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## *Special Book Review Essay*

### **Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources**

Edited by Bill T. Arnold and Richard S. Hess

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*Reviewed by Kevin Burr, Alison Hawanchak, Esteban Hidalgo, Drew Holland, Joseph Hwang, Danielle Li, Joachim Mbela, Dustin Mills, Brian Shockey, Benjamin Wiggershaus, and Jim Wilson*

### **Introduction**

In the opening pages Richard Hess exhorts his readers to value the study of history in the way that the ancients did because of what the study of ancient Israel's history could offer to the reader, e.g. influencing faith, recognizing commonalities with ancient peoples, entering into a different worldview, thinking critically, and understanding the basis for a significant part of the socio-religious culture of the last two millennia (1-3). Having established a need for the historiography of ancient Israel, Hess surveys the history of interpretive methods that have been applied to the Hebrew Bible, which leads ultimately to the comparative method used in this book (5-12). The comparative method approaches the Hebrew Bible as "an ancient source that should be weighed and critically evaluated along with other ancient sources" (10). Particularly important is the assertion of V. Philips Long that the Hebrew Bible (and most ancient Near Eastern historical sources) may be understood in theological, literary, and historical dimensions so that each dimension complements the others (10). In other words, a text is not necessarily ahistorical because it is theological. This legitimates the authors' use of the Hebrew Bible as a valid source for their historiography.

The present review essay includes contributions from several PhD students at Asbury Theological Seminary. Each of us has reviewed one or two chapters of the book as a collaborative effort to critique the contents of each chapter in light of the purpose of the book as a whole. As Hess states, the book is intended to function as an introductory level text which seeks “to introduce the interested reader to the study of ancient Israel by examining the story as traditionally told, the most important sources for interpretation, the major critical issues and problems with our understanding of the sources, and how they might best be synthesized” (19). Thus, our critical comments will focus upon the accessibility of the chapters as introductory level texts and the extent to which the chapters align with the goals of the book just stated. A brief comment on the layout of the book is appropriate. The first three chapters focus on the Pentateuch, comparative literature, and the value of the Pentateuch as historiography. Chapters 4-7 and 9-14 follow the history of Israel chronologically from the beginning of the Iron Age to the end of the Hellenistic Period. Chapter 8 considers the historiographical value of the Hebrew Bible prophetic texts. The following reviews will summarize the contents of each chapter and provide some critical feedback where appropriate.

*Jim Wilson*

### **The Genesis Narratives – Bill T. Arnold**

In this first chapter Bill Arnold discusses whether the book of Genesis can be examined from the perspective of history and historiography. Arnold begins with some of the challenges posed by Genesis: a dramatically different social location, a unique literary style, and a dearth of archaeological evidence. In spite of these challenges Arnold argues the book of Genesis still contains historical value. Although, as he demonstrates, the historical conclusions reached through the study of Genesis will only fall into the categories of “possible, plausible, and most likely;” rather than the category of “proven fact” (25). Against modern skeptics, Arnold is clear in his stance that the book of Genesis is “capable of preserving reliable historical information,” though the modern connotation of historiography should be disregarded (30).

Arnold discusses Gen 1–11 as “mytho-historical” literature due to its form of historical narrative and its parallel themes found in mythological literature of the ancient Near East. He focuses upon the genealogies and their functions, which although not intended to be a historical record may still contain historical value (33). In the section on Gen 13–36 Arnold focuses upon the issue of the emergence of Israel in Syria-Palestine as it relates to the archaeological evidence of population increase. He also notes records in the Mari archives about various

ancient tribes, which may be connected to ancient Israel. An assessment of Israel's tribal and religious history as described in the book of Genesis concludes it is improbable that later authors fabricated the accounts (41). Based on the literary features of the Joseph narrative in Gen 37–50, Arnold identifies it as an ancient novel, though he asserts that this does not preclude it from containing historical information. Therefore, Arnold suggests it should be thought of as a historical novel (43). Arnold uses the “Report of Bedouin” from the time of Pharaoh Merneptah in particular to demonstrate that the Joseph narrative is compatible with Egypt's history (45).

One piece missing from the discussion of Gen 13–36 is the nature of the literary genre, which Arnold describes as “traditional epic” (43). Arnold describes this as the literary “type,” but does not elaborate on its features as he does for the genres of Gen 1–11 and 37–50. This leaves the reader wondering what specific features Gen 13–36 shares with other ancient Near Eastern epic literature and how these epic features contribute to or diminish its historical value. Overall Arnold has clearly introduced and discussed the various issues surrounding the historical study of the book of Genesis. Although much of modern scholarship has approached Genesis with skepticism, Arnold presents a strong argument for the study of Genesis within the context of ancient literature; whether mytho-historical, traditional epic, or novel. He also clearly demonstrates that within its literary context Genesis still contains reliable historical information.

*Alison Hawanchak*

### **The Exodus and Wilderness Narratives – James K. Hoffmeier**

Although the Hebrew Bible refers to the Exodus and wilderness narratives explicitly and implicitly as foundational for explaining Israel's origins many scholars operating with a hermeneutic of suspicion question the authenticity of these narratives (47). James K. Hoffmeier calls for a reconsideration of the Hebrew Bible as a valid historical source given its internal claims to provide multiple witnesses, and he appeals to indirect archaeological and textual evidence to support its historicity.

