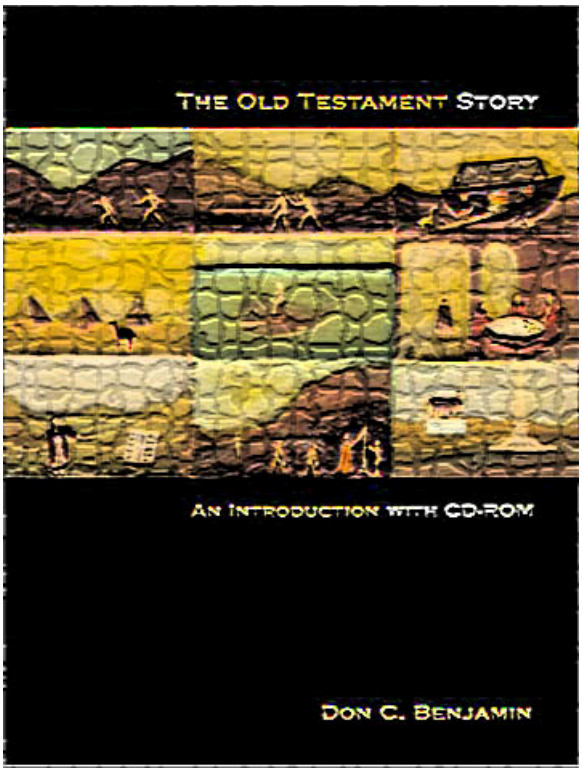
The Old Testament Story, an introduction

(Fortress Press, 2004)



Don C. Benjamin

(Department of Religious Studies, Arizona State University)

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- **OTS 2004: Dedication**

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Dedication

This one, at last, is for Patrice

♦

Acknowledgments

Among the enduring joys of learning are those who share the journey. Year after year, there are **students**, who share their willingness to learn. They come, they question and they learn, and so do I.

My own teacher, **Rolf P. Knierim** (Claremont Graduate University) taught me what his teacher -- Gerhard von Rad (Heidelberg University) -- had taught him, and so much more. Rolf's own passion for the text made it clear that biblical studies was not only good work, it was exciting work. His commitment to carefully crafting the exegesis of a text, as well as to appreciating what these texts contributed to the theology of the Bible, taught me that the measure of biblical scholarship was not only that it made sense, but that it also made a difference.

Victor H. Matthews (Southwest Missouri State University), my long-time friend and writing colleague, made the sometimes elusive goal of collaboration a reality and introduced me to a whole new way of learning and writing.

Niels C. Nielsen, Jr. (Rice University) and **Joel Gereboff** (Arizona State University) were my gracious hosts in the community of learning at their Departments of Religious Studies where I taught. Both thoughtfully developed my skills as a teacher and as a colleague.

My editor, **K.C. Hanson** (Fortress Press) greeted the work of publishing Old Testament Story, an introduction with a contagious enthusiasm. His close reading and conscientious attention to detail have made it a so much better book.

I am indebted to all these good friends, and to so many others, like **Katie Meier**, my teaching assistant at Arizona State University, who have shared journey of learning and teaching and writing with me. They have made this work, a pleasure.

> OTS 2004: Praise for the First Edition

Stephen L. Cook, Virginia Theological Seminary (Alexandria VA)

Congratulations to Benjamin on this comprehensive new introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures grounded in the author's many years of research into the Bible's ancient social word and Near Eastern background! He courageously fills his textbook with provocative readings of the texts, which are sure to enthrall readers and send them rushing back to the Bible full of brand new questions. *The Old Testament Story, an introduction* is a sure cure for complacency about traditional understanding of what the Hebrew Bible says.

Carol J. Dempsey, University of Portland (Portland OR)

In this wonderfully crafted book, Benjamin addresses important question, illuminates the role that faith and culture played in the shaping of the biblical text and tradition, and presents familiar material in a fresh and engaging way. Creatively drawing out the richness of many literary strands embedded in the Old Testament, Benjamin teases out the artistry of an ancient document while imaginatively capturing, with accuracy, its historical and social dimensions. *The Old Testament Story, an introduction* is a gem among many texts of its kind.

Michael S. Moore, Fuller Theological Seminary Southwest (Phoenix AZ)

Teachers struggling to teach the strange world of the Bible to postmodern students will welcome this textbook for three reasons. First, it's easy to read. Unlike other textbooks, undergraduates will find it difficult to get lost or even sidetracked here. Second, it's wonderfully written – creative, but not idiosyncratic; eloquent, but not fanciful; comprehensive, but never tedious. Third, this book is a cut above other Old Testament introductions because Benjamin genuinely understands and respects the faith traditions of *all* his students: Muslims, Christians, Jews, and those who profess none of the above. To a world in need of sane inter-religious dialogue, *The Old Testament Story, an introduction* is an answer to prayer.

Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, Bluffton College (Bluffton OH)

Here is a textbook with a fascinating and fresh approach that focuses on one of the most important elements of reading and studying the Bible – an appreciation of the central stories themselves! …Students and teachers will not be disappointed …Benjamin's analysis invites readers to a dialogue with the Bible, and his choice of sample texts creates a good survey of all the major forms of biblical literature, from early traditions, poetry, and prophets, to wisdom and apocalyptic.

Laurie Metzler, Future Church (Fall 2004)
http://www.futurechurch.org/newsletter/fall04/story.htm

The Old Testament Story, an introduction is a fresh scholarly look at the stories and culture of the Hebrew peoples. Don C. Benjamin, who teaches biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies at Arizona State University, states that his book "teaches students how to listen to the words that the Bible speaks, and how to understand the people of ancient Israel who rafted these remarkable words." It is not the answers that the biblical stories offer but the questions that eventually all of us must struggle to answer about life and death, right and wrong, the divine and human that is the focus of this text.

Benjamin is particularly sensitive to the women of the Old Testament, recognizing that the world of the Bible was patriarchal but that many traditions of interpretations have projected their own sexism into this world. Understanding the society and customs of these ancient peoples offers a greater understanding and respect for the way in which biblical women believed and handed on their beliefs. The women in these stories display courage, faith, strength, ingenuity, dignity, talents and worth. In the story of Adam and Eve, Benjamin suggests that the writes of the story see Eve as the heroine who chooses fertility and mortality over immortality by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Both Sarah and Hagar are seen as strong women who are both given land and children by God. The two midwives who save Moses in the Exodus story outwit the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt by saving the Hebrew babies. Rahab in the Book of Joshua saves the city of Jericho through her own cunning and quick thinking, outmaneuvering both the Israelite and Canaanite warriors. Ruth and Naomi in the Book of Ruth are persevering widows who negotiate like monarchs for anew life and place for themselves and their children in Israelite society.

Old Testament Story, an introduction includes very informative chapters on "Learning the Bible" and on "Living the Bible" for Jews, Christians, and Muslims who believe these stories to be God's revelation. Also included with the book is a CD-ROM, featuring Libronix software, which provides a full searchable text of the book, links, discussion questions, and additional bibliography.

Understanding the meaning of these ancient stories to the people who lived them and the people who wrote them down can help break open God's word to us today. What were the difficulties our foremothers and forefathers faced? How did they solve their problems? How did they listen to God's voice? Do we face similar problems today? Can these stories help us find answers? Often these stories have been encrusted with layers of cultural traditions but this comprehensive and engaging biblical studies book can help us to see the original intent of the ancient peoples and may be an opportunity to make a new connection with this powerful God of ancient Israel.

Tricia Hoyt, Kino Institute of Theology (Phoenix AZ)

Don C. Benjamin, O*ld Testament Story, an introduction*

Drawing on his extensive knowledge of the oral traditions of the Ancient Near East, master storyteller Benjamin provides an entrancing and fresh perspective on the world of the Bible. Benjamin's forte lies in his ability to weave together examples from ancient cultures, world literature, modern politics, and even the commonplace in daily life into a tapestry that illuminates the biblical texts for modern readers. A bold new study from a scholar whose credentials in social-scientific criticism are impeccable, this book is a very valuable addition to the library of any student of the Bible.

Clifton A. Mann, Rector, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church (Amarillo TX)

Benjamin's willingness to employ several critical techniques in one unified approach brings new insights with every chapter. His insights into the Old Testament breathe new life into the ancient text, and free it up to breathe new life into those of us who study and love it.

Robin B Salters, University of St Andrews (Theological Book Review 16 (2004)15-16)

This is a user-friendly book which attempts to introduce the student and non-student to the Old Testament. Engaging and lively, Benjamin eschews footnotes and detaining details – there is not even an introduction – but includes several maps, illustrations and figures. Beginning with some frequently asked questions, he proceeds to deal with the Old Testament by dipping into book by book, in the order they appear in the English Bible. When he gets to the Minor Prophets he deals only with Hosea, Amos and Jonah; and he omits Lamentations, even in his canonical order list (p. xxv)! The CD-ROM, featuring Libronix software, includes the full searchable text of the book, notetaking, bookmarking, NRSV=linked citations, weblinks, discussion questions, and additional bibliography.

Donn Morgan, Berkeley CA (The Living Church 228 (2004): 5)

Prof. Benjamin, of Arizona State University, has written a very good introduction to the Old Testament, focusing on its literary character while also grounding the text in its historical, cultural, and theological contexts. He writes clearly, making both the stories and traditions of the Old Testament come alive in discussion of topics as diverse as ancient Near Eastern mythology, geography, archaeology, and politics. This book is clearly focused on helping the contemporary reader to understand the Old Testament. While there is an explicit concern to demonstrate the special value and place of this literature in the faith communities of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, the message of the Old Testament is presented in ways which challenge and inform any reader, regardless of religious perspective or affiliation.

Following the canonical (Christian) order, Benjamin discusses most of the books in the Old Testament, focusing on particular stories (creation, ancestor), or other forms when necessary

(law, prophetic oracles, wisdom sayings). The presentation of the stories highlight their structure and purpose, usually setting individual stories in the larger literary context of the book in which they appear. The appeal of this presentation is in the retelling of the story in ways which anchor it in its setting and yet bring it alive today. Benjamin wants us to know what the story meant and why it was told, so that we can use it for our own edification today.

Each chapter begins with a map ("Points of Interest") and there are many interesting and pertinent illustrations from the ancient Near East. More important, there are 107 'figures," highlighted section of the text which present the author's translation or parts or all of the story being presented, structural analysis of the story or of the larger book, and interesting parallels from either the Bible or other literature. While not all of the Old Testament is covered, the readability and careful scholarship of this book is much to be praised. Its primary value is its ability to introduce forms of biblical literature, especially stories, in interesting and informative ways, taking seriously both the background of the text and the interests of the contemporary reader. There are times when "story" is probably overdone, and times when particular interpretations of the text are on the boundaries of academic norms. A full treatment of the whole Old Testament text will clearly require other resources which make reference to the material not covered. But this book would be an excellent resource for introducing the Old Testament to undergraduates or for adult education in parishes and other settings.

Carl E. Linder, Lutheran Partners 20 (2004): 32

Old Testament Story: an introduction (with CD-Rom), by Don C. Benjamin (Fortress 2003 $29). I agree with Daniel L. Smith's comment about the book: "Here is a textbook with a fascinating and fresh approach that focuses on one of the most important elements of reading and studying the Bible – an appreciation of the central stories themselves… Benjamin's analysis invites readers to dialogue with the Bible."

Needcoffee.com December 26, 2003 (http://needcoffee.com/)

Reference Book of the Week: *The Old Testament Story: an introduction* by Don C. Benjamin, Probably the best book on the Christian mythos since *The Five Gospels*. Fortress Press brings you this edition which provides context on the Old Testament six ways from Sunday. Seriously, pun not intended. Anyway, not only do you get a grand tour of that half of the the Bible, but you also get a bonus CD-ROM. This contains the full text of the book, citations, discussion question and a bibliography. For those needing an introduction to the work or just a refresher, it's gold.

Dianne Bergant C.S.A., Catholic Theological Union, Chicago (The Bible Today 42 (2004)185)

Benjamin's introduction begins and ends with the biblical text. Rather than provide an introductory overview of the history of Israel along with the theological elements that comprised

its religion, he examines the Bible itself. It is the content of the passage under examination that invites further explanation of the social or religious reality described within the story as well as the perspective of those telling the story. Numerous illustrations and explanatory figures enhance the material being discussed. Benjamin's skill at both historical and literary approaches is obvious throughout the book. His passion for social-science criticism and his feminist sensitivity provide insights not found in other introductions. Finally, the book comes complete with CD-ROM, featuring Libronix software that includes NRSV citations, Web link, discussion questions, and additional bibliography. The book is an innovative text and a fine resource for study.

John Kaltner, Rhodes College, Memphis TN (Catholic Biblical Quarterly 67 (2005) 107-108

Don C. Benjamin describes his book as a new type of introduction to the Bible that attempts to integrate the historical-critical methodology commonly employed in earlier works with other approaches that have been developed more recently. "Here there is more criticism, less history. This introduction teaches students how to listen to the words that the Bible speaks, and how to understand the people of ancient Israel who crafted these remarkable words" (p. 19).

The book does much to facilitate the student's ability to listen to the biblical text and to understand better the contexts out of which it emerged. Passages of varying lengths are treated in what B. calls "interpretations that are not full commentaries." He adopts a genre centered approach that identifies the type of writing being employed in a passage, the various parts or elements of that style of writing, and the purposes of the given genre. This is often an effective way to raise issues of text and context, but it does have its drawbacks, especially in light of some of the terminology B. employs.

The discussion of the Song of Solomon (chap. 11) shows the value of such a method. Categorizing the different sections of the book as "propositions," "*tours-burlesque,*" "teases," and "boasts" opens up new ways of thinking about the text and its purpose. Elsewhere, B.'s designations of genre are sometimes a bit unclear or ambiguous. For example, he labels each of the sections of Ecclesiastes an "audit," but he does not give a full and precise definition of the term. Similarly, some passages are identified in surprising or unexpected ways with no explanation (why, for example, are Gen 2:15-17, 19-20, 22-24 all designated "covenant"?).

The major shortcoming of the book is the idiosyncratic nature of many of the interpretations B. puts forward. In his concluding chapter, he speaks of the Bible as a mirror upon which one gazes in order better to understand oneself. He says the reflected image is constantly changing because one never looks into the mirror from the same place in his or her life. At times, his analysis suggests that B. is changing the mirror rather than the position from which he examines it. Throughout the book he offers many clever and insightful readings that are well supported by the text, but elsewhere he makes claims and proposes ideas that are untenable or are in need of further clarification.

Some of B.'s statements about ancient peoples and societies cry out for explanation. What is the basis for the claim that in the biblical world the difference between life and death

was moisture, not breath (p. 425)? Why is the removal of Ruth's legal guardian's foot from his sandal symbolic of a man's withdrawal from the vagina during intercourse (p. 172)? Is it really the case that men who are frustrated in their desire for sexual intercourse shift into the shape of a fox to seduce women (p. 159)?

Elsewhere, B. adopts unusual readings of biblical texts that lack any support or explanation. Jacob sees Esagila, not a ladder, in his dream (p. 70). The walls of Jericho are the divine patron of the city, which prostrate themselves before Yhwh (p. 141). The Philistines sexually abuse Samson (p. 163). The boat in Jonah is called the "Sea Dragon" (p. 453). When, in Genesis 22, Abraham tells his servants to "stay here with the ass," it is a reference to Ishmael, not an animal (p. 65).

The last example is particularly noteworthy because it provides an intriguing possibility, given B.'s translation, which contains "ass" in Gen 22:5 and Gen 16:12, the latter in reference to Ishmael. In fact, B.'s interpretation is undercut by the fact that two different Hebrew nouns are used in these passages, suggesting that the author is not trying to establish a link between the two verses. An apparent looseness with how the Hebrew text is translated also appears to be in evidence in many of the etymologies that B. proposes, particularly for personal names. Hagar is "the homeless woman who becomes the mother of a household" (p. 54); Samuel is "the name of our Creator" and Saul is "answer to a prayer" (p. 180); Solomon is "the replacement" (p. 213); Daniel comes from "praise our Creator, who delivers us from our enemies" (p. 405).

Benjamin attempts to acknowledge the scriptural and historical connections among the "Peoples of the Book" by occasionally making reference to Islam and its view of the Bible. His effort in this regard should be applauded, but, unfortunately, some of these statements will have the opposite of their intended effect because they are likely to offend Muslim readers. In a number of places he suggests that Muslims consider the Bible and the *Qur'an* to be equally accurate and reliable sources of divine revelation. This is a position that runs counter to one of the basic beliefs of Islam, and very few Muslims would accept B.'s claim that the Bible is a mirror for understanding what it means to be a Muslim (p. 463). Along the same lines, the drawing of the Dome of the Rock (p. 465) is likely to upset Muslim readers, because it appears to replace the crescent that adorns the top of this important Islamic building with a cross.

Such criticisms aside, this book makes a unique contribution to the ever-expanding corpus of introductions to the Hebrew Bible. Readers will find the writing style to be clear and straightforward, and B.'s emphasis on story and genre enables him to present some of the technical aspects of biblical scholarship in an accessible way. B. may have written a new type of introduction, as he claims, but it does not render its predecessors obsolete. The best way to appreciate the strengths and limitations of *The Old Testament Story* would be to read it in tandem with another, "more traditional" introduction.

The book contains many helpful maps, charts, and drawings, and the accompanying CD-ROM also has some very useful features. In particular, the study questions and bibliography contained on the CD will be beneficial to teachers and students alike.

Joseph Scrivner, Samford University, Birmingham AL (SBL, SE Regional Meeting, Winston-Salem NC, March 11-13, 2005)

Don Benjamin's *The Old Testament Story: An Introduction* is a new and original contribution to the genre of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament introductions. I'll demonstrate why I think this is true by focusing on 3 aspects of the introduction. For each aspect, I'll do three things: describe the aspect or issue, explain the positive contribution it makes, and then raise some questions about the particular aspect or issue.

1. Benjamin's Choices for introduction and discussion. As he explains on p. 19, Benjamin makes specific choices about what books and book sections to cover and not cover in his introduction.

After a general introductory chapter, there are 2 chapters introducing the Pentateuch. Chapter 2 covers Genesis in about 50 pages. In his 50 pages on Genesis, Benjamin does not treat Gen 1, Gen 5, Gen 6-8 or Gen 9-11. Chapter 3 introduces Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, also in about 50 pages. Of those 50 pages, the book of Exodus gets 30 pages, Leviticus 7 pages, Numbers 11 pages and Deuteronomy 2 pages.

The Positive Contribution: Again, recalling Benjamin's statement on p. 19, the kind of coverage is intentional and there is much to commend it. As a relatively new teacher, I often realize that less is more; that I accomplish more pedagogically if I focus on a few key objectives for each course. Benjamin has provided us with a text that is specifically formatted with such thinking in mind. By not covering certain texts or issues, Benjamin gives himself additional space for detailed discussions of very important texts, texts like Gen 2-4 and the Abraham and Sarah stories in Gen 12-25. In my required Bible introduction course, I have to cover the entire Bible in a semester and I do well to get out of the Pentateuch before the mid-term of each semester. So, to say the least, I am very sympathetic and appreciative of this aspect of Benjamin's introduction.

Question: This approach does raise questions, however. Benjamin's decisions about the Pentateuch lead to a very little discussion of the P material. Considering the history of biblical scholarship, what are the consequences of so little attention to the P material in the Pentateuch? How might this be viewed by readers familiar with this history of biblical scholarship in a post-Holocaust context? How is this received and interpreted by Jewish readers, students and scholars? In short, in light of the past discrimination against P, does P deserve some affirmative action?

2. Benjamin's use of certain critical methods other than the standard topics like source criticism. Although he does not use standard historical-critical topics to create necessary distance for the reader/student, Benjamin's employment of narrative criticism and social scientific criticism often serve a similar purpose.

Benjamin states that the Bible is more story than history and he describes stories as having three parts: crisis, climax and denouement. As Benjamin interprets the biblical

narratives in these three movements, he makes sure the reader understands the ancient concerns of the stories. This can be seen in his use of the phrase "sterility affidavit" to describe the crisis of the story. This is probably most creatively done in Benjamin's interpretation of Gen 2-3. In short, Benjamin argues that the issue in Gen 3 is not disobedience, but the choice of fertility over immortality. He provides contextual credibility for this interpretation with contemporary ANE texts. Similarly, in his discussion of Elijah and Elisha he discusses how their activities are similar to "shamans" in Hindu traditions. In both examples, Benjamin is demonstrating the ancient world of the biblical narratives. When he treats other genres he is as creative there as he is in his analysis of narrative like Genesis and Joshua. Just see his introduction to the Song of Solomon and the sections there entitled "tours-burlesque." To say the least, the book is full of fascinatingly creative construals of the biblical text.

Positive: While the details of Benjamin's interpretations are often fascinating and worthy of discussion in their own right, the larger issue is how he has accomplished an important goal through different means. By focusing on fertility, children and land in his interpretation of Gen 2-3, for example, he has made the text strange without the traditional critical means of doing so (documentary hypothesis, tensions between P and J, definition of genre as "myth," etc.). There is probably some pedagogical wisdom to this approach and it may reflect the results of years in the classroom in a variety of contexts.

Questions: Although I find much that I appreciate in this aspect of Benjamin's work, I can't help wondering if students from conservative religious backgrounds will be able to entertain creative socio-narrative interpretations without the explicit use of standard historical criticism topics as a prerequisite. The standard historical-critical topics can serve as a means to an end; as a way to get students to more interesting and creative interpretations. I'm not convinced I can move students from the pre-critical to the post-critical without dragging them (kicking and screaming) through historical-criticism. My sense is that Benjamin's work is a definite move in a nuanced post-critical direction and I can appreciate it for that. As a teacher in these red Southeastern United States, however, I'm afraid I may need several semesters to get a significant percentage of my students ready for the kind of work Benjamin's approach represents. With that social location in mind, where might Benjamin's introduction fit best? If one is in a more religiously conservative social context, let's say Birmingham, AL, or Greenville, SC, how can Benjamin's introduction be utilized?

3. Benjamin's discussion of Jews, Christians and Muslims and the Bible. Benjamin explicitly refers to Jews, Christians and Muslims as joint possessors of the HB/OT. Briefly in the introduction and conclusion, Benjamin touches on the Bible, God and inspiration. On p. 9 Benjamin claims, "The Bible is the word of God, but it is not the autobiography of God. God is not the one who tells the story, but the one about whom the story is told." Here Benjamin subtlety explains the genitive "of God" as an objective instead of a subjective genitive - the Bible is a book about God, not written by God. Similarly, in the last pages, Benjamin writes, "The Bible is inspired because Jews and Christians and Muslims regard these very human traditions as having divine authority."

Positive: With these statements and others Benjamin gives a respectful liberal arts/humanities perspective on the value of the Bible for life and for faith communities who

recognize the bible as a religious authority of some sort. Connected to what I've called his socio-narrative approach, Benjamin rightly emphasizes some basic connections between the ancient life of faith and that of the modern life of faith. In one way or another, human beings have always been concerned about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Benjamin's introduction makes this point in subtle and explicit ways and probably does it as well as any introduction I've seen or read.

Questions: For Jews, Christians and Muslims, does the introduction equally address all three? Granting the choice of title by the publisher, Benjamin does not spend much time addressing the terms "Hebrew Bible" and "Old Testament." Is this adequate for Jewish readers? The book also basically follows the Protestant canon in its organization. Why is this the case? For Roman Catholic Christians, is there an adequate explanation of the so-called Apocrypha? While some of these issues are touched on at points and the additions to Daniel are helpfully included, would an informed Catholic reader view the plan of the book as fair to his or her tradition?

By focusing on the Bible as the possession of the monotheistic traditions, does Benjamin inadvertently exclude readers who are not part of those traditions? As stated at the beginning, Don Benjamin's new introduction is a fascinatingly creative contribution to HB/OT introductions. The non-traditional interpretations and fresh translations alone make the book worthy of consideration. For the sake of stimulation and provocation, I've raised a few key issues that may have decisions about text adoption. I will probably continue to ponder these questions myself as I consider this introduction for my own introductory course on the Bible.

International Review of Biblical Studies (International Zeitschriftenschau fur Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete) 50 (2003-2004)

On 470 pages, Benjamin offers an eminently readable, straightforward undergraduate introduction to all the books of the Hebrew Bible. While the reviewer feels that at times the interpretations are debatable (e.g. the book of Proverbs is seen as being organized according to the pattern of Solomon's temple) and that the illustrations would require more elaborate legends (the one on p. 453, showing a scene form the Black Obelisk, has a legend that may mislead students), the text is quite attractive, and students will no doubt like it. The enclosed compact disk (for PC, but not for Macintosh users) must be installed with the help of software (conveniently supplied on the disk), and then emerges as a miracle machine. It offers study questions, bibliographies (actually, lists of commentaries), and internet links that conjure up more resources, especially more bibliography relevant for understanding specific biblical texts. Certainly to be recommended to a new generation of students!

Theological Digest Book Survey 157

Benjamin teaches biblical studies and religion at Arizona State University in Tempe. His introduction for undergraduates, describes how the ancient Hebrews "thought about Yahweh, their divine patron, how they understood themselves, how they dealt with their neighbors, and how they treated the earth." He keeps in mind Christian readers who "described the story as the `Old Testament,' not because they considered it to be outdated, but because it was the original and enduring testament from which their own tradition -- the New Testament -- developed:' He includes many maps and other illustrations, boxes explaining related issues, and a CD-ROM, which features Libronix software and includes the full searchable text of the book, notetaking, bookmarking, NRSV linked citations, weblinks, discussion questions, and additional bibliography.

Mary Lou Henneman, Boardman UMC (Boardman OH) Media Reviews Nov-Dec 2004:11
http://www.csla.info

What was life really like in Old Testament times? Who were the Hebrews, who wrote the Bible, and why are there so many different Bibles, anyway? Don C. Benjamin, a biblical studies and religion teacher at Arizona State University in Tempe, explores these questions and many more in this user-friendly textbook. Commentaries on selected books from Genesis to Jonah are clearly written and perfectly suited for beginning undergraduate students. They also can serve well as reference aids for individual or group Bible study. The maps, illustrations, highlighted passages and works cited, along with the CD-ROM of the complete text, are a bargain at this price.

Ellen White University of St. Michael's College Toronto School of Theology Toronto Journal of Theology 20 (Fall 2004): 208-209

The Old Testament Story by Don C. Benjamin is designed to provide an introduction to the Old Testament and the various types of literature found within it. Even though the book progresses according to the biblical canon, Benjamin does not attempt a complete summary, but chooses different vignettes to highlight the various forms of the text and to provide the larger context for Old Testament studies. His work could be described as a combination of narrative and commentary.

Benjamin's combined methodology uses historical criticism integrated with narrative, social-scientific and feminist criticism to approach the biblical text in order to compensate for what he sees as historical criticism's over-emphasis on history and under-emphasis on criticism.

There are several commendable aspects to Benjamin's work. One is his extensive knowledge of the texts, archaeology and cultures of the Ancient Near East. He draws many parallels to the literature of the other ancient Near Eastern cultures when examining the biblical passages. This approach is quite helpful for the student trying to understand the world of the Bible, and is useful in placing its stories in context. He has also provided his own translation for each of the passages that he discusses. Because these translations are placed in sidebars parallel

to the main text, the student is often able to look at the translation and its explanation simultaneously. This method also helps the student understand the author's interpretation, because the translations highlight his focus (p. 15). This presentation would have been further enhanced by a brief introduction to these literary forms, with an explanation of the texts and their origin, especially since this is designed to be an introductory text and these comparisons are integral to Benjamin's presentation.

Another strength of the book is Benjamin's use of figures, tables, photographs and maps, which are beneficial for those whose learning style is more visual. In addition, the text itself is supplemented by a useful and user-friendly CD-ROM.

In spite of the book's strengths, there are areas that could be improved. For instance, Benjamin's distinction between "history" and "story" seems overly simplistic. It leads the reader to believe that only modern Western forms of historical literature count as history, anything else is "story." It also allows the reader to assume that "story" refers to a piece of fiction -- which is certainly one interpretation, but only one of many. For a more balanced portrayal it would have been helpful to discuss the difference between historical fiction and fictional history, or simply to address the theories about whether the events of the Bible actually occurred in some form.

Further, the introductory chapter is problematic because the content of the sections does not always flow from the section headings. For example, in his section entitled "Who wrote the Bible?" he spends a paragraph in the middle of a discussion on JEDP comparing the geography of the ANE to modern land holdings. Such tangents distract from the overall presentation; smaller, more focused sections would have been more helpful.

In addition, the integration of other theories into his own interpretation of the text would have been helpful. Of course, presenting a thorough and yet useful introduction to the Old Testament is not an easy task; the writer must decide how much information can be presented without overloading the beginning student. However, it is important to present various theories on different issues, to help the beginner to understand the field and to develop his or her own thoughts and ideas, to teach the student how to think, not simply what to think.

Related to this is the lack of supporting documentation provided by Benjamin. While much of the material presented in an introduction is considered common knowledge to senior scholars, citations do not just support the author's claim. Citations are often used by students as directives to additional research or to provide a deeper understanding of a difficult point. While the CD-ROM does provide an additional bibliography for each chapter, it would have been beneficial to have this information in the text itself (e.g., when discussing the Deuteronomistic History it may have been helpful to mention Martin Noth).

Despite these weaknesses, Benjamin's book is a very helpful introduction to the Old Testament.

Katherine M. Hayes, Seminary of the Immaculate Conception (Huntington NY) Old Testament Abstracts 27 (2004): 511

This textbook claims to represent "a new generation of introductions to the Bible that integrate what historical criticism taught with what narrative criticism, social-scientific criticism, and feminist criticism are teaching." Its focus is on the words of the OT itself. as a masterpiece of storytelling. It does not offer a comprehensive commentary (no interpretations of the Books of Deuteronomy, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles are given, for example), but presents new interpretations of a broad selection of passages and includes much information on the socio-cultural world of the OT. The book comprises nineteen chapters, a prefatory series of four maps, a list of illustrations and figures, a list of abbreviations, and a list of works cited. It is supplemented by a CD-Rom.

D. Charles Smith, Claremont Graduate University Religious Studies Review 31 (July, October 2006): 190-191

This textbook for introductory classes focuses on the Bible message from a predominantly narrative point of view. Despite the title, the book encompasses the stories in such a way to aid its understanding from Judaism and Islam, along with the Christian tradition. The book assumes no knowledge of the Bible or its cultural setting. Historical and cultural descriptions are aided by maps, drawings, archaeology and examples of ancient Near Eastern literature. This is not a comprehensive introduction from a theological stance as a number of books are left out (such as Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Stories in of various genres are elucidated including· those found in the prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and others), wisdom literature, along with the expected "story" books of Genesis, Judges and Kings, etc. Few Biblical passages are included so a Bible will need to be consulted; especially since interpretation is added in some cases (see re the insertion of names in the Daniel passages, (pp. 419, 422-423). A CD-ROM utilizing Libronix software (Windows platform only) allows the user to search the full text, make notations, and contains the full bibliography. The print edition has only a limited source listing. For students.

Carl E. Linder, Lutheran Partners Online, July / August 2004 • Volume 20 • Number 4
http://www.elca.org/lp/0407_10.html

Another excellent textbook is ***The Old Testament Story: An Introduction*** (with CD-Rom), by Don C. Benjamin. I agree with Daniel L. Smith's comment about the book: "Here is a textbook with a fascinating and fresh approach that focuses on one of the most important elements of reading and studying the Bible — an appreciation of the central stories themselves.… Benjamin's analysis invites readers to dialogue with the Bible."

Mark Gignilliat, Beeson Divinity School, Themelios 31 (January 2006): 76-77

Introductions have carved out a unique niche in the community of biblical scholars**.** New ones seem to arrive on the scene every year. Don Benjamin's new Old Testament introduction is an accessibly written volume intended for undergraduate audiences. There actually may be a lacuna in this particular market which Benjamin seeks to fill. Laudations aside Benjamin's new introduction to the OT is an attempt to bring together assumed historical-critical conclusions

(e.g., JEDP) with narrative, social scientific and feminist criticisms. According to Benjamin, his approach to OT introduction is more critically analytical than traditional historical critics who focused on history *per se* more than criticism. The result of Benjamin's efforts, in the estimation of this reviewer, is an approach to OT introduction that is defined by social anthropology with little to no recourse made to categories of revelation or canon. In his concluding methodology chapter Benjamin states, 'The Bible is not a textbook of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or even the American way of life, but an exquisite expression of the questions with which, eventually, every human being must struggle' (19).

Benjamin's stated aims and intentions are of more interest to this reviewer than the actual conclusions drawn in his discussions of the biblical books. Though not exhaustive, a few of these stated presuppositions need be rehearsed. Firstly, traditionally orthodox categories such as inspiration or the divine authorship of Scripture do not come into play in Benjamin's work. In fact, assumed orthodox presuppositions are probably a hindrance in one's reading. Benjamin states that the Bible is the Word of God, 'but it is not the autobiography of God' (9). It isn't God telling the story. Rather, the stories are told about God. And while evangelicals and/or orthodox Christians would want to affirm the incarnational aspect of the biblical texts, seeking to avoid biblical doceticism, this would not be at the expense of dispensing with the divine authorship of Scripture nor the constitutive role this presupposition plays in exegesis and interpretation.

Secondly, Benjamin wants to emphasize that his work is Biblical Studies and *not* Bible Study. Biblical Studies is an academic discipline, whereas Bible Study is religious devotion (17). Working with Enlightenment principles that tended to eschew the role religious devotion plays in interpretation, Benjamin is fully vested in the modernist period of Biblical studies without the nuancing of historical-critical judgments and theological concerns found in someone like Brevard Childs. The disjunction between participation in the subject matter of Scripture and the actual task of exegesis itself is, in the estimation of this reviewer, unfortunate.

Finally, to call the Bible the Word of God or Scripture, according to Benjamin, reveals that 'yesterday is important for understanding today' (463) It does not reveal the over againstness of Scripture, its authority, or any of the other categories that might be valued in an orthodox understanding of Christian Scripture. Rather, the Bible is a mirror of humanity's general problems and concerns whether one is Christian, Jew, or Muslim (463).

There is much that one might find frustrating about this introduction from certain perspectives, theological or other (e.g., why the move to Isaiah 60 from Isaiah 45 with no discussion of either the central role Isaiah 49 or the suffering servant plays in the text's literary movement). One might assume that this particular work had general undergraduate programmes in mind and in that milieu may receive special reception. Indeed much of the background material is keenly interesting. For those who value a theology of Scripture as an essential pre-understanding for one's approach to exegesis, this introduction might be found disappointing.

Don Benjamin has provided a fresh introduction to the Old Testament. Separating himself from the teaching tradition of Bernhard Anderson, Benjamin joins what he calls, "a new generation of introductions to the Bible" that focus less on history. Instead, he works from insights drawn from the various criticisms by which we can interpret the biblical traditions themselves. As a result, Benjamin claims that his introduction "teaches students how to listen to the words that the Bible speaks, and how to understand the people of ancient Israel who crafted these remarkable words" (19). The text is supplemented by a CD-ROM that provides the text, biblical citations, and helpful web sites. It also provides the student with a guide of questions and pertinent issues tied to each chapter that functions to steer the student toward some important material.

All in all, Benjamin makes good on his promise. *The Old Testament Story* orients students to hear the text as *story*, not history. This is very appealing, especially since most religious studies teachers face classrooms full of students fundamentally ignorant about the nature and purpose of the biblical traditions. They have years of misinformation about the Bible that often rests on some type of literal revelation doctrine or they do not know the stories at all. Benjamin's approach confronts the student primarily with what the ancient stories *say*. He offers his own translations of pertinent texts, and shows the structure and form of the text so that the student can begin to understand the logic and force of Hebrew literature.

Presenting the Hebrew traditions in the diversity of their literary shapes sometimes leads Benjamin to confront popular, theologically orthodox views. For example, he deftly presents the creation narratives in their Hebraic context, while at the same time debunking later usages of these stories as biblical proof texts for doctrines of original sin, women as seductive and subordinate to men, work and childbearing as punishment for sin, and connecting the snake in the Garden with the Devil. Eve is therefore not the gullible temptress bringing sin into the world, but intelligent, moral and heroic in action. A few times this effort to keep consistency within his reading of the narrative leads Benjamin to force the issue. He struggles to explain the explicit statement in Gen 3:16 that the man "will rule over you" by positing that originally, this consequence may have applied to the snake and not to Eve (38). While this is a fascinating idea, no textual evidence exists for it, so far as I am aware. Yet, in proposing it, Benjamin opts out of dealing with the direct statement as it appears in the text. He does it again with his treatment of the story of Abraham's offering of Isaac in Genesis 22, this time more by omission than by commission. The portrayal of this story in its Hebraic context is excellent. Benjamin shows its role in settling the vital issue of how God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah will be inherited. He corrects common western theological readings of the text as an interior crisis of faith for Abraham. Then, Benjamin announces that this story is not about human sacrifice, since that ritual was practiced only when the clan leader set off to war or founded a city (68-69). Of course, it is clear to any student who reads the biblical text that Abraham is commanded to make a sacrifice and the plot of the story moves toward that action. It is this very issue that has made Genesis 22 one of the most interpreted biblical texts in the history of theology and philosophy. Like his treatment of Eve, Benjamin avoids the problems that a "plain reading" of the text present by opting out of the problems altogether. Why does the element of the sacrifice occur at all in such a narrative? Benjamin perhaps should have said more in this regard. But these are not major flaws. Benjamin still offers one of the most sensitive presentations of the Hebraic world view that I have seen.

It is clear that archaeology forms an important basis for Benjamin's work. In fact, at times reading *The Old Testament Story* could provide a challenge for someone not familiar with other ancient near eastern literature. I got the feeling that the student was supposed to also have Benjamin's other book (with Victor Matthews), *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* at hand. Reading his new introduction without such a supplement could be difficult for the student. While the CD-ROM helps, it is uneven in its offerings, and some of the sites were not accessible or difficult to find (e.g., Tanach: Resources for Academic Study http://www.milligan.edu/iTanakh did not go to the site; Gilgamesh (Search: Hero Choking a Small Lion) http://www.louvre.fr/anglais/collec/ao/ao_f.htm did not work, but could be found by browsing). This is not Benjamin's fault, but the nature of the internet.

These comments do not diminish my enthusiasm for this book. I found it invigorating to read, and written in a way that will attract undergraduate students. This introduction can help students to listen to the Hebrew stories in a way that loosens preconceived notions about the irrelevancy of the Bible and shakes rigid ideology into facing the biblical text itself.

Logos Bible Software: http://www.logos.com/products/prepub/details/2449

The Old Testament Story: An Introduction is a solid and exciting guide for lower division courses in religious or public universities, and for adult learners anywhere. It is not an exhaustive commentary, but samples the unforgettable and timeless traditions of the Bible. It translates biblical scholarship for anyone who wants to know what the Bible meant then, and what it means now.

What kings were ruling? What wars were raging? What did prophets and midwives do in ancient Israel? Why did Hebrews tell creation stories like Adam and Eve and parables like Jonah? What dramatic roles do heroes like Samson, widows like Ruth, prophets like Elijah and teachers like the Wise Woman in Proverbs play in tradition? Where is the voice of the women in the male world of the Bible?

The Old Testament Story: An Introduction engages the Bible, not as a textbook in the theology of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam — or even in the American way of life, — but as an exquisite expression of the questions with which, eventually, every human being must struggle.

Order Your Own Copy of ***Old Testament Story, an introduction***
http://www.augsburgfortress.org/store/item.asp?clsid=111347&isbn=080063621X

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►**OTS 2004: xxv** ***(with thanks to Robin B. Salters, University of St Andrews, 2004)***

ABBREVIATIONS

Old Testament Books (in canonical order)

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sarn	2 Samuel
1 Kgs	1 Kings
2 Kgs	2 Kings
I Chr	1 Chronicles
2 Chr	2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Esth	Esther
Job	Job
Ps / Pss	Psalms
Prov	Proverbs

Apocryphal Books

Bar	Baruch
Add Dan	Additions to Daniel
Pr Az	Prayer of Azariah
Bel	Bel and the Dragon
Sg Three	Song of the Three Young Men
Sus	Susanna
1 Esd	1 Esdras
2 Esd	2 Esdras
Add Esth	Additions to Esther
Ep Jer	Epistle of Jeremiah
Jdt	Judith
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
3 Macc	3 Maccabees
4 Macc	4 Maccabees
Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh
Ps 151	Psalm 151
Sir	Sirach (Ecclesiastic us)
Tob	Tobit
Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

Eccl	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	**Lamentations**
Ezek	Ezekiel C
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

► OTS 2004: 6

Who Were the Hebrews?

The Hebrews were one of the peoples who lived in Syria-Palestine during the Late Bronze period and the Iron Age.

