) royal adversaries.

77. On Moses’ (and Yahweh’s) Midianite connection, see recently F. M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998), 53–70; L. E. Stager, “Forging an Identity: The Emergence of Ancient Israel,” in *Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Coogan, 142–49; M. Weinfeld, “The Tribal League at Sinai,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, Jr., P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 303–14; W. H. Schmidt, *Exodus, Sinai und Mose* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 110–29; cf. J. Van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus–Numbers* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994); and the speculative reconstruction of E. A. Knauf, *Midian: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palästinas und Nordanabians am Ende des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 50–56, 135–41.

78. Smend, “Mose,” 16.

79. Note the thematic echoes in this scene: his vessel of salvation is an “ark” (*tēbā*), perhaps echoing the ark (*tēbā*) in which the human family was earlier saved from the flood; this ark is placed in the “reeds” (*sūp*) of the river, anticipating the later deliverance of the people at the “Re(e)d Sea” (*yām sūp*). On these correspondences, see U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 18–19; Zakovitch, *Concept of the Exodus*, 104; Van Seters, *Life of Moses*, 29–34.

80. Cross (*Epic*, 58) has noted that the site of Moses’ grave was in the ancestral territory of Reuben, but this has been forgotten in the present form of the tradition, for which this region is Moab (Deut 34:6). What an earlier stage of the tradition might have looked like is an intriguing question; see Cross’s comments (*Epic*, 60–61) on the parallelism between Mt. Nebo and Mt. Sinai.

81. On this curious text, see recently W. H. Propp, “The Skin of Moses’ Face:

Transfigured or Disfigured?” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 375–86; M. Haran, “The Shining of Moses’ Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography,” in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström*, ed. W. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 159–73.

82. See R. S. Hendel, “Sacrifice as a Cultural System: The Ritual Symbolism of Exodus 24, 3–8,” *ZAW* 101 (1989): 366–90.

83. On the priesthood as a mediating and cross-cutting institution in Israelite society, see N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), 320; L. E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 27–28. On the further cleavages among the priestly lineages, see Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 195–215; S. L. Cook, “Innerbiblical Interpretation in Ezekiel 44,” *JBL* 114 (1995): 193–208 and references.

84. On these and related texts, see recently W. H. C. Propp, “Why Moses Could Not Enter the Promised Land,” *BR* 14/3 (1998): 36–43 and references.

85. See R. S. Hendel, “Where is Mount Sinai?” *BR* 16/3 (2000): 8; J. D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 19–23.

86. See the characterization of the biblical “epic” (particularly JE) in Cross, *Epic*, 22–40, and ch. 6.

87. F. Braudel, “History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*,” in *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 25–54.

88. On the symbolism of rites of passage and the social functions of the Passover rite, see Hendel, “Sacrifice,” 374–75, 384–87; see also Propp, *Exodus*, 427–44. On the transformation of Passover from a local sacrificial feast to a Temple pilgrimage festival, see B. M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 53–97. Also of interest is the emphasis on commemorative ceremonies (including Passover) in P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 41–71.

89. See the insightful treatment of M. Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

90. I prescind from current controversies in liberation theology, but note J. D. Levenson’s thoughtful essay, “Exodus and Liberation,” in his *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 127–59; but it is worth observing that in the classic Jewish theology of the Exodus (as embodied in the Passover Haggadah), the giving of the law is a very subsidiary theme.

91. Note Braudel’s argument (*On History*, 44, 75–76) that Claude Lévi-Strauss’s researches into the “deepest, least conscious layers” of kinship, myth, ceremonies, and institutions pertain to the *longue durée*.

CHAPTER 5

1. On current debates and issues, see G. N. Knoppers, “The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel,” *JBL* 116 (1997): 19–44; and the valuable essays in L. K. Handy, ed., *The Age of Solo-*

mon: *Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); and V. Fritz and P. R. Davies, eds., *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); and nn. 6-8.

2. See R. Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 141-48.

3. M. de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 4.

4. See W. G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 30-35; and from the biblical side, B. Halpern, "Text and Artifact: Two Monologues?" in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, ed. N. A. Silberman and D. Small (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 311-13, 330-40; E. A. Knauf, "From History to Interpretation," in *The Fabric of History: Text, Artifact and Israel's Past*, ed. D. V. Edelman (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 37-53.

5. I am using the term "archaeology" in a loosely Foucauldian sense; see M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970).

6. I. Finkelstein, "The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View," *Levant* 28 (1996): 177-87; idem, "Biblical Archaeology or Archaeology of Palestine in the Iron Age? A Rejoinder," *Levant* 30 (1998): 167-73.

7. W. G. Dever, "Archaeology and the 'Age of Solomon': A Case Study in Archaeology and Historiography," in *Age of Solomon*, ed. Handy, 217-51; A. Mazar, "Iron Age Chronology: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein," *Levant* 29 (1997): 157-67; H. J. Bruins, J. van der Plicht, and A. Mazar, "¹⁴C Dates from Tel Rehov: Iron Age Chronology, Pharaohs, and Hebrew Kings," *Science* 300 (2003): 315-18; R. Kletter, "Low Chronology and United Monarchy: A Methodological Review," *ZDPV* 120 (2004): 13-54. A lively defense is E. A. Knauf, "The 'Low Chronology' and How Not to Deal with It," *BN* 101 (2000): 56-63.

8. See A. Gilboa and I. Sharon, "Early Iron Age Radiometric Dates from Tel Dor: Preliminary Implications for Phoenicia and Beyond," *Radiocarbon* 43 (2001): 1343-51. I wish to thank Ilan Sharon for several long discussions about the implications of these data.

9. On the relationship between this text in the MT and LXX, including the curious "Miscellanies" in 3 Kingdoms 2, see Z. Talshir, "The Reign of Solomon in the Making: Pseudo-Connections between 3 Kingdoms and Chronicles," *VT* 50 (2000): 245-48; and cf. F. H. Polak, "The Septuagint Account of Solomon's Reign: Revision and Ancient Recension," in *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, ed. B. A. Taylor (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 158-64.

