Writing the history of ancient Israel: a review article

In his 1977 essay on 'The History of the Study of Israelite and Judaean History', J. H. Hayes isolated four major 'current approaches' to the writing of ancient Israel's history. The first was the conservative/orthodox/traditional approach presupposing the 'supernatural origin' and inerrancy of the original text of Scripture. This approach 'works primarily from the evidence of the biblical text, supplying this with illustrative and supportive material drawn from extra-biblical texts and archaeological data'.

A second approach is archaeological, particularly associated with W. F. Albright and his pupils. Albright assumed the basic reliability of the OT traditions and believed that archaeological evidence functioned 'as a control against unnecessary dependency upon literary, philosophical, or fundamentalist hypotheses'. Hayes notes, however, that 'there are many archaeologists who would not share his methodological approach'.

A third approach is via tradition history. This approach, associated with such names as G. von Rad and M. Noth, presupposed the late writing down of traditions which were subsequently redacted into the present books of the OT. Among Noth's distinctive contributions to Israelite historiography was the suggestion that the tribal union was modelled on the Greek amphictyony.

A fourth approach involves the use of socio-economic categories to illuminate ancient Israelite society. Associated initially with G. E. Mendenhall and made widely available in the monumental study by N. Gottwald, proponents of this approach have argued that Israel's origins are to be sought within Canaan, in a popular movement that sought a new way of life free from the existing oppressive social structures.

Hayes' concluding paragraph recognized that some contemporary histories of Israel 'cannot be said to be dominated by any exclusive methodology but were more eclectic'. When, nine years later, Hayes co-wrote a History with J. M. Miller, his comment would accurately describe their own work. The importance of their history may be gauged by the fact that the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* devoted half an issue to it, providing a platform for different scholarly evaluations and then a response by Miller.

A little over a decade later we have a new History: H. Shanks (ed.), *Ancient Israel. A Short History from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*. Like the Miller-Hayes volume it was originally published in the States, and is a collaborative effort. However, while Miller-Hayes represents the work of just two scholars the Shanks volume presents contributions from a team of eight, all but one North Americans. Like Miller-Hayes its methodology is eclectic; no attempt has been made to impose a uniform approach between contributors.

How does the new work measure up in terms of accessibility and accuracy? We are delighted to be able to offer *Themelios* readers two different assessments. One is from a long-time contributor, Kenneth A. Kitchen, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Liverpool. Professor Kitchen is well known for his trenchant contributions to OT study; see *e.g.* *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* and *The Bible in Its World: The Bible and Archaeology Today*. Twenty-eight years ago he provided TSF readers with a minutely detailed review of Bright's History. The other is from Dr Richard ('Rick') Hess who reviewed G. J. Wenham's Word Commentary on Genesis 1–15 in the April 1989 issue. Dr Hess lectures in Old Testament at BTI Glasgow, and has worked on the Tyndale House Genesis 1–11 Project and the (Sheffield) Hebrew Dictionary Project. He has a major work on the Amarna Correspondence in press and is completing a monograph on Personal Names in Genesis 1–11.

Their differing assessments of the Shanks volume indicate something of the range of an evangelical response on the ongoing question of how to write the history of ancient Israel.

David Deboys, Reviews editor.

2 Ibid., pp. 64-69.

3 Hayes cites L. T. Wood, *Survey of Israel’s History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), as illustrating this approach. The most recent example is E. H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests. A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987). In the notes which follow, no attempt is made to be comprehensive bibliographically, I only cite representative works in English. Also ignored are the rash of current monographs dealing exclusively with the early history of Israel. For references see J. Bimson’s article in the present issue.