Hoffmeier contends that requiring biblical historical claims to be substantiated by external sources is “a serious methodological flaw” (48). Wellhausen's “traditional synthesis” views the Pentateuch as a collection of sources (J, E, P and D), thus “multiple voices” from across the OT, including the earliest writings (Exo 15, Judg 5, Hos, etc.) make a case for the historical value of the Exodus and wilderness traditions (49). In particular, the Sinaitic covenant was viewed in prophetic literature as “marriage” between the Lord and Israel, and the

“foundation for religious and social life” (Deut 4:9-10; Jer 2:2; Hosea 12:9). *Bĕrīt*, denoting “treaty” or “alliance,” enjoyed widespread Near Eastern usage since the second millennium BCE, refuting Wellhausen’s claim for the late development of covenants (84). Israel’s kings were assessed and Israel and Judah indicted by covenant; it follows that the Sinai event was not fictional but historical reality (84-85).

Hoffmeier shows that between 2106 and 1200 BCE, the Nile Valley was a refuge for pastoral tribes and flocks during dry periods in the eastern Mediterranean (50), as attested in numerous Egyptian texts (50-53). Remains at sites such as *Tell El-Mashhuta* and *Tell el-Dab’a* confirm that some Semitic pastoralists remained in the land (54), and Egyptian records give evidence of huge construction projects using forced labor (e.g. tomb of the vizier of Pharaoh Thutmose III, major mud-brick structures at *Tell El-Dab’a*) and attest to the servitude of Semitic speaking slaves; the Bible also preserved this memory (59). Correlation is also found between Hebrew toponyms and thirteenth century BCE Egyptian terms and cities mentioned in Exodus and Egyptian texts, e.g. Rameses (1275 BCE to eleventh century) and Pithom, called Retabeth (62-65).

Hoffmeier further evaluates the exodus and wilderness geography. The “the way of Philistine” taken by the Israelites is confirmed in Egyptian documents as is the shorter but more precarious “way of Horus” (68). Although specific identification of Mount Sinai is not possible, Hoffmeier speculates that it is in the mountains of the southern Sinai Peninsula, e.g. Gebel Musa and Gebel Serbal (85). Hoffmeier also demonstrates Egyptian parallels to the tabernacle tent and materials, and asserts that their origin can be traced to the Sinai wilderness. This calls into question the Wellhausian assertion that the tabernacle was a retrojection of the Solomonic Temple by the Priestly writer (86-87).

Although the Hebrew Bible must be handled with caution due to the way in which Biblical writers included historical details, often only to serve their religious purposes, Hoffmeier calls for fairness in evaluating the Bible’s historical claims. Hoffmeier demonstrates that the exodus and wilderness traditions were not human inventions, but historical realities verifiable by archaeological and textual evidence. His creative argument and exhaustive handling of external evidence are challenging and raise important questions about the implications of Wellhausen’s documentary theory.



*Joachim Mbela*

## Covenant and Treaty in the Hebrew Bible and in the Ancient Near East – Samuel Greengus

Samuel Greengus surveys biblical treaties and covenants and highlights relevant comparative sources to clarify their meaning and purpose. Greengus divides his survey based on the various types of covenants, drawing distinctions between those involving divine figures and those that are purely secular. Within each of these sections he further categorizes covenants based on the size of each party (individual to individual vs. individual to group) and the type of relationship represented (parity vs. suzerain/vassal). This arrangement of material is particularly helpful when comparing the biblical data to internal and external sources and guards against misapplication of the evidence. Not all covenants are the same nor do they bear the same value for comparison.

Greengus begins his study looking primarily at secular covenants and seeks to illustrate the function of these covenants in normal environments before applying that understanding to similar divine covenants. Marriage covenants, simple covenants of friendship, political covenants, and treaties are each examined in turn, interspersed with examples and insights from ancient texts. An extensive list of primary sources is presented in the footnotes for readers interested in examining the ancient Near Eastern evidence firsthand. Considerable attention is given to the perpetuity of covenants in the ancient Near East, particularly the expectation that the covenant would continue beyond the life of the participants.

The “group” covenants between the nation of Israel and their God (first at Sinai and then in Deuteronomy) are the focus of the second half of the chapter. Greengus notes the unique emphasis of biblical divine covenants on “rules of worship, moral conduct, and law” (108) as well as their excessive length compared to other ANE treaties. Accompanying covenant rituals are also discussed, although he notes that in many places the biblical evidence is unclear and must be interpreted or implied from the cultural background.

Despite efforts by other scholars to use comparative study to date the biblical sources, Greengus focuses mainly on how the covenant structure informs the meaning of the text. In his discussion of Deuteronomy, for example, he highlights the relationship of the covenant to the prior Sinai covenant, rather than focusing primarily on its similarity to Hittite or Assyrian treaties. Greengus does include a brief discussion of the parallel curses between Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty and Deuteronomy 28, but downplays the connection and surprisingly omits the ordering of the curses, which is one of the more significant aspects of the broader scholarly discussion. This seems to be an intentional choice to keep the focus of the discussion on the content of the biblical text. Despite the quantity of

material involved, Greengus' survey is comprehensive and accessible, offering the reader an excellent introduction to the topic and providing ample resources for the reader to pursue further study.

