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Multiculturalism
and the Biblical Text

Re-reading the Bible
in a Multicultural World

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Introduction

It has been argued recently that the major issue facing religions in the twentieth century is the development of a useful theory of the "other" (Neusner 1990:273-85). In the past, a religion served an integrating function, providing an identity for those inside the religious community. When a dominant religion gained power in a society, the "other" was either tolerated, being defined in terms chosen by the dominant religion, or eliminated as an evil and a threat. If religion is to continue its integrating function in a multicultural society like Australia, where Christianity exists in plural forms alongside equally diverse expressions of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Aboriginal religions and others, then it will be necessary for religions to learn to comprehend each other's differences. The age is gone in the West when a religion can dominate, choosing either to tolerate or eliminate the other. I offer this essay to honour Victor C. Hayes, whose effort in AASR Publications has contributed greatly to the understanding of the "other" in Australian society.

In this essay I want to consider the problems of reading or better, re-reading, the Bible in the contemporary Western world of religious plurality. As a religious document, the Bible has played an integrating role in the West. Western culture has constructed a world of meaning - a kind of mythology - using the language of the Bible, its images and symbols, its forms and structures (Barr 1973-74:16). The recognition of the place of the Bible in cultural consolidation, however, should not mask the fact that there has been and continues to be a diversity of readings represented by a variety of reading communities with different reading approaches.

My focus will be on re-reading the Bible in academia where the prevailing historical-critical community of readers is gradually, and often reluctantly, losing power. Specifically, the essay will focus on three different, although interrelated, areas in which the soundproof walls of historical-critical

reading are falling so that the voices of other communities can be heard in their own terms. The areas I will look at are: (1) reading the Bible as other, (2) other contemporary communities of interpretation, and (3) the Bible and other sacred texts.

Reading the Bible as Other

The central presence of the Bible in Western culture is manifested in many areas of our life. It continues at the top of best seller lists and it is in the top drawer of the bedside table in nearly every hotel room. We are also reminded of its presence by the allusions to it in our literature. The Bible is a commonplace document, whether it is welcomed or closed and out of the way in the top drawer of the bedside table.

My concern here is with what happens when the Bible is opened and read. It is my contention that reading strategies are frequently utilised in reading the Bible that result in reconstructing it as a familiar text. It is so redefined in the reader's terms that it is not given the opportunity to speak from an alien world reflecting foreign literary conventions and a different world construction.

This is easy to see in fundamentalist readings of the Bible.[1] The Bible is clothed in twentieth century garb so that it is made to sit comfortably in the modern world. It is read in such a way that creation becomes science and prophecy headline news. Fundamentalist readers of the Bible construct the Bible in their reading so that the strange and alien character of the Bible ceases to be foreign and therefore, ceases to communicate from its origins in the remote past. It ceases to be "other".[2]

What is so difficult for historical-critical readers of the Bible to recognise is that the reading strategies they bring to the Bible have the same taming effect. Historical-critical reading strategies literally re-shape the text in the reading process. The Pentateuch is not read as a single piece of literature but as the Yahwist, 'Elohist, Deuteronomic and Priestly documents. Isaiah is not read as a book but as three books which require even finer adjustments in the construction. These constructions also clothe the text in modern garb so that it ceases to display the unfamiliar dress of the "other". Historical-critical studies bring to the Bible literary conventions that typified the Romantic view of literature as the expression of authorial intention. When biblical texts were seen to lack unity, to be repetitive, or contradictory - features which obscured the assumed intentions of an author - the Bible was reshaped to create unity out of a perceived disorder and to eliminate repetition and contradiction. These new constructions, outlined

in *Einleitungen*, present the text as familiar.   However, extinguishing the perceived problems can destroy the text as "other".   When reading strategies recreate the text to conform to contemporary reading conventions, the text ceases to be unlike our own.

I have recently argued (Conrad 1991a:3-33) that reading strategies used in approaching biblical books such as Isaiah should focus on them in their final form.   When an interpreter makes the book as a whole the object of reading rather than re-making it or reshaping it, the text can be encountered as "other".[3] The interpreter also reads the text as "other" by focusing on the implied audience encoded in the text.[4]

By understanding biblical texts as structures or wholes, I am approaching them as systems with an internal logic. This is the structuralist position that assumes literature to possess a grammar as does language (LaFargue 1988:343-47).   While the grammar of one's own language is internalised so that the user is often unaware of its rules, the knowledge of grammar, the system of a language, can give the user of the language greater insight into how the language works as a structure.   In a similar way the study of the "grammar" of literary texts becomes important for reception of texts by readers.   It is our intuitive knowledge of grammar that enables us to communicate and it is our knowledge of the grammar of literature that enables us to read.   Just as it would be inappropriate to use contemporary Indo-European grammatical rules to understand classical Hebrew as a system of language, so it is inappropriate to use contemporary Western literary conventions for understanding the literature of the Bible.

By studying biblical texts as wholes, then, I am arguing that biblical scholars need to be engaged in understanding how biblical texts work as systems.   To analyse the text into bits and pieces and to read it in parts is to destroy the system.   It is to impose on the text an anachronistic set of literary conventions.

While I cannot treat these matters in detail, one example can illustrate my point. It is increasingly being recognised that biblical texts, like all ancient texts, were composed for the ears of an audience not for the eyes of a silent reader. (See Gitay 1980:190-94, 1985:45, Vorster 1986:353, Boomershine 1987:51-55 and Achtemeier 1990:3-27.)   A text read aloud to an assembled audience will reflect rhetorical techniques such as repetition (Conrad 1991b).   To be aware of the orality of biblical texts means that repetition needs to be understood as a key to textual unity.   Many historical-critical studies mistakenly identify repetition

as evidence of authorial disunity - and thus editorial expansion. This focus on texts as textual wholes has important implications for the role of biblical scholarship. The professional biblical scholar should focus his or her attention on exploring how biblical texts work as alien systems with their own unique literary conventions.[5] In this way the biblical scholar invites and facilitates the reading of biblical texts by larger communities[6] both within and outside communities of faith. Just as the linguist examines languages as systems of grammar, so the biblical scholar should examine biblical texts as systems, facilitating their reading by larger communities.

Other Contemporary Communities of Interpretation

To read the biblical text as "other" also brings with it ethical responsibility and accountability. As I have argued earlier, the Bible has functioned as a formative text in Western culture. However, as a text from the past it has encoded within it ideologies reflecting the social worlds out of which it emerged (Bal 1989:13-15). When these ideologies function to oppress and dehumanise, it is the responsibility of the reader to expose them and not simply to reproduce them as normative.[7] It has been the feminist reading of the Bible, more than any other, which has summoned us to this responsible reading. To re-read the Bible in this way means that biblical authority needs to be redefined so as to acknowledge the pivotal role of the reader in the production of meaning. Reading the Bible in a multi-cultural age is to recognise the plurality of the Bible's readers and as a consequence the plurality of its meanings.

Writing in 1980, the year in which the Society of Biblical Literature was celebrating its centennial, Paul J. Achtemeier and Gene M. Tucker made the following comment in an article in which they were assessing the current state of Biblical Studies:

> ... we are at a turning point concerning our fundamental methodologies for interpreting biblical texts. To call the situation a crisis may be a bit too melodramatic, but it is obvious that the historical-critical method, in various forms the dominant modus operandi since the Enlightenment, is **under fire** from many directions. From without, there is a new life from the old **enemies** of critical inquiry into the Bible: traditional, conservative, and fundamentalist theology. More decisive, however, for the future of biblical scholarship are the **rumblings within the ranks**. (Achteimer and Tucker 1980:73. The emphasis is mine.)

