

Liberty University

**Preexilic Traits of the Israelian Prophetic Material in the Book of Kings**

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of the John W. Rawlings School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Lynchburg, VA

November 9, 2022

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“The evidence preserved to us by the passage of time  
constitutes but a small fraction  
of that which must once have existed.”

- Helene J. Kantor, 1947 -

## **Acknowledgments**

This text is dedicated to the memory of two members of my congregation, Ronald and Greg Jones. These brothers spoke into my life in so many ways during their time with us. Ronald joined the heavenly assembly in 2013, and his brother Greg followed in 2020. Never have two men been a greater encouragement to a young pastor and scholar. I want to thank my wife Nichole and our daughter Ariel who have endured years of conversations about topics they really were not that interested in just to help me further my passions. Our congregation, Bedford Road Baptist Church, sacrificially allowed me the time and resources to work nearly full-time on this project when it was necessary, and our elders were my biggest cheerleaders. My father, the original Dr. DiVietro, has been my teacher, mentor, advisor, and friend. He never misses an opportunity to challenge me, and along the way he has taught me research and rhetorical skills that have served me well. There is no way I could not thank Dr. R. Alan Fuhr, the director of the PhD in Bible Exposition program at Liberty University, the many professors who have aided me through this journey, Dr. Joseph Cathey who mentored me through the dissertation process despite facing a number of personal and professional hurdles during the time we were working together, and Dr. Jennifer Jones who brought a fresh perspective to the text as my second reader and challenged me to elevate my approach beyond what I thought was adequate. Of course, the greatest thanks and praise belong to the One who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is the source of faith, strength and wisdom. All of this is for the glory of God, or it is nothing.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Significant Terms

Akk.	Akkadian language
ANE	Ancient Near East
Assyr.	Assyrian language
Bab.	Babylonian
BCE	Before Common Era (aka BC)
CE	Common Era (aka AD)
DH	Deuteronomistic History
Dtr	Deuteronomistic Historian
EBA	Early Bronze Age
EBH	Early (Archaic) Biblical Hebrew
ESem.	Eastern Semitic language group
Hurr.	Hurrian language
IH	Israelian (northern) Hebrew
IPM	Israelian Prophetic Materials*
JH	Judahite/Judaeen (southern) Hebrew
LBA	Late Bronze Age
LBH	Late Biblical Hebrew
LXX	Greek Septuagint
MB	Middle Bronze Age
MH	Midrashic (Rabbinical) Hebrew
MT	Masoretic Text
RM	Reductionist/Minimalist*
SBH	Standard Biblical Hebrew (Classical Hebrew)
STJ	Second Temple Judaism
TRA	Theologically Robust Approach*
UBC	Ugaritic Baal Cycle

\* Denotes a term unique to this dissertation.

### Text Identifiers (Sigla)

A.	Sigla for texts found at Mari
AEM	Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn-Wien
<i>aFO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
ARM	Archives royales de Mari, transcribe et traduite
CAT	<i>Cuneiform Alphanumeric Texts</i> (also KTU), sigla for texts found at Ugarit
FLP	Tablets catalogued in the Free Library of Pennsylvania
IM	Tablets catalogued at the Iraq Museum
K.	Tablets catalogued at the British Museum
KA	Signature of texts found at Kuntillit 'Ajrud
KTU	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> (also CAT), sigla for texts found at Ugarit
M.	Tablet signature of texts found at Mari
Msk	Tablet signature of texts found at Eski Meskene
RIMA	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Assyrian Periods
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period

RS	Ras Šamra, tablet signature for texts found at Ugarit
Ug.	Ugarit, sigla for texts found at Ugarit
VAT	Cuneiform tablets in the collection of the Staatliche Museum, Berlin

### Periodicals

<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>ATST</i>	<i>Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament</i>
<i>AuBr</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
<i>AuOr</i>	<i>Aula Orientalis</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin of Biblical Research</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Review</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CAJ</i>	<i>Cambridge Archaeological Journal</i>
<i>HBAI</i>	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JANER</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Religions</i>
<i>JAR</i>	<i>Journal of Archaeological Research</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JFA</i>	<i>Journal of Field Archaeology</i>
<i>JJA</i>	<i>Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>JMA</i>	<i>Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near East Studies</i>
<i>JOAS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal of the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LAS</i>	<i>Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien</i>
<i>MThZ</i>	<i>Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>NEA</i>	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
<i>OJA</i>	<i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i>
<i>OtSt</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
<i>SAAB</i>	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>WO</i>	<i>Die Welt Des Orients</i>

*ZA*            *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*  
*ZAW*          *Zeitschrift für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*  
*ZDMG*        *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*  
*ZDPV*         *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

**Series**

AASOR    Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research  
ÄAT        Ägypten und Altes Testament  
ABC        Anchor Bible Commentary  
ABS        Archaeology and Biblical Studies  
ADPV      Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins  
AIL        Ancient Israel and Its Literature  
AMD       Ancient Magic and Divination  
ANEM      Ancient Near East Monographs  
AOAT      Alter Orient und Altes Testament  
ASOR      American Schools of Overseas Research (American Schools of Oriental Research)  
ATANT     Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments  
AYBRL     Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library  
BETL      Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium  
BFCT      Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie  
BJS        Brown Jewish Studies  
CBQM      Catholic Bible Quarterly Monograph Series  
CHANE     Culture and History of the Ancient Near East  
CNIP      Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications  
CRAI      Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres  
CUSAS     Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology  
EANEC     Explorations in Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations  
FOTL      The Forms of the Old Testament Literature  
HdO        Handbuch der Orientalistik  
HSK        Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikations-wissenschaft  
HSM        Harvard Semitic Monographs  
HSS        Harvard Semitic Studies  
IOS        Israel Oriental Studies  
JAJSup     Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements  
JSOTSup   Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements  
LHBOTS    Library of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (formerly JSOTSup)  
LSAWS     Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic  
NAC        New American Commentary  
NCB        New Century Bible Commentary  
NICOT     New International Commentary on the Old Testament  
NWS       Northwest Semitic language group  
OBO        Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis  
OIP        Oriental Institute Publications  
OLA        Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta  
ORA        Oriental Religions in Antiquity  
OTL        The Old Testament Library

OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PMIRC	Penn Museum International Research Conferences
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SANER	Studies in Ancient Near East Records
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SMC	Studies in Manuscript Cultures
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
SMC	Studies in Manuscript Cultures
SSLL	Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics
STJ	Second Temple Judaism
SVK	Skrifter utgit av Vitenskapsselskapet i Kristiania
TBM	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> , Supplements
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World

### Reference Works and Databases

- ABL* *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters*. Robert Francis Harper. 14 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1892–1914.
- AHw* *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*. Wolfram Von Soden. 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965–1981.
- CAD* *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. 1936–2006.
- CAI* *Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions*. Walter E. Aufrecht. 2nd ed. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2019.
- CDA* *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*. Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate. Wiesbaden, 2000.
- COS* *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions, and Archival Documents from the Biblical World*. Edited by William W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2000.
- GHCLOT* *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures: Translated with Additions and Corrections from the Author's Thesaurus and Other Works*. Translated by Samuel Prideaux Tregelles. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957.
- GKC* *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arther. E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon: 2010.
- HALOT* *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamp. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999.

- KAI* *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. Herbert Donner and Wolfgang Röllig. 2nd ed. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966–69.
- ORACC “Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus.” Currently hosted at the University of Pennsylvania. <http://oracc.org>.
- SAAo “State Archives of Assyria Online.” The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, University of Helsinki. Currently maintained as a subdomain of ORACC. <http://oracc.org/saao>
- TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006.

## CHAPTER 1: DEFINITION, LITERATURE, AND STRUCTURE

### Introduction

The profile of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, as well as the northern prophetic tradition that surrounds them in the biblical text, is a matter of considerable debate in current scholarship. The Book of Kings itself has been treated as everything from a coherent narrative by a single author during the later years of the southern kingdom of Judah to a pastiche of largely legendary material that was serialized in support of postexilic Jewish hierarchy, and the prophets of the northern kingdom are often relegated to a secondary status and treated as anything but historical. This is not to say that all scholars reject them as historical, but in many cases their historicity is questioned to the point that they could be best described as legends or ideological caricatures.

In this dissertation, the objections to a preexilic, northern origin for the materials pertaining to these prophets will be examined. The purpose of this examination is not to discredit existing scholarship but to invite readers to look at these materials from a different perspective. The dissertation will be a convergent synthesis of theological, historical, and linguistic arguments, positing that preexilic date, not just of their origin but of their essential composition, is plausible. Given the centuries of transmission, the actual composition of the materials cannot be known for certain, but as will be demonstrated in this dissertation, there are several plausible reasons to place these texts in this preexilic, northern milieu as opposed to the later dates offered in much of the current scholarship.

When so much scholarship points in other directions, a question as to the purpose of this study may be raised. This topic is of some significance for evangelical interpretation of the Scriptures, as it speaks to the formation and coherence of canon. If the prophetic materials are the haphazard, quasi-legendary materials they are often presented as by some scholars, then one must ask why they were included in the canon and to what extent this type of material has been

placed alongside authoritative, historical works. The underlying motivation of their development may be called into question. On the other hand, if they can be demonstrated to reflect the theological views and historical realities of that period, as well as have the linguistic hallmarks of literature from the northern kingdom of Israel then the plausibility of their origin in the preexilic northern kingdom can be more confidently asserted.

## **A Survey of the Approaches to the Materials in the Book of Kings**

### Diachronic Analysis

Since most commentaries on the text of the Book of Kings are diachronic in nature, it is necessary to survey the prevailing theories.<sup>1</sup> The analysis of the prophetic texts of Kings is usually tied closely to the diachronic examination of the so-called Deuteronomistic History, which has been ongoing for well over a century. In this type of analysis, the objective is the determination of the nature and content of the underlying sources. Such endeavors have produced a diversity of positions but no definitive results. While claiming to be a part of a group “willing to dig deeper,” Walter Dietrich flatly states that “many [exegetes] refuse to penetrate with the diachronic spade.”<sup>2</sup> According to Dietrich, it is the scholar who refuses to do diachronic

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “diachronic” and “synchronic” are used in biblical study to deal with the development of the canonical form of a text. Generally, diachronic analysis assumes that a text developed over time, so it is more or less synonymous with the redactional-historical approach to the texts. In the case of the Book of Kings, these redactions are often said to include legend or tradition. A synchronic approach attempts to view the text in its present state, and so is generally synonymous with the literary approaches to the text. There is significant range in the use of all of these terms. See Paul R. Noble, “Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches to Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of Literature and Theology* 7 (1993): 130–49. The two terms derive from linguistics and were coined by Ferdinand de Saussure to describe language change. A diachronic analysis attempts to understand development over time. Synchronic analysis examines language at a point in time. In the case of the biblical text, a synchronic analysis examines the text in its received form. Saussure warned against an overemphasis on “laws” of development in language, going so far as to argue, “diachronic facts are forced upon the language, but there is nothing general about them.” Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Roy Harris (Chicago: Open Court, 1986); trans. of *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1916), 79–98.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Dietrich, “The ‘Ban’ in the Age of the Early Kings,” in *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*, ed. Volkmar Fritz and Philip R. Davies, JSOTSup 228 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 196–97.

analysis who fails to understand the true meaning of the biblical text, and yet the “diachronic spade” has not produced anything approximating consensus. This does not negate the need for such analysis, but it must be tempered with other approaches.

### **Martin Noth: The Deuteronomistic History**

Modern diachronic analysis of the Book of Kings took shape in the wake of Martin Noth’s proposal of a unified Deuteronomistic History (DH) in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Prior to Noth, Wilhelm Martin Lebrecht deWette had proposed that the Former Prophets were the result of a burst of literary production during the reign of Josiah.<sup>4</sup> Noth viewed Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets as a literary and theological unity, on par with Wellhausen’s conjectured unities in the Torah. Noth’s author, who he called the Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr), was not attempting to write a history of the Israelite kingdom but rather chose narrative elements that followed a specific theological trajectory.<sup>5</sup> He held that the Dtr edited existing materials and contributed little additional material beyond smoothing the seams among his sources.<sup>6</sup> For Noth that theological message was the decline of the kingdoms, so the prophetic materials in the entire

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<sup>3</sup> Noth made his proposal in *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Verlag, 1957). The first half of the book was translated into English as *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1981). Strictly speaking, Noth simplified an increasingly complex field of diachronic studies that had sprung up. For a succinct summary of the pre-Nothian developments, including a chronology from deWette to Noth, including the contribution of Heinrich Ewald, see Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, “Deuteronomistic History (DH): The History of Research and Debated Issues,” in *Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi, JSOTSup 306, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 124–41.

<sup>4</sup> His conclusions were printed in two volumes, Wilhelm Martin Lebrecht de Wette, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 2 vols. (Halle: Schimmelfennig und Compagnie, 1806–1807).

<sup>5</sup> Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 64–65. Noth’s Deuteronomistic Historian was distinct from Wellhausen’s conjectured Deuteronomist, who was seen as contributing to the redaction history of the Pentateuch as a whole. Noth’s author was working in the tradition of the Deuteronomist and derived his theology from him.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–11.

DH should be viewed as evidence of God's mercy—an expression of God's willingness to grant a respite to the people. The prophets served as a check on the declining monarchy.

Noth gave little substantial thought to the origin of the Elijah-Elisha materials in his original work, viewing them as independent sources that were incorporated into cycles and attached to the names of individuals prior to the composition of the DH.<sup>7</sup> What followed was the imposition of additional materials, such as the anointing of Jehu (2 Kgs 9:1–10:27), which were credited to Elijah and Elisha at some point.<sup>8</sup> In his later commentary on 1–2 Kings, Noth questioned even this view of Elijah and Elisha and argued that due to their literary character, they might have been original creations of the DH.<sup>9</sup> Noth's attempt to unify the literature eventually gave birth to an array of diachronic schema which instead dissected the literature. From this later position, it was not too much of a stretch to include a growing discussion in the continental academy on the subject of *legend* and how it might fit into the creation of biblical texts.

At the core of Noth's diachronic analysis was the argument that theology or ideology is the unifying factor in determining origins, date of redaction, and function of texts.<sup>10</sup> This idea that ideological coherence can indicate common origin appears in many diachronic approaches. For Noth, the prophetic materials must have been married to Dtr's theological perception of the text. Historicity was not a primary consideration because the theological necessity drove its inclusion. The end result of this view is expressed by critics like Simon DeVries who take a

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<sup>7</sup> Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 68.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Noth, *Könige*, BKAT 9/5 (Ner kirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), 312.

<sup>10</sup> Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 86–87. Although Noth does not directly articulate an ideological motivation, it is implicit in his reasoning. He sees Dtr selecting texts and organizing them to drive to a final theological argument, namely the failure of the Israelite kings and the imminent collapse of the kingdom.

skeptical view of any text which emphasizes theology over history.<sup>11</sup> From DeVries' perspective, texts that lack "essential orientation" to the historical events surrounding them may be viewed as less than historical because, in his mind, they tend toward the idealization of an individual or a rigidly schematic structure. Put another way, DeVries holds that history cannot be primarily ideological or literary. He fails to account for the intentionality of the narrative's composer, which Noth embraced in his DH theory. Noth saw the author as a sort of theological historian, not simply an editor or redactor; and in Noth's estimation, a historian does not merely recount facts. He constructs an ideological argument from an array of facts. In Noth's view, Dtr observed patterns and similarities in the events he was reporting, then used those in a literary way to make order out of the asymmetry of the events. Thus, it was completely reasonable, at least at first, that the prophetic materials concerning Elijah and Elisha were unified literature, incorporated into a larger literary unit. For those who followed Noth, even in critiques such as DeVries, the presence of a theological bias precipitates the division of the text between historical and ideological.

### **Frank Moore Cross and Stephen L. McKenzie: Multiple Redactions**

Perhaps the most significant contributor to scholarship on the Book of Kings after Noth was Frank Moore Cross, who proposed a double redaction of the text. The first would have occurred during the reign of Josiah and the second in the postexilic period. Although giving some credence to Noth in saying the DH contains themes of doom, Cross agreed with Gerhard von Rad that there is a primary message of grace. The prophets were the main agents of this message.<sup>12</sup> For von Rad, the conflict between the "pure Jahweh cult in Jerusalem" and "all the

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<sup>11</sup> Simon DeVries, *Prophet Against Prophet: The Role of the Micaiah Narrative (1 Kings 22) in the Development of Early Prophetic Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 100–103.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 275–76.

Canaanite cults of the high places” was the defining motivation of the entire DH.<sup>13</sup> In the discovery of a great deal of Canaanite literature in the early twentieth century, Cross found confirmation of von Rad’s ideas. Although he rejected the historicity of Elijah, this conflict was personified in the literary creation of Elijah.<sup>14</sup> For Cross, the prophetic materials reflect this rivalry between Yahweh and Baal, and pointing to the Josianic revivals, Cross dated the original composition to that period. In this layer, Cross observed resonances and echoes of the Exodus narrative in the text.<sup>15</sup> Themes of hope, and not inevitable decline, represented this earlier layer.<sup>16</sup> Formulas like the phrase “to this day” (1 Kgs 8:8, 9:13, 10:21, 12:19; 2 Kgs 2:22, 8:22, 10:27, 14:7, 16:6, 17:34, 21:15), could be used to determine a *terminus ante quem*, and in Cross’s mind, the evidence pointed to Josiah. He then concluded that after the fall of Jerusalem (586 BCE), the text was updated to include contemporary events.