10. Reading "Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon" with 2 Chr 8:5, את בית חורון העליון ואת בית חורון התחתון. MT reads ואת בית חרן התחתון, "Lower Beth Horon." It is reasonable to suspect that the MT reading suffered a homoioteleuton from חרן to את בית חרן; see S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 623. Cf. G^b (at 2:35 and 10:22) και την Βαιθωρον επανω/την ανωτερω, "Upper Beth Horon."

11. The Qērê reads תדמר, “Tadmor,” as do most of the textual versions and 2 Chr 8:4. Tamar (תמר) better fits the geographical sequence from north to south; see M. Cogan, *1 Kings* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 302; E. Würthwein, *Das Erste Buch der Könige: 1. Kön. 1–16* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 111 n. 13.
12. M. Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 57, 61; N. Na’aman, “Sources and Composition in the History of Solomon,” in *Age of Solomon*, ed. Handy, 57–80, esp. 70. Less convincing is the view that the sequences of place-names are post-Deuteronomic expansions, as in E. A. Knauf, “Solomon at Megiddo?” in *The Land that I Will Show You: Essays on the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honour of J. Maxwell Miller*, ed. J. A. Dearman and M. P. Graham (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 123–24.
13. As noted by many commentators, e.g., M. Noth, *Könige* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1967), 206; V. Fritz, *Das erste Buch der Könige* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1996), 105; Cogan, *1 Kings*, 302.
14. Z. Talshir, “The Detailing Formula ‘... ויה (ה)רבר,’” *Tarbiz* 51 (1981–82): 23–35 (Hebrew); Cogan, *1 Kings*, 300.
15. For this text, see S. Aḥituv, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1992), 14; on its late eighth century B.C.E. date, R. S. Hendel, “The Date of the Siloam Inscription: A Rejoinder to Rogerson and Davies,” *BA* 59 (1996): 233–37.
16. Talshir, “Detailing,” 31.
17. Na’aman, “Sources,” 70.
18. On these supplements, see especially G. N. Knoppers (*Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*. Vol. 1, *The Reign of Solomon and the Rise of Jeroboam* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993], 129–32), who notes that the disavowal of Israelite subjection to forced labor coheres with the Deuteronomistic strategy of “enumerat[ing] the benefits of Solomon’s public works” (130) as part of the glorification of his reign: “The result is an unexampled period of international prestige and Israelite prosperity” (132); see also Würthwein *Könige*, 110–13; C. Schäfer-Lichtenberger, *Josua und Salomo: Eine Studie zu Autorität und Legitimität des Nachfolgers im Alten Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 332–34; Fritz, *Könige*, 106–7.
19. Na’aman, “Sources,” 70; Würthwein (*Könige*, 109–14) reconstructs the pre-Deuteronomistic form of 1 Kgs 9:15–24 similarly, consisting of 9:15, 17b–19a, 23.
20. Note the repetition of the last clause, הַרְדִּים בַּעַם הָעֹשִׂים בְּמוֹלָאֲכָה (“who were in charge of the people who did the work”), in 5:30 and 9:23.
21. See the capsule of this debate in Knoppers, “Vanishing Solomon,” 29–30.
22. I. Finkelstein and N. A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 186–89, 209–11; Knauf, “Solomon at Megiddo,” 127; see also H. M. Niemann, “Megiddo and Solomon: A Biblical Investigation in Relation to Archaeology,” *Tel Aviv* 27 (2000): 61: “the biblical tradition had to include the strongly traditional city, Megiddo, along with other key places of the north (especially Hazor) in its retrospective idealization of Solomon.”

23. See following; and E. A. Knauf, “Le roi est mort, vive le roi!: A Biblical Argument for the Historicity of Solomon,” in *Age of Solomon*, ed. Handy, 82–86.

24. This figure is taken from Dever’s estimate of the population in the mid-eleventh century (“Archaeology,” 222, n. 8), adjusted downward to the low chronology.

25. 1 Kgs 11:1–13, 31–38; see Knoppers, *Two Nations*, 143–51, 186–89.

26. On this ideological function of the text, see further H. M. Niemann, *Herrschaft, Königtum und Staat: Skizzen zur soziokulturellen Entwicklung im monarchischen Israel* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1993), 91, 96–101; idem, “The Socio-Political Shadow Cast by the Biblical Solomon,” in *Age of Solomon*, ed. Handy, 272, 276–78.

27. See Na’aman, “Sources,” 77; and further on this setting, idem, “Sources and Composition in the History of David,” in *Ancient Israelite States*, ed. Fritz and Davies, 180–82.

28. For this expectation, see C. Meyers, “David as Temple Builder,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 357–76, particularly her emphasis that “Temples were the structures par excellence for communicating to a wide audience the authoritative rule of the regime responsible for erecting them” (364); and Baruch Halpern’s remarks (*David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001], 102): “Since the Jerusalem temple was standing when Kings was written down, it is highly improbable that the authors of Kings got the builder’s name wrong. Yet he was not the dynastic founder, David, attested at Tel Dan. This, of itself, is extraordinary, and is again not a feature that would characterize an invented history.”

29. See 2 Sam 7:1–17; 1 Kgs 5:17, 8:16–21; 1 Chr 22:7–16; see the previous note and F. M. Cross, “Ideologies of Kingship in the Era of the Empire,” in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 231, 241–46; W. M. Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1–17* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 34–39.

30. Leipzig, 1930 = Alt, “The Formation of the Israelite State in Palestine,” in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 223–309 (citations from the latter).

31. According to Finkelstein and Silberman (*Bible Unearthed*, 189–90), the low chronology “removes the only archaeological evidence that there was ever a united monarchy based in Jerusalem and suggests that David and Solomon were, in political terms, little more than hill country chieftains.” They argue that “a highland kingdom of a thoroughly conventional Near Eastern type arose in the north in the early ninth century B.C.E.” at the earliest. An effective counterargument, by analogy with the situation of Jerusalem and its neighboring kingdoms in the Late Bronze Age, is marshaled by N. Na’aman, “The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem’s Political Position in the Tenth Century B.C.E.,” *BASOR* 304 (1996): 17–27.