The dynamic editor of the liveliest popular periodical in biblical studies (Biblical Archaeology Review) has induced eight scholars (one French, the rest American) each to contribute a chapter to this new, compact history of early Israel from Abraham down to the Romans in AD 70. The concept was to combine a high level of scholarship with a highly readable text, incorporating recent developments and archaeological discoveries. As Shanks says, there is nothing quite of this scope on the bookshelves of current (the recent essays by Garbini, History and Ideology in Ancient Israel, 1988, and Lemche, Ancient Israel, 1988, are tendentious, ill-informed and misleading). This gap, he aims to fill. The quality of production is good, and beyond any doubt, the entirely laudable aim of ready readability is certainly well achieved — on that (dealing with scholars) all credit is due. But what of content? Here, matters are less clear-cut, as scrutiny reveals.

Chapter I, ‘The Patriarchal Age’, by P. Kyle McCarter, begins by criticizing the biblical data for dating the patriarchs, mechanically lumping together all the figures with no regard for their varying nature. Not surprisingly, this brings only discord, because his treatment is wrong. These are ancient Near Eastern, not modern, Western-style documents, and must be treated accordingly; the transmission of ancient numbers also enters into play. This reviewer’s treatment of a quarter-century ago (Ancient Orient & OT, 1966, pp. 41-56) is significantly ahead of McCarter’s on both methodology and results, requiring only minimal modification. The claim that the ‘patriarchal history reflects the political and religious viewpoint of the Judean monarchy and priesthood’ (p. 3) is made without offering any proof, as are the statements that treat the documentary hypothesis as fact (cf. pp. 12-13 and passim) instead of theory and not cogently. McCarter successfully reviews various scholarly interpretations of the patriarchal narratives: of Albright and followers, of Noth, to both of which he records objections. External comparative data for an early second-millennium (BC) date for the patriarchs are rejected in dependence on the twin works by T. L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (1974), and J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (1975), whose views and statements he adopts and cites uncritically. These works performed the useful service of clearing away misuse of some external sources, particularly in the Nuzi texts, as background for the patriarchal narratives, but they misrepresented the entire evidence to a serious extent. They are strictly works for the non-thinking biblical scholar. It needs to be stated that Albright’s old hypothesis of Amorite mass migrations, for example, has no bearing on the patriarchs.

On proper names, being so uncritical of his twin sources, McCarter is seriously in error. The so-called ‘Amorite Imperfective’ type of name (often beginning with J, J, in the English Bible), like Jacob, Joseph, Isaac, are admitted to be ‘especially well known from Middle Bronze sources’. But McCarter (and his twin sources) then allege (p. 11): ‘there is no reason to believe that its use diminished after the Middle Bronze Age; only some two hundred names appear in Ugaritic and Amarna . . . with Jacob-related names appearing in Aramaic and in Palmyrene (3rd century AD). Just how wrong can one be? The facts are as follows. First, this class of names is already found in the 3rd millennium BC — well before the patriarchs — at Ebla, as a recent and reliable reference work makes clear. Second, from Gelb’s monumental compendium on early 2nd-millennium Amorite, from over 6,000 names, some 1,360 of the ‘Jacob/Isaac’ type form one-sixth of the entire corpus (16%) — and 55% (over half) of all names beginning with I/Y. What about the Late Bronze Age (McC: not diminished)? At Ugarit, using Gronemeyer’s two lists (alphabetically written), the name 1,860 alphabetical script names yield under 40 of these names — only 2% (contrast 16% in Middle Bronze), and only one-third of I/Y names (some 30%, not 55%). In syllabic script, it gets worse — 4,050 names yield only 20 ‘Jacob-type’ names (down to ½%), and now only one-quarter of the initial I/Y names (25% instead of 55%). In direct contradiction to McCarter and Thompson/Van Seters, there is clearly a massive diminution between (say) 1800 BC and 1300 BC — overall 16% drops to between 2% and ½%, while in the I/Y groups, it drops from 55% to between 30% and 25%. Going into the 1st millennium BC, the divergence gets worse again — Ugarit’s Late Bronze Inscription (subscript) count of 5,000 names, only 120, or 2.4%, and others 5,000 names, only 0.24%, or 1/70th of the Middle Bronze Age proportion! And out of 740 I/Y names, it is still only 1.6%, a minute fraction of the 55% of the early 2nd millennium. For McCarter these figures are daunting; these are not of the ‘Jacob’ imperfective type, hence of no relevance (the root ‘agab’ is common) — the only one of our type (at Palmyra) is himself a Jew! In short, there was a drastic and continuing diminution in use of such names after the Middle Bronze/early 2nd millennium BC/patriarchal age.