Richard Nelson has expanded upon Cross’s double redaction theory. Answering opponents of the DH theory, he argues that there are three unifying elements to the DH as a whole: (1) end-of-era reflections, (2) dual and overlapping chronologies, and (3) prophecy-fulfillment literary schemes.<sup>17</sup> Nelson has done an analysis of the Book of Joshua demonstrating

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<sup>13</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, trans. David Stalker, Studies in Biblical Theology (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1953), 75. In recent years, Von Rad’s underlying assumptions— (1) Israel’s world view was pan-sacral and (2) direct divine activity belongs to early narratives— were seriously brought into doubt by John Barton. This calls into question a great deal of how Von Rad perceived Israelite history, and his perceptions informed a large number of subsequent commentators. See John Barton, “Gerhard von Rad on the World-View of Early Israel” repr. in John Barton, *The Old Testament: Canon, Literature and Theology: Collected Essays of John Barton*, SOTSMS (London: Routledge, 2007), 212–28.

<sup>14</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 191. Cross casts the vast majority of the early materials of the Hebrew Scriptures as deriving from Canaanite myths. Thus, Elijah’s showdown with the prophets of Baal is a reenactment of the older mythical struggles of gods for control of people or lands.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 166–67.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 282–84.

<sup>17</sup> Richard D. Nelson, “The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History: The Case is Still Compelling,” *JSOT* 28 (2005): 320.

what he believes to be a reflection of Josiah in the way Joshua is portrayed.<sup>18</sup> For Nelson, only Josiah could possibly fulfill the role of the ideal Davidic king, and therefore like deWette and Cross, he points to a Josianic origin. Even the postexilic passages of the book (2 Kgs 21–25) look back to him.<sup>19</sup> Given that the prophetic materials in the Book of Kings do not focus on Davidic kingship, he concludes that they are postexilic reflections of Josianic ideals, filtered through the intervening crises.

Cross's student Stephen L. McKenzie continued to develop this concept. Extrapolating from increasingly nuanced evidence, McKenzie reconstructed a development history of Samuel-Kings that involved not just Cross's two redactions but a daunting array of redactors and additions. Discussing the prophetic materials, McKenzie states that the Elijah materials are "a complex of legends which have been bound into a cycle."<sup>20</sup> In terms of sensibilities, McKenzie evaluates the text based on perceived relationship. Thus, when considering Elijah's encounters with the Phoenician widow and her son (1 Kgs 17:8–24), McKenzie states they are "out of place" in the Elijah Cycle and feel derivative of similar passages from the Elisha materials.<sup>21</sup> In fact, McKenzie feels the entire Elijah narrative is out of place in the DH, even going so far as to argue that the theology of the text is out of keeping with the DH.<sup>22</sup> He postdates any text he feels is out of keeping with his expectations of the text.<sup>23</sup> Like DeVries, McKenzie looks to the portability of the purported legendary material. One of the key hallmarks of the portability of

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<sup>18</sup> Richard D. Nelson, "Josiah in the Book of Joshua," *JBL* 100 (1981): 531–40.

<sup>19</sup> Nelson, "The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History," 325–26.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History*, VTSup 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 81. This is not too far of a leap from Noth's original proposal.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–87.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

these pericopes is their self-contained style. The lack of chronological data means a text is not assigned to a specific point in history. Also, a number of episodes do not name a specific king and employ “king of Israel.” The pericopes are therefore unmoored from any historical viability and the redactors could relocate them as needed. Of course, these supposedly portable elements may be stylistic choices as well. This view of the materials as portable assumes that these “portable” legends were not original and integral elements of the composition. Instead, he sees a reticulated construction to satisfy postexilic purposes.

The inevitable conclusion of McKenzie’s view is that the arbiter of originality of the text is the interpreter himself. If he estimates that a text fits better in another context, he assumes that is where it originated. Almost all of McKenzie’s objections to the originality of the Elijah-Elisha materials derive from a feeling that the texts are disjointed from other prophetic works. The question that must be raised is whether such reticulation is necessary. If a literary unity includes supposedly legendary materials, then the reader must ask when the literary unit was composed as a whole. When were the materials reworked, and what was the underlying motivation for the reworking?<sup>24</sup>

McKenzie is not alone in this protest that the prophetic materials must be postexilic. Although holding to a preexilic origin for much of the Book of Kings, Susanne Otto lists several works which reject a preexilic date.<sup>25</sup> Otto argues there are four criteria for determining what is

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<sup>24</sup> For another example of one might go about with dating these materials, see Hermann-Josef Stipp, “Die Deuteronomisten und das Exil: Historische Erfahrungen und theologische Lernprozesse,” *MThZ* 70 (2019): 2–23. There Stipp traces what he sees as distinct preexilic and postexilic theological ideologies in the DH and Jeremiah. For Stipp, each subsequent redaction adds a theological perspective, which colors and alters previous layers. Additional materials, factual or legendary, are added to support the ideology of the most recent layer. Stipp unapologetically argues that redactors would omit or modify difficult materials that did not meet their ideological goals. For both McKenzie and Stipp, prophetic materials are subject to these pressures.

<sup>25</sup> Susanne Otto, “The Composition of the Elijah–Elisha Stories and the Deuteronomistic History,” *JSOT* 27 (2003): 488–90. This article is a translation and abridgment of her doctoral dissertation published, which was

preexilic: (1) language, (2) style, (3) theology, and (4) a consistent conception of history. In her thinking, anything that does not meet her criteria is a postexilic addition. Citing perceived inconsistencies in the depiction of the prophets as well as a disconnection from the theological themes of the DH as a whole, she maintains that while the texts concerning Elijah and Elisha are late, it has some historical origins. For example, she considers the story of Naboth's vineyard to be preexilic.<sup>26</sup>

The increasingly complicated approaches to the text do not deal with the text itself but rather the scholarly perceptions of what is or is not Deuteronomistic. These can be confusing indeed, and in his survey of an extremely stratified approach in one commentary, Helmer Ringgren observed, "it is difficult to decide whether these 'strata' derive from different authors or represent strands of thought that can have existed in one man's mind."<sup>27</sup> Take for example, McKenzie's particular view of the Josianic origins. By setting up the Josianic period as the only viable option, it is necessary to derive and defend a reason that much of the narrative is devoted to the northern kingdom and what to do with those materials. His response, especially in the case of prophetic materials, is to simply relegate them to the status of later legends. The only basis for this is the presupposed Josianic origin, creating a *circulus in probando*. In hypothesizing a

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published as Susanne Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa. Die Erzählung von der Jehu-Revolution und die Komposition der Elia-Elisa-Erzählungen*, BWANT 152 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2001). The sources she cites include Hans-Christoph Schmitt, *Elisa* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1972), 119-26; Ernst Würthwein, "Zur Opferprobe Elias I Reg 18,21-39," in *Prophet und Prophetenbuch*, ed. Volkmer Fritz, Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, and Hans-Christoph Schmitt, BZAW 185 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 277-84; and Erhard Blum, "Der Prophet und das Verderben Israels," *VT* 47 (1997): 277-92. Otto holds to a preexilic date herself. She sees value in McKenzie's derivation, but she prefers to use a modification of Noth because she believes McKenzie and others fail to provide an adequate replacement for his theory of DH development.

<sup>26</sup> Otto, "The Composition of the Elijah–Elisha Stories," 491. She is not alone in this assertion, so it is extraordinary that Alexander Rofé uses the same narrative as an argument for dating the text linguistically to the postexilic period. Rofé's argument will be discussed in chapter 6.

<sup>27</sup> Helmer Ringgren, "Israelite Prophecy: Fact or Fiction?" in *Congress Volume: Jerusalem 1986*, ed. John A. Emerton, VTSup 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 206.

particular literary origin, anything that might inconvenience the hypothesis is simply deprecated. Niesiołowski-Spanò has pointed out the total absence of extrabiblical basis for dating the text to the Josianic period.<sup>28</sup> Absent extrabiblical evidence, McKenzie's argument hangs on selective internal evidence.

### **Herman Gunkel and Alexander Rofé: Legendary Material**

Around the turn of the twentieth century, German scholarship was considering the relationship of folktale studies to the Bible. In his 1917 work, Hermann Gunkel argued that “magical” prophets like Elijah and Elisha were the product of folktales and legends, not history. Like Noth, who came a generation later, Gunkel was heavily influenced by Wellhausen. In Gunkel's view, a narrative was legend (*sage*) if it met eight criteria: (1) it had a distinct introduction and conclusion; (2) repeated elements were used to intensify interest; (3) there were a small number of characters; (4) there was a narrow focus on individual actions in the narrative; (5) the framework was simple, requiring little external information to understand it; (6) there was rigid patterning; (7) it possessed unity of plot; and (8) the focus was on one particular person or hero.<sup>29</sup> It should be observed here that Gunkel's categories are so broad as to encompass virtually any episodic portion of the biblical text. At the core of his assessment was the relegation of

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<sup>28</sup> Granted, he also rejects any preexilic origin for Deuteronomy or the Book of Kings. See Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò, “Why was Biblical History Written during the Persian Period? Persuasive Aspects of Biblical Historiography and Its Political Context, or Historiography as an Anti-Mnemonic Literary Genre,” in *Collective Memory and Collective Identity: Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History in Their Context*, ed. Johannes Unsok Ro and Diana Edelman, BZAW 534 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 353–76.

<sup>29</sup> Herman Gunkel, *The Folktales in the Old Testament*, trans. Michael D. Rutter (London: Bloomsbury, 1987), 113–21; trans. of *Das Märchen im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Verlag, 1917). Rickie Dale Moore, *God Saves: Lessons from the Elisha Stories*, JSOTSup 95 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 12–15. For a more thorough treatment of Gunkel, see Patricia G. Kirkpatrick, *The Old Testament and Folklore Study*, JSOTSup 62 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988), 23–33; Antony Campbell, “The Emergence of the Form-critical and Traditio-historical Approaches” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø, vol. 3.2, *The Twentieth Century—From Modernism to Post-Modernism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 45–147.

anything supernatural to the status of folktale, minimizing its historical value. This has become a fundamental issue with much of the diachronic analysis.

Noth appears not to have been too heavily influenced by Gunkel, but post-Nothian scholars Hermann-Josef Stipp and Alexander Rofé were.<sup>30</sup> To Rofé, prophetic materials fall into two categories. The first is *legenda*, stories informed by historical events that influenced later retelling. The second category is *vita*, a term borrowed from Christian hagiography but here applied to the Hebrew prophets. These were marked by repetitions of the same story ideas, both within the narrative of one prophet but also across the board. Rofé relegated any supernatural events to this latter category, and therefore places their origin well after the Omride Period. He sees the prophetic *vita* as independent stories that are distinguished by (1) linguistic irregularities, including the shift to Second Temple theophoric name forms, (2) unusual interrogative forms, and (3) dependence upon rabbinic formulations.<sup>31</sup> Contra Noth, Rofé did not believe these independent stories were collected before the writing of the DH. For Rofé, these prophetic texts were postexilic composites meant to magnify the role of the prophet in the administration of the Jewish community.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Elischa – Propheten – Gottesmänner: Die Kompositionsgeschichte des Elischazyklus und verwandter Texte, rekonstruiert auf der Basis von Text- und Literarkritik zu 1 Kön 22.22 und 2 Kön 2–7*, ATSAT 24 (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1987), 463–480. Alexander Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories: The Narratives about the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, Their Literary Types and History*, trans. D. Levy (Jerusalem: The Magnus Press, 1986). This volume is a reworked anthology of articles Rofé wrote in the 1970's. The original text was published in Hebrew in 1982. Rofé's arguments will be the chief focus. They have some minor variations, but largely defend the same thesis. Stipp's arguments are very similar to McKenzie's discussed above.

<sup>31</sup> Rofé, *The Prophetic Stories*, 35–37.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 18–19. See also DeVries, *Prophet Against Prophet*, 52.

Among many historians, it is generally accepted that ancient historiography was a mixture of history and myth that could not be easily separated.<sup>33</sup> In keeping with this philosophy, Lester Grabbe and other contemporary writers view the prophetic materials in the Book of Kings as legend. Some have gone even further and proposed that there is no actual history in Samuel-Kings. Kurt L. Noll argues that the perceived absence of historical and archaeological proof for Josianic reformation indicates that the Book of Kings could not have been composed until the exilic period.<sup>34</sup> In particular, Noll objects on the grounds that further diachronic study has relegated much of Noth's DH to the realm of fiction, a "fanciful anthology" that contains some historical events but is largely the work of a postexilic imagination.<sup>35</sup> It is not necessary to accept Noll's following conclusions to observe how relatively easy it was for him to deconstruct the DH, as well as the assorted diachronic schema. This reflects how tenuous some of the core concepts of diachronic analysis may be. Source criticism is, by in large, predicated upon criteria that may sometimes prove to be out-of-date by the close of a generation.

### **Antony Campbell: Prophetic Record**

Since Noth, the perception has been that the prophetic texts look back to the decline of the southern kingdom of Judah. Cross pointed to the reign of Josiah, who was the last full king of that kingdom. Otto turned the focus to several touch points, including the reign of Jehu, since the focus of the prophetic texts are on northern Baal worship. Like Otto, the Australian scholar

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<sup>33</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, *1 & 2 Kings: An Introduction and Study Guide*, History and Story in Ancient Israel (London: T&T Clark, 2017), 7; Kenton L. Sparks, "The Problem of Myth in Ancient Historiography," in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible. Essays in Honour of John Van Seters*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer, BZAW 294 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), 269–81.

<sup>34</sup> Kurt L. Noll, "Is the Book of Kings Deuteronomistic? And Is It a History?" *SJOT* 21 (2007): 49–72. Noll assumes a Josianic origin as the only viable preexilic date.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

Antony F. Campbell sees a focus on the northern kingdom, especially the Omrides and their Nimshite/Jehuite successors.<sup>36</sup> While Campbell still shares the mainstream reluctance to accept the supernatural aspects of these northern prophetic materials as historical, he nonetheless argues that the core of the narrative dates to a much earlier time and therefore reflects a more historical than literary creation.<sup>37</sup>

Where Campbell's view is unique is in his belief that much of the prophetic texts predates any kind of source for the monarchy, royal chronicle or otherwise, in the text. He says this "Prophetic Record" (1 Sam–2 Kgs 10) was primarily composed in the late ninth century BCE.<sup>38</sup> The first section of this "Prophetic Record" deals with the rise of the Davidic kingdom. The second is the narrative driving toward the collapse of the northern kingdom. The third stage mirrors the northern record but follows events leading to the fall of the southern kingdom. In all three stages, the text is marked by a unique prophetic presence, which Campbell sees as arising in the contemporary makeup. Campbell points to similarities among the various kings as evidence for a prophetic authority in the text.<sup>39</sup> Similarities in the ways northern kings, specifically Jeroboam, Ahab, and Jehu, were anointed by the prophets and subsequently rose to power hints at "a single narrative horizon, coherent, structured, incomplete. It is a narrative

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<sup>36</sup> Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth-Century Document (1 Samuel 1–2 Kings 10)*, CBQM 17 (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986), 85–101. See also McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 11–14. Omride refers to Omri and his direct successors. Nimshite and Jehuite both refer to the line of Jehu, which ruled from the end of the Omride dynasty almost to the fall of Samaria. For discussion of the Nimshite connection to the Omrides, see Amitai Baruchi-Unna, "Jehuites, Ahabites, and Omrides: Blood Kinship and Bloodshed," *JSOT* 42 (2017): 3–21; Shuichi Hasegawa, *Aram and Israel During the Jehuite Dynasty*, BZAW 434 (Boston: de Gruyter, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 94, fn. 69.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–63. Campbell sees a continuity of prophetic records based on the way the prophets interact with kings in either designating or rejecting the king. This continuity is marked by five features: (1) the anointing, (2) the private venue, (3) the commission of YHWH, (4) the call to be king (מלך) or "king-designate" (נגיד), and (5) empowering for action through a change of heart, or reception of a commission. He identifies these features in Saul, David, and Jehu with contrast in Jeroboam and Ahab.

composed from a specific viewpoint, designed to illustrate the course of God's guidance of his people in a particularly exciting and eventful period of their history."<sup>40</sup> Where other commentators see the prophetic record as subordinated to the monarchy narrative, Campbell claims it is the core of the text. The monarchy narrative has omissions to fit the prophetic text, not the other way around.<sup>41</sup>

Still, the texts surrounding the northern prophets, and particularly Elijah and Elisha, became "a complex thicket" for Campbell.<sup>42</sup> He struggles to reconcile the theology of the northern prophets with that of the rest of his "Prophetic Record." The only way Campbell could justify the inclusion of these materials was to argue that prophetic schools who aided in Jehu's rebellion included them to present a religious and political crisis in the reign of the Omrides. He writes of his own theory, "it is a fascinating claim because it brings together prophetic word and political reality."<sup>43</sup>

In his commentaries on 1-2 Samuel, Campbell forwarded the idea of a "reported story" as one of the sources of the text.<sup>44</sup> He became convinced "that no storytellers worth their salt would be able to tell some of the stories the way they are in the text."<sup>45</sup> He concluded that while there are recorded stories in the biblical text, there are also what he referred to as "reported stories." These include the essential elements of the story but leave areas for expansion and

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<sup>40</sup> Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 28–29.