The use of military imagery to describe alternative readings reflects the view of the historical-critical reading community that other readings "from without" are a threat requiring defence - and perhaps elimination. What the Bible means, according to this view, emerges "within" the group, and that meaning is not to be muddied with other readerly constructions. The exclusion of the "other" has made it possible for historical-critical readers of the Bible to maintain their identity and the "truth" of their interpretation. Speaking from the outside, Mieke Bal has described the activity of the historical-critical reading community as follows:

> It has been by excluding women - or blacks, or gays, or the young, or the poor - that the identity of the dominant group - say, to simplify a bit, the group comprising white, middle-class men - has been constructed. This group undeniably dominates, if not the world at large, at least biblical and other literary scholarship. (Bal 1989:15)

The decade of the 1980's, which separates the remarks of Achtemeier and Tucker from those of Bal, has witnessed historical criticism's loss of the power it once enjoyed, especially in the English-speaking world. The community of historical-critical readers within the academy can no longer control the reading of the Bible and choose to tolerate or eliminate other readings. The voice of the white, middle-class Western male has been joined by the feminine voices, the voices of the peoples of colour and the voices from the third world. Historical criticism attempted to distinguish itself from the "other" because it saw itself as a scientific discipline; it alone took a detached and value-neutral stance *vis-a-vis* the biblical text. The presence of other voices now within the structure of the academy has exposed this apparent detachment as an illusion.

The failure to understand its own voice as one of many in Western society, thinking instead that it was univocally proclaiming the one meaning of the text, has meant that biblical scholarship has neglected to participate in the role of the Bible as a "meaning making" and "culture making" document. Because historical criticism has become such a highly complex undertaking (Barr 1973-74:19-20) bracketing out all other interpretive voices, it has primarily engaged in a discussion with itself. Its "objective, detached" stance has resulted in a separation from both the historical world of the Bible and its own contemporary world. In distancing itself from the world, the analogy of historical criticism with that of natural science as a detached objective endeavour breaks down, as Schüssler Fiorenza has recently argued (1988:13):

Biblical scholarship and natural science sharply diverge with respect to their public influence. Whereas science has cultivated a public that is aware of the improvements science can effect for the increase of human welfare or its destruction, biblical scholarship has taken for granted the public influence of the Bible in Western culture. Therefore, it has cultivated as its public not society as a whole but organised religion, "whose dominant leadership has been more concerned with the defence of the status quo than with any human betterment accruing from new religious insights".[8]

Biblical scholars have understood their role in the interpretive enterprise to be a rather limited, descriptive one: the task of the biblical scholar is to answer the question, "What did it mean?" while leaving the task of contemporary relevance, "What does it mean?" to others.[9] In her article Schüssler Fiorenza sees this detachment of historical-critical studies as a flight from responsibility, as an ethical failure. She says:

If scriptural texts have served not only noble causes but also to legitimate war, to nurture anti-Judaism and misogynism, to justify the exploitation of slavery, and to promote colonial dehumanisation, then biblical scholarship must take the responsibility not only to interpret biblical texts in their historical contexts but also to evaluate the construction of their historical worlds and symbolic universes in terms of a religious scale of values. If the Bible has become a classic of Western culture because of its normativity, then the responsibility of the biblical scholar cannot be restricted to giving "the readers of our time clear access to the original intentions" of the biblical writers. It must also include the elucidation of the ethical consequences and political functions of biblical texts in their historical as well as in their contemporary sociopolitical contexts. (1988:15)[10]

If reading and interpreting the Bible are never value neutral but reflect the values of its readers, then re-reading the Bible in a multicultural world means that no one community can co-opt the meaning of the biblical text. As contemporary literary theory has shown, textual meaning arises when communities employ interpretive strategies, and, therefore, join in the creation of the text and its meanings.[11] Since both the text and its readers are social products manifesting the ideologies encoded in their respective social worlds, reading of the Bible cannot proceed in a detached and singular manner (Bal 1989:15-16 and Carroll 1990:309-11). Reading requires that a reader not only be reflective about his or her own subjective involvement in meaning making but

also recognise the voices of other readers from other communities whose social situations set a different interpretive agenda. Since the Bible has had a normative function in cultural creation, making meaning is not something to be left to chance; it must not be an "anything goes" situation.

The Bible and Other Sacred Texts

In the final section of this paper I want to discuss one other way in which diversity in contemporary society requires a re-reading of the Bible as sacred text. In the contemporary Western world the Bible must be read in connection with other sacred texts and stories that have played formative roles in shaping culture. The Bible's potency to shape a multicultural world has been diminished; it is now a shared power.

One way to develop this point is to illustrate it by highlighting the leitmotif of the land in the sacred stories from biblical and Aboriginal traditions. In the biblical stories, and here I am focusing on the Old Testament, the land appears primarily as something that Israel is "out of". For example, in Gen. 12:1-3 the LORD calls Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to the promised land, but by verse 10 Abraham has passed straight through the land of promise; a famine has taken him to Egypt. The stories of Israel's ancestors move them in and out of the land, and all of Israel is again in Egypt by the end of Genesis. Indeed, the Pentateuch ends with Israel outside the land. The story continues in Joshua with the conquest of the land, but this is a story that will also end with Israel out of the land in Babylonian exile, a new Egypt. In Israel's stories the land is always a place where one is going.

Israel's stories are travel stories (Clines 1978:107-111) for a people in exile from the land. They are "portable" stories that a people can take with them, stories designed to create order and meaning in new frontiers. Indeed, it is just such stories that the early settlers brought with them to Australia and America. The stories of occupation of the land gave a rationale for moving into new lands. But these were also stories of exodus and liberation from oppression, and in this way too the stories helped construct a meaningful new life for a people on the move from poverty or persecution in old lands to opportunity in new ones.

Aboriginal stories are different; they are stories about being "in" the land. While Aboriginal peoples also travel, they travel "in" the land, not to the land. When they speak of the land, then, their stories are quite different from biblical stories. Christine Morris, a descendant of the Kombumerri/Manaljahli people of the Bundjalung language group, defines Aboriginal stories in the following way:

The essential factor about these stories was that they were particular to their areas and were not transportable. Stories passed down from the creator beings stated how to care for that particular tract of land and how that particular group of people must behave. The following Adynyamathanha explanation of the significance of stories is an example that can be generalised to encompass all Aboriginal cultures within Australia: "For the people, the stories are the land. In the language telling a story means simply telling the land (Yarta) ... the land is seen as the outward expression of the spiritual dimension. Evidence for the existence of that dimension is there in concrete form and it is the mythology which interprets those forms to the people."

... the stories are related to the physical environment. To talk of the great emu and the eggs it laid means nothing unless you can see the piece of topography that depicts this event, e.g., a group of copper green boulders. (Morris 1991)

For Aboriginal people, then, sacred stories construct meaning for their audience when they are told in the land. They are about living in the land, and the land and its topography are essential for telling of a story.

In Australia biblical stories stand alongside Aboriginal stories as sacred texts producing different cultures now living side by side. Ironically, however, the positions of these cultures in relation to the land and to their myths has changed. White Australians, whose biblical stories reflect the needs of people who are "**out of**" the land, now find themselves settled "**in**" the "promised" land. There is no land to travel to. Yet there are signs that white Australians do not feel at home in the land. The land is deteriorating in what is a continuing and an expanding ecological crisis.

Aboriginal people, on the other hand, have been forced from their land and have been settled in missions and forced into cities and towns controlled by those who wield power. Like the Israel of the biblical text, they have been exiled from the land and suffer oppression from those who made them homeless. In exile Aboriginal stories have been emptied of the land required for telling and hearing them.

Ironically, there has been a needs reversal in Aboriginal and white Australian culture. The biblical stories concerned with the oppression of a people exiled from their land may have an appeal to Aboriginal people whose land has been taken from them. On the other hand, the Aboriginal stories about living in the land may have an appeal to white Australians who are living in the land. Sacred stories serving different salvific needs may serve to meet the needs

of multicultural Australia when those stories become shared stories and perhaps the basis of new stories. In an age of multiculturalism, the sacred texts of the "other" can be heard and read without being perceived as either peculiar and threatening or inferior and dismissible.