32. Alt, “Formation,” 238.

33. F. Braudel, "History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée*," in Braudel, *On History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 25–54.
34. Alt, "Formation," 235.
35. Alt, "Formation," 237.
36. C. Hauer, Jr., "From Alt to Anthropology: The Rise of the Israelite State," *JSOT* 36 (1986): 3–15; see also R. B. Coote and K. W. Whitelam, "The Emergence of Israel: Social Transformation and State Formation following the Decline in Late Bronze Age Trade," *Semeia* 37 (1986): 128–31; I. Finkelstein, "The Emergence of the Monarchy in Israel: The Environmental and Socio-Economic Aspects," *JSOT* 44 (1989): 43–74.
37. Hauer, "From Alt," 4.
38. Alt, "Formation," 248.
39. Alt, "Formation," 271.
40. Alt, "Formation," 285.
41. Alt, "Formation," 282.
42. Alt, "Formation," 282.
43. Alt, "Formation," 282, n. 113; the text is KAI 202; see recently P. E. Dion, *Les Araméens à l'âge du fer: Histoire politique et structures sociales* (Paris: Gabalda, 1997), 137–70.
44. G. Buccellati, *Cities and Nations of Ancient Syria: An Essay on Political Institutions with Special Reference to the Israelite Kingdoms* (Rome: Istituto di studi del Vicino Oriente, 1967), 137–46.
45. See D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, "'Fils de Sim'al': Les origines tribales des rois de Mari," *RA* 80 (1986): 142–50; and D. E. Fleming, *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors: Mari and Early Collective Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
46. Alt, "Formation," 280–81.
47. On this use of נִיִּר as "king-designate," see Alt, "Formation," 254; B. Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), 1–11; T. Ishida, "Nāgīd: The Term for the Legitimization of the Kingship," in Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel: Studies in Biblical Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 57–67.
48. Alt, "Formation," 308.
49. Cf. Buccellati, *Cities*, 137–68; T.N.D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: Gleerup, 1976), 298–301.
50. On the explanatory value of the term "early state" for the Davidic kingdom, see C. Schäfer-Lichtenberger, "Sociological and Biblical Views of the Early State," in *Ancient Israelite States*, ed. Fritz and Davies, 78–105.
51. See J. D. Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2001), 63–73 et passim; Na'aman, "Amarna Letters," 19–21; Niemann, "Socio-Political Shadow," 265–67.
52. L. E. Stager, "The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 260 (1985): 24–27; Schäfer-Lichtenberger, "Early State," 86–105; Schloen, *House of the Fa-*

ther, 120–22; D. M. Master, “State Formation and the Kingdom of Ancient Israel,” *JNES* 60 (2001): 117–31.

53. P. J. King and L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 4.

54. Cf. N. P. Lemche, “From Patronage Society to Patronage Society,” in *Origins of the Israelite States*, ed. Fritz and Davies, 110–19.

55. Dion, *Araméens*, 225–32.

56. See Halpern (*David*, 107–226) on the political rhetoric of territorial claims in 1 Samuel 8 and its reception in later biblical texts; also R. S. Hendel, “The Empire of David—or Not?” *BR* 17/5 (2001): 8.

57. H. White, “Fictions of Factual Representation,” in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 125.

58. See the comprehensive treatment of this issue in Knoppers, *Two Nations*; also Na’aman, “Sources.”

59. Knoppers, *Two Nations*, 57–60, 124–27, 135–39.

60. Many scholars assign this text to a postexilic stratum, but see the cogent remarks of Knoppers, *Two Nations*, 77–80, esp. 88: “The presentation of utopian conditions under Solomon also contributes to the Deuteronomist’s broader designs. The peace and security Israel enjoys during the time of Solomon fulfill one of the divine promises made to David in Nathan’s oracle, namely, that Israel would ‘live in security and be disturbed no longer’ (2 Sam 7:10).”

61. 1 Kgs 11:14–25 is perhaps an excerpt from the “Book of the Acts of Solomon” (ספר דברי שלמה, 1 Kgs 11:41); see Na’aman, “Sources,” 61–63.

62. R. Alter, *The David Story* (New York: Norton, 1999), 378. On this aspect of biblical narrative, see the classic treatment of E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 7–23.

63. See T. Ishida, “Solomon’s Succession to the Throne of David,” in *Historical Writing*, 130.

64. On the echoes of Absalom in the account of Adonijah, cf. also 1 Kgs 1:5–6 with 2 Sam 15:1 and 14:25, and Ishida, “Solomon’s Succession,” 114–17.

65. M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 169.

66. R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 98–100.

67. See Alter, *Art*, 97–113; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 419–27.

68. Alter, *David*, 379.

69. So J. T. Walsh, *1 Kings* (Collegeville, Minn.: Michael Glazier, 1996), 53–54.

70. Walsh, *Kings*, 54.

71. Sternberg, *Poetics*, 53–55: “The tale will appear coherent even, or often most of all, to those who unwittingly escape the horns of ambiguity, imposing univocal closures on troublesome omissions and overlooking the rest” (54).

72. See also the apt comments on narrative ambiguity and suspicion in I. W. Provan, “Why Barzillai of Gilead (1 Kings 2:7)? Narrative Art and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion in 1 Kings 1–2,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46 (1995): 1–15; idem, *1 and 2 Kings* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 38–40.

73. See J. S. Rogers, “Narrative Stock and Deuteronomistic Elaboration in 1 Kings 2,” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 399–400; Schäfer-Lichtenberger, *Josua und Salomo*, 252–53; Würthwein, *Könige*, 6, n. 14; Knoppers, *Two Nations*, 69.
74. Halpern, *David*, 396.
75. P. K. McCarter, Jr., “‘Plots, True or False’: The Succession Narrative as Court Apologetic,” *Interpretation* 35 (1981): 355–67; Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 22–26, 32; Ishida, *Historical Writing*, 107–36, 166–85; Cogan, *Kings*, 166–68; Halpern, *David*, 391–406. For other recent views, see S. Seiler, *Die Geschichte von der Thronfolge Davids* (2 Sam 9–20; 1 Kön 1–2): *Untersuchungen zur Literarkritik und Tendenz* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 3–22, 302–6; and A. de Pury and T. Römer, eds., *Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids: Neue Einsichten und Anfragen* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, 2000).
76. McCarter, “Plots,” 360.
77. Rogers (“Narrative Stock,” 403–4) argues cogently that the Abiathar incident (1 Kgs 2:26–27) is a contribution of the Deuteronomist and not a part of the source document.
78. Cf. Knoppers, “Vanishing Solomon,” 42–43: “Addressing such issues involves an eclectic approach, an intersection of disciplines—anthropology, archaeology (new and old), epigraphy, ethnography, history, literary criticism (new and old), and textual criticism.”