<sup>42</sup> Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History: Origins, Upgrades, Present Text* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 391–92; Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 93, fn. 68.

<sup>43</sup> Antony Campbell, *An Approach to the Writings of Pre-Exilic and Exilic Israel*, vol. 2 of *The Study Companion to Old Testament Literature* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 225.

<sup>44</sup> Antony F. Campbell, *1 Samuel*, FOTL 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 346–47; Antony F. Campbell, *2 Samuel*, FOTL 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 228–30.

<sup>45</sup> Antony F. Campbell, "The Reported Story: Midway between Oral Performance and Literary Art," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 77.

embellishment when the story was performed. The core of the story is presented, which includes characters, key plot shifts, and what Campbell refers to as “color” elements.

### **Baruch Halpern: Ongoing Preexilic Composition**

Baruch Halpern has co-written works with David Vanderhooft and André Lemaire which posit a continual revision of the Book of Kings throughout the history of the Hebrew kingdoms. Halpern works backwards from the existing text of the Book of Kings, especially in consideration of the synoptic passages that it shares with the Book of Chronicles, in an attempt to deduce the historical source and the attitude that the redactors had toward that source or sources.<sup>46</sup> This is distinct from the ideas of redaction present in many current studies in that Halpern and his co-authors question why redactors would not have reordered and overwritten the base of the DH when they introduced their own ideologies.<sup>47</sup> “One must hypothesize that the redactors were not quite up to the task or that they were much more reluctant to tinker with the text they inherited than the analysts hypothesized.”<sup>48</sup> Like Campbell, Halpern and his co-authors see the text of the Book of Kings deriving from sources which the redactors treated with respect as history, and they agree with Helga Weippert that the earliest edition of the document dates to

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<sup>46</sup> The earliest articulation of his case is probably found in Baruch Halpern, “Sacred History and Ideology: Chronicles’ Thematic Structure—Indicative of an Earlier Source,” in *The Creation of Sacred Literature: Composition and Redaction of the Biblical Text*, ed. Richard E. Friedman, Near East Studies 22 (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1981), 35–54.

<sup>47</sup> Baruch Halpern and André Lemaire, “The Composition of Kings” in *The Book of Kings: Sources, Composition, Historiography, and Reception*, ed. Baruch Halpern and André Lemaire, VTSup 129 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 128–29.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

the Hezekian period, followed by a similar edition in the Josianic period.<sup>49</sup> This second idea they borrowed from Cross, but adapted to their own timeline.

Working from arguments similar to those of Weippert, J. Brian Peckham, and James A. Montgomery, Halpern argues that specific formulaic elements can be used to demarcate editions of the Book of Kings.<sup>50</sup> Of interest are two formulations. The first is the death and burial formula (DBF).<sup>51</sup> As Halpern presents the evidence, up to the reign of Hezekiah, the following are true: (1) all kings not said to die violently (except Ahab) are described using the DBF; (2) all Judahite kings prior to Hezekiah are buried with their fathers; (3) the only possible parallels in the Israelite kingdom of this practice are Jehoash and Jeroboam II; and (4) Israelite kings who die violently lack a DBF but Judahites are buried with the fathers, a sign of Judahite stability.<sup>52</sup> The second formula is the ascension formula which includes the name of the Queen Mother (QM). This practice continued until into the exilic period in the Book of Kings but drops out after Hezekiah in the Book of Chronicles.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*; Mark A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment*, OBO 92 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1989). Campbell and Halpern adopt at least the Hezekian date from Helga Weippert, "Die 'deuteronomistischen' Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher," *Biblica* 53 (1972): 301–39; Helga Weippert, "Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk: sein Ziel und Ende in der neueren Forschung," *Theologische Rundschau* 50 (1985): 213–49. This was an idea Halpern was championing as long ago as 1991. See Baruch Halpern and David S. Vanderhooft, "The Editions of Kings in the 7th–6th Centuries B.C.E.," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 62 (1991): 183. 179–244.

<sup>50</sup> J. Brian Peckham, *The Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, HSM 35 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); James A. Montgomery, "Archival Data in the Book of Kings," *JBL* 53 (1934): 46–52; Shoshana R. Bin-Nun, "Formulas from the Royal Records of Israel and of Judah," *VT* 18 (1968): 414–32.

<sup>51</sup> The basic formula is עַם־אֲבֹתָיו — יִשָּׁכּב, where — represents the name of the monarch. For a full table of the appearances of the formula and its variations, see Halpern and Vanderhooft, "The Editions of Kings," 189–90, 197.

<sup>52</sup> Halpern and Vanderhooft, "The Edition of Kings," 193–94.

<sup>53</sup> Halpern agrees with Provan that the uneven appearance of this formulation in Chronicles, disappearing after Manasseh's reign, indicates a preexisting source shared by both books. See Iain W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Book of Kings* BZAW 172 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 139–41; Halpern, "Sacred History," 48. Na'aman shares this view as well. See Nadav Na'aman, "The Opening Biblical Verses on the Kings of Judah and Israel: Sources and Editing," in *Up to the Gates of Ekron: Essays on the Archaeology and History of the Eastern Mediterraneans in*

## Emerging Approaches

In recent years, new approaches to the historiography of ancient Israel have arisen. They have an array of orientations which either do not view the text as historical or disengage with the historicity of the text in favor of attempts to analyze the reception or use of the text in later times. Dever broadly refers to these approaches as revisionists or minimalists, although one must be careful not to treat the array of approaches as a single, monolithic movement.<sup>54</sup> Halpern casts considerable doubt on the ability of many of these minimalists to gather appropriate, supporting evidence from the biblical texts.<sup>55</sup> These emerging views are quite diverse, and many of the proponents would balk at being categorized as minimalist, and in some cases, their concerns are justified. In others, the label is apt.

These emerging views often utilize similar terminology and rely upon similar concepts, but it is not always possible to discern if they are using the terminology in the same ways. The four scholars presented here are representative of a spectrum of emerging approaches. The first is the most clearly minimalist, Niels Peter Lemche of the Copenhagen school. Lemche is openly

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*Honor of Seymour Gitin*, ed. Sidnie White Crawford, Amnon Ben-Tor, J. P. Dessel, William G. Dever, Amihai Mazar, and Joseph Aviram (Jerusalem: W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and Israel Exploration Society, 2007), 376–77.

<sup>54</sup> William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 23–52. Minimalist views stretch back several decades. See Gösta W. Ahlström, *History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest*, JSOTSup 146 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Philip R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel": A Study in Biblical Origins*, 2nd ed., JSOTSup 148 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Early History of the Israelite People*, SHANE 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1993); John Van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992). All of these works deal with preexilic history as part of a greater historiographic scheme, and so do not speak to the immediate context of this dissertation. They nevertheless represent some undergirding ideas.

<sup>55</sup> Baruch Halpern, "Erasing History: The Minimalist Assault on Ancient Israel," *Bible Review* 11.6 (2005): 26, 28–29, 31–35, 47. While Ben Zvi and Edelman represent what might be called "literary minimalism," the basis of their views is an archaeological minimalism. This view, also known as "Low Chronology," can be found in Kathleen Kenyon's treatment of Jericho and, more recently, Israel Finkelstein's work on Megiddo and the northern kingdom. Amihai Mazar represents a "Conventional Chronology," once referred to as a "High Chronology." Mazar summarizes the distinctions. See Amihai Mazar, "The Iron Age Chronology Debate: Is the Gap Narrowing? Another Viewpoint," *NEA* 74 (2011): 105–11. See Appendix D for a more thorough discussion and comparison of chronologies.

contrarian, rejecting any sense of historicity in the biblical text. His views are the most progressive of the four scholars. Diana Edelman is a represent of what might be called a moderate minimalism because she holds that the memory of the past has been distorted by both time and the necessity of the moment but there may be a root of historical fact. Third, Ehud Ben Zvi is perhaps the best representative of social memory studies in biblical texts, an extremely complex, psycho-literary approach. While Edelman also employs this idea of social memory, she has a different view of what it means. Ben Zvi is a historian first, and he takes a very nuanced approach which shifts him into a space somewhere between minimalism and more historical approaches. While Lemche is so extreme as to be alone on a minimalist island, discerning the differences between Ben Zvi and Edelman is sometimes difficult because they are often found in close association, contributing to the same volumes of work. There are, however, clear cut differences between them which inform their analysis of the text.

The fourth scholar presented here is Lester L. Grabbe, who presents a historical perspective, focused heavily on archaeology and material culture. While Lemche emphasizes the Hellenistic period and Edelman and Ben Zvi deal primarily with the mnemonic aspects of literary analysis, Grabbe focuses chiefly on the historiographic elements of the narrative. His work is with the European Seminar in Historical Methodology, which he founded; and he has edited a number of volumes devoted to a reconstruction drawn primarily from archaeological remains. Whether Grabbe is a minimalist or not is difficult to assess. Like Ben Zvi, Grabbe exists outside of the minimalist framework. He is grouped with the new approaches here for two reasons. First, the European Seminar is closely associated with the proponents of the Low

Chronology, such as Israel Finkelstein.<sup>56</sup> Second, he takes a very low view of the historicity of the Hebrew Scriptures generally.

### **Niels Peter Lemche: Minimalism**

Niels Peter Lemche is a representative of the so-called “Copenhagen School” of scholarship, which is widely regarded for their minimalist approach to the biblical text. Lemche does not perceive historicity in the text beyond the perception of social factors at work during the text’s composition. He takes a very negative view of the historicity of the text, and at one point, states plainly, “in the Deuteronomistic History we find a number of narratives and narrative cycles which deal with various prophets and with their relations to the monarchy, and which we can dismiss without further consideration as primary sources.”<sup>57</sup> Lemche sees ancient Israel entirely as a construct of Second Temple Judaism (STJ), with the texts written in the Hellenistic period.<sup>58</sup> Here is how he describes his minimalist position in contrast to more conservative writers, “the minimalists claim that there is no reason to put faith into the biblical story unless it can be proved to have happened by applying normal historical procedures as found in general history.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>57</sup> Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israel* (London: T & T Clark, 2015), 126.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–3. In many ways, Lemche’s views parallel those of Thomas L. Thompson, *The Bible in History* (New York: Random House, 2000). Thompson takes the position that there has been a “collapse of historicity” due to the archaeological evidence, an assertion he makes with the confidence that often radiates from Copenhagen authors.

<sup>59</sup> Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, 4. What Lemche means by “normal historical procedures” is not always clear. It appears that he believes history requires suitable archaeological evidence for reconstruction, viewing textual evidence as a very distant secondary resource. Elsewhere Lemche dispenses with the historical Israel by arguing there is no material evidence for ancient Israel and that Jerusalem did not exist as a city until the fourth century BCE. He flatly states there is no evidence for an Israelite people, equating the existence of Israel to the myths of King Arthur. See Niels Peter Lemche, “Too Good to Be True? The Creation of the People of Israel,” *WO* 50 (2020): 254–74. Lemche’s denial is based largely on the absence of evidence in Jerusalem itself, and to this writer’s

Lemche is mentioned here only as the extreme edge of the minimalist camp. He rejects the historicity not only of the monarchy but also the exile. He refuses even to acknowledge the existence of a Jerusalem of any significance in the Persian period, rejecting the idea of even a literary class existing at the time. Instead, Lemche prefers to see the “true” history as a Samaritan history and the Jewish people of the Bible as a conglomerate group of exiles in Babylon who formed some kind of identity there and then relocated to Palestine, superimposing their own version of history upon the people and land.<sup>60</sup> Such an extreme view removes any historical mooring for the biblical narrative, and as evidenced by Lemche’s writings, sees the history of Israel as being the history of the development of the idea of Israel at a much later date.

### **Diana Edelman: Moderate Minimalism**

Diana Edelman believes the biblical texts represent only the idealized memories of the past. For her, Elijah and Elisha represent something akin to a fictional recreation of the past by the postexilic priesthood. These later writers reshaped history for ideological purposes. The history of the period itself is unrecoverable. The modern historian employs “instinctive understanding and imagination” to recreate a history which likely does not fully reflect the facts

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knowledge, he does not address the evidence for the northern kingdom except to claim that it represents not an Israelite identity but what he calls a Samaritan identity, contiguous with the LBA Canaanite societies. This requires that he ignore or redefine implicit evidence for Israel’s existence, such as theophoric names including Yahwistic elements which have been found in abundance throughout the southern Levant. See, for example, the exchange between Lemche and Younger concerning such names found at Ashkelon. Niels Peter Lemche, “Ideology and History in Ancient Israel,” *SJOT* 14 (2000): 165-193; K. Lawson Younger, “Yahweh at Ashkelon and Calah? Yahwistic Names in Neo-Assyrian,” *VT* 52 (2002): 207–18. Lemche attempted to argue that Yahwistic theophoric names were characteristic of non-Israelite people, but Younger showed through analysis of the language that Lemche is in error. This is just one example of Lemche’s approach to historical Israel.

<sup>60</sup> Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, 12–14; Lemche, “Too Good to Be True?” 267–68. The term “Samaritan” is generally reserved for the Yahwistic group centered at Gerizim while “Samaritan” applies to the people of the region, a contiguous identity that is pre-Israelite and includes the Omride kingdom as its central polity. See Etienne Nodet, “Israelites, Samaritans, Temples, Jews,” in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans: Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics*, ed. József Zsengellér, Studia Judaica 66/Studia Samaritana 6 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 123.

but is sufficient for the historian's point of view.<sup>61</sup> Although Edelman meant this description for the modern historian looking back through the Scriptures and extrabiblical evidence, she also applies it to the biblical historians as well. They cannot see much of their own past, and they sometimes hide aspects which do not serve their own purposes. Edelman's view of the social memory is that it is inherently biased to the author's contemporary conditions, rendering it only marginally valuable as a historical source. Priority must be given to the archaeological evidence.

For example, Edelman dismisses any idea of a Hezekian revival as non-historical. She believes that YHWH was "a national deity, not a universal deity" and that there was no concept of the Israelites as worshipping him outside of Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup> She goes so far as to reject any kind of ideological unity in the DH. In one respect, she is to be commended because she seems to have understood that the prophetic office was not contiguous throughout Israel's history.<sup>63</sup> Edelman sees the prophets as "torah police."<sup>64</sup> They function as a corrective influence, a role which she sees as largely a component of the priesthood in the postexilic period. While Edelman does not deny that prophets existed during the preexilic period, she believes any named prophets to be later creations. In this type of scheme, the prophets serve to distinguish between the "true" Israel

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<sup>61</sup> Diana V. Edelman, "Doing History in Biblical Studies," in *The Fabric of History: Text, Artifact, and Israel's Ancient Past*, ed. Diana V. Edelman, JSOTSup 127 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 15–16.

<sup>62</sup> Diana V. Edelman, "Hezekiah's Alleged Cultic Centralization," *JSOT* 32 (2008): 429.

<sup>63</sup> Edelman proposes that it is not consistent across the books of the DH, all of which she views as late creations. Still, if viewed from a historical perspective, her proposal can be applied to the books as histories as well. See Diana V. Edelman, "Court Prophets During the Monarchy and Literary Prophets in the So-Called Deuteronomistic History," in *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History: Portrait, Reality, and the Formation of a History*, ed. Mignon R. Jacobs and Raymond F. Person, Jr., AIL 14 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 51–73.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

and a literary “Other.”<sup>65</sup> This process was meant to redefine and reform memory in the postexilic period.

Most recently, Edelman has begun to adapt her own understanding of Assmann’s “mnemohistory” as a means of understanding how biblical histories were written. “The relevance of memories comes not from their historical past, but from an ever-changing present in which these events are remembered as facts of importance.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, the needs of the present allowed the writers to shape past history. In the words of Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò, “historiography as such created the past rather than retelling it ... The historian’s intention was to challenge common memory and impose a new version of the past on its audience.”<sup>67</sup> While this might appear radical, it is the logical end of much of the modern approach to the biblical text. If one disallows the supernatural, there must be an explanation for it. Substituting her particular take on cultural memory eliminates the need for historicity.

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<sup>65</sup> Among the many works they have edited together, Ben Zvi and Edelman produced a collection dealing with postcolonial criticism which focused on this topic. One essay in the volume points to reform movements, like that of Josiah, as a means for this kind of redefinition of Israel. See Terje Stordalen, “Imagined and Forgotten Communities: Othering in the Story of Josiah’s Reform (2 Kings 23),” in *Imagining the Other and Constructing Israelite Identity in the Early Second Temple Period*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana V. Edelman, LHBOTS 456 (London: T & T Clark, 2014), 182–200.