Summary and Conclusion

Reading the Bible in a multicultural world means that it must be continually re-read. The role of the Bible in cultural construction means that its meaning arises in a world of plurality and relativity. Its many meanings result from the plurality of communities who read it with diverse strategies of interpretation. To read it with ethical responsibility means that readers must not only learn to acknowledge these other readings but also to acknowledge the ideologies the Bible encodes from the worlds out of which it emerged. Furthermore, responsible reading means that the Bible must be understood in relation to other sacred texts. The power of the Bible as a "founding document" of Western culture must now be shared with the power of other sacred texts as our culture is changing. How this power can be shared constructively is a crucial problem facing religious people in a multicultural - and multi-religioned - society.

Notes

1   For a discussion of the fundamentalist approach to the Bible see James Barr (1977 and 1984).

2   An example of this fundamentalist denial of the Bible's origin in another time and place is evident in the following comment by F.C. Payne: "Science expresses the universe in five terms: Space, Time, Matter, Motion, Power. The first two verses of Genesis expresses these five elements, "in the beginning" - Time; "God created the heaven" - Space; "and the earth" - Matter; "and the Spirit of God" - Power; "moved on the face of the water" - Motion". (1987:58)

3   The structural unity of such a text as Isaiah, for example, is not obvious to contemporary readers of the text. It is possible, however, in a close reading of Isaiah to identify recurring rhetorical techniques and patterns that are not incompatible with unity. The book of Isaiah contains repetition in vocabulary, motif, theme, narrative sequence, and rhetorical devices such as rhetorical questions, pronominal shifts, and forms of

address. This repetition creates cohesion in the text. However, the repetition in the book is not literal; repetition is always repetition with a difference. Variation in the recurrence of repeated elements in the text suggests movement and progression. Literary critics have pointed out that the techniques of repetition are a feature of Hebrew narrative. Repetition is not only a unifying device but also a key to the narrative's development. (See Alter 1978 and 1981:88-113 and Sternberg, 1985:365-440.) What appears to be a key to the unity and structure of narrative is akin to what I'm suggesting is indicative of the unity of the largely poetic book of Isaiah. However, to point out this commonality is not to suggest the significant differences separating narrative and poetry.

4   See Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan who has summarised the various concepts of the reader by saying that they represent "two diametrically opposed views and various nuances between them. At one extreme the concept is of a real reader, whether a specific individual or the collective readership of a period. At the other, it is a theoretical construct, implied or encoded in the text, representing the integration of data and the interpretive process invited by the text." (1983:119)

5   This is also a point LaFargue makes. He says "... the role of the biblical scholar, as scholar, is to be servant of the biblical text, to guard its otherness, to help make its substantive content something modern people can in some way experience and understand, its particularity and its otherness" (1988:355).

6   The biblical scholar may of course also be part of other communities including communities of faith.

7   Fewell argues that the biblical text "because it represents so many different points of view" invites us to deconstruct it (1981:82).

8   In her SBL presidential address Schüssler Fiorenza is quoting from an earlier presidential address by Leroy Waterman.

9   This dichotomy in the interpretative process was outlined by Krister Stendahl (1962:219-20).

10   Schüssler Fiorenza is quoting from an earlier presidential address by Krister Stendahl.

11   The most radical position concerning the reader construction of texts is that of Stanley Fish (1980). For a perceptive discussion of the implication of Fish's reader response theory for Biblical Studies see Stephen D. Moore (1986), and for a biblical study that launches itself from Fish's observation see Conrad (1991a).

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Peoples at Peace:
The Land Ideology of the Abraham Narratives

Norman Habel

Preamble

It is with great pleasure that I offer a paper in this volume honouring my friend and colleague Vic Hayes. There can be little doubt that Vic, as one of the founding members of the Australian Association for the Study of Religions, has made a remarkable contribution to the advancement of Religion Studies in Australia. Given Vic's wide range of interest in religious cultures, I believe the theme of Religion and Multiculturalism is indeed appropriate for this volume.

Within this broad thematic framework I shall argue in my paper that the Abraham cycle of narratives reflects a distinctive land ideology which can be characterised as an agenda for peaceful relations between peoples of diverse cultures. Principles reflected in this agenda are relevant, I believe, for the contemporary Australian context.

In arguing my case I shall function with the Abraham narratives as a literary whole recognising that whatever sources may have been part of the growth process, we now have a text that presents us with the Abraham story as a narrative in its own right and a cycle of episodes with a dominant viewpoint. I acknowledge the research of scholars such as Meir Sternberg who have shown that in the biblical narrative the ideological, historiographical and aesthetic functions are closely intertwined (Sternberg 1987:35-50). The text confronts the reader with a viewpoint of reality which may at the same time be social, religious and artistic.

I am also conscious that as a reader I am influenced by various factors in my world when constructing the meaning I find in the text. Walter Brueggemann in his well known study, *The Land*, quite explicitly states that his vantage point for viewing the subject is the psychological and sociological "sense of being lost, displaced and homeless pervasive in contemporary society" (Brueggemann 1977:1-2).

The orientation which will probably influence my reading of the text is the social, religious and political context of the current land rights debate. Today we face conflicting claims of indigenous and invading peoples to the same land. That context is also multicultural raising the difficult question of how traditional and contemporary cultures should interact and what peace between such peoples might mean.

While I acknowledge my interest is this contemporary debate, I will attempt to isolate the ideological viewpoint of the text as one addressed to an implied audience in a distant and alien past, an approach advocated elsewhere in this volume by Ed Conrad. Who the actual audience may have been is a matter for historical reconstruction. I incline to the view that the historical audience is the Israelite people in exile in Babylon. The force of the ideology I discern in the text, however, is not dependent on a precise historical identification of the audience but can be ascertained from a close literary analysis of the text as a social document.

I shall substantiate the major elements of this ideology by analysing (a) the migration account which introduces the Abraham cycle of narratives, (b) the promise texts which punctuate these narratives, (c) the land covenant made with Abraham which stands at the centre of these narratives, and especially, (d) the pattern of relationships between Abraham and the peoples of Canaan.

The Migration Narrative

Most studies of the Abraham saga begin with the call of Gen. 12: 1-3 as evidence of a remarkable act of faith which leads Abraham to travel to some mysterious unknown land led only by the inner guidance of his God. When we consider the Abraham story as a whole, however, the situation is somewhat different. For the call is actually part of a migration narrative (Gen. 11: 31 - 12:9) which can be broken into five stages:

(a) the plan of the Terah group to migrate from Ur to the land of Canaan
(b) the settlement of the Terah group in Haran
(c) the journey of the Abraham group to Canaan
(d) travels of the Abraham group through the land
(e) the establishment of sacred sites in the land.

This narrative outline reveals that the plan to migrate to Canaan is a given; Canaan is not an unknown destination even if it may be an unknown

quantity. There is no explicit indication of why the Terah group leaves Ur, no expulsion as Brueggemann supposes (1977:16), and no suggestion yet that YHWH was behind the initial move. The land of Canaan is an inviting land, a land of opportunity and the goal of the migration plan. Abraham does not flee from a land of evil but is part of a migration from one urban centre to another *en route* to a new land.

The settlement in Haran is passed over quickly. Abraham's stay is interrupted with an unexpected command from his God to separate from his father's family in Haran and fulfil his father's original plan to migrate to Canaan, **the land which I will show you**. The catalyst for completing the migration is YHWH who thereby legitimates the original plan of Abraham's father.

In Haran the Terah group is said to have **settled**, a term which clearly suggests making that territory its home land. Terah did not merely **sojourn** in Haran. And the subsequent command of YHWH is for Abraham to leave his father's land and go to a new land. Abraham migrates from one land to another; he is not depicted as one of the landless poor (Wielenga 1988:137) or like one of the Israelites wandering uprooted and aimless in the wilderness, but as an ancestral hero led by God in search of a new land (Miscall 1983:17), a hero who provides an ancestral bond between an ancient homeland and a new land. Abraham is an immigrant not a refugee.

Abraham's journey to Canaan with all his family and possessions happens without incident concluding with the succinct but emphatic, **"They set forth to go to the land of Canaan and they came to the land of Canaan"** (Gen. 12: 5). Canaan is clearly the land of destination and destiny. Significantly the land seems open to migrants without any barrier set up by the inhabitants. Abraham migrates, it would seem, to a friendly inviting land. Abraham is not yet in control of the land but then neither is he threatened with domination or eviction by rulers in the land.