*Brian Shockey*

### **Early Israel and Its Appearance in Canaan – Lawson G. Stone**

Stone begins his discussion of the biblical material by discounting redaction critical attempts to determine the historical scope of the book of Joshua as overly complex due to their presentation of the history of Joshua from the perspective of its numerous authors (133). Taking seriously the internal chronology of the Bible and the Egyptian evidence, Stone places Israel's entry into Canaan around 1240–1175 BCE. He rightly acknowledges the dearth of evidence necessary to arrive at a definite conclusion, but believes this reconstruction yields “a chronological structure firm enough to be testable but not sufficiently exact to justify dogmatism” (137).

Stone proceeds to the lengthier section of his paper, the archaeological witness. First, he offers an extensive treatment of the collapse of Near Eastern civilization during the Late Bronze Age to Iron Age I transition. He notes not only political and technological shifts, but also the migrations of several people groups (141). Second, he introduces three significant Egyptian inscriptions that support his proposed dating: the Merneptah Stele, the fragmentary victory stele from the time of Ramses II, and captive lists from the column bases of the Soleb temple of Amenhotep III, which date Egyptian recognition of Israel to the late thirteenth century BCE. Third, Stone evaluates the archaeological evidence of the conquered cities in Joshua in light of the declining status of cities like Jericho, Ai, and Hazor during the Late Bronze Age. Contrary to the traditional biblical interpretation, we ought to understand these cities as places where the structure and infrastructure fell victim to the Late Bronze Age collapse, facilitating their capture by novice, roaming warriors. Fourth, Stone speculates the possibility of Israelite presence in Canaan based on the material culture of the central hill country during this period. Especially noteworthy are excavations of the distinctively Israelite worship centers at Shiloh and Shechem, and the increase of settlements in the central highlands around 1200 BCE. All of these observations provide extra-biblical support to undergird the presence of Israel in Canaan at the time of Stone's proposed chronology.

Next, Stone moves toward a historical reconstruction of Israel's migration into Canaan. He founds his reconstruction on the following factors that show the coherence between the text and the archaeological evidence: Israel both reflected and diverged from existing Canaanite cultural norms; the earliest stages of

Israel's movement into Canaan in the land allotted to Manasseh; and the historical background of the Late Bronze Age dictates that some warlike violence must have occurred. Stone then argues that the relationship between text and trowel is further reinforced by reexamining the biblical witness. That is, we must view the hyperbole of military victory in Joshua as part and parcel of the ancient military argot; we must also align our focus on the destruction of the Canaanite kings, rather than the cities themselves; and we must retract our vision of "conquest."

In sum, Stone has offered a compelling reconstruction that remains faithful to both the biblical witness and archaeological evidence. He has presented with efficient execution an issue that has long been the subject of intense scholarly debate. While there are doubtless biblical scholars and archaeologists who will argue against him in the self-admitted gaps in evidence and hypothetical nature of his historical reconstruction, the evidence he provides offers a likely proposal for the scholar who wishes to reconcile the biblical account and the claims of archaeology.

*Drew Holland*

### **The Judges and the Early Iron Age – Robert D. Miller II**

Robert D. Miller II provides foundational information on the book of Judges situating the history of Israel in the Early Iron Age (IA I: 1200-1000 BCE). Miller focuses on the Israelite clans who lived in the hill country in IA1 to show how distinct they were from their surrounding neighbors such as the Canaanites and the Philistines. He introduces a broad outline of the book of Judges and covers the modern history of scholarship to explain why the biblical text and archaeology are both necessary for reconstructing the history of Israel in IA1.

In the next section Miller evaluates archaeological sources. First, he delimits the geographic range of his archaeological discussion to highlight how distinct and unique the highland settlement was (a densely populated north-central hill country area between Jerusalem and the Jezreel Valley), compared to its bordering regions and the LB II (1400-1200 BCE). The maps (Figs 5.2 - 5.3) aid the visualization of this geographic scope. The book of Judges shows geographically that "the real 'Israel' of IA1 was the northern hill country" (173). The archaeological surveys of the Israelite highlands provide the "greatest insights into the history of IA1 Israel" (173). For example, archaeological surveys support Judges 1 in identifying most of the cities as being Canaanite in IA1. In addition, we learn of six distinct zones of settlement in the highlands. Interestingly, the book of Judges mentions some cities like Shiloh, Shechem, and sites in the region of Benjamin, which were important in IA1, but it does not include politically important sites such as Dothan and Tirzah. The scarcity of epigraphic sources during IA1 in the highlands is another point

of contrast to the surrounding regions and eras. Although Miller's analysis is brief, it still provides pertinent information for further research. As a minor point of critique, Miller's use of modern day highway names (55, 60, and 505), which the reader may not be familiar with, would have been aided by a modern map.

The latter half of the chapter is Miller's "synthesis of the archaeological and biblical evidence about the economies, lifestyles, and religion" (181). In the sections on gender and religion, one cannot help but wonder about the religious role women like Deborah had in the period of Judges and how that compares (if at all) to the Canaanites or Egyptians in IA1. The final section deals with the historical significance of the Philistines. In sum, students will certainly benefit from Miller's analysis. Anyone unfamiliar with the historical background that leads up to IA1 should first read chapter four "Early Israel and Its Appearance in Canaan," since it provides a smooth segue into the present chapter.

*Joseph Y. Hwang*

### **The Story of Samuel, Saul, and David – Daniel Bodi**

In this chapter, Daniel Bodi conducts a comparative analysis between the stories of Samuel, Saul, and David and ancient Near Eastern culture, focusing particularly on several Mari texts. His goal is to demonstrate how 1–2 Samuel contains an authentic historical presentation of Israel.