<sup>66</sup> Diana V. Edelman, “Using the Past to Mold New Attitudes in the Present and Future: Examples from the Books of Deuteronomy, Judges (17–18), and 1 Samuel (28),” in Ro and Edelman, *Collective Memory and Collective Identity*, 48. For more on the Assmanns’ contribution to memory studies and Scripture, see Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies (Cultural Memory in the Present)*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). In specific, Jan Assmann developed the term “mnemohistory” to analyze “the importance which a present ascribes to the past.” He equates it with Warburg’s *Wanderstraßen der Kultur*, the way in which memory meanders through the constructs of history and changes. Consider here Dorothea McEwan, “Aby Warburg’s (1866–1929) Dots and Lines: Mapping the Diffusion of Astrological Motifs in Art History,” *German Studies Review* 29 (2006): 243–68. Although not concerned with Warburg’s theories and their implication on biblical studies, McEwan explains the idea of *Wanderstraßen* well. Put simply, Assmann’s envisions “mnemohistory” as a consideration of how a memory is reconstructed and the values associated with it as that memory is transmitted from one context to another over time. He uses the recollection of Moses as an example, seeing Moses not as a Hebrew but as an Egyptian who was reimagined by subsequent generations of Hebrews to be more and more what they needed him to be in their present. The memory itself does not belong to history or to canon. It has its own identity. See Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 10–12.

<sup>67</sup> Niesiołowski-Spanò, “Why was the Biblical History Written during the Persian Period?” 373.

## Ehud Ben Zvi: Social Memory

Like Edelman, Ehud Ben Zvi sees the prophetic materials as the product of a Persian-era Jewish literati, but he differs in that he sees the relationship flowing the other way. Where Edelman sees the writers shaping history, Ben Zvi allows that the society of the writers might have been shaped by the memory of historical events. He is unconcerned with what portion of the social memory is history or legend, seeing instead a shared, community memory of the past, and this memory explains the present realities of the writers. This idea of social or community memory must be handled carefully. When Ben Zvi uses the word “memory,” he does not mean individual recollections only. Social memory can take the form of oral tradition but also institutions, rituals and even bodily gestures.<sup>68</sup> He writes:

“It is worth stressing that for the most part the main sites of memory were not the very books in either the DHC or the PBC that evoked these central figures of old (e.g., the book of Judges, or the book of Isaiah), but the places, events and, above all, prophetic characters whose memory the books were seen to encode, and which the literati decoded as they imagined and vicariously experienced the past in their present.”<sup>69</sup>

At first, this might sound like a simple idea, but memory studies is quite a complex proposal.<sup>70</sup> Relying upon the social memory theory, Ben Zvi attempts to survey the “mnemonic

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<sup>68</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel,” *BTB* 27 (1997): 78. One should also be cautious about others using similar language but meaning something very different. For example, Niels Lemche uses the term “cultural memory” as a derogative term describing the perceived biases of Western culture to believe the Bible to be historical, something Ben Zvi definitely does not mean. See Lemche, “What People Want to Believe,” 31–33.

<sup>69</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, “Prophetic Memories in the Deuteronomistic Historical and the Prophetic Collections of Books,” in Jacobs and Person, *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History*, 76. Ben Zvi’s acronyms are his own, marking two distinct DHC is “Deuteronomistic Historical Collection” and PBC is “Prophetic Book Collection.”

<sup>70</sup> The term “social memory” was coined by Aby Warburg in relation to the effect of Greco-Roman art on later history. Memory studies proper begins with the theories of sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, but Halbwachs was more interested with living memory, and he developed the term “communicative history.” As Halbwachs summarizes it, “no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections.” Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43. It is vital to note here that Halbwachs believed history and memory were

landscape” of the Jewish literati under Persian rule.<sup>71</sup> Ben Zvi’s emphasis on sites of memory as being either “mental or ‘real’” is significant for the present study. He allows for the possibility that memory included written texts, although he does not explore the idea himself. Here is how he describes the memory process among the literati:

To be sure, visits to (mental or “real”) sites of memory activate and engender social memory, and social memory is about constructing a shared past. Thus, the literati could not but learn about the personages that populate their story and their (construed) past, as well as their circumstances. Yet neither Kings nor Chronicles were simply antiquarian; nor were their intended and primary rereaders [sic] interested in simply learning and sharing images of the past, for their own sake as it were. Instead, both Kings and Chronicles were didactic histories aimed at teaching ideological/theological lessons, instilling a certain attitude of the mind and socializing the literati and those influenced by them into a particular worldview.<sup>72</sup>

When discussing the social memory of the prophets specifically, Ben Zvi sees it centering on Moses as an exemplar of the prophetic leader.<sup>73</sup> In other words, Moses represented what could be, but was not in the leadership of Israel, and this remembered Moses was a template to

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antithetical. See Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 28–31. Jan and Aleida Assmann applied the principles to ancient contexts. As Aleida Assmann has written, “groups and institutions “construct” an identity. Such a memory is based on selection and exclusion, neatly separating useful from not useful, and relevant from irrelevant memories. Hence a collective memory is necessarily a mediated memory. It is backed up by material media, symbols, and practices which have to be grafted into the hearts and minds of individuals.” Aleida Assmann, “Transformations between History and Memory,” *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (2008): 55. Of course, memory studies have grown far beyond what Halbwachs initially envisioned. Recent surveys of the literature include Brian Conway, “New Directions in Sociology of Collective Memory and Commemoration,” *History Compass* 4 (2010): 442–53; Marek Tamm, “Beyond History and Memory: New Perspectives in Memory Studies,” *History Compass* 11 (2013): 458–73. Ben Zvi has, in turn, applied the concept to the reconstruction of how the Jewish literati of the Persian period perceived their past.

<sup>71</sup> Ben Zvi uses the term “literati” to describe a class of intellectuals within the political structure of Jewish society who existed at some point before the Chroniclers but well after the events they reconstruct.

<sup>72</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, “A Contribution to the Intellectual History of Yehud: The Story of Micaiah and Its Function within the Discourse of Persian-Period Literati,” in *The Historian and the Bible: Essays in Honour of Lester L. Grabbe*, ed. Philip R. Davies, and Diana V. Edelman, LHBOTS 530 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 93.

<sup>73</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, “Exploring the Memory of Moses ‘The Prophet’ in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah,” in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 336.

be carried forward into STJ and early Christianity.<sup>74</sup> The memory of the “hero-prophets” like Elijah and Elisha then were informed by this remembered Moses, accounting for the observable affinities in the biblical text. In other words, memory is a composite of the past experienced in the writer’s present, and the modern reader must enter that writer’s “mnemonic landscape” to understand the text.

Whether one accepts Ben Zvi’s thesis or not, it is important to note that his efforts represent an attempt to go beyond the diachronic approach without completely abandoning the historicity of the text, as the minimalists are prone to do. While his sites of memory are not necessarily “real” or literary, he nonetheless allows for the possibility of such sites of memory, and that is a crucial component of a new consideration of the prophetic texts. Where many diachronic approaches have shifted these prophetic materials out of the historical components of the DH, Ben Zvi’s approach may open the door for conversation that includes these literary sites of memory alongside others. While Ben Zvi does not propose this himself, it is conceivable as an extension of his ideas.

### **Lester L. Grabbe: Socio-Historical Approach**

Lester Grabbe does not consider himself a minimalist, although he did once admit “in some areas of Israelite history we are all minimalists.”<sup>75</sup> For the most part, Grabbe limits his analysis of Hebrew literature to the Persian Period and later because this is the only period with

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<sup>74</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, “Looking at the Primary (Hi)story and the Prophetic Books as Literary/theological Units within the Frame of the Early Second Temple: Some Considerations,” *SJOT* 12 (1998): 26–43. For further discussion, consider Michael Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer: A Study of Exodus 32–34 and Numbers 13–14*, FAT 2/8 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 72–75.

<sup>75</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, “The Case of Corrupting Consensus,” in *Between Evidence and Ideology: Essays on the History of Ancient Israel Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oud Testamentisch Werkzelschap Lincoln, July 2009*, ed. Bob Becking and Lester L. Grabbe, OtSt59 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 86. 83–92.

reliable historical records that can be compared to the archaeological record.<sup>76</sup> Material remains must be interpreted as carefully as textual records, and they are subject to the same potential biases and misreadings. As such, he accepts the existence of prophets in the Israelite culture. In fact, he maintains that such prophets were even vital to the function of their society, but at the same time, he is very skeptical of the historicity of the narratives because he does not find material evidence to support them.<sup>77</sup>

He offers two dangers which are mirror images of each other. First, there can be a tendency not to understand one's own subjectivity and second, there is the opposite tendency to treat archaeological data as no more objective than textual data.<sup>78</sup> For Grabbe, material remains "actually existed in real life ... texts, on the other hand, are products of the imagination."<sup>79</sup> This does not mean that archaeological and textual evidence necessarily contradict each other, but Grabbe maintains that artifacts are tangible and therefore must be given priority.

In one respect, Grabbe's challenging of both the minimalist and the maximalist views is not only important but necessary. The evidence must be allowed to speak for itself, rather than being made to conform to theories already comfortable for the interpreters.<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, he occasionally dismisses any view that contradicts the interpretation of the facts as he reads

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<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992); Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaic History in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>77</sup> Grabbe, *1 & 2 Kings*, 57.

<sup>78</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* (London: T & T Clark, 2017), 6–11.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>80</sup> Grabbe continually challenges the notion of having to "belong" to a single group or school, as evidenced by his remarks in "The Case of Corrupting Consensus" cited above, and he tends to reject any notion he believes conforms to the needs of the reader. See Lester L. Grabbe, "'The Comfortable Theory', 'Maximal Conservatism', and Neo-Fundamentalism Revisited," in *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, ed. Alastair G. Hunter and Philip R. Davies, JSOTSup 348 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 175–78. As he wrote, "A scholarly consensus needs to be respected, but it is only after the consensus is challenged that its true solidity can be established."

them, especially if they come from the more conservative end of the biblical theology spectrum and allow for the presence of supernatural elements in the historical record.<sup>81</sup>

### The Difficulties with Diachronic Analysis and a Reasonable Conclusion

These various approaches to the biblical text grow out of ideas which came to the forefront as commentators became more aware of the historical context of the biblical record. Archaeology, comparative language studies, and other disciplines developed since the mid-nineteenth century have opened the doors of the biblical world, allowing readers to peer through the centuries at something more substantial and observable than the written word. It was, and is, necessary that biblical studies embrace this historical context.<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately, much of the modern analyses are coupled with a naturalistic approach that questions the veracity of anything perceived as miraculous or supernatural. Higher criticism, which assumes only natural forces in the formation and transmission of Scripture, becomes inextricably intertwined with hermeneutics.<sup>83</sup> An interpreter will view the content of the Scriptures with a perspective shaped

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<sup>81</sup> Grabbe, “The Comfortable Theory,” 179–89. He singles out a number of respectable conservative scholars, including Richard Hess, Edwin Yamauchi, and Alan Ralph Millard. His chief objection to Millard is his acceptance of the compilers’ intent in including the supernatural aspects of narratives such as Elisha and the floating axe head (2 Kgs 6:1–7). He is not alone in this respect. William Devers likewise rejects any appeal to the supernatural as unhistorical. See William G. Dever, *Beyond the Texts: An Archaeological Portrait of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 32–34.

<sup>82</sup> Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 51–65. In fairness, Frei’s emphasis is on the theology of the text rather than literary or historical criticism; but his point is worth considering even today. For a recent consideration of Frei’s thesis, see F. F. Bruce, review of *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* by Hans W. Frei. *Christian Scholar’s Review* 51 (2021): 78–80.

<sup>83</sup> Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 53–54. This tendency may be characterized as a result of post-Enlightenment natural rationalism, but it is worth noting that it also has roots in the Protestant Reformation. Anything that was not within the realm of empirical experience was relegated to the realm of magic. Walsham argues that the Reformation “desacralized” the worldview of the West. See Alexandra Walsham, “The Reformation and ‘the Disenchantment of the World’ Reassessed,” *The Historical Journal* 51 (2008): 497–528. Further, in discussing the resurrection, Joseph Simon points to methodological issues with the supernatural. While there might be an ontological acknowledgement of the supernatural, the lack of the ability to evaluate the supernatural without an ideological or theological bias against objective inquiry results in minimization or rejection. See Simon J. Joseph, “Redescribing the Resurrection: Beyond the Methodological Impasse?” *BTB* 45 (2015): 155–73.

by that interpreter's view of the context and formation of Scripture. This creates a feedback loop because perceived history influences criticism, which in turn limits Scripture, which then forms theology which further informs the view of history and criticism. The question should be raised as to whether this is not a self-perpetuating criticism, and whether close scrutiny of the text from outside the loop would yield the same result. The issues raised here will be addressed more fully in chapter two.

New discoveries inevitably influence present interpretational trends, but these are indeed trends and not necessarily facts. This is just a reality of scholarship. Consider this statement from Na'aman. "Let me emphasize the importance of the archaeological findings to the discussion of Josiah's kingdom, and the vast progress made in this field since the early 1970's."<sup>84</sup> Cross's Josianic date for the Book of Kings was published in the early 1970's, directly related to these finds in archaeology. The impulse to include the current, most sensational data in an interpretational scheme is understandable, but consideration must be made for the faddishness of such inclusions. On the other hand, precritical examinations of the text were not so encumbered. Interpreters read the text as received, and while they might have had a deficient knowledge of the complete historical context, there is still merit in appreciating their precritical, unitarian approach to the text.

Of the diachronic approaches, the most reasonable is that raised by Halpern, which makes a conscious nod to Campbell and Provan. Campbell's emphasis on the care and handling of the text by the redactors or editors invites the reader to rethink attitudes that denigrate the writers of the text. Where others see clumsiness or incoherence, Campbell sees "consummately careful

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<sup>84</sup> Nadav Na'aman, "Josiah and the Kingdom of Judah" in *Good Kings and Bad Kings: The Kingdom of Judah in the Seventh Century BCE*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 393 (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 190.

people and compilers or preserves with authorial status.”<sup>85</sup> Halpern likewise refuses to treat the redactors as sloppy or uncritical, a point made clear in his protest that if the redactors had been ideologically motivated, they would have made greater changes to the text still stands.<sup>86</sup> The form of the text as it stands, with the given variables of textual transmission over centuries, is not haphazard. It appears to have been carefully curated. As such, there is good reason to perceive it as historical in nature. How historical it is, and where minimalist biases can influence the reading and interpretation of these historical texts is the subject of the next section.

### **Three Biases Against Preexilic Origins of the Materials**

In surveying these approaches to the prophetic materials in the Book of Kings, three general objections to the historicity of the materials emerge. In many cases, these objections prohibit the existence of a substantial, preexilic, literary source underlying components of the text, including the prophetic materials under consideration in this dissertation. These objections reveal biases in the interpretation of the evidence, both literary and material, and so must be addressed. They are articulated differently and in varying degrees by the surveyed writers, but the first two are adhered to widely by mainstream scholarship. The last bias deals with specialized language studies, and so it does not appear in detail in most discussions but is appealed to whenever there is a need for an argument for late dating the text. This dissertation will address these biases under three categories: theological, linguistic, and historical. The theological and linguistic arguments are inherently more abstract than the historical, and yet they

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<sup>85</sup> Antony Campbell, “Past History and Present Text: The Clash of Classical and Post-Critical Approaches to Biblical Text,” *AuBr* 39 (1991): 3–5.

<sup>86</sup> Halpern and Lemaire, “The Composition of Kings,” 129.

are fundamental to making sense of the historical evidence. This is why the theological will be addressed first before the historical and the linguistic.

### Method of Inquiry

Answering these three biases involves three separate lines of inquiry. Although they are independent lines of inquiry with their own internal progression of thought, the conclusions are convergent. This type of convergent argument allows for a synthetic approach to the evidence, with each independent argument supporting the same conclusion. This is distinct from a serial or linked argument which requires that arguments function interdependently, producing a shared conclusion which cannot exist without all statements being true. In a serial argument, function is intertwined, and neither argument alone points to the conclusion. In a convergent argument, premises are viewed as alternative lines of support. They do not build on each other, but rather are presented separately. The conclusion then is the point where these lines of support converge. There occurs a transference of acceptability. While none of the individual arguments are independently sufficient to convince the reader, each individual line of reasoning provides a vector converging into a single conclusion. As each individual argument proceeds to the conclusion, it provides validation of the others, while not being dependent upon them.