Upon arrival in Canaan Abraham **passes through** the land, an act which can hardly be dismissed as innocent sightseeing. For it is precisely at that this point that the Canaanites, the indigenous inhabitants of the land, are introduced. Abraham surveys a friendly territory, belonging to others, where he or his descendants will stake a claim. These journeys through the land (Gen. 12: 6-9) are tantamount to mapping the territory associated with a land claim. After separating from Lot, Abraham actually **walks through the length and breadth of** the land at God's command to chart the promised territory (Gen. 13: 7). Yet no one seems to object; the Canaanites are not depicted as enemies.

At two places in this narrative, and subsequently at several others (for example, Gen. 21: 33), Abraham establishes sacred sites. These sites bind Abraham's seed to the land because at these sacred locations the God of the ancestors is to be found. The ancient trails of the patriarchs and the sacred sites they establish turn the territory into a storied landscape in which the history of Israel's beginnings is recorded. Somewhat like the actions of Aboriginal Australian ancestors, the deeds of the patriarchs transform uncharted space into a known land with which the descendants claim a kinship. In this charted land the ancestors locate their God, a God whose stories in the land precede the Abraham migration.

This image of the land is a significant feature of the irenic ideology of the Abraham narratives. God is revealed to be located at sacred sites throughout the land. But the God of the land is not only the God of Abraham. This God is already being worshipped under different names by different peoples in the land - El Elyon at Salem and El Olam among the Philistines. El Shaddai is yet another ancient name associated with this God of Canaan. The fear of this God is even found among the Philistines, a people representing quite a different culture from that of Abraham. Central to the ideology of these narratives seems to be an acknowledgement that God is already in the land among the peoples of the land rather than any condemnation of these peoples of the land or their gods.

The Promise Agenda

At two points within this migration narrative programmatic promises from Abraham's God are introduced (12: 2-3, 7) which provide vital cues for understanding the ideological viewpoint of the account. As a package these promises provide the agenda for a land ideology to be explicated in the patriarchal narratives which follow (Westermann 1980). In brief these promises are that:

(a) Abraham will become **a great nation**
(b) Abraham's **name** will become **great**
(c) Abraham will mediate **blessing**
(d) Abraham's seed will obtain **the land**.

The promise that Abraham would become a great nation implies a future history in which the Abraham family will be transformed from being a small social group into a political power with a controlling interest over the land. The

land of Canaan will be the home land of this great nation. The land is the launching place for national ambition; the promise is entitlement for national expansion. The name of the ancestor who initiated this great dream will become great.

These promises sound imperialistic. They are modified, however, by another promise which anticipates that Abraham and his seed are to mediate blessing to other groups (Wolff 1975:41-46): **Through you all the families of the land will be blessed** (12: 3; see also 28: 14). Abraham is given the land as a vehicle for bringing blessing to other groups.

In this first promise text these groups are designated families, a term which recalls the traditional family clusters or clans among the peasant people of Israel (Gottwald 1979:301-305). The image here is one of peasant families living together and gaining benefit from the presence of the Abraham group. In a later promise passage, however, Abraham is to become a **great and mighty nation,** not with the intent of dominating other nations, but with the plan that **through him all the nations of the land will be blessed** (Gen. 18: 18).

Abraham's nation is to mediate blessing to all other nations of the earth. How this is to be achieved is not specified in the promise. Blessing, however, clearly implies imparting power, life and resources. This power includes great fertility (17: 16), economic growth (24: 35), political control (24: 60) and high social importance (12: 2, 17: 16, 20). In some way the nation of Abraham's seed is supposed to empower, not disempower other nations of the land. In this context, it seems, the imparting of blessing to other peoples is intended to have long term political and economic ramifications.

Admittedly where other groups **curse** Abraham, and presumably his seed, they will experience God's curse. But the primary focus of the promises and their explication in the narratives is on the role of Abraham, and subsequently Jacob, of mediating blessing without conflict. Abraham is to bring blessing to the land not curse, peace not conflict. Such a vision is far from the usual way in which indigenous peoples in the ancient Near East experienced the advent of invaders as conquering commanders and imperialistic rulers.

In biblical Hebrew the term *'eres* is used for what we render land and earth. The land of Canaan, it would seem, stands *pars pro toto* as a part for the whole earth. What happens in the given land is presumably a model for all the land, the entire earth. The wider context of the Babel story suggests that *'eres* may also refer to the inhabited earth (Gen. 11: 9). From the promised land at the centre of earth, the blessing is to extend to all the land, the whole earth. How the

indigenous peoples are treated in the given land may then offer a cue for how other peoples of the earth are to be blessed or cursed. This point is explored in detail later in the paper.

The climactic clause of the promise agenda is revealed through a theophany in which YHWH states (in 12: 7), **To your seed I will give this land.** While there is no explicit statement here that Canaan is **YHWH's land** (von Rad 1966:79-93) or that YHWH is the owner of the land, it is clear that YHWH is assumed to be the God of the land, the divine landlord, who is located in the land and has the right to bestow the land on Abraham and his seed (Wright 1990:3-23). YHWH is present in the land and is one with the God revealed at sacred sites within the land. YHWH and the destiny of the anticipated Abraham nation are inextricably bound to the land. Yet the domain of influence claimed by YHWH clearly extends from this land to other peoples of the whole land, the earth. These claims of YHWH imply an ideology of political outreach from Canaan as the power base of operations.

In short, the promise passages provide a clear entitlement to the land as the locus of divine presence and the basis for future economic and political power.

The Land Covenant

The promise agenda launched in the migration narrative is extended in various ways throughout the Abraham narratives with explicit verbal revelations interrupting the story line. The first such extension is found after Abraham generously offers to share the land and give Lot the richest portion (Gen. 13: 1-13). Not only is Abraham and his seed given the land, they can also expect to possess it **forever**, apparently without condition (13: 15, 17: 8).

The eternal character of the land deed is emphasised even more strongly in a subsequent covenant sealed with the rite of circumcision (Gen. 17). Here the land of Canaan is emphasised as **an eternal possession** (17: 8). That the term *'ahuzzah* (possession) implies ownership is evident from the narrative where Abraham buys a plot of land for Sarah's place of burial (Gen. 23: 20). This purchased plot of land is the earnest of all Canaan as an eternal possession.

The deed of entitlement reflected in the promise agenda is offered as an unconditional trust. Here there are none of the conditional clauses typical of a deuteronomic approach to the land. There are no warnings against being corrupted by Canaanite gods, no requirements to follow a code of behaviour, no

demand for conditions about care of the land. Abraham's faith in the promise is sufficient (Gen. 15: 6).

As Garbini points out, the covenant with Abraham is a transfer to Abraham, the founder of the people, of the prerogatives and powers of royalty. **God gives him the blessing which in the ideology of the ancient Near East the king was the guarantor** (Garbini 1988:79). The promised blessings which would traditionally have been bestowed on the king and mediated through the king (Ps. 72: 17) are here made an unconditional gift of the people (see also Isa. 55: 3). Abraham projects an image of popular power, the father of a people who will themselves one day control their own land.

The land covenant narrative begins with God identifying himself as YHWH, the one involved in bringing Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to possess the land (15: 7). Such a message would immediately remind the audience of the traditional formula, "I am YHWH who brought you from the land of Egypt" (Exod. 20: 2) and offer an assurance that the seed of Abraham will enjoy the same exodus from Babylon as did their forefather. Thus the old land and the new land are again linked by the God of the promise.

This narrative presents Abraham, who presumably reflects the mood of the implied audience, as duly sceptical: "How do I know I shall possess it?" After Abraham divides the ceremonial animals according to God's direction, a deep and ominous sleep descends on the hero (15: 7-12). This time the covenant promise is intensified by a profound religious experience. No longer do promises seem to interrupt the story line; the land covenant experience functions as a narrative event in its own right (15: 13).