CHAPTER 6

1. F. W. Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980; German original, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, 1874), 45.
2. Nietzsche, *Advantage*, 45 (translation adapted); Nietzsche, *Werke*, ed. K. Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1966), vol. 1, 261: “der Ursprung der historischen Bildung . . . muss selbst wieder historisch erkannt werden, die Historie muss das Problem der Historie selbst auflösen, das Wissen muss seinen Stachel gegen sich selbst kehren.”
3. P. Hazard, *The European Mind (1680–1715)* (Cleveland: Meridian, 1963; French original, *La crise de la conscience européenne*, 1935); F. Meinecke, *Historism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972; German original, *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, 1936).
4. M. Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971; French original, *Les mots et les choses*, 1966); H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).
5. A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For some apt qualifications of Momigliano’s treatment of Near Eastern historiography, see A. Kuhrt, “Israelite and Near Eastern Historiography,” in *Congress Volume: Oslo 1998*, ed. A. Lemaire and M. Saebo, VTSup 80 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 257–79. See also the insightful essay of P. Machinist, “The

Voice of the Historian in the Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean World,” *Interpretation* 57 (2003): 117–37.

6. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 30. See further the theoretical discussion of M. Detienne, “A Debate on Comparative Historicities,” in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. A. de Pury, T. Römer, and J.-D. Macchi (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 174–88.

7. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 30.

8. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 20.

9. Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 19.

10. P. Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 7.

11. See recently S. Japhet, “Postexilic Historiography: How and Why?” in *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. A. de Pury, et al., 158–66; M. Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995), 20–47; I. Kalimi, *Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995).

12. Japhet, “Postexilic Historiography,” 161.

13. See recently Brettler, *Creation*, 62–78; B. Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); D. M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 114–29.

14. S. E. McEvenue, “The Elohist at Work,” *ZAW* 96 (1984): 329–30; R. E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 83–85; R. S. Hendel, “Leitwort Style and Literary Structure in the J Primeval Narrative” (forthcoming).

15. M. Sternberg (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985], 230–63) uses the phrase to describe the “gapping” strategies of biblical narrative: “the reader fills in the gaps himself to the best of his (limited) ability, forming and revising and if possible deciding between alternative closures as he goes along, till the end either resolves or fixes the play of ambiguity” (p. 239).

16. Machinist (“Voice of the Historian,” 135) aptly observes that ancient Near Eastern historiography operates under multiple structures of authority: “The principle authorities were: (1) the human ruler, the king; (2) tradition, what passes for the collective wisdom and behaviors of the society into which each member is absorbed; and (3) especially the divine world, the ultimate ‘omniscient’ authority controlling all human, natural, and cosmic events.”

17. An interesting form-critical comparison of Greek and biblical historiography is undertaken by J. Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 16–54; idem, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 86–99, 328–33; but many of his conclusions and inferences are unconvincing; see the critical evaluation of E. Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 146–53.

18. Note the indicative title of G. E. Wright’s influential study, *The Old Testament*

Against Its Environment (London: SCM, 1950); and the works discussed in Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 227–48. On the dubious contrast of linear versus cyclical time in many of these older works, see J. Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 1969); and A. Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography,” in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), 179–204. See also n. 20.

19. Y. H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (2nd ed.; New York, Schockea, 1989), 8.

20. See the classic study of B. Albrektsen, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (Lund: Gleerup, 1967); and the important contributions of J. J. M. Roberts, “Myth versus History: Relaying the Comparative Foundations,” in Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 59–71; J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 3–50; and J. Assmann, “Guilt and Remembrance: On the Theologization of History in the Ancient Near East,” *History and Memory* 2 (1990): 5–33.

21. The same can be said of much Greek and Roman historiography, particularly of the distant past or distant cultures, as Erich Gruen (personal communication) reminds me: “The absence of a strong contrast between myth and history can be said of much of classical historiography as well. Herodotus’ play with fanciful tales in his *History* is well known. Livy’s narrative of early Rome conveys transparent legends as historical narrative. Even Thucydides, that most ‘rational’ and ‘critical’ of historians, never questioned the authority of Homer.”

22. I am using the words “myth” and “history” to refer to discursive genres, their respective subject matters, and their eras of the past; these semantic ambiguities are pertinent to the present discussion, since their boundaries are malleable.

23. On this aspect of the psalm, see further J. Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 21–22; R. J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1994), 154–58.

24. See recently J. Assmann, “Kollektive Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität,” in *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, ed. J. Assmann and T. Hölscher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 9–19; P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 43–59; A. Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3–10.

25. A. Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), esp. 148–49; S. Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 78–85, and Columbus’s comment: “[God] spoke so clearly of these lands by the mouth of Isaiah, in many places of his Book” (p. 83).

26. See the treatment of modern conflicts in Hebron in A. D. Marcus, *The View from Nebo* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2000), 29–50.

27. Burke, *Aspects*, 51; see also the treatment of analogous issues in M. Sahlins,

Islands of History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), esp. 146: “by thus encompassing the existentially unique in the conceptually familiar, the people embed their present in the past.”

28. On the antiquity of this text, see A. Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 56–62, and the following note.

29. F. M. Cross, “The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth,” in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 112–44; and see the recent treatments of W.H.C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 554–61; and H.-J. Fabry, “Mythos ‘Schilfmeer’,” in *Mythos im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt: Festschrift für Hans-Peter Müller*, ed. A. Lange, H. Lichtenberger, and D. Römhald (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 88–106. On the interpretation of the Song of the Sea in the prose narratives of Exodus 14, see B. Halpern, “Doctrine by Misadventure: Between the Israelite Source and the Biblical Historian,” in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism*, ed. R. E. Friedman (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 49–52.