In a convergent argument, if the independent lines of inquiry arrive at the same conclusion, one could argue that a logical vectoring has been established. The conclusion is validated and becomes more acceptable because of the convergence.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the arguments are

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<sup>87</sup> By far, the more common type of reasoning employed in almost all fields is linked reasoning. For an introduction to these two types of reasoning, see Douglas Walton, *Fundamentals of Critical Argumentation*, *Fundamentals of Critical Argumentation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39–45. A more advanced understanding of the distinctives can be found in Shiyang Yu and Frank Zenker, “Identifying Linked and Convergent Argument Structures: A Problem Unsolved,” *Informal Logic* 42 (2022): 363–87. It is worth noting that

independent and can stand alone, or as Freeman puts it, “the loss of one premise does not cancel the others as relevant reasons for the conclusions or foreclose the possibility that they might constitute sufficient evidence justifying it.”<sup>88</sup> At the same time, the fact that the lines do converge adds acceptability and plausibility to the conclusion which each line reaches independently.

## Theological Bias (Chapter 2)

### Statement of the Issue

Most writers surveyed in this chapter are unabashedly opposed to viewing any supernatural element of the biblical narrative as historical.<sup>89</sup> Although these same writers would protest that their views are strictly historiographic and objective, this anti-supernatural stance is nonetheless a theological position. As discussed in the review of literature above, the prophetic materials are generally considered to be legendary by most scholars. McKenzie calls the Elijah materials in 1 Kings 17–19 “a complex of legends,” and he treats almost every other passage dealing with Elijah as if it was cobbled together over an extended period of time by multiple, anonymous hands.<sup>90</sup> Burke Long says, “legend differs from history and historical story in its refusal to be bound by a drive to recount real events as they happened.... Legend belongs to the

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one noted scholar disagrees with this distinction. See G. C. Goddu, “Against Making the Linked-Convergent Distinction,” in *Pondering on Problems of Argumentation: Twenty Essays on Theoretical Issues*, ed. Frans H. von Eemeren and Bart Garssen, Argumentation Library 14 (New York: Springer, 2009), 181–90. Goddu does not really disprove of convergent reasoning as much as argue it is still dependent reasoning.

<sup>88</sup> James B. Freeman, *Argument Structure: Representation and Theory*, Argumentation Library 18 (New York: Springer, 2011), 129.

<sup>89</sup> See Grabbe, “The Comfortable Theory,” 179–89, and Dever, *Beyond the Texts*, 32–34, which were already referenced above.

<sup>90</sup> McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 67–69; 81–82.

world of oral folklore and storytellers.”<sup>91</sup> For example, he describes the episode in 2 Kings 1:1–17 as “clearly a legend, a narrative concerned primarily with the wondrous, miraculous, and exemplary.”<sup>92</sup> This is in keeping with Rofé’s view that Elijah and the other northern prophets are *epigoni* (sing. *epigone*), fictional or quasi-historical figures created in the present and projected into the past.<sup>93</sup>

Even among those who accept that the Book of Kings relies upon older sources in some way, the idea of the prophetic materials having any kind of textual basis in the preexilic north is considered implausible.<sup>94</sup> Mordechai Cogan believes they were a mixture of traditions and legends circulated among the “sons of the prophets” and eventually transmitted at some point to the Judahite redactors of what is now the Book of Kings.<sup>95</sup> Campbell and O’Brien argue that the only historical components of the Elijah-Elisha materials are the incident at Carmel (1 Kgs 18:20–40) and Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kgs 21:1–24), around which “a number of traditions appear to have accumulated.”<sup>96</sup> At some points, these “accumulated” traditions become cumbersome. For example, Campbell and O’Brien accept Elijah’s encounter with YHWH on Horeb as an early

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<sup>91</sup> Burke O. Long, *1 Kings with an Introduction to Historical Literature*, FOTL 9 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 110.

<sup>92</sup> Burke O. Long, *2 Kings*, FOTL 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 16.

<sup>93</sup> Rofé, *Prophetic Stories*, 33. An even more extreme view was expressed by Kurt Noll who described the Book of Kings as “an anthology, or ‘reader,’ of fanciful stories about fallible *nabi'im* (prophets and kings) who find themselves in a relationship with a fallible patron god.” See Noll, “Is the Book of Kings Deuteronomistic?” 66.

<sup>94</sup> See for example, Lester L. Grabbe, “Mighty Oaks from (Genetically Manipulated?) Acorns Grow: *The Chronicle of the Kings of Judah* as a Source of the Deuteronomistic History,” in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld*, ed. Robert Rezetko, Timothy H. Lim, and W. Brian Aucker, VTSup 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 155–74. Grabbe proposes that the Chronicle of the Kings of Judah served as the framework for the divided monarchy narrative in the Book of Kings, supplemented by various other sources at different times.

<sup>95</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC 10 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 92–94. Remarkably, Cogan references the preexilic northern dialect found in the narrative and uses it as a part of his basis for distinguishing between legend and tradition. See Cogan, *1 Kings*, 93, n. 15. This is discussed more fully in chapter six of this dissertation.

<sup>96</sup> Campbell and O’Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History*, 392. They credit many of the “additions” to anti-Jezebel rhetoric, intended to criticize foreign rule,

tradition but cite Gwilym Jones's redactional scheme for the rest of the chapter. For Jones, there are no fewer than three disjointed traditions brought together to produce a literary bridge between the encounter with the prophets of Baal on Carmel and the encounter with YHWH: an original story kernel of YHWH commissioning Elijah (1 Kgs 19:9–10, 15–18), a much later theophany tradition added to bridge between the two components of the original story (1 Kgs 19:11–14), and a bridging narrative to connect this to the events in the previous chapter which expands a later legend about Elijah in the wilderness near Beersheba (1 Kgs 19:3–6). Jones's reasoning for his proposed redactional history is simple. The existing text "is not feasible."<sup>97</sup> The refusal to accept a theophany as a historical document is immediately apparent in this example, but once the supernatural portion is removed, there has to be a redactional, natural explanation for the disjointed reading that is created. When the assumed theological realities of the text are removed, the text becomes incoherent and requires further critical analysis to attain a level of reconstructed coherence. The anti-supernatural theology becomes an issue for the text as it stands, and consideration of the text as it stands is key to interpreting the text.

### **Critical Considerations**

In one sense, this anti-supernatural bias is understandable in history writing, which is supposed to be as objective as possible. One would assume that the modern reader must distinguish at some point between the historically reasonable and the mythical or legendary. Since ANE literature is full of often strange supernatural affairs, making a distinction between the historical and the supernatural is not an objectionable practice. At the same time, if one is to interpret the Hebrew Scriptures from within the context of evangelical, theologically

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<sup>97</sup> Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, vol. 2, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 327.

conservative belief structures, the supernatural cannot be ignored. As D. A. Carson once wrote, biblical studies are often marred by “the barren exegeses generated by historical-critical methods, and especially those readings of Scripture that are ‘historical’ in the sense that they are frankly anti-supernatural interpretations determined by post-Enlightenment assumptions about the nature of history.”<sup>98</sup>

Wiseman allows that “much depends on the reader’s attitude to the supernatural and miracle.”<sup>99</sup> For the theological orthodox reader, the path forward inevitably must involve wrestling with the supernatural because it is undeniably present in the biblical texts. It is important that one’s theological presuppositions be brought to light in order to understand how one frames these extraordinary narrative elements. The supernatural was a component of the worldview of the authors and original audience of the texts, and yet, as Frei points out, the reports of the supernatural in the Old Testament are less “weird” than that of surrounding nations.<sup>100</sup> There is certainly something to this. Consider “Shachar and Shalim and the Gracious Gods” (CTA 23, lines 30–54) which has the god El kidnapping women, then using a sort of meal augury to have them consent to him impregnating them.<sup>101</sup> If anything, Israelites relied less upon the purported divine actions in human existence than their Canaanite and Assyrian neighbors. The modern readers’ assumption that the critical ability of the Israelites was somehow deficient in comparison to their own is unwarranted. There is a necessity then to look intensely at the theology of the text and read the text within that theology.

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<sup>98</sup> D. A. Carson, “Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But ...” in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. R. Michael Allen (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2011), 187–205.

<sup>99</sup> Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, TOTC 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 48.

<sup>100</sup> Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 275.

<sup>101</sup> For text, commentary and translation, see J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 28–30, 123–27.

## **Approach to Be Employed**

Chapter two will first address the rationale underlying what are dubbed here “reductionist/minimalist” (RM) perspectives. This broad label is applied to any views which minimize the historicity of the biblical text, with the understanding that this includes a great deal of those who place socio-historical evidence in the position of primary arguments. The purpose of this is to underscore the basic presuppositions that are brought to this evidence. In two brief case studies, it will be demonstrated that this evidence is not always argued as objectively as it is sometimes presented. The theologically conservative reader can still benefit greatly from the presentation of the socio-historical evidence but there is reason for caution and circumspection.

The second half of the chapter will then be devoted to an argument for a theologically robust approach (TRA) to both textual and material evidence. Admittedly, the framework for this argument will derive from those who hold to a theologically conservative position, chiefly Tremper Longman, III. Then, through examination of the biblical texts, it will be argued that the modern reader must read the biblical text from the theological perspective of the original authors and audience. This reading must, however, be tempered with a respectful but critical perspective to avoid swinging the pendulum into another set of presentist biases that could be imposed on the text.

### Historical Bias (Chapters 3–4)

## **Statement of the Issue**

The relationship of the Israelian prophets to their historical context is a matter to be addressed before the literary nature of the materials in the Book of Kings can be considered. This is important because if the prophetic materials do not fit into what is known of the historical context, then their content must be later constructions. If, as it is often argued, the prophetic

materials derive from the exilic or postexilic contexts, then one would naturally assume that they would be heavily influenced by those contexts. While there might be some memory of the situations involved in the Omride kingdom in particular, these memories would be altered to match the context in which the works were finally composed.

There are therefore two issues of historical context to be addressed. The first is the nature of prophecy itself and whether there were any unique attributes of prophecy which might not have been understood or would have been altered in a later context. The second is the makeup of the secondary state of Israel under the Omrides. If the materials are preexilic and close to their purported origins, then they should reflect an understanding of that context which may not have been accessible to later writers.

### **Critical Considerations**

For the understanding of both prophecy and state in the period of the Omrides, it is necessary to draw heavily from the archaeological evidence now available. In both cases, this includes not only material remains but textual remains. There are a number of prophetic texts available from the archives of ancient cities. The relationship among these, other prophets in the biblical text and these Israelian prophets is one with a large number of gaps which must be filled in. At some points, filling in these gaps involves conjecture based on a presupposed interpretational framework, which is the subject of chapter two and informs the process going forward. There are very few extant documents which deal with the formation and maintenance of secondary states during this period, but there is a great deal of scholarship on the one Aramaeo-Canaanite state which has left us significant materials—Ugarit. The Ugaritic Baal Cycle in particular provides a fascinating study in the religio-political formation of a Canaanite state, but

it is separated from the Omrides by several centuries, so the correlation of these materials is admittedly tenuous.

### **Approach to be Employed**

These two chapters are primarily contextual, as they establish the parameters of understanding the world of the Hebrew kingdoms. Chapter three will focus on prophecy, both in the Ancient Near East (ANE) as a whole but also within the Hebrew kingdoms. If the Omride kings of the northern Israelian kingdom were using what might be loosely referred to as the “indigenous” or pre-Israelite religious practices as a unifying, royal cult, then the northern Yahwistic prophets like Elijah and Elisha may have been responding to that expression of Canaanite sensibilities rather than to popular religions or mythical religions. Divination, prophecy, and other mantic practices are known from a number of ANE societies. Assyrian practices may speak directly to practices in the Omride period, but older Aramaeo-Canaanite texts are available which show a contrast.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, the idea of ancient prophetic archives will be studied. Appreciation of their prevalence and portability is a significant component of understanding how such a thing as the IPM could develop from existing textual evidence.

Chapter four will shift focus to secondary state formation during Iron Age I–II secondary states in the Levant because the dynamics of these states contributed to the development of the Israelian state. Since one of the core assumptions of the historical bias is that sufficient secondary state infrastructure did not exist in Israel for the production of lengthy compositions such as the prophetic materials, this examination provides important context for the states

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<sup>102</sup> “Northwest Semitic” (NWS) is used here because the literature is broad in origin. The Ugaritic texts are Canaanite, at least geographically, but also distinct. There is, however, a great deal of affinity. There are few Canaanite texts of any length, and so it is best to speak broadly and geographically rather than linguistically. Still, Ugarit has characteristics of NWS languages and there is a lively debate as to the relationship. As will be discussed later, Ugaritic is probably characterized best as Aramaeo-Canaanite.

themselves. In particular, consideration has to be given to how the states were formed, what historical forces might have been at work, which could have given the impetus for the creation of lengthy literary works. In addition, it is vital to understand the secondary states themselves so that what is known from history can be compared to the biblical text. By examining what is known of the royal religious practices, it can be shown that the Omrides were embracing a template that would have been all but unknown in the postexilic period. This type of royal religion is implicit in the text of the Book of Kings but lurks under the surface of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle as well. The prophets, who were the inheritors of a long tradition of prophets in ANE societies but unique in their devotion to YHWH would have arisen as “loyal opposition.” This dynamic not only provided the impetus for the development of lengthy prophetic works, but also the framework by which they can be placed in their probable historical position.

### Linguistic Bias (Chapter 5–6)

#### Statement of the Issue

It is commonly asserted that the Hebrew states lacked the infrastructure to produce lengthy literary works until at least the eighth century BCE.<sup>103</sup> The argument is that Israelite society did not exist in terms of literary output until the Assyrian Period. Although the consensus is that there was some kind of Hebrew tradition, most likely oral, prior to this, there are those scholars, such as Davies, who believe that Hebrew society prior to the exile may be a construct

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<sup>103</sup> Israel Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel*, ANEM 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 35; Christophe Nihan and Dany Nocquet, “1–2 Samuel,” in *Introduction à l’Ancien Testament*, ed. Thomas Römer, Jean-Daniel Macchi, and Christophe Nihan, La Monde de la Bible 49 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2004), 286–87; John Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of David* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 119. To be clear, these works discuss the Davidic narratives and not the later Omride material. The idea of “little cities such as Jerusalem in the earlier period,” as Van Seter puts it, would apply to Samaria and the northern administration as well. They all agree, however, that any lengthy works would have to date from the Persian Period.

as well.<sup>104</sup> There are two fundamental assumptions underlying this position. The first assumption is that since there is no lengthy epigraphical evidence from the time period, there must not have been significant literary output. The second assumption is that scribal development always follows state formation in the same pattern, and since the assumed prerequisite conditions did not exist in the Levant until the eighth century BCE, lengthy literary works could not have been created. This second assumption will be considered first because it provides the framework for the consideration of the first, which will be the subjects of chapters five and six.

As Alan Millard pointed out, “it is easy to assume that what we see truly represents the situation in antiquity, yet such an assumption is quite wrong; rather, we can assume there was a far wider use of writing than the range of specimens recovered can suggest.”<sup>105</sup> Thus, the question must not be whether there are extant documents from the period but rather if there is evidence that such documents could have existed and no longer do.

If such documents existed and are preserved in the biblical text, they should have a distinctly northern linguistic flavor or style. Linguistic dating of a biblical text is quite a different focus than historical dating. The Book of Kings contains a mixed bag of Biblical Hebrew forms,

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<sup>104</sup> As Davies wrote, “There seems to be no society to which such a cultural memory could be realistically attributed.” See Philip R. Davies, “The Dissemination of Written Texts,” in *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism and Script*, ed. Philip R. Davies and Thomas Römer (London: Routledge, 2013), 37. This is certainly the position Lemche takes, shifting the literary construct to an even later, Hellenistic period. See Niels Peter Lemche, “What People Want to Believe: Or Fighting Against ‘Cultural Memory’,” in *Biblical Narratives, Archaeology, and Historicity: Essays in Honour of Thomas L. Thompson*, ed. Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò and Emanuel Pfoh, LHBOTS 680 (London: T & T Clark, 2020), 26–31. A. Grahame Auld takes the same position when it comes to Elijah and Elisha, who he believes were created as “resonances” of later southern prophets because he sees no evidence of earlier records. See A. Graeme Auld, *Life in Kings: Reshaping the Royal Story in the Hebrew Bible*, AIL 30 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 192–94.

<sup>105</sup> Alan R. Millard, “The Uses of the Early Alphabets,” in *Phoinikeia Grammata: Lire et écrire en Méditerranée*, ed. Claude Baurain, Corinne Bonnet, and Véronique Krings (Naur: Société des Études Classiques: 1991), 110.

although no systematic analysis of the linguistic dating has been published to date.<sup>106</sup> For the most part, suggestions of dates of composition are made based on the differences in proposed diachronic ideologies. Almost all writers accept that the work is an anthology reliant upon earlier sources. Due to the inclusion of postexilic events in the text (2 Kgs 25:–27–30), the final form of the Book of Kings is generally held to be exilic or postexilic, although much earlier than Chronicles.<sup>107</sup> Some, such as James Linville, Niels Lemche, and Alexander Rofé push the date much later, arguing that the recollections must be of “the distant past.”<sup>108</sup> As a result of this dating, the general assumption is that one would expect to find postexilic, Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH) forms.<sup>109</sup>

### Critical Considerations

While the epigraphic record from the period of the Hebrew secondary states is not extensive, there is sufficient evidence to at least propose the level of literary awareness that existed in these states. Scholarship tends toward the idea that these were essentially illiterate societies with an educated scribal class. There is, however, evidence that written language was

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<sup>106</sup> Ronald Hendel and Jan Joosten, *How Old is the Hebrew Bible? A Linguistic, Textual, and Historical Study*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 130. Likewise, Robert Rezetko notes, “the debates over the dates of origin of biblical literature ... have included surprisingly few first-hand treatments of the linguistic issues.” Robert Rezetko, “Dating Biblical Hebrew: Evidence from Samuel-Kings and Chronicles,” in *Biblical Hebrew: Studies in Chronology and Typology*, ed. Ian Young, JSOTSup 369 (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 217.