The revealed message associated with this experience refers to a period when Abraham's seed would sojourn in a land which was not their own (15: 13). They return when **the iniquity of the Amorites is complete** (15: 16), an enigmatic expression seeking to explain the delay in God's promise of a land. This is the one reference in the Abraham narratives which may perhaps indicate that Abraham's seed will eventually gain the land because of the corruption of the inhabitants, a theme common in Deuteronomy (9: 4f). Elsewhere in the Abraham narratives the emphasis is on the land as a generous gift and Abraham as the mediator of blessing to the families in the land rather than on the inhabitants as evil. Ultimately Abraham's seed is not expected to get the land by default but by virtue of covenant entitlement.

On the awesome day of Abraham's traumatic sleep experience and the mysterious manifestation of God in flame and smoke, YHWH is said to have **cut**

a covenant with Abraham (15: 18) guaranteeing the land to Abraham's seed. The covenant event depicted here is a ritual in its own right which has not been modelled on the traditional covenants in Israel. Here Abraham as the father and representative of the people called Israel is promised the land unconditionally and given control (*yaras*) over that land for the people.

The territory to be possessed is identified in terms of its ten indigenous inhabitants, the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites. This classic list might conjure up memories of the conquest tradition but few hints are given that these people are to be expelled or destroyed. On the contrary, the narratives which surround this land covenant suggest that Abraham provided a model of how to live at peace with these peoples. In this ideology possessing the land does not demand annihilation or expulsion of these peoples. The militant Joshua story is not the logical conclusion of the patriarchal narratives.

Abraham as Peacemaker

The basic agenda of these promises is elaborated with artistic subtlety in the surrounding narratives of the Abraham saga. Abraham is portrayed as an exemplar of how to share the land, overcome conflict and mediate blessing to the inhabitants of the land. The peoples live together with Abraham as a welcome migrant in their midst, a man of peace.

When the land chosen by Abraham and Lot cannot support them both and strife arises between their herdsmen, Abraham points to the whole land as open for settlement even though the Canaanites are among their neighbours (13: 1-9). Abraham is happy to share the land with Lot who chooses the best territory in the South (13: 10). Abraham the peacemaker shares the land with Lot, the father of the Moabites and Ammonites, and with the Canaanites of the region. Abraham arrives, it seems, as an agent for peaceful co-existence.

Just as striking is the role Abraham plays in the following narrative where he and his household of servants take on the invading kings who capture Lot. Abraham rescues the household of Lot and returns to a royal welcome by the kings of Sodom and Salem (Gen. 14). Abraham's encounter with each of these kings is telling in terms of his function as a mediator of goodwill in Canaan.

Abraham participates in a ritual with Melchizedek who is not only a king, but also a priest from a different religious culture. By so doing Abraham respects the inhabitants of Salem (presumably the Jebusites), acknowledges their

God, El Elyon, receives his blessing and responds with a tithe of all his many possessions (Gen. 14: 18-21). Such tribute is hardly an insignificant blessing for Melchizedek to receive from Abraham's hand. The promotion of peaceful relations is immediately apparent; Abraham is welcomed as a friend in this new country and culture. As Westermann observes,

> Melchizedek brings refreshment to the exhausted liberator and thus as royal host receives him into the peace, the *shalom* of his royal domain (Westermann 1985: 205).

Here there is no denunciation of Canaanite worship, no condemnation of Canaanite inhabitants, no rejection of Canaanite kings as oppressors. Even Baal is not damned as dangerous. Abraham fosters a way of life in Canaan that mediates blessing and creates peace. In spite of promises of future greatness as a nation, Abraham here functions as an ambassador of goodwill among equals.

Even the King of the notorious Sodomites is treated with due respect. Abraham avoids placing himself in the debt of this king and even swears by the local deity of Salem to emphasise his commitment to sharing rather than exploiting the inhabitants of the land (Gen. 14: 21-23). Abraham does not become rich and powerful at the expense of the Canaanites, he does not exploit the indigenous people, he does not play king or conqueror. His whole mode of operation seems to be a reversal of the holy war model of Joshua. Lives and goods are rescued rather than put to the *herem* of total destruction.

The sequel to this act of goodwill is the effort of Abraham to rescue the city of Sodom from destruction (Gen. 18: 16-33). The three men who had just visited Sarah with the promise of a son are already on their way to Sodom when YHWH repeats his promise that Abraham would be a great nation, mediate blessing and instruct his household in the way of justice (18: 17-19). Abraham stands in their way and prevents YHWH from proceeding; Abraham is ready to mediate for the people of Sodom.

Abraham's intercession on behalf of Sodom demonstrates more than an interest in his relatives. He exhibits a concern for justice and the deliverance of what is probably the most notorious city in Canaan. Abraham is the potential mediator of blessing to this and other cities of the land. While nothing could save Sodom, the policy of intercession for Canaanites is indicative of an ideology which promotes peace in the places where Abraham's people live and fosters justice in the cause of peace.

The episodes with Abimelech reflect a similar orientation. Contrary to Abraham's expectations he discovers **the fear of God** among the Philistines who are found to be a people of integrity (Gen. 20: 1-13). These people are not viewed as godless pagans but neighbours conscious of the divine presence in the land, in spite of the fact that they belong to a radically different Aegean culture.

Abraham's folly in presenting his wife as his sister almost leads to Abimilech's destruction. Only God's intervention prevents the death of Abimilech who discovers that Abraham is a prophet capable of interceding for him as he once did for Sodom (20: 7). In due course Abimelech sees that justice is done by Abraham and more (20: 14-16). Abimilech could quite well have told Abraham to leave, but instead generously offers Abraham the choice of whatever land he pleases. Abraham lives at peace with the people of Gerar and surprisingly perhaps also learns about justice from their king. The Philistine culture is remembered as a source of wisdom and truth.

Abimelech is explicitly portrayed as a concerned inhabitant seeking peace with Abraham. It is Abimelech who has hitherto demonstrated loyalty (*hesed*). Now he expects the same kind of just dealings "with me and with the land" where Abraham is sojourning. When a dispute arises because the servants of Abimilech have seized a well, Abraham can count on the integrity of Abimilech. The resulting treaty guarantees permanent peace between Abraham and these inhabitants of the land and establishes Beersheba as a sacred site for Abraham's seed (Gen. 21: 22-34). Peaceful and good relations are cemented by the treaty.

In these passages the land and the inhabitants are closely bound. Justice demands that the people and their land are not exploited, a justice the inhabitants expect of Abraham as the newcomer. Abimelech asks that Abraham deal fairly with Abimelech and "with the land." Justice for the land means abiding by treaties and respecting the integrity of its peoples. By swearing an oath with the inhabitants before a local deity (presumably El Olam) whom both parties recognise, Abraham not only respects the Philistines but does justice by the land where he sojourns.

The final episode in Abraham's dealings with the peoples of the land reflects this same irenic viewpoint (Gen. 23). Sarah dies "in the land of Canaan" and Abraham requires a burial place. In spite of his recognised status in the community he does not assume squatters' rights or take land by force. Rather, he pays the ultimate respect to the Hittites, who are here designated "the people of the land". He "bows down" to them (23: 7, 12) and buys the field of Ephron in accordance with the legal procedures depicted as customary among the Hittites.

This piece of land then becomes Abraham's permanent possession, the earnest of a hope to be fulfilled and a model of justice in dealing with any appropriation of the land.

The Abraham narratives have the hero relating peacefully to a wide range of inhabitants from quite diverse cultures. He buys land from the Hittites, attempts to save the Sodomites after rescuing their stolen property, pays tithes to the king of the Jebusites, makes a treaty with the dreaded Philistines and shares land with Lot, the father of the Ammonites and Moabites. Abraham is clearly the mediator of goodwill and blessing in the land. He is the symbol of people seeking to live at peace with the land and build bridges with the existing peoples of the land.