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/hebrews.html

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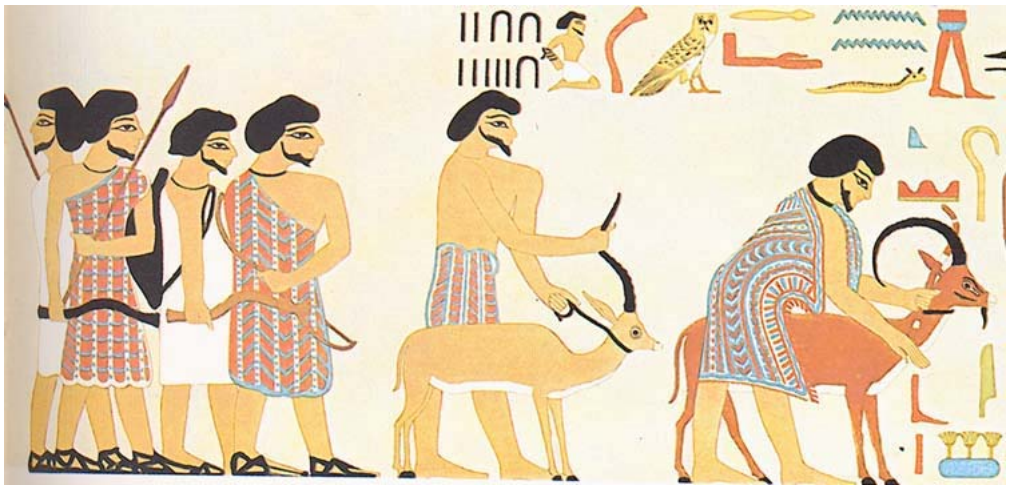
► OTS 2004: 8 (Illustration 1)

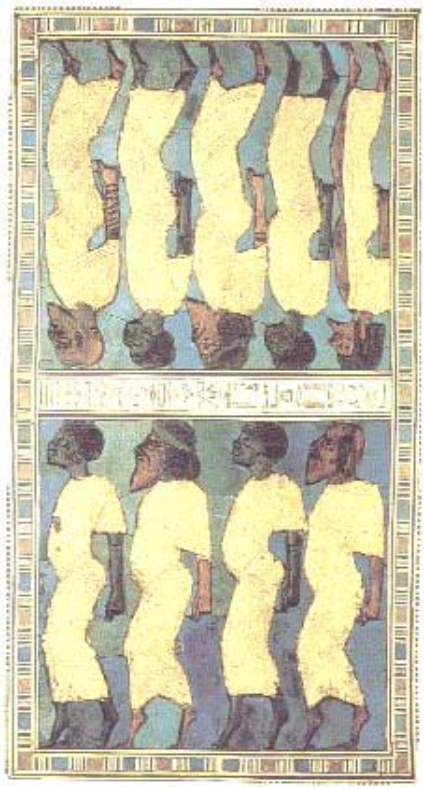
Beni Hasan is a village in Middle Egypt 15 miles south of Al Minya on the east bank of the Nile, with remarkable catacombs. Most of the tombs have a similar layout, with a carved entrance, and then a large pillared room containing the painted decoration and burial shafts. One wall painting (1890 B.C.E.) shows the household of Absha from Syria-Palestine entering Egypt. These people are not the biblical Hebrews. The hieroglyphs identify them as "Asiatics" – a generic Egyptian term for any of the cultures in Syria-Palestine. Like the Hebrews, however, they are Semites, whose clothes, hair style, animals, weapons and tools are similar to those used by the Hebrews some six-hundred years later.



Household of Absha from Syria-Palestine Entering Egypt
Beni Hasan ▪ 2005-1800 B.C.E. ▪ fresco 24 m

The Egyptians portrayed the people of Syria-Palestine with collar length hair and beards as on this footstool of Tutankhamun (1333-1323 B.C.E.) Among the nine traditional enemies of Egypt on which the pharaoh rested his feet were the peoples of Syria-Palestine – second from the left in the group of four.

See OTS 2004: 8



In the Amarna Letters written to Amenophis III (1398–1361 BCE) and Akhenaton (1352–1335 BCE) by their governors in Syria-Palestine, the word *'apiru* refers to people who lack recognized social status. They are ethnically diverse. They are a culture without honor. The governors use the word to describe the mercenaries hired by their fellow governors to raid their caravans, plunder their harvests and rustle their cattle. They also accuse fellow governors of being *'apiru* for being disloyal to Pharaoh.

Tutankhamen's Footstool
Egyptian Museum, Cairo
1333-1323 BCE

Some of the Hebrews in the Bible were *'apiru*. Most were farmers and herders. The story Abraham Negotiates with Lot (Gen. 13:5—14:24) describes Abraham as *'apiru* when he delivers Sodom and Melchizedek from Elam, their enemy. When the father of the household of Gilead excommunicates Jephthah, he joins the *'apiru* and supports himself raiding caravans (Judg. 11:1-40). In the Covenant between Abigail and David (1 Sam. 25:2-43), Nabal accuses David of being *'apiru* because he extorts protection money from households for protecting their herds. Nonetheless, there is little evidence today for identifying the *'apiru* in the Amarna Letters with the Hebrews in the Bible. Nonetheless, this social unrest in Syria-Palestine during the New Kingdom is comparable to the social unrest in Syria-Palestine during the early Iron Age period described in the books of Joshua and Judges. (Illustration 1)

Wall Painting
British Musem EA 37991
1391-1353 BCE
Tomb of Sebekhotep, Thebes
Hatushepsut 2005:61

As the result of Egypt's expansion into Syria-Palestine during the New Kingdom (1550-1196 BCE) large quantities of plunders goods and people, taxes and gifts or benevolences flowed into Egypt. On a wall painting in the tomb Sebekhotep at Thebes Syrians bring gifts to pharaoh. Their physical appearance and clothing would parallel those of the Hebrews. The man at the rop right of the painting holds a tusk container in his right hand.

How a People Forms

Mary Joan Winn Leith (Stonehill College)

BARev 32 (May/June 2006): 22-23

Many of us struggling through our children's teenage years are all too familiar with the adolescent compulsion to assert an identity apart from one's parents. Yet, no matter how vociferously they reject it, teens cannot escape from what we might call the "historical reality" of their genes and upbringing. The past decade or so has witnessed the scholarly recognition of something akin to this phenomenon in the way the Biblical Israelites came to construct their identity. Israel defined itself as "not Canaanite" while the archaeological and textual record reveals that, in its formative centuries, Israel, like a teenager, was a lot more what it claimed *not* to be than otherwise.

In an important new book, Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity (2005), archaeologist Ann Killebrew (Pennsylvannia State University) assembles an impressive array of data in an attempt to determine if and how specific ethnic groups, such as Israel, can be detected in the archaeological record. She argues that previous attempts to attribute Israel's presence in Canaan to a single mechanism-Joshua's violent conquest, peaceful infiltration, social revolution-were overly simplistic. According to Killebrew, Israel emerged from a "collection of loosely organized and largely indigenous tribal and kin-based groups: At this embryonic stage, this "mixed multitude" had "porous borders" that allowed "external groups" to join those already allied to form the evolving new ethnic group that called itself Israel.' Conceivably, one or more of these "external groups" would have brought with it a compelling memory of enslavement and escape from Egypt

By "indigenous" groups, Killebrew means the Late Bronze Age Canaanites who resembled an ethnic mosaic rather than a monolith. Think of all those Perizzites and Girgashites and Jebusites in the Bible. In other words, Israel was essentially Canaanite and not-as the Bible claims a nomadic group who entered Canaan from the west in the early Iron Age. Killebrew's assemblage of archaeological data indicates continuity between Late Bronze and early Iron Age material culture. A case in point is the collar-rimmed jar (see photo), known to decades of archaeologists as a new pottery form that signaled the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan during Iron Age I (beginning in about 1200 B.C.E.). It turns out, however, that the collar-rimmed jar originated hundreds of years earlier in the Canaanite lowlands of the Late Bronze Age. Similarly, we now know that the religious landscape of Israel included one or more Canaanite goddesses, possibly as late as the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. (Jer 44). And archaeological evidence has convinced most Biblical scholars that the conquest narratives in Joshua are theological constructs rather than empirical history.

Still, the Bible consistently describes Israel as an outsider to whom God promised the land of Canaan. Even in Genesis, Israel's ancestors avoided marriage with indigenous Canaanites. One school of Biblical writers/editors, the Deuteronomists, was by far the most insistent on a moral dichotomy between Israelites and Canaanites or, to be more precise, the many indigenous peoples of Canaan. The Deuteronomists warned the Israelites not to become like peoples of the land and thereby prove faithless to God. Because the Deuteronomists shaped Joshua's tales of the conquest of Canaan and edited the account of Israel's subsequent history, their ideology has dominated readers' perception of Biblical Israel as culturally, ethnically and religiously unrelated to the land it occupied.

Why would Israel want to deny its origins? In part, explains Killebrew, because this is how new ethnic groups are formed. How better to forge bonds between the tribes of Israel than to assert their difference from and superiority --- moral and otherwise -- over the neighboring groups who do not belong? Another necessary component in the creation of a new ethnic identity is a powerful ideology that, again, unites the emerging group and distinguishes it from its neighbors. In Israel's case, that ideology most likely featured the god Yahweh, who was credited with liberating slave from the mighty Pharaoh.

With the passage of time, memories of origins faded and were forgotten. Ethnic boundaries that were once porous solidified. Although the Deuteronomistic historian writing centuries after the events might not have recognized it, Pogo's famous dictum, "We have met the enemy and he is us," could have applied, ethnically speaking, to ancient Israel. The later Biblical authors who adopted the "us-versus-them" opposition of Deuteronomy would hardly have agreed with the wise little opossum.'

► OTS 2004: 11

The name *Iraq* means *river banks*. The name *Mesopotamia* means *between the rivers*. Iraq is the land along the banks of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Mesopotamia is the land between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris.

► OTS 2004: 11

Two important language families appear in the ancient Near East. One is Indo-European and the other is Semitic. Hittite and Persian are the only Indo-European languages in the world of the Bible. They are related to the languages of India to the east, and of Britain, Germany, Italy, and the Baltic and Slavic countries to the west.

Semitic languages are divided into east Semitic languages and northwest Semitic languages. Akkadian is the only east Semitic language. It was named for Akkad in southern Mesopotamia, where the first inscriptions in this language were recovered by archaeologists. Babylonian and Assyrian are dialects of Akkadian. Babylonia was the cultural heartland of Mesopotamia where the art and traditions characteristic of all Mesopotamian cultures developed. During the Middle Bronze period (2000–1550 B.C.E.) Mari, north of Babylon on the Euphrates River near Deir-ez-Zor, Iraq today, served as a gateway for Babylonian culture to enter Syria-Palestine. Assyria (1000–614 B.C.E.) was a culture that developed the technologies of government and military science, but borrowed heavily from Babylonia for its art and tradition.

The dominant northwest Semitic language is Aramaic. It is written with an alphabet of just twenty-two letters instead of the hundreds of Akkadian symbols. Aramaic replaced Akkadian as the language of diplomacy after 1000 B.C.E. Arameans were from Aram or Damascus, but appear throughout Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine. Hebrew is a dialect of Aramaic. Most of the Bible is written in Hebrew, although part of the book of Daniel (Dan 2:4–7:28). and a few other sections are written in Aramaic (Gen 31:47, Jer 10:11, Ezra 4:8–6:18, 7:12–26).

http://janpeters.net/pics/stuff/alphabet.gif

►OTS 2004: 14

The following biography of Jerome was written by Leslie J. Hoppe (Ph.D. Northwestern), Professor of Old Testament at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Hoppe is obviously an admirer of this ancient intellectual

This painting from the studio of El Greco portrays Jerome as a cardinal of the Church, even though neither the designation of cardinal nor this style of clerical dress existed in Jerome's time. It is preserved in The National Gallery, London

St. Jerome:
The Perils of a Bible Translator

Leslie J. Hoppe, O.F.M.

"WHAT IS THE BEST TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE?" This is the question that people who teach biblical studies hear more than any other. A bewildering abundance of alternatives is available to those who want to begin reading the Bible. This long list will grow because the Bible will continue to nourish the faith and life of believers, because scholars will learn more about the ancient languages in which the Bible was written, and because the English language will continue to evolve. New translations of the Bible are a practical necessity.

This is not new. In the fourth century A.D., the language spoken in the Roman Empire began to change. Before that time, Greek was the dominant language. People of every ethnic background in the empire spoke Greek in addition to their native tongue. The Romans encouraged this since they saw themselves as the heirs of Greek culture and civilization.

Gradually Latin, the language spoken by the Romans, began to replace Greek as the common language in the western part of the empire. This had a significant impact on the Church since its Bible was in Greek. The New Testament, of course, was written in Greek. Christians used the *Septuagint*, a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, as its version of the Old Testament. (The word *30eptuagint* is derived from the Latin word for 70 and is based on a legend that the Greek translation was the work of 70 translators.) Because fewer and fewer Christians in the West could read or understand Greek, the Church faced a serious pastoral problem. How could the Bible remain accessible to believers?

If the Bible were to continue shaping Christian faith and life, it had to be rendered in Latin. Responding to this pastoral need, Christian scholars produced several versions of the Bible in Latin. Unfortunately, none of these has survived to the present. We know them only from citations of individual texts in early theological works.

While these translations made the Bible accessible, they were flawed on two counts. First, they were not the product of careful study of ancient manuscripts. The necessity of copying ancient texts by hand introduced many errors into Greek texts of the Bible. Also, the first Latin Bibles translated the Greek text of the Old Testament—not the Hebrew text. Second, the Latin in these early translations was not the best. It was far too colloquial. None of these Latin translations was authorized and none acquired that position that the Greek had. Pope Damasus wanted a good, serviceable and authorized Latin text of the Gospels for the liturgy. In 382, he commissioned a young priest named Jerome to revise the Latin versions of the Gospels that were in circulation.

Too Smart for His Own Good?

Who was this Jerome the pope chose for this task? Jerome was the pope's private secretary, but the commission that Damasus gave Jerome was no political appointment. Jerome was a good choice.

Like any good translator, Jerome had a flair for languages. He was "trilingual." He could speak, write and understand Latin, Greek and Hebrew—something that few others could do. Jerome also studied Aramaic and could

read it competently, but he admitted having a problem with pronunciation. He could speak Syriac and had some acquaintance with Arabic.

What made Jerome the logical choice for the pope's commission in addition to his linguistic competence in the languages of the East was his training in the Latin classics. He began his study of rhetoric in Rome when he was a boy of 12. Donatus, his teacher, was a famous Latin grammarian.

Jerome seems to have reproached himself later in life for the secular color of his education. He wrote that he spent his youth in the company of grammarians, rhetoricians and philosophers. He once had a nightmare in which he saw himself before the judgment seat of God, who asked Jerome, "Who are you?" Jerome replied, "A Christian," but God corrected him: "You are a liar. You are not a Christian but a Ciceronian."

When Jerome awoke, he promised to read the books of God with greater fervor than he devoted to his study of "the books of men." Jerome was uniquely prepared to translate the Scriptures into Latin because he was both a Christian and a Ciceronian. The touch of an outstanding linguist and scholar—like the Roman Cicero—was sorely needed.

Jerome fulfilled his commission by producing a revision of the Gospels. He took care to concern himself not only with his literary craft but also with his own moral response to the Gospel. He must have enjoyed his work because he produced a Latin translation of the Psalms and a few Old Testament books, too. This experience led Jerome to commit himself to a project that occupied him for more than 20 years and proved to be his lasting claim to fame: the translation of other parts of the Bible from the original languages into Latin.

Pope Damasus died in 384. Jerome was a leading candidate to succeed his patron, but another priest of Rome, Siricius, was elected. The new pope did not admire Jerome as much as Damasus had. In addition, Jerome probably did not want to stay in the city that preferred another as its bishop, so he left Rome forever shortly after the new pope took office.

Jerome went first to Antioch, then to Alexandria before settling in Bethlehem in the fall of 386. He was joined by several women whom he had served as spiritual guide while in Rome. Paula, one of these women, founded three convents of women and one for men.

If Jerome had been elected pope, his pastoral responsibilities would have taken all his time and energy. After Jerome arrived at Bethlehem, he began a most productive career as a translator and commentator. He became convinced that producing a good Latin translation required more than simply revising existing translations.

In the case of the Old Testament, Jerome decided that his translation had to consider the Hebrew version of the books. He could not rely on the *Septuagint* alone. This was not an easy or popular decision. Christians accorded a high status to the *Septuagint*. Many thought that this Greek version of the Old Testament was itself inspired, making any reference to the Hebrew version unnecessary. Jerome disagreed.

At a time when there were conscious efforts to distance the Church from its Jewish background, Jerome not only went to the Hebrew Bible but also sought help with difficult texts from Jews. In particular, Jerome acknowledged his debt to his Jewish teachers for helping him with the Book of Job whose Hebrew is difficult. Not all Jerome's fellow Christians appreciated his efforts. They denigrated his translations as being "tainted with Judaism."

Riots Over Jonah

St. Augustine was one of Jerome's opponents. He suggested that, by basing his Latin translation on the Hebrew Bible rather than on the *Septuagint*, Jerome was driving a wedge between Christians of the East and West since the Greek-speaking Christians of the East were still using the *Septuagint*.

To illustrate the folly of Jerome's approach, Augustine told him the tale of a bishop from Tripoli who authorized Jerome's new translation for use in his church. When the people heard the Old Testament lesson from Jonah, it was

so unfamiliar that they protested the bishop's innovation by rioting in the streets. Augustine saw this as proof that Jerome's "Hebrew" version was a serious mistake.

Fortunately, not all Christians reacted as did Augustine and the people of Tripoli, but it did take a long time before the Church in the West became accustomed to Jerome's translation. While no riots appear to have been caused in our century by new translations, many people do feel uncomfortable and complain when they hear familiar biblical stories rendered in unfamiliar words.

As serious as these problems were, Jerome had to deal every day with the practical difficulties of translation. One problem was the character of Latin. In Jerome's day, it was a fixed language that resisted new vocabulary. But Latin did not have words that corresponded to some of the religious language of the Bible. This required adopting Greek words into Latin or forcing Latin words to bear new meanings. All this made Jerome's translation sound strange to ears accustomed to the older Latin versions.

A familiar text like the Lord's Prayer illustrates Jerome's problems. The Greek word that is rendered as *daily* in the phrase "Give us this day our *daily* bread" is not the usual Greek word for *daily*. In fact, outside the two occurrences in the Matthean and Lucan versions of the Lord's Prayer, that word occurs only once in all of classical Greek literature. The older Latin versions translated the Greek word as *quotidianum* ("daily") in Latin.

Jerome believed this to be inaccurate so he attempted another rendering, which he may have coined himself: *supersubstantialem* (Matthew 6:11). Not hesitating to change the wording of a text as familiar as the Lord's Prayer showed Jerome's courage. At the same time, Jerome was flexible. In his translation of Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer, Jerome kept *quotidianum* (Luke 11:3). In its liturgy, the Church uses the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer though it kept *quotidianum*, which is the basis of all English translations of the prayer. Otherwise, we might be saying, "Give us this day our supersubstantial bread."

Wary of Word for Word

While Jerome was an accomplished and careful translator, he was not a dogmatic one. He translated idiom for idiom, and not always word for word. For example, he produced at least three translations of the psalms in his attempt to capture and illuminate these prayers of the Church.

Jerome's translation grated on the ears of contemporaries like Augustine because Jerome's idea of translation differed from that generally held in his day. Most translators of the Scripture in the era before Jerome believed that the language of the original must dominate the new language. In part, this attitude reflected the belief that the smallest linguistic detail of the biblical text was divinely inspired and had its particular significance. The translator was expected to preserve this by rendering the original as literally as possible.

Jerome believed that a good translator will give the new language equal weight with the original and will try to make the translation equivalent to the original not just in meaning but also in quality of style. Any translation should reflect the new language used at its best—this Jerome learned from Cicero.

The principle that Jerome used as he translated was not "word for word" but "sense for sense." Today the type of translation that Jerome favored is called "dynamic equivalence" and is found, for example, in *The Liturgical Psalter* sponsored by the International Committee on English in the Liturgy and published by Liturgical Training Publications of Chicago.

While Jerome may have gotten his idea of what a translation should be from his rhetorical training, he also found a precedent for it in the Bible itself. He remarked on the looseness with which Old Testament passages are cited in the New Testament. Still, he noted that, while the words may differ, the meaning does not. Jerome felt that he had backing from both Cicero and the Bible for avoiding literalism in his translation of the Old Testament.

Narrow Role in a Big Book

The result of efforts to provide a new Latin translation of the Bible is popularly known as the *Vulgate*, a word derived from the Latin and meaning "common" or "commonly known." But Jerome was not responsible for the *Vulgate* as it has come down to us. The only New Testament books he worked on were the Gospels.

It is natural to assume that, after completing his work on the Gospels, Jerome would have then turned to the rest of the New Testament, but there is little evidence that he did. After he published his revision of the Old Latin Gospels, Jerome turned to the Old Testament. In the course of 15 years of work, Jerome translated all the books of the Hebrew Bible.

It is a mistake to identify his work with the *Vulgate* as it exists today. In Jerome's time, most manuscripts of the Bible in Latin contained only a few books—not the entire Bible. Assembling manuscripts to make a complete Bible usually meant bringing together manuscripts from a variety of Latin translations. The *Vulgate* was created by assembling books from a variety of sources, including Jerome. That is how the rest of the New Testament became connected with his work.

As is the case with any new translation, it took a while for people to become accustomed to the new phraseology. They quickly accepted his revision of the Gospels since it had a certain official status. After all, the pope commissioned it. Also, his work on the Gospels was conservative. He did not offer a fresh translation but simply revised the Old Latin translations that were already familiar to readers.

Back to the Beginnings

Translation of the Old Testament was another matter. Jerome undertook translating the Old Testament on his own initiative, so his translation had to achieve acceptance on its own merits. If Jerome had simply revised the Old Latin versions of the Old Testament, his work would have enjoyed more popularity in his lifetime, but Jerome presented an entirely new Latin translation of the Old Testament based on the ancient Hebrew text.

Jerome preferred to base his translation of the Old Testament on the Hebrew Bible with which most Christians were unfamiliar rather than on the familiar *Septuagint*—at least through the medium of the Old Latin versions. This preference affected not only his translation of Old Testament books but also his view of the Old Testament canon.

The *Septuagint* contained several books that are not in the Hebrew Bible. The rabbis of Palestine did not regard as inspired the books in the *Septuagint* that were not also found in the Hebrew Bible. Eventually, all Jews accepted this view and abandoned books like Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Tobit, Judith, Baruch, and First and Second Maccabees.

Jerome's view corresponded to that of the rabbis. He believed that, while these "extra books" may edify Christian readers, the Church should not use them as a source for doctrine. Again, Augustine opposed Jerome. In this instance, Augustine's view prevailed.

Eventually, the Council of Trent opted for the wider canon probably because the Reformers chose to accept only books of the Hebrew Bible. That is why the Old Testament read by Catholics contains seven more books than the Old Testament read by Protestant Christians.

Irascible Biblical Commentary

Jerome was more than a translator of the Bible. He was a gifted interpreter as well. His major contribution was a series of commentaries on the prophets. At first, Jerome followed the approach common in his day. For example, his commentary on Obadiah was allegorical. He ignored the historical dimensions of the prophet's words and focused on a spiritual interpretation that sought to edify readers.

While Jerome never completely abandoned allegorical interpretation, his work as a translator led him to appreciate the historical and literal approach more. He sought to understand the biblical text in its original cultural and historical setting. Many students of the Bible find Jerome's commentaries still helpful.

Jerome's commentaries were not esoteric flights of scholarly fancy. The irascible scholar sometimes used his role as a biblical commentator to give his opinion on ecclesiastical controversies of his day, some of which were occasioned by his work. His comments sometimes use personal invective against his opponents that, by today's standards, seems harsh and sarcastic.

For example, Jerome had a running quarrel with another Christian commentator named Rufinus. In the Preface to his translation of the Book of Ezekiel, Jerome wrote of the recently deceased Rufinus: "Now that the scorpion lies buried…." He once described the heretic Pelagius as the most stupid of persons whose wits were dulled by too much Scottish porridge.

Jerome did not even spare the biblical prophets. He remarked that the quality of their rhetoric made his skin crawl. Reading Jerome's commentaries and his 117 surviving letters leads to the conclusion that Jerome loved a good argument.

Kind Toward His Friends

As merciless and abusive as Jerome was toward his opponents, he was gentle and kind toward his friends and the needy. Many people sought his advice as they tried to live out their Christian lives. He founded a school for boys at Bethlehem and served as a spiritual guide for the monks and nuns who settled in Bethlehem to be near him. He gave shelter to refugees who came to the Holy Land following the sack of Rome by the Vandals in 410.

It is also clear that Jerome had a great and abiding respect for ecclesiastical authority. He spent some time in Antioch, which at the time of his visit had three rival bishops. Jerome asserted that he would accept the bishop in union with Rome. All three professed loyalty to the See of St. Peter so Jerome waited until the pope chose to support one of the three competing bishops. Jerome accepted ordination to the priesthood from Paulinus, the bishop that Rome approved.

Jerome was among the most learned Christians of his day. He put his learning to the service of the Church and became the greatest biblical scholar of the early Church. He has been considered a Father of the Church since the eighth century and the Council of Trent proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church. His writing style was exceptional and he used it to offer the Church a translation of the Old Testament that was the best available to the Latin-speaking Christians of his day.

The contradictions of his personality may be more apparent than those of others whom the Church honors as saints. Still, no one can read his commentaries without recognizing that the Bible was not simply an interesting literary work but the source of Spirit and life for Jerome.

Historical Repeats

Can Jerome help those who are looking for a good translation of the Bible? Jerome would, of course, expect those who preach and teach the Bible to read it in the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek as he did. For those who cannot do this, but still want to engage in serious study, he would suggest a literal translation such as found in the *Revised Standard Version* and the *New American Bible*.

Jerome would also favor a translation that used the method of "dynamic equivalence" like *The Liturgical Psalter* of the International Committee on English in the Liturgy since it seeks to render the psalms "sense for sense" rather than "word for word." This makes the psalms more accessible to those who wish to pray them today.

Finally, Jerome would know exactly what the translators of the *New American Bible* psalter are going through. It is almost five years since the American bishops asked that this psalter be approved by Rome for use in the liturgy. Approval has still not come. Jerome's translation did not achieve wide acceptance in the Church until centuries after his death.

There is no other person who has had greater influence on the way Catholics read the Bible than St. Jerome. He had worried that his influence would be restric

ted to aesthetics rather than to faith. His worries were groundless because Jerome was a sincere believer who used his talent and education to help other believers find, as he did, that the Scriptures are the Word of God—the word of life.

► OTS 2004: 18

As the discoveries at Qumran (1953-1956) demonstrated copying the Bible was an important ritual in life of ancient Israel. Christian monks continued the tradition from the first centuries of the Common Era until the Middle Ages. Today, the monks of St. John's Abbey in Collegeville MN are sponsoring the copying and illumination of a Bible honoring that ancient tradition.

The Bible in Longhand

Naomi Schaefer Riley (Wall Street Journal November 10, 2006: W13)

In a recent article for this paper's Masterpiece column, Adam Nicolson, the author of "God's Secretaries," marveled that the King James Bible is "is the richest, most passionate ...of all works of English prose." It is "full of grandeur and a vivid, heart-gripping immediacy" yet, as he noted, it was composed in the 17th century by a committee of roughly 50 men.

An exception that proves the rule, perhaps. Group projects, as any middle school social-studies teacher can tell you, rarely produce inspiring results. But if you think writing by committee is hard, try drawing by one. That's what Donald Jackson, the former official scribe for Britain's Queen Elizabeth, signed up for when he agreed to create the first handwritten English Bible in 500 years.

As Mr. Jackson tells it, he approached the Benedictine monks of Saint John's University in central Minnesota in 1995 with the idea of writing and illustrating the Gospels to celebrate the 2000th anniversary of Christ's birth. (http://www.saintjohnsbible.org/) Two years later, the monks agreed to an even larger project, commissioning Mr. Jackson to handwrite and illustrate the whole Old and New Testaments at a cost of $4.5 million (underwritten by profits from the sale of printed versions of the handwritten Bible and by the generosity of donors ranging from a Boy Scout troop to the Target Corporation). The project would require that Mr. Jackson collaborate with a team of several calligraphers, to whom he would teach a script that he had developed just for this purpose. And a commission of monks would have to approve each of the 160 illustrations.

Donald Jackson
Artistic Director, St. John's Bible

The entire work is not scheduled to be complete until 2008. (The 2000th anniversary has, of course, come and gone.) But many of the calfskin pages are being exhibited now. Sections from the Gospels and of Acts, the Pentateuch and Psalms are on display at the Library of Congress, and selections from the Prophets are at the Museum of Biblical Art in New York through the end of this month.

I saw the latter exhibit recently. It was a striking experience. What immediate catches the eye is the calligraphy, each page filled with hundreds of lines of sacred text, each letter beautifully drawn, as if by monks of old. Just as startling are the illustrations that appear every few pages, embedded in the text or taking over a major part of a particular page. I immediately understood why this type of illustration is referred to as "illumination." The vibrant colors and the gold leaf incorporated into the paintings infuse the paper with a beautiful lightness. It's as if you are looking at a Chagall window with the full sun of the afternoon behind it.

Jacob's Ladder
Gen 28:10-22

In the text for Ezekiel can be seen the haunting shapes of the four creatures that appear in a vision to the prophet, their faces gray, their eyes specked with gold dust, their figures drifting over the calligraphy like a cloud. From their midst, the prophet hears God's commission: "Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day ....I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, `Thus says the Lord God.'"

On the facing page, in the right margin of the text, is a picture of Ezekiel literally consuming God's word. As instructed, he eats a scroll with "words of lamentation and mourning and woe." And yet, he says in the biblical text, "in my mouth it was as sweet as honey." In Isaiah, we see a seraph purify the prophet's mouth with a touch of hot coal so that he can deliver God's word to the people of Israel.

While some of the men and women who have written and illustrated the Saint John's Bible may feel divinely inspired to do so, Mr. Jackson doesn't consider himself one of them. "I'm not a committed Christian or a committed anything," he announces proudly to a group visiting the exhibit. But he does seem to appreciate the theological complexities of his project. For his first illumination the one created as the frontspiece to Matthew's Gospel -- Mr. Jackson chose a menorah to illustrate the genealogy of Christ. He says that the first reaction to this choice from the monks was one of surprise, but they ultimately approved.

The monks' committee has been particularly keen on ensuring the project's ecumenical appeal. It instructed Mr. Jackson to illustrate Matthew 16:18 -- "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it" -- in a way that would de-emphasize the passage's special significance for the Roman Catholic Church. Catholics trace to this passage the idea of the one true church being in Rome and of the popes' being the spiritual descendants of Peter. But the illustration merely shows Jesus standing as a bulwark between various demonic images representing Hell and a rock with the vague outlines of a face on it, representing the Christian community. There are no signs of the Roman Catholic hierarchy or St. Peter's Basilica, for example.

As old-fashioned as a handwritten Bible may seem, Mr. Jackson and his team used computers to calculate the number of words that would fit onto each line, to help them justify the margins. And some of the pictures contain rather abstract renderings of the biblical stories. The result, though, is a document imbued with a kind of care and intensity that is rarely seen in modern life.

► OTS 2004: 18

Before 1900, most introductions to the Bible were theological or confessional. They explained the doctrines of particular religious traditions, and used the Bible to footnote these theologies. After 1900, most introductions to the Bible were historical-critical, and taught students that the Bible had a time and a place and a message of its own. *Understanding the Old Testament* by Bernhard W. Anderson was one of the best introductions. When this widely used textbook was first published there was a consensus among teachers that historical criticism was the best method to use with students in introductory classes. Today many teachers still choose a historical-critical introduction for their students, but many historical-critical introductions are still too much history

and too little criticism. Anderson's opening chapter, for example, offers thirty-four pages of well-balanced and reliable history of the Middle Bronze period without critically discussing a single biblical tradition.

The inspiration for the observation that biblical interpretation continues to be "too much history, too little criticism" comes from Hans Frei, Eclipse of Biblical Narrative. In 1974 Frei observed that the historical accuracy of a tradition had become the primary question in the academic study of the Bible. Thus, the Bible as a living, dynamic narrative had been eclipsed. The 20th century fascination with history was in marked contrast with the previous two hundred years of biblical interpretation. During the 18th and 19th centuries the historical accuracy of the Bible was taken for granted. Therefore, biblical interpretation concentrated on what the Bible means. The over-concentration of biblical studies on history locked the Bible into the past, and deprived it of a dynamic relationship with the present generation where it was being read and heard.

> OTS 2004: 19

Further Reading

1. Learning the Bible

Abbreviations [1]

AB	Anchor Bible
BerO	Berit Olam
CC	Continental Commentaries
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
Hermeneia	Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JPSBC	Jewish Publication Society Bible Commentary
JPSTC	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
SB	Schocken Bible
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

One-Volume Bible Commentaries

[1] The list of commentaries published between 1985 and 2002 was compiled by K.C. Hanson (Fortress Press) and is included here with permission. .

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> OTS 2004: 19

Links

Biblical Studies.org.uk

An Internet Resource for Studying the Bible

http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/arch_meso.html

According to Webmaster: Robert I. Bradshaw, B.Sc., C.D.R.S., "The inspiration for this site grew out of the interest generated by my first site, Creationism and the Early Church Home Page, which indicated that there is a demand for detailed and well-written articles on biblical subjects on the Internet. As my original site was concerned with quite a narrow branch of biblical studies and church history I decided to develop four more sites, the first (this site) providing resources for those studying the Scriptures …"

Biblical Studies.org.uk provides links to many of the home pages of archaeological excavations working in the world of the Bible.

► OTS 2004: 20

CREATION STORIES (Gen 1:1–11:26)

In the book of Genesis the Hebrews tell their own versions of the creation stories of Babylon, in whose sphere of influence they lived after 587 B.C.E. These traditions include the Stories of the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 1:1–2:4), the Stories of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:4–4:2), the Stories of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3–5:32), and the Flood Stories (Gen 6:1–11:26). They provide little truly scientific information about the origins of the world or the origins

of humanity. Planetary geology, paleontology, and archaeology are modern, not ancient interests. The Hebrews lacked both the data for and the interest in forging a chain between themselves and early humans. Instead they told creation stories to put human life in their time into perspective. Their creation stories are not reports on the past. They are timeless reflections on human life. They explore questions about life and death. People in every culture raise these questions to orient themselves to the greater world in which they live. Therefore, biblical storytellers set creation stories during the epoch primeval, which does not date events, it qualifies them. Setting the action of a story in the epoch primeval does not explain when something took place, but why things are the way they are in the time when the story itself is told. Only events of universal significance take place in the epoch primeval. Stories set in the epoch primeval are philosophical or theological, not geological or paleontological.

Like all stories, creation stories have plots with three episodes: a crisis, a climax, and a denouement. The crisis episode in a creation story is a sterility affidavit, which certifies that the conditions for land and children are missing. The climax episode is a cosmogony, which describes the creator giving birth to the world. The denouement episode is a covenant, which endows humans with gifts and teaches them how to live in this new world (Fig. 7)…..

The Story of the *'Adam* as a Farmer (Gen 2:4–17) certifies that when Yahweh began to create, none of the conditions for agriculture existed. First, there were no grapes or olives, and there were no grains. Grain, wine, and olive oil were farm products in the world of the Bible. Second, there was no rain at the end of the long, hot summer to soften the soil enough for farmers to plow, and there was no rain near the end of the growing season to bring crops to full fruit. To prevent crop failure these twin rains must come at the right time and in the right quantity. Third, there was no farmer, and there was no farmland. Land was life. Without good farmland, no farmer could survive. Without good farmers, no farmland would exist. Fourth, there was water everywhere. Some translations describe this flood as if it were an irrigation system parallel to the imagery in the Stories of Enki from Sumer where his semen irrigates the vulva of Nintu before she gives birth to the plants and animals. The waters in the Story of the *'Adam* as a Farmer do not give life; they bring death. They are not a cloud, a mist, a spring, or a stream that irrigates crops, but rather a flood that inundates everything in its path.

In contrast with philosophical descriptions of creation as "making something from nothing" (Latin: *creatio ex nihilo*), Semitic cultures describe creation as bringing order or cosmos from disorder or chaos. Semitic languages do not find abstract concepts helpful, and "nothing" is an abstract concept. They prefer to use metaphors drawn from concrete, physical human experience. Therefore when Yahweh begins to create, what is there is not "nothing" but flood waters and endless darkness. A similar commitment to the concrete continues into the Arabic of the Qu'ran.

For Ahmed Ali, "By Way of Preface" in Al-Qur'an: a contemporary translation 1993: 7-8 "The remarkably rich poetic tradition of Pagan Arabs did not deal in abstractions and pure thought. Their poems had sung of love, camels, horses, war, hunting, the 'mountain and desert landscape, and the martial valour of the tribesmen. Words were used to invoke concrete, almost physical_images. The Qur'an restructured the metaphorical mould through allegory, paralleling it as a rhythmical unit with the conceptual language of transcendence which acquired primary authority and universal persuasive power to conform to its conceptual standards. Hence such words as taqwa, sabr, salat, which were connected with physical processes or particular objects, acquired entirely new and conceptual meanings. For instance, in Pagan poetry muttaqi was a person who fought to preserve himself from harm, but now becomes a person who preserves himself from evil and follows the straight path, fearing God and abiding by His commands. Sabr meant constant effort in obtaining a desired object, and implied constancy, firmness. Hence a mountain was called as-sabir, and the weight put in a boat to balance it as-saburat, while al-asbirat was used for camels and goats that returned home regularly in the evening. In the Qur'an it came to mean endurance, firmness, fortitude, as in 2:153, 2:250, 3:200, and acquired

the conceptual meaning of perseverance, elaborated in the statement that God is with those who are patient and persevere, 2:153, 8:65. Similarly, salat as as-sala meant middle of the back, a horse that is second in a race, and as salia-wastala dependence, adherence, attachment. In the Qur'an salat acquired the conceptual meanings of devotion, adherence to God and His commands, fulfilling one's duties and obligations as behoves an *abd,* creature, servant, devotee of God, as integral part of *'ubudiyat,* servitude and devotion, made clear in 24:41 which underlines that every creature in the heavens and the earth knows its *salat,* duties and obligations. It also means worship as in 8:35, piety as in 11:87, and service of prayer, as in 2:238, 4:43; 101-3, 11:114, etc."

► OTS 2004: 22

> In the book of Genesis the Hebrews tell their own versions of the creation stories of Babylon, in whose sphere of influence they lived after 587 B.C.E. These traditions include the stories of the Heavens and the Earth (Gen 1:1–2:4), the Stories of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:4–4:2), the Stories of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3–5:32), and the Flood Stories (Gen 6:1–11:26). They provide little truly scientific information about the origins of the world or the origins of humanity. Planetary geology, paleontology, and archaeology are modern, not ancient interests. The Hebrews lacked both the data for and the interest in forging a chain between themselves and early humans. Instead they told creation stories to put human life in their time into perspective. Their creation stories are not reports on the past. They are timeless reflections on human life. They explore questions about life and death. People in every culture raise these questions to orient themselves to the greater world in which they live. Therefore, biblical storytellers set creation stories during the epoch primeval, which does not date events, it qualifies them. Setting the action of a story in the epoch primeval does not explain when something took place, but why things are the way they are in the time when the story itself is told. Only events of universal significance take place in the epoch primeval. Stories set in the epoch primeval are philosophical or theological, not geological or paleontological.

Ancient and extinct cultures are not the only tellers of creation stories. Every culture, including the United States, tells creation stories. These are the stories that explain how United States works; the values on which the culture of the United States developed. A common time for the telling of creation stories is a time of crisis. The following report is a good example of the way creation stories develop in the United States today.

How American Myths are Made

Evan Thomas and Andrew Romano

Newsweek (August 7, 2006) 56-57

The story of workaday men and women rising to greatness is one of America's most cherished myths. As a term, myth is much misunderstood; hearing it, many people take the word to mean "lie," when in fact a myth is a story, a narrative, that explains individual and national realities -- how a person or a country came to be, why certain things happen in the course of a life or of history, and what fate may have in store for us. Myths are a peculiar hybrid of truth and falsehood, resentments and ambitions, dreams and dread. We all have personal myths running through our heads, and some chapters would withstand fact checking while others would fail miserably.

Nations are the same way. In America, the underlying faith is that in a truly free and democratic society, every man and woman has the potential to realize greatness, that freedom and openness liberate and ennoble

ordinary citizens to do extraordinary things. The Triumph of the Common Man is a myth deeply rooted in American culture, and unlike some popular myths, it is true enough. Tom Hanks may have played a fictional character in "Saving Private Ryan"-the small-town American called to arms-but World War Il was won by a million citizen soldiers very much like him.

There is, unfortunately, another, less admirable myth that Americans concoct to explain crises and disasters. It is rooted in the paranoid streak that runs through pop culture, the conspiracy theories that blame some sinister (and usually make-believe) Other for whatever went wrong. In 1950, many frightened Americans wanted to know: how could Russia have gotten the bomb so soon after America won World War II? There must be traitors among us! railed Sen. Joe McCarthy and other conspiracists, as they tore up the country looking for communists under every bed.