<sup>107</sup> Robert Polzin distinguishes the late date of the Chronicler based non-synoptic passages, those which the Book of Chronicles does not draw from the Book of Kings. See Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose*, HSS 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 27–28. Fohrer relied upon particular idioms which he saw paralleling known later texts to date the text to the postexilic period. For more recent discussion see McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 85–86.

<sup>108</sup> Alexander Rofé, “Rethinking the ‘Exilic’ Book of Kings,” *JSOT* 75 (1997): 21–42.

<sup>109</sup> There are issues associated with this term, which has prompted some writers, such as Robert Rezetko and Ian Young, to refer to the form instead as “Peripheral Classical Hebrew” (PCH), “which allows us to circumvent persistent confusion over the meaning and connotations of ‘late’ and LBH as well as judgmental views of LBH as something ‘less-than-classical’.” Robert Rezetko and Ian Young, *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps Toward an Integrated Approach*, ANEM 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 11.

being employed by people outside of this class because of the technological innovations of the alphabetic scripts and more readily available writing materials. The extraordinary alphabetic script was made not for inscription or impression but for pen and ink. It is difficult to understand just how revolutionary this shift would have been.<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately, the shift also may have included moving to less permanent media, which would account for the lack of an extant literary record. The proposed paucity of epigraphic evidence must be explored in light of this shift. To accomplish this, scribal practices and writing technology should be surveyed.

There is also, and no less importantly, the issue of the language of the prophetic materials in the Book of Kings. If there was a capacity for creating literary works and those works were incorporated into the biblical text, it is reasonable that some vestiges of a northern linguistic profile would exist. When linguistic data is referenced in the scholarship, it is usually to note that linguistic dating is difficult, if not impossible, in the opinion of the particular writer.<sup>111</sup> Linguistic discussion of the biblical text in general is a relatively new field of inquiry, and there are two prominent views. The first is espoused by the more established voices like Robert Polzin and Avi Hurvitz and is sometimes called the “traditional” view, although it dates only from the mid-twentieth century.<sup>112</sup> The advocates of this view see Biblical Hebrew going through distinct periods of development. The second, more recent view, which is currently being forwarded by

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<sup>110</sup> For an exploration of this revolutionary concept, see Alan R. Millard, “The Infancy of the Alphabet,” *World Archaeology* 17 (1986): 390–98.

<sup>111</sup> Rezetko goes into detail on this point and cites numerous examples. See Rezetko, “Dating Biblical Texts,” 217–20 for his fuller discussion. As examples, see Diana V. Edelman, “The Deuteronomist’s David and the Chronicler’s David: Competing of Contrasting Ideologies?” in *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Thomas Römer, BETL 147 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 67; Giovanni Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1988), xv; Joel Rosenberg, *King and Kin: Political Allegory in the Hebrew Bible*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington, IL: Indiana State University, 1986), 101–2; Victor Sasson, “Studies in the Lexicon and Linguistic Usage of Early Hebrew Inscriptions,” (PhD diss., New York University, 1979), 244.

<sup>112</sup> In the chapter dealing with this, “traditional” is replaced with the term “Sequential Development” which fits the method more appropriately.

Ian Young and Robert Rezetko, challenges the development theory and instead posits that the various forms of Biblical Hebrew could have coexisted.<sup>113</sup> A third, even more recent, view has been presented by Dong-Hyuk Kim. In Kim's view, distinctions must be made between "change from below," natural, observable variations in spoken language, and "change from above," stylistic, literary variations used in both prestige speech and representations of non-natural linguistic factors.<sup>114</sup>

It is tempting to set aside the linguistic arguments for dating the biblical text on the grounds that it cannot be definitive. Due to the composite nature of the Book of Kings, however, the linguistic data can be important for understanding the sources, perhaps even more important than ideological schema because linguistic forms tend to be persistent. Because of this, linguistics data cannot be assumed or presumed. There is linguistic evidence to be considered, especially in the northern portions of the Book of Kings. If the northern portions can be shown to have a distinct linguistic profile, as was argued over a century ago by Robert Burney and is now being argued by Gary Rendsburg, then this profile speaks to the origins of the text.<sup>115</sup> Rendsburg's output is substantial and specifically focused on the understanding of the northern text as a whole, and so must be addressed.

### **Approach to Be Employed**

The fifth chapter will focus on the development of the Northwest Semitic (NWS) alphabet as a tool for language transmission and how it changed scribal practices and made

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<sup>113</sup> There is no consensus on what to call this view, although in this text, Young and Rezetko's view is referred to as the "Co-existent Argument."

<sup>114</sup> Dong-Hyuk Kim, *Early Biblical Hebrew, Late Biblical Hebrew, and Linguistic Variability: A Sociolinguistic Evaluation of the Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*, VTSup 156 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 89–91.

<sup>115</sup> Charles F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903).

writing more available than previous writing systems. The chapter will survey the extant NWS texts from the Levant to demonstrate what level of literacy, or rather literacy awareness, might have existed during the period of the Omride kings. Additionally, the chapter will consider the nature of scribal education in the Levant and how the existence of the alphabet and materials like papyrus might have made scribal education in this region different from the Mesopotamian cultures which still relied on the more complex and difficult to learn cuneiform writing system and more durable media. The question of orality and genre will be addressed, focusing on Antony Campbell's proposed "reported story" as a bridging or transitional genre, specifically applied to the northern prophetic narratives.

Chapter six begins with a summary of the current schools of thought on the literary profile of the biblical text. The use of linguistics in dating texts is hotly debated, and three schools of thought will be presented. This will give way to an extensive investigation of the linguistic character of the northern or Israelian portions of the Book of Kings. The relationship of Hebrew and Aramaic is important here, with the chief argument being whether a preexilic Israelian Hebrew dialect existed and was employed in the writing of the prophetic materials. Gary Rendsburg's work on the dialects and diglossia of ancient Hebrew will be relied upon heavily to clarify the relationship of these Hebrew forms.

### Conclusions (Chapter 7)

Chapter seven will then bring together the arguments at the point of convergence, demonstrating that the separate lines of inquiry point to the same conclusion. Any one facet of the dissertation is not sufficient to support the proposed hypothesis, but when viewed together, they provide a stable basis for the plausibility of the IPM. This dissertation is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis, but rather the opening of a new perspective on the texts, a path forward from

the quagmire of modern scholarship, which is more often at odds with one another than it is in agreement. Taken together the arguments present a coherent historical view of the prophetic texts in the Book of Kings, supporting the thesis that the IPM can be plausibly shown to be of preexilic provenance, and that this demonstrated date is as likely, if not more likely than later dates proposed by many modern writers.

### **A Definition of “Israelian Prophetic Materials”**

The concept of “Israelian Prophetic Materials” (IPM) is the core concept of this dissertation and so requires a definition here, even if this appears as a bit of an excursus from the discussion above. This term is meant to describe the prophetic works presented in the narratives of the northern kingdom of Israel, mostly during the period of the Omride-Nimshite period (roughly 875–722 BCE).<sup>116</sup> It will be argued that the IPM was a substantial, preexilic, literary source which served as the historical basis for the present passages of the Book of Kings which deal with the northern prophets. In these biblical texts, there is an elevated prophetic presence, often through continual interaction with the rulers of the kingdom and in contest with Canaanite religious cults. The core of the materials under consideration are therefore the Elijah-Elisha materials which appear in 1 Kings 17:1–2 Kgs 13:25. Several precursor prophets participate in the northern narrative before Elijah appears on the scene (1 Kgs 11:28–39; 13–14; 16:1–8). In addition to these named prophets, there are several unnamed prophets who appear throughout the narrative and seem to have an affiliation with Elijah and Elisha. For the purposes of this dissertation, these materials will be referred to as “Israelian Prophetic Materials” (IPM).

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<sup>116</sup> Omride refers to Omri and his direct successors. Nimshite and Jehuite both refer to the line of Jehu, which ruled from the end of the Omride dynasty almost to the fall of Samaria. For discussion of the Nimshite connection to the Omrides, see again Baruchi-Unna, “Jehuites, Ahabites, and Omrides,” 3–21 and Hasegawa, *Aram and Israel*.

## Components of the Definition

### **“Israelian”**

“Israelian” speaks to the northern nature of the materials. Other terms such as “Israelite,” “Ephraimite,” and “Samaritan” are often employed in the literature, but these terms sometimes have a variety of meanings. Here, “Israelian” is a primarily linguistic term, relating to the dialect of Hebrew that is conjectured as being spoken in the northern kingdom. It is being used here to describe linguistic and religious traits which derive from the northern region of the Hebrew territories, prior to the fall of Samaria (722 BCE).

### **“Prophetic”**

“Prophetic” seems like it would be a simple term to define, but prophecy was an important but complex aspect of Ancient Near East (ANE) cultures. As will be seen, the worship of YHWH was far from uniform in Hebrew society, so distinguishing prophetic materials from royal or priestly materials is important. For the sake of clarity, it will be defined here as mantic practices associated with the revelation of YHWH to the Hebrew people.

### **“Materials”**

Finally, “materials” must be defined. In this dissertation, “materials” will be used to describe functionally literary records of people and events. This idea of a functionally literary record allows for some flexibility as to genre and form. Materials are recorded in some form, which implies composition and transmission prior to the canonization in the biblical text. It should be stated plainly that this is a working definition, and aspects of it will be more fully fleshed out over the course of the dissertation.

### Reasoning Behind this New Term

One would assume there would be a convenient term already in place for these discussions, but there is not. There is no uniformity in the application of terminology to the materials relating to the Omride-Nimshite period. There is a large amount of literature on the “Elijah-Elisha Cycle,” but this label does not include the auxiliary materials such as the prophecies of Ahijah the Shilonite (1 Kgs 11:29–39), Micaiah, son of Imlah (1 Kgs 20:13–22), or the anonymous prophets who seem to appear in the materials and play a significant role before disappearing (1 Kgs 13:1–34; 22:6–28). While focus of the materials is the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, these other prophets should also be included in any category dealing with the larger issue of the prophets and the northern kings. Additionally, the use of a term of this nature aids in distinguishing the materials from the southern prophets who appear in the Book of Kings as well as the large literary works of the prophets which came later.

## CHAPTER 2: A THEOLOGICALLY ROBUST APPROACH TO THE SCRIPTURES

### Introduction

Reading the Bible as history is challenging to say the least. There are a variety of schools of thought concerning its historicity, ranging from those who might view the biblical record as absolute, systematic history to those who reject the historicity of the text entirely. All views come to the biblical record with a set of presuppositions concerning its historicity as well as a theology, whether implicit or explicit. Protests of a non-theological approach are themselves statements of implicit theology. That theology may exclude or minimize God as an active participant in the events, or it may allow for his direct intervention and revelation within history, but all biblical interpretation is theological.<sup>1</sup> If, however, one affirms the inspiration and authority of Scripture, then it is important to have an approach to the biblical texts that allows for the balancing of credal affirmation and critical thinking.

### Biblical Reductionism/Minimalism

At the core of the question of historicity is the relationship between the growing knowledge base of socio-historical research, which includes the areas of sociology, archaeology, and history, and the biblical text. Outside of theological circles, the socio-historical evidence is treated as a primary source for the history of the Hebrew kingdoms. For the theologically conservative reader it is important to understand why this is so. It is also equally as important to

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright, eds. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 21–22.

be capable of articulating an alternative, theological view which does not ignore the presence of evidence.<sup>2</sup>

It is common to employ the terms “minimalist” and “maximalist” in a broad sense, as if the field of biblical studies is easily divided into two camps with the minimalists rejecting the biblical text as historical, and the maximalists presenting it as fully historical.<sup>3</sup> In reality, most scholars fall somewhere on a spectrum between these two extremes, and this has been true for all of modern history.<sup>4</sup> Through this section, these terms will be employed sparingly. Instead, the term “reductionist/minimalist” (RM) will be employed to describe this position. By the term RM, it is meant that these scholars reduce the value of the biblical text in their interpretations. The direction of their interpretation is toward minimalization, whether they fall into the category of minimalist or not. The text is not held to be equal to archaeological or historical evidence. While

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<sup>2</sup> The question of history and the supernatural is perhaps best observed in New Testament discussions, especially those surrounding the historical Jesus. Robert L. Webb describes the tension between the historical method and faith in this context as existing because history is meant to detail human activity rather than the interaction of humanity and the divine or supernatural. He is correct that in the natural sense, “the focus of historical inquiry, at least as normally defined and pursued, concerns events in the past involving humans as agents.” Robert L. Webb, “The Rules of the Game: History and Historical Method in the Context of Faith: The *Via Media* of Methodological Naturalism,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 9 (2011): 64. Webb reflects a classic anthropocentric view of history. For articulation of this view of history, see Robin George Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, ed. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946; repr. Chicago: Muriwai Books, 2018), 31–33; and G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), 7–10.

<sup>3</sup> Emanuel Pfoh helpfully defines biblical minimalism in this way: “[it is] an alternative and critical epistemological stand for both constructing knowledge about Israel’s past in the wider historical scenario of ancient Palestine. Minimalism also addresses the literary nature of the biblical texts and traditions in relation to historical references, attending to the intellectual context.” See Emanuel Pfoh, “On Biblical Minimalism,” *Annali di Storia dell’Esegesi* 38 (2021): 285. Maximalism, on the other hand, is generally defined by its critics rather than its proponents. Lester L. Grabbe, for example, described maximalism as “neo-fundamentalist approach to scholarship,” which he continued, “tends to cloak its defence of the Bible in the rhetoric of scholarship.” Later, he does offer a simple definition: “those who accept the testimony of the Bible unless it is falsified.” See Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 23–24. Under Grabbe’s definition, this dissertation would be maximalist.

<sup>4</sup> Halpern traces reductionist/minimalist approaches back to Spinoza, if not before, and he refers to the rise of these movements as a recurrent issue. “The information forthcoming from a welter of analyses has precipitated, therefore, closer attention to detail—a cause and a legacy of minimalism. But careful as we may be, sometimes kicking a stone is useful: no reference history stands by fifty-year-old facts and inferences; none will in future.” Baruch Halpern, “The Weight of the Past,” *BN* 193 (2022): 72. (Grammar and punctuation reproduced as it was in the text.)

the text may not be completely minimized, it is nonetheless treated as if it must be verified in order to be valid. On the other hand, positions which elevate the Scriptures and argue for the value and even primacy of the biblical texts will be referred to as “theological robust approaches” (TRA).<sup>5</sup> Scholars who lean toward this position are seeking to normalize the biblical texts, treating the narrative as historical unless the text itself indicates it is not historical or if there is undeniable evidence that the text is in error.

Proponents of RM positions treat the biblical text as just another artifact to be interpreted. Both moderates like Grabbe and self-professed minimalists, such as Lemche, fall along the spectrum of RM positions. As Ernst Knauf summarized the position, “data from literary sources have to be sifted as vigorously as data from archaeology; some are useful and some are not.”<sup>6</sup> Knauf believes that history can be written entirely on the basis of archaeological evidence, and he places a high primary value on that evidence. Any biblical records must be rigorously tested and cannot be accepted as factual. The vast majority of those who fall under the category of RM interpretations believe they are treating the text fairly, and one should be careful not to denigrate their research and evidence, even if their interpretation of that evidence may be open to question.

Not all who hold to the primacy of the archaeological evidence are as bold as Knauf. Grabbe, for example, argues that there must be a dialogue between archaeology and biblical studies.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, William Dever has argued that there are points of convergence between archaeology and texts. Although there are differences in their views, Dever summarizes his and

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<sup>5</sup> The term “theological realist” is a convenient shorthand, but it must be defined carefully, as theological realism has been the foundation for a diverse number of interpretational schemas. See the discussion below.

<sup>6</sup> Ernst A. Knauf, “From Archaeology to History, Bronze and Iron Ages with Special Regard to the Year 1200 BCE and the Tenth Century,” in *The Archaeology*, vol. 1 of *Israel in Transition: From Late Bronze II to Iron IIa (c. 1250–850 BCE)*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 491 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 82.

<sup>7</sup> Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 10–11.