30. Or “majestic among the holy ones,” taking קדש as a collective; see Cross, “Song of the Sea,” 129 n. 61.

31. My vocalization of the Ugaritic is a philological conjecture, based on our imperfect knowledge of Northwest Semitic linguistics.

32. Note the creation language in the phrase עַם זֶה קִנִּיתִי (Exodus 15:16), which means “the people that you acquired/redeemed” and “the people that you created,” playing on different senses of the verb קָנָה; cf. the probable allusion to this text in Isa 43:21, עַם זֶה יִצְרֵנִי, “the people that I created.”

33. Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 52.

34. See the examples in Albrektsen, *History*, passim.

35. Cf. the eighteenth century B.C.E. letter from Mari (ARM A.1968), in which the god Adad of Aleppo (via his prophet) recalls his inauguration of King Zimri-Lim: “Thus says Adad: . . . ‘I restored you to your father’s throne, and I gave you the weapon with which I smote the Sea (*Têmtum*). I anointed you with the oil of my glory, and no one has withstood you.’” See J.-M. Durand, “Le mythologème du combat entre le Dieu de l’orage et la Mer en Mésopotamie,” *MARI* 7 (1993): 43–46; N. Wyatt, “Arms and the King: The Earliest Allusions to the *Chaoskampf* Motif and Their Implications for the Interpretation of the Ugaritic and Biblical Traditions,” in “*Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf*”: *Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient*, ed. M. Dietrich and I. Kottsieper (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 841–44.

36. R. J. Clifford, “Psalm 89: A Lament Over the Davidic Ruler’s Continued Failure,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 40–45.

37. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, viii; idem, “Traditional Narrative and the Reconstruction of Early Israelite Institutions,” in *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 22–52.

38. Cross, “Traditional Narrative,” 23–29. I am agnostic on the view that biblical epic derives from Israelite oral poetry, though Ugaritic epic is an important antecedent; the preference for prose may be another ingredient in the “historicization of the

mythic function” (see n. 40). On the advantages and disadvantages of the term “epic,” see my remarks in *JAOS* 121 (2001): 139–40.

39. P. Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 81, 84.

40. H.-P. Müller and J. Krecher, “Vergangenheitsinteresse in Mesopotamien und Israel,” *Saeculum* 26 (1975): 32–33. Müller notes that this tendency also pertains to much ancient Near Eastern historiography.

41. G. Scholem, “Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism,” in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 289–90.

42. See Cross’s comment (*Canaanite Myth*, ix): “The Deuteronomistic history (Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and the Chronicler’s work . . . in effect extended the Epic, interpreting the later history of Israel in Epic patterns.”

43. See further I. L. Seeligman, “Menschliches Heldentum und göttliche Hilfe: Die doppelte Kausalität im alttestamentlichen Geschichtsdnken,” *TZ* 19 (1963): 385–411; Y. Amit, “The Dual Causality Principle and Its Effects on Biblical Literature,” *VT* 37 (1987): 385–400.

44. G. von Rad, “The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel,” in von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 176; cf. the more nuanced views of E. Blum, “Ein Anfang der Geschichtsschreibung? Anmerkungen zur sog. Thronfolgegeschichte und zum Umgang mit Geschichte im alten Israel,” in *Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids: Neue Einsichten und Anfragen*, ed. A. de Pury and T. Römer (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg, 2000), 4–37; and R. Alter, *The David Story* (New York: Norton, 1999), xvi–xxiv.

45. On the importance of this scene, see von Rad, “Beginnings,” 198–202; P. K. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 387.

46. R. E. Friedman, *The Disappearance of God: A Divine Mystery* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 7–29, 60–76.

47. P. Machinist, “Fate, *miqreh*, and Reason: Some Reflections on Qohelet and Biblical Thought,” in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. Z. Zevit, S. Gitin, and M. Sokoloff (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 159–75; R. S. Hendel, “Tangled Plots in Genesis,” in *Fortunate the Eyes That See: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. A. B. Beck, A. H. Bartelt, P. R. Raabe, and C. A. Franke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 42–45.

48. See particularly R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); idem, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

49. T. Mann, *Joseph und seine Brüder: 1. Die Geschichten Jaakobs* (Berlin: Fischer, 1934), ix: “Tief ist der Brunnen der Vergangenheit. Sollte man ihn nicht unergründlich nennen?”

50. D. Ben-Amos, “Analytic Categories and Ethnic Genres,” in *Folklore Genres*, ed. Ben-Amos (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 215–42; see also idem, “Folklore in the Ancient Near East,” *ABD* 2:823–26.

51. Or the priestly redactor; see Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 301–5; R. E. Friedman,

The Exile and Biblical Narrative (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981), 77–80; Carr, *Reading*, 68–75, 93–99.

52. J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1926–1940), I. 491.

53. It belongs to the corpus of archaic Hebrew poetry; see Sáenz-Badillos, *History*, 56–62; cf. J.-D. Macchi, *Israël et ses tribus selon Genèse 49* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1999), 19–25.

54. E.g., Ezek 38:16; Dan 2:28; 10:14; see H. Seebass, “אֲחִירָה,” *TDOT* 1:210–12.

55. See the early interpretations collected in J. L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 468–74.

56. E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 14–15.

57. Cf. M. de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 14: “[the] system of Scriptures which modernity has *made* into an absent body, without being able to eliminate it.”

APPENDIX

1. So P. R. Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel”* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 85–105; K. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 1996), 221–22, 218–33; and several essays in L. L. Grabbe, ed., *Can a “History of Israel” Be Written?* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). Note also E. A. Knauf’s claim (“War ‘Biblich-Hebräisch’ eine Sprache?” *ZAH* 3 [1990]: 11) that “Biblich-Hebräisch ist als Sprache der biblischen Literatur in exilisch-nachexilischer Zeit entstanden,” though he admits that the classical Hebrew prose of Genesis–Kings reflects the morphology and syntax of the eighth–sixth centuries B.C.E. (p. 21); cf. I. Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 203–5.