One might expect Hollywood's Oliver Stone to drum up a conspiracy theory to explain 9/11. He is, after all, known as the director of a movie, "JFK," that essentially accused Lyndon Johnson, the CIA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff of killing President Kennedy. 'That Stone did not go to the dark side to explain the attacks of September 11 tells us something about the American sensibility toward that day. True, Stone was under pressure

from the studio not to make the story political or conspiratorial. It is also true, though, that public-opinion surveys show that many Americans (42 percent in a recent Zogby poll) believe the government must be covering up something about 9/11, and many blame Bush for using the attacks to justify invading Iraq. Scaremongers on the Internet and Michael Moore's entertaining but outlandish "Fahrenheit 9/11" have fueled popular suspicions of devious plots.

Nonetheless, 9/11 has become a kind of sacred day in American life. Stone's movie will stand as a civic elegy, a statement that the events of 9/11, and the memories of the nearly 3,000 people who died that day, should not be degraded or sullied by politics or the fevered imaginings of people who see tragedy and assume scheming and betrayal.

All nations need myths to understand crises that shock, the wars and riots, assassinations and natural disasters that wrench history. The myth of the Triumph of the Common Man was born in the first battle of the Revolution, when farmers and tradesmen made their stand against British Redcoats at Lexington and Concord in April 1775. These Minutemen were our first citizen soldiers, and their example still inspires. "In our mind's eye we see a scattering of individual militiamen crouched behind low granite walls, banging away at a disciplined mass of British regulars," writes historian David Hackett Fischer. "We celebrate the spontaneity of the event, and the autonomy of the Americans who took part in it. As a writer put it in the 19th century, `Everyone appeared to be his own commander."

Myths evolve as circumstances and needs change. The Founders at first portrayed Lexington and Concord as an unprovoked attack on innocents; "Bloody Butchery, by the British," proclaimed a printed broadside of the time, illustrated with 40 small coffins. The propagandists were trying to stir up sympathy for the rebellion and a desire for revenge. Only a later generation of popularizers, who wanted to inspire a young democracy, stressed the bold resistance of the Minutemen who "fired the shot heard round the world."

The fantasists of the American South after the Civil War had to justify not just defeat but the elimination of a way of life. Thus was born the "Lost Cause," the dreamy fiction that chivalrous "gentlemen-officers" had fallen to forces of greater number but weaker character, and that rapacious "damn Yankees" and carpetbaggers had been exploiting the South ever since. The real cause of the Civil War – slavery -- was swept into the shadows. The Lost Cause was used to justify the evils of Jim Crow and perpetuate the myth of white supremacy.

World War II remains the greatest of American myths. (Iii an old New Yorker cartoon, a glassy-eyed man leans toward the bartender and says, "I remember the Second World War. That's the one that kind of flickers on the screen, right?") President Franklin D. Roosevelt did not hesitate to play to the desire for revenge in his address to Congress after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. "Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a day which will live in world history," the president dictated to a secretary. Looking over the resulting draft, lie crossed out "world history" and wrote "infamy" instead. With a flick of his pen, FDR switched from the cool judgment of history to a personal

attack on the character of the Japanese people. They were soon portrayed as monkeys, snakes, insects -- villainous vermin to be exterminated. Hollywood signed on. In "Air Force" (1943), a grinning Japanese guns clown an American pilot who has parachuted and is floating helplessly in the air.

Rut the moviemakers more often venerated Everyman, as they rallied the country to the soldiers' cause. The standard trope became the polyglot platoon-the wise guy from Brooklyn, the Midwest farmer, the hillbilly, the rich kid, all fighting for their buddies and their moms and apple pie against fascist beast. Even when postwar books and movies grew more nuanced and worldly, often edged with bitter satire, the basic myth persisted: that the sons of American democracy had triumphed over tyranny.

Vietnam was a lot harder to explain. Hollywood initially packaged it as the Good War, Part Two, with John Wayne's gung-ho potboiler "The Green Berets" (1968). The film was panned by critics and picketed by antiwar protesters. Later, better movies, including Stone's overwrought but masterful "Platoon" (1986), captured the alienation of the soldiers and the futility of the war. But Vietnam remains troublesome in the American psyche; it's as if we cannot reconcile the war with our mythic (and heroic) self-image.

September 11 could have been equally vexing. What is there to celebrate in the slaughter of nearly 3,000 innocent civilians? Early attempts to canonize George Bush as take-charge commander in chief, as in the hokey made-for-TV production "DC 9/11: Time of Crisis," were mostly embarrassing. But there were real heroes on 9/lI, and not just the firemen and cops who died trying to rescue their fellow citizens. Although some critics have contended that the quasi documentary "United 93" is a little too raw for the families of the dead, the film shows in graphic, gripping detail how a group of ordinary passengers on an airplane could, as they faced the enormity of their fate, marshal themselves to overwhelm trained killers and terrorists. That these modern day Minutemen perished in the effort just makes their story more affecting.

"United 93" offers a gritty, convincing reality. So, too, does Stone's "World Trade Center:" Stone's movie will live on in the national consciousness, not just as a skillful exercise in movie making, but because it touches on a profound national faith in the courage and steadfastness of common men and women. The greatest of myths are the ones that ring true.

► OTS 2004: 24-25 (Figure 7)

Sterility Affidavit (Gen. 2:4-6)

When Yahweh, Our Creator,
Began to create the heavens and the earth,
There were no orchards,
There were no fields of grain.
There were no planting rains,
There were no harvesting rains.
There was no one to work the soil,
There was no soil to work --
Only water pouring through dikes of clay;
And water flooding the earth.

cosmogony (Gen. 2:7-14)

Then Yahweh sculpted an *'adam* from clay,
Made it live by breathing moisture onto the clay.

Yahweh, Our Creator, built a plantation,
Yahweh installed the *'adam* in Eden.
There were trees delightful to see,
Fruit good to eat:
The Tree of Life was in the middle of Eden,
And The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad.
There were rive– --
Abundant water for the garden.
The Pishon flowing through the desert of Havilah in Arabia,
The Gihon running through the land of Cush in Ethiopia.
The Tigris rolling east of Asshur in Iraq,
The Euphrates.
There was gold,
Twenty-four carat gold.
There was the gemstone, bdellium,
There was lapis lazuli.

covenant (Gen. 2:15-17)

Finally Yahweh, Our Creator, gave Eden to the *'adam* to cultivate,
The *'adam* was to care for the plantation of Yahweh.
Yahweh decreed: "You shall eat from any tree in Eden,
Except the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.
Anyone who eats from this tree shall die...."

Figure 7 Story of the Adam as a Farmer
(Gen. 2:4-17)

"All this in just six days?" God cried.
"I am supremely satisfied.
Those dainty finned and creeping things,
The ones with hooves, the ones with wings!
This world's divine. Just one thing more –
Two-legged, furless omnivore.
Free will, at least to some degree.
The creature quite resembles me.
It only wants a breath of life;
And then, of course, it wants a wife.
No sooner asked, my boy, than done!
They will afford me hours of fun.
See how they blink, and stretch, and grin.
Now let the comedy begin!"

Jeanne Steig
The Old Testament Made Easy 1990

► **OTS 2004: 27-40**

For the Qur'an the Story of the 'Adam as a Herder (Gen 2:18-20) and the Story of Adam and Eve as Farmers and Child-bears (Gen 2:25—4:2) are the most important creation stories.

Al-Baqarah: Madani (Ahmed Ali, translator)

Remember, when your Lord said to the angels: "I have to place a trustee, on the earth,"

They said: "Will You place one there who would create disorder and shed blood, while we intone Your litanies and sanctify Your name?"

And God said: "I know what you do not know." 31. Then He gave Adam, knowledge of the nature and reality of all things and every thing, and set them before the angels and said: "Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful."

32. And they said: "Glory to You (O Lord), knowledge we have none except what You have given us, for You are all-knowing and all-wise."

33. Then He said to Adam: "Convey to them their names."

And when he had told them, God said: "Did I not tell you that I know the unknown of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you disclose and know what you hide?" 34. Remember, when We asked the angels to bow in homage to Adam, they all bowed but lblis, who disdained and turned insolent, and so became a disbeliever. 35. And We said to Adam: "Both you and your spouse live in the Garden, eat freely to your fill wherever you like, but approach not this tree or you will become transgressors. 36. But Satan tempted them and had them banished from the (happy) state they were in. And We said: "Go, one the antagonist of the other, and live on the earth for a time ordained, and fend for yourselves." 37. Then his Lord sent commands to Adam and turned towards him: Indeed He is compassionate and kind. 38. And We said to them: "Go, all of you. When I send guidance, whoever follows it will neither have fear nor regret; 39. But those who deny and reject Our signs will belong to Hell, and there abide unchanged."

► OTS 2004: 28-30

The story of the *'Adam as a Man and a Woman* (Gen 2:20-24) states that YHWH formed Adam out of clay, and then Eve was created from Adam's *tsela'* -- traditionally translated as *rib.* Ziony Zevit (American Jewish University) and Alan Dundes (Univerity of California, Berkeley) argue that this translation is wrong. *Tsela'* was first translated as *rib* in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (300-200 BCE). However, a more careful reading of the Hebrew word *tsdela'* suggests that Eve was created from Adam's *os baculum* -- penis bone. Most mammals have penis bones, the biblical story explains why human males do not. (Ziony Zevit, *What really happened in the Garden of Eden?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). Ziony Zevit, "Was Eve made from Adam's Rib -- Or His Baculum?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 41, September/October (2015). Alan Dundes, "Couvade in Genesis," in *Studies in Aggada and Jewish Folklore*, eds. I. Ben-Ami and J. Dan (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 35-53).

► **OTS 2004: 40-44 (Illustration 2)**

Abraham , Lot and other men in the Household of Terah (Gen 11:29-30) may have looked like the people of Ur portrayed on this inlaid box – called "The Standard of Ur". The shaved their heads and their beards, wore mid-calf kilts stripped at the hem and tied at the waist with a belt.

Men Lead a Bull to the King of Ur
Ur ▪ 2400 B.C.E. ▪ Mosaic

The Ubaid people founded Ur in 4000 BCE. The city lasted until 300 BCE. By 2800 BCE, it had developed a unique culture magnificently displayed in the tombs of its rulers, buried amid numerous objects fashioned in gold and precious stones. The code of Ur-Nammu (2050–1950 BCE), which is the oldest legal tradition recovered from the world of the Bible, is also developed at Ur. In this wonderful city, Terah is father of a household with three sons. (Illustration 2)

Sarai, Milcah, Iscah and other women of the Household of Terah (Gen 11:29-30) may have looked like the woman in this statue from Ur. Her page-boy hair is bobbed at the base and she wears a stove pipe hat with a partial brim turned up. Her skirt has a scalloped hem, and is pleated.

Mother of a Household at Ur
(Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University, Atlanta)

►OTS 2004: 40

Three stories celebrating Abraham and Sarah introduce two great cycles in the book of Genesis. The first cycle tells the Stories of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 11:27–25:18); the second tells the Stories of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel (Gen 25:19–37:2). They are ancestor stories told by clans to celebrate those who taught their households how to survive. These stories describe Abraham and Sarah as people of the Middle Bronze period. During this remarkable time, refugees from the Early Bronze period returned from the hills and deserts to rebuild old cities and found new ones. Their cities were magnificent. Throughout the entire Bronze Age, there were none larger, none more heavily fortified. Walls twenty-five feet thick and a mile long were built with stones weighing over two thousand pounds. City people in the Middle Bronze were merchants. Villagers were herders and farmers. Some were rich and some were poor. The wealthy were served by warriors, bureaucrats, artists, tradespeople, and slaves. They were masters of the planning, organization, production, distribution, and enforcement that the construction and operation of great cities demands. They invented the alphabet. Hundreds of word-pictures in Mesopotamian cuneiform and Egyptian hieroglyphics were reduced to thirty hieroglyphics in Ugaritic and twenty-two letters in Hebrew. Ordinary people, not just an elite corps of scribes, could now read and write. They manufactured bronze tools and weapons with tin imported from Afghanistan. They crafted jewelry with alabaster and faience from Egypt. They turned exquisite pottery on new high-speed wheels. They carved fine wooden furniture inlaid with ivory from Syria. They exported grain, olive oil, wine, cattle, timber, and slaves.

Piotr Bienkowski, Christopher Mee, and Elizabeth Slater, eds., *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 426). New York: T & T Clark, Zoos.

Addresses issues of writing in ancient Israel, Ugarit, Medea, and Greece, to name but a few civilizations covered. The essays are all quite focused in their topics and scholarly in their approaches. These topics include the question of literacy in oral cultures, reading ancient inscriptions, prophetic oracles and writing, and the challenges posed by transliteration.

►**OTS 2004: 46**

Millennia of Murex

Philippa Scott
(Saudi Aramco World 57 August 2006: 30-37)

London-based free-lance writer Philippa Scott is a textile historian and author of several books, including The Book of Silk (2001)

Among the more unlikely "marriages" arranged by human ingenuity is the one between the Chinese domesticated silk moth, Bombyx mori, and the Mediterranean sea snails of the Muricidae, or murex, family. The sea snails produce a pigment that, when brought together with silk, led to the world's longest-lasting fashion statement.

Detail from an 11th century Byzantine robe shows griffins embroidered on a delicate silk woven of murex dyed threads. It was in the eastern Roman empire of Byzantium that the symbolic power of murex purple reached its apogee.

Murex is the dye first famous as "Tyrian purple," named for the city of Tyre, today in Lebanon but 3000 years ago the center from which that energetic trading nation, the Phoenicians, controlled a far-flung luxury trade in murex-dyed silks. Later, the dye was known as "royal purple" or "imperial purple," from the Roman and Byzantine emperors who reserved the color for members of the imperial family.

The search for stable, brilliant textile dyes is an ancient one. Early dyers experimented with plants, lichens, colored earths, stones containing metallic oxides, insects, blood, seaweeds -- and shellfish. Shell mounds, pits full of shells and stretches of seashore made up of millions of crushed shells are continually being discovered, forcing archeologists and historians to reassess dates and boundaries. Archeologists working in Qatar, along the Gulf coast of the Arabian Peninsula, have recently uncovered shell middens -- discard heaps -- that date to the 18th century BC: and are composed mostly of the *Thais savigni* species of murex. Nearby were pits with hearths and dye pots more than a meter (39") in diameter. Until this discovery, historians believed the story of murex purple dyes began around 3000 BC with the Minoan civilization of Crete, and was then advanced by the enterprising Phoenicians. Now it seems probable that the use of shellfish dyes developed as independently in what is today Qatar as it did in the Mediterranean and the Americas.

Beyond the Mediterranean, there are a number of other sea snails useful for dyeing. Some 140 species flourish off the shores of North and South America. Of these, *Purpura patula, Purpura persica* and *Purpura aperta i*nhabit the Gulf of Mexico, and these arc still valued today in Central America, where women use them to color skeins of yarn. Sun arid salt water cause the pigment to oxidize on the fibers into an attractive but uneven purple. Unlike the Mediterranean types of murex, which must be crushed in order to obtain the tiny sac of pigment, the gland in the American shellfish is closer to the surface, and the creature can be persuaded to squirt its secretion onto the yarn. Afterward, the shellfish can be put back into the sea, given time to recover, and used again. Threads colored in this way tend to retain a fishy smell, however. The dyes in many pre-Columbian textiles and the purple paint in the Nahuatl codices have been analyzed and found to be shellfish purple.

In ancient Japan yet another type of shellfish was used. In the waters around Scandinavia and the British Isles, the Anglo-Saxons called purple dye *fiscdeag* ("fish dye"), and in the seventh century the Venerable Bede wrote about red and purple dyes obtained from sea snails. In Australia, although there are equivalent shellfish, no evidence has yet been found that these were ever used far textile dyeing.

In the Mediterranean there are 16 species of Muricidae. Three that are common to the eastern Mediterranean were specifically fished for dye: *Murex trunculus, Murex brandaris* and *Thais baemastoma* (also called *Purpura haemastoma).* The earliest, most complete written account of early dyeing techniques comes from Pliny the Elder in the first century of our era, but researchers have recently found that Pliny either misunderstood certain processes or was misinformed -- or perhaps intentionally misled by craftsmen reluctant to fully reveal their techniques. For example, it might be true, as Pliny claimed, that honey was a traditional ingredient in the murex formula, or there may be a lost legend about it, or a belief in some symbolic potency of which today we know nothing. However, modern methods of chemical analysis have found honey to be of no practical use in murex dyeing.

The oldest known murex-dyed textile is a fine wool tapestry woven during the fifth to fourth centuries BC in Persia. Originally a garment, it was later adapted -- in a well-worn condition -- as a felt-lined horse trapping, which was buried with its owner.

The Minoan civilization of Crete endured some two millennia, from roughly 3000 BC to 1000 BC. Excavations there have revealed houses decorated with fres-coes that used murex purple as a paint. Some earthen floors have been found tocontain crushed murex shells as aggregate-an example of recycling from about 1500 BC. Murex shells appeared as a design motif on pottery and on carved gemstones. From frescoes, painted figures and pottery, we know that the Minoans wove fine wool cloth that was profusely patterned and colored; however, we do not know whether the designs were woven, embroidered, appliqueed or printed, for archeologists have not yet found any of the textiles themselves.

The extensive Minoan trading network operated by barter, coinage not having yet been invented, and cloth was among the most important trading elements. To the south, Egypt was a significant trading partner, and the Papyrus Anastasy, a New Kingdom document written about 1400 BC (now in the Victoria Museum in Upsala, Sweden), includes 70 formulae for dyeing wool, most of which deal with purple. There is a vivid description of a purple dyer: "His hands stink, they have the smell of decaying fish. His eyes are overcome with exhaustion."

From the 15th century BC or earlier, murex dyeing was also carried on along the north coast of Syria at the port of Ugarit, at Mina al-Bayda. Here, archeologists' finds include lots of crushed shells and part of a pot still stained with purple. Surviving Ugaritic texts describe a thriving commerce in purple wool and purple cloth. They mention wool being dyed in the yarn, an indication that craftsmen may have practiced pattern weaving. An Assyrian chemist's text gives a formula for murex purple dye. Eastward in Mesopotamia, Babylonians dressed sacred idols in purple cloth.

But it was another seafaring nation of traders, the Phoenicians, who were destined to become irrevocably linked with murex purple dye. The name "Phoenician" -- and "phoenix," the legendary bird reborn in the flames -- is derived from the Greek *phoinix,* meaning "purple-red." *(Murex* comes to us from Latin, derived from the Greek *muax,* or "purple fish.") It was the Phoenicians who developed and promoted the Mediterranean murex market. Herodotus tells us that Tyre, built on an island and the neighboring mainland, was founded in 2759 BC. Archeology supports this as a roughly probable date for the arrival and settlement of this Semitic people from somewhere further south. The geography of their long, narrow country, with its high mountains sloping toward the coastal plain, made the Phoenicians look naturally outward to the sea.

The sea meant trade, and by the eighth century BC, the Phoenicians were established as traders, craftsmen and daring seafarers, and Phoenician sarcophagi depict wealthy businessmen. Perhaps because good business required efficient accounting, the Phoenicians invented an alphabet which was passed on to and adapted by the Greeks – and which became the origin of our own today. Phoenician vessels traveled as far as the British Isles, where they traded for tin in Cornwall and tin, gold, silver and copper in Spain.

Dye formulae of many kinds were widely known by the time this cuneiform tablet was inscribed in the seventh century BC near Babylon, now in Iraq. It describes the dyeing of wool to shades of "lapis-lazuli," which was apparently an attempt to imitate murex.

All around the Mediterranean there are wide stretches of beaches composed of crushed murex shells, silent witnesses to the geographical scope and longevity of the Phoenician dyeing industry. One famous Phoenician dye-works was near Cadiz, in the south of Spain; others were in present-day Tunisia, where Carthage was a Phoenician colony. At all these sites, the shellfish were crushed, and the pigment extracted, processed, mixed and used. Gravestones of "purple merchants" *(purpurarii* or *negotiatores artis purpurariae)* often show a set of scales or hanks of yarn, indicating that here too yarn was dyed before weaving, enabling it to be used for woven patterns and embroidery.

On the supply end, the "marriage" of silk and murex may have occurred relatively early. Strands of Chinese silk -- the remains of a decorative net, perhaps -- have been identified in the hair of an Egyptian mummy dating from 1000 BC, long before an established trade network is thought to have existed -- a reminder of the importance of keeping an open mind to the reassessment of historical knowledge.

The East-West land and maritime routes that became known as the Silk Roads are generally considered to have been "opened up" during the time of the Han and the Roman Empires, bur already during the sixth century BC, Greek vessels carried silk to the Mediterranean via trading settlements around the Black Sea. The Chinese, who kept close account of all silk production outside their borders, recorded that Syria was a silk producer by the fifth century of our era.

To paint this fresco of a bull-leaper, a Minoan artist of approximately 950 BC used murex dye in his palette.

The commercial success and enduring appeal of murex was based on solid science. Silk and wool are both protein fibers obtained from living creatures and, as such, they both have carboxyl and amino groups available to which dyestuffs can bond, unlike such plant fibers as cotton, linen, hemp, nettle and jute. Silk, as strong as steel, weight for weight, is also highly absorbent, which makes it easier to dye than any other fiber. This meant it required less dye to achieve more effect. Results ranged the palette from heavy ultramarine blues and purples to gentle lilacs, mauves and pinks, all depending on dye mixture and timing. Silk, it turned out, was more than a chemically compatible partner for murex: Both were labor intensive in use, extremely expensive and long-lasting, and the Phoenicians justified the high prices they

demanded for murex because so little pigment was obtained from the glandular secretions of each shellfish.

At first, the mucus-like glandular secretions of all types of murex are colorless or faintly yellow. The glands of the American species are close to the surface, which means the animals can be squeezed lightly, then replaced in the water alive, but in the Mediterranean, the species must be crushed. Exposure to sunlight and air causes rapid oxidization, turning the secretions into a purple pigment. If this is immediately rubbed onto fabric (or, as in a Phoenician legend, a dog's muzzle), it will stain. Each shellfish, however, produces very little pigment, and although this method of rubbing the pigment onto thread or fabric is used in the Americas, it was not practical for Phoenician commercial purposes. Murex produce most of their secretions in early spring, the season when Sirius, "the Dog Star," is high in the northern hemispheres sky, and thus the legend of Melcarth (Hercules) and his dog may in fact he a folktale reminding people of this seasonal advantage.

A pigment is a coloring agent, but to become a dye that will attach itself permanently to fibers, it needs to be processed. Murex is chemically related to the indigo dye family (which includes woad), and all these need to be processed in dyeing vats in all alkaline solution. Usually this meant a mixture of saltwater, wood ash, fermented urine or lime-water. (The salt stops the shellfish's flesh from rotting, just as salt-curing preserves meat). No doubt dyers had their own formulae, each with varying quantities, reduction times and so on.

Once the dye had been made, it could be used to color cloth or unwoven yarn, or it could be dried and made into a powder; which could then he stored or transported and later reconstituted. After the cloth or yarn had been dyed, its color could be brightened by rinsing in an acetic-acid bath, such as diluted vinegar.

The trickiest question is, how many sect snails were required for dyeing? Enormous numbers have always been quoted, and indeed the dyeing vats used in ancient Qatar had a capacity of more than 600 liters (160 gal).

One experiment in 2001 with woollen fleece found that good color could be obtained on one gram of wool (1/30 oz) with just three snails; though darker hues and a more uniform color could he obtained by using a more concentrated dye solution and less wool. Excellent uniformity of dyeing was obtained using three successive one-gram samples of wool, 20 medium-sized snails (total weight; with shells, about 360 grams (13 oz) and about 200 milliliters (6 ¾ oz) of sodium carbonate, or washing soda, as the alkaline solution -- just enough to cover all the snails. The minimum recipe to produce uniform purple color was seven snails and 70 milliliters (2 1/3 oz) alkaline solution.

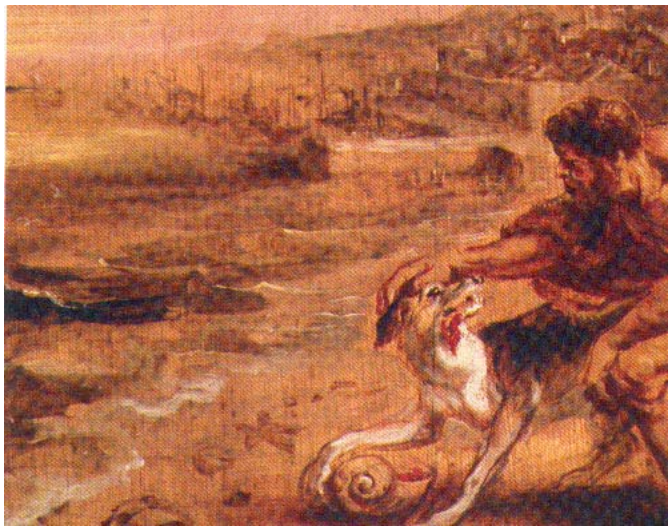
Based oil these findings, the researchers calculated that dyeing a robe, cloak, mantle, toga or other garment that weighed only a kilogram (2.2 lb) to a deep shade would require not fewer than 10,000 snails.

When Alexander the Great's troops, marching east in 324 BC, took the Achaemenid winter capital Susa (in today's Iran), they found a vast store of purple robes and cloth in the royal

treasury. Afterward, Alexander's generals criticized their leader for swarming around in the all-purple robes "like a Persian." To the austerity-loving Greek mind of the time, only a show-off would don such ostentatious luxury. Not long afterward, however, possibly thanks to captive Phoenician dyers, the Greeks learned purple technology themselves. Purple dye works have been excavated in Corinth, and murex shells were depicted on certain Greek coins. Archeologists excavating the royal Macedonian graves at Vergina found the bones of Cleopatra, Philip II's youngest wife and Alexander the Great's stepmother, wrapped in a breathtaking fabric of the finest purple wool, delicately woven with gold thread. A fragment of that royal shroud has recently been analyzed and proved, not surprisingly, to have been dyed with murex.

The Phoenicians continued trading until the late fourth century BC, when the gradual incorporation of their cities into the Greek empire effectively put an end to a separate Phoenician identity. However, their dyeing and textile skills continued to flourish in the Levant and Syria.

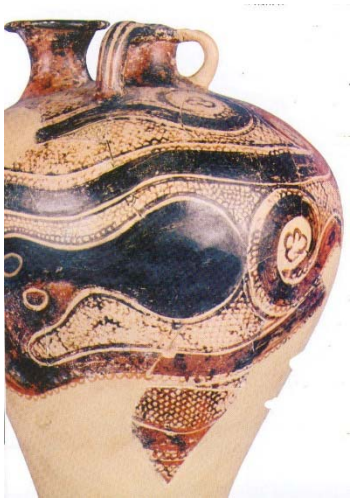
By the time Julius Caesar returned to Rome from Egypt in 47 BC, his mind awash with thoughts of Cleopatra's perfumed purple sails, the number of purple stripes or emblems on any Roman male's outer garment was an indication of his rank, authority and prestige. This prompted imitations and became a fashion. Artists and orators donned purple. Nero, who had a habit of taking things to extremes, wore all-purple robes, and it was he who issued a decree that anyone else who did so would be executed.



In 1636, Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens depleted the legendary discovery of murex by the Phoenician god Melcarth (in Greek versions of the tale, it is Hercules), who was strolling along the shore when his dog began to play with a murex snail, staining his muzzle. The legend may be a reminder that murex snails are best harvested in early spring, when Sirius (the "Dog Star') is high.

In the breakaway Syrian state of Palmyra, grown rich from the Silk Roads trade, statues show its citizens elaborately coiffed and bejeweled, and the folds of their carved robes drape in silk's inimitable manner. Murex purple has been identified in some of the Palmyran silks discovered in graves and funeral towers. When Palmyra fell to Rome in the year 273, its queen, Zenobia, was paraded through the streets of Rome in golden chains and we may be reasonably certain that she also wore murex-dyed silks from Palmyran looms.

But it was in the eastern Roman Empire of Byzantium that the murex purple fashion reached its all-time apogee. When Emperor Constantine established his new city, Constantinople, in 330, the Byzantines embraced the symbolism of purple. Ancient Phoenicia and Syria became Byzantine territories. Syrian merchants were accorded special privileges in the imperial city, for they brought the most desirable dyestuffs and the most desirable purple-dyed silk, some already woven and some as thread, to supply the imperial weaving ateliers. The Byzantine silk industry was strictly regulated by guilds, and silks of both purple and purple-and-gold were imperial monopolies. Many Byzantine laws regulated the sale, production and wearing of purple and punishment for their breach was severe.



A Minoan earthenware jar, dated between 1450 and 1400 BC, depicts an octopus and semi abstract *murex trunculus* shells.

If in Rome a single stripe of murex purple had signified wealth, prestige and, at times, even aristocracy, how much more magnificent was a Byzantine subject dressed in a purple garment or -- better yet -- in a purple silk garment? More prestigious still were purple silk garments woven with gold thread, in patterns of varying degrees of intricacy. And what of the Byzantine imperial children, literally and in every symbolic sense "born to the purple," raised in the *porphyra,* a room with pillars and floor of polished purple porphyry, hung all around with perfumed purple drapes? As a finishing touch, there was also imperial footwear, crimson or scarlet, sandals or boots, for men and women alike.

Of all the shades obtained from murex, the Byzantine favorite was a dark violet color sometimes described as "cock-roach." Exerting a strict monopoly on murex, the Byzantines colluded with the Syrian merchants to maintain and protect this market. Foreign rulers begged for trading privileges that would include Byzantine silks, and a gift of Byzantine silk was a treasure indeed. It may be difficult for us to imagine today, accustomed as we are to the easy worldwide availability of silk, but it is no exaggeration to say that in the Byzantine economy and in Byzantine diplomacy, the central position of their fabulous silks is loosely comparable to the role of crude oil in today's world.

All around the Mediterranean, throughout the Roman Empire, from Phoenician times until the collapse of the Byzantine Empire and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, purple meant glamour, royalty, aristocracy, wealth and power. Authors have often borrowed this symbolism: In 1400, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote of "the venom of Tyre" and "the bright fleeces of the land of Syria" and, quoting St. Jerome, warned, "wives that are apparelled in silk and in precious purple are not able to clothe themselves in Jesus Christ." Shakespeare's image of Cleopatra's royal barge conjures romance: "Purple the sails, and so perfumed that the winds were lovesick with them." And Byron: "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold / And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold."

In the western hemisphere, artisans tended to apply shellfish dyes in the manner of paints. This fragment of a mantle from coastal Peru is between 2000 and 2200 years old.

Our ancestors thus understood "purple" in a broader, more symbolic sense than we do today. Many a student in recent times has puzzled over Homer's "wine-dark sea," in *The Iliad.* The sea can be dark blue, they wonder, but surely not wine-colored. As a color, however, "purple" encompassed all the shades that could be obtained from the murex family of shellfish, from ultramarine to pink. Which color resulteddepended on what species' pigment went into the dye pot, what it was or wasn't mixed with, for how long and how many times the yarn or cloth was dyed and even the season in which the shellfish had been harvested. Faced with such a rainbow, "purple" was not so much a color as a notion, a status.

The demise of murex purple has been variously attributed to the seventh-century Arab conquest of the Levant and to overfishing, but most writers and textile historians blame the Turks. Historian Stephen Runciman, in his *Fall of Constantinople,* wrote that two great secrets were lost when Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453: the military formula for making "Greek fire," and the dyeing techniques of Tyrian purple.

But there were other factors. In 1202, the Fourth Crusade sacked and looted Constantinople, and the Byzantines and their great city never fully recovered. As always throughout history, skilled craftsmen were part of the booty taken back to Italy, and among them were textile workers whose skills and knowledge boosted the fledgling Italian silk industry, which suddenly, around this time, began to flourish.

It is also true that for the Turks, and the Arabs as well, purple did not carry the same symbolic freight as for the Byzantines. To Muslims, green and red were the colors of life and royalty. Ottoman superstitions held black and purple to be unlucky colors. Although purple at times conferred distinction, during times of war it was an omen of death. But still, the Ottoman Turks were always canny about their textile trade, and they had no compunction about continuing to manufacture Byzantine-style silks, complete with figures of Jesus, for the Orthodox Church in Russia. Despite some claims that Byzantine dye works and weaving factories were destroyed by the Turks, we know that murex dyeing continued under the Ottomans, for the dye has been identified recently in at least one silk examined by Turkish textile historians, and the Topkapi holdings contain other silks that, when analyzed, may well prove to be murex.

There is also the element of alum. With the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, the Ottomans in 1460, it began to control the lucrative trade in this vital ingredient used for mordanting textile dyes (and also for preparing leather). Alum had always been a major Byzantine export to Europe, and to the Ottomans it promised a no less vital revenue for the sultans' coffers. But Italians discovered a plentiful source of alum on their mainland. The Pope immediately claimed the deposits as church property, simultaneously enriching the Church and dealing a blow to Ottoman commerce.

Then, a 1467 papal decree stated that the murex purple, previously used on cardinals' robes, should be replaced by scarlet, a color intended to bring the cardinals onto a level equal with kings. The new "cardinal purple" was dyed with a mixture of indigo and kermes, the "beetle dye" from which English takes its word *crimson* -- via the Arabic *qirmizi*. By this color shift, said the Pope, the Ottomans would lose valuable revenue and the Church would gain it, the better to wage war against them.

Yet a further blow to the murex industry lay ahead. The European discovery of the Americas brought cochineal, a crimson dye obtained from the insect of the same name *(Dactylopius coccus).* It proved less expensive than either murex or kermes. From the 16th century, with no more need to go through the laborious processes of obtaining pigment from sea snails, Turkish dyers, as others, began mixing cochineal with indigo to obtain shades formerly obtained from shellfish. (Logwood imported from Sri Lanka also gave a deep, purplish-red color, but in 1630 a complaint is recorded from the velvet-makers of Bursa, who considered this to be an inferior dye.)

Things changed further in the 19th century when chemists discovered how to make synthetic colors. When William Henry Perkin, an 18-year-old English student and lab assistant of the German chemist Wilhelm von Hofmann, accidentally discovered the dye mauveine in 1856, he initially called it "Tyrian purple," thinking, mistakenly, that he had rediscovered the dye of the ancients. When Queen Victoria chose mauve for her jubilee dress in 1887, she was perhaps the first monarch ever to wear silk that had been dyed to that shade without the aid of either the venerable murex or the upstart cochineal.

Fashion being a fickle jade, the murex market, so stable and central for millennia, had finally faded. The marriage was over. The silkworm had spurned the shellfish, first for a beetle, and finally for a chemist.

> OTS 2004: 49 (Figure 15)

story of the conflict (Gen. 13:5-7)

The household of Lot and the household of Abraham lived together in the same village. But there were too many flocks, herds, and tents. One land could not support two households.

With the Canaanites and the Perizzites in the land, skirmishes developed between the herders of Lot and the herders of Abraham. So Abraham negotiated this covenant with Lot.

terms (Gen. 13:8-13)

"Let there be peace between you and me. Let us be brothers."

"Go anywhere! Is not the whole land at your disposal? Please separate from me. If you prefer the north, I will go to the south; if you prefer the south, I will go to the north." Lot looked about and saw how well watered the whole Jordan Valley was as far as Zoar, like the Ggarden of Yahweh or like Egypt. This was before Yahweh had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot, therefore, chose the Jordan Valley and set out eastward. Thus they separated from each other. The Hhousehold of Abraham stayed in the Lland of Canaan, while the Hhousehold of Lot settled among the Ccities of the Pplain, pitching his tents near Sodom. Now the inhabitants of Sodom were shameful. They committed sins against Yahweh.

litany of curses and blessings (Gen. 13:14-17)

After Lot had left, Yahweh said to Abraham: "Look about you. From where you are standing, look to the north, the south, the east, and the west. I will give to you and to your household all the land which you see forever. I will make your household like the dust of the earth. If anyone could count the dust of the earth, your household too might be counted. Walk off from here the length and width of the land which I will give you."

promulgation (Gen. 13:18)

Abraham struck his tents and pitched them near the sacred Tree of Mamre at Hebron. There he built an altar dedicated to Yahweh.

156 Abraham Negotiates with Lot
(Gen. 13:5-18)

> OTS 2004:52-53

title (Gen. 14:1-3)

This is the story of the war between Elam and the Cities of the Plain. With Elam were Amraphel, ruler of Babylon, Arriwuku, ruler of Mari, Chedorlaomer, ruler of Elam, and Tudhalias, ruler of Hatti. With the Cities of the Plain were Bera, ruler of Sodom, Birsha, ruler of Gomorrah, Shinab, ruler of Admah, Shemeber, ruler of Zeboiim, and the ruler of Bela-Zoar.

crisis (Gen. 14:4-12)

For twelve years the Cities of the Plain were clients to Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year, they declared their independence of him. In the fourteenth year, Chedorlaomer and the rulers who remained loyal to him attacked and put down the revolt of the Rephaim at Ashteroth-karnaim, of the Zuzim at Ham, of the Emim at Shaveh-kiriathaim and of the Horites in the hills of Seir, routing them as far as El-paran on the desert border. Then they turned and attacked the sanctuary of En-mishpat and put down revolt through the land of the Amalekites and of the Amorites living around Hazazon-tamar.

Therefore, the rulers of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela-Zoar deployed their armies in the Vvalley of Siddim and prepared to defend themselves against Chedorlaomer of Elam, Tudhalias of Hatti, Amraphel of Babylon and Arriwuku of Mari -- four rulers against five. There were tar pits everywhere in the Valley of Siddim. So, after the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah were routed and they crouched down in those tar pits hid themselves there, while their soldiers fled to the hills. The armies of Elam plundered all the livestock and granaries of Sodom and Gomorrah before withdrawing. They also took the Household of Lot, Abraham's covenant partner, who was living in Sodom, and his livestock.

climax (Gen. 14:13-16)

A messenger reported everything to the Hebrew chief, Abraham. He was camped under the sacred tree of the Amorite chief, Mamre, who was a covenant partner with Eschol and Aner, who were Abraham's covenant partners. When Abraham learned that the Household of Lot was being held hostage, he armed his most trusted slaves, three- hundred eighteen in all, and set out for Dan. Abraham and his warriors cleverly deployed against the armies of Elam at night, and then attacked and routed them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.

denouement (Gen. 14:17-24)

When Abraham returned from his victory over Chedorlaomer and the rulers who remained loyal to him, the ruler of Sodom went out to greet him in the Valley of Shaveh, which was royal land. Melchizedek, ruler of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and, being a priest of El most high, he blessed Abraham with these words:

"Blessed be Abraham by El most high, who created the heavens and the earth.
Blessed be Abraham by El most high, who turned the enemy over to you."

Then, Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.

The ruler of Sodom said to Abraham: "Give me the hostages, but keep the rest of the plunder."

But Abraham replied:

"I have raised my hand before Yahweh,
...before Yahweh, Our Creator, who is the most high,
...before Yahweh, Our Creator, who created the heavens and the earth.

"I will not accept even a length of cloth or a single tract of land from you, so you cannot brag: 'I am the one who blessed Abraham.' Forget me. Just repay my warriors for what they have eaten, and give them and my covenant partners who fought with me, Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, their shares of the plunder."

16 5 Abraham Negotiates with Lot (cont.)
(Gen. 14:1-24)

> OTS 2004:54

Slave
Metropolitan Museum of Art
2009-1998 B.CE.
Painted Wood
44 1/8 inches (height)
Romb of Mekutra, Thebes
Dorman 1987:28

The Chief Steward and Chancellor Meketrê, or Mehenkwetrê, was buried at Thebes, in the hillside to the south of the mortuary temple of Mtuhotep II. Wooden statues of the slaves who worked his estate were recovered from his tomb. Hagar, who was the Egyptian slave of Sarah, may have resembled this slave of Meketre.

► OTS 2004:55

Story of Hagar from Beer-lahai-roi (Gen 16:1–16)

> ….Hagar's response to the child's movement is generally translated: "she looked with contempt upon her mistress" (Gen 16:4), but Hagar's words may have originally been a hymn, not an insult. When she feels the child kick, Hagar sings: "I am going to give birth to a wild ass of a man." Mothers regularly celebrate the birth of their children with a hymn like those now preserved in the words of the messenger of Yahweh to Hagar who sings: "he shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin" (Gen 16:12). The Hebrew word commonly translated "to look on with contempt" also has the meaning "to jettison" or "to unload." In the book of Jonah the sailors jettison the cargo of the ship into the sea, to lighten it ~~for them~~ (Jonah 1:5). In the books of Samuel-Kings, the people say to Rehoboam, "Lighten the yoke that your father, Solomon, put on us" (1 Kgs 12:10). Since the messenger describes Ishmael as a wild ass, it would be consistent for Hagar to describe his birth as if she were "throwing" or "dropping" a foal. Her words celebrate the strength and vigor that he began to exhibit even in the womb.