Grabbe's views well. "The archaeological data will constitute our primary source. That is because these data alone can serve as an external witness to critique, complement, and correct the biblical texts with their limited potential as a source for reliable facts."<sup>8</sup> For Dever, the biblical texts are, at best, quasi-historical but they "contain" history.<sup>9</sup> While he believes there is historical core to the prophetic materials, even if he takes the composition to be postexilic, he nonetheless rejects any supernatural elements as myth or legend.<sup>10</sup>

This gets to the core of the RM position, which is the belief that the biblical text is not "real" history because it has been edited, redacted, amended, and transmitted. In the meantime, they view archaeological evidence as being untainted by process and therefore more objective. As Grabbe has put it, "the Bible is not being attacked or vilified, but it is, unfortunately, almost always a secondary source because of the long history of writing, compilation and editing.... Primary sources take precedent, and secondary sources normally need some sort of confirmation."<sup>11</sup> This statement reflects the presupposition that the biblical text cannot be considered a witness of the biblical events unless verified by archaeology or comparative study.

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<sup>8</sup> Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 24–27. Both Dever and Grabbe provide excellent summaries of their views and comparisons to other views. See Dever, *Beyond the Texts*, 35–36. Occasionally, Dever has been called a maximalist, but it is an overstatement. One might consider him a moderate. Dever is more conservative than Grabbe, but he confesses to more or less an agreement on the principal arguments. Indeed, Dever takes the "revisionists" like Lemche and Thompson to task for the way their approach "robs them [the biblical texts] of any truth or meaning." William G. Dever, "Can Archaeology Serve as a Tool in Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible?" in *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays on Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in Honor of R. E. Friedman on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Shawna Dolansky, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 226. It is true that Dever is much more open to traditional thought than the minimalists, but it is a difference of degrees. He still reduced the authority of the biblical text, especially the supernatural passages. See Megan B. Moore, and Brad E. Kelle, *Biblical History and Israel's Past: The Changing Study of the Bible and History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 34.

<sup>9</sup> William Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 97.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 101. Dever believes that there are elements of "everyday life" in the text which point to an earlier origin. This will be discussed more fully in the historical considerations below.

<sup>11</sup> Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 264. Also consider Harm van Grol's declaration, "biblical history is now the subject of historians (even if they are theologians), and they (we) tend to be straight in drawing a distinction between faith and fact, evidence and ideology." See Harm van Grol, "Three Hasidisms and Their Militant Ideologies: 1 and 2 Maccabees, Psalms 144 and 149," in Becking and Grabbe, *Between Evidence and Ideology*, 10.

For the person who accepts the Scriptures as authoritatively inspired by God, this option creates difficulty. To affirm divine inspiration while also minimizing the factual nature of the text that you hold to be inspired is problematic. To put it bluntly, the reader must divorce the message of the text from the veracity and historicity of the text. This creates an authority paradox. How can you draw theological significance from materials you know to be fabrications, legends or literary inventions? In this dilemma, even the most conservative reader must agree with Grabbe. One must choose.<sup>12</sup>

### Archaeological Evidence Must Be Interpreted

William Devers makes it plain that the interpretational of the archaeological record is art more than science.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, there is a great deal of variability in archaeological reconstruction. The remains do not tell us about the past. The archaeologist interprets the remains and creates an informed vision of the past. “Archaeology can only act upon the past as a contemporary (and therefore future-oriented) project that aims to recover, conserve, preserve what is in the process of being lost through decay, neglect, or whatever.”<sup>14</sup> Interpretation is necessary in archaeology because of the state of the sites and objects that are being studied, and the process of interpretation is complex. There is, however, the potential for interpretational bias, for bringing conclusions to the evidence. A pair of examples may suffice to make this point.

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<sup>12</sup> Webb attempts to resolve this by proposing a *via media* in which one must separate the portrayal of an event from the biblical author’s theological interpretation. See Webb, “The Rules of the Game,” 74–79.

<sup>13</sup> Dever, *Beyond the Texts*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Shanks, *The Archaeological Imagination* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2012), 133.

## Palace 1723 in Megiddo

To illustrate this, let us turn our attention to the case of Palace 1723 at Megiddo. In 1966, David Ussishkin classified Palace 1723 as a *bīt hilāni* (BH) structure.<sup>15</sup> These structures have been identified in a number of Assyrian and Aramaean sites, and they are distinguished by two unique features, first described by Henri Frankfort: (1) a palace with two long narrow rooms that are often subdivided into smaller spaces, both with the main axis parallel to the façade, and (2) a columned portico at the top of a flight of stairs.<sup>16</sup> The style was considered a dominant style because of the way the Assyrian kings described them, and so virtually every structure with a columned portico found in the Levant was classified as BH.<sup>17</sup> Noting the presence of pillared porches in the description of the Jerusalem palace of Solomon (1 Kgs 7:6–12), Ussishkin decided that Solomon’s preferred building style would have been BH, and since he identified Palace 1723 as Solomonic, he classified it as BH.<sup>18</sup> In doing so, however, Ussishkin chose to ignore the lateral entrance and instead relocated his reconstructed entrance to the “front” of the building, as he saw it, although there was no evidence of an entrance there.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the

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<sup>15</sup> David Ussishkin, “King Solomon’s Palace and Building 1723 in Megiddo,” *IEJ* 16 (1966): 176.

<sup>16</sup> Henri Frankfort, “The Origin of the *Bit Hilani*,” *Iraq* 14 (1952): 120; Jean Margueron, “Un *hilani* à Emar,” *AASOR* 44 (1977): 153–76.

<sup>17</sup> Johanna Tudeau, *Building in Assyria: A Philological Perspective* (Wesibaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019), 19.

<sup>18</sup> David Ussishkin, “King Solomon’s Palace,” 175–176.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 182–83. Contra Ussishkin, see Volkmar Fritz, “Paläste während der Bronze- und Eisenzeit in Palästina,” *ZDPV* 99 (1983): 1–42; Aharon Kempinski, *Megiddo: A City-State and Royal Centre in Northern Israel*, *Materialien zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden 40* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989), 162–63. Fritz noticed the issues with Ussishkin’s orientation of the entrance to force a BH structure.

structure was tiny compared to others BH structures, but Ussishkin appears to have assumed that the builders of the Megiddo structure reduced the size due to a lack of resources.<sup>20</sup>

It is now generally acknowledged that the structure is probably Omride, but it is certainly not Solomonic.<sup>21</sup> There are real questions as to whether it is BH, perhaps reflecting a regional building style that was not beholden to the BH style at all and had only superficial similarities.<sup>22</sup> Ussishkin's initial interpretation of the evidence on site was based on sound reasoning and available evidence. It was not a haphazard conclusion. His method and the thoroughness of its application was of the highest caliber. Still, his interpretation was colored by presuppositions which he brought to the site concerning both Solomonic building preferences and the extent of BH style structures.

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<sup>20</sup> For example, almost all of the BH structures at the site of Zincirli, which is generally considered the exemplar site for the BH style construction, have "throne rooms" that were larger than 12m x 6m (72m<sup>2</sup>) while Building 1723 is half the size at 8m x 4.5m (36m<sup>2</sup>). The portico is even smaller, just 5m wide compared to an average of 15.6m at Zircili. See David Kertai, "Architectural Assemblages: The Northwest Complex at Zincirli," *CAJ* 29 (2018): 85–86. One could argue that the Megiddo builders did not have access to comparable resources, but this is subjective. It has been argued, however, that the BH structures in the Levant tend to be smaller than their Mesopotamian counterparts, although the argument broadened the definition of BH so much that the type was described as "a house with a window or a portico, regardless of the presence of other elements. See Susan Dibo, "Nouvelles réflexions sur la question du *Bît-Hilâni* à travers les données Bâtiment I à Hama," in *Studies Eblaitica: Studies on the Archaeology, History, and Philology of Ancient Syria*, vol. 6, ed. Paolo Matthiae (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020), 89–110. For a helpful comparative table and additional discussion, see Gaku Takata, "Problems in the Chronology of the Iron IIA in Palestine and Research on Bît Hilâni," *Orient* 40 (2005): 97–100.

<sup>21</sup> Amihai Mazar, "The Debate over the Chronology of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant," in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text, and Science*, ed. Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham (London: Equinox, 2005), 15–30. There are some who protest that the site is older, see Norma Franklin, "Revealing Stratum V at Megiddo," *BASOR* 342 (2006): 107–8. The truth is that the structure was subsequently destroyed, their blocks reused in other construction, and stables built on the site. See Debrah O'Daniel Cantrell and Israel Finkelstein, "A Kingdom for a Horse: The Megiddo Stables and Eight Century Israel," *Megiddo IV: The 1998–2002 Seasons*, ed. Israel Finkelstein, David Ussishkin, and Baruch Halpern (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2006), 643–65.

<sup>22</sup> Ronny Reich, "Palaces and Residences in the Iron Age," in *The Architecture of Ancient Israel from the Prehistoric to the Persian Periods*, ed. Aharon Kempinski and Ronny Reich (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992), 202–22. See also Ilan Sharon and Anabel Zarzecki-Peleg, "Podium Structures with Lateral Access: Authority Ploys in Royal Architecture in the Iron Age Levant," in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever*, ed. Seymour Gitin, J. Edward Wright, and J. P. Dessel (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 145–68. Sharon and Zarzecki-Peleg propose an alternate building classification, but here the significance is that there may be a regional distinction.

The point here is not that archaeological reconstructions are inherently unreliable, but that they are, to some extent, generally subjective. They should not be treated as absolute. Often, however, they are presented with a certainty that can go beyond the evidence. This is true especially if one compares the certainty employed when contrasting the interpretation of the evidence with the biblical text. Intentional or not, there is a tendency to exclude alternative reconstructions, even when there are multiple, viable theories.

### **Population Increase in Jerusalem after the Fall of Samaria?**

There is little doubt that Jerusalem was a large, relatively densely populated urban site by the end of the eighth century and early seventh century BCE.<sup>23</sup> Given that there are few signs of a significant population prior to this period, the means of the population increase has been a matter of debate in recent times. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman have published several works describing a “great leap forward” in the population and activity in and around Jerusalem after the fall of Samaria.<sup>24</sup> They maintain that Jerusalem was a small urban site lacking the hallmarks of state apparatus—literacy and a centralized economy—until the late eighth century. Suddenly, at least in terms of archaeological evidence, Jerusalem spread out significantly, increasing in size from ca. 2 hectares to over 60 hectares, with the booming population living in

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<sup>23</sup> For discussion of the finds on the western hill, especially Avigad’s wall and accompanying signs of occupation, see Avraham Faust, “On Jerusalem’s Expansion during the Iron Age II,” in *Exploring the Narrative: Jerusalem and Jordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages*, ed. Eveline van der Steen, Jeannette Boertien, and Noor Mulder-Hymans, LHBOTS 583 (London: T & T Clark, 2013), 256–85.

<sup>24</sup> Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty: Hezekiah, the Remaking of Judah, and the Rise of the Pan-Israelite Ideology,” *SJOT* 30 (2006): 259–85. This article is more or less an expansion of ideas presented in Magen Broshi, “The Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh,” *IEJ* 24 (1974): 21–26. The two also worked together on the idea in Magen Broshi and Israel Finkelstein, “The Population of Palestine in Iron Age II,” *BASOR* 287 (1992): 47–60. See also the earlier mention in Israel Finkelstein and Neil Ashur Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 243.

a strongly fortified city.<sup>25</sup> Inhabited sites in the southern highlands increased from less than twenty to over one hundred by the late eighth century BCE.<sup>26</sup> Also, monumental inscriptions such as the Siloam tunnel inscription and mass-produced pottery, including *lmlk* jars and other texts indicative of bureaucratic activity began to appear.<sup>27</sup>

The theory that Finkelstein and Silberman forwarded seems completely reasonable, based on tangible, “real” history from the archaeological record. Before their work, it was assumed that if such an influx of inhabitants did occur, it was a gradual process beginning in the early eighth century BCE.<sup>28</sup> They demonstrated that such a sudden increase was evidence not of a gradual movement but of a sudden swelling, attributable to the presence of a large refugee population which blended with the existing population in a relatively short time, roughly the last quarter of the eighth century BCE. They see the sudden appearance of stone-cut oil presses, common to ninth century BCE Samaria, in the Shephelah as a sign of northern migration rather than

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<sup>25</sup> Nadav Na‘aman, “The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem’s Political Position in the Tenth Century BCE,” *BASOR* 304 (1996): 17-27; Avi Ofer, “‘All the Hill Country of Judah’: From a Settlement Fringe to a Prosperous Monarchy,” in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, eds. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na‘aman (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1994), 92-121; Israel Finkelstein, “The Rise of Jerusalem and Judah: The Missing Link,” *Levant* 33 (2001): 105-15; Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 54-60; Hillel Geva, “Western Jerusalem at the End of the First Temple Period in Light of the Excavations in the Jewish Quarter,” in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period*, ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew, SBL Symposium Series 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 183-208.

<sup>26</sup> Israel Finkelstein, “The Archaeology of the Days of Manasseh,” in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King*, ed. Michael D. Cogan, J. Cheryl Exum, and Lawrence E. Stagers (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 174-75, written at least partially in response to Ofer, “All the Hill Country of Judah,” 104-5.

<sup>27</sup> Finkelstein and Silberman, “Temple and Dynasty,” 264.

<sup>28</sup> For a summary of the works expressing this view, see Andrew G. Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archaeology in the Chronicler’s Account of Hezekiah*, *ABS* 4 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 64-69. Vaughn based his analysis on Yosef Garfinkel, “The Distribution of the ‘Identical Seal Impressions’ and the Settlement Pattern in Judah on the Eve of Sennacherib’s Campaign,” *Cathedra* 32 (1984): 35-53 (Hebrew); Yosef Garfinkel, “A Hierarchic Pattern in the Private Seal-Impressions on the *lmlk* Jar-Handles,” *Eretz Israel* 18 (1985): 108-15 (Hebrew). Garfinkel has since contributed another volume to the discussion. Yosef Garfinkel, “Development of the Settlement Patterns of the Kingdom of Judah from Its Establishment until the Destruction of the First Temple,” *Cathedra* 143 (2012): 7-44 (Hebrew).

commerce.<sup>29</sup> The outlying Judahite sites were ravaged by the Assyrians in the waning years of the eighth century BCE, and then northern immigrants resettled them with their distinctive tools, joining the Judahite economy.

Nadav Na'aman reconstructs the population increase very differently. While he agrees with Finkelstein and Silberman on the population increase, he sees it not as the result of northern immigration but of Assyrian aggression in the outlying areas controlled by Judah, driving the rural population to the city.<sup>30</sup> In answer to Finkelstein and Silberman's theory, he points out that there is a continuity of pottery usage in the cities which they believe were populated by immigrants. The Judahite city of Ekron had a similar population "leap" in the early seventh century BCE, with the populated area multiplying by a factor of six. New residential and industrial buildings were built rapidly in the area during this time, indicating massive growth. Unlike the situation in Jerusalem, however, there are external sources that speak to the growth. In the Assyrian textual record, Sennacherib described the city as a Hebrew fortress.<sup>31</sup> Confirmation of this seems to have presented itself in the form of artifacts excavated from the lower city.<sup>32</sup>

There are similarities between the two proposals. Both agree with the increase of Jerusalem. Both see it as a result of Assyrian pressure in the eighth century BCE. Indeed, there are good reasons to accept both proposed models. It has to be admitted though that they paint

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<sup>29</sup> Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman, "The Judahite Shephelah in the Late 8th and Early 7th Centuries BCE," *Tel Aviv* 31 (2004): 73–75. To be fair, they note that there are none of these oil presses found in the Judahite highlands, but they argue this was because the state-organized olive oil industry was centered in the Shephelah.

<sup>30</sup> Nadav Na'aman, "When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah's Premier City in the Eighth–Seventh Centuries BCE," *BASOR* 347 (2007): 21–56; Nadav Na'aman, "The Growth and Development of Judah and Jerusalem in the Eighth Century BCE: A Rejoinder," *RB* 116 (2009): 331–35.

<sup>31</sup> Nadav Na'aman, "Sennacherib's 'Letter to God' on his Campaign to Judah," *BASOR* 214 (1974): 26–28. See lines 14–16, 29.

<sup>32</sup> David Ussishkin, "The Fortifications of Philistine Ekron," *IEJ* 55 (2005): 35–65.

very different pictures of the relationship of the Hebrew states. If Finkelstein and Silberman are correct, then such an influx of immigrants not only informs the biblical narrative of Hezekiah's preparations for the Assyrian siege in 701 BCE but also provides for the possibility of a Yahwistic contingent in the north, which some scholars believe could have included the northern prophetic schools. On the other hand, Na'aman's argument is focused more on the Judahite highlands and sees the city perhaps only growing after these northern immigrants moved to the countryside. Again, the point here is not to criticize either approach. Both are valid explorations. The point is to demonstrate that socio-historical evidence tends to be presented with interpretation deeply integrated with the evidence.

#### Archaeological Evidence has Gaps

Archaeological evidence is fragmentary, and often must be reconstructed using inference. Gaps in the record do not only exist, but they often exceed concrete material finds. The archaeologist must extrapolate from material remains to fill in these gaps. There is a level of imagination required in doing this, and no matter how confidently a finding may be reported, there is a certain measure of subjectivity involved in its presentation.