After an overview of the biblical account, Bodi discusses the contributions made by a historical-critical study of the text. Traditionally 1–2 Samuel has been viewed as two narratives: "David's Rise to Power" and the "Throne Succession Narrative". Bodi notes the development and flaws in this view and suggests reading the narrative as "The House of Saul Pitted against the House of David" (201). One reason Bodi prefers this model is for its historical connection with two Mari texts, which depict the power struggle between two clans and contains themes similar to those in the Saul and David narrative: divine retribution triggered by a sacrilegious action, acts of hubris leading to demise, and the importance of a tribal leader's ethnic background (205-207).

The archaeological evidence from the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE suggests that the monarchies of Saul and David are not as extensive as once thought. Although archaeological evidence should not discount the biblical record, Bodi believes it should be heeded. Therefore, he suggests the reigns of Saul and David should be referred to as "tribal chieftain" or "warlord" rather than "monarchy" due to its modern association with large European monarchies (211). However, based upon his logic, I think the term "warlord" may not be an appropriate term either due to its strongly negative modern associations.



Bodi establishes multiple connections between the Mari texts and the narratives of Saul and David, including the symbolism of donkeys and anointing with oil. For Saul in particular, the Mari texts depict his actions in 1 Samuel 11:5-7 as a standard method of recruiting individuals for a military campaign. As for David, three Mari texts contain accounts similar to his rise to power and portray *'apiru* leaders analogous to David (219).

Overall Bodi presents an extensive comparison resulting in strong historical connections with the surrounding culture. Due to his reliance upon the Mari texts, Bodi's chapter could benefit from a longer discussion of their significance. He briefly mentions their importance due to the wide spectrum of tribes they present and their reliance upon West Semitic loanwords similar to those found in Hebrew (208). However, he does not adequately discuss how these eighteenth century BCE texts relate to narratives dated conservatively to the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE. Although connections between the Mari texts and the Saul and David narratives exist, a discussion of how these connections are relevant in spite of their temporal gap is necessary. Bodi concludes that despite the legendary claims of some scholars the narratives of Samuel, Saul, and David do present authentic historical information concerning this period of Israel's history; a claim that his research clearly supports.

*Alison Hamanchak*

### **United Monarchy: Archaeology and Literary Sources – Steven M. Ortiz**

Steven M. Ortiz authors an insightful chapter overviewing the period of the United Monarchy (tenth century BCE, Iron IIA). He begins by providing a synopsis of the biblical portraits of David and Solomon, describing David's formidability as military leader and politician and Solomon's savvy in domestic and foreign policy. Ortiz's textual analysis of David and Solomon is important; the nature of the biblical text is at the very heart of scholarly contention of this period (235-37). Some scholars, later identified as the Copenhagen School, view the text as nothing more than hyperbolic, theological constructions, theorizing that David and Solomon were not historical figures, but mere legends.

Opposing such perspectives, Ortiz candidly offers his position. He first warns the reader not to assume that the authors of the biblical narrative intended to write a systematic history void of theological insight (235). He then posits that one of the pressing questions scholars face is, "What was the nature of the united monarchy," not "Has archaeology proven that David and Solomon existed?" (240). The former implies a positive answer to the latter. Ortiz uses his remaining space to present significant evidence that stands to contradict the Copenhagen case.

The section titled “The United Monarchy: A Synopsis of Research,” features anthropological models and archaeological data that convincingly buttress a high view of the biblical record. For instance, the geopolitical context of the Iron Age I-II transition—namely, the weakened reach of Egypt and Mesopotamia—allowed for smaller polities to arise (241-43). According to Ortiz, leading scholars believe Solomon gained wealth via access to the four major Levantine trade routes (256), while excavations at Lachish and Megiddo reveal a network of chariot cities, both biblical features of Solomon’s rule (257). Ortiz concludes this section with data that is presumably unique to tenth-century Israel: the four-room house and Hebrew inscriptions (260-61).

Ortiz must be commended for this chapter, which presents the “maximalist” position of the United Monarchy. Not only does he provide a survey of important archaeological data relating to the tenth century, but he also wrestles with multiple arguments from silence lobbed by the Copenhagen camp. While the author does provide the current state of research and his own point of view thereof, he seems to forget the target audience of the editors. *Ancient Israel’s History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources* is an introductory book. Ortiz’s survey of the issues and sources may cater to the developing biblical scholar, but his use of jargon does not. Evoking terminology, such as “ceramic stratigraphy,” “red-slip burnished,” or “Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon,” may cause problems for a reader unfamiliar with the data. The contributor further strays from this volume’s objectives by not creating space for his opposition. He admits the impact of Israel Finkelstein’s Low Chronology, but does not discuss the evidence in favor of this paradigm. He instead footnotes refutations of the Low Chronology with no detail (238).

Ortiz provides a valuable addition to this volume. This chapter does indeed present much of the research into and the primary debate regarding the historicity of the United Monarchy. While he does not always keep his target audience in mind nor fully divulge his opposition’s perspective, he succeeds in presenting a bird’s-eye-view of the issues and sources pertaining to the period of David and Solomon.