Likewise, the Hebrew word commonly translated as "mistress," and used in reference to Sarah (Gen 16:4), can also mean a "champion" or "stallion." Goliath is a champion of the Philistines (1 Sam 17:51). Yahweh does not "delight in the stallion" (Ps 147:10). ~~At this point in the story, Hagar anticipates giving birth to a champion or a stallion.~~ Hagar compares the kick of her unborn child to the kick of the wild ass common in Syria-Palestine, which was notoriously difficult to break and ride. Hagar's attention is not on Sarah, but on the son she expects. It is Sarah who first taunts Hagar and twists the words of Hagar's hymn when she reports to Abraham. Hagar sings: "I am going to deliver a real fighter" (Gen 16:4), but Sarah taunts: "this pregnant slave is picking a real fight with me" (Gen 16:5).

► OTS 2004:54-58

See: Gen 21: 8-14

[8] The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. [9] But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac.[a] [10] So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." [11] The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. [12] But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. [13] As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." [14] So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

[a] Gk Vg: Heb lacks *with her son Isaac*

The motif of a woman carrying a new born on her back in the Story of Hagar from Beersheba (Gen 21:1-21) also appears on a vase recovered from Tomb 949 at Abydos, Egypt.

Women with a Child on her BackVase
British Museum EA 65275
1479-1352 B.C.E.
Alabaster
7 in (H) 3 in (W) 2 in (D)
Abydos, Topmb 949
Catharine H. Roehrig, ed. Hatshepsut: from queen to pharaoh. 2005:241

► OTS 2004:56 (Figure 17)

crisis (Gen 16:1–6)

Sarah, wife of Abraham, could not bear him a child. So, she made a covenant with her slave, Hagar the Egyptian. Sarah said to Abraham: "Yahweh has forbidden me to bear a child. Have intercourse with my slave, and she will bear my child." After ten years in Canaan, Abraham fulfilled Sarah's covenant with Hagar to be her child-bearer. He had intercourse with Hagar, who conceived a child.

Hagar celebrated her pregnancy, singing, "I am going to deliver a real fighter." Consequently, Sarah said to Abraham: "You have caused me to lose face, after I saved your face by providing you a child-bearer. This pregnant slave is picking a real fight with me." Abraham told Sarah: "She is your slave, therefore you must deal with her." Sarah swore: "May Yahweh decide between you and me," and she punished Hagar.

climax (Gen 16:6–8)

Then, Sarah submitted Hagar to a grueling ordeal in the desert, where Hagar sought sanctuary with Yahweh at a spring on the road to Shur. Here a messenger of Yahweh cross-examined Hagar: "Hagar, slave of Sarah, where have you come from, and where are you going?" Hagar answered in her defense, "I want to free my household from the Household of Sarah."

denouement (Gen 16:8–16)

Then the messenger of Yahweh decreed: "Go back to Sarah, your patron, and carry out the labor of childbirth for her. I will make your children so numerous, they will be too many to count. You have conceived and will bear a son and will name him 'Ishmael.' For Yahweh has heard your prayer. This child will be afraid of no one, but everyone will be afraid of him. He will be a real fighter, even when he has to stand alone."

Hagar named the spring "Where I looked for Yahweh," singing: "At Beer-lahai-roi, Yahweh will look after you, and you can look from Kadesh to Bered." She gave birth to a son. Abraham named the son, whom Hagar bore him when he was eighty-six years old, "Ishmael."

Figure 17 Story of Hagar from Beer-lahai-roi (Gen 16:1–16)

> OTS 2004: 57 (Figure 18)

art 129 (Deut 22:22)

If a citizen's wife is arrested in the act of committing adultery,
Then she and her partner are to be tied up and tried by ordeal in a river.
If, however, the woman's husband pardons her,
Then the monarch can pardon his subject.

art 132 (Num 5:11-31; Ur-Nammu 10-11)

If a charge of adultery is made against a citizen's wife, but there is no evidence,
Then she is to be tried by ordeal in the river to restore the honor of her husband.

Figure 18: The Code of Hammurabi
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, forthcoming 3rd revised & expanded edition)

> OTS 2004: 65

Story of Abraham on Mt. Morah
(Gen 21:33—22:19)

For Lippmann Bodoff, "God Tests Abraham, Abraham Tests God" *BRev* 1993: 62 "There are hints in the text that Abraham never intended to kill Isaac. For example, Abraham brings along two young men on the trip, presumably to guard Isaac and him – but why take along potential witnesses to a killing, and why the need for them on a trip at God's command? Going up Moriah, Abraham tells them: 'We [Isaac and I] will …return to you' (emphasis added). When Isaac asks Abraham: 'Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?' Abraham answers, 'God will find *for himself* the lamb…,' instead of 'for us,' suggesting that Isaac was in no danger if the lamb was not found, but God needed the lamb in order to retain his only follower, and the founder of the

world religion that would spread God's message of ethical monotheism." See also: Lippmann Bodoff, "The Real Test of the Akedah: blind Obedience versus Moral Choice" *Judaism* 42 (1993) 71-.

► **OTS 2004:64-69 (*with thanks to John W. Baker, Houston TX, 2007)***

12 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אַל־יֵרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל־הַנַּעַר
וְעַל־אֲמָתֶךָ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלֶיךָ שָׂרָה שְׁמַע בְּקֹלָהּ כִּי
בְיִצְחָק יִקָּרֵא לְךָ זָרַע׃
13 וְגַם אֶת־בֶּן־הָאָמָה לְגוֹי אֲשִׂימֶנּוּ כִּי זַרְעֲךָ הוּא׃

In the Story of Abraham on Mt. Moriah (Gen 21:1—22:19) Yahweh considers the social status of Isaac and Ishmael to be comparable. Neither is rejected. Both Isaac and Ishmael are the seed [zr'] of Abraham. The tradition does not say: Isaac is the son of Abraham; Ishmael is not. Both sons are descendents [zr'].

"In Isaac seed [zr'] will be named for you." (Gen 21:12)

"Of the son of the handmaid I will make a people because he is your seed [zr']." (Gen 21:13)

If *bytshq yqr' lk* means: "offspring will be named in memory of you through Isaac." Thus the two verses (Gen 21: 12-13) are parallel. Yahweh assures Abraham that he will be blessed with many descendents through both sons.

8 The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. 10 So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac."

11 Abraham was worried about his son, Ishmael;
12 So Elohim said: "Do not worry about your son and the slave;

Do what Sarah says tells you to do;
Because Isaac will name his children after you.

13 And I will make the son of the slave a great people;
Because he is also your child."

Yahweh says to Abraham: "Don't worry about your two sons. Through Isaac seed will be named after you. And of Ishmael I will make a people because he is your seed." Do you see that both verses mean the same thing? Peoples were named after eponymous ancestors. Each of the Hebrew tribes had a patriarch who gave his name to that tribe, for example. To be a people and to be named after an ancestor are two ways of saying the same thing. It means *Elohim is going to make a people out of Isaac and a people out of Ishmael*. Abraham's dilemma is solved, because Elohim will do right by both Sarah and Hagar.

► OTS 2004: 66-67, Figure 21

crisis (Gen. 21:1-10)

Yahweh kept the stipulations of his covenant with Sarah, who conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. Abraham named the son to whom Sarah gave birth "Isaac" (Hebrew root: *tsahaq*), and circumcised him when he was eight days old, as Yahweh had stipulated. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born and when Sarah sang:

"Yahweh has made me laugh (Hebrew root: *tsahaq*);
Everyone who hears will laugh with me....
Who would...have said...Sarah will nurse a child?
Yet I have borne Abraham a son in his old age."

The child grew. On the day he was weaned Abraham celebrated a great feast. Then Sarah saw the son to whom Hagar the Egyptian had given birth with Abraham sexually abusing (Hebrew: *metsaheq*) her son Isaac (Gen. 26:8; 39:14-17; Judg. 16:25).

climax (Gen. 21:11-18)

So she said to Abraham, "Expel this slave with her son, for the son of this slave shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." Sarah's indictment of Ishmael troubled Abraham. But Yahweh said to Abraham: "Do not worry about this young man Ishmael and the slave Hagar. Do whatever Sarah asks you to do, because it is Isaac's children who will remember (Hebrew: *qara'*) you. As for the son of the slave, I will make a great people of him as well, because he is your son." So Abraham rose early in the morning...

climax (Gen. 22:1-10)

Abraham planted a sacred tree at Beersheba, which he dedicated to the Yahweh, Our Creator Everlasting Godparent of the sacrifice (Hebrew: *el 'olam*). Abraham remained a stranger in the Lland of the Philistines for a long time. Some time later, Yahweh appeared (Hebrew: *nissah*) to Abraham and said: "Abraham." "Here I am," Abraham responded. Then, Yahweh gave Abraham this command: "Take your son, your heir, Isaac, and depart for the Lland of Moriah, where you will offer sacrifice on the hill which I will reveal to you." So Abraham rose early in the morning...,

...saddled an ass, took his son, Isaac, two slaves, and the wood that he had cut for the sacrifice. Then he departed for the sanctuary that Our Creator Yahweh, the Good Shepherd, would reveal to him.

On the third day, Abraham saw the sanctuary in the distance. Then Abraham ordered his slaves: "Stay here and take care of Ishmael (Hebrew: *hamor*). This young man and I will go on ahead. After we offer the sacrifice, we will return." Abraham let Isaac carry the wood for the sacrifice. Abraham himself carried the flint and steel to light the fire. As the two of them were walking along together, Isaac called out to his father, Abraham: "My father." "Here I am, my son," Abraham replied. "Look. There is fire and wood, but there is no sheep for the sacrifice." "My son, Our Creator Yahweh, the Good Shepherd, will see to it that there is a sheep for the sacrifice." The two of them continued walking along together. When they came to the sanctuary that Yahweh had chosen, Abraham built an altar, and laid firewood on it. Then he raised the steel knife in his hand to sacrifice his son.

denouement (Gen. 22:11-14)

But the messenger of Yahweh called out from the heavens, "Abraham, Abraham!" He said, "Here I am." "Do not sacrifice this young man. Do not harm him. Yahweh, the divine patron of your household, knows that you have placed your heir in his hands." Abraham looked around and saw a ram caught by its horns in the maquis brush. So he went and took the ram and sacrificed it in place of his son. Abraham named the sanctuary "Where I looked for our Creator," where people now sing: "On this mountain Our Creator will look after you."

denouement (Gen. 22:15-19)

Again the messenger of Yahweh called to Abraham from the heavens. This is the word of Yahweh: "Because you would not withhold even your heir from me, I will bless you abundantly and make your children as countless as the stars of the sky and the sand on the shore. I will give your children the cities of their enemies. I will bless all the nations of the earth with your children because you obeyed my command." Abraham returned to his slaves, and they set out together for Beersheba, where Abraham made his home.

21 Story of Abraham on Mt. Moriah
(Gen. 21:1-14+22:1-19)

► OTS 2004: 66, Figure 21

crisis (Gen. 21:1-10)

Yahweh kept the stipulations of the covenant with Sarah, who conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. Abraham named the son to whom Sarah gave birth "Isaac" (Hebrew root: *tsahaq*), and circumcised him when he was eight days old, as Yahweh had stipulated. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born and when Sarah sang:

"Yahweh has made me laugh (Hebrew root: *tsahaq*);
Everyone who hears will laugh with me....
Who would...have said...Sarah will nurse a child?
Yet I have borne Abraham a son in his old age."

The child grew. On the day he was weaned Abraham celebrated a great feast. Then Sarah saw the son to whom Hagar the Egyptian had given birth with Abraham sexually abusing (Hebrew: *metsaheq*) her son Isaac (Gen. 26:8; 39:14-17; Judg. 16:25).

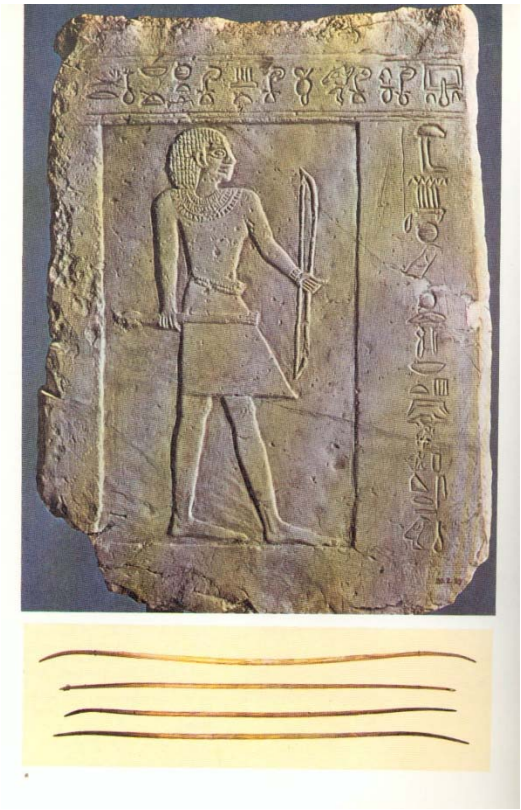
In Hebrew the name "Isaac" (Hebrew: *yishaq*) and the word "laugh" (Hebrew: *tsahaq*) sound the same. They are homonyms -- two words that sound the same, but have different meanings. Therefore, the Story of Abraham on Mt. Moriah puns or plays on the two words both positively and negatively.

Isaac is the child who plays a joke on his parents, Abraham and Sarah, by being born to them when they are old. He is their "little surprise". Therefore, Sarah sings: "Yahweh has made me laugh, and everyone who hears will laugh with me…" (Gen 21:6) The people who made fun of her, or laughed at her, for not having a child, now are celebrating, or laughing, with her because Yahweh gave her a happy child, Isaac, who makes her laugh.

La Gioconda
Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)
Louvre Museum

A laughing pun also appears in the painting "La Gioconda" or "Mona Lisa" by Leonardo da Vinci. The model for the painting is the wife of Francesco del Giocondo. In Italian *gioconda* means "laughing", so da Vinci painted his model with a smile.

►**OTS 2004: 67**



Yigael Yadin, The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands, vol 1 (1963:162-3)

In the Story of Hagar from Beersheba (Gen 21:1-21), Ishmael is celebrated for endowing the household of Hagar with the bow (Gen 21: 20). These ancestor stories are set in the Middle Bronze period (2000-1550 B.C.E.)

The Egyptian father of a household on this tombstone stela in Thebes shows him holding a double convex bow in his left hand and reeed arrows in his right. This style of weapon was popular during the 11th dynasty in Egypt (2134-2040 B.C.E.). Below the stela are four bows made of acacia wood during the same period recovered by archaeologists from the tome of Beni Hasan at Assiut, and from Thebes.

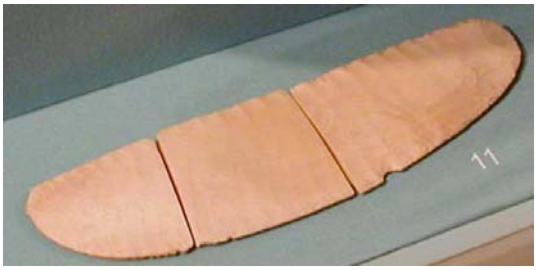
According to Graham Philip, "Weapons and Warfare in Ancient Syria-Palestine" in Near Eastern Archaeology: a Reader: 186-187 edited by Suzanne Richard (2003), "f]lint projectiles are known to have been hunting weapons as early as the Natufian period. Projectiles were less common after the Neolithic, with archaeological evidence only becoming widespread again in

the Late Bronze Age, when numerous metal arrowheads appear. Self-bows, made from a single piece of wood, were an old tradition but had serious limitations. An example from the early fourth millennium B.C.E. was recently found with a burial in the "Cave of the Warrior" located northwest of Jericho. Made from a single length of olivewood, the bow was of double curved form and had a relatively short draw-length, but would have been quite accurate over short distances. However, powerful, accurate wooden bows required suitable wood, were so long as to be immobile, and could not remain strung for long periods. Composite bows, constructed from layers of wood, horn, and sinew were more powerful and could be kept strung. They were also smaller and more manageable than a wooden equivalent. Bows are perishable, of course, and rarely survived.

"Composite bows may have originated in mid-third-millennium Mesopotamia and are mentioned in early-second-millennium B.C.E. texts from Mari under the term *tilpanum*. These texts also include royal orders for as many as ten thousand projectile heads of various weights. Because the glues used require time to dry out, composite bows were suitable for batch-production in large institutional workshops. Their distribution may have been restricted to individuals supplied from those sources.

"Reed was the best material for making arrowshafts, while arrowheads were of metal, stone, bone, or hardwood. From the Late Bronze Age onward, mostly metal arrowheads have been found. Fire arrows too would have been used, especially when walled settlements or buildings were attacked. Sling-bolts are all but absent from graves, although this weapon was certainly used and appears at Mari under the term *wapsum*."

► OTS 2004: 68

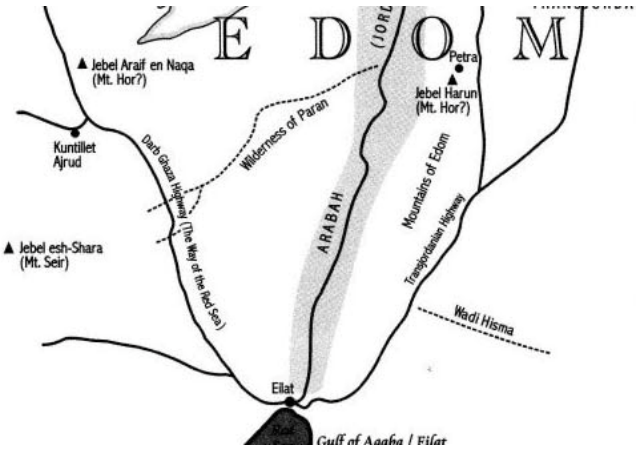


This Pre-Dynastic (3250-3111 BCE) flint knife from Egypt in the Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory University may resemble the knife which Abraham carried both to slaughter the sacrifice and to start the fire on Mt. Moriah (Gen 22:10)

► OTS 2004: 69

From Mt. Moriah Yahweh lets Abraham and Isaac look over the land where Yahweh will look after them. Therefore, Abraham names the sanctuary "Where I looked for Yahweh." It will be the sanctuary where the household of Abraham and Sarah will sing: "On this mountain, Yahweh will look after you" (Gen 22:14) All the land that Abraham and Isaac can see from the sanctuary on Mt. Moriah will belong to the household of Abraham and Sarah. As their heir, Isaac will inherit it all. Ishmael, as the heir of Abraham and Hagar, will inherit all the land that can been seen from the sanctuary at Beer-lahai-roi. The story designates Isaac as heir to the household of Abraham and Sarah, just as the Stories of Hagar designate Ishmael heir to the household of Abraham and Hagar. These ancestor stories celebrate Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar for their faith and perseverance in moving their households from slavery to freedom—from being slaves without land and children, to being free or Hebrew, blessed by Yahweh with the children of Ishmael and Isaac and the lands of Beersheba and Moriah.

The land of Hagar and Ishmael was the Negeb, a steppe -- a vast semiarid grass-covered plain with four hard limestone ridges with three large craters along its southern border with the Sinai Desert. These ridges are some 2000 feet above sea level, and get some 6 inches of rain a year. The Sinai is a deep desert characterized by extreme climate and relative inaccessibility. In the central Negeb are limestone and sandstone ridges running northeast to southwest. The eastern border of the Negeb is the Arabah Valley dropping to some 1000 ft below sea level along the shore of the Dead Sea. Its western border are sand dunes and loess hills -- a fine-grained accumulation of clay and silt deposited by the wind and carried by the currents created by the Nile River.



The Negeb, however, is not empty. People lived here during the Middle Bronze period (2000-1550 B.C.E.), the Iron II period (1000-586 B.C.E.) and into the Common Era. They made their livings from farming, herding and transit trade along the Edom or Shur Highway (Arabic: *Darb el Shur; Darb Gaza*) running from the Mediterranean Coast south and east to Edom. Judah competed with Edom and then with Petra for control of the highway. During the last century before the Common Era Petra controlled the highway and developed trade centers like Avdat. Avdat was of significant commercial importance because of its location at the junction of the highways from Petra and Eilat.

► OTS 2004: 70-71

Stories of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel

(Gen. 25:20—37:2)

The Stories of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel are a window through which to view the Hebrews' struggle for survival in the hostile world of the Iron Age. They remembered these

ancestors the way they understood themselves: survivors who compensated for lack of power by an ability to manipulate the power of others.

Jacob or Israel was a favorite ancestor of a Middle or Late Bronze period people who appear both in the Bible and in traditions from Mesopotamia and Egypt. They lived north of Jerusalem and on both sides of the Jordan River. Jacob's rivals all lived along the frontiers of this area. Esau lived in Edom along the south. Laban lived in Aram along the north and Shechem along the west. Jacob's encounters with his divine patron take place at Bethel (Gen 28:10-22) and Jabbok (Gen 32:23-33), important sanctuaries in the area.

Bethel marks the intersection of two great ancient highways fifteen miles north of Jerusalem. Bethel was a border city separating Israel from Judah. Its sister city, Dan, separated Israel from Syria. For the Israelites, Dan and Bethel were holy cities dedicated to Yahweh. For the people of Judah, however, Dan and Bethel were cities whose worship was sacrilegious, because the Israelites erected golden calves as pedestals for Yahweh in their sanctuaries. The only fitting pedestal for Yahweh, according to the people of Judah was Ark of the Covenant. Bethel belongs to the heartland of ancient Israel where some of the Bible's most-told traditions developed. Near Bethel are Jericho and Ai where villagers celebrated Yahweh's gift of new land to them by telling stories like those in the book of Joshua (Joshua 2–8). Bethel was also part of the territory where the Ark of the Covenant Stories (1 Samuel 4–6; 2 Samuel 6) and the Stories of Samuel were told.

Hebrews laid claim to Bethel with the story of how Abraham Negotiates with Yahweh (Gen. 11:27—13:18) and the Inauguration of Jacob at Bethel. These ancestors celebrate their commitment to their divine patron by erecting a great stone there. In his inauguration, Jacob does not actually see a ladder, but Esagila, a ziggurat or great stepped-platform which the members of the divine assembly use to enter and leave Babylon. The Flood Stories (Gen. 11:1-9) satirize the same ziggurat as the "Tower of Babel." The stories confer the status of the "Gate (*Bab-*) of our Divine Patron (*-Elyon*)" in Mesopotamia on the "House (*Beth-*) of our Divine Patron (*-El*) "in Syria-Palestine.

The villages where the Stories of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel were told were always threatened by rivalry from within and invasion from without. Similarly, Jacob is always embroiled in conflict. He struggles with Esau, his brother, and with Laban, his uncle; with Levi and Simeon, his sons, and even with Yahweh, his divine patron. Storytellers did not wish to remember the household of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel as troublemakers, but as survivors. Their position was never secure and had to be continually defended.

The Hebrews were a people on the margins of their world. Like all marginal peoples, the Hebrews admired the clever who improved themselves at the expense of the establishment. Cleverness was the wisdom of the poor. Therefore, Jacob tricks Esau into selling him his birthright (Gen. 25:19-34), Isaac into designating him as his heir (Gen. 27:1-45), Laban into selling him his sheep (Gen. 30:25-43) and his land (Gen. 31:1—32:3), and even Yahweh into letting him cross the Jabbok into the promised land (Gen. 32:23-33). The household of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel knew how to work the system to their own advantage. Cuneiform tablets from Nuzi, an important Mesopotamian city around 1500 BCE, now document the household of

Jacob's legal sophistication by showing that birthrights could be bought and sold; that oral wills, even when conferred on the wrong beneficiary, were irrevocable; that fathers of households without natural heirs like Laban could adopt an heir like Jacob (Gen. 29:1-30); and that the titles to property belonged to whomever could produce the *teraphim* statues of a household's divine patrons (Gen. 31:19-35).

Jacob, Leah, and Rachel could not only manipulate the powerful, but use nature to their advantage as well. Leah uses mandrake plants to conceive a child (Gen. 30:14-21). Mandrakes are only one plant that the clever in traditional societies use to help the childless conceive. Likewise, Jacob builds a breeding corral from multicolored poles so that his sheep will conceive multicolored lambs. Traditional societies have a wonderful inventory of techniques like this for priming nature to imitate human behavior.

Nonetheless, the Stories of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel are quite balanced in their assessment of cleverness, which is, at best, only a temporary challenge to the establishment. The clever are fugitives at risk. Consequently, the household of Jacob is always on the run, a wandering Aramean (Deut. 26:5-10). Esau (Gen. 27:30-45), Isaac (Gen. 27:46—28:9), and Laban (Gen. 31:1-24) all exile the household of Jacob when they discover their losses. The household of Jacob that outwits Isaac is eventually outwitted by Simon and Levi (Gen. 34:1-31). Their stories do not celebrate cleverness to teach that cheating and stealing is alright for ancestors, but not for ordinary people. Biblical cleverness celebrates the tenacity with which the poor survive and honors the divine patron of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel for helping the poor, rather than supporting the powerful (Gen. 49:24; Isa 1:24; 49:26; 60:16; Ps. 132:3-5).

> OTS 2004: 71

Further Reading

2. The Book of Genesis

(Gen 1:1—Exod 1:6)

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Chapter 3

Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers

(Exod 1:7—Num 27:11)

► OTS 2004:81

The Stories of Moses (Exod 1:7–7:13) portray Moses rehearsing the major events through which he will subsequently lead the Hebrews. Moses goes into the Nile and is lifted up out of the Nile just as the Hebrews will go into the Red Sea and be lifted up out of it. He strikes down one Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, just as Yahweh will strike down all the firstborn in Egypt. He goes into the desert and encounters Yahweh, just as the Hebrews will go into the desert and encounter Yahweh.

Joshua A. Berman, Narrative Analogy in the Hebrew Bible (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 103; Leiden: Brill, 2004) observes that openings and closings of narrative traditions alert their audiences to the presence of an analogical link between two traditions by establishing a word link (Berman 2004: 17). For example, the Inauguration of Moses at Mt. Horeb (Exod 2:23—4:23) and the Covenant between Yahweh and Israel (Exod 19:1—24:18) are traditions where the storytellers wanted to alert their audiences to a relationship between the two events. Both traditions contain similar words and the preamble to each tradition uses the motif of entry into the desert and arrival at the holy mountain (Exod 3:1 and 19:1).

► OTS 2004:83-86

Mowinckel, Sigmund Olaf Plytt. "The Name of the God of Moses." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 32, (01/01, 1961): 121-133.

…the use of the pron. "He" as designation of the deity among the Hebrews is directly attested, viz., in the personal name Abihu (Exod. 6:23; 24:1). …proper names containing *'abi* as first element are theophoric: *abi'el* "(My) Father is (the) God," *'abiyah(u)* "My Father is Yahweh, *'abi asaf* "(My) Father adds" etc. Abihu can then only be interpreted as "(My) Father is He," or "He is (my) Father," where "He" stands for the god of the bearer of the name. A second instance is probably Jehu.

The element *ya-* can only be the abbreviated form of *yahu; hu* is the pers. pron., and the meaning of the name becomes "Yahweh is He."….

…the god concerned is spoken of as "He": "He" *with* whom we have to do in cult and devotion:

"He" whose mystical forces we feel and experience.

"He" whose inmost essence and being we cannot see and understand…

"He" on whom our whole existence depends;
"He" whom we cannot meet without fear and awe;
"He" …again and again cannot help seeking. …whose name we are not worthy to pronounce, …not even to know, because knowing and pronouncing the name means taking possession of and dominating the bearer of the name. The god without a name is an analogy to the god without an image. As the inmost essence and nature of "the numinous" cannot be conceived and expressed in any image, so it can neither be expressed in any name from human language and human world of conceptions. This is not modern feeling only, it is the general and typical way of religious feeling and thinking.

…even the pre-historic ancestors of the North-Sinaitic tribes simply used to call the god of Qadesh-Sinai, whose feast they used to celebrate every year: "He". "Oh He"! — *ya-huwa* — was therefore originally the cultic cry of exclamation and invocation, with which the worshipers met their god, gradually used as a symbolic designation and finally felt to be a name….

…both J and Deutero-Isaiah have come very near to the original essence of the name, the meaning of the Tetragrammaton, each in his own way, however, filling it with a deeper and wider intention, obtained both through the religious history of Israel, through their own personal experiences, and, as far as Deutero-Isaiah is con-cerned, also as a result of the much wider world, within which he saw the activity of God. The history of the name may be expressed like this: originally "He," with whom we have to do, whom we meet in the experiences of the cult. J: "He" who acts in the history of Israel, besides whom Israel shall have no other god; Deutero-Isaiah: "He" who is the only real God in the fullest sense of the word — "He alone."

From this supposed original *yahuwa*, which may have been meant as late as in the *yhwh* of the Mesha' stone, both attested forms *yahu* and *yahwa* can easily be derived as two different abbreviations. The abbreviation of *yahuwa* into *yahu* is quite in accordance with the abbreviation of the pers. pron. 3rd masc. *huwa* into *hu*, which must have taken place rather early, even if the old orthography and pro-nunciation was known as late as in the Qumran texts. The abbreviation *yahu* is the regular form of the divine name both as initial and final element of compound theophoric personal names.

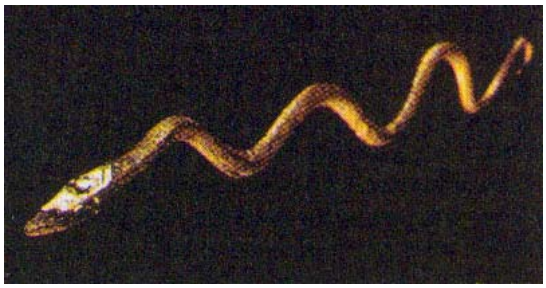
Even the form *yahwa* can be explained linguistically as an abbreviation of *yahuwa*. Because consisting of two words an exclama-tion like *ya-huwa* would naturally have two stresses, the heavier one on *hu*, the lighter one on *ya: yá-húwa.* When the exclamation of the name was repeated, e. g., at the moment in the cult when the congregation would cheer the coming God, …might easily happen and by and by become a traditional usage, that the first syllable of the name was stressed: *yahuwa, yáhuwa.* From such an accentuation the abbreviated form *yahwa* can be explained.

►**OTS 2004:88-89**

Labor of Moses and Aaron against the Priests (Exod 6:2—7:13)

Snakes wind along the side of a silver plated plaque on either side of the Godmother of Hazor. Like the snake staff of Moses in the Death of the First Born of Egypt (Exod 6:2—7:13) and the Nehustan snake in the Creation of the First Born of Israel (Num 21:4-9) the plaque has a fitting so that it can be mounted on a pole. It was recovered from a 14th century BCE sanctuary at Hazor.

Hazor Snakes
BARev 2007 (MarApr): 59



Timna Snake
BARev 2007 (MarApr): 61

The Timnah snake was recovered in a 13-12th century sanctuary in Negev desert. This copper snake with its gilded head stretches five inches. Both the Hazor snake and the Timnah snake may have been both symbols of protection and royal authority. Moses and Aaron use the snake staff given to them by Yahweh to confront the uraeus cobra worn by pharaoh as a symbol of divine authority and divine protection.

In Egypt the uraeus was a golden cobra worn around the pharaoh's head as part of his crown. The cobra identified the pharaoh as the ruler of Egypt and it protected him from his enemies. The Nechushtan snake (Num 21:4-9) may have served the same functions for the ruler of Judah. It identified him as a monarch and protected him from his enemies like the uraeus cobra. The Nehustan snake may also have identified the ruler of Judah as a client of Egypt.

Sennacherib, great king of Assyria, invaded Judah in 701 B.C.E to suppress the rebellion of Hezekiah, the ruler of Judah. He demanded that Hezekiah demonstrate Judah's loyalty to Assyria by destroying the Nechushtan snake (2 Kgs 18:4). Removing this Egyptian symbol demonstrated Hezekiah's renunciation of pharaoh as his patron, and his acceptance of the role of a client of Sennacherib (Kristin Swanson, "A reassessment of Hezekiah's Reform in Light of Jar Handles and Iconographic Evidence." CBQ 64 (2002):460)"

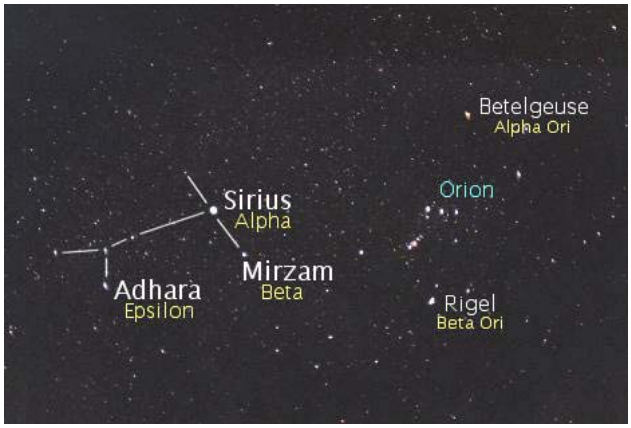
►**OTS 2004:90**

Sirius Still Big Dog of Winter Sky

John Stanley
The Arizona Republic
Feb. 24, 2004

. …Sirius is known throughout the ancient world as the Dog Star, Sirius is part of Canis Major, the Big Dog of the heavens.

Sirius is a fairly big star, about twice the diameter of our sun, but that's not why it appears so bright. After all, millions of stars are bigger. No, Sirius is bright because it's so close, only 8.7 light-years away. Only a handful of stars are closer.



Ancient Egyptians also knew Sirius as the Nile Star, as its appearance in the predawn skies meant the great river would soon be flooding, the event upon which their agriculture depended.

Sirius is easy to find. Just go out an hour or two after sunset and face south. The brightest star you see is Sirius, which forms a rough equilateral triangle with Procyon, to its upper left, and Betelgeuse, to its upper right. (The bright "star" above Betelgeuse and Procyon is the planet Saturn, conveniently located this month for evening viewing.)

The word Sirius comes from the Greek word *seirios* meaning "scorching" or "searing."

Since the sun and Sirius are in the same part of the sky during the summer, ancient observers believed the heat of the two combined to make the season so miserably hot. Even today, we speak of the "dog days of summer."

Sirius seems plenty bright when it's in the south but it can be absolutely dazzling when it's lower in the atmosphere, either rising in the southeast or setting in the southwest. At those times Sirius shimmers and glints like a cosmic diamond, throwing off flashes of red and green and blue that even today result in a surprising number of UFO reports.

The second-brightest star in Canis Major is Mirzam, just to the right of Sirius. Mirzam, a blue giant about 500 light-years away, is known as "the announcer" because it rises shortly before Sirius and in almost the same location, "announcing" the imminent arrival of the Dog Star.

Sirius has a faint companion, a tiny, ultradense star known as a white dwarf. Sirius B, often called the Pup, orbits Sirius once every 50 years but is very difficult to see because it is so close to the much brighter star. The Pup, a slow-burning remnant of a star in the last stages of its

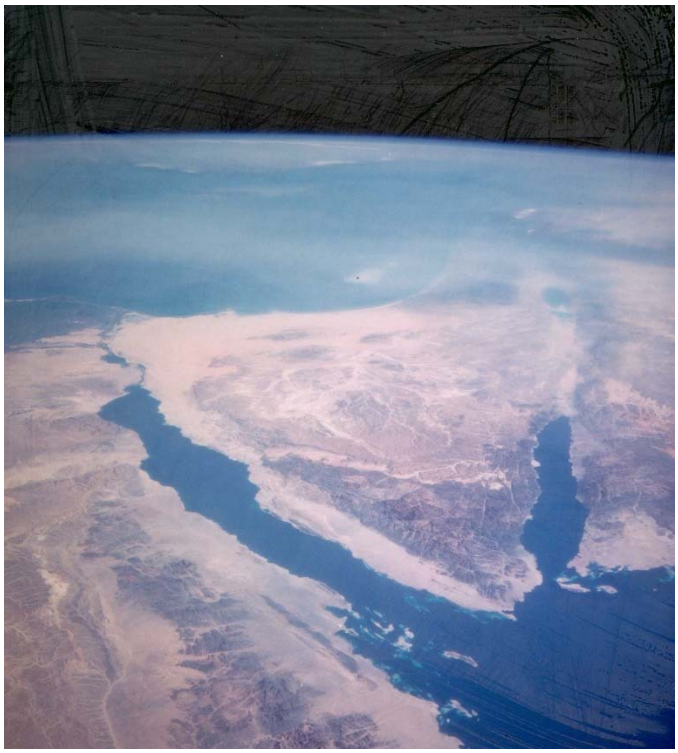
life, is so dense that a teaspoon of it would weigh a couple of tons.

Canis Major is home to M41, a large, easily observed cluster of stars. M41 is what astronomers call an open (or, sometimes, “galactic”) cluster….

Canis Minor, the Small Dog, isn’t much of a constellation. But Procyon, its brightest star, is the eighth-brightest star. Its name means “preceding the dog,” a reference to the star’s rising slightly before Sirius. Procyon is about 11 light-years away.

Both Canis Major and Canis Minor often are described as the dogs that accompany Orion the Hunter across the sky.

► **OTS 2004:95**



The contest between Yahweh, the divine patron of the Hebrews, and Pharaoh, the divine patron of Egypt, takes place at the Red Sea – the Sea at the End of the Earth -- shown here in a NASA photograph taken from the Discovery (STS 51D) launched on April 12, 1985.

Yahweh and Pharaoh meet at the boundary between chaos and cosmos to determine whether the Hebrews are the people of Yahweh or the slaves of Pharaoh.

► **OTS 2004:96**

> Sentencing in the Code of Ur-nammu preferred restitution paid to the victim in preference to punishment inflicted on the criminal. The Hittite Code further refines this aspect of the tradition by commuting death sentences to corporal punishment and sentences of corporal punishment to fines. The covenant between Yahweh and Israel also uses the principle of talion or retaliation, which tailors the punishment to the crime. "Talion" is from a Latin word *talis* meaning "just as." Hence the sentence should be "just as" or "fit" the crime.

According to Pamela Barmash, Homocide in the Biblical World (2005), Mesopotamian society and class identity were built on the assumption of status, so *lex talionis* did not function in their legal tradition in a real sense. Punishment was designed to preserve class status. Mesopotamian laws that may appear to abide by the principle of proportionality, in reality, may

not actually tailor the punishment to the crime. But in Israel *lex talionis* was designed to protect ordinary households, not the elite, so it was taken more seriously.

► OTS 2004: 95-97

"One of the most important contributions to the history of biblical religion is G.E. Mendenhall's discovery of the close analogy between the structor of the early Hebrew covenant between God and Israel and that of Hittite suzerainty tries from the third quarter of the second millennium B.C.E." (William F. Albright, "The Impact of Archaeology on Biblical Research – 1966." In New Directions in Biblical Archaeology: 13. Edited by David Noel Freedman and Jonas C. Greenfield. Garden City: Doubleday, 1969)

► OTS 2004: 113

Crimes that carried the death penalty required that the plaintiff's charge be supported by the testimony of two eyewitnesses. Without two eyewitnesses, the assembly could not use the standard legal remedies to restore the honor of the household. To resolve such a deadlock, traditional cultures use an ordeal. Ordeals allow a decision to be made. In an ordeal, defendants are exposed to strenuous, life-threatening experiences. If they survive, then the divine assembly has cleared them of the charges made against them, and the honor of their households is reaffirmed. If they do not, then their households are shamed.

Decisions must be made for human life to continue. To facilitate making difficult decisions, cultures develop tie-breaking rituals. The results are never absolute. There are always unknowns. When research fails to identify a preference, cultures resort to ordeal. Remnants of ordeals remain in industrial cultures today. Occasionally, lovers still pull petals off a daisy to determine if their love is unrequited. Players still alternate their hands along the handle of a baseball bat to determine which team should bat first, and officials still flip a coin to determine who kicks and who receives at the start of a football game.

Personal coaches today still advise their clients to make decisions, rather than to avoid them. Rhona Abrams (The Costco Connection January 2006:13) offers the following strategies for resolving deadlock, and moving on by making a decision.

New Year's goal: Be decisive

Rhonda Abrams

The Costco Connection (January 2006: 13)

DID YOU HAVE TROUBLE deciding on your New Year's resolutions? Were you stumped choosing between the many ways you could improve your life? If so, let me make a suggestion: In 2006, resolve to be a better decision-maker.

Let's face it: Every day, each one of us is faced with a ton of decisions-interacting with our families and friends, dealing with our businesses or careers, even what to make for dinner. It's easy to become what I call "decide-ophobic."

Decide-ophobia sets in when you must make so many decisions you begin to avoid making any. Here are some ways you can improve your decision-making skills.

• Recognize that any decision is almost always better than no decision. If we neglect to choose, there are usually consequences.

• There's no perfect choice. We often procrastinate, thinking that the perfect option will come along if we wait long enough. It won't.

• You're going to make mistakes. Sure, you'll regret some of your choices. Even some big ones. Allow yourself-and others-to make mistakes; that's part of being human.

• Set deadlines. To avoid procrastination, give yourself a "drop dead" date for making a choice. Allow yourself time to do the necessary fact-finding, but make a decision by your deadline.