Serious needs of this kind affect McCarter’s other pronouncements on proper names. The name of Zebulon, with other sons of Jacob, is dismissed as merely geographical and not personal (p. 28), and ‘means something like “highland”’. In fact, names most closely linked with Zebulon are (i) personal names only, and (ii) particularly
in the early 2nd millennium BC. We possess: (1 & 2) Zibilanum, two men so named in an Old Babylonian wage-list; (3) Zabili and (4) Zabulan, both from Mari, same period; (5) a Zabilanan, ruler of Shudu in Transjordan, c. 1800 BC, earlier Exarchus texts (6); and (6) Zabili-Hadu (Hadad is Prince), in later such texts (E. 16), in c. 1770 BC as ruler of [Jabbok]. In these names the root zbl̄ means ‘exalted’, and hence ‘prince’, with variations (little prince, etc.). The common noun ‘prince’, zbl, is well attested in the religious epics and legends from 14th/13th century BC Ugarit, originating much earlier (c. 19th-16th centuries BC). All these data are readily available to scholars, yet they are ignored. Even in Hebrew, zbl is far more metaphorical (‘exalted’, etc.) than literally ‘highland’. McCarter’s treatment of this name is inexcusably misleading. His treatment of other names (Abraham, Asher, etc.) is almost as bad, and equally misleading.

Matters are no better in the legal/social sphere. Again, following Thompson and Van Seters, McCarter rightly rejects Speiser’s Hurrian fantasies, based on mistaken use of Nuzi data (p. 11). Again, he admits that good background material is available from Old Babylonian and other texts of the early 2nd millennium for the responsibilities of a barren wife towards her husband, and so on. He then alleges parallels from a 12th-century Egyptian contract and an Assyrian document of 648 BC, to prove that such usage went on into the 1st millennium. Unfortunately, he has merely ‘lifted’ these two items from Thompson and Van Seters, without attempting to verify the facts. Both parallels are weak. The Egyptian document is unique and is in content not a valid parallel, dealing with simply an unusual series of adoptions. The Assyrian parallel is at best only tentative. These parallels, however, proves nothing, having a different emphasis from the patriarchal usage — it too is an abnormal document for its period, as its editor remarks. So, neither document proves patriarchal usage going into the 1st millennium — and all the really good and valid comparisons are, as before, in the first half of the 2nd millennium. It is regrettable that McCarter’s view is so narrowly restricted that he fails to consider almost any view other than those of Thompson and Van Seters and those they tried to debunk, instead of reviewing a wider range of scholarly contributions, and going for facts not just opinions.

As for history of tradition, the guesswork of Alt and Noth is reviewed, thankfully a little more critically; then, the genealogical suggestions of Oden, at third remove from original sources. This is no way to handle such a topic. Like should be compared with like, on a wide factual basis. This procedure was given a first-ever systematic outline by the reviewer a dozen years ago; of the data and the treatment alike, McCarter seems unaware. Furthermore, even quite ‘folksy’ stories can be shown to preserve good historical data, and to involve strictly historical people. A parade example is the totally fictional ‘Tales of the Magicians’ (Papyrus Westcar) of c. 1600 BC, concerning a period of 2500 BC, at best only tentatively. These tales correctly name three (originally four) monumentally-attested pharaohs of the Pyramid Age, in their correct order, three sons of Kheops (known to be real ones), and the three first kings of the succeeding 5th Dynasty, with only two errors in the relationships (on number of full brothers, name of mother). If an Egyptian folk tale (written in what was informal language for its day) can retain historical people so well in a thousand years’ time-lapse, then — judged by these external standards — there is no reason for doubting the names, sequence or historicity of the Hebrew patriarchs, especially as our existing narratives are older than the monarchy period; these too could have transmitted data across a thousand years, but the actual period was probably rather less. However, evidence of this kind never entered McCarter’s very limited horizons.