*Benjamin Wiggershaus*

### **The Biblical Prophets in Historiography - James K. Mead**

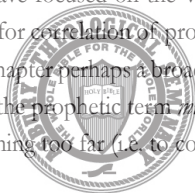
J. K. Mead argues via comparative study that prophetic messages in the Hebrew Bible provide us historical pictures of prophets and their works, which may contribute to a reconstruction of Israel’s history. First, Mead analyzes Hebrew Bible



prophetic literature with great detail according to prophetic titles and development of prophetic ministry (262-270). Mead discusses the four prophetic titles “seer” (*rō'eb* and *hōzēb*), “man of God” (*š hā'ēlōhīm*), and prophet (*nābī'*). “Prophet” (*nābī'*) occurs most frequently and its root relates to “divine calling” (261). It is the all-embracing term for coordinating all biblical prophetic messages.

Mead illustrates the development of prophecy throughout most of the first millennium BCE thriving especially during the divided kingdom (266). During this time the audience of biblical prophecy transitioned from the kings, to the people; and the content of prophecy shifted from God’s judgment to “oracles of hope and salvation” (270). Mead compares this picture with the similar prophetic phenomena in the ancient Near East, specifically the Mari letters, Neo-Assyrian Prophecies, West Semitic texts and other materials. He observes: (1) that most of the prophetic messages from Mari are concerned with cultic and political/military matters (274), (2) that Neo-Assyrian Prophecies are mainly concerned with the security of the king’s sovereignty, (3) that the terms, “seer of gods” (*hzb llm*) and divine “assembly” (*mw'd*) in *Deir 'Allā* substantiate the historical plausibility of the biblical prophetic terms (277), and (4) that whereas Neo-Assyrian prophecies evince an editing process, Mari prophecies do not (280). For Mead the comparative data supports the plausible historicity of the biblical prophets based on the Bible’s presentation of prophets, their behavior and their message (283). Against the argument that the prophets were written in the Persian era, Mead cites the “antiquity of prophetic phenomena,” “subtle [archaic] linguistic features,” the progression of prophetic ministry alongside the history of the Old Testament (284), and the appropriate context of the late monarchy as the setting of prophetic ideology (e.g. criticism of idolatry and unfaithful leadership) (285).

Although Mead utilizes a number of resources to substantiate his claims, his argument shows some vulnerability. First, Mead does not define well the term “historical plausibility of the biblical prophets.” Although his data supports the historicity of the biblical prophets, it is insufficient for information about the prophetic eras. Secondly, Mead utilizes too broad of categories to support his claims, lessening the strength of his argument for the historical probability of the biblical prophets (e.g. rather than discussing four broad categories of ancient Near Eastern prophecy, he could have focused on the West Semitic inscriptions, which alone provide ample evidence for correlation of prophetic terms). However, for the pedagogical purposes of the chapter perhaps a broad approach is appropriate, albeit less convincing. Also, though the prophetic term *nubbum* in Mari means “ecstatic,” it is difficult to press this meaning too far (i.e. to connect biblical and ancient Near



Eastern ecstasy) (280-281). Despite these points of criticism, Mead has provided a helpful paper for students who study biblical prophecy.

*Danielle Li*

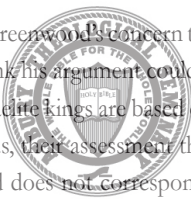
### **Late Tenth- and Ninth-Century Issues: Ahab Underplayed? Jehoshaphat Overplayed? – Kyle Greenwood**

In his chapter on Israel and Judah in the ninth and tenth centuries, Kyle Greenwood reviews the major sources and evaluates critical issues involved in a historical reconstruction of the two kingdoms. He surveys the relevant material in Kings and Chronicles (288-95) as well as the extra-biblical sources, including the Tel Dan inscription, the Mesha Stela, the royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, among other epigraphs, and archaeological evidence (295-305). He points out discrepancies between the biblical and extra-biblical sources and familiarizes the reader with the current scholarship on such issues as the dating of Israel's campaigns against Aram-Damascus (308-12), the details of an attack on Moab (313-15), the identity of Jehu and the reasons for his revolt (315-16), and the Bible's portrayal of the strength of each kingdom (316-18).

Greenwood's chapter is a worthy introduction for students of Israel's history. For each issue, he allows readers to judge between a number of scholarly theories. He is careful to present the perspectives of those historians who view Kings and Chronicles with suspicion, while he also offers alternative positions, encouraging readers to value the biblical sources more highly.

At the same time, however, Greenwood recognizes the limitations of the two books. One of his major arguments concerns whether Ahab and Jehoshaphat are portrayed accurately in the biblical sources. Kings and Chronicles "underplay" Ahab by making exclusively negative comments about his reign; they "overplay" Jehoshaphat in their positive portrayal of him (317). Greenwood contrasts these portrayals with the extra-biblical evidence, in which Ahab is more prominent and influential than Jehoshaphat. His construction projects were more extensive, his dynasty led campaigns against their neighbors, and he formed alliances with Phoenicia, Judah, and Damascus (317-18). In contrast, Jehoshaphat is not mentioned in any extra-biblical source. The Davidic dynasty during the 9<sup>th</sup> century simply does not appear as strong as Israel.