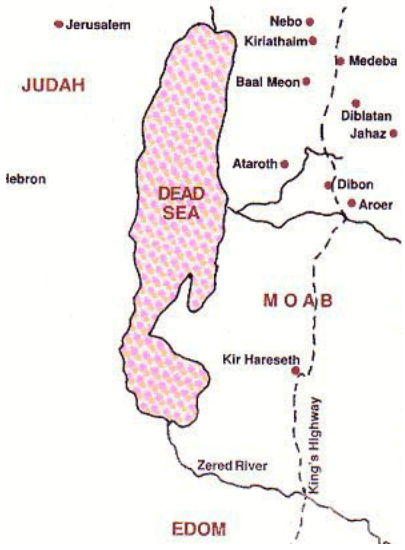
• Give yourself fewer options. I've learned a trick I use when trying to decide something with another person. We list three options -- only three -- and each of us can either choose one or veto one. It's easier to choose when options are limited.

• Get good advisers. You'll make better decisions, especially major choices, when you can consult people you truly trust, whether it's your spouse, friend, accountant, etc.

• Don't second-guess! Once you've made a decision, stick to it!

Decision-making is like any other skill: It can be learned and improved upon. You don't have to remain "decide-ophobic" forever.

► OTS 2004: 116



Moab is a plateau of land that rises three thousand feet above sea level on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. Today, Moab would stretch across central Jordan between the city of Amman in the north to the Wadi Hesa or Wadi Zered in the south. Prevailing winds blowing off the Mediterranean Sea into the desert of Saudi Arabia brought enough rain to Moab so that its farmers could grow wheat and barley, and its herders could graze sheep and goats. Pioneers settled Moab as early as the Neolithic period. During the Early Bronze period Moab was a major civilization center. During the Middle Bronze period and the Late Bronze period, however, there is little archaeological evidence for any stable cultures in Moab, even though Ramses II (1279–1213 B.C.E.) mentions Moab in his description of Syria-Palestine on the walls of the temple complex at Luxor. (http://phoenix.hartifacts.com/karnak/tour1.htm) The Late Bronze period was dominated by great empires like Egypt, Hatti, and Mycenae. Only when competition and war eroded their control of the eastern Mediterranean after 1200 B.C.E. did small independent states like Israel, Edom, Moab, and Ammon begin to appear. They were states, not empires. Edom, Moab, and Ammon developed into states east of the Jordan River at approximately the same time as David developed the villages of Israel to the west.

► **OTS 2004: 117**

I am Mesha from Dibon, ruler of Moab (2 Kgs 3:4). My father, Chemoshyat, ruled Moab for thirty years, and then I became king. . . . Omri, ruler of Israel, invaded Moab year after year because Chemosh, the divine patron of Moab, was angry with his people (Judg 2:14). When the son of Omri succeeded him during my reign, he bragged: "I too will invade Moab." However, I defeated the son of Omri and drove Israel out of our land forever. Omri and his son ruled the Madaba plains for forty years, but Chemosh dwells there in my time. I built the city of Baal-Ma'on with its reservoir, and the city of Qiryaten.

Long ago the tribe of Gad invaded Ataroth, but I defeated them and captured the city of Ataroth which the ruler of Israel had fortified. I sacrificed all of the people of Ataroth to Chemosh (Josh 6:24). I brought the altar of Israel (Moabite: *dwd*) from the sanctuary of Ataroth and mounted it before Chemosh in the sanctuary of Qiryat (1 Sam 5:1-2). Finally, I settled the tribes of Sharon and Maharith in the land which I had taken from Israel to claim it for Moab. At that time, Chemosh said to me, "Go! Take Mt. Nebo from Israel." (Josh 8:1-2, 18, 24-7; 10:42; 1 Sam 23:4) So I deployed my soldiers at night and attacked Nebo from dawn until noon (Josh 7:19-22). I won a great victory and I sacrificed seven thousand men, women, and children from Nebo to Chemosh. I brought sacred vessels from the sanctuary of Yahweh and laid them before Chemosh (Jer 28:3, 6; Dan 1:2). The king of Israel was invading Moab from Jahaz, which he had fortified. Chemosh, my divine patron, drove him out before me. I settled the households of two-hundred of my best soldiers in Jahaz to claim it for Dibon.

I built Qarhoh with gates and towers, a palace and reservoirs. I also decreed: "Every household in Qarhoh is to have its own cistern." I had my prisoners of war from Israel dig the cisterns of Qarhoh (2 Sam 8:2). I built Aroer and a highway through the Arnon valley (Arabic: Wadi el-Mujib). I also rebuilt the cities of Beth-bamoth and Bezer for fifty households from Dibon. I reigned in peace over hundreds of villages which I had conquered … and Chemosh dwelt there in my time. . . . (1 Kgs 16:23-24)

Figure 28: Annals of Mesha
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, 3rd edition; 2006: 167-169)

►**OTS 2004: 77 (Illustration 3)**

Man Riding an Ass
Syria ▪ 2000 B.C.E. ▪ Bronze 13 cm

See OTS 2004: 118-119

The Story of Balaam and an Ass (Num 21:21-35) satirizes Balaam as a seer of the divine assembly who cannot see as well as an ass. Originally, the story was a parable that asked its audience: "Would you rather have the advice of a prophet or an ass?" (Illustration 3) The tellers of the story thought prophets were fools, whose divination, and magic, and visions were only so much theater, successful for getting goods and services away from their clients, but useless for understanding the ways of the divine assembly. The story has litte respect for divination, magic, and visions.

The ass (*equus africanus)* or donkey first appeared wild in North Africa, and was domesticated in the Chalcolithic Age (4300-3300 B.C.E.). In ordinary times the Hebrews did not eat the ass, although under siege by Aram the people of Samaria ate even the head of the ass (2 Kgs 6:25). Likewise, the Hebrews did not sacrifice the ass, but the people of Ugarit, Mari and Arabia sacrificed the ass to seal covenants. In Mari to "kill an ass" meant "to negotiate a covenant." In the Story of Abraham on Mt. Moriah (Gen 21:1-14+22:1-19), Ishmael is called the "the ass" or "the child of the covenant" (Gen 22:5).

In many biblical traditions the ass is simply a standard part of households (Exod 22:9-10; 23:4-5; Deut 22:1-3; 1 Sam 9-10; 2 Sam 16:1-2; Job 24:3, Isa 30:24; Sir 33:25) used for hauling and plowing. The household of Issachar is an ass, who works for others rather than a household working its own herds (Gen 49:14). Samson uses a jawbone of an ass as the unorthodox weapon that identifies him as a hero (Judg 15:9-17).

In some biblical tradtions the ass is a master of chaos. Throughout the world of the Bible, rulers rode on the ass to symbolize that they were the masters of chaos and the stewards of the cosmos for their people (Zech 9:9-13). In the Story of Hagar from Beer-lahai-roi (Gen 16:1-16), Ishmael is an ass -- the child of chaos, who will not serve the household of Abraham as the son of Sarah and will survive without covenant partners in the desert. Likewise, Yahweh challenges Job to explain the behavior of the ass that freely roams the desert without need for the amenities of civilization (Job 39:5-8). In its analysis of the domestic policy of Judah, the book of Isaiah announces that even the city of Jerusalem will return to chaos and become pasture for the ass (Isa 32:14). The book of Jeremiah sentences Josiah and Jehoiakim to die in chaos like an ass dumped outside the city walls. (Jer 22:10-19)

As a character the ass not only allows the story to satirize Balaam, but also emphasizes the urgency of his divine mission. On foot he could have covered some two or three miles per hour. On the ass Balaam could have covered five or six miles per hour, and therefore reached the battlefield more quickly. (B.S.J. Isserlin, The Israelites 2001: 25)

The wise in the world of the Bible observed what was going on around them in the human world and in the world of nature. Even a slave knew that when a saddle-broken ass balks repeatedly something unusal was going on, but Balaam does not. Only after Yahweh approaches Balaam the third time does he even do as well as the ass does. Finally, Balaam sees and responds appropriately. What the ass senses immediately, the prophet only begins to appreciate after preparation. The prophet does not understand Yahweh (Num 22:9-21), and does not even understand the world (Num 22:22-35). If prophets would just repeat the words of Yahweh, they would be of some value, but they do not (Num 20, 35).

►OTS 2004: 123

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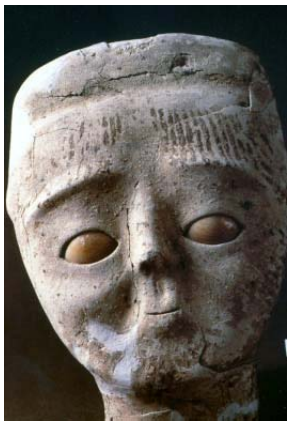
Chapter 4

Books of Joshua and Judges

(Josh 1:1—Jkudg 21:25)

► OTS 2004: 134



In some Neolithic burials at Jericho, founded at ‘Ain Sultan about 7000 B.C.E., the skull was removed and treated separately, with the facial features reconstructed in plaster. The removal of the skull from the body and its separate burial was widely practiced in the Levant during the seventh millennium BC. Here the lower jaw was removed and then the skull was remodeled with plaster to build up the facial features. Shells, either cowries or other bivalves, were set into the empty sockets to represent the eyes. The skull was decorated with red and black paint to depict individual characteristics such as hair and even moustaches. Similarly plastered skulls have been found at other Neolithic sites throughout Syria-Palestine. The practice may have been part of an ancestor cult. See: http://www.usyd.edu.au/nicholson/collection/jericho.html

Jericho was once thought to be a unique settlement during the Neolithic period (8500-4300 B.C.E.) here in Syria-Palestine. New discoveries at sites like ‘Ain Ghazal, however, indicate that Jericho may have been a western settlement in an impressive league of Neolithic cities at the north end of the Dead Sea. These statues were found at the Neolithic site of ‘Ain Ghazal, in central Jordan during excavation in 1983. Their similarity to the plaster coated skulls at Neolithic Jericho may link the two cultures.

Excavation has produced information showing that ‘Ain Ghazal, measuring approx. 30 acres was occupied for more than 2000 years as a farming settlement. ‘Ain Ghazal is thought to have been founded around 7250 BC in the mid pre-pottery Neolithic B and abandoned around 5000BC. Archaeological evidence gives an insight to the changes witnessed across three major periods: Pre-pottery Neolithic B (PPNB), Pre-pottery Neolithic C (PPNC) and the Yarmoukian phase of the Pottery Neolithic. See: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/frontpage/tubb.htm

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► OTS 2004: 134

The ritual of using human skulls to maintain communion between the living and the dead who become helpers for the living is not limited to the prehistoric ancient Near East.

Finding new uses for old craniums

Bolivians hope empty skulls fill up with luck

By Fiona Smith
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LA PAZ, Bolivia - It's a tradition people outside Bolivia might find creepy: families perch human skulls on altars, revering them and asking them for protection and good luck.

On Tuesday, the skulls were gussied up and taken to cemeteries, where the families crowned. them with flowers and filled their jaws with lit cigarettes.

The chapel in La Paz's main cemetery was filled with hundreds of people jockeying to get their skulls, or natitas, in a good position for a special annual Mass. Thousands more people gathered outside.

"I was scared of them at first, but now I realize I was scared because I wasn't taking care of them," said Shirley Vargas, who brought two skulls, whom she calls Vicente and Maria, to the Mass. "Now, I keep them in my room with me. I love them a lot, and they have helped our family when we've had problems."

Milton Eyzaguirre, an anthropologist, said Bolivians are now more willing to bring out their

skulls than before. "People are bringing back the idea that we're not separated from the dead ...but that life and death are always connected," said Eyzaguirre, a curator at La Paz's Museum of Ethnography and Folklore.

The tradition reflects the force of pre-Hispanic belief in this poor country whose population is majority Indian; the Roman Catholic Church has chosen to recognize this and other non-Catholic traditions as a way of retaining its own influence.

On Tuesday, people of all ages entered the chapel carrying skulls in fancy glass boxes or on silver platters. Others used plastic bags, shoeboxes or baskets. Most of the skulls were decorated with bright knit caps, cotton wool in the eyes and crowns of red roses and hydrangeas.

Vargas said she got her skulls from a medical student. She believes that they helped her father recover from a chronic back problem.

The ancient Andean belie is that people have seven souls, and one of them stays with the skull, Eyzaguirre
said. This soul has the power to visit people in their dream: and provide protection.

Eyzaguirre said he began believing in the skulls when a building at the museum collapsed, killing four construction workers, after he moved out some skulls without proper ceremony. The museum staff held a ceremony, offering food and drink, and he has had no problems since the curator said.

Some Bolivians also credit the skulls for success in business and with family.

Rubita Montano believes her *natita* helped her recover $4,000 in stolen money. On Tuesday she sat in a grassy patch in the cemetery and handed bags of coca leaves to strangers who prayed to the skull, named “Tatiana Dumas”.

Montano said she bought the skull at a cemetery. It's common for cemetery workers to take skulls from graves when relatives either abandon their dead or stop paying cemetery bills, Eyzaguirre said. The practice isn't legal, but officials turn a blind eye to it.

"She's like a daughter or a sister in my house," Montano said as she chewed coca leaves and arranged lit cigarettes in the skull's mouth.

http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1292861

► OTS 2004: 141

Each household that joined Israel brought its own exodus stories describing their liberation from slavery by Yahweh. These stories were their profession of faith that “Yahweh is Lord!” Converts not only needed to know the Death of the First Born of Egypt (Exod 1:7—

13:16) and the Creation of the Firstborn of Israel (Exod 13:17—Num 27:11), they need to tell their own stories as well. The Books of Joshua and Judges preserve many of these hero stories.

In the Christian New Testament the Book of Acts is parallel to the Books of Joshua and Judges in ancient Israel. Here the Jews who became Christians retold their stories of being crucified and raised from the dead. Stephen is stoned to death executed (Act 7:1-60) and the apostles are miraculously freed from prison (Acts 5:17-42).

► OTS 2004: 146

Deborah Delivers Israel from Hazor

(Judg 4:1–16 +5:31)

…Just as the powerless in developing nations today associate the powerful in industrial societies with business suits, briefcases, and eyeglasses, the village cultures like Israel associated the powerful city cultures like Hazor with chariots. The Hyksos introduced chariots in Syria-Palestine during the Middle Bronze period. Although the Hyksos were a federation of more than one ethnic group, they ~~the Hyksos~~ were a~~re~~ primarily a Semitic people. As many as four animals drew a war chariot, which had either two or four wheels. The crew of a chariot included a driver and a warrior and sometimes a shield-bearer. The Hyksos developed an entire social system around the chariot. Only Hyksos chariot warriors like the people of Hazor were eligible to become landowners for whom local villagers like the Hebrews farmed and grazed animals....

But see James K. Hoffmeier (Trinity International University):

"…The first clear reference to a chariot in an Egyptian text is one driven by King Ahmose in the war of liberation against the Hykso (Pritchard 1969, number 233), and there is no mention of "Hyksos" chariotry. The word *htry* in Kamose's earlier campaign again the Hyksos capital, Avaris, has been rendered "chariotry" (Pritchard 1969: number 554), but this translation appears to be incorrect (Schulman 1980: 112-113). It is disappointing that Aldred (1987: 140) did not include the information about the Austrian excavations at Tell el-dab'a, thought to be the Hyksos capitalof Avaris… (Bietak 1975, 1979)"

FURTHER READING

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Schulman, A.R.
1980 "Chariots, Chariotry and the Hyksos." Journal fof the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities. 10, 2: 105-153.

► OTS 2004: 146

The story introduces Deborah as "wife of Lappidoth" (Judg 4:40. Beyond this title, however, Lappidoth appears nowhere elkse in the Bible. It would be more characteristic of the hero story if "wie of Lappidoth" were translated as "woman of fire." Saul is tall, David is ~~ruddy~~ handsome, Ehud is left-handed, Samson is mucular, and Deborah is a "torch." She has red hair.

Similar nicknames are still applied to politically assertive women.

"During an assembly session in [Caracas, Venezuela] last September [2005], a roiling, deafening tumult was in progress, but Iris Varela was one of the few *asambleistas* who was not yelling, arguing, and otherwise ignoring the assembly president's repeated pleas for silence and respect. Varela, one of Chavez's key operators on the assembly floor, was instead taking notes, and listening, and talking into the chairman's ear. She is known as *Comandante [Cerilla* (English: The Head of a Match)] for her red hair and inflammable temper, and after less than a minute of conversation I understood the nickname but found her hard to dislike -- she was so young and dead earnest and lively. In a common room where we could hear each other, I asked in what way she thought that *chavismo*, [the political vision of Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela (2002-),] …. could guarantee the rights of the opposition?" (Nat Geo 209 (Apr 2006): 101-102)

► OTS 2004: 147

Sisera is the commander of the chariots at Hazor. Barak is the chief designated by the ~~Hebrews~~ warriors from Naphtali and Zebulun. The story keeps its audiences in suspense. Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman (Judg 4:9), but will it be Deborah or Jael?

After the warriors of Hazor have been routed, Sisera also seeks asylum at the sanctuary. It is the sanctuary, not the camp of Heber, that offers Sisera protection. When he finds the household of Heber already at the sanctuary, Sisera tries to take over the household of Heber to restore the fortune that he has lost in battle. To take over the household of Heber, Sisera must rape Jael, the mother of the household. David uses the same strategy when he rapes Bathsheba to take over the household of Uriah (2 Sam 11:1–17). Likewise, Amnon rapes Tamar to take over to the household of Absalom (2 Sam 13:1–22), and Absalom rapes ten wives of David to take over the royal household (2 Sam 16:15–22).

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Sisera misunderstands Jael's courage. At precisely the moment that he has fallen into the power of a woman (Judg 4:9) he assumes that she is now in his power. Unaware that he is in danger, Sisera orders Jael to wait on him like a slave by bringing him a drink. If Sisera were Jael's guest, he would not ask her for anything. She "opens a skin of milk and gives him a drink" (Judg 4:19). Abraham offers his guests "a morsel of bread" (Gen 18:4–5), and then upgrades it to pastry, a calf, curds, and milk, but Jael is not a host providing the best for her guest. When Jael gives Sisera milk to drink, she is a hunter stalking prey. Jael manipulates Sisera, not by treating him like a child, but by distracting him as if he were her lover. Goat's milk is a wedding drink with which a man and woman toast their marriage. Milk ~~is~~ also contains lactic acid, which soothes away the anxieties that prevent sleep. Sisera drinks the milk to prepare for sex. Jael serves the milk to prepare him for the sleep of death (Judg 16:14–19; CTA 19.213–224).

> OTS 2004: 152 ***(with thanks to Galit Cooke ASU 2004)***

A longstanding interpretation of Jael Delivers Israel from Harosheth-ha-goiim (Judg 4:17-22) reads the words of Jael to Sisera at the door of her tent as parallel to words of Lot to the strangers at the gate of Sodom. The interpretation argues that both Lot and Jael use the word *(sur)* with the connotation of "to turn in/unto for shelter or refuge." (BDB: 693)

> "Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, 'Turn aside, my lord, turn aside *(sur)* to me; have no fear". (Judg 4: 18, NRSV)

> "The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. He said: 'Please, my lords, turn aside *(sur)* to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash you feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." (Gen 19:2-3, NRSV)

Old Testament Story, an introduction, however, reads the words of Jael as parallel to the words of the people of Jerusalem to their priests and prophets at the doors of their houses. (Lam 4:1-22) Jael tries to turn Sisera away *(sur)* from the door to her tent just as the people of Jerusalem shoo *(sur)* their priests and prophets from the doors to their houses and shun *(sur)* them as if they were lepers,

> "Blindly they [the priests and prophets] wandered through the streets, so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments. 'Away! *(sur)* Unclean!' people shouted at them; 'Away! *(sur)* Away! Do not touch!' So they became fugitive and wanderers; it was said among the nations, 'They shall stay here no longer.' (Lam 4:15)

For Lot *sur* is an invitation; for Jael *sur* is a warning. Lot invites the strangers to pause *(sur)* from their journey in his house. Jael pleads with Sisera to abandon *(sur)* his plan to rape her and confiscate the household of Heber. The strangers are heading for the gates to spend the

night, and Lot asks them to "turn away"' from that destination and come into his house. Sisera is heading for the tent of Jael to lay claim to the household of Heber, and Jael warns him to "turn away" for his plan.

Old Testament Story, an introduction, also reads the words of Jael as parallel to the words of Abner to Asahel (2 Sam 2: 12-32) during the battle of Gibeon. Abner is the chief of the warriors of Saul. Asahel fights for Joab, chief of the warriors of David. Abner is fleeing after his warriors have been defeated by Joab. Asahel runs after him, and wants to kill him. Abner, like Jael, warns Asahel to quit *(sur)* chasing him.

> "Now Asahel was as swift of foot as a wild gazelle. Asahel pursued Abner, turning neither to the right nor to the left as he followed him. Then Abner looked back and said, 'Is it you, Asahel?' He answered, 'Yes, it is.' Abner said to him, 'Turn *(sur)* to your right or to your left, and sieze one of the young men, and take his spoil.' But Asahel would not turn away *(sur)* from following him. Abner said again to Asahel, 'Turn away *(sur)* from following me; why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I show my face to your brother Joab?' But he refused to turn away *(sur)* So Abner struck him in the stomach with the butt of his spear, so that the spear came out at his back. He fell there, and died where he lay." (2 Sam 2:18-23)

Like the words of the people of Jerusalem to their priests and prophets, and the words of Abner to Asahel, the words of Jael to Sisera are not an invitation, they are a warning.

> "Jael came out of her tent and challenged Sisera: 'Sir, this is your last chance. Put your plans to seize this household aside *(sur)*. If you leave me alone, no harm will come to you.' Sisera, however, pushed Jael aside *(sur)* and barged into her tent. (Judg 4:18, author)

Once Jael's opening words to Sisera are heard as a protest rather than as an invitation the significance of her actions become clear. Patterns of hospitality in the world of the Bible make it clear that Jael is never a host, and Sisera is never a guest. Sisera is a warrior trying to rape Jael and confiscate the household of Heber. Jael is a hero defending her household against him. (Matthews and Benjamin 1993: 82-95) Throughout the story Sisera treats Jael with disdain. He never speaks to her as the woman on whom his life depends. Sisera is typical of the powerful who cut covenants only in order to survive (Soggin 1981: 77) Like Deborah, Jael is a liminal woman, who acts heroically when men fail to fulfill their responsibilities (Murray 1979:178, 183; Webb 1987:135: Amit 1987:93). Both Deborah and Jael go above and beyond the call of duty as mothers of their households. Both risk their own lives to save their households. When Barak fails to defend Israel against Hazor, Deborah acts. When Heber fails to defend his household, Jael acts.

Heber camps beneath the oak in Zaanannim near Kadesh, a sanctuary where his household will be out of harm's way during the battle. (Judg 4:11) After the chariots of Hazor are routed, Sisera also seeks sanctuary at Zaanannim *(pace* Soggin 1981:67; Halpern 1988: 85).

When he finds the household of Heber there, however, Sisera decides to confiscate it for himself. (Gilmore1987:4).

To lay claim to the household of Heber, Sisera must rape Jael. (Zeid 1966:253: Van Nieuwenhuijze 1971:701) The rape is a legal bid to take over Heber's household. David uses the same strategy when he has intercourse with Bathsheba to take over the household of Uriah (2 Sam 11:1-17). Amnon has intercourse with Tamar to take over the household of Absalom (2 Sam 13:1-22), and Absalom has intercourse with ten diplomatic wives to take over the household of David (2 Sam 16:15-22). Every action and reaction in the story pivots on Sisera's plan to rape Jael (Zakovitch 1981:370-71).

If Sisera were a stranger seeking hospitality he would have approached Heber, not Jael. A wife may share the tent of her husband, but a man with more than one wife was expected to provide each with a tent (Ahmed 1973:79). The story assumes Jael has a tent to herself.

If Sisera were a stranger seeking hospitality he would not have to sneak into the camp. There are always warriors in camp to protect the women and animals (Pehrson 1966:85). Whether Heber was present or not, warriors would have been at the camp to protect Jael. The story assumes that Sisera approaches Jael's tent unnoticed. The expression *(beraglayw)* means "on foot" or "secretly". Sisera does not approach Jael the way Abraham's slave approaches Rebekah. (Gen 24:17) The slave approaches a woman at a well in public, not at her tent in private. Jael confronts the intruder who has entered her camp just as Jezebel confronts Jehu when he eludes her bodyguards and trespasses into the palace (2 Kgs 9:31).

By forcing his way into Jael's tent Sisera does not merit the protection accorded a guest. He shames Heber by approaching Jael's tent uninvited and in complete disregard for her protest. Sisera is not in an agitated mental state after the failed battle: he is clear thinking and calculating, and he plans to use Jael to restore the fortune which he has lost to Deborah. He plans to revenge his loss to one women, with the rape of another woman. This action, freely taken, marks him as a danger which must be dealt with by any means at hand.

If Sisera had entered Jael's tent as a guest she would have washed his feet (Gen 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; Judg 19:21). Jael does not omit washing Sisera's feet because such a leisurely and relaxing task was inappropriate in the middle of Barak's and Deborah's hot pursuit of Sisera. The omission of the foot washing clearly indicates that Sisera has not been granted true guest status.

Although most translations say Jael "covered him with a rug" (Judg 4:18), there is no precedent in this gesture connected with hospitality. It is more likely that "she closed the curtain of the tent flap (*semikah)* behind him" (Soggin 1981:67: Bal 1988:122). After Sisera barges past her into the tent Jael neither runs nor screams for help. She coolly and decisively steps into the tent behind Sisera and draws the rug across the entryway. She confronts the enemy of her household alone.

Sisera is undaunted by Jael's courage. Mistakenly, he assumes he is safe and that the household of Heber is now in his power. In reality, it is precisely at this moment that the great

warrior, stained with mud and sweat, has fallen into the power of a woman. Deborah's prophecy that "Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (Judg 4:9) has been fulfilled.

Sisera orders Jael to wait on him like a slave. He commands her to bring him a drink and guard the door. If Sisera were Jael's guest he could not ask her for anything. In contrast, when Abraham's slave asks Rebekah, "give me a little water to drink from your jar" (Gen 24:17), he is not a guest addressing his host. By requesting a drink he is seeking access to a natural resource of the village (Matthews 1986:121). The well functions as communal property and thus any member of the village may be approached for access to the water. Rebekah's response to Abraham's slave in giving him a drink and watering his camels is not the offering or granting of hospitality, only the extension of temporary water rights. The fact that the slave's test to find Isaac a proper bride included the provision that the woman would also water his camels (Gen 24:14) suggests that Rebekah's generous action was an unexpected one, thus not part of any ritual expectation or obligation.

Skillfully manipulating Sisera's false sense of security, Jael responds by treating him like a child: she "opens a skin of milk and gives him a drink" (Judg 4:19). Jael fills Sisera's order for the simple necessity of water with the luxury of fermented goat's milk. Upgrades are part of the protocol of hospitality, but only on the part of the host. Hosts fulfill their responsibility to provide the best possible food for their guests by offering something simple, and then upgrading it. Abraham offers his guests "a morsel of bread" (Gen 18:4-5), and then upgrades it to three measures of fine meal made into cakes, a calf, curds, and milk (Gen 18:6-8). Nonetheless, since it is Sisera who orders the water, Jael's response has nothing to do with fulfilling the obligation of a host to provide the best for guests. Jael would have had to offer a little water and then upgrade it to milk.

When Jael gives Sisera milk to drink she repeats the challenge she issued by drawing the rug over the entry to her tent and courageously takes another step to trap and kill him (Cundall 1968:95). Her offer is not a gesture of a host, but the strategy of a hunter. Milk is an aphrodisiac with which a husband and wife toast their marriage (Bat 1988:62-63). Milk is also a soporific whose lactic acid soothes away the anxieties which prevent sleep (Boling 1975:98). Tellers exploit both associations. Sisera drinks the milk to prepare for sex while Jael serves the milk to prepare him for death.

Jael stalks Sisera the way Judith stalks Holofernes in Judith (Judith 12-13) and Pughat stalks Yatpan in the story of Aqhat from Ugarit (CTA 19.205221). With deliberation, Jael closes in on her prey. She closes the curtain to her tent, she serves him milk, and finally she tucks him into bed. Like Jael, both Judith and Pughat serve their enemy drink, and both provide an alluring and beguiling picture to further cloud their victim's mind. Each woman hunts and kills her enemy to set their households free (Hendel 1987:90-94; Gaster 1969:260). What the men of their house holds -- Barak, Danil, Heber, Uzziah -- could not do, these women accomplished on their own.

Hosts regularly guard the door to protect their guests. Rahab, for example, guards the door to protect her two guests (Josh 2:4-6). The slave woman at En Rogel does the same for Jonathan and Ahimaaz (2 Sam 17:17-21). But a guest can never order a host to stand guard.

Sisera's order does not remind Jael of her responsibility as a host but dramatizes his helplessness as a fallen warrior. The same audience who first met Sisera as commander of the nine hundred chariots of Hazer (Judg 4:2-3) now listens to him crying out to the woman caring for him like a child afraid of the dark (Bat 1988:92). He is alone and helpless, and yet he continues to command Jael as if she were a soldier in his now vanquished army.

Sisera's helplessness is further played out in the words which he orders Jael to pass on to those who approach her tent. "If anyone comes and asks you: 'Is there a man in this woman's tent? Say, No!" The word (*'is*) is carefully chose. It can mean both "anyone" and "a man". This once-great warrior can now unwittingly admit that he is no longer a man (Judg 4:20; Bat 1988:123). Sisera orders Jael to lie, but she can use his exact words and tell the truth, which the audience already knows (Webb 1987:135).

Sisera falls asleep. Similarly, Samson sleeps in Delilah's lap (Judg 16:14, 19): Yatpan passes out before Pughat (CTA 19.213-224). Jael, Delilah and Pughat are all heroes who put their enemies to sleep and then to death. Their enemies are totally unaware of their impending deaths. These men think that by making themselves helpless they are saying that their women are powerless even when they are drunk or asleep (Williams 1982:74; Soggin 1981:78).

Jael fetches the hammer and a peg. The same skills and strength which she uses to pitch her tent, Jael uses to defend it. She drives the peg through Sisera's skull with the same speed with which she normally sinks it into the ground.

Jael's weapons are not only functional, they are also symbolic. Protagonists in hero stories always wield unorthodox weapons. Ehud is armed with a two-edged sword (Judg 3:16); Shamgar with an ox goad (Judg 3:31); Samson with a jawbone (Judg 15:15). The motif characterizes them as farmers and herders, not warriors. Nonetheless, they skillfully wield the tools of their peace-time trades to free their households from well-armed invaders. Jael's homespun weapons mark her as an authentic deliverer.

The hammer and the peg are also strong sexual symbols. The male who violated the door of her tent is penetrated by the woman he threatened. Sisera's sentence is designed to fit his crime. His attack on the household of Heber does not need to be consummated with Jael (pace Brenner 1985:11920). From a legal point of view, Sisera is guilty of rape the moment he passes through the door of her tent. The door is a common sexual symbol as love songs from both Egypt (Papyrus Harris 500) and the Song of Solomon (Cant 5:4) indicate.

Sisera never succeeds in having sexual intercourse with Jael. He is crazed, but impotent. Sisera "falls between her legs" (Judg 5:27), as much a failure against Jael (Bal 1988:120) as he had been against Deborah (Judg 4:15). On neither field does he mount a successful assault.

Sisera is a dead man from the moment he appears in the story. He tries to bring shame upon Barak and Heber and instead suffers the shame of death at a woman's hand (Judg 9:53). His death is not only inevitable, but expected and justified.

Like Deborah who leads Barak to Sisera on the battlefield (Judg 4:14-16), Jael now leads Barak to Sisera on the floor of her tent. The episode frames the two stories and draws them to a close. This final episode in the story of Jael (Judg 4:22) creates a frame with the opening episode (Judg 4:18) around the story (Bal 1988:92). In both, Jael "came out to meet" a stranger.

Jael does not misuse hospitality to lure Sisera to his death. On the contrary, it is Sisera who violates hospitality, bringing shame on himself and his household. Each of Jael's actions is carefully chosen to reflect both the gentle nurture of a mother tending her young and the fearless courage of a mother defending them. In this way, the story consciously acknowledges both qualities in honoring Deborah and Jael as "mothers in Israel" (Judg 5:7: Williams 1982:73). Deborah and Jael are honored as heroes for delivering their households left in harm's way by men. Mothers in Israel were selfless not only in birthing and rearing their children but in protecting them from harm.

In contrast, the mother of Sisera pines selfishly for the child who will feed and protect her (Judg 5:28-30: Bal 1988:64). The irony in the conversation between her and the women of her household is exquisite. The women rationalize Sisera's delay by assuming her warrior son is busy handling the two women he has won in a single day (Judg 5:30). Meanwhile, the audience knows that Sisera has fallen into the hands of two women in a single day. The women tell the mother of Sisera that her loving son will arrive shortly with a bolt of fabric dyed in royal purple for her (Judg 5:30). But the audience knows her son will soon arrive shrouded in the carpet he has dyed with his blood.

Deborah and Jael were "blessed among women" (Judg 5:24). This title confers on two women equal in honor to Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Saul, Jonathan, and David (Gilmore 1987:9: Blok 1981:429). Deborah and Jael were "friends of Yahweh" (Judg 5:31) who set their households free.

(with thanks to Theodore W. Burgh, " 'Who's the Man?': sex and gender in Iron Age musical performance" <u>Near Eastern Archaeology</u> 67 (Sept 2004): 128-136)

No archaeological artifacts have so far been recovered in ancient Israel of people singing, but the Bible strongly suggests that both women and men sang during worship in Iron Age Syria-Palestine (Num 21:17; 2 Sam 19:36; 2 Chr 20:22; 23:12-13).

Miriam and a group of women play frame drums to celebrate Yahweh's victory over Egypt. (Exod 15:20) The tradition presents the picture of an organized ensemble with Miriam as the leader.

Deborah wins a battle over Hazor, and then sings a duet with Barak to celebrate Yahweh's victory (Judg 5:1-31). The Hebrew reads: "and she sang," (Hebrew: *v'atashar*) implying that Deborah does the singing. However, both Deborah and Barak are subjects of the sentence. The combining of Deborah and Barak here suggests that men and women could sing together in worship.

Jepthah's daughter serenades her father to celebrate Yahweh's victory of Ammon. She plays multiple drums, demonstrating adroit ability and possibly learned musical skills similar to Miriam (Exod 15:20) and the prophets who greet Saul (1 Sam 18:6-7).

► **OTS 2004: 158 (Illustration 4)**

Lion Slays a Man
Nimrud ▪ 900-700 BCE ▪ Ivory 10 x 10 cm

See OTS 2004: 158

Double entendre is used throughut the Stories of Samson. Words frequently have more than one meaning. One meaning is always sexual, the other meaning is not. The woman of Timnah is a female lion. She roars or taunts Samson, who, nonetheless, overpowers her. Eating the honey from the body of the lion is a double entendre for Samson's enjoyment of his sexual conquest. (Illustration 4)

Links

Mesopotamian Exhibit at the Universtiy of Chicago's Oriental Institute Virtual Museum
http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/QTVR96/QTVR96_Image_ME_Menu.html

Don Stahlnecker, "The Old Testament and the Ancient Near East: Nimrud" (BST 550, Western Evangelical Seminary)
http://www.seminary.georgefox.edu/courses/bst550/reports/DStahlnecker/Nimrud.htm

Treasures of the Iraq Museum in Bagdad: Traveling Exhibition Photo Archive

http://www.baghdadmuseum.org/treasures/timlist1.htm

>OTS 2004: 161 (Figure 37)

Number 7

His song:

The woman, whom I love, is the lady of a great house.
You enter her house in the center.
The doors are wide open, the bolt is unfastened, (Song 5:2-6)
Because she is angry with her lover. . . .
If she hired me to guard her door,
At least when I made her angry,
I would get to hear her voice,
Even as I tremble like a child.

Egyptian Love Song
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, forthcoming 3rd revised & expanded edition)

>OTS 2004:163

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> OTS 2004: 167 (Illustration 5)

Expectant Mother
Akhziv ▪ 700-600 B.C.E. ▪ ceramic ▪ 23.5 cm

See OTS 2004: 174-175

According to the ritual for legal guardians, the natural child of Boaz and Ruth should be the legal child of Mahlon, Ruth's husband. ((llustration 5) Nonetheless, the women of Bethlehem celebrate the birth of the child, singing: "Praise Yahweh, ...a son has been born to Naomi" (Ruth 4:14-17). Like the words "go back...each of you to your mother's house" (Ruth 1:8), these words are both unexpected and surprisingly feminist. The use of words so emphatically women's words may be characteristic of the liminal condition of widows, who are operating without any relationship to the households of a father, a husband, or a son. It is unlikely that the women, or even the storytellers, name Naomi as the mother of the child in order to erase the memory of Ruth as a sexually forward stranger. The traditions consistently celebrate both Naomi and Ruth as widows, who use their status as liminal women to restore the honor of their common household. Throughout, these women act together, and they act honorably. The names of Ruth and Naomi are interchanged without prejudice to either of them. As liminal women they are entitled to act aggressively to restore the honor of their households. Ruth is a surrogate mother for Naomi. She carries the child for Naomi, who then adopts it from Ruth at birth. Sarah made a similar arrangement with Hagar (Gen. 16:1-16).

>OTS 2004:175

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5. Book of Ruth

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► OTS 2004: 177

The Stories of Samuel, which include the Ark of the Covenant Stories (1 Sam 4:1–7:2), hand on the idealism of early Israel (1200–1000 B.C.E.). The villages of early Israel depended upon Yahweh to lift up a chief to defend them from their enemies. There were no monarchs, no taxes, no soldiers, no slaves, and no cities in early Israel.

In 1983 John L. McKenzie argued that David and Solomon were not Hebrews. ("The Sack of Israel". In The Quest for the Kingdom of God: studies in honor of George E. Mendenhall: 25-34. Edited by H.B. Huffmon, F.A. Spina, and A.R.W. Green). The names "Jesse" and "David" are not Hebrew names. David's bodyguards were not Hebrews, Jerusalem was not a Hebrew city, the Philistines were not David's enemies, they were his patrons. Before David every household in Israel had its own vines and fig trees (Zech 3:10). There was no permanent ruler, no landed gentry, no professional army, no taxation or state labor, no trade. Merchants were "Canaanites" and prostitutes were "foreign women" -- imposed on Israel by David and Solomon. Yahweh had delivered the Hebrews not just from slavery, but from slavery to the state. Solomon's chariot cities were not on the borders to protect Israel from outsiders, but inside Israel to collect taxes and enforce law. David was not a messiah who delivered the Hebrews from their enemies, but a warlord who imposed the harsh conditions of a centralized surplus economy on them.

> OTS 2004: 179 (Illustration 6)

Creation of the City of David
(2 Sam 5:6-16)

Ships of Tyre Unload Cedar for Palace of Sargon II
Khorsbad ▪ 721-705 B.C.E. ▪ Alabaster ▪ 2.83 m

See OTS 2004: 202

The denouement of the Creation of the City of David begins with the construction of the *millo*. Kathleen Kenyon (British School of Archaeology, Jerusalem) pioneered the identification of the *millo* as stone retaining walls creating agricultural terraces on the slopes of the Kidron valley (2 Sam 5:9; 1 Kgs 9:15–24; 11:27; 1 Chr 11:8: 2 Chr 32:5). Lawrence E. Stager (Harvard University) argued that these terraces were not the *millo*, but the "Slopes of Kidron" (2 Kgs 23:4). For Stager the *millo* is a massive five-story-high stone footing first uncovered by R. A. Macalister (Palestine Exploration Fund). Kenyon also partially excavated this foundation, but mistakenly dated it to the Hasmonean period (170–64 B.C.E.). Following 1977, Shiloh excavated this foundation more completely and suggested that what Kenyon dated to the Hasmonean period was merely a stone tower built on top of an earlier, massive, stepped-stone foundation that is the largest human-made structure in Israel. Nonetheless, Shiloh himself was not ready to identify it as the *millo*, but rather as an *ophel* that marked the acropolis in a royal city. Similar ophels have been excavated at Samaria (2 Kgs 5:24), and the stele on which the Annals of Mesha were carved may have been erected on the acropolis of Dibon.

The *millo* in the Creation of the City of David serves the same purpose as the Apsu Palace (Enuma I:71–77) and the Esagila ziggurat (Enuma VI:45–66) in the Enuma Elish Stories. "*millo*," "Zion," and "City of David" are all names for the Great House that David constructs to ratify his victory as the divine warrior over Jebus. A similar use of *millo* appears in Abimelech Delivers Israel from Shechem: "all the elders of Shechem and all Beth-millo came together, and they went and made Abimelech king, under the Oak of Shechem" (Judg 9:6). Other creation stories in the Bible include similar building programs. In the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth, Yahweh builds Eden. In the Stories of Cain and Abel, Enoch builds Irad. In the Flood Stories, the descendants of Noah build Babel. In the Creation of the Firstborn of Israel, the Hebrews build the Great Tent. Building a new world, a new house, a new altar, a new temple, or a new city celebrates the victory of the divine warrior over the conspirator. Therefore, both the Stories of David's Rise to Power and the Stories of David's Successor describe the great monarchs of Israel as the builders of sacred dwellings. The construction ratifies their right to rule.