It is distasteful to have to criticize his well-written essay so severely, but he has brought this upon himself.

Chapter 2, ‘Israel in Egypt’, by N. M. Sarna, is a considerable improvement on McCarter in both content and method. He too has problems (i.e. dating the exodus, questions of historicity), but opts — probably rightly — for the 13th century and a real event. Proper background data are duly utilized (foreign immigrants from Canaan into Egypt; scope of brickmaking; popular religion; features of the plagues, etc.), indicating a very definite Egyptian colouring to the narratives. The route of the exodus and Sinai travels is a difficult question, but Sarna is wrong to dismiss too lightly the general location of Gebel Musa for Mt Sinai — not on the basis of Byzantine tradition, but on ecological grounds made clear by this writer and others. Sarna rightly stresses the importance of the covenant at Sinai, but fails badly to recognize the mass of external evidence that clearly dates the Sinai/Moab covenant to the 14th/13th centuries BC. It is good to see him giving some realistic background for the tabernacle in the Late Bronze Age, using the Timna shrine and essential Egyptian data. As Sarna stresses, we have no explicit proof for the events of the exodus and after, but the (he notes) negative evidence is no evidence, and his overall assessment that the transmitted biblical narratives give us the best framework for the facts is a sound one.

Chapter 3, ‘The Settlement in Canaan’, is by the late J. A. Callaway. His main value is simply the presentation of the views of a mere handful of scholars on Israel’s ‘conquest’ and settlement in Canaan, where the archaeological picture has been in part transformed in recent years. Callaway reviews the views of Yadim and Malamat (who favour some kind of conquest), of Alt (favouring mainly peace by infiltration by nomads), and of Mendenhall and Gottwald (seeking Israelite origins in a ‘peasant revolt’ within Canaan). Regrettably, an exaggerated antithesis is drawn between the books of Joshua and Judges, which reflects, as Callaway says (p. 53), the impression given by a ‘casual reading’ of those narratives. A casual reading is precisely what scholar or student should not be indulging in, if they want valid results. Only careful, observant study is valid here; like others, Callaway simply ignores statements like Joshua 13:1: ‘very much land remains to be possessed’, and appears not to realize that allocation of land is one thing, but actual physical occupation of this land is another. The case of the few centuries actually stated to have been involved is quite different. It is relatively easy to say very well to say that Jericho and Ai ‘should have identifiable traces of destruction dating to the time of the conquest’ (p. 61) and that Jericho still has some 70 ft of occupation layers ‘intact’ — a misleading adjective to use here. It all depends on the state of preservation of the site and its layers, not all of which are intact. Callaway begins to admit this (p. 62) when he concedes that of Middle Bronze Jericho (i.e. patriarchal period), ‘a substantial portion of the fortifications and the city [that was] burned about 1560 BC had eroded away — the part of the city on the top of the mound — so it is impossible to reconstruct the city’s appearance on that basis’. And therefore, we are not entitled to misuse archaeology to deny, any more than to affirm, the reality of Joshua’s reported capture of Jericho. It gives the lie to Callaway’s misjudgment that — somehow — sufficient traces of the Late Bronze city of the 14th/13th centuries BC should have survived for our convenience. He admits major loss of the Middle Bronze town, which happened in hardly 200 years; hence in the 400 years from Joshua to Ahab — almost half a millennium — near-total erosion of a smaller settlement has been the result. And despite the common archaeological myth to the contrary, pottery is both destructible and durable, even if it takes longer than with other artifacts. If Judges is called kings of Canaan more often than king of Hazor the latter name remained as name of his North Canaanite state rather than his erstwhile capital. The confused opinions reported by Callaway (pp. 66-68) are of little merit. Incidentally, the supposed
bottom date for Hazor’s fall, 1220 BC (p. 68), is now wrong, because
based on an outdated and too-high Egyptian chronology — it can be
lowered by a decade or two if need be. It is possible to attribute level
XI to Jabin II of Deborah’s day; Israelite occupation of Hazor almost
certainly happened much later. No other city destructions can be
attributed to the incoming Israelites with any certainty, either on
biblical or any other evidence. For example, Lachish level VII (and
not VI as Ussishkin has suggested) might have suffered the impact of
Hebrew attack, but Joshua–Judges do not authorize us to claim this —
the destructions of Lachish levels VII and VI may as easily have been
done by local Canaanite foes, incoming Philistines, or the Egyptians
revolting, to name but a few.