While I appreciate Greenwood's concern to show the historical limitations of Kings and Chronicles, I think his argument could be more nuanced. The biblical authors' evaluations of the Israelite kings are based on the ruler's loyalty to YHWH, not his political influence. Thus, their assessment that a king did what was right or wrong in the eyes of the Lord does not correspond with the king's achievements



on the throne. Greenwood acknowledges that the evaluations are theological (316-17), but he still contrasts them with evidence of Ahab's political power. Instead, one must compare the biblical descriptions of Ahab's and Jehoshaphat's power and influence with the extra-biblical evidence. In this regard, the book of Kings portrays the two kings' reigns more appropriately than the Chronicler does. Apart from the need to better nuance this argument, Greenwood's chapter is a great addition to a work aimed at representing the biblical text as a legitimate source for the study of Israel's history.

*Dustin Mills*

### **Eighth-Century Issues: The World of Jeroboam II, the Fall of Samaria, and the Reign of Hezekiah – Sandra Richter**

Sandra Richter's analysis of the eighth century BCE in Israel and Judah interweaves archaeological evidence and biblical data to provide a convincing narrative of this era's history. For her, this century is best viewed as divided between two distinct periods: a period of wealth and prosperity (800-745 BCE), and a period of decline due to the rise of Assyria as a world power (745-700 BCE) (321).

The earlier period is characterized by economic success and relative unity between the two kingdoms. Not coincidentally for Richter, this is due in large part to a power vacuum in the ancient Near East during this period (322). The first significant archaeological find revealing the prosperity of this time is a collection of ostraca found in Jeroboam II's capitol of Samaria, which reveal the unprecedented wealth of Jeroboam II's kingdom (324). The ostraca also indicate that Israel's kinship- and agrarian-based society may have been transforming into a socioeconomically stratified urban one (325). Furthermore, the perception of the kingdom's wealth has been bolstered by the discovery of ivories etched in styles akin to those found in foreign nations at this time, thus revealing that the Northern Kingdom was likely involved in trade with other nations (324-325). The wealth and international flavor of the kingdom is also substantiated by the biblical text.

Although Richter gives less detail about the archaeological findings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and heavily relies on textual data, she surmises that prosperity in this period extended to that kingdom as well. The primary evidence for the strength of Uzziah's reign comes in the advancement of war machinery (333, 336), and secondarily she notes Judah's prosperity in an aside describing the ancient trading post of Kuntillet Ajrud (334, 335). The later of the two eighth-century periods is marked by the filling of the aforementioned Near Eastern power vacuum. Tiglath-Pileser III rises to power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire, and he soon subjugates Israel, which is soon overtaken by later Neo-Assyrian kings with

many of its inhabitants sent into exile. Richter confirms the biblical details of this period's events with Neo-Assyrian documents paralleling the narrative (338-340). In Judah, Hezekiah succeeds Ahaz, who had submitted the Southern Kingdom to Assyrian vassalage (340-341). Hezekiah proceeds to rebel against Assyria, leading to an invasion of Judea. Archaeological evidence supports and adds to the scant biblical narrative of this invasion, including the Broad Wall, Hezekiah's Tunnel, and excavations at the city of Lachish (344-346).

In sum, I find Richter's chapter informative of the evidence available for the historical context of eighth-century BCE Israel and Judah. Moreover, she clearly relates the evidence to the biblical account. My only critique is an editorial one. The eighth century is an arbitrary parameter for study, as enumerated by Richter's own division of this century into two separate periods. Perhaps the scope of this essay would be better served as a more detailed study of one of these periods, especially since more could be said about each. However, given the guidelines that Richter was given, her essay is instructive for the introductory student who wishes to dive deeper into historical study of this period.

*Drew Holland*

### **Judah in the Seventh Century: From the Aftermath of Sennacherib's Invasion to the Beginning of Jehoiakim's Rebellion – Brad E. Kelle**

Brad E. Kelle's thorough examination of seventh-century Judah is an excellent addition to *Ancient Israel's History*. His overview focuses on the reigns of Manasseh (697/696–643/642 BCE), Josiah (641/640–609 BCE), and the early years of Jehoiakim (609–600 BCE)—the span between Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and Jehoiakim's rebellion against Babylon. Kelle describes each reign in a consistent manner, beginning with the biblical presentation of the Judahite king under consideration, drawing from Kings, Chronicles, and some from the Major and Minor Prophets. He then presents "primary questions" regarding each reign, usually centering on one of two topics: (1) the state of the Judean Kingdom in its Syria-Palestinian political context during each reign and (2) specific events that the Bible attributes without detail to each reign (353, 370, 379). The bulk of each section reflects the main purpose of the work, namely to present the primary sources and scholarly activity related to the issues at hand.

Kelle presents an adequate amount of primary data without overwhelming the reader. He introduces the reader to crucial material culture, such as Judean pillar figurines and *mlk*-type jar handles. After providing this data, he discusses essential theories proposed by leading and current scholars while not labeling any one as definitive. The conclusions to each section are as identical as

they are intriguing; Kelle ultimately declares these primary questions unresolved. The reader is then left still wondering about the state of seventh-century Judah. Perhaps this is Kelle's way of rousing him or her to further study.

Staying true to the first aim of this work, Kelle does not openly endorse nor deny the validity of the biblical source material. He does, however, warn the reader against being "essentially skeptical" and against "overinterpreting the text as though it were a historical account" (352). Kelle further stays on course by candidly explaining issues up for debate. As noted above, he includes primary questions for each reign discussed. He then presents data and theories proposed by members of the academic community relevant to those questions. Kelle, though given license by his editors, does not divulge his personal stances, but lets the reader evaluate the survey of evidence he offers. By forgoing this prerogative, Kelle has made sure that the major contributors to the discussion are represented equally for consideration. Perhaps most important, Kelle's presentation of the evidence is accessible to the emerging biblical scholar. The information he presents is targeted for his audience; he limits his use of technical terms (e.g. he is careful to provide short, parenthetical definitions for specialized words such as ostraca and Shephelah); and his chapter is well structured with helpful headings. One of the better chapters of this volume, Kelle's contribution achieves the goals set before it. His presentation of the historiographical challenges that scholars face when dealing with seventh century Judah is precise, fair, and accessible.