Implications

The pivotal features of this ideology in the Abraham narrative cycle can be summarised as follows:

(a)   a sense of the land as the prior locus of God's presence discovered by the patriarchs in their travels

(b)   an unconditional entitlement to the land promised to the common people represented by Abraham; this promise was understood as a basis for future control of the land

(c)   a perception of the land as the centre and source of economic and political blessings for the peoples of the promised land and the extended land, the earth

(d)   a policy of promoting these blessings from the land through peaceful strategies of treaty, cooperation and justice

(e)   a respect for the culture of the existing peoples of the land, including their customs, deities and treaties.

This vision may never have been realised historically. It is probably a dream similar to Ezekiel's projection of an ideal society (Ezek. 40-48) or the jubilee model of land economy (Lev. 25-27) or, more likely, the policy of peace urged by Jeremiah in his letter to the exiles (Jer. 28). This does not negate the significance of this vision from Israel's past as remembered through the text. In the textual memory the values of a new and better society are embraced.

These values and principles are worth exploring in the context of multicultural societies where indigenous peoples still strive for full acceptance. I would like to identify several of those factors which I believe deserve attention wherever bodies or writers use biblical precedents like the Abraham cycle to argue their case along with Aboriginal Australians for rights, justice and future relations.

(1) The land ideology of the Abraham narratives offers a vision which is relatively sympathetic to existing or indigenous peoples in a given land. This sympathy is not necessarily shared in other models; the Joshua portrait of a militant holy war against all people, livestock and property offers little or no apparent concern for the peoples of Canaan (Habel 1990). We need to acknowledge, therefore, that if we use the Abraham model as appropriate we are selecting one model from among many and that we do so precisely because it coincides more closely with contemporary social justice values.

(2) By affirming the role of the peoples of Canaan in the narrative we have no longer cast them in the role of the evil enemy. Whether Aboriginal Australians reading the story identify with the indigenous peoples of Canaan or with the patriarchal ancestors who walked the land is for them to choose. Those of us whose ancestors came to Australia from other cultures are clearly the invading peoples. And we need to take seriously the ethics and responsibility of that role.

(3) Whether our forebears invaded under colonial expansion by 'right of discovery' or whether they entered what they believed was a 'promised land' from God, or whether they came for some other reason, they are the invaders. Abraham presents a model of invaders as friendly immigrants rather than aggressive conquerors. While Abraham believes Canaan is to be his home and the domain of his descendants in the future, that dream does not distort his sense of justice in relating to the people around him.

(4) The friendly immigrant model of Abraham incorporates genuine respect for the laws, customs, religion and space of the existing peoples of the land. This is demonstrated in a number of striking incidents including the following:

  (a) Abraham acquires land by following the legal customs of the Hittites here designated the "people of the land" (ch. 23)

    (b)   Abraham acknowledges the god of Salem and worships with the priest of Salem at an already existing sacred site in the land (Gen. 14)

    (c)   Abraham deals fairly with the king of Sodom and intercedes for the Sodomites (Gen. 14 and 18)

    (d)   Abraham finds God already located in the land among the existing peoples, including the Philistines, and discerns this God's presence at sacred sites throughout the land

    (e)   Abraham makes treaties and agreements where there are disputes and is expected by the existing inhabitants to honour these (for example, Gen. 21).

In the light of this visionary model we may ask how often invading peoples in colonial countries considered local or traditional law in acquiring land? How often did they make genuine treaties with indigenous peoples and have the integrity to honour them? How often did invading Europeans seek to know the gods or spiritual beings of the land rather than first imposing the God of their homeland? How often did they respect the culture of these indigenous peoples and intercede for their lives? How often did invading peoples consider the land of the Aboriginal Australians as sacred the way Abraham did the holy land which he discovered?

In other words, why was the Joshua model more appealing to our invading ancestors than the Abraham model? And why were the ideals of the Abraham model so easily suppressed?

While I may have left my statement of implied values in the form of questions, the agenda is clear. Social justice in a culture involving conflicting indigenous and invading cultures still demands a serious reconsideration of history and a fresh appreciation of the principles reflected in the Abraham model. A treaty would be a good start.

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The Fear of the Non-Israelite

Anne Gardner

The present paper, written for the Vic Hayes Festschrift, demonstrates a move from a multi-cultural society to a mono-cultural one. The people delineated are those of Ancient Israel, the community of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, whose racial origins were mixed and whose early history, both legal and textual, shows a tolerance for marriage partners of other nationalities. The dangers of unregulated mingling with others became apparent to those who advocated the exclusive worship of one God[1] for there was a tendency to accept the duties and religious practices of these marriage partners. Reflection upon disasters in the history of Israel, too, appear to have led to the conclusion that God was angry with his people, and that the likely cause of this was a turning away from Himself, provoked by contact, especially marital, with non-Israelites. This led to the formulation of legal rulings and to changes to early traditions which had been handed down. These will be demonstrated in this study in the case of intermarriage. The legal rulings will be traced throughout the period of the Hebrew Bible and beyond and then examples given of the exogamous marriages of four of Israel's greatest heroes and the way in which these are dealt with in early texts and then later rewritings. One caveat must be made: this paper concentrates upon the movement towards exclusivity and separatism which became dominant in Rabbinic Judaism. It is recognised that throughout the history of Israel there have been those within its own community who have objected to such a stance and whose views are apparent, for instance, in the books of Ruth and Jonah, but due to the limitations of space, no consideration will be given to such opposition in the present paper.

Legal Rulings against Intermarriage

A number of warnings against marriage with non-Israelites appear in the Hebrew Bible: Ex. 34: 12-16 exhorts those in the wilderness not to arrange marriages for their children with the offspring of the "inhabitants of the land" to which they are going because of the fear of apostasy associated with such unions. Deut. 7: 3-4 expresses similar sentiments. In the former text it is

implied that the 'inhabitants of the land' are the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (Ex. 34: 11) while the latter adds the Girgashites to the list. This is not the only difference between the two texts: Ex. 34: 11-12 has an internal contradiction in that in verse 11 God declares his intention of driving out the six native peoples and yet verse 12 warns the Israelites against making a covenant with the 'inhabitants of the land' thus casting doubt upon the efficacy of God's ejection of such inhabitants. Deut. 7: 1-2 overcomes this contradiction and apparent slur on God's power by instructing Israel, "When the Lord your God delivers them up before you, you shall smite them; then you shall utterly destroy them ..." (Deut. 7: 2). If any of the original inhabitants of the land survived with whom there could be intermarriage it was now Israel's fault!

The prohibition against intermarriage is extended in Nehemiah and Ezra. Women of Ashdod, Ammonites and Moabites are specifically mentioned in Neh. 13: 23. The basis for singling out the latter pair appears in Neh. 13: 1-3 where there is an allusion to their hiring of Balaam to curse Israel prior to its entry into the promised land (Num. 22: 6). It is interesting that Neh. 13: 26, where Nehemiah is contending with those who have married such women, alludes to Solomon and his downfall through foreign women which appears in 1 Kings 11: 1-9. That particular passage also goes beyond the prohibition of Deut. 7: 1-4 in that Solomon is slated for marrying, amongst others, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and Zidonians, nations not specified hitherto.[2] Nehemiah himself does not state the nationality of the women Solomon married, simply saying, "... strange women caused him to sin" (Neh. 13: 26).

The taking of 'strange wives' is specified as a sin against God in Ezra 10: 2,10. They are linked with 'the peoples of the land' in 10: 2 but the connection between the two is tenuous in Ezra 10: 11 where Ezra commands the men of Judah and Benjamin to "separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the strange women".

Thereafter, in Ezra 10 'the strange women' are cited without further definition and this would allow women from nations other than the previously specified ones to be included in a prohibition of marriage. However, in 9: 1 Ezra does give a specific list of the nations with whom the people of Israel had mingled in marriage and it is noteworthy that 'Egyptians' feature for the first time.[3] A further noteworthy feature of the verse is the accusation that Israel had not separated itself from "the peoples of the lands".