Then Callaway draws upon the considerable amount of new
digging at Tell el-Ful (the Judean seat of ancient Jerusalem) recently done in Israel, rightly
noting (p. 73) that these appear to reveal ‘a considerable influx of
newcomers to the hill country of Canaan . . . at the end of the 13th
century BC’, citing the findings of Stager, Kochavi and others. Thus,
something new had clearly happened; such newcomers (as Callaway
notes also) had increased ‘too rapidly to be ascribed to natural
growth’. Here the Mendenhall/Gottwald internal peasant revolt
theory (as is widely acknowledged) is worthless. The main movement
seems to have entered from the east and spread westward, particularly
through Ephraim. This tallies perfectly with an Israelite entry from
across the Jordan, and earlier occupation of areas like Shiloah, for
example. So Callaway observes, again rightly, that these people were not Alt’s imaginary desert nomads; they were herdsmen and
cultivators. These are skills that the Hebrews already had as
patrarchal clans (cf. Genesis), and still had on their exodus from
Egypt; cf. Ex. 9.4.6-7; 10:24-26; 12:38, for the Hebrews’ livestock then.
All of this fits together better than might be gleaned from this chapter.
Callaway knew his Palestinian archaeology, but his use of that and
the biblical data leave a lot to be desired.

Chapter 4, The United Monarchy, by André Lemaire, covers
Saul, David and Solomon. In his account of Saul’s reign, the impact
of archaeology is limited to a summary list of sites (p. 91) in which
the candidature of Tell el-Ful for Gibeah of Saul is not even mentioned,
still less discussed. Again, the Near Eastern evidence that
authenticates Samuel’s description of levantine kingship on the eve
of Saul’s appointment to kingship (1 Sa. 8) is ignored. Attribution
of Saul’s wars to David is merely unsubstantiated speculation. There
follows a fair summary of David’s wars and transformation of Israel
into a fully organized state. Half of Lemaire’s account is devoted to
Solomon’s reign in many of its aspects. This is a useful outline,
including archaeological data, but has its weaknesses. Thus, the
essential link between Solomon and wisdom literature (including
Proverbs) is seriously underestimated, and the Egyptian links with his
administration not understood. Again, Hadad of Edom (p. 103 and
n. 59) has nothing to do with Aram; (H)adad as a deity is common to
all the West Semitic groups. Additional data in Chronicles is
needlessly dismissed, whereas we know that Chronicles actually
preserves authentic data not in Kings – the Sukkii of king Shishak,
for example (Tjukten of Egyptian sources). Nor are these the only
weaknesses.