2. N. P. Lemche, “The Old Testament—A Hellenistic Book?” *SJOT* 7 (1993): 163–93; idem, *The Israelites in History and Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998), esp. 159–60; T. L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 66–81. See the responses to this issue in L. L. Grabbe, ed., *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); and my review of Lemche’s book in *BAR* 25/6 (1999): 59–60.

3. From the linguistic side, see the valuable treatments of A. Hurvitz, “The Historical Quest for ‘Ancient Israel’ and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations,” *VT* 47 (1997): 301–15; M. Ehrensverd, “Once Again: The Problem of Dating Biblical Hebrew,” *SJOT* 11 (1997): 29–40; J. Joosten, “Pseudo-Classicism in Late Biblical Hebrew, in Ben Sira, and in Qumran Hebrew,” in *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages*, ed. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 146–59; and several essays in I. Young, ed., *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology* (London: Clark, 2003). From the historical side, B. Halpern, “The State of Israelite History,” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. G. N. Knoppers and J. G. McConville (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns,

2000), 540–65; from the archaeological side, W. G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); for a thorough critical analysis, J. Barr, *History and Ideology in the Old Testament: Biblical Studies at the End of a Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59–101.

4. W. Gesenius, *Geschichte der hebräischen Sprache und Schrift* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1815; reprint, Hildesheim: Olms, 1973), 25–43; important subsequent works include A. Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik verglichen mit der seiner Quellen: Ein Beitrag zur historischen Syntax des Hebräischen* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1909); A. Hurvitz, *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew: A Study in Post-Exilic Hebrew and Its Implications for the Dating of Psalms* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1972); R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976); A. Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 112–29. Other Hebrew dialects of the Second Temple Period are treated in E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Z. Ben-Hayyim, *A Grammar of Samaritan Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2000); Sáenz-Badillos, *History*, 130–60.

5. Sáenz-Badillos, *History*, 112.

6. See M. Eskhult, *Studies in Verbal Aspect and Narrative Technique in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990), 103–20; R. S. Hendel, “In the Margins of the Hebrew Verbal System: Situation, Tense, Aspect, Mood,” *ZAH* 9 (1996): 152–81.

7. J. L. Borges, “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*,” in *Collected Fictions* (New York: Penguin, 1998), 88–95. The former claim is advanced by Davies, *Search*, 104.

8. The book of Ezekiel is a good example of the transition period between CBH and LBH; see A. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (Paris: Gabalda, 1982), esp. 157–62; M. F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

9. Note the methodological caveat of W. Labov (*Principles of Linguistic Change*, vol. 1, *Internal Factors* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1994], 11): “The principle strength of historical linguistics lies in its ability to trace many linguistic changes over long periods of time. . . . But the data that are rich in so many ways are impoverished in others. Historical documents survive by chance, not by design, and the selection that is available is the product of an unpredictable series of historical accidents. . . . Historical linguistics can then be thought of as the art of making the best use of bad data.”

10. More precisely, a *Fremdwort*, which refers only to Philistines. See BDB, 710; HALOT, 770 (with bibliography). The biblical attestations are Josh 13:3; Judg 3:3; 16:5–30; 1 Sam 5:8, 11; 6:4–16; 7:7; 29:2–6; 1 Chr 12:20. On the Ugaritic word *srnm* in CAT 1.22.i.18, see recently W.G.E. Watson, “Wonderful Wine (KTU 1.22 i 17–20),” *UF* 31 (1999): 778–79, who prefers “cup(?)”; cf. *DUL*, 770–71.

11. See recently F. Pintore, “Seren, Tarwanis, Tyrannos,” in *Studi Orientalistici in Ricordo di Franco Pintore*, ed. O. Carruba, M. Liverani, and C. Zaccagnini (Pavia: GJES, 1983), 285–322; R. Stefanini, “Il nome di Adad-Nirari (III) nei geroglifici di Carchemish (A6, fr. 1),” *Vicino Oriente* 6 (1986): 140–44; G. Garbini, “On the Origin

of the Hebrew-Philistine Word *seren*,” in *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau*, ed. A. S. Kaye (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1991), 516–19; I. Singer, “Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines in the Period of the Emergence of Israel,” in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, ed. I. Finkelstein and N. Na’aman (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 335–36. E. Edel (“Bemerkungen zu HELCKs Philisterartikel in BN 21,” BN 22 [1983]: 7) is dubious of this relationship due to the difference of initial consonants (*t* vs. *samekh*), but see following. Stefanini posits the Luvian-Greek transfer as follows: *tarwanis* > **tarunis* (contraction) > Gk. *turannos* (metathesis of *a-u*). Interestingly, the Targum of Judg 3:3 and 16:5 translates סרני as טורני, “tyrants.”

12. See the details in J. E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 407–8, 429; R. S. Hendel, “Sibilants and *šibbōlet* (Judges 12:6),” BASOR 301 (1996): 72.

13. The best evidence in Hebrew is the misspelling of words with *samekh* for *šin* and vice versa, e.g., סכרים in Ezra 4:5; שכלית in Qoh 1:17; שחם in Lam 3:8. See the collection of such misspellings (along with some earlier irregular forms) in J. Blau, *On Pseudo-Corrections in Some Semitic Languages* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1970), 114–25. It is difficult to date precisely the shifts in the sounds represented by *samekh* and *šin*, viz. [ts] > [s] and [t] > [s]; see recently A. Dolgopolsky, *From Proto-Semitic to Hebrew: Phonology* (Milano: Centro Studi Camito-Semitici, 1999), 30–34, 61.

14. S. Gitin, T. Dotan, and J. Naveh, “A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron,” IEJ 47 (1997): 9–10. B. Halpern has raised the attractive possibility (oral communication) that homophony between סרן and שר may have facilitated this lexical replacement.

15. HALOT 463, 1081–2; I. Singer, “Egyptians, Canaanites, and Philistines,” 336. This etymology was first noted by E. Sapir, “Hebrew ‘Helmet,’ a Loanword, and Its Bearing on Indo-European Phonology,” JAOS 57 (1937): 73–77.

16. Gitin, Dotan, and Naveh, “Dedicatory Inscription,” 15.

17. B. Halpern, “Text and Artifact: Two Monologues?” in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, ed. N. A. Silberman and D. Small (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 312; idem, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 60–64.