That 'lands' is in the plural rather than the singular of Exodus and Deuteronomy is important: it, along with the inclusion of 'Egyptians',

demonstrates that the prohibition now applied to nations of lands other than Israel itself. A further difference from the prohibitions of Exodus and Deuteronomy is significant: the latter texts stood against intermarriage because of the dangers of religious syncretism or its associated apostasy but Ezra introduces the notion of impurity in 9: 11-12. He represents the prophets as having said of the promised land:

> The land to which you are going, to possess it, is an unclean (*niddah*)
> land through the uncleanness (*be niddah*) of the peoples of the land ...
> (Ezra 9: 11) [4]

Niddah is the term used to describe the menstruous woman (Lev. 15: 19, 29, 25 and so on) or more correctly the woman who is separated for the period of menstruation. At this time, according to Leviticus, the woman could render unclean anyone who touched her (Lev. 15: 19) or anything she sat or lay upon (Lev. 15: 20) which in turn could render unclean a person who touched these objects (Lev. 15: 21-23). Marriage with the peoples of the promised land should be avoided, then, according to Ezra, for like the menstruant, they could render unclean the people of Israel. Indeed the suggestion of contamination is present in Ezra 9: 2 in the statement that "the holy seed have mingled themselves with the peoples of the land", an act which runs counter to God's command to Israel in Lev. 20: 26, "You shall be holy to me: for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples that you should be mine".

Concerns for ritual purity then tend towards a desire for ethnic purity.

The separatist or purist authors of Apocryphal or Pseudepigraphical works appear to, take it for granted that marriage with any non-Israelite was highly undesirable for it led to 'doing wickedness' (I Macc. 1: 15) or to defilement (Jub. 30: 10, 14; Wis. of Sol. 3: 13, 4: 1). This did not prevent individuals marrying non-Israelites as has been the case throughout the history of the people of Israel but it did mean that by the Graeco-Roman period it was firmly established that marriage with anyone outside the community of Israel did not have official sanction.

Narrative Accounts of Intermarriage

In Gen. 41: 45 Joseph is given a wife by the Pharaoh; "Asenath the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On". That her father was a priest of On provides us with the information that Asenath was Egyptian. No adverse comment is made about this marriage and indeed two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, are born

of the union who not only signal God's intent (Gen. 41: 51-52) but were accepted by Jacob (Gen. 48: 5) and given his blessing (Gen. 48: 20). Ephraim and Manasseh were the progenitors of tribes of Israel and the name Ephraim became virtually synonomous with Israel or the ten northern tribes (for example, Is. 7: 8, 9; 11: 13, Jer. 7: 15, 31: 18).

Joseph's marriage to Asenath is not mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible[5] but Jewish thought later recognised the incongruity of the marriage of one of its great forefathers with a foreign woman who was closely associated with the worship of another god. The haggadic tale of Joseph and Asenath (Charlesworth vol. II, 1985:177-247) which dates from between the first century B.C.E. and the second century C.E. attempts to rationalise the union: Joseph refuses to marry Asenath at first because of her idolatry for he remembered his father, Jacob, warning him about associating with a foreign woman (7: 5-6). Asenath, a beautiful young virgin, fasts for a week and repents of her idolatry whereupon she is visited by the chief of God's angels (14: 8) who tells her that her confession has been heard (15: 3) and that from that day she is renewed and will be given to Joseph as a bride (15: 6). The marriage then had the divine stamp of approval!

A glaring example of a contradiction in attitude to marriage with non-Israelites can be seen between Ex. 2: 16-22 and Num. 25: 6-8. In the former Moses finds refuge with the priest of Midian after fleeing from Egypt, accepts in marriage Zipporah, one of the daughters of this priest, and has a son by her. Zipporah herself is seen to be more righteous than Moses in Ex. 4: 42 when she averts God's anger by circumcising their son. Contrast Num. 25: 6-8, a text where the perpetrator of an act of extreme violence is represented as a hero. The violence is supposedly justified because an Israelite man had brought a Midianite woman into the camp. The verses are worth quoting:

> And behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of people of Israel while they were weeping at the door of the tent of meeting (6).

> And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest saw it he rose up from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand (7)

> and he went after the man of Israel in the pavilion and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly ... (8)

Note the temerity of the man of Israel; he actually brought a Midianite woman into the camp in the sight of Moses!

There is no explicit statement of what sin the Israelite and the Midianite woman committed, rather one is left to make an assumption from the surrounding context. The verses which precede the cited ones castigate the people of Israel for "committing whoredom with the daughters of Moab" (Num. 25: 1) which apparently involved the Israelites in worshipping Moabite gods, the implication being that the Midianite woman would do the same. The contrast with the report of Moses' espousal of a Midianite woman and her righteousness is glaring. Perhaps the second Midianite woman was a cultic prostitute although the text does not actually say so, merely implying it through the connection between Num. 25: 1-2 and 6-8. There is evidence from elsewhere, though, that foreign prostitutes were not creatures to be shunned at all times in the history of Ancient Israel. Josh. 6: 25 shows this clearly:

> Rahab, the prostitute, and her father's household and all that she had,
> Joshua saved alive and she dwelt in the midst of Israel to this day,
> because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

No trace of fear of apostasy resulting from contact with that particular foreign prostitute is evidenced in this text.

Numbers 31 may represent a rationalisation for the killing of the Midianite woman in that Midianites, rather than the Moabites of 25: 1, were said to have, "caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor ..." (Num. 31: 16), but it is noteworthy that in the ensuing capture of Midianite women by the Israelites only female children "that have not known man by lying with him" (Num. 31: 18) were kept alive. Does youth ensure that religious affiliations can be changed? But if so why were only the female children allowed to live? Presumably so that they could become wives or concubines for Israelite men.[6] This makes the so-called horror produced by the Israelite man bringing a Midianite woman into the camp in Num. 25: 1, a woman who is not said to be a prostitute or a non-virgin, even more astounding.

Moses' second marriage also was to a non-Israelite. Num. 12: 1 says that he married a Cushite woman and for that reason Miriam and Aaron spoke against him suggesting that God had communicated with them as well as Moses and now they should be of a higher status than him. God himself defends Moses saying that Moses is greater than a prophet and that He, God, would speak to

him face to face. The most interesting aspect in the present context of God's rebuke to Miriam and Aaron is his assertion that "... my servant Moses ... is faithful in all my house".

The implication is then that God does not see Moses as sinful because of his marriage to a foreign woman and considers him more worthy of receiving His communication than the pair who had criticised Moses for such a marriage.

The reports of Moses' two foreign wives must stem from a period when exogamous unions were seen as acceptable within Israel and presumably any direct criticism of his actions arising in a later period could not be allowed to stand because of Moses' exalted status. Indeed, as with Joseph, there is evidence in post-biblical tradition of an attempt "to explain away" Moses' foreign wives. In Exodus Rabbah, one of the haggadic midrashim, Zipporah is accredited with having removed all remains of idolatry from her father's house in the same way as a bird would collect all crumbs (Ex.R. 1: 32). This suggests then, that despite being "foreign" Zipporah was very pious and hated idol worship, which made her a suitable wife for Moses. A further haggadic tradition is that Zipporah and the Cushite woman were one and the same: Moses supposedly divorced Zipporah and later remarried her. A Cushite or Ethiopian woman would have had black skin; the Rabbis said that just as she was remarkable for her skin colour so she was remarkable for her pious deeds (M.K. 16b)! Again "evidence" of a suitable mate for Moses! [7]

David, the greatest king Israel ever had, also married non-Israelite women. In 2 Sam. 3: 3 we are told that he had a son Absalom, by Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, King of Geshur. 2 Sam. 5: 13 says that "... David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem ..." and, although it is not specified that these women were non-Israelites, it is likely because verse 6 of the same chapter says that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were Jebusites. David's most famous wife was Bathsheba but as with David's other wives the text says nothing condemnatory about her foreign connections. Interestingly Uriah, like Zipporah, Moses' wife, is presented as more conscientious in his worship of Israel's deity at the time of the incident than David, the Israelite hero: Uriah refused to eat, drink and sleep with his wife while the ark and army were out in the field whereas David committed adultery and connived at murder.