Chapter 5, The Divided Monarchy (Judah and Israel), is by S. H.
Horn, who provides a reasonable, straightforward account of the twin
countries down to the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles respectively.
Apart from the obvious contributions of the Moabite Stone, Hezekiah’s
tunnel inscription and the Samaria and Lachish ostraca, plus the
Assyrian references, the use of archaeological and external data is
rather sparse. Throughout, one glaring fault is that this author is
twenty-five to thirty years out-of-date on matters relating to Egypt. He
treats as the last word on the subject (p. 248, n. 1) Mazar’s impossible
views on the list of Palestinian place-names left us by the pharaoh
Shoshenq I (Shishak); several other treatments have been offered
since 1957, and the whole matter dealt with in proper Egyptological
terms by this reviewer.21 The Samaria ivories may be evidence of
Ahab’s ‘ivory house’, although a later date has been suggested. On pp.
130-131, Horn has followed the outdated views of Goedicke (quarter-
century obsolete): So is a king, nor the city of Sais, and most probably
Osorkon IV of Tanis.22 Again, on p. 136 Horn clings to the wrong view
of two Palestinian campaigns by Sennacherib (now rejected by
virtually all competent authorities), instead of one actually attested in
701 BC, misunderstanding even the biblical data. The simple fact
remains that our present account in Isaiah and Kings was cast in its
present form after 681 BC, as it records the death of Sennacherib. By
that time, Tabarqat had already been king in Egypt for nine years, and
hence is referred to as ‘king’ in all contexts, including earlier ones,
just we would say ‘Queen Elizabeth II was born in 1926’, although she
was not queen in that year. The whole matter was discussed in full
fifteen years ago and again three years since,23 so Horn’s ignorance is
inexcusable at this late stage. P. 117, the first five lines of dates are
ten years too low (typographic error). The mess over Egyptian data
impairs the usefulness of this chapter.

Chapter 6, ‘Exile and Return’, by J. D. Purvis, gives quite a good
survey of Judah under neo-Babylonian and Persian imperial
domination, useful and competent.

Chapter 7, The Age of Hellenism, by Lee I. A. Irvine, and Chapter
8, ‘Roman Domination’, by S. J. D. Cohen, take us respectively
through the period of the Ptolemies, Seleucids and Hasmoneans,
then of Herod and the Romans to AD 70. Both authors give vivid,
masterly treatments of their periods, dealing with social and religious
developments as well as the indispensable historical and political
events. One curious omission from both chapters struck this
reviewer: neither ever makes even the slightest reference to the role of
the neighbouring and powerful kingdom of the Nabataeans (creators
of rose-red Petra) in this period! The notes and an index close the
volume.

The whole book is prefaced by H. Shanks’s introduction, largely an
enthusiastic ‘blurb’ for his brain-child. It makes a good case for the
limited chosen (Abraham to AD 70). Much less satisfying is his idea
that the further back one goes in the Bible (especially beyond
annalistic works like Kings), the less reliable the biblical record
becomes, and the less correlation there is with external sources. This
betrays serious misunderstanding of those sources, both biblical and
Near Eastern; effective correlation is not to be limited just to finding
named biblical individuals in external sources (a naive error shared
with McCarter), nor are reliable historical data to be found solely in
annalistic-type writings. Space forbids further comment on so vast a
subject.

How then shall the work be viewed? The last three chapters overall
are commendable; chapters 2 and 4 are competent and useful, but
have important gaps. Chapter 3 is not wholly satisfactory, and chapter
5 is thin and positively misleading on the several Egyptian
connections. And the important chapter 1, patriarchs, is replete with
substantial errors. One would dearly love to have been able to
commend this well produced and readable book for the role its editor
hopes for – but the very serious deficiencies mean that, factually, it
cannot be recommended as a textbook or reference work; the flaws
are too serious.

K. A. Kitchen.
We do need another history of Israel?

Hershel Shanks has provided the teacher and student with a well-informed, up-to-date account of study on the history of ancient Israel. His sales pitch in the introduction argues for an affirmative to questions both student and teacher would ask: Is it balanced and comprehensive? And is it interesting and fun to read? As to the first, the book lies well within the American (more specifically American Schools of Oriental Research) perspective of 'orthodox' archaeological and historical interpretation. Those who seek the defense of alternative views or a new synthesis must look elsewhere. As to the second question, we have the editor's hand throughout guaranteeing reader-friendly prose, accompanied by notes on difficult terms and names. There are also the pictures (including nine colour plates), reflecting Biblical Archaeology Reviews' (which shares the same editor as the volume under consideration) wide inventory, and the maps (we overlook the confusion of the Tigris and Euphrates on the first one, by no means characteristic of the others). Many of the major issues and directions are covered in the chapters. Perhaps the brevity of the study, intended as a short history, explains the sometimes schematic presentation of the data which, in its attempt to show the 'progress' of research in the field, can omit some of the precise contours of what the data actually suggests. What is certain is the importance of this work as an influential introductory text on the history of ancient Israel for the English-speaking world in the coming years.