Besides serving to ratify a monarch's right to rule, these building projects teach the citizens of the new world all the important crafts and trades necessary for survival. Guilds of artists and craftspeople consider their skills to be divine gifts. They were taught their trades by a divine patron so that they could make a living and so they could make a difference in their world. The guilds considered their apprenticeships to have taken place while building the Great House. According to the rabbis, thirty-nine different guilds of Hebrew weavers, tailors, metalworkers, and carpenters traced the origins of their crafts to the days when Yahweh taught them how to build the Great Tent.

The structure of a Great House also outlines the structures of the society at whose center it is erected. Houses are microcosms that model the worldview of those who build them. The temple in Jerusalem, the African dogon, the Pueblo kiva, and the Zuni village are all models of the cosmos celebrated in the creation stories of their respective cultures.

The use of first-growth cedar from the forests covering the Lebanon mountains is an indication that David's Great House is sacred. The cedars of Lebanon were harvested only for the building of houses for members of the divine assembly. One thousand years before David, Gudea of Lagash boasts: "From the cedar forests on the Amanus Mountains, I harvested raft after raft of logs" to construct the House of Ningursu. (Illustration 6)

Just as the members of the divine assembly convene at the Esagila ziggurat to celebrate the coronation of Marduk as a world ruler (Enuma VI:67–120), the Creation of the City of David recounts how Hiram the monarch of Tyre sends messengers to Jerusalem to celebrate the coronation of David as the ruler of the people of Yahweh. According to Josephus and Menander, Hiram was king of Tyre at the end, and not at the beginning, of David's reign. Furthermore, Hiram helps Solomon, and not David, with his royal building projects. Abibaal was monarch of Tyre during David's time. Therefore, the story telescopes the reigns of David and Solomon and their counterparts from Tyre.

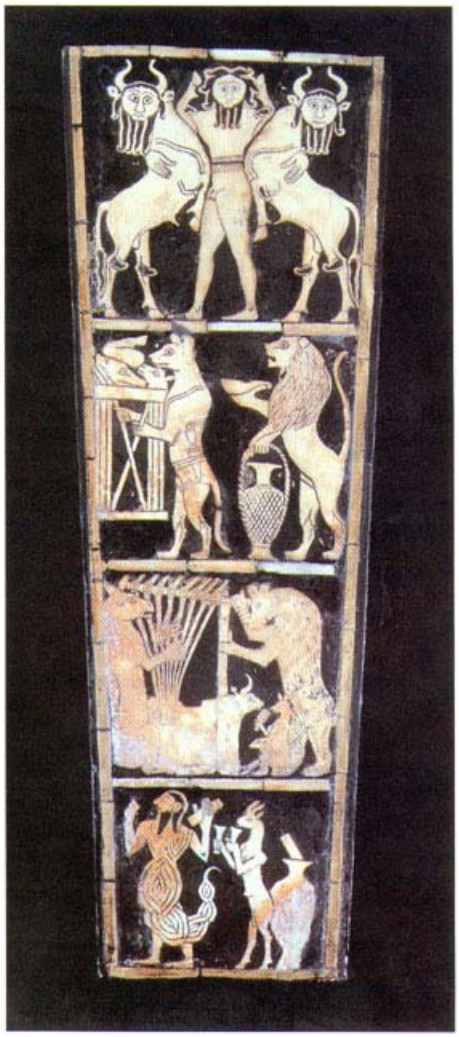
► **OTS 2004:194-195**

In David Delivers Israel from Goliath (1 Sam 17:1-58), David brags that he had killed both a lion and a bear to protect the herds of his household (1 Sam 17:34-36).

> Saul said to David: "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth."
>
> "But David said to Saul: "When your servant herded sheep for his father; and a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth. If the lion or bear turned on me, I would grab its jaw, strike it down and kill it. Your sevant has killed both lions and bears. This uncircumcised Philistine is not different than them. He has defied the armies of the Divine Patron of the Living. Yahweh, who saved me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine."
>
> "So Saul said to David, "Go and may Yahweh go with you." (1 Sam 17: 33-37)

The bear lives in the forest; the lion in the savannah or steppes of the shephelah. The sense of David's boast is that he has never met his match in the forests or Syria-Palestine or on its foothills.

In the third register on the front panel of the Great Lyre recovered from Ur, entertainment at a banquet is provided by an all animal orchestra. An ass plays a lyre while a bear dances. (Treasures from the Royal Tombs or Ur. Edited by Richard L. settler and Lee Horne. 1998:53-57)



Front Panel from the Great Lyres from the King's Grave at Ur

Ur ▪ Shell and Wood
Unviersity of Pennsylvannia Museum
(Rivka Merhav, ed. Treasures of the Bible Lands: the Elie Borowski collection 1987:116)

Combat between lions and bulls is a familiar motif. The earliest example is found in the tomb of Tutankhamun. The Egyptian motif is exported to Phoenicia and Assyria. The lion has jumped onto the back of the bull and sunk its teeth into its neck. The bull tries to buck the lion off its back.

Lion Killing a Bull

Nimrud ▪ 800 B.C.E. ▪ Ivory ▪ 5 cm high, 6.5 cm long
Treasures of the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem

► OTS 2004: 198-199 (Figure 39)

crisis (2 Sam. 5:6)

When David and his warriors attacked Jebus,
They went up against Zion.

The people of Jebus taunted David:

"The blind will see
Before David looks inside Zion,
The lame will walk
Before David marches through the gates of the city."

David retorted:

"Yes, but my warriors will crawl through the *tsinnor*,
Before the lame can stop them.
David will come up behind his enemies,
Before the blind can see him."

climax (2 Sam. 5:7-9)

Then David conquered Zion,
He renamed it "City of David. "
Where the lame never walk through its gates,
Where the blind never see its palace.
David conquered Jebus,
He renamed it "City of David."

denouement (2 Sam. 5:9-16)

Finally, David constructed a *millo,*
He built the City of David on a great foundation..
David grew more and more powerful,
Yahweh Sabaoth was with him.
Hiram sent messengers to David,
Hiram furnished cedar wood for David.
The ruler of Tyre sent carpenters and masons,
He built a palace for David.
Hiram saw that Yahweh had enthroned David,
He recognized David as ruler of all Israel.
Tyre saw that Yahweh had extended David's rule,
Tyre recognized David's reign over Yahweh's people.
David negotiated more great covenants in Jerusalem,
He cut more lesser covenants than in Hebron.
David had more sons and daughters in Zion,
He sired eleven new children:
Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishua,
Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

39 Creation of the City of David
(2 Sam. 5:6-16)

> OTS 203: 196 ***(with thanks to Atis Krigers ASU 2004)***

In David Delivers Gath from Amalek, Saul rescinds his adoption of David and drives him into exile. Undaunted, David courts Saul's opponent, Achish, Philistine ruler of Gath, by delivering Gath from Amalek (1 Sam 27:1—28:2). Achish becomes David's patron and appoints him governor of the Philistine province of Ziklag (1 Sam 27:5-6). The capital of the province ~~**is Ezion-geber**~~ **was Tel Sera'**, about twelve miles northwest of Beersheba. ~~**Ezion-geber**~~ ~~**governs**~~ **Tel Sera'** governed a number of villages and forts like Horvat 'Uzza (Josh 19:2-6; 1 Chr 4:28-31).

> OTS 2004: 198 (Figure 39)

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They went up against Zion.

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Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

39 Creation of the City of David (2 Sam. 5:6-16)

> OTS 2004: 214 (Figure 46)

How graceful are your feet in sandals,
You, fit to marry a king!
Your rounded thighs are like jewels,
The work of a master hand.
Your navel is a rounded bowl,
Full forever with wine.
Your belly is a heap of wheat,
Wreathed with lilies.
Your breasts are like matched fawns,
Twins of a gazelle.
Your neck is like an ivory tower.
Your eyes are like sacred pools at the gate of Heshbon.
Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon overlooking Damascus.
Your head crowns you like the Carmel Mountains,
Your hair flows like drapes of royal purple.
A king is the prisoner of your braids.

46 Tour-Burlesque of the Woman's Body (Song 7:1-5)

> OTS 2004: 215 (Figure 47)

Teaching NINE

xi:12 -- xiii: 9

Do not take counsel with fools, (Prov 14:7)
Do not seek their advice.
Do not speak back to superiors,
Do not insult them.
Do not let superiors discuss their troubles with you,
Do not give them free advice.
Seek advice from your peers, (Prov 19:20)

Do not ignore your equals.
More dangerous are the words of fools (Prov 22:24-25)
Than storm winds on open waters
Foolish words destroy…
Foolish advice deserves a beating.
Fools dump their cargo on the whole world,
But their shipments are weighed down with lies.
Fools deliver fraud;
They ship quarrels….

Fools cause neighbors to quarrel,
Fools are clouds blown by the winds of the moment…
The words of fools sound sweet,
But they taste sour…

Therefore, do not rush after fools,
The words of fools will drown you like a strong wind.

Figure 47 Teachings of Amen-em-ope
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, forthcoming 3rd revised & expanded edition)

►OTS 2004: 224

The Stories of Elijah

(1 Kgs 17:1—22:40)

Archaeology enriches the Stories of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1—22:40) in a number of ways. First, the Carmel Mountains and Jericho were two important Natufian sites, and both appear in the stories as important sites for Elijah. Second, Elijah is a champion of the kind of village culture the Natufians perfected, and an opponent of the centralized urban cultures introduced in the Bronze Age. (3300-1200 B.C.E.) Third, like the Natufians, Elijah confronts a prolonged drought. Fourth, Elijah builds a Natufian platform to mark the sacred center of the Carmel Mountains to link the heavens and the earth. Fifth, Elijah mimes a Natufian burial to end the drought and summon the rain.

Elijah Divines Rain on the Carmel Mountains (1 Kgs 18:1-2+17-39) takes place at a prominent Natufian site. "Mt. Carmel" is not a single mountain, but a range jutting north and west into the Mediterranean Sea. The mountains are 13 miles long, 5-8 miles wide, and 556-1800 ft in elevation.

The Carmel Mountains were a fitting location for telling stories that will bring a long drought to an end. It was to the Carmel Mountains that the Natufian people withdrew at the onset of the Younger Dryas Cooling at the end of the Pleistocene era (10,300 B.C.E.) These mountains have a long history as a place to wait for rain. These mountains were also the home to the Natufian people who survived and thrived – a fitting model for the Israel that Elijah calls back to life.

Carmel Mountains

The Carmel Mountains were not the only Natufian site associated with the Stories of Elijah. Jericho also appears as the site where Elijah inaugurates Elisha as his successor. (2 Kgs 1:1-18) The Carmel Mountains and Jericho were the sacred centers of the world of Elijah, not the great cities of Samaria, Megiddo and Hazor.

The Zinman Institute of Archaeology at the University of Haifa is the curator for a series of excavations and restorations of early human sites in the Carmel Mountains (http://arch.haifa.ac.il/excav.php). The Valley of the Caves (Hebrew: *Nahal Me'arot*) is located on the western slopes of of the Carmel Mountains, some 12 miles south of the city of Haifa. The first were excavated in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1960s excavations were renewed.

A million years of human evolution appeas in the four caves and rock-shelters in the valley: the Oven Cave (Arabic: *Tabun*) , the Camel Cave (Arabic: *Jamal*), the Valley Cave (Arabic: *El Wad*) and the Goat Cave (Arabic*: Skhul*). The earliest were settled during the Lower Palaeolithic period. Several well-preserved burials from the Middle Paleolithic period contain the remains of two very different species of humans *(*Latin*: homo): *Neanderthals (Latin: *homo neanderthalensis*) and Cro-Magnons (Latin: *homo sapiens*). Neanderthal humans appear in Africa and then Europe as early as 300,000 B.C.E. Cro-Magnon humans appear about 100,000 B.C.E. Both species appear in the same regions about 50,000 B.C.E., but by 30,000 B.C.E. Neanderthals are extinct. Until recently paleontologists had not evidence the two species intermarried. Therefore, the Cro-Magnons either adapted more successfully than Neanderthals to the changing environment of the earth or they hunted the Neanderthals to exitinction. Finding the remains of both species in the Carmel Mountains living and dying peacefully together indicates that the species were not enemies. Now genetic paleontology is discovering evidence that Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons not only lived together in the same regions, but that they also intermarried.

Neanderthals, humans appear to have mated

John Noble Wilford
New York Times (November 5, 2006)

Scientists have found new genetic evidence that they say may answer the longstanding question of whether modern humans and Neanderthals interbred when they co-existed thousands of years ago. The answer is: probably yes, though not often.

In research being published online this week by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (http://www.pnas.org), the scientists reported that mating between Neanderthals and modern humans presumably accounted for the presence of a variant of the gene that regulates brain size.

Bruce T. Lahn of the University of Chicago, the report's senior author, said the findings demonstrated that such interbreeding with relative species, those on the brink of extinction, contributed to the evolutionary success of modern humans.

Other researchers in evolutionary biology said the new study offered strong support for the long-disputed idea that archaic species like Neanderthals contributed to the modern human gene pool.

Two other reports of DNA studies of possible mixing of human and related genes are expected to be published in the next few weeks.

Both genetic and fossil studies show that anatomically modern humans emerged 200,000 years ago in Africa and migrated into Europe 40,000 years ago. In about 10,000 years, Europe's longtime inhabitants, Neanderthals, became extinct. The mainstream interpretation is that modern humans somehow replaced them without interbreeding.

In previous research, Lahn and associates discovered that a gene for brain size called microcephalin underwent a significant change 37,000 year-s ago. Its modified variant, or allele, appeared to confer a fitness advantage on those who possessed it. It is now present in about 70 percent of the world's population.

The new research focused on the two classes of alleles of the brain gene. One appeared to have emerged 1.1 million years ago in an archaic Homo lineage that led to Neanderthals and was separate from the immediate predecessors of modern humans. The 37,000year date for the other variant immediately suggested a connection with Neanderthals.

Lahn said it did not necessarily show that interbreeding was widespread. It could have been a rare, perhaps even single, event.

►OTS 2004: 230-231 (*with thanks to Trenton Hizer ELCA, Virginia Synod, 2005*)

Most commentaries consider Ba'al to be an idol, an "other god" (Exod 20:3) or the divine patron of other peoples living in Syria-Palestine. Here, however, "Ba'al" is considered as another title for Yahweh. Yahweh Ba'al, like Yahweh El 'Olam in the Story of Abraham on Mt. Morah (Gen 21:33) reflects a theology, a way of understanding the relationship of Yahweh to the Hebrews. Yahweh El 'Olam is Yahweh, the Creator Everlasting. Yahweh Ba'al is Yahweh, the Great King.

The time in the Stories of Elijah is 886-842 B.C.E. when the household of Omri ruled Israel. It was the age of great cities, and the golden age of the state of Israel.

Ahab followed the domestic and foreign policy initiatives establish by Omri, the father of his household. In Samaria Ahab erected a temple to Yahweh as Ba'al and Asherah (1 Kgs 16:32). At this spectacular state sanctuary, Israel worshiped Yahweh as Ba'al.

Despite the judgment of the Bible itself (1 Kgs 16:31), Ahab was hardly a follower of a strange divine patron. He named his sons for Yahweh: Ahaziah (Hebrew: 'ahayahu): Yahweh Endures!" and Joram (Hebrew: yoram): "Yahweh is Great!".

Ahab and Elijah are both followers of Yahweh. Both agree that Yahweh is the divine patron of Israel. They disagree, however, on how Israel should honor Yahweh. Ahab and Jezebel worship Yahweh as a Great King like Melqart, the divine patron of Tyre and the household of Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:32; 2 Kgs 11:18). Elijah worships Yahweh as a Good Shepherd, who has promised to feed Israel forever.

In the Stories of Elijah, these divine titles have been abbreviated. "Yahweh, the Great King (Hebrew: ba'al)" has been shortened to "Ba'al"; "Yahweh, the Good Shepherd" has been shortened to "Yahweh." Nonetheless, both titles refer to the same divine patron, not two different divine patrons. "Ba'al" honors Yahweh as triumphant; "Yahweh" honors the divine patron of Israel as humble.

Ahab and Jezebel consider Elijah's theology of a humble Yahweh to be archaic. Elijah considers Ahab and Jezebel's theology of a triumphant Yahweh to be heretical.

The tension reflected here in the Stories of Elijah appears throughout the Deuteronomistic History (Josh-2 Kgs) and the prophets. Early Israel (1250-1000 B.C.E.) was a decentralized, subsistence culture of villages. There were no monarchs, no taxes, no cities, no soldiers, and no slaves. The powerlessness of this social structure made it absolutely clear that the Hebrews survived not because of their own human accomplishments, but only because of Yahweh's divine protection. Yahweh alone was powerful.

When the Hebrews' raids on Philistine caravans prompted reprisals, however, David rescued the Hebrew villages by creating a centralized, surplus state culture modeled on Egypt. In the states of Israel and Judah there were monarchs, taxes, cities, soldiers and slaves. There was also a great deal of objection to such a powerful and triumphant culture represented by the prophets, and preserved as the Deuteronomistic History in the Bible today. Such a triumphant theology makes it is too easy for humans that are powerful to forget their need for a divine patron. The consequences of such a theology are the loss of the land the children with which Yahweh endowed Abraham and Sarah. The conquest of Israel (7231 B.C.E.) and Judah (587 B.C.E.) and the deportation of their ruling households are the direct result of such triumphalism.

Elijah is a voice of this minority. Yahweh cares for Israel as Good Shepherd (Ps 23), not as a Great King. Yahweh is to be worshipped not in a grand temple in a great city built by the architects and masons of Tyre, but at an altar of uncut stones assembled by a single villager in a rustic place.

Therefore, Elijah does not indict Ahab and Jezebel for worshiping the wrong divine patron, but for worshiping Yahweh wrongly.

► OTS 2004: 233

On the Carmel Mountains Elijah retells a story of creation with both words and pantomime. Just as the royal prophets mime their prayer in dance (1 Kings 18:26), Elijah mimes his story with two symbolic acts. He begins by rebuilding the altar as the primeval mountain representing the dry land. Then,

he digs a great circular reservoir that will hold the primeval sea, just like the huge round cauldron called "the sea" (2 Kings 16:17), "the bronze sea" (2 Kings 25:13), or "the molten sea" (1 Kings 7:24) outside the temple. The dirt that Elijah piles along the edges of his trench creates the great dikes or horizons which will hold in the sea.

There are two kinds of water in creation stories. The seas and great rivers threaten the cosmos (Gen. 1:1; 2:6). Springs and rains sustain it (Ps. 36:8-9). Elijah floods his model of the cosmos with the waters of the chaos.

Now, Elijah tells a creation story. The Bible no longer preserves the story but only the prayer with which he draws it to a close precisely at noon (1 Kings 18:36). At that moment Yahweh strikes the waters of chaos with lightning. The waters recede and the dry land of the altar emerges. A new world has been created. Israel is free once again. Elijah sets the stage and tells the story that Yahweh acts out.

Elijah's pantomime and story were easily understood by the people gathered on the Carmel Mountains. A parallel appears on a limestone stela from Ugarit cut after 2000 BCE. On the stela a divine patron stands poised with a spear of lightning over the sea. Two other parallels from Ugarit also portray divine patrons wielding lightning bolts to drive off the waters of chaos and bring on the life-giving rain. Elijah celebrates Yahweh as a divine warrior who conquers the sea and is then enthroned as creator of the cosmos (Ps. 29:1-11; Fig. 56).

> OTS 2004: 234 (Figure 56)

call to worship

Sing to Yahweh, all you members of the divine assembly,
Sing to Yahweh: "You are glorious and powerful!"
Sing to Yahweh the glory due the name,
Worship Yahweh who is holy.

creation story

The voice of Yahweh rules over the waters of chaos,
The Glorious Godparent thunders.
Yahweh subdues the great waters,
The voice of Yahweh is powerful,
The voice of Yahweh is majestic.

The voice of Yahweh splits the cedar trees,
Yahweh snaps the cedars of Lebanon.
Yahweh makes the Lebanon mountains dance like a calf,
Yahweh makes the Sirion mountains shake like a young wild ox.

The voice of Yahweh strikes with bolts of lightening,
The voice of Yahweh shakes the desert.

Yahweh makes the desert of Kadesh tremble.
The voice of Yahweh causes the oaks to mourn,
Yahweh drops the leaves from the trees.

call to worship

Let all those in the Temple sing: "Yahweh is Glorious!
Yahweh sits enthroned above the waters of chaos,
Yahweh sits enthroned as the eternal ruler.
Yahweh strengthens the people!
Yahweh blesses the people with peace!"

56 Hymn
(Ps. 29:1-11)

> OTS 2004: 240

In the sentence, Elisha summons two female bears from the forest beyond the village to execute the warriors. Shamans are particularly proud of their ability to imitate the call of wild birds and animals well enough to summon them at will. Elijah summons ravens who feed him (1 Kgs 17:1–7). and Elisha summons bears who protect him. Some shamans are also shape-shifters who can enter the bodies of their patron spirits to compensate for the limitations of their human bodies. As a raven, Elijah can fly. As a bear, Elisha can fight. The jaguar, which is the most intelligent, mysterious, and powerful creature in Brazil's jungles, is a favorite shape into which shamans in the Amazon shift. Elisha uses divine power to demonstrate that he is not impotent, and certainly does not need warriors to defend Israel. When Israel needs to be defended, Yahweh will summon the beasts of the forest.

The relationship between humans in traditional communities and their totem animals, like the raven in the Stories of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:1-7) and the bears in the Stories of Elisha (2 Kgs 2:23-25), is intimate even today. Totem animals teach the humans who are their proteges how to survive. The raven, for example, feeds Elijah, and the bears protect Elisha. These bonds are poignantly portrayed in the film *Whale Rider* directed by Niki Caro which describes the relationship between a Maori clan in New Zealand and their "ancestors" – the great whales who along the shores of their island. http://www.whaleriderthemovie.com/

> OTS 2004: 245

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► **OTS 2004: 249 (Illustration 7)**

Phaaraoh Menes (2920-2858 B.C.E.) was the first pharaoh of the first dynasty of ancient Egypt (2920-2770 B.C.E.). Although Menes was called the "Fighter", he did not die in battle, but was probably killed in a hunting accident when he was trampled to death by a rampaging hippopotamus. (NatGeo 207 April 2005: 106-121) The dangerous hippopotamus of chaos that killed Menes is portrayed as the domesticated hippotamus of cosmos grazing on the plants of the Nile in this small blue faience statue

Hippopotamus Grazing Riverbank

Dra Aboul Naga ▪ 2040-1640 B.C.E. ▪ Faience 12.7 cm
(Christiane Ziegler The Louvre: Egyptian antiquities 1990: 38)

See OTS 2004: 250

Every year the cosmos has to be recreated. As part of the celebration of the Akitu New Year, the divine assembly would meet and review the status of its covenant with each state. The struggle between the creator and chaos represented by creatures like the ostrich, the hippopotamus, and the crocodile took place, not only once at the beginning of time, but also at the beginning of each New Year. The book of Job reminds its ancient audiences of the traditions that celebrate the Akitu New Year in order to question whether the new world coming into being will truly be a kinder and gentler place for the powerless than the old world that is coming to an end. (Illustration 7)

See: OTS 2004: 259

Yahweh immediately gives the second (Job 38:1—39:30) and third opinions (Job 40:6—42:17) in the fourth session. Yahweh does not explain why the innocent suffer, but teaches Job how to understand the cosmos by using an in-depth study of a single creature (Job 40:6—41:26). Yahweh teaches Job that humans are not the center of the universe, but that the wise carefully observe creation to understand its creator. Every creature is a microcosm

of the cosmos. No one can observe the cosmos as a whole, but everyone has an observable universe in a single creature like the hippopotamus (Job 40:15) or the crocodile (Job 40:25), two creatures representing the once fearsome Mesopotamia and Egypt. The wise can see that these creatures, which were once out-of-control or chaos, are now in-control or cosmos. If the hippopotamus and the crocodile are in good order, then the rest of the cosmos must be in good order. The lesson does not explain why the innocent suffer, but simply argues that if everything else in the cosmos makes sense, surely the suffering of the innocent must make sense. (Illustration 7)

► OTS 2004: 253-4

See: OTS 2004: 253-4

Job's status as a stranger, as wealthy, and as liturgically observant establishes his credentials as an attorney immune from prosecution, and eminently qualified to appear before the divine assembly to argue that Yahweh does not protect the faithful.

Once the divine assembly hears the portfolio of Job, it hears from the Satan who "goes to and fro on the earth . . . walking up and down on it" (Job 1:7), in order to evaluate the covenants that the divine assembly has negotiated. The Satan is not the devil, but a member in good standing of the divine assembly. Only after the conquest of the world of the Bible by Alexander in 332 B.C.E. did both biblical and nonbiblical traditions begin identifying the snake in the Stories of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:25–4:2) and the Satan here and in the book of Zechariah (Zech 3:1–2) as the devil. Originally, the snake and the Satan are quality-control engineers, like Qoheleth (Eccl 1:12–13) and the "riders" (Zech 1:7–17). They continually audit the cosmos, not to tempt and to destroy it, but to see that the stipulations of the covenant are met. They guarantee the quality of Yahweh's estate. The Satan proposes to audit the household of Job to see if its faithfulness is genuine or simply self-serving.

The standard audit has a mandate, which describes the purpose of the investigation, a report on the sample taken or spot-check conducted (Eccl 3:1–8), and an evaluation of the results (Eccl 3:9–15). The report often cites a proverb from the wisdom tradition that the evaluation grades by stressing its limitations. Here the Satan proposes a wager. The metaphor is not irreverent; it is anthropomorphic.

Gambling is a form of divination that appears in virtually every culture. Gambling allows humans and their divine patrons to communicate with one another. The game is not a diversion. Gambling is a microcosm for the creative tension that characterizes the relationship between human beings and their divine patrons. The hearing on the credentials of Job portrays Yahweh gambling with the other members of the divine assembly as if they were the men of a village in Israel or Judah. The players in the game are Job, his wife, and the Satan.

1555-1525 B.C.E.
Metropolitan Museum NY
2 in (H), 10 in (L) 12 in (W)

Two popular forms of gambling or gaming in the world of the Bible were "Thirty Squares" (Egyptian: *senet*) and "Twenty Squares" played on a board. Each was played with two sets of five or more pieces, whose moves were determined by throwing knucklebones or sets of flattened marked sticks. Inside this box were twelve playing pieces: six conves and six spools, ivory sticks and a pair of knucklebones.

Wood, Ivory, Bronze
Asasif Valley, Thebes
Roehrig, ed. Hatshepsut: from queen to pharaoh. 2005:255-56

The satan and Yahweh play *senet* using Job as a gameboard.

► OTS 2004: 261

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7. Book of Job

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► OTS 2004: 265 (Illustration 8)

These Philistine mourners strike their heads. Besides bruising themselves, mourners in the world of the Bible smeared themselves with dirt and ashes, ripped their clothes or dressed in sackcloth shrouds, shaved the hair off their bodies and stopped eating. Although these rituals are commonly understood as expressions of personal or communal sorrow, their purpose may also be protective. Self-inflicted wounds would camouflage mourners by making them look like a dead body. Although it was mandatory for the living to escort the dead to the boundary of the afterlife, funerals put the living at risk. Death, which had come for one of them, might also take another victim from among the mourners. However, if mourners made it difficult for Death to tell the difference between the living and the dead, they might fulfill their funeral obligations at less risk.

Mourners Strike Their Heads in Grief

Tell 'Aitun ▪1200-1100 B.C.E. ▪ terra cotta
(Trude Dothan, The Philistines and their Material Culture 1982: Pl 23)

See: OTS 2004: 272

Mourners were the midwives of the dead. Like midwives, mourners washed and anointed the bodies of the dead. Like midwives who swaddled the newborn, mourners shrouded the dead. Like midwives who celebrated the birth of the newborn with hymns, mourners announced the passage of the dead with laments. The lamenting of mourners was not simply a clinical symptom of pain, but a legal petition for admittance into the afterlife. As legal representatives of the dead, mourners used laments to petition the long dead to accept the newly deceased as members of their household. Just as the primal scream of the newborn was understood as a legal petition to enter a household in the clan, the lament of mourners was considered to be a primal scream on behalf of the dead. It was a legal petition for admittance to the world of the dead. (Illustration 8)

► **OTS 2004: 266 (Figure 60)**

adage

Wise are those who do not walk with the wicked...
    Wise are those who do not stand with sinners,...
    Wise are those who do not sit with fools...
Wise are those who obey the law of Yahweh...
    Wise are those who meditate on it day and night.

proverb

The wise are like trees planted by water.
    They yield fruit every season.
Their leaves do not wither.
    They thrive year after year.

Not so fools,
    Not so.
Fools are like chaff.
    They are blown away by the wind.

proverb

Fools never stand in the gates of the city,
    Sinners never sit with the village assembly.
Yahweh protects the wise on their way.

Neither fools,
    Nor sinners shall stand in the assembly with the wise.
Yahweh protects the way of the wise,
    The way of fools Yahweh leaves unguarded.

60 Teaching on Prayer (Ps. 1:1-6)

► **OTS 2004: 267**

Hymns

Most hymns have two components. There is a call to worship and a creation story. There are, however, hymns in which the call to worship is repeated like an antiphon or chorus throughout the creation story (Psalm 66), or at the beginning and the end of the creation story (Psalm 136). There are also hymns that have only a call to worship, and no creation story (Psalm 150:1–6), or a creation story and no call to worship (Psalm 23).

Calls to worship challenge their audiences to praise and acknowledge Yahweh as their divine patron who delivered them from slavery and endowed them with land and children. The standard call is "Praise Yahweh!" or "Alleluia." These calls are best translated in the imperative. Therefore, "Bless Yahweh!" captures the sense of a call to worship better than "Blessed be Yahweh!" When it appears in a call to worship the Hebrew word "bless" does not mean something that the Hebrews do for Yahweh, but rather calls on the Hebrews to acknowledge what Yahweh has done for them. Other verbs like "Come!" "Sing!" "Shout!" "Give thanks!" "Extol!" are also calls to worship.

(with thanks to Edward Bleiberg, "The Economy of Ancient Egypt." In Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, vol iii: 1379-1380. Edited by Jack M. Sasson et al. London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995.)

In ancient Egypt pharaohs regularly commissioned trade expeditions south into the Sudan and north into Syria-Palestine. The officials appointed to lead these expeditions kept journals in which they chronicled their exploits and what their pharaohs paid them when they returned. In these traditions a common euphemism for "pay" was "praise". Therefore, "to be praised by pharaoh" meant "to be paid by pharaoh".

Harkhuf

One expedition leader named Harkhuf journaled that he " . . . was praised …very greatly" by his pharaoh, Pepy II (2246-2152 B.C.E.) for a dancing dwarf that he brought back to Egypt from equatorial Africa. The average height of these dwarfs was less than five feet. The payment was authorized in a letter from Pepy that was eventually inscribed at Harkhuf's tomb.

His majesty will provide your many worthy honors for the benefit of your son's son for all time, so that all people will say, when they hear what my majesty did for you: "Does anything equal what was done for the sole companion Harkhuf when he came down from Yam, on account of the vigilance he showed in doing what his lord loved, praised, and commanded?" [2]

[2] Miriam Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature, vol. i, 1973: 26

If the “pay-praise” motif were applied to the hymns in the Bible, then “Praise Yahweh!” would also me “Pay Yahweh!” Fathers of households were expected to pay a commission to Yahweh for the blessings of land and children. It was not enough for the fathers of households to simply say that their land and children were divine blessings; they were also expected to pay a commission to their divine patron as well.

Three Dwarfs Dancing Toy
Egyptian Museum, Cairo
1990-1780 B.C.E.
Ivory

►OTS 2004: 269 (Figure 61)

call to worship

Proclaim Yahweh on earth!
Glorify our divine patron in the heavens!

creation story

Powerless newborns cry out like warriors against your enemies,
The wail of helpless infants silences your foes.
The heavens are the work of only your little finger,
The moon and the stars you set effortlessly in place.
Is it surprising, that you choose humans?
Should any be amazed that you should shape creatures of clay?
To be second only to the divine assembly,
To be crowned with glory and honor?
That you made them stewards over the works of your hands,
That you put all things under their feet:
All sheep and oxen,
All the wild beasts.
The birds of the air,
The fish and everything which swims in the sea?

call to worship

Proclaim Yahweh on earth....!

61 Hymn
(Ps. 8:1-8)

►OTS 2004: 271

Hymn

(Ps 150:1–6)

A Hymn to Yahweh as creator and warrior, which closes part five in the book of Psalms (Ps 150:1–6), creates a litany of calls to worship. Twelve times the hymn calls on its audience to "Praise Yahweh!" Each of the tribes of Israel is challenged to acknowledge Yahweh as its divine patron (Fig. 63). The opening and closing lines of the hymn, "Praise Yahweh!" (Ps 150:1), "Let every living creature praise Yahweh" (Ps 150:6), frame the other five sets of parallel lines in the hymn.

The creation story in the hymn celebrates Yahweh for making a home or sanctuary in the land with the people. Like the women of the household, Yahweh pitches the heavens like a tent over the heads of the people. Like the men of the household, Yahweh delivers the people from slavery. The books of Exodus and Deuteronomy describe the great works of Yahweh in Egypt, the books of Joshua and Judges the great works of Yahweh in Syria-Palestine, and the book of Isaiah the great works of Yahweh in Mesopotamia. In each, Yahweh delivers the Hebrews from slavery to their enemies and blesses them with land and children. This hymn challenges the Hebrews to retell these great stories, not just in words, but in music and in dance as well. The same eight wind, string, and percussion instruments that led the Hebrews into battle against their enemies are to be played in victory.

Although rulers and their priests led their people in the singing of psalms during worship in ancient Israel, hymns may have originally been sung by midwives during birth. These women were the guardians of the threshold that newborns crossed to enter the human plane. Midwives marked the transition with a hymn. Midwives washed, anointed, and swaddled children, after which they placed them on the lap of the mother of the adopting household. As mothers accepted their newborns, midwives affirmed the adoption by intoning a hymn inviting the household to praise Yahweh, who created the earth, who delivered the Hebrews from slavery, and who had now endowed this household with land and children.

► OTS 2004: 272 (Figure 63)

call to worship

Praise Yahweh!

Praise Yahweh inside the sanctuary,
Praise Yahweh out-of-doors.
Praise Yahweh who delivers us from slavery,
Praise Yahweh for blessing us with land.
Praise Yahweh with trumpets,
Praise Yahweh with lyres and harps.
Praise Yahweh with timbrels and in dance,
Praise Yahweh with strings and pipes.
Praise Yahweh with castanets,
Praise Yahweh with cymbals.

Let every living creature praise Yahweh!

63 Hymn
(Ps. 150:1-6)

► **OTS 2004: 274**

complaint

You disown us and shame us;
You do not march into battle with our soldiers.
You let our enemies drive us back;
Our foes plunder us without opposition from you.
You mark us as sheep to be slaughtered;
Among strangers you scatter us.
You sell your people at a loss;
You make no profit.
You make us fools in the eyes of our enemies;
Our foes laugh at us.
You make us a proverb among strangers.
Outsiders tell jokes about us.
All the day my shame is before me;
Every day shame covers my face
When my foes taunt me,
When my enemies make fun of me.

64 Lament
(Ps. 44:10-17)

► **OTS 2004: 275**

petition

Awake from your sleep, Yahweh!
Deliver me, my divine patron!
Land a blow with your fist right on the jaw of my enemies,
Hit them in the mouth and break their teeth.

65 Lament
(Ps. 3:7)

► **OTS 2004: 276**

complaint (Ps. 137:1-3)

We mourned by the Rivers of Babylon,
    We prostrated ourselves to remember Zion.
Our enemies told us to sing hymns,
    Our conquerors ordered us: "Sing the hymns of Zion!"

vow (Ps. 137:4-6)

We hung our harps in the weeping willows.
    How could we sing hymns to Yahweh in a strange land?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
    Paralyze the hand with which I play.
Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth,
    If I do not remember Jerusalem above everything else.

petition (Ps. 137:7-9)

Remember, Yahweh, how Edom sang when Jerusalem fell:
    "Pull down its walls. Raze the city to its foundations."
You are a monster, Babylon.
    Blessed are they who do to you what you did to us.
Blessed are they who grab your children by the ankles,
    Blessed are they who smash their skulls against a rock.

66 Lament
(Ps. 137:1-9)

► OTS 2004: 277

In the world of the Bible war was waged on four fronts. First, warriors confronted one another on the field of battle. Victory here, however, was only a prelude to three other confrontations. A battlefield victory was a victory over the present generation. Second, warriors were expected to wage war on the future generation by raping childbearing women, disembowel pregnant women (2 Kgs 15:16), and massacre newborn infants. Third, warriors laid siege to the past generation by desecrating graves. The dead were the third front in a war. Human remains were exhumed and burned or scattered to prevent the ancestors of a village from coming to its defense from the land of the dead. The fourth front was the desecration of sanctuaries. Warriors waged war on the eternal generation by smashing sacred furniture and decapitating the statues of the divine patrons of their enemies, or gouging out their eyes and breaking off their noses. A divine patron who could not see or smell the aroma of a sacrificial meal was powerless to restore its people to life. The petition in this lament reflects the simple and harsh reality that war was always total war.

> OTS 2004: 281

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8. Book of Psalms

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> OTS 2004: 281

In *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Hendrickson, 2002: 54-62) Karen Rhea Nemet-Nejat (Yale University) vividly describes what life was like for the students in Mesopotamia's schools for scribes.

> Sumer's great achievement was the invention of writing, and an organized system of education was its natural outgrowth. Most people were not literate. With approximately six hundred signs with multiple values, education was confined to the few. Even priests, kings, governors, and judges were illiterate, with few exceptions. Correspondence from Assyrian merchants at Kanesh (Turkey) opens with the standard formula: "Tell Mr A, Mr B sends the following message."z That is, the letter was dictated to one professional scribe and would be read to the addressee by another professional scribe. Literacy was highly prized, and only a few rulers, among them Shulgi, Naram-Sin, Lipit-Ishtar, Assurbanipal, and Darius, boasted of their scribal accomplishments.
>
> The oldest documents, the Uruk tablets, consist primarily of economic and administrative records. But we also find lexical lists used by scribes to team signs to study elementary vocabulary for use in administrative texts, and to categorize the world in which they lived so that an archaic society could better understand itself. The same lists are found about five hundred years later at Shuruppak, the home of the Sumerian Noah, thereby showing the continuity of a tradition.
>
> The archaic texts offer little information about the education or professional activity of scribes. However, the unity in both the appearance of tablets and the writing conventions from different regions of Babylonia suggests the existence of some kind of regulated system of education ca. 3000 BCE. The first detailed information concerning the scribal profession and its social status comes from the Ur III period (2112-203x4 BCE). Most probably the purpose of the official Ur III schools was to provide necessary specialized personnel at a time when the demand for scribes was great. From this period come tens of thousands of clay tablets that are administrative in nature, encompassing all aspects of economic life in Sumer. From these texts we learn that there were thousands of scribes, specializing in all branches of the temple and royal administrations. From this we infer that scribal schools must have thrived.
>
> The organization and operation of schools in Mesopotamia are known from the numerous student/teacher exercises, lexical lists, essays on school life, examination texts, and royal hymns where kings refer to their education. This information comes from the first half of the second millennium BCE. After this, small groups of tablets appear at different periods, often retaining the intent of the old tradition but revamping the format.
>
> The student attended school, called a "tablet-house," whose headmaster was called "expert" or "father of the tablet-house." There was a dean who enforced the rules and regulations of the tablet-house, called "supervisor of the tablet-house," and there was even a "man in charge of the whip." Teaching assistants were referred to as "older brothers"; their jobs included writing new tablets for the students to copy, checking the students' work, and listening to memorized lessons. Other faculty members included "the man in charge of Sumerian," "the man in charge of drawing," as well as proctors in charge of attendance and discipline. Mathematics was a separate part of the curriculum, taught by the "scribe of accounting," "the scribe of measurement," and the "scribe of the field." We know neither the hierarchy of the school nor how salaries were paid. When finished, the student became a scribe, literally, a "tablet-writer."
>
> Education was undertaken only by wealthier families; the poor could not afford the time and cost for learning. Administrative documents from about 2000 BCE list about five hundred

scribes who are further identified by the names and occupations of their fathers. Their fathers were governors, "city fathers," ambassadors, temple administrators, military officers, sea captains, important tax officials, priests, managers, accountants, foremen, and scribes, in other words, the wealthier citizens of the city. There are references to poor orphan boys adopted and sent to school by generous patrons. There is only one reference to a female scribe at this time. However, cloistered women, celibate devotees of the sun god Shamash and his consort Aya, served as scribes for their own cloister administration. Celibate priestesses may also have devoted themselves to scholarly pursuits.