The post-exilic work of Chronicles which parallels parts of Samuel is interesting in its treatment of the passages outlined above: it mentions Absalom only once (2 Chron. 11: 20) but ignores his matrilineal descent; 2 Sam. 5: 13 is virtually repeated in 1 Chron. 14: 3 (although "concubines" is omitted) but the

passage now stands at a distance from the specification that Jerusalem was a Jebusite city (1 Chron. 11: 4), thus removing the implication that David's new wives were Jebusites; Bathsheba, her previous marriage, the adulterous scene and David's complicity in Uriah's murder are all omitted!

Solomon, famed as a lover of women, is said in 1 Kings 3: 1 to have taken Pharaoh's daughter in marriage, "and brought her into the City of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the Lord and the Wall of Jerusalem round about".

No adverse comment is made about such a union in this passage and indeed it is emphasised in verse 3 that "Solomon loved the Lord". The daughter of Pharaoh is mentioned again in 1 Kings 11: 1 where she is coupled with other "strange women" - "women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians and Hittites", whom Solomon loved and married. The following verses indicate that in so doing Solomon was acting in direct contravention of God's Commandment (11: 2) and that these women led him to worship gods and goddesses of their own nations (11: 4-9). Such apostasy provoked God's anger (11: 9) and as punishment he took the ten northern tribes away from Solomon's son (11: 11-13).

Chronicles, which delineates Solomon's reign as well as that of David, makes an interesting addition to the report of 1 Kings 3: 1. 2 Chron. 8: 11 reads:

> And Solomon brought out the daughter of Pharaoh from the City of
> David to the house that he had built for her: for he said, my wife shall
> not dwell in the house of David, King of Israel, because (the places)
> are holy to which the ark of the Lord comes.

The suggestion is then that the presence of the foreign woman, the daughter of Pharaoh, would contaminate the holiness of David's city, thus linking with the ritual impurity posited of non-Israelites in Ezra 9.

The other wives of Solomon listed in 1 Kings 11: 1 are omitted by Chronicles as were David's foreign wives. If the only motivation of Chronicles in ignoring the foreign wives of two of its heroes was simply to white-wash the latter then why did it mention Solomon's Egyptian wife, Pharaoh's daughter, at all? It may be that Chronicles recognised that the prohibitions against intermarriage in Exodus and Deuteronomy, which purported to come from a time earlier than Solomon, specified only the native inhabitants of the land of Israel and did not include Egyptians. According to the tenets of Solomon's own time then, Chronicles accepts that he did not commit a sin in marrying Pharaoh's

daughter and, in so far as he removed her from holy places, his righteousness is emphasised.

Synthesis

The gradual growth of laws prohibiting marriage with non-Israelites, at first because of fear of them provoking apostasy or syncretism and later on account of their ritual impurity, is mirrored in the texts which have been delineated. Four of Israel's heroes and their foreign marriages were shown in the earliest strata of texts to be mentioned without adverse comment and indeed their spouse or offspring to have been lauded in some cases. Later strata of texts either attribute the cause of major catastrophes such as the division of the Kingdom to God's judgement upon indulgence in mixed unions with their attendant dangers or overcome the 'problem' of the exogomy of Israel's heroes by either omitting it in a rewriting of the texts, as was the case with David and Solomon in Chronicles, or by 'explaining it away' as the tale of Joseph and Asenath demonstrated. The desire for the exclusive worship of Israel's God led to a rejection of close association with other peoples who were seen ultimately as a source of ritual impurity. This in turn led to a concern with the racial purity of Israelites or Jews with the Tannatic Rabbis positing that the children of a union between an Israelite and a Gentile were non-Jews (Kidd 68b; Yeb. 17a, 22b; Tem. 29b). (See also Archer 1990:130-131.)

The irony of such a declaration is underlined with the realisation that Joseph's sons (Ephraim and Manasseh), and Moses' offspring, as well as many of those of David and Solomon were the product of mixed marriages. Indeed a number of the heroes or heroines of the period of the conquest and settlement were either not pure Israelites or not Israelites at all as the following examples will demonstrate. Caleb, the nephew of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, is hailed in Num. 32: 12 as one of only two people who "have wholly followed the Lord".

The Kenizzites were a tribe of Edom who became joined to Judah (Josh. 14: 6, 15: 13)! Othniel, Caleb's brother and therefore also a Kenizzite, "the Lord raised up (as) as saviour to the children of Israel" in Jg. 3: 9, while Jg. 5: 24 declares Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, to be "blessed of women". Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute, acted on behalf of Israel in the capture of Jericho and as a reward she and her family "dwelt in the midst of Israel" (Josh. 6: 25).

Indeed going further back in time to the period of the Exodus it is apparent that the people in the wilderness were not a homogenous group for Ex.

12: 3 states, "And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth ... and a mixed multitude went up also with them ..."

However, such an ethnic mix which is here cited without adverse comment receives a bad press in a later work, as is evident when Ex. 16: 2-3 is compared with Num. 11: 4-5. The former text cites "the whole congregation of Israel" as complaining to Moses and Aaron that they would have been better off dying in Egypt where at least they "ate bread to the full" whereas the latter text blames "the mixed multitude that was with them" for inciting the children of Israel to complain!

Sufficient examples have been given to demonstrate that Israel was not homogenous in origin; that it accepted, welcomed and even lauded those of various ethnic groups. The gradual progression towards exclusivity and thus fear of the non-Israelite has been illustrated most fully in the present paper in the case of laws and narratives concerned with exogamy. This is not arbitrary for the prohibition against intermarriage has been both the strength and weakness of Judaism: its strength in so far as it was a major feature of the religious exclusivity which gave the world monotheism, and its weakness in that it bred intolerance and cultural separatism.

Notes

1   Morton Smith (1987) argues strenuously that the views of what he calls "the Yahweh-alone party" came to dominate the collection of works in the Hebrew Bible. He posits, from the evidence of the use of Canaanite cultic sites, the celebration of Canaanite agricultural festivals, the Canaanite architecture of the Jerusalem Temple and the compounding of Israelite first names with those of Canaanite deities that the Israelites adopted, to some extent, Canaanite culture and religion (pp.15-16). It was not until the time of Elijah or shortly after that there was a demand in both Northern and Southern Kingdoms for the worship of Yahweh alone (p.17). Smith acknowledges that the practice of worshipping Yahweh alone may go back to the desert but points out that "the prohibition of worshipping any other god can only have arisen when the Israelites came into contact with other gods" (p.22).

2   M. Fishbane (1985:125) thinks that the specification of those nations in 1 Kings 11: 1 is in itself an allusion to Deut. 23: 4-9 where they are prohibited from entering "into the asembly of the Lord" for a certain

number of generations: ten in the case of Ammonites and Moabites and three in the case of Edomites and Egyptians.

3   M. Fishbane (1985:116-117) posits that Ezra 9: 1 also refers to Deut. 23: 4-9 and that Ezra 9: 1-2 is an exegetical blend of Deut. 7: 1-6 and 23: 4-9.

4   M. Fishbane (1985:119) posits that Ezra is alluding here to Leviticus 18.

5   It is recorded, but not commented upon, in the Pseudepigraphical work of Jubilees (40: 10). Jubilees does however reiterate Biblical prohibitions against intermarriage (Jub. 20: 4, 22: 20, 25: 1-10, 30: 7), but projects them back to the time of the Patriarchs. All texts cited specify marriage as having been prohibited with Canaanites except for 30: 7 which uses a term susceptible to a much broader exegesis, "seed of the Gentiles". The retrojection of the prohibitions prior to the time of Joseph may well have been the impetus for the haggadic tale of Joseph and Asenath. Jubilees is generally thought to have been composed between 175 and 100 B.C.E.

6   See also Deut. 21: 10-14 for the regulations concerning an Israelite man marrying a non-Israelite woman taken as a prisoner in war.

7   These midrashic traditions concerning Moses' marriages were taken from Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol 16 (1971:1183).

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