For example, in the first chapter, by Kyle McCarter, we learn that the Amorites did not invade Palestine at the EB/MB transition. But does that necessarily mean that Amorites did not exist or that an Abraham figure could not have been an Amorite? Again, does the fact that the personal names of the patriarchs have parallels in later West Semitic history mean that the dominance of single-element yodh-prefixes names among these figures says nothing about their similarities with the Amorite names from Mari and elsewhere in the early 2nd millennium (where similar features obtain to a degree not found later)? McCarter wisely avoids such judgments, but unqualified criticism of a theory may invite the reader of the text to dismiss more than is necessarily intended. In any case, this criticism should not ignore a competent review of Noth's tradition-historical approach with criticism and updating. The discussion of the names of the sons of Jacob raises some questions. On this period, it is not clear that the description of a place? Could it not more easily originally have been a personal name sharing the same Canaanite root as Jezebel and Zebul? The historical conclusions of the 'patriarchal period' reflect a move away from alignment with any particular extra-biblical events of the second millennium and towards an acknowledgment of something preserving a memory of this period, at least in the names and occasional glosses, but not coalescing as a nation until the 12th century in the central hill country of Canaan, and waiting another two centuries before appearing as a literary unit.

Editorial comments on some of the alternative views from surfacing. Thus while we learn from McCarter that the Hyksos period does not fit the Joseph story (p. 27), Sarna informs us that such a context 'makes considerable sense'. Indeed, the difference between these two chapters is striking, reflecting far more than a distinction in the literary forms of the biblical text. Whereas McCarter's approach begins with the classical theories and proceeds to demonstrate how they have changed in the light of new evidence, Sarna focuses on the biblical narrative, pausing here and there to comment on relevant archaeological and epigraphical materials. Thus the issues Sarna addresses are not whether there was an exodus or which segment of Israelites left Egypt, but what Egyptian deities are challenged by the plagues and what can we know about the route of the exodus. Tradition-history questions such as the relationship of the exodus and the Sinai 'traditions' are entirely omitted. On the other hand, we come away from Sarna's chapter with a much better idea of what the biblical text itself relates about the exodus and the wilderness wanderings.

Responsibility for the chapter on the present interpretative crux of the settlement of Israel in Canaan fell to the late Joseph Callaway. His distinction between the historiography of Joshua and that of Judges leads to discussion about redactors and the emergence of a 'canonical' or 'official' version. As is often the case in discussions of this kind it is not clear why two competing versions were allowed to stand side by side throughout the period in which the biblical documents came together into their present form. Callaway's discussion of the archaeological evidence reviews the difficulties which the conquest model has encountered over the past generation. He prefers the alternative view which finds in Joshua a redacted account which served political and religious purposes of generations far removed from the time of Israel's appearance in Canaan. Is not a third alternative possible? Can we find in the texts of Joshua and Judges accounts which need not be read as contradictory or primarily redactional, but as reflecting the styles of literary expression found elsewhere in the ancient Near East, whether in the annalistic accounts of wars of conquest by Egyptian and Mesopotamian rulers, or in the lists of cities 'conquered' by the pharaohs of Egypt throughout the second half of the 2nd millennium BC? The former suggest a literary approach which makes sense of the texts as we have
them by defining their form and motif as part of the language of war used throughout the ancient Near East. The latter suggest that the taking of cities such as are recorded in the Karnak list of Thutmose III did not imply their destruction (see J. K. Hoffmeier, 'Reconsidering Egypt's Part in the Termination of the Middle Bronze Age in Palestine', *Levant* 21 [1989] and the literature cited there). The point is not that we have solved the problems of the descriptions of the accounts of Joshua and Judges, only that there are aspects of the literature which need to be considered before other options can be eliminated. Although Callaway did not have access to the most important synthesis on the subject (I. Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, Israel Exploration Society, 1988), his treatment of the survey results which were in his possession suggests an awareness of the importance of this material for the topic at hand. After reviewing the three approaches to Israel's origin, conquest, peaceful infiltration, and peasant revolt, he concludes by noting aspects of village society in the archaeological and biblical evidence and by following the observations of Miller regarding the origins of Yahwism in the desert.