18. Josh 13:13, 2 Sam 3:3; 13:37–38; 14:23, 32; 15:8; 1 Chr 2:23; 3:2; see Z. U. Ma’oz, “Geshur,” ABD 2.996.

19. So, tentatively, W. F. Albright, “The Biblical Tribe of Massa’ and Some Congeners,” in *Studi Orientalistici in Onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida*, ed. R. Ciasca (Rome: Istituto per “Oriente, 1956), 12; and more decisively, E. Lipiński, “Les Sémites selon Gen 10,21–30 et 1 Chr 1,17–23,” ZAH 6 (1993): 202; idem, *The Aramaeans: Their Ancient History, Culture, Religion* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 336; Halpern, “Text and Artifact,” 312.

20. See M. L. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language in the Achaemenid Period: A Study in Linguistic Variation* (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 74; on a possible occurrence in the eighth cent. Sefire inscription (I C 24: ירה), see W. R. Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-*

Palestine, 1000–586 B.C.E. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 29, 119.

21. See HALOT, 1284; W. T. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus: A Historical Study of the Syrian City-State from Earliest Times until Its Fall to the Assyrians in 732 B.C.E.* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 181–82; Lipiński, *Aramaicans*, 404; Halpern, *David's Secret*, 61–62. The biblical references are 2 Kgs 15:37; 16:5–9; Isa 7:1–8; 8:6; 9:10.

22. This is the closest emphatic grapheme for [d], since the Phoenician alphabet did not have a letter for this sound. See the fuller analysis of Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 181–82.

23. The MT vocalization, *rēšîn*, takes the *yod* as a *mater lectionis* rather than a consonant, thereby misconstruing the form.

24. Note the Old Aramaic and Imperial Aramaic representations of **d* as *ḡ* and *ʿ*, respectively, in the Aramaic verse in Jer 10:11: אֲרֵצָה and אֲרֵצָה (“earth,” Hebrew אֶרֶץ). At the time of this verse, the *ḡ* is probably an archaic spelling; see J. Greenfield, “Philological Observations on the Deir ‘Alla Inscription,” in *Al Kanfei Yonah: Collected Studies of Jonas C. Greenfield on Semitic Philology*, ed. S. M. Paul, M. E. Stone, and A. Pinnick (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 807.

25. See the data in Folmer, *Aramaic*, 69–70.

26. See P. V. Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 123–25, 151–52, 135–36; H. Tadmor, “The Commanders of the Assyrian Army” (Hebrew), *EI* 26 (1999): 186–90; and on their chronological significance, M. Eskhult, “Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts,” in *Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Young, 20.

27. Tartan: Isa 20:1. Rabsaris: Isa 36:2; Jer 39:3, 13; Dan 1:3. Rabshakeh: 2 Kgs 18:17–37; 19:4, 8; Isa 36:2–22; 37:4, 8. Jer 39:3, 13 also mention a military official called *rab-māg*, from Akkadian *rab mugī* (Mankowski, *Akkadian*, 134).

28. The Hebrew sibilants indicate that *rab ša rēši* was borrowed from the Neo-Assyrian (Hebrew ש renders Neo-Assyrian š), while *rab šaqē* was borrowed into Hebrew from the Neo-Babylonian (Hebrew שׁ renders Neo-Babylonian š); see Mankowski, *Akkadian*, 125, 136.

29. M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 223–51; P. Machinist, “Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah,” *JAOS* 103 (1983): 719–37, esp. 730–35. On the literary history of 2 Kings 18–19 and Isaiah 36–37, see recently B. S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 260–66, and references.

30. Dever, *Biblical Writers*, 221–28.

31. R. Kletter, *Economic Keystones: The Weight System of the Kingdom of Judah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

32. Darics (אֲדָרְכָנִים): 1 Chr 29:7; Ezra 8:27. Drachmas (דְּרַכְמַיִם): Ezra 2:69; Neh 7:66–71.

33. See J. Joosten, “The Knowledge and Use of Hebrew in the Hellenistic Period: Qumran and the Septuagint,” in *Diggers at the Well: Proceedings of a Third International Symposium on the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Ben Sira*, ed. T. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 115–30.

34. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 43–44; Qimron, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 47; Ben-Ḥayyim, *Samaritan Hebrew*, 202–7, 339–40.

35. On these uses, see J. M. Solá-Solé, *L'infinitif sémitique* (Paris: Champion, 1961), 92, 96–104; T. Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 83–92; B. K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 584–88, 593–94; J. H. Hospers, “Some Remarks about the So-Called Imperative Use of the Infinitive Absolute (Infinitivus pro Imperativo) in Classical Hebrew,” in *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Syntax Presented to Professor J. Hofstijzer*, ed. K. Jongeling, H. L. Murre-Vanden Berg, and L. van Rompay (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 97–102.

36. Kropat, *Syntax*, 23; B. Waltke, “The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Text of the Old Testament,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Payne (Waco: Word Books, 1970), 215–16; E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a)* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 347.

37. Line 1; S. Aḥituv, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1992), 106.

38. Line 2; see also כַּחֲרֵם אֶכְחָדֶם [] in line 3; Aḥituv, *Handbook*, 219.

39. Line 7; Aḥituv, *Handbook*, 250.

40. Combination 1.3–4; Aḥituv, *Handbook*, 266.

41. See S. L. Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 264–65; Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 181.

42. Aḥituv, *Handbook*, 54. The Arad letters also use the imperative form הַן, e.g., הַן לְכַתִּים (4.1, etc.), rendering dubious the proposal that the Arad form הַן is a “an irregular, non-BH form of the imperative,” as entertained by I. Young, “Late Biblical Hebrew and Hebrew Inscriptions,” in *Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Young, 286, 300.