The Sumerian school may have begun as a temple annex during the third millennium BCE; it was attached to some palaces in the second millennium and later privatized. The first Mesopotamian schools we know of were founded or subsidized by King Shulgi at Nippur and Ur at the end of the third millennium. When in royal service, the scribal school may have composed hymns ordered by the royal court for the king. Three royal hymns actually indicate that they were composed in the school! Sumerian literary texts have been found principally in private houses (some in the scribal quarter of Nippur referred to as Tablet Hill) rather than in the temple complex. In fact, school texts have been excavated at most private homes in the first half of the second millennium, thereby implying that all boys in wealthy families were sent to school.

The actual learning process involved memorization, dictation, writing new lessons and reviewing old ones, reading aloud from a written document, and spelling. The students learned signs, language, and vocabulary through syllabaries (syllabic lists) and lexical lists. The lexical lists provided compilations of botanical, zoological, geographical, and mineralogical information; they also provided important linguistic tools for the study of grammar, bilingual and trilingual dictionaries, and legal and administrative vocabulary. The methods of teaching have given us thousands of "school tablets," often round in shape, with the teacher's copy on one side and the pupil's work on the other. We have the tablets students wrote themselves, from the beginner's first copies to those of the advanced student, whose work could hardly be differentiated from the teacher's. Not every scribe completed the "full course." In fact, the student was probably not required to complete the entire series before attempting the next text of the curriculum. The student copied tablets not only as exercises but at times to build a private library for himself or his teacher.

Despite its professional orientation, the Sumerian school was also a center for literature and creative writing; the Mesopotamian literary "classics" were studied and copied, and new compositions were written. Later, the Akkadians not only used the Sumerian script but also studied the literature of the Sumerians, even imitating their works. The "dictionaries" became a useful tool for learning the Sumerian language, which i was no longer spoken by the beginning of the second millennium BCE ~ but enjoyed enormous prestige, much like Latin in Western culture.

The student attended classes daily from sunrise to sunset. We have no information about vacations, but one pupil explained his monthly schedule:

The reckoning of my monthly stay in the tablet house is (as follows):
My days of freedom are three per month,
Its festivals are three days per month.
Within it, twenty-four days per month (Is the time of) my living in the tablet house. They are long days.3

The student began school between the ages of five and seven years and continued until he became a young man. We do not know if scribes were expected to have a varied background or to what degree they were expected to specialize as preparation for assuming their posts.

The most complete list of the subjects .studied is best represented by "A Failed Examination." The examination involved a comprehensive test by a scribe of his son; it took place in the courtyard of the tablet-house before an assembly of masters.

A: Come, my son, sit at my feet. I will talk to you, and you will
give me information! From your childhood to your adult age you have been staying in the tablet-house. Do you know the scribal art that you have learned?
B: What would I not know? Ask me, and I will give you the answer.

A series of questions follows:

1. "The element of the scribal craft is the simple wedge; it has six teeth (directions in which it could be written) . . . Do you know its name?"
2. Secret meanings of Sumerian words (cryptography).
3. Translation from Sumerian to Akkadian and the reverse.
4. Three Sumerian synonyms for each Akkadian word.

► **OTS 2004: 282-283 (Figure 67)**

Hymn (Ps. 66:1-12)

call to worship (Ps. 66:1-5)

Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth.
Sing the glory of the name of Yahweh.
Give to Yahweh glorious praise.
Say to Yahweh, "How awesome are your great works.
Because of your great power, your enemies are prostrate before you.
All the earth worships you;
They sing praises to you,
They sing praises to your name."
Come and see what Yahweh has done;
Come and see the great works Yahweh does for the powerless.

creation story (Ps. 66:6)

Yahweh turned the sea into dry land;
They passed through the river on foot.

call to worship (Ps. 66:6)

Let us rejoice in Yahweh,
Let us rejoice in Yahweh, who rules by might forever,

creation story (Ps. 66:7)

Who watches over the nations,
Who humbles the rebellious.

call to worship (Ps. 66:8)

Bless Yahweh, O peoples,
Let the sound of praise be heard,

creation story (Ps. 66:7-12)

Who kept us alive,
Who did not let our feet slip.
Who tested us;
Who tried us as silver is tried.
Who brought us into the net;
Who laid burdens on our backs;
Who let strangers rule over us;

Who led us through fire and through water;
Who, finally, brought us into this fertile land.

Lament (Ps. 66:13-20)

vow (Ps. 66:13-17)

I will come into your house with burnt offerings;
I will pay you my vows,
The vows that my lips uttered,
The vows that my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
I will offer you burnt offerings of yearlings;
I will offer you the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will offer you bulls and goats.
Come and hear, all you who fear Yahweh,
I will tell what he has done for me.
I cried aloud to him,
Yahweh was extolled with my tongue.

declaration of innocence (Ps. 66:18-19)

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
Yahweh would not have listened.
But Yahweh has listened;
Yahweh has given heed to the words of my prayer.

confession of faith (Ps. 66:20)

Bless Yahweh, who has not ignored my prayer.
Bless Yahweh, who has not stopped loving me.

67 A Hymn and a Lament
(Ps. 66:1-20)

► OTS 203: 284-285 (Figure 68)

complaint (1-2)

My Creator, My Creator, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you not helping me?
Why are you not listening to the words of my lament?
My Creator, I cry out during the day, but you do not answer;
I cry out at night, but I find no peace.

confession of faith (3-5)

You are holy.
The hymns of Israel rise up to your throne.
Our ancestors had faith in you.
They had faith, and you delivered them from their enemies.
They cried out to you, and were saved.
They had faith in you, and were not shamed.

complaint (6-8)

I am a maggot, not a man.
Scorned by animals, despised by humans.
All who see me mock me,
They make faces at me,
They shake their heads.
"What good is your faith in Yahweh?
Why cannot Yahweh deliver you?
Why cannot Yahweh rescue a beloved heir?"

declaration of innocence (9-10)

You were my midwife.
You showed me to my mother's breast.
I have depended upon you since I was born,
Since my mother bore me you have been my divine patron.

petition (11)

Do not be far from me.
Trouble is near.
No one else can help me.

complaint (12-18)

Herds of bulls encircle me.
Powerful bulls from Bashan surround me.
They roar at me like hungry lions,
They bawl like lions on the prowl.
I am poured out like water,
All my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax,
My heart melts within my breast.
My mouth is as dry as clay,
My tongue sticks to my cheek.
You let death return me to clay,
Dogs are all around me.
Evildoers encircle me.
My hands and feet have shriveled.
I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me.
They divide my clothes among themselves,
They gamble for my clothing.

petition (19-21)

Yahweh, do not stay so far away.
My helper, come quickly.
Deliver me from the sword,
Save me from powerful dogs.
Protect me from the mouths of lions,
Rescue me from the horns of wild oxen.

vow (22-31)

I will praise your name in my household.
At the sanctuary I will sing hymns to you....
I will praise Yahweh in the assembly,
My vows I will pay before the people of Yahweh,
I will feed the hungry until they are satisfied....
Our descendants will serve Yahweh.
Future generations will hear of Yahweh.
They will hand on the stories of the great works of Yahweh to a people yet unborn.
They will tell future generations everything Yahweh has done.

68 Lament
(Ps. 22:1-31)

► OTS 2004: 287-290

Over time, the teachings of the mothers of household in the villages were canonized by the men who trained the rulers of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and of Israel. The book of Proverbs preserves the traditions of both the mothers of household in villages and the royal teachers in the palaces. Both men like Ptah-hotep, Amen-em-ope, and Ben Sira, and women like Ma'at, Bathsheba, and Jezebel were teachers who taught those who would be rulers (Benjamin 2004: 288)

There is still no clear archaeological or textual evidence that there were scribal schools in Israel, or that these Israelite schools were structured like the scribal schools of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The traditional caution about assuming that there were scribal schools in ancient Israel can be seen in the work of Roger N. Whybray ("Slippery words, 4 : wisdom". Expository Times, 89 (1978): 359-362) who argues that the widespread assumption that ancient Israel possessed from Solomonic times a class of professional "wise men" is unproven. Although the influence of the scribal cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia on the teaching traditions in the Bible cannot be denied, these teaching traditions reflect much that is unique to the world view of ancient Israel. For Whybray the teaching traditions in Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes develop in Israel's culture which, while running parallel to analogous strands in the cultures of the neighboring peoples, concerned itself in its own characteristic way with ethical and philosophical and ultimately with theological questions.

Karel van der Toorn (Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), however, accepts the existence of schools in ancient Israel parallel to the scribal schools in Egypt and Mesopotamia. He argues that the Hebrew Bible developed in a largely nonliterate culture in which writing, editing, copying, interpretation, and public reading were the work of a professional elite. Like other minimalist scholars van der Toorn argues that the Bible developed in the scribal schools of the Second Temple period (500-200 BCE). The methods, assumptions and material means of production in these schools in ancient Israel are clearly parallel to the scribal schools in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.

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► **OTS 2004:289 (llustration 9)**

Godmother with Great Hips, Full Breats and a Pointed Crown

Horvat Minha ▪ 6000 B.C.E. ▪ terra cotta ▪ 11x65 cm
(John P. O'Neill, ed., Treasures of the Holy Land: ancient art from the Israel Museum 1986)

See: OTS 2004: 297-299

The wise woman in the teaching is celebrated as Yahweh's midwife when the world was born. (Fig. 73). She is "the firstborn of the ways of Yahweh, the forerunner of the great works of Yahweh" (Prov. 8:22), and the "master worker" (Prov. 8:30). . She celebrates, "delights," or "rejoices" in each new creature by singing hymns praising Yahweh for having given birth to such magnificent children (Prov. 8:31). In the world of the Bible, cultures often celebrated creators like this wise woman as Godmothers. They portrayed them with great hips from bearing many children and with full breast for nursing them. These divine women often wore pointed caps like the pharaoh's double crown or a bishop's miter. (Illustration 9)

►**OTS 2004: 294 (Figure 71)**

My child, honor the instruction of your father,
Do not ignore the teaching of your mother.
They are crown of flowers for your head,
They are a string of precious stones for your neck.

Students, when fools invite you in, do not accept.
Students, do not walk in their way.

If they say, "Follow us!"—
Let us lie in wait for blood,
Let us wantonly ambush the innocent,
Let us swallow them like Sheol,
Let us engulf them like the Pit.
We shall find treasure,
We shall fill houses with riches.
Throw in your lot with us, we will all get rich."

Don't bait a trap while the prey watches!

Fools lie in wait to kill one another,
One sets an ambush for the other!
They are their own worst enemies.
Greed puts the greedy to death.

71 Teaching on Foolishness
(Prov. 1:8-19)

► OTS 2004:296-297 (Figure 72)

Students, pay attention to my teaching.
Listen to my instruction.
Act prudently.
Talk sensibly.
The lips of a foolish woman drip honey,
Her words are smoother than oil.
In the end her lips taste bitter as wormwood,
Her words cut like a two-edged sword.
Her feet lead to death,
Her steps follow the path to Sheol.
She does not stay on the path of life.
She wanders around lost.
Students, listen to me,
Do not depart from the words of my mouth.
Keep away from the foolish woman.
Do not go near the door of her house.
You will give your honor to others,
You will give your years to the merciless.
Strangers will take your wealth,
Households of strangers will use your labor.
At the end of life you will groan.
When flesh and blood dry you will lament.
"How I hated discipline,
How my heart despised reproof.
I did not listen to the voice of my teacher,
I did not obey the wise woman.
Now I am a fool in the village assembly."
Drink water from your own spring.
Draw living water from your own oasis.
Do not drink from the springs of others.
Do not draw water in the streets.
Keep your spring for your household.
Do not let strangers drink from your oasis.
Bless your spring.
Rejoice in the wife of your youth.
Enjoy the lovely deer.
Delight in the graceful doe.
May her breasts always satisfy you.
May her love always intoxicate you.
Students, do not be fooled by a strange woman.
Do not embrace a foolish woman.
Yahweh knows the ways humans walk.
Yahweh examines all their paths.

Foolishness is a trap.
Sin has consequences.
Fools die for lack of discipline.
Foolishness leads them astray.

72 Teaching on Foolish Teachers (Prov. 5:1-23)

► **OTS 2004: 298-299 (Figure 73)**

When Yahweh began to create, I was there.
Yahweh called me on the first day of labor.
In the beginning I opened the womb,
On the first day, before the world took shape, I was there.
Before the seas of salt water were born, I was there.
Before the springs of fresh water were born, I was there.
Before the mountains at the horizons took shape, I was there.
Before these eternal hills were created, I was there.
Before there was soil to work, I was there.
Before there was anyone to work the soil, I was there.
When Yahweh created the heavens, I was there.
When Yahweh drew the shorelines of the earth, I was there.
When Yahweh pitched the skies like a tent over our heads, I was there.
When Yahweh capped the geyser flooding the earth, I was there.
When Yahweh called the sea together in one place, I was there.
When Yahweh set the pillars of the earth in place, I was there.
I was beside Yahweh as midwife,
I sang at the birth of each day of creation.
I sang a hymn when the world was created.
I sang praise when the human race was born.

Now, students, listen to me.
Blessed are those who follow a life of learning.
Listen to my teachings and become wise,
Do not ignore wisdom.
Blessed are those who listen to me,
Blessed are those who meet me every morning at the gate,
Blessed are those who wait for me at the door.
Those who meet me find life,
Those who meet me receive blessings from Yahweh.
Those who miss me take their own lives,
Those who break their promises to me make a covenant with death.

73 Teaching of the Wise Woman at Creation
(Prov. 8:1-36)

► **OTS 2004: 302 (Figure 74)**

Blessed is the husband of a wise wife.
The number of his days will be doubled.
A faithful wife brings joy to her husband,
He will complete his years in peace.
A good wife is a great blessing.
She is a gift for a husband zealous for Yahweh.
Whether rich or poor, his heart is content,
His face is always cheerful.

74 Teaching on the Mother of a Household
(Sir. 26:1-4)

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►OTS 2004: 305

Except for: "See, this is what I found, *says the Teacher*, adding one thing to another to find the sum, which my mind has sought repeadely, but I have not found (Eccl 7:27), the Hebrew word *Qoheleth* is always linked to verbs with masculine forms. (T.A. Perry, Dialogues with Kohelet: The Book of Exxlesiastes, Translation and Commentary. University Park: Pensylvania State University 1993: 78)

► OTS 2004: 307 (Illustration 10)

Teacher like Amen-em-ope whom Ecclesiastes Audits

Saqarra ▪ 2575-2134 B.C.E. ▪ Limestone 53.7 cm
(Christiane Ziegler, The Louvre: Egypitan antiquities 1990)

See OTS 2004: 292

Titles dedicate the Courtyard Teachings and the Great Room Teachings of the book of Proverbs to Solomon. One section of the Holy of Holies Teachings (Prov. 25:1—29:27) is also dedicated to him. Other sections of the Holy of Holies Teachings are dedicated to Amen-em-ope (Prov. 22:17—24:22) and to teachers named Agur (Prov. 30:1-33) and Lemuel (Prov. 31:1-31). Ptah-hotep taught about 2450 BCE in Egypt. Amen-em-ope taught in Egypt about 1000 BCE. The Teachings of Ptah-hotep and the teachings of Amen-em-ope demonstrate both the consistency and the important changes that took place in Egypt's worldview over 2000 years. Both Ptah-hotep and Amen-em-ope contrast the wise and the foolish. The wise are soft-spoken or silent. Fools are hot-tempered or hotheaded. The wise know when to talk and when to listen. Fools let anger run or ruin their lives. Ptah-hotep teaches that the wise prosper, and should share the fruits of their success with others. Amen-em-ope, however, teaches that the wise seldom prosper, nonetheless they should remain self-controlled, modest, thoughtful in speech, considerate of others, and humble servants of their divine patrons. (Illustration 10)

See OTS 2004: 305

For the books of Job and Ecclesiastes, blind obedience was disloyal. Unquestioning loyalty was treason. Untested faith was heresy. The only true faith was a questioning faith. The only real loyalty was a tested loyalty. The only genuine obedience was an obedience given by students who had passed through the novitiate of doubt. The wise woman is not a skeptic. She is a quality-control engineer like the snake in the book of Genesis or the Satan in the book of Job. This wise woman is responsible for assembling and evaluating traditions like those in the book of Proverbs, not to destroy them, but to improve them. The title page assures audiences that the book of Ecclesiastes is an official audit of Israel's teaching traditions, and not an eccentric rejection of them. (Illustration 10)

►OTS 2004: 308-309

According to R. N. Whybray, The New Centruy Bible Commentary: Ecclesiastes (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans 1989: 66-73 Elohim designates the correct times for things but humans cannot know what they are.

►OTS 2004: 312-313 (Figure 75)

For the wise the light of each day is sweet.
Every morning their eyes delight to see the sun.
No matter how many years they live,
The wise learn something from each day.
Days without learning are many in a lifetime,
So treat every day like a breath of air.

My student, if you indulge your senses while they are sharp,
If you let your heart learn something every day,
If you satisfy your curiosity,
If you study everything you see,
Then the creator will endow you with wisdom....

Do not fill your mind with anxiety.
Do not rack your body with pain.
Life is too short.
The time to learn vanishes like a breath of air.

Pay attention when your creator teaches.
Learn before the days without learning come.
Use your eyes before the sun, the moon, and the stars are darkened,
Use your eyes before daylight is shrouded by rain clouds.
Use your hands before the guardians of the house tremble,
Use your legs before the strong men are bent.
Use your teeth before the grinders are idle because they are few,
Use your voice before the sound of the mill is low.
Use your eyes before they who look through the windows grow blind,
Use your ears before the doors to the street are shut,
Use your ears before the chirp of a bird is silent.
Use your voice before the daughters of song are suppressed.
Explore the world before you become afraid of heights,
Seek adventure before you are frightened by perils in the street.
Make love before the almond tree blooms,
Kindle passion before the locust grows sluggish,
Indulge concupiscence before the caper berry is without effect.
All of us are on a journey to the grave,
All of us will be escorted by mourners through the streets.
Learn before your umbilical cord is snapped.
Eat before your bowl is broken.
Drink before your cup is shattered at the spring.
Quench your thirst before the pulley falls broken into the well.
Breathe before your clay returns to the earth.
Inhale before your breath returns to your creator.
We live life one breath at a time, says Qoheleth.
Exhale and the lesson of that day is gone forever.

75 Audit of Learning
(Eccles. 11:7—12:8)

►OTS 2004: 313

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►OTS 2004: 314-331

Carol L. Meyers, ""to Her Mother's House": Considering a Counterpart to the Israelite Bêt 'Ab," in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis*, eds. David Jobling, Peggy I Day and Gerald T Sheppard (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Pr, 1991), 45-47.

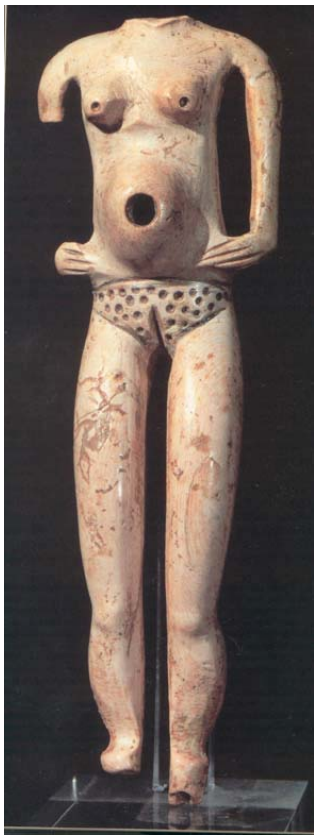
The Song of Songs, or Canticles, is surely the most famous collection of love poetry in the Western world. It is also the only biblical book probably spoken more by women than by men. Despite the traditional ascription of authorship to Solomon, which probably occurred at the time of editing because his name is mentioned several times in the work, the author or authors remain anonymous. Yet, according to the signification of the speakers in the poem itself, 53 percent of the text is spoken by females, as opposed to the 34 percent uttered by males. A female voice begins the collection of love poems and also ends it; the female speaker clearly dominates this extraordinary book.

Not only is a woman's voice heard more directly in the Song than anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible; but also its major character is a woman, and women form much of the supporting cast of characters. References to other females far outnumber mentions of men. Furthermore, female emotions are presented more prominently than are those of the male. Although there is no definitive proof for female authorship, some of the love lyrics that comprise the Song are so fundamentally feminine in texture and tone that the possibility that at least some parts of this book are a woman's composition must be entertained. The question of the author's gender aside, the treatment of gender is virtually unique in the Hebrew Bible. There is little gender stereotyping, with the woman being at least as assertive as, if not more so than, the man in the pursuit and celebration of her beloved.

The mutuality of the lovers notwithstanding, the female voice and female characters dominate.

Furthermore, in a striking reversal of conventionallanguage, traditional masculine imagery is employed by the poet to portray the female rather than the male. Through the use of military terms and also of certain animal metaphors, the female is repeatedly depicted in figurative language that associates her-and *not* the male-with strength, might, aggression, and even danger. The woman more than the man is connected with images of power.

►OTS 2004: 317 (Illustration 11)



"Your Navel is a Rounded Bowl, Your Belly in a Heap of Wheat" (Song 7:2)

Safadi ▪ 4300-33000 B.C.E. ▪ Ivory 10 cm
(BARev 11:41-53)

See OTS 2004: 321-322

Cultures regularly identify one place in their world whose women are the most beautiful. In Syria-Palestine it was Shunem. Here at the foot of Mt. Gilboa, sixty miles north of Jerusalem and twenty miles southeast of the Carmel Mountains, where a pass leads north into the Valley of Jezreel, lived the most beautiful women in the world. After "they sought for a beautiful young woman throughout Israel," it was in Shunem that David's officials found Abishag, "who was very beautiful. She became the king's attendant and served him, but the king did not know her sexually" (1 Kings 1:3-4). The woman in the Song of Solomon (Song 7:1-6) is a Shulammite. The words "Shulammite" and "Shunammite" both identify women from the village of Shunem. She is the most beautiful woman in the world.

►**OTS 2004: 318 (Figure 76)**

Number 1

Her song:

I am still here with you,
    But your heart is no longer here with me.
Why have you stopped holding me?
    What have I done . . . ?
You no longer seek to caress my thighs. . . .

Would you leave me to get something to eat?
    Are you that much a slave to your belly?
Would you leave me to look for something to wear?
    Would you leave me holding the sheet?

If you are thinking about something to eat,
    Then feast on my breasts, make my milk flow for you.
Better a day in the embrace of a lover . . .
    Than thousands of days elsewhere. . . .

Number 2

Her song

Mix your body with mine . . .
    As honey mixes with water,
    As mandrake mixes with gum,
    As dough mixes with yeast . . .
Come to your lover,
    Like a horse charging onto the field of battle….
    Like a soldier. . . .

Number 3

His song:

My lover is a marsh,
    My lover is lush with growth. . . .
Her mouth is a lotus bud,

Her breasts are mandrake blossoms.
Her arms are vines,
Her eyes are shaded like berries.
Her head is a trap built from branches . . . and I am the goose.
Her hair is the bait in the trap . . . to ensnare me.

Figure 76 Egyptian Love Songs
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels 2006: 321-322)

► OTS 2004: 322

Tour-Burlesque

The tour-burlesque is an erotic catalog for the parts of the human body, which it describes one feature at a time. At each stop on the tour, one lover describes a part of the other's anatomy using erotic analogies. Like the other genres in the Song of Solomon, the tour-burlesque appeals to one or more of the senses of the audience. One lover begins the tour at the head; the other begins at the feet (Song 5:11+16). There are at least nine tours-burlesque in the Song of Solomon (Song 1:5–6, 9–11; 3:6–11; 4:1–5, 10–11; 5:10–16; 6:4–7; 7:1–6, 7–10).

Without understanding how the world of the Bible understood the body, it is impossible to understand the Bible. Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, Body Symbolism in the Bible (2001) offers a general introduction to the anthropology of the human body in the world Bible and a discussion of heart, throat, belly, head, eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, flesh, and bones. The book is richly illustrated with full-color images printed on good-quality paper. The authors are students of Othmar Keel, whose seminal work: Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern iconography and the Book of Psalms (1978), used the art of the ancient Near East to define cosmos, chaos, temple, Yahweh, ruler, and human in the Book of Psalms.

The body is a sacrament for humans to encounter creator. The divine patrons of most ancient Near Eastern cultures were incarnate in statues Yahweh was incarnate in the human body. The nepes or throat is synonymous with the person. Food enters through the throat; hence, Yahweh satisfies the thirsty throat with food (Ps 107:8-9), and good news is water for a thirsty throat (Prov 25:25). Speech, especially trilling or yodeling, leaves by the throat. Middle Eastern North African women still trill to say: "We are alive! Praise God!" (Ps 103). These sounds transcend the body, and therefore the throat is the life force of the body. Only when the Greek translation of the Bible (LXX) used psyche for nephes, was it incorrectly assumed that nephes was separate from the body.

The belly, which includes the liver, kidneys, heart, and uterus, is the basis of human well-being and psychic impulses. Emotions resided in the liver. The heart is not the seat of emotions but the seat of reason, of secret planning. Hence, heart appears only three times in the Song of Songs. People who lack heart are not emotionless, they are thoughtless (Hos 7:11). The kidneys are a measure of sincerity. The uterus, an omega-shaped glyph in ancient Near Eastern art, is the seat of compassion, the most divine of human emotions and the physical link between humans and their divine patron. The prophets reject the menstruating uterus, but Jesus accepts it (Mark 5:25-2b).

The head is the center of the body. Beheading does not just kill the body; it destroys the person. The covered face is withdrawn or threatening. The uncovered face is life supporting. Place the face on the ground (proskynesis) is an act of submission. Staring into the face of another is an act of aggression or rebellion. The stars are the face of Yahweh! The neck expresses pride and self-confidence. The nose communicates anger or patience. Hair signifies physical power, especially sexual power. Ears define discipleship. Like Egyptian scribes who sit and cross their leges to listen to their master, the wise and the faithful listen (Deut 6:4-9; Matt 13:16); fools and the disobedient do not (Deut 21:18-21). Yahweh desire listening, not sacrifice. Liberation theology today begins with listening.

http://63.136.1.22.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/pls/eli/ashow?aid=ATLA0001344643

►OTS 2004: 324 (Figure 77)

Inanna's song:

Let my lover bring boundary stones,
Let him string boundary stones;
Let Dumuzi plow between the boundary stones,
Let the small boundary stones adorn my neck,
Let the large boundary stones decorate my breasts.

Dumuzi's song:

Inanna is my devoted lover,
For her I will plow.
Surely for her I will plow the boundary stones,
For her Dumuzi will plow the boundary stones….

Inanna's song:

Dumuzi was created for me,
Amaushumgalanna was made for me,
With a beard as dark and rich as lapis lazuli.
Dumuzi was created for me by Anu, my godfather,
Dumuzi was made for me with a beard as dark and rich as lapis lazuli
With a beard as dark and rich as lapis lazuli
With a beard as dark and rich as lapis lazuli. . . .

Figure 77 Stories of Tammuz and Isthar
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, forthcoming 3rd revised & expanded edition)

►OTS 2004: 326-327

Carol L. Meyers, ""to Her Mother's House": Considering a Counterpart to the Israelite Bêt 'Ab," in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis*, eds. David Jobling, Peggy I Day and Gerald T Sheppard (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Pr, 1991), 45-47.

In the context of this series of poems characterized by the prominence and power of females, the use of the term "mother's house" to signify the female's family household should come as no surprise. This phrase occurs twice in the Song, in 3:4 and in 8:2,39 when the female expresses how dear her beloved is by speaking of bringing him "to her mother's household."

In the first occurrence, the phrase is followed by a parallel reference to the mother's "chamber" *(heder).* This use of a spatial term need not mean that the preceding *bet 'em* is also spatial. Rather, "chamber" intensifies, focuses, and clarifies the female orientation of its parallel. For it is not simply a bedroom, it is "the chamber of her that conceived me," an amplification highlighting the mother's procreative role.

The second instance of "mother's house," in 8:2, involves textual variants that again illustrate the androcentric bias of the ancient translators as well as of modem commentators. This verse, like 3:4, involves a parallel, which reads *telammedenf* in the MT. This word could be translated either "she teaches (or instructs) me" or "you (masc.) teach (or instruct) me." The translations that understand the former possibility, acknowledging "mother" to be the referent, are to be preferred, given the female orientation of this verse and of the entire book, and also for other reasons to be discussed below.

The Hebrew word *tlmdny,* however, takes on other meanings in some of the versions. The LXX, Vulgate, and Peshitta all delete it and instead *"To Her Mother's House"* offer translations that would represent an expanded and quite different Hebrew: *we'el-beder hartit;* ("to the room of the one who bore/conceived me"). This phrase, clearly influenced by the parallelism of 3:4, has been adopted by a number of influential English translations. Furthermore, as might be expected, many modern critics favor the versions over the MT, if they have not already decided that *tlmdny* is masculine and that the male lover or even God, and not the mother, must be doing the teaching.

Therefore, the following translation is preferred.

Erotic Fantasy
(Song 8:1-14)

O that you were like a brother to me,
Who nursed at my mother's breast!
If I met you outside, I would kiss you
And no one would despise me.
I would lead you
and bring you into my mother's house
and into the place of the woman
who taught me to make love.[3]
I would give you spiced wine to drink,
And the juice of my pomegranates.
O that my lover's left hand were under my head
And that his right hand embraced me.

[3] NRSV: …into the chamber of the one who bore me.

Swear to me, O daughters of Jerusalem that
You will not stir up or awaken love until it is ready.

►OTS 2004: 327 (Figure 78)

My lover brings me into the banquet hall.
He smothers me with love.
My lover feeds me raisins so that I will not faint.
He gives me quince to fire my passion.
My lover caresses my head with his left hand.
He fondles my body with his right.

78 Erotic Fantasy
(Song 2:4-6)

► OTS 2004: 331

Further Reading

11. Song of Solomon

Commentaries

Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs* (The Old Testament Library). Louisville: Westminster John Knox, Zoos.

> Convinced that the Song of Songs can be adequately understood only by uncovering the manner in which its poetry functions, Exum sets out to unpack the book's guiding poetic strategies. Chief among these is what she calls the "illusion of immediacy." The use of direct speech makes the readers feel that they are privy to intimate moments in the relationship between the lovers and can thus understand and sympathize with them. In a comprehensive introduction (eighty-six pages), she treats all the literary questions posed by the Song and points out where her own work agrees and/or disagrees with other authors. The commentary itself begins with her own translation along with critical notes explaining it. This is followed by an extensive and detailed verse-by-verse commentary.

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►OTS 2004: 336-337 (Figure 81)

indictment (Isa. 1:2-3)

Let the heavens hear and the earth listen when Yahweh speaks:

"I have been faithful to Israel and Judah,
    But they were unfaithful to me.
An ox knows its owner, and an ass knows who fills its manger,
    But my people do not."

lament (Isa. 1:4-9)

Shame! Only the unclean are unfaithful to Yahweh,
    Only fools abrogate their covenants with the Holy One,
    Only the shamed do such evil.
Judah, your body is covered with wounds, yet you still rebel?
    Your whole head is bleeding,
    Your heart is scarcely beating.
From head to foot, you are covered with bruises.
    Wounds and welts...infected, un-bandaged, untreated.
Your villages are laid waste,
    Your cities are burned to the ground.
    Your crops feed strangers,
Jerusalem looks like Sodom and Gomorrah.
    The chosen city looks like a harvester's hut abandoned in a vineyard,
    Zion looks like a farmer's hut left in a melon patch....

sentence (Isa. 1:10-17)

Let Sodom hear the word of Yahweh,
    Let Gomorrah listen to the commandments of Yahweh....

"Trample my courts no more, bring no more worthless offerings.
Your incense is loathsome to me.
Your new moons, Sabbaths, assemblies, octaves, and festivals I detest....
You lift your hands, I close my eyes. The more you pray, the less I listen.
Your hands are full of blood, wash yourselves clean.
Get evil out of my sight, cease doing evil.
Learn to do good, make justice your aim.
Redress the wronged.
Hear the orphan's plea.
Defend the widow."

appeal (Isa. 1:18-31)

"Though your sins be scarlet, they will become white as snow," says Yahweh.
"Though they be crimson, they will become white as wool.
If you are faithful, you shall eat produce from the land,
If you are unfaithful, the sword shall eat you...."

Therefore Yahweh Sabaoth rules: "I will take vengeance on my foes."
The Mighty One promises: "I will fully repay my enemies.
I will be a crucible smelting out dross,
I will be a forge burning out impurities.
I will reestablish the city assembly, and appoint new elders.
You shall be called 'City of Justice' and 'Faithful City.'
Zion will be delivered from its enemies by its judgment,
The repentant will be delivered by their justice.
Rebels and sinners shall be threshed,
Deserters shall be burned.
Sacred trees will shame you, sacred groves will embarrass you.
You shall become a leafless tree, and a waterless garden.
The gardener shall turn to tinder, his garden shall burst into flames.
Both shall burn together, no one shall quench the flames."

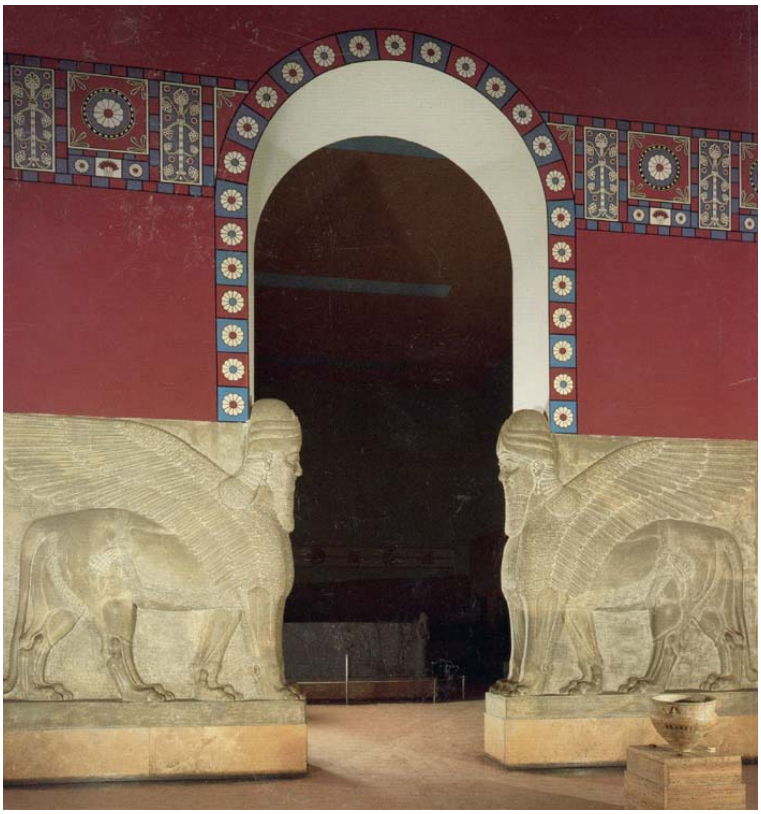
81 Trial of Judah
(Isa. 1:1-31)

►OTS 2004: 339 (Illustration 12)

The Inauguration of Isaiah at Jerusalem describes the seraphim that guard the House of Yahweh greeting Isaiah as he enters the Temple, and then preparing him to assume his work as a prophet. Both seraphim and cherubim were divine bodyguards. Cherubim or karibu (say: KAH-ri-bu) means "one who prays." Cherubim, like the one below preserved today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, guarded the Palace of Assurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.E.) at Nimrud some twenty-two miles south of Mosul in Iraq today. At the peak of his career Sargon II (721-705 B.C.E.), Great King of Assyria, founded a new capital, which he named Dur-Sharrukin -- the Fortress of Sargon. A French team directed by Paul-Emile Botta excavated the site at Khorsabad, Iraq from 1842- 1844. The gates of Sargon's palace were also flanked by huge stone Cherubim -- winged figures with human heads and the bodies of bulls. Sculptors gave their statues five legs, to give the illusion of four legs when seen from either the front or the sides.

Guardian from Palace of Assurnasirpal II

(Nimrud 883-859 B.C.E. Limestone)



Assyrian Cherubim Guard Palace of the Great King

Nimrud ▪ 883-859 B.C.E. ▪ Alabaster ▪ 4.4 m
(Max Kunze, et al. Short Guide to the Pergamon Museum ,1995)

See OTS 2004: 345

Isaiah also hears the seraphim snakes, who guard Yahweh. They are comparable to the uraeus snakes who guard Pharaoh. Seraphim and the cherubim are composite creatures that combine the most respected and most feared qualities of different creatures. The cherubim are part human, part ox, part lion, and part eagle. (Illustration 12) Humans were respected for their intelligence, oxen for their strength, lions for their fierceness in battle, and eagles for the ability to fly (Ezek. 1:1-28). The seraphim here combine the body of a snake with the flames of a fire and the wings of an eagle. They have six wings. Two wings cover their faces so that they do not violate the prohibition against seeing Yahweh. Two wings cover their reproductive organs so that they do not violate the prohibition against appearing naked before Yahweh (Exod. 20:26). Two wings allow the seraphim to hover aloft. The seraphim chant "Holy, Holy, Holy" to warn pilgrims to the temple that they are entering the divine plane, which is clearly distinct from the human plane. Humans who enter the divine plane are as radically altered as humans who are exposed to radiation today. They are physically changed, and they can change or harm other humans with whom they come into contact. Most cultures physically mark off the boundaries of the divine plane. Sometimes priests are posted at regular intervals along the path or stairway into the sanctuary. As pilgrims approach, these priests challenge them to be sure they meet the qualifications for entering sacred space (Ps. 15:1-5; 24:1-10). Sometimes sanctuary land is simply fenced by a low temenos-wall to remind pilgrims to enter advisedly. Cultures not only mark off the holy, they also mark off those who enter and then leave. When Moses leaves the presence of Yahweh, he wears a mask (Exod. 34:29-35), which clearly identifies him as someone who speaks for Yahweh.

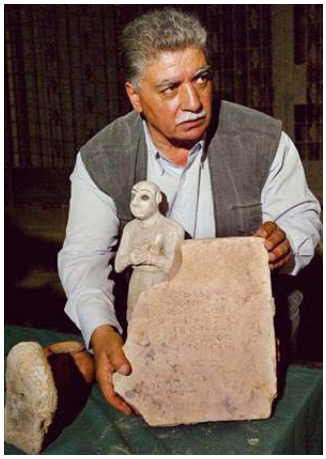
Assyrian Cherubim are also part of the collection at the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. This museum houses a major collection of material remains from Mesopotamian cultures and is the second oldest museum in the region after the Imperial Ottoman Museum in Istanbul.

The Ghost in the Baghdad Museum

Roger Cohen (NY Times April 2, 2006: 29)

BAGHDAD, Iraq

FOR the director of a shuttered mu seum in a country at war, the imaginary can be a welcome refuge. Condemned to contemplate his own and his country's fate in great halls emptied of visitors, Donny George paces past showcases of ancient vessels and jars and clay tablets, and he dreams.



In his mind's eye, the museum director sees the grand opening: the courtyard filled with 1,000 guests, succulent lamb and sumptuous dates on tables beneath the palms, a Baghdad chamber quartet playing, the spirited talk of civilized people in the land where, several thousand years ago, the emergence of writing first permitted the considered transfer of ideas from one epoch to the next.

Donny George, Ph.D.
Director
Iraq Museum, Baghdad

Mr. George smiles. It is a relief to dream when explosions greet the dawn. His genial brown eyes express both hope and the burden of living in Iraq: Under Saddam Hussein, he learned to live a double life: praising the dictator in public, worrying in private. He was a member of Mr. Hussein's now-disbanded Baath Party. Not to be, he says, would have meant dismissal and the abandonment of archaeological excavations, his great love. Compromise is woven into the texture of his life.

Now, as the director general of Iraqi museums, his new title, he inhabits a labyrinth. The Interior Ministry has been urging him to reopen the National Museum, saying it will provide him with 1,000 guards if necessary. "But then it's no longer a museum," Mr. George said. "It's a barracks."

Three years have now passed since the chaos accompanying the arrival of American troops in Baghdad set off looting at the museum. Mr. George fled through the back door, he says, when Iraqi militias began firing rocket-propelled grenades into the grounds. The plundering prompted international outrage, fingerpointing and a frenzy of political spin.

Initial reports of 170,000 stolen artifacts were exaggerated, as were wild comparisons to the sack of Constantinople. But the real number, about 15,000, still amounted to a tremendous loss. Reversing the damage has been arduous.

Largely through American assistance, both public and private, the museum has been restored and modernized. Mr. George, an Iraqi Christian who speaks excellent English, has proved adept at garnering this aid, forging good relations with several American officials while nursing an undiminished anger at the way, in his view, the United States "dismantled the whole former system only to leave a void."

Even with thousands of pieces still missing, the museum houses an extraordinary collection by any standard. What is lacking is the peace it needs to admit the public.