*Benjamin Wiggershaus*

### **Sixth-Century Issues: The Fall of Jerusalem, the Exile, and the Return – Peter van der Veen**

The chapter opens with a historical overview of important sixth century events and developments in Jewish life (383-87). While only the elite of Jerusalem (about 10-13% of the population) was exiled to Babylon, the administration of Judea shifted to Mizpah and many Jews relocated to Lower Egypt (e.g. Elephantine) and other regions in the eastern Mediterranean (384). In the next section van der Veen introduces the "Myth of the Empty Land" theory, which holds that during the exile the land of Judea was abandoned and essentially "empty" (387). This issue has engendered a lively scholarly debate, for which the reader is referred to Oded Lipschits "Shedding New Light" (2010) for a fuller treatment. Van der Veen, following Hans Barstad and others, rejects the theory based on archaeological evidence. The most noteworthy of the archaeological observations for Iron Age III Judea include: (1) a population shift to the territory of Benjamin (389), (2) a boon in development at Mizpah attesting to an administrative shift (390), (3) widespread

abandonment of Jerusalem (391-92), (4) continued occupation of other sites in the region (i.e. Ramat Rahel and Rephaim Valley) (393-96), and (5) ongoing conflicts with Edom (396-98). Epigraphic evidence for Gedaliah, the pro-Babylonian governor of Mizpah, is also highlighted (398-401).

Next the focus shifts to the return of exiles. Contrary to the population reports of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 a number of Jews who had settled elsewhere, e.g. at al-Yahudu near Babylon and Borsippa, did not necessarily return to Jerusalem (cf. Murashu archives) (401-403). Archaeological data further attests to the low population of Yehud until the late Persian period. Van der Veen also discusses the debate over the historicity of the Persian period biblical books (esp. Ezra 1–6) and includes a brief excursus on Aramaic as the lingua franca of the Persian period (405).

Throughout the chapter van der Veen excellently surveys his topic. The strongest section is probably the archaeology of sixth century BCE Palestine, which is supported by a thorough bibliography. Overall he treats the issues fairly and when necessary directs his reader toward more exhaustive resources. However, in the opinion of the reviewer there is one place where van der Veen could have more helpfully aided his reader. In his discussion of Nabonidus (386-87) it would have been helpful to cite Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556-539 B.C.* (Yale University Press, 1989), who has questioned the traditional scholarly assumption that Nabonidus was promoting the moon god Sin over the patron god Marduk. Besides this minor suggestion for improvement, the chapter accurately fits the method and objectives of the larger book, and presents the introductory reader with a wealth of resources for further study.

*Jim Wilson*

### **Fifth- and Fourth-Century Issues: Governorship and Priesthood in Jerusalem – André Lemaire**

The renowned French epigraphist, André Lemaire, has published multiple inscriptions that shed light onto the history of Israel during the Achaemenid period, which he discusses in concert with current scholarship to present some issues surrounding the political situation in Palestine during the fifth- and fourth-century BCE. This broad critical overview of how epigraphic evidence connects to the biblical tradition of Ezra-Nehemiah is complementary to his Schweich Lectures on Biblical Archaeology (2013), published as *Levantine Epigraphy and History in the Achaemenid Period* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

With little of a clear guiding thesis outside of the title and lack of an introductory outline, Lemaire pushes forward in lecturing style to discuss in five



parts the issues concerning: (1) Yehud in the 5<sup>th</sup> century; (2) epigraphic evidence, late 5<sup>th</sup> century; (3) Diaspora in the 5<sup>th</sup> century; (4) the mission of Ezra; and (5) the southern Levant in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. By way of expert engagement with primary sources, he makes critical inferences between archaeology and the biblical or historical record (e.g., 409, 411, and 416). The article is copiously illustrated with a map of Yehud in the 5<sup>th</sup> century (408), images of the al-Yahudu tablet (415) and a Yehud coin (419), in addition to text boxes with key inscriptional evidence, including the Papyrus Cowley 30 (407 BCE) where Bagohi the governor of Judah, Yehohanan the High Priest and the sons of Sanballet governor of Samaria are named (423), and a portion from the Samaria Papyrus from Wadi ed-Daliyeh (335 BCE) where a number of Yahwistic names form “by far the dominant group” (424). Lemaire does more than bring up the issues of governorship and priesthood in Yehud. As his subtitle indicates, he also comments on how the inscriptional evidence sheds light into the socio-religious and economic situation of the Diaspora in the Elephantine community (412-13), among the Judean refugees in Babylonia (414-16), and the cultural composition of the local population in Idumea, Judea and Samaria during the Achaemenid period. Lemaire concludes that the importance of the revival commenced by Nehemiah, which successfully reestablished Jerusalem as the capital of Yehud, and Ezra, which synthesized “the Israelite traditions... from the eastern Diaspora,” outweighed the shift in political power from governor to priest attributed to the Grecian conquest (425).