Lemaire's chapter on the United Monarchy returns to the style of Sarna, basically following the material of the text with occasional notes from extra-biblical sources. Accepting neither the extreme scepticism of a Garbini, with his rejection of the achievements of David's reign, nor the literalism which would overlook the problems of a local king such as Saul making war with the power of Aram, Lemaire argues for the importance of the records of the reigns of David and Solomon and for their fundamental basis in reality. For David's reign he focuses on the military achievements, and for Solomon's he studies the administrative achievements. Lemaire's own work in scribal schools and their presence in ancient Israel leads to an appreciation of the period as a time of literary creativity, though this as well as the use of Josephus and classical sources in reconstructing the parallel early history of Tyre seem overshadowed by the comprehensive catalogue of relevant archaeological finds from Palestine which are relevant to the period. But this is only a reflection of the quantitative differences between the two.

Horn's chapter on the divided monarchy is the longest in the book. It follows the style of Lemaire with summaries of the biblical narrative, including the addition of relevant archaeological and epigraphical finds. Photographs of many of the important texts supplement the text, though it is not clear if the photograph of the Siloam inscription is of the original which is in the museum in Istanbul (a fact mentioned in the text), not in the Israel museum, the source of the photo used. Horn accepts two campaigns for Sennacherib and the historicity of Manasseh's repentance. His observations on the Arad sanctuary destruction levels must now take into consideration the redating of the evidence by D. Ussishkin, 'The Date of the Judaean Shrine at Arad', *Israel Exploration Journal* 38 (1988), pp. 142-157. An additional reason for Josiah's confrontation of Necho at Megiddo could have been his desire to reincorporate the Northern Kingdom into a new United Kingdom. Thus Necho's move would be interpreted by Josiah as a territorial invasion. Horn incorporates significant epigraphic finds as well as the archaeological materials. However, the focus is political and religious rather than social or economic. Thus neither the major olive oil processing installations at Miqne (Ekron) nor the interpretations of Israelite society suggested by the Samaria ostraca receive much attention.

Purvis' chapter on the exilic period and the subsequent return begins with the biblical text and supplements it with discussions from the Elephantine papyri, the seals, and what is known of Persian history. He raises the question of the existence of a synagogue or perhaps a temple in Babylonia during this period. Of course, the Samaritans and their origins are considered here. In comparison with the preceding period, the archaeological evidence for this period in Palestine is meagre. Part of the problem may have to do with the relatively small percentage of the population of Judah which actually went into exile. This suggests more of a continuity with the preceding period for much of the land than previously supposed.

The final two chapters lie beyond the OT period. Levine's chapter on Hellenism observes later wisdom literature as a means of coming to terms with this distinct culture. They bring us through the period of Jesus Christ, with three pages devoted to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, and almost one page devoted to Christians. No attempt is made to incorporate the material in the later chapters of Daniel. Neither Levine nor Cohen deal with the canon's formation.

A modern study of the history of ancient Israel must take into account the increasing variety of methods and evidence used in the study. An introductory survey must encounter readers with little or no biblical background and provide them with some sort of intelligible account of the ideas and people involved. The volume under consideration seems suitably designed to achieve this. The criticisms made here are not intended as peripheral but neither do they vitiate the work's value as a means of introducing a new generation of readers into the fascinating world of ancient Israel's history and how scholars try to recover it. Do we need another history of Israel? Probably not, unless it provides a new synthesis to broaden the minds of scholars, or reworks the existing interpretation so as to make it available to the general reader.

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