43. By “clearly Persian-Hellenistic books,” I mean those with references to the Persian empire and/or clear Persian loanwords: 1 Chr 4:10; 21:17; 21:24 (= 2 Sam 24:24); 2 Chr 18:27 (= 1 Kgs 22:28); 28:19; 32:13; Neh 1:7 (pointed in MT as inf. cst.); Cant 8:7; Esther 4:14; 6:13; Daniel 10:3; see Solá-Solé, *L'infinitif*, 201–4. For the sparse use of the paranomastic construction in Ben Sira and Qumran (in the latter mostly in biblical citations), see M. S. Smith, “The Infinitive Absolute as Predicative Verb in Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Preliminary Survey,” in *Diggers at the Well*, ed. Muraoka and Elwolde, 262–65.

44. Solá-Solé, *L'infinitif*, 201–4.

45. M. Eskhult, “Verbal Syntax in Late Biblical Hebrew,” in *Diggers at the Well*, ed. Muraoka and Elwolde, 90 and n. 28. M. Ehrensverd (“Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts,” in *Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Young, 170) points out that הוֹעֲמִיד in Neh 7:3 is an infinitive absolute expressing a command, but since it continues the previous volitive sequence (imperfect + *waw* + imperative) it is most easily understood in the continuative function of the infinitive absolute; see Eskhult, “Verbal Syntax,” 90 n. 30; and Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 596: “with *waw* the infinitive is used as a finite verb and represents a situation subordinate to the leading verb . . . [and] that verb specifies the person and aspect of the infinitive.”

46. Ben Sira 3:17 (MS C): הוֹלִיךְ; noted by W. T. van Peursen, “Conditional Sentences with הוֹ in the Protasis in Qumran Hebrew,” in *Diggers*, ed. Muraoka and Elwolde, 225.

47. See R. J. Williams, “The Passive *Qal* Theme in Hebrew,” in *Essays on the An-*

cient Semitic World, ed. J. W. Wevers and D. B. Redford (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 43–50; Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction*, 373–76. In Hebrew the perfect is *qattal*, the short *a* by analogy with the other internal passives (Pual, Hophal), and the gemination either by a regular change for pretonic short *u*: **u*C > *u*CC / ___[a] (see W. R. Garr, "Pretonic Vowels in Hebrew," *VT* 37 [1987]: 148–50), or by misconstrual as a Pual perfect; in Aramaic the perfect *qəṭīl* (the long *ī* probably by analogy with the participle) is used regularly, but the imperfect **yūqal* is rare after the 8th cent. B.C.E. (see Sefire I A 38–41); only a few examples are discernible in Phoenician and Punic; C. R. Krahmalkov, *A Phoenician-Punic Grammar* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 157.

48. Qimron, *Hebrew*, 48; Ben-Hayyim, *Samaritan Hebrew*, 176–83; J. Hughes, "Post-Biblical Features of Biblical Hebrew Vocalization," in *Language, Theology, and the Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr*, ed. S. E. Balentine and J. Barton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 71–76.

49. 1 Chr 11:19 (יִלֵּד); Neh 2:3, 13 (אִכְלִי); Qoh 9:12 (יִקְשִׁימ), participle; see Hughes, "Post-Biblical," 76 n. 20.

50. Eskhult, *Studies in Verbal Aspect*, 112; see also Kutscher, *Language*, 351–52.

51. See n. 6.

52. See T. Muraoka, "The Participle in Qumran Hebrew with Special Reference to Its Periphrastic Use," in *Sirach, Scrolls, and Sages*, ed. Muraoka and J. F. Elwolde (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 194–201; M. S. Smith, "Grammatically Speaking: The Participle as a Main Verb of Clauses (Predicative Participle) in Direct Discourse and Narrative in Pre-Mishnaic Hebrew," in *Sirach*, ed. Muraoka and Elwolde, 306–8, 315, 331–32.

53. The iterative sense is still conveyed by the initial sequence, וַיְהִי כִּי בָּא הַמֶּלֶךְ, "whenever the king came."

54. Hendel, "Margins," 165–66; Waltke and O'Connor, *Syntax*, 527; and M. S. Smith, *The Origins and Development of the Waw-Consecutive: Northwest Semitic Evidence from Ugarit to Qumran* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 27–33 ("The 'Fall' of the Waw-Consecutive in the Biblical Corpus").

55. A. F. Rainey, "Mesha and Syntax," in *The Land That I Will Show You: Essays on the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honour of J. Maxwell Miller*, ed. J. A. Dearman and M. P. Graham (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 287–307.

56. Lines 5–6; see Aḥituv, *Handbook*, 250–51. Aḥituv incorrectly describes this usage as pluperfect ("עֲבַר שֶׁל עֲבָר," 253).

57. Krahmalkov, *Phoenician-Punic*, 184. On the reading יִהְיוּ לְכֶן, see J. Tropper, "‘Sie knurrten wie Hunde’: Psalm 59, 16, Kilamuwa: 10, und die Semantik der Wurzel *lun*," *ZAW* 106 (1994): 92–94.

58. See further J. Joosten, "A Remarkable Development in the Biblical Hebrew Verbal System: The Disappearance of Iterative WEQATAL," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. S. Fassberg (Jerusalem: Magnes, forthcoming).

59. The only probable exceptions are 2 Kgs 8:7–9, where the Aramean king Ben Hadad is named instead of his successor Hadadezer, and 1 Kgs 20 and 2 Kgs 6:24, where campaigns of Ben Hadad II are placed in the time of Ben Hadad I (whose

reign is lengthened because of the forgotten Hadadezer). See Halpern, "Israelite History," 546–55. On the Ben Hadad confusions, see Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 114–25, 132–38; Lipiński, *Aramaean*, 373–77, 397–99; and on linguistic indications that 1 Kgs 20 may be postexilic, see A. Rofé, *Introduction to the Historical Literature of the Hebrew Bible* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Carmel, 2001), 95–96.

60. A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 11, regarding Daniel, Esther, and Judith. The book of Ezra also commits some howlers; see L. L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (London: Routledge, 1998), 134.

61. See n. 3.

62. Some other materials are gathered in R. S. Hendel, "'Begetting' and 'Being Born' in the Pentateuch: Notes on Historical Linguistics and Source Criticism," *VT* 50 (2000): 38–46. On p. 46 I should have written, "the P source, arguably a multi-generational work, stems from the late pre-exilic, exilic, and early Persian periods," since there is adequate linguistic evidence for both sides of this range.



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