Students seeking to be introduced to this period in Israelite history as well as scholars discerning the author’s position on certain issues will be rewarded with a broad discussion of a variety of subjects, including the controversial reworking of a final redaction of Neh 13 (410), the historical reinterpretation of Ezra’s mission, here argued to have begun “*after* Nehemiah in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II”, instead of the traditional 457/458 BCE (416-18), and the debated reconstruction of the list of administrators for Judea and Samaria before the Greek conquest (419-22). One is reminded however that a single article of this length cannot include every significant issue surrounding this period. Another article by Efraín Velázquez II, “The Persian Period and the Origins of Israel: Beyond the ‘Myths’” (in *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History*, Eisenbrauns, 2008), covers a different range of similarly important issues.



*Esteban Hidalgo*

### **The Hellenistic Period – David A. deSilva**

In this chapter David deSilva thoroughly summarizes the approximately 300 years that elapsed from Alexander the Great’s conquest of Palestine to the end of Hasmonean independence.

Throughout the sections on history deSilva deftly and fairly treats primary, secondary, archaeological and even some numismatic sources. This is especially helpful when the available evidence is partial (see 437 on how Jason built up his army), conflicting (see 443 on differences between 1 Macc. 2–9 and 2 Macc. 8–15), or of uncertain historicity (443-44 on the diplomatic letters preserved in 1 Macc.). The historical period deSilva covers is certainly familiar material, but he capably shows the complexities of the issues by detailing the various social and political factors of Antiochus IV’s Hellenizing efforts which often present Antiochus as a static, bloodthirsty tyrant fixated on eradicating Judaism. The reality which deSilva portrays is much more dynamic.

This chapter provides not only a fitting conclusion to ancient Israel’s history but also a helpful introduction to certain persons and groups relevant to New Testament studies. DeSilva provides a concise excursus entitled “The Rise of Apocalyptic Literature” (441), which naturally refers to the book of Revelation as well as certain apocryphal works. A brief definition of apocalypse introduces this topic and is followed by two paragraphs in which deSilva places the earliest forms of apocalypse in their historical contexts (e.g., Daniel 7–12 and 1 Enoch 6–16). The references to secondary literature in this section are noticeably slim compared with the robust notes elsewhere in the chapter. This may leave the reader wanting more resources relating to apocalyptic literature than the standard introductory resources, which deSilva provides. Later in the chapter deSilva includes a section devoted to “Partisan Judaism in the Hellenistic Period” (449-55). Without taking a position he helpfully explains various theories for the rise of the sects of the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Qumran community, and others. Near the chapter’s end he introduces Herod the Great, and explains how Roman interference effectively ended the Hasmonean dynasty and Jewish independence – the loss of which undergirded Jewish hope for a messianic deliverer who would restore Israel once again.

DeSilva’s work is methodical, detailed, and focused – all important attributes for an introductory essay in a volume like this. This chapter should provide any student with an accurate and helpful framework for directing further study in ancient Near Eastern history, second temple Judaism, and even NT studies as well.

*Kevin Burr*



## Summary

To summarize our chapter-based reviews it is appropriate to comment on the unity, organization, and content of the whole book. Although it includes essays from several biblical scholars, *Ancient Israel's History* is unified in its presentation. Besides differences arising from each author's unique style, the goal "to introduce the interested reader to the study of ancient Israel by examining the story as traditionally told, the most important sources for interpretation, the major critical issues and problems with our understanding of the sources, and how they might best be synthesized," guides each chapter (19). Some of our reviewers have observed some deviation from this structure (see the chapter seven review above), but overall the contributors have adhered to it. As a result, although it contains the voices of many authors the text is a unity.

The organization of the book might seem a little odd. First, one might assert that the major events in Israel's history do not fit the neat chronology imposed by most of the book's chapter divisions. Second, one might inquire "Why in a book about Israel's history do we find chapters on covenants, prophets, or even Genesis since these chapters seem to address portions of the Hebrew Bible that contain so little of the kind of history we observe in the majority of the book?" Indeed, either criticism "might" be appropriate if one neglected the introduction. The authors are well aware of the differences between the historiographical import of, e.g. Genesis compared to Kings. This is why Hess has explained the differences between relative and absolute chronology (19–22). Relative chronology (or historiography) relates to chapters 1–3 and 8, whereas absolute chronology relates to the other chapters. The book is a model for the types of chronology and historiography we find in the Hebrew Bible. It is also necessary to include chapters on prophets and covenants; the prophets because although spread over a large period of history they form a large corpus of material with historiographical value; and the covenants likewise because of their historiographical value and because the comparative literature covers from ca. 2,000 BCE to 625 BCE (96–97). The organization of the text as a whole is appropriate to its goals and method, which are clearly stated in the introduction.

Finally, the content (and prose) of the book is appropriate for an introductory level textbook. Although we have noted places where additional resources might be considered, or ways in which certain chapters might have provided a more balanced approach to particular issues, the whole book is otherwise incredibly thorough. The authors cannot include everything, and what they have included demonstrates their expertise in the period on which they write. It could be argued that the book fails to consider the implications of different methods or

theories for interpreting the Hebrew Bible, or that the authors are too assenting of the use of the Hebrew Bible for historiography, but again we refer the reader to the introduction where these concerns are addressed (4–19). To conclude, *Ancient Israel's History* functions quite well as *An Introduction to Issues and Sources*.

*Jim Wilson*