"When a museum is reopened, it means that peace has come," Mr. George said. For now, it is a hollow place, devoid of life, empty of discourse. This echoing museum at the heart of Baghdad, that is to say, at the heart of the American project in Iraq, is an image of hope frustrated.

"Everyone, deep in hirriself, is grateful to the United States that they helped us get rid of this regime," Mr. George said. "But the uncontrolled situation, that is another thing. Why was it not controlled?"

In Baghdad today, as the concrete blast walls multiply, control seems almost unimaginable. Since 2003, three museum employees -- an archaeologist, an accountant and a driver -- have been killed.

"It's hard to know what you can do with security the way it is," said John Russell, an expert in Iraqi archaeology at the Massachusetts College of Art who spent several months in Baghdad coordinating cultural reconstruction for the State Department. "The museum will open some day, but for now it's right to keep a low profile. Nobody wants to be responsible for a disaster."

Least of all Mr. George, who at 55 sees himself as standing guard over his country's history. A love of the outdoor life marked him from childhood, when he would fish with his father, hunt with his grandfather and lead expeditions of scouts. He was set to study English literature at Baghdad University but was steered to a French literature class that he said held no interest for him. He went to see the assistant dean, who told him that the only other opening was in archaeology. "I asked if that meant living in tents and excavating sites, and when he said yes, I jumped at the opportunity," Mr. George recalled.

What he found was an intellectual passion that has endured to this day -- one that brings perspective. "There are stages such as these, and then there are stages of calm," Mr. George reflected. "Each can last 100 years, but it passes. A famous Sumerian writer described the scene here in 2000 B.C., saying that people are looting and killing and nobody knows who the king is. So you see, nothing is new."

Well, a few things are: Mr. George was sitting in a comfortable office with cellphones, a computer, the Internet. American money and American experts have produced results.

More than $2 million from the State Department, the Packard Humanities Institute of Los Altos, Calif., and the Iraqi Culture Ministry have gotten the roof repaired, the telephone system transformed, the fences upgraded, guard houses built, the plumbing fixed, the windows washed, locks coordinated, the air-conditioning upgraded, surveillance cameras installed and an electronic security system activated.

After years of gradual decay under Mr. Hussein, the museum has had a face-lift.

"The assistance we have asked for from the State Department we have had, and we are grateful," Mr. George said. Asked whether thought guilt drove this American largess, he joked, "I would love them to feel that."

But restoration is one thing, recovery another. Of the 15,000 pieces estimated to have been looted, many from museum storeroom, about 5,000 have been recovered. The identification has been complicated by the plundering of Iraqi archaeological sites since 2003, which has flooded the international market with items are easily confused with museum pieces.

"Lady of Warka" or "Lady of Uruk"
Sumer
3200 BCE
Iraq Museum.

Most of the approximately 10,000 artifacts still missing are smaller items: gems, jewels. terracotta figurines and cylinder seals. More than 40 larger unique pieces were stolen, like a 5,200-year-old mask from the Sumerian city of Warka, but most of those have been returned.

Mr. Russell said that the smaller artifacts "are easy enough to sell if you clean off the acquisition numbers." Still, over time, he said, they may be identified and recovered if customs aid law enforcement officials step up their efforts.

Mr. George takes a long view. "I am always hopeful," he said. "This building contains the story of mankind; its lesson cannot be despair."

He is still indignant that American troops did not guard the museum from April 10 through 12 2003, in the initial days after the fall of Baghdad. "I blame Unites States forces," he said. "A tank was close to the main gate. One of our people went and begged them to protect the museum but was told there were no orders to do so."

Why the museum was not protected may never be clarified. United States military officers have suggested that Hussein loyalists as well as arms stockpiles were in the museum and that chaos prevented action. The museum is in a highly exposed position. All that is clear is that no order was swiftly issued to stop the looters.

Confusion at the time of the looting was compounded in its aftermath. The woman who first cited the exaggerated figure of 170,000 artifacts was initially identified as the museum's deputy director but later found to be a former employee. The number spread like wildfire.

"A bum rap," was how Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld characterized criticism of the military. Mr. George was accused by some American editorial columnists of exaggerating the losses, though his line from the outset was that quantifying the loss would take time.

The director learned long ago to wait the bad times out. Under Mr. Hussein, he had a sideline as a drummer for a rock band called 99 Percent - "of perfection," he said - that specialized in Deep Purple songs and brought in much needed extra cash. That's an unwritten chapter of life under a dictatorship. Another is how Mr. George used work at Iraq's thousands of archaeological sites to avoid Baath Party meetings.

Through the ghostly museum, Mr. George led the way, commenting on 500,000-year-old axes and clay tablets with cuneiform script and sacred objects from mosques. Some showcases are filled and some empty; packages of new equipment (including special drawers for clay tablets sent by the German Archaeological Institute) are still wrapped; date palms are being planted in the courtyard. Mr. George says that the museum, which was repeatedly closed and neglected while Mr. Hussein fought his successive wars, will one day emerge stronger.

One site already in perfect order is the Assyrian Hall, which survived the looting and is filled with monumental reliefs representing the summit of Mesopotamian art. A prominent presence is the winged bull, a protective spirit gua r ding Assyrian palaces and cities.

The bull's body conveys strength; the wings, the magnificence of flight; the head of a man, enlightened wisdom. Created eight centuries before the dawn of the Christian era, 14 centuries before the beginnings of Islam, it was a striking representation of a seemingly invincible power.

Its time, of course, would end. The Babylonians would sweep away the Assyrians as comprehensively as the Americans, 26 centuries hater or so, have swept away Mr. Hussein. Even a closed museum can teach that everything passes and nothing is quite what it seems.

So, Mr. George was asked, are the Americans the new Babylonians? "No," he shot back. "The Babylonians were Iraqis."

► **OTS 2004: 346-354** ***(with thanks to Robert J Miller, Juniata College 2003)***

The Trial of Ahaz consists of an indictment and a sentence. In trials throughout the prophets, the indictment always asks, for example, "Did Ahaz allow Yahweh to feed and to protect Judah?" When the answer is "No" -- as it almost always is -- the sentence is death by war or starvation.

Isaiah says to Ahaz: "If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all". (Isa 7:9) His words anticipate the sentence which the divine assembly will impose on Ahaz and Judah. The words of the sentence itself are elliptical: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also?" (Isa 7:13) in a Trial of Ahaz, 735-715 B.C.E. (Isa 7:1—12:6). I assume that the divine assembly sentences Ahaz to death, but that the execution is delayed so that he can watch his son grow, and Assyria destroy Syria and Israel (353). Only the powerless in Judah -- like the unborn Emmanuel -- will survive, while the powerful (Isa 7:18-20), like Ahaz, will be overrun by the army of Assyria (Isa 7:21-22)

Ahaz is sentenced to death because he chooses to rely on himself, his army and his allies to defend Judah. Only Yahweh can protect the land from its enemies. When the rulers of Israel and Judah usurp that divine prerogative, and try to do what Yahweh has promised to do, the results are always death. A lament (Isa 1:4-9) which appears is another Trial of Judah (Isa 1:1:2-31) pleads with the rulers of Judah to realize that their attempts to protect the land for its enemies have left every male of military age either dead or wounded, every village burned to the ground, every harvest eaten by Judah's enemies, and turned Jerusalem into a ruin like Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Ahaz traditions (2 Kgs 18, 2 Chr 28) are edited in very different directions. Keith Whitlam ("Ahaz" in ABD i:106-107) reviews their history of interpretation and concludes that they are ambiguous abut both the death and the birth or Ahaz. Ambiguity, like the lack of a known grave site for Moses (Deut 34: 6), usually indicates an untimely and shameful death.

►**OTS 2004: 360 (Figure 89)**

On The Mountain, Yahweh will remove the shroud covering all peoples,
On The Mountain, Yahweh will remove the bindings wound around all nations.

89 Creation of New Heavens and a New Earth
(Isa. 25:7-8)

►OTS 2004: 361

Rebirth in the Creation of New Heavens and a New Earth takes place on "The Mountain" (Isa 25:6–7). Cultures regard certain mountains as sacred because they are shaped like the distended uterus of an expectant mother. Certain mountains mark the spot where the earth is pregnant. Through these sacred centers life flows from the Godmother into the communities that she creates. The human navel is a strong physical reminder of the dependence of one human being on another for life. A sacred center is a strong physical reminder of the dependence of a community on its creator.

Creation is celebrated at sacred centers with a sacred meal. These meals close the time of transition during which only rations are consumed. Wine and other holiday food or "rich food" is served. These meals "wipe away the tears from all faces" (Isa 25:8) as effectively as nursing a newborn stills its crying.

L. Juliana M. Claassens, The God Who Provides: biblical images of divine nourishment (2004) studies biblical traditions where Yahweh does or does not feed the Hebrews. In these traditions Yahweh is a mother who listens to her children, provides for their needs and manages her household by rationing food for the day. In the Creation of New Heavens and a New Earth Yahweh prepares an eschataological banquet, the first meal in the new world. Subsequent traditions further develop this motif (2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, 1 Enoch, Luke 14).

► **OTS 2004: 368 (Figure 90)**

Nabonidus turned the worship of Marduk, ruler of the divine assembly in Babylon, into an abomination. . . . celebrating rituals incorrectly and failing to offer sacrifices at the proper time with the intent of completely eliminating the worship of Marduk. He also enslaved the people of Babylon to work for the state year round. . . .

Marduk, the ruler of the divine assembly, heard the people of Babylon when they cried out, and became angry. Therefore, he and the other members of the divine assembly left the sanctuaries which had been built for them in Babylon. Marduk . . . searched all the lands for a righteous ruler to lead the *akitu* New Year procession. He chose Cyrus, the ruler of Anshan. Marduk called his name and made him ruler of all the earth. . . . Because Marduk . . . was pleased with Cyrus' good deeds and upright heart, he ordered him to march against Babylon. They walked together like friends, while the vast army of soldiers accompanying Cyrus marched into Babylon without fear of attack. Marduk allowed Cyrus to enter Babylon without a battle. . . and delivered Nabonidus, the king who would not revere Marduk, into the hands of Cyrus…..

I entered Babylon as a friend of Marduk and took my seat in the palace. Every day I offered sacrifice to Marduk, who made the people love and obey me. Therefore, I ordered my soldiers not to loot the streets of Babylon, nor to molest the people of Sumer and Akkad. I no longer enslaved the people of Babylon to work for the state, and I helped them to rebuild their sanctuaries which had fallen into ruin…. Every ruler from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf, rulers who dwell in palaces in the east and rulers who live in tents in the west came to Babylon to bring me tribute and to kiss my feet.

I returned the statues of the divine patrons of Ashur, Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, Zamban, Meturnu, Der and Gutium to their own sanctuaries. When I found the sanctuaries across the Tigris in ruins, I rebuilt them. I also repatriated the people of these lands and rebuilt their houses. Finally, at Marduk's command, I allowed statues of the divine patrons of Sumer and Akkad, which Nabonidus had moved to Babylon, to be returned to their own sanctuaries . . . which I rebuilt.

May all the members of the divine assembly, whose statues I have returned to their sanctuaries, ask Bel and Nebo for a long life for me every day. May they remember me to Marduk, my divine patron, with the prayer: "Remember Cyrus, the ruler who reveres you, and his son, Cambyses."

Figure 90 Decree of Cyrus
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, forthcoming 3rd revised & expanded edition)

> OTS 2004: 371

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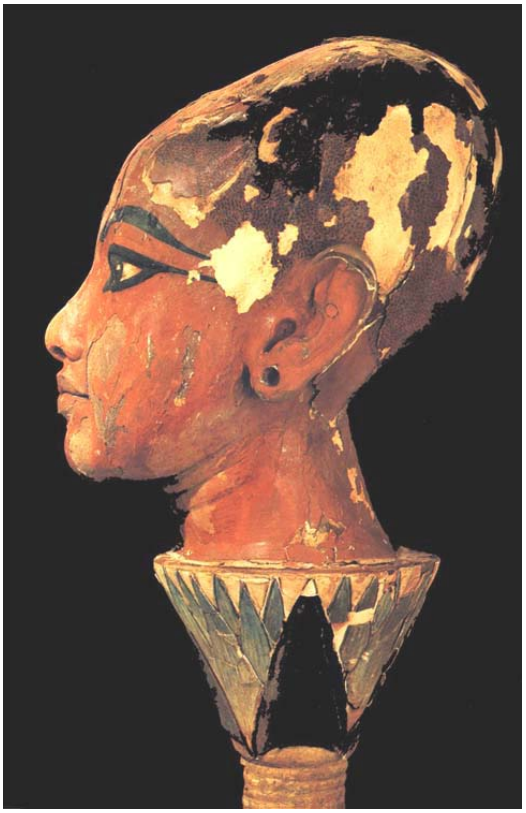
►**OTS 2004: 375 (Illustration 13)**



Amun Calls Tutakhamun from a Lotus Womb

Valley of the Kings ▪ 1333-1323 B.C.E. ▪ Wood ▪ size?

> OTS 2004: 383

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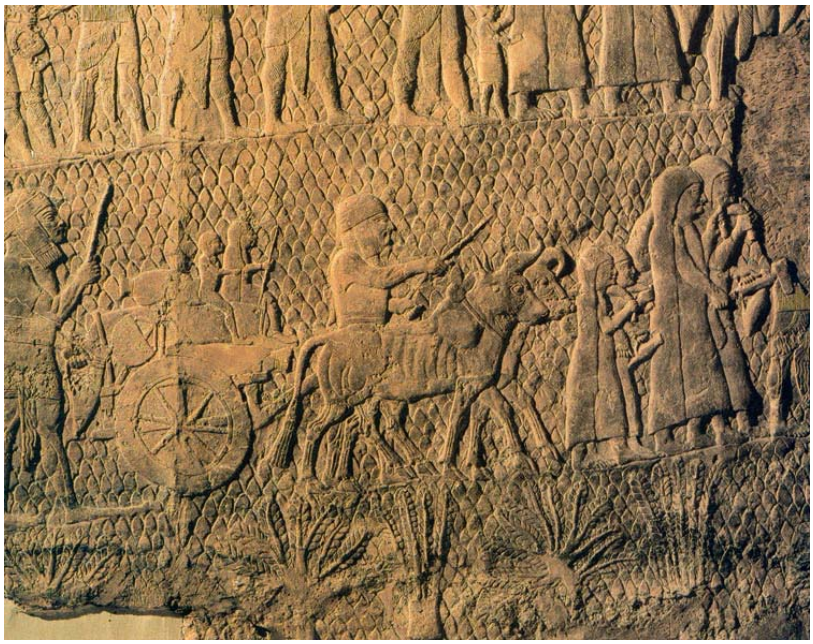

Hebrew Refugees Flee Lachish with Wagon

Nineveh ▪ 694 B.C.E. ▪ Limestone ▪ 250 cm x 18.9 m
(David Ussishkin, The Conquest of Lachish by Sennacherib, 1982)

See OTS 2004: 388

As Ezekiel watches the storm crossing the plain, he expects to see Yahweh ride out of the cloud like a divine warrior in order to attack Babylon and free the people of Judah. Instead, he sees a refugee's wagon, glowing with the static electricity created by St. Elmo's fire, rumble out of the storm (Ezek. 1:5). This is the same wagon that Ezekiel sees leaving Jerusalem when Yahweh evacuates the temple (Ezek. 10:18-22). The same kind of wagon appears in the reliefs of Sennacherib's victory over Lachish. (Illustration 14) The image evokes the feelings of humility and identity with the poor evoked when the body of Martin Luther King, Jr. processed in a farm wagon to his grave, or when the family in *Grapes of Wrath*, the 1939 novel by John Steinbeck (1902–1968), load their truck to leave Oklahoma. Marduk rides in a war chariot; Yahweh in a refugee's wagon. Yahweh does not process triumphantly like Marduk into Babylon, but enters the city humbly among all the other prisoners of war to share the suffering of the household of David in exile.

► OTS 2004: 389 (Figure 91)

call to worship

Praise the divine patron of Israel without equal!
Shout as Yahweh rides across the heavens to save us!

creation story

Yahweh subdues the ancient enemies,
Our divine patron shatters the forces of old;
Yahweh drives out the enemy before you,
Our divine patron decrees: "Destroy them!"
So Israel lives in safety,
Untroubled is Jacob's abode
In a land of grain and wine,
Where the heavens drop down dew.
Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you,
A people saved by Yahweh;
Yahweh is your helpful shield,
Yahweh is your victorious sword.
Your enemies shall surrender to you,
You shall put your foot on their backs.

91 Hymn
(Deut, 33:26-29)

► **OTS 2004: 399 (Figure 93)**

I:200-30

Nintu said to the divine assembly: "I cannot do Ea-Enki's work.
Only Ea-Enki has the power to create.
Let him give me clay to create."
Ea-Enki spoke: "I will bathe to mark my time . . .
At the new moon, the seventh day, and the full moon, I will wash.
Let the divine assembly sacrifice We-ila.
Let them bathe in his blood.
Let Nintu thin my clay with his blood.
Let Nintu mix clay with blood, the human with the divine. (Jer 18:2-6)
Let the drum mark off the days,
Count down the time.
Let divine blood give these workers life,
Let the spirit within allow them to live.
The divine assembly agreed,
The divine elders consented.

At the new moon, the seventh day, the full moon, Ea-Enki bathed.
The divine assembly sacrificed We-ila the wise. . . .
Nintu thinned the clay with his blood.
The drum marked off the days . . . counted down the time.
We-ila's blood gave the workers life,
The life in the clay allowed them to live.

Stories of Atrahasis I:200-230
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, forthcoming 3rd revised & expanded edition)

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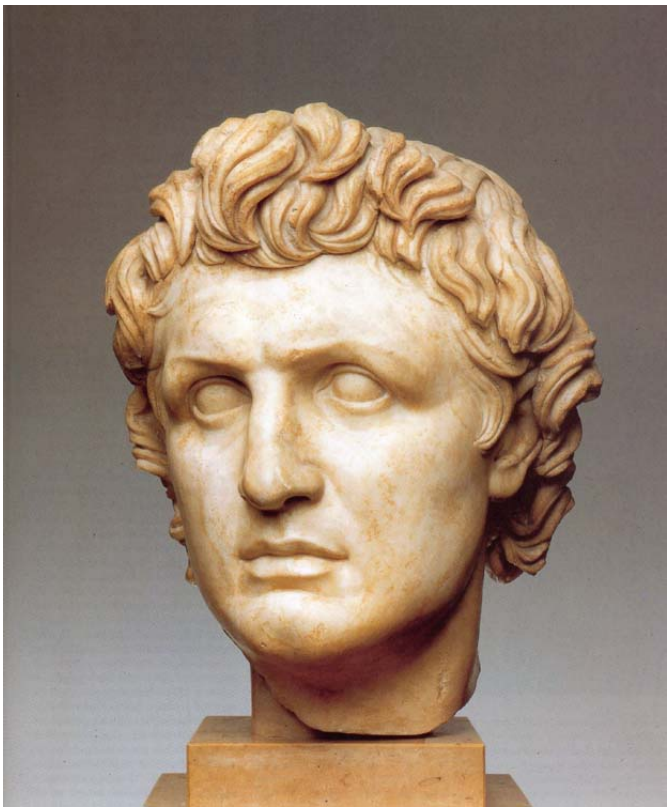
► OTS 2004: 406 (Figure 95)

On the first day, Danil prepared food for his divine patrons to eat,
The Powerful One mixed wine for the divine assembly to drink.
Then the Son of Harnam spread his garment in the sanctuary,
Danil lay down and went to sleep. . . .
On the seventh day, Ba'al came forward
He answered Danil's lament.
The divine patron of Ugarit showed mercy to the Son of Harnam
"Surely, Danil should have a son like his brothers,
He needs an heir like his covenant partners.
He has blessed the divine assembly with food,
He has filled their sanctuaries with drink.
Bless him and show that you are El the Bull.
O my father, creator of all things, bless him.
Raise up a son for his household.
Establish an heir in his palace.
Give Danil a son to erect a stele for the divine patrons of his ancestors,
To build a shrine for the household of Danil in their sanctuary.
Give Danil a son to burn incense for him,
To chant beside his grave.
Lift up a son to silence the mouths of his father's enemies,
To drive away those who trouble him.
To give Danil a hand when he drinks too much,
To support him when he is filled with spirits,
To eat a sacrificial meal for him in the sanctuary of Ba'al,
To consume his portion in the House of El,
To repair Danil's roof after it rains,
To purify his clothes."

Figure 95 Stories of Aqhat
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, forthcoming 3rd revised & expanded edition)

> OTS 2004: 409 (Illustration 15)



Splendor of Greece – an "Abomination" in Dan 11:31, 12:11

Pergamon ▪ 200 B.C.E ▪ Marble ▪ 39.5 cm
(Max Kunze, et al. Short Guide Pergamon Museum, 1995)

See OTS 2004: 417

In the Book of Isaiah, the fallen star is "Lucifer" or the "Day Star," who is the "Child of the Dawn," exiled for masterminding a conspiracy against the divine assembly (Isa. 14:12). In the traditions of Ugarit, this star is "Athar the Awesome." Each is defeated and condemned to live between the heavens and the earth. In the book of Daniel, this star is Antiochus Epiphanes, condemned to live forever between the heavens and the earth for offering a sacrifice to Zeus in the temple during the dedication of Jerusalem as a Hellenistic city in December 167 BCE. This was the "abomination that makes desolate" or "abomination of desolation" (Dan. 11:31; 12:11; 1 Macc. 1:54; 2 Macc. 6:1-5).

The statue which Antiochus Epiphanes dedicated to Zeus in the Temple in Jerusalem, had a human face – most likely the face of Antiochus Epiphanes himself. (Illustration 15) The people of Judah were outraged. Zeus had no place in the House of Yahweh, and statues of the divine as human were sacrilegious – an abomination (Dan 11:31).

The act by which Antiochus Epiphanes had intended to inaugurate a state that would live forever would in fact destroy it. At the outset, Antiochus Epiphanes appears to succeed. He assimilates the House of Yahweh in

Jerusalem into the chain of temples for Zeus throughout the Hellenistic world, and buries Yahweh, who is called the "Chief of the Divine Warriors" (Dan. 8:11+25). Here the "holy ones" who guard the tomb of Yahweh are members of the divine assembly after whom the "holy ones" who developed the apocalypse stories in the book of Daniel named themselves (Dan. 8:25). The seers appropriate the title "holy ones" to identify themselves with the work of the divine assembly. Daniel hears them discussing the fate of Yahweh. At this point, Daniel seems only to hear the voices of the holy ones, but not to see them.

► OTS 2004: 412 (Figure 96)

One day, when Tjerker Ba'al was offering a sacrifice, a prophet went into a trance and became ecstatic (2 Kgs 3:15**)**. The prophet announced: "Summon this Egyptian messenger and his statue of Amun, who dispatched him to Syria-Palestine." The prophecy occurred on the same night that I had booked passage on a freighter headed for Egypt. I had already loaded my possessions and was only waiting for it to get dark, so that I could smuggle my statue of Amun, protector of travelers, on board.

Figure 96 Stories of Wen Amun
(Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels, forthcoming 3rd revised & expanded edition)

►OTS 2004: 415 (Figure 97)

creation story

Yahweh awakes.
Yahweh scatters the enemies of Israel.
Yahweh routs those who attack Israel.
Like smoke blown by the wind,
Our enemies are driven away.
Like wax melted by a flame,
Those who attack Israel are routed.

call to worship

Rejoice!
Exult before Yahweh!
Celebrate!
Praise Yahweh!
Praise the name of Yahweh!
Sing to Yahweh who rides upon the clouds!
Celebrate Yahweh, the divine patron of Israel!
Exult before Yahweh!

Figure 97 Hymn to Yahweh
(Ps. 68:1-5)

► OTS 2004: 416

In the book of Isaiah, the fallen star is "Lucifer" or the "Day Star," who is the "Child of the Dawn," exiled for masterminding a conspiracy against the divine assembly (Isa 14:12). In the traditions of Ugarit, this star is "Athar the Awesome." Each is defeated and condemned to live between the heavens and the earth. In the book of Daniel, this star is Antiochus Epiphanes, condemned to live between the heavens and the earth for offering a sacrifice to Zeus in the temple during the dedication of Jerusalem as a Hellenistic city in December 167 B.C.E. This was the "abomination that makes desolate" or "abomination of desolation" (Dan 11:31; 12:11; 1 Macc 1:54; 2 Macc 6:1–5).

"Fallen angels" also appear in Qur'an. Harut and Marut were two angels sent by Allah to the earth, after the angels made fun of humans for their corrupt rule of the earth. Allah said to the angels: "If you were in their place you would be doing the same thing." Allah also said to Harut and Marut: "I have given humans ten carnal desires, and they uses these desires to disobey me." Allah challenged the angels to do a better job of ruling the earth than humans. Harut and Marut accepted: "O Lord, if you give us ten carnal desires, we will go down to the earth and rule it justly." Harut and Marut were chosen and were sent to the city of Babylon -- Harut as scholar and Marut as a judge. (Qur'an 2:102)

►**OTS 2004: 420 (Figure 99)**

Cyrus repatriates the people of Judah, 537 BCE	373 calendar years seventy weeks of years (490 years)
Zerubbabel rebuilds the temple, 489 BCE	48 calendar years seven weeks of years (49 years)
Reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, 175–164 BCE	9 calendar years one week of years (7 years) a time, two times, and half a time (3½ years) 2300 evenings and mornings (3½ years) 1290 days (3½ years) 1335 days (3½ years)
Onias is assassinated, 172 BCE	317 calendar years sixty-two weeks of years (434 years)

Figure 99 Calendar in the Book of Daniel

> OTS 2004: 427

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►OTS 2004: 431 (Illustration 16)

Nobel Woman like Gomer Gazes from Her Window

Nimrud ▪ 800-750 B.C.E. ▪ Ivory ▪ 10.7 cm
(BARev 1985: 40-53)

See OTS 2004: 433

In the Trial of Israel (Hosea 1:2-3), which opens the book of Hosea, the marriage of Hosea and Gomer is a pantomime. “So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim” is the official document that records the marriage covenant between Hosea and Gomer. Gomer is the “Daughter of Diblaim,” which is the title of a woman of honor. She is not a prostitute. (Illustration 16)

►OTS 2004: 440-441 (Figure 103)

indictment (Hos 11:1-4)

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
Out of Egypt I called my son.
The more I called Israel,
The more they went from me.
They kept sacrificing to me as Baal,
They kept offering incense to statues.

I taught the household of Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms;
They did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness,
I led them with bands of love.
Like a parent I lifted them to my cheek,
I cradled them in my arms and nursed them.

sentence (Hos 11:5-7)

They shall return to slavery in Egypt,
Assyria shall conquer them.
Because they refuse to come back to me,
The sword will destroy their cities,
The sword will kill their priests....
Because my people turn from me....
When they call on the Most High, I will ignore them.

appeal (Hos 11:8-11)

How can I give you up to your enemies, Israel?
How can I hand you over as prisoners, Israel?
How can I destroy you like Admah?
How can I punish you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me.
My compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not act in anger.
I will not destroy Israel again.
For I am divine, not human,
The Holy One cannot come in anger.
The Hebrews return to Yahweh roaring like a lion,
Yahweh roars and cubs come obediently from the west.
They come obediently as geese from Egypt,
They come obediently as swallows from Assyria.
I will take them back, says Yahweh.

Figure 103 Trial of Israel
(Hos 11:1-4)

> OTS 2004: 441

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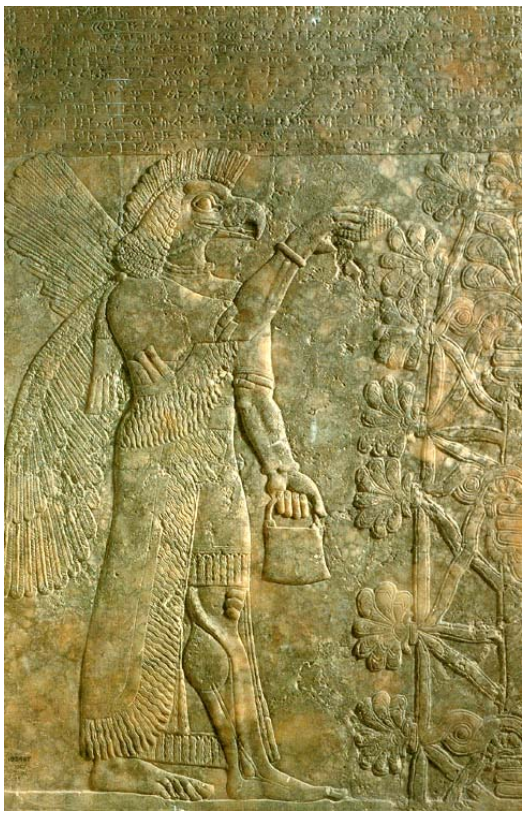
► **OTS 2004: 445 (Illustration 17)**



Divine Gardener like Amos Dresses Tree (Amos 7:14)

Nimrud 875-860 B.C.E. Alabaster 141x95 cm
(J.E. Curtis and J.E. Reade, eds., Art and Empire: treasures from Assyria in the British Museum, 1995)

See OTS 2004: 443

Amos (Hebrew: *'Amos*) is introduced without a patron or "father," but he is not introduced as a poor man. Amos was a wealthy rancher or a grower. (Illustration 17) When Amaziah charges him with being a "professional prophet" paid by the ruler of Judah to destabilize Israel, Amos argues that he makes his living as a herder and farmer (Amos 7:10-17). He has the mobility to leave Judah, where Tekoa is located, and travel to Bethel in Israel. His style of speaking and his familiarity with the traditions of ancient Israel are learned.

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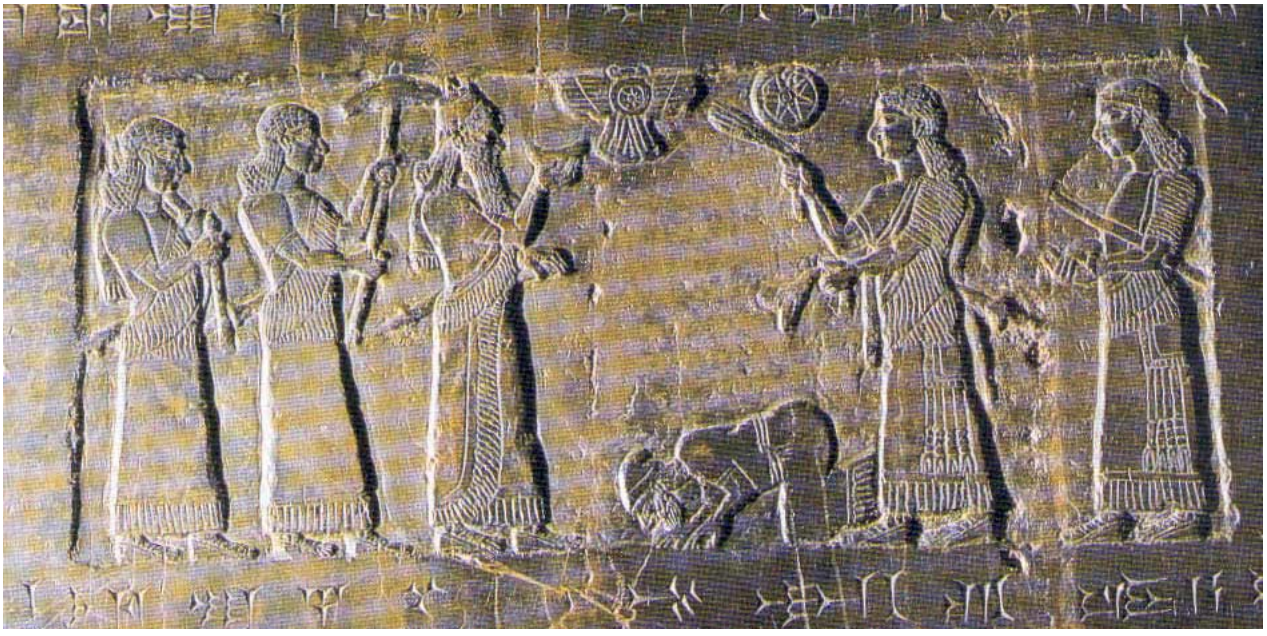
►OTS 2004: 453 (Illustration 18) ***with thanks to the reviewer at International Review of Biblical Studies 50 (2003-2004)***



The Humiliation of Jehu before Shalmaneser III

Nimrud ▪ 858-824 B.C.E. ▪ Alabaster ▪ 2x0.6 m
(Michael Roaf, Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East 1991: 175)

► OTS 2004: 457

The reputation of the Great Kings of Nineveh for arrogance in their annals was legendary. In 1846 Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894) recovered a four-sided obelisk of black limestone, six and one-half feet high from Nimrud in what is today Iraq. It is preserved in the British Museum in London. There are five titled columns of cuneiform inscription. The stepped pyramid on the top of the obelisk and about one-third of its base are also inscribed. On the obelisk, Shalmaneser reports his fifth western campaign in 841 B.C.E. which included Assyria's covenant with Israel. The Great King recognized Jehu as king of Israel (842-815 B.C.E.). Jehu, in return, declared an armistice with Syria and abrogated Israel's covenant with Judah. The covenant is described not only in writing, but also in a relief that shows Jehu kneeling before Shalmaneser as his client. (Illustration 18)

Yet the Great King in the Book of Jonah repents in sackcloth and ashes, while the Faithful Prophet remains incorrigible. Each acts in exactly the opposite way that the audience expects. The actions of both are ironic. Jonah converts the most evil nation in the world of the Bible with a semon only five words long in Hebrew that he preached during only three days. In contrast, the Bible preserves sixty-six chapters of Isaiah's preaching. Not one prophet, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, was able to convert the people of Yahweh in spite of a life-time of lengthy sermons. The audience expects Jonah to fail. Nonetheless, he succeeds, which is also ironic. Hyperbole appears in the climax where not only the people of Nineveh repent, but their rulers and their livestock as well. Such repentance was unheard-of in any other prophetic tradition.

► OTS 2004: 456 (Figure 105)

Lament for Jonah (Jonah 2:3-9)

confession of faith

In agony, I cried out to Yahweh.
Yahweh answered me.
From the pit of Sheol, I begged for help;
Yahweh heard my voice.

complaint

You cast me into the deep,
You threw me into the sea.
Judge River engulfed me,
Breakers and billows washed over my head,

petition

I cried out, “I can no longer see your face.
Give me one last look at your holy temple.”

Complaint

Water choked me,
The abyss smothered me.
“Sea of No Return” was tattooed on my forehead.
I went *down* at the base of the mountains.
The earth disappeared behind me forever.

confession of faith

You delivered my life from the pit of Sheol.
Yahweh, you are my divine patron...
With my last breath,
I remembered Yahweh.
I turned back to you,
I looked toward your holy temple.

Vow

Those who follow worthless patrons desert a merciful one.
I will gratefully offer sacrifice to you.
What I have vowed, I will fulfill.
“Yahweh is my deliverer.”

Figure 105 A Lament for Jonah
(Jonah 2:3-9)

► OTS 2004:453

The odyssey of Jonah begins in Joppa on the Mediterranean coast. In this ancient port, as in the Cloud City Cantina from the George Lucas film "Star Wars" film (1977) cultures from all over the world of the Bible mixed freely. Here ships sailed to the end of the earth through waters home only to monsters unseen since the world was made. Today, Jaffa is a colony of artists, shopkeepers and cafes basking in the Mediterranean sunshine. http://www.starwars.com/

Joppa in the 20th-21st Centuries
(David Harris, Glory of the Old Testament, 1984)

►OTS 2004: 453

Sennacharib, Great King of Assyria (704-681 B.C.E.) cut this relief into the stone walls of his palace at Khorsbad in Iraq today. Sailors like those in the Book of Jonah row through high waves and hugh sea creatures. A rope tied to the bow and stern is stretched over the mask to stabilize the hull of their ship.

Musee de Louvre Collection

Khorsbad 704-681 B.C.E.
(David Harris, Glory of the OldTestament, 1984: 222)

► **OTS 2004: 459**

Yahweh shades Jonah with a castorbean (Latin: ricinus communis), a tropical plant which blooms year after year, and quickly grows twelve feet high. The leaves form an umbrella thirty inches wide. The flowers are white or brown. The fruit is a soft, spiny gourd containing a large, spotted seed.

Castorbean (Latin: ricinus communis)
(David Harris, Glory of the Old Testament, 1984:223)

► **OTS 2004: 459**

Further Reading

18. Book of Jonah

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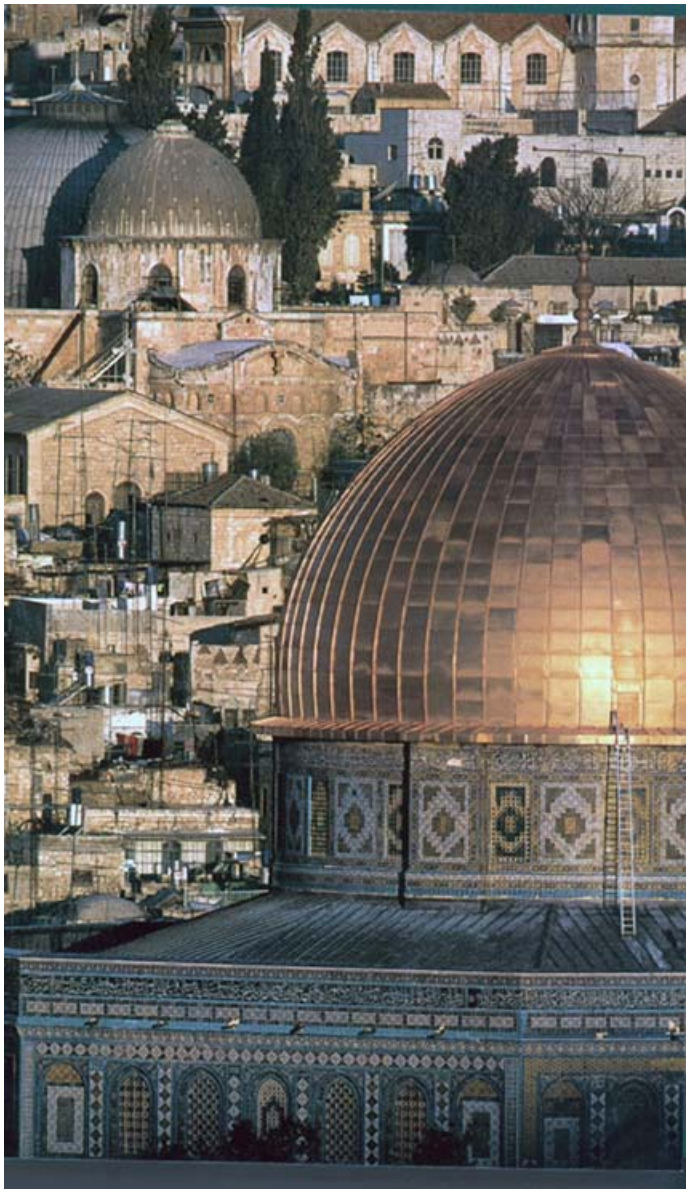
►**OTS 2004: 460 (Illustration)**

Cover Image: Anonymous, 20th Century, Untitled (Stories from Genesis) 1920-1930

Ricco Maresca Gallery, NYC
Art Resource http://www.artres.com

> OTS 2004: 465



See OTS 2004: 463

For those who live the Bible, the traditions of ancient Israel are a “canon.” In Egypt, the canon was a length of measurement like a meterstick or a yardstick (1 Kings 14:15; Ezek. 40:5). As a canon, the Bible is the core curriculum that hands on the basic culture of ancient Israel. The way of life that developed in ancient Israel is the basis on which those who live the Bible develop their own ways of life. Therefore, the Bible is the foundation of the

Talmud for Jews, the foundation of the New Testament for Christians, and the foundation of the Qur'an for Muslims. The Bible is "The Book" on which their books stand.

The geography of Jerusalem is map of both blessing and competition. The Dome of the Rock, built between 688-691 by Caliph Abd al-Malik, blesses the site where, for Muslims, Muhammad ascended into heaven. (Illustration 19) This Islamic shrine lays claim to same site where, for Jews, Abraham bound Isaac, and challenges the twin domes of Holy Sepulchre Church, at the site where, for Christians, Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead.

"Benjamin attempts to acknowledge the scriptural and historical connections among the "Peoples of the Book" by occasionally making reference to Islam and its view of the Bible. His effort in this regard should be applauded, but, unfortunately, some of these statements will have the opposite of their intended effect because they are likely to offend Muslim readers. In a number of places he suggests that Muslims consider the Bible and the *Qur'an* to be equally accurate and reliable sources of divine revelation. This is a position that runs counter to one of the basic beliefs of Islam, and very few Muslims would accept B's claim that the Bible is a mirror for understanding what it means to be a Muslim (p. 463). Along the same lines, the drawing of the Dome of the Rock (p. 465) is likely to upset Muslim readers, becaue it appears to replace the crescent that dorns the top of this important Islamic building with a cross."

John Kaltner (Rhodes College) CBQ 67 (2005):107-108

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