As a consideration of this topic, let us look at the typical Israelite dwelling, the four-room house. The basic plan of this structure is a long building with four primary spaces which could be subdivided as necessary. The construction appears in Iron Age I, with the earliest sites found at Tel Masos, 'Izbet Sartah, and Tell Qasile.<sup>33</sup> By Iron Age II it was the most common residential structure across the southern Levant. The style is found in urban settings, where they sometimes were built right up against the city's casemate walls, as well as rural settings, where the wealthy

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<sup>33</sup> Amihai Mazar, *10,000–586 BCE*, vol. 1 of *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 486–89.

homes were larger and of finer materials but of the same basic layout as the poorer farmers.<sup>34</sup>

Faust nicely summarizes the ubiquitous presence of the four-room house: “in no other period in the history of the region was there such great uniformity in the architecture of residential houses, and the building types common in other periods were never so uniform.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, a discussion of the four-room house is a discussion of one of the best known features of Israelite society in Iron Age II.<sup>36</sup>

While the four-room house is known throughout the region, there is little agreement as to the function of the individual spaces. Since roofing materials do not survive, early writers believed the central space of these houses was an open courtyard. Now, there is an assumption that the space was roofed as the rest of the house was. This shift was prompted by the discovery of stone staircases in some of the buildings, leading to the conclusion that where stone staircases

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<sup>34</sup> The four-room house has been discussed at length. A short bibliography would include Shlomo Bunimovitz and Avraham Faust, “Ideology in Stone: Understanding the Four Room House,” *BAR* 28.4 (2002): 32–41; Shlomo Bunimovitz and Avraham Faust, “Building Identity: The Four-Room House and the Israelite Mind,” in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina of Archaeological Research and American Schools of Oriental Research, Jerusalem, May 29/31, 2000*, ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 411–24; Volkmar Fritz, *The City in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 142; Yigal Shiloh, “The Four-Room House: Its Situation and Function in the Israelite City,” *IEJ* 20 (1970): 180–90; Yigal Shiloh, “The Casemate Wall, the Four Room House, and the Early Planning in the Israelite City,” *BASOR* 268 (1987): 3–15; and Lawrence E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35.

<sup>35</sup> Abraham Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 215.

<sup>36</sup> Unsurprisingly, the association of the four-room house with the Israelites has been challenged by proponents of low chronology and social archaeology. Ahlstrom refers to an Israelite origin as “wishful thinking.” See Gösta W. Ahlstrom, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Paleolithic Period to Alexander’s Conquest* JSOTSup 146 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 339–40. Israel Finkelstein writes, “this layout should be attributed to socio-economic characteristics of the inhabitants rather than to any specific ethnicity.” See Israel Finkelstein, “Ethnicity and the Origin of the Iron Age I Settlers in the Highlands of Canaan: Can the Real Israel Stand Up?” *BA* 59 (1996): 204–5. 198–212. Faust deftly handles these protests, pointing out that the handful of “non-Israelite” four-room houses that Ahlstrom cites either do not fit the four-room layout or are located in sites that the biblical text places Israelites anyway. See Avraham Faust, “The Four Room House: Embodying the Iron Age Israelite Identity,” *NEA* 66 (2003): 29–30. 22–31. One additional aspect is worth considering. Although the four-room house gradually spread over the Levant from the eleventh to eighth centuries BCE, it disappeared rapidly in the sixth century BCE and did not reappear during the Persian Period. If this was not an Israelite-specific style, why did it disappear during the exilic period? See Ephraim Stern, *The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods (732–332 BCE)*, vol. 3 of *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 470–79; and Samuel R. Wolff, “Mortuary Practices in the Persian Period of the Levant,” *NEA* 65 (2002): 132–36.

are not evident, wood ladders or stairs may have been used to reach a second story.<sup>37</sup> Mazar admits that there was no consensus on the topic when he was writing, and the situation has not been resolved.<sup>38</sup> Faust likewise presents likely reconstructions while noting that there is no consensus as to how the houses would have appeared.<sup>39</sup>

An illustration of the different ways these gaps might be filled in can be found in two recent works on the K8 House at Tell Halif. In her monograph *Food in Ancient Judah*, Cynthia Shafer-Elliott produced a description of this particular house.<sup>40</sup> At nearly the same time and utilizing the same available data, another group of archaeologists were doing their own reconstruction of the same house although their findings were published years later.<sup>41</sup> The two interpretations differ on a number of points. Schafer-Elliott identified a staircase in the house, which turned out to be part of a later phase of construction.<sup>42</sup> She interpreted a particular room as a stable because of the flagstone floors, but Oksuz, Hardin, and Wilson point out that it would be odd indeed for a stable to be situated right next to a room for food service, which both parties agree was the case for the next room.<sup>43</sup> At points, Shafer-Elliott reconstructed other room uses which did not reflect material remains later found in those rooms. Microartefacts in particular led to different interpretations. Indeed, in a different article, Hardin notes that without the

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<sup>37</sup> Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society*, 216. Faust provides a discussion of the various scholars who presented the different positions on these matters.

<sup>38</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 488.

<sup>39</sup> Faust, "The Four Room House," 22–31.

<sup>40</sup> Cynthia Shafer-Elliott, *Food in Ancient Judah: Domestic Cooking in the Time of the Hebrew Bible*, BibleWorld (New York: Routledge, 2013), 59–116.

<sup>41</sup> Latif Oksuz, James W. Hardin, and Jared Wilson, "The K8 House: A Domestic Space from the Iron Age II at Tell Halif, Israel," *PEQ* 151 (2019): 218–244.

<sup>42</sup> Shafer-Elliott, *Food in Ancient Judah*, 80; Oksuz, Hardin, and Wilson, "The K8 House," 224.

<sup>43</sup> Shafer-Elliott, *Food in Ancient Judah*, 81; Oksuz, Hardin, and Wilson, "The K8 House," 224–25.

microartefact evidence, it would be difficult to determine the function of these particular rooms.<sup>44</sup>

All of this points to an understanding that archaeological evidence not only has to be interpreted, but also that those interpretations fill in gaps. This is a necessary process, and it is one that is constantly evolving as new disciplines and scientific methods emerge. Pioneers like William Albright would be stunned today to see the technological tools available to the modern archaeologist. The same may be said in half a century when technology has exceeded the parameters and level of precision embraced in digs that are currently ongoing. Again, filling in such gaps is an important part of reporting the socio-historical evidence, and the work is highly specialized. It is enough to state, however, that gaps do exist, and the reporting of the evidence is rarely, if ever as concrete as the language often used to describe it.

#### Section Summary

The main argument here is not that archaeological evidence is unreliable or inherently false. There is a great deal that can be extracted from the record, and archaeology is a demanding field with many excellent scholars doing astounding work. Still, it must be said that there is a certain amount of imaginative reconstruction and filling in the gaps with inference involved in reporting evidence. The absence of complete remains coupled with the multiplicity of approaches to reconstruction inevitably will result in varied reconstruction and interpretation. The cases of Palace 1723 at Megiddo and the theories of population increase in Jerusalem demonstrate that there is a certain amount of interpretation involved in any assertion made from the archaeological record. The four-room house offers an illustration of the reality of gaps in the

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<sup>44</sup> James W. Hardin, "Understanding Domestic Space: An Example from Iron Age Tel Halif," *NEA* 67 (2004): 75.

archaeological record, gaps which can be bridged through inference and consensus but nevertheless cannot be absolutely resolved. There is at least as much opportunity for bias to influence the subjective aspects of archaeology as there are in textual studies.

In a chapter concerned with theology, it may seem strange to devote so much space to acknowledging these aspects of archaeological evidence, but this discussion informs the response to the assertion that archaeological evidence must be given primacy because it is “real” history. Archaeological evidence as presented is not wholly objective and free of the potential for interpretational bias. The recreations from archaeological evidence can be very helpful in building an understanding of the ancient world, but these recreations are still the work of the imagination of the modern interpreter.

### **Developing a Theologically Robust Approach**

In a relatively recent volume, Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III argued for a profound reexamination of our thinking in terms of biblical history. These authors asked “what sense does it make in our pursuit of knowledge of Israel’s past, therefore, to adopt the kind of principled distrust of major sections of, or even the totality of, the Old Testament that is often evidence in the histories of Israel of the past two hundred years?”<sup>45</sup> In these sentiments, they somewhat echo the call of G. Ernest Wright who said, “to assume that it makes no difference whether [the biblical events] are facts or not is simply to destroy the whole basis of the faith. Or even to infer that these facts, if they are such, are irrelevant, would to the Biblical mind be a form of faithlessness or harlotry.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 54. Grabbe calls these authors, “true maximalists, that is, those who accept the testimony of the Bible unless it be falsified.” See Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 24.

<sup>46</sup> G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 8 (London: SCM Press, 1952), 126–27.

### The Supernatural as Realistic History

To read the biblical texts and exclude the supernatural and miraculous is to read them in such a way that would have been alien to the original historical context. Within the theology of the authors, supernatural events and miracles were not literary devices. Their worldview was fundamentally supernatural in its character, deriving all identity from the intervention of their God. Tremper Longman has referred to the Hebrew presentation of their history in the Scriptures as “theological history.”<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Mark Gignilliat has argued that text can be read faithfully only when it is read within its own theological framework.<sup>48</sup> In other words, if the biblical text includes elements, such as the supernatural acts of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, the modern reader must assume that these acts were within the theological framework of the author. To interpret the text and treat these acts as less than the rest of the text would not be reading the text faithfully. The distance of time and culture makes it difficult to fully recreate the theological stream of the ancient Hebrews, but several core tenets help us approximate their theological perception in the broadest sense.

#### **Tenet 1: God is a Necessary Being in the Biblical Worldview**

*Articulation.* The Bible is meaningless if there does not exist a necessary being who is God. In his consideration of the *shema* (Deut 6:4–5), theologian R. W. L. Moberly notes that the appearance of such a clear declaration of dependence upon YHWH in Deuteronomy, which he calls “the Old Testament’s most systematic account of the relationship between YHWH and

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<sup>47</sup> Tremper Longman, III, *Introducing the Old Testament: A Short Guide to Its History and Message* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 82–83.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Gignilliat, “Theological Exegesis as ‘Exegetical Showing’: A Case of Isaiah’s Figural Potentiality,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (2010): 217–32.

Israel, whose perspectives inform substantial parts of the histories and the prophetic literature,”<sup>49</sup> indicates that the Hebrew worldview was one which embraced the necessity of God’s existence, what has recently been labeled as “theological realism” (TR).<sup>50</sup> To date, the label of theological realism has been employed mostly in Christian theology without too much concern about the thinking of the Hebrew authors. Put another way, the argument is used to defend the veracity of the New Testament and the New Testament authors’ view of the Old Testament. It has not been employed extensively in defense of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is applicable here, however, due to the propensity of RM scholarship to strip away and dissect the text to determine the “true” version of the narrative, creates what Maier called “the diastasis between truth and reality.”<sup>51</sup> This tendency ignores this fundamental element of the original authors’ theology.

*Biblical Precedent.* As previously mentioned, the *shema* articulates this theological realism: “the LORD your God is one” (Deut 6:4). This statement presupposes the absolute existence of the Israelite God. The necessity of God as creator is present in the creation epics (Gen 1–2). At times, this necessity is implicit in the narrative, as in the case of the encounter

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<sup>49</sup> R. W. L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 8.

<sup>50</sup> Realism is the belief that objects exist independently of observation. Theological realism therefore is the belief in the independent or necessary existence of God, despite the empirical observability of his existence. As a corollary of this, it also holds that God is knowable in creation. The specifics of the argument are nuanced. For a more complete discussion of the definition, see Thomas F. Torrance, “Theological Realism,” in *The Philosophical Frontiers of Christian Theology: Essays Presented to D. M. MacKinnon*, ed. Brian Hebblethwaite and Stewart Sutherland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 169–96; Janet Martin Soskice, “Theological Realism,” in *The Rationality of Religious Belief: Essays in Honour of Basil Mitchell*, ed. William J. Abraham and Steven W. Holtzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 105–19; Sue Patterson, *Realistic Christianity in a Postmodern Age*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12–32. Theological realism is not without its critics. Andrew Moore, for example, argues it is too imprecise for the Christian believer because it is grounded in the philosophy of science rather than God’s self-revelation in Christ. This is a valid critique, but it is a Christian one, which does not directly speak to the realism of the Hebrew Scriptures. See Andrew Moore, *Realism and Christian Faith: God, Grammar, and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21–40.

<sup>51</sup> Gerhard Maier, “Truth and Reality in the Historical Understanding of the Old Testament,” in *Israel’s Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography*, ed. V. Phillips Long, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 196.

with Naaman the Aramaean (2 Kgs 5).<sup>52</sup> In the narrative, the kings of both Israel and Aram are relegated to minor roles. Even the prophet Elisha is somewhat veiled in the narrative, never directly addressing Naaman. According to Moberly, “it is this combination of the universal with the particular, of God and a privileged human context for knowledge of God, that is so distinctive of the Bible. It is foundationally present in the Old Testament.”<sup>53</sup> The presence and power of YHWH is manifest in the miraculous healing through the almost absurd order Elisha gives to Naaman, but without YHWH’s reality, the healing would not have occurred in any fashion. Again, Moberly emphasizes that for the ancient Israelites, it was not a matter of choosing what form of belief they might embrace—polytheism, monotheism, atheism, or some other arrangement. God’s existence is the definitive mystery at the core of the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>54</sup>

In his essay, Maier emphasizes two peculiarities of Israel’s attitude toward history which lend to seeing their works as “true history.” First is Israel’s emphasis on history as the work of one God, not the acts of great men or multiple gods. This kind of unifying divine attribution *could* be the result of editing, but the diversity of texts in Israel’s historical record is vast. Second, he remarks that “the Hebrew root word *zākar* [[remember]] expresses a spiritual-personal bond that includes an active component—for example, the obedience of a thinking man. This bond arises from the historically experienced care of God.”<sup>55</sup> At various points, the invocation to “remember” that YHWH is present is a call to awareness of his necessity, of his

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<sup>52</sup> This fascinating exploration of YHWH’s necessity not just to Israel but to all nations is the subject of a chapter in R. W. L. Moberly, *The God of the Old Testament: Encountering the Divine in Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 165–202.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>54</sup> Moberly, *Old Testament Theology*, 40.

<sup>55</sup> Maier, “Truth and Reality,” 202.

reality in the events of life (Exo 3:15; Isa 26:8; Hosea 12:6), or in one case, the end of remembrance in death (Ps 6:6).

God is therefore necessary in the biblical worldview. Since biblical history records the remembrance of a *long* history of a single God's participation in the lives of a covenant people, one must at least allow for the possibility that the memories would not have been subject to "normal" conditions. In other words, Maier takes the position that Israel's history is unique. It was more carefully guarded and required exactitude, not just verisimilitude, because of their adherence to theological realism.<sup>56</sup>

## **Tenet 2: Biblical Literature as Fiction Does not Reflect This View of God**

*Articulation.* One of the core arguments of the minimalists and reductionists is that story need not be historical in order to be impactful and true. They often resort to describing the text as "realistic narrative" while resisting the idea that the world of the narrative has anything but a tangential relationship to the real history.<sup>57</sup> Longman argues that if the biblical "stories" did not happen, then the message is meaningless. If, for example, the Exodus did not occur, how can it teach a lesson about God saving his people? The very idea of God saving his people who are living in and making history must be grounded in history in order to be valid.<sup>58</sup> A fictional story which illustrates a moral point, such as a parable, need not be historical; but a narrative upon which a people are expected to build their entire worldview and indeed *have* built their worldview in the case of the ancient Israelites, needs to be true.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>57</sup> Iain W. Provan, *1 & 2 Kings*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 19.

<sup>58</sup> Tremper Longman, III, "History and Old Testament Interpretation," in *Hearing the Old Testament: Listening for God's Address*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew and David J. H. Beldman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 98.

Ancient people were capable of discerning whether stories were factual or not. They were also capable of discerning the difference between a literary structure and a historical fact. While there might not be many examples of this preserved in the biblical text, it is still observable in the ancient world. As Michael Graves demonstrates, ancient thinkers in both Judaism and Christianity were not afraid to raise critical questions about the biblical text.<sup>59</sup> Whether their protests were well-founded or not, the capacity of people in every age to discern fact from fiction should be accepted *a priori*. Assuming that the ancient readers of the biblical texts were incapable of this discernment or disinterested in whether their narratives concerning their God were factual is, to put it bluntly, condescending toward them.

*Scriptural Precedent.* Every genre of biblical text emphasizes truth over falsehood. At the foundation of this principle is the command against bearing false witness (Exod 20:16). The narrative of Balaam ends with Balaam blessing the people of Israel and when challenged he replies, “Must I not take care to speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?” (Num 23:12). Truth is lifted up as a virtue (Ps 15:2; Prov 12:7). In the Torah, there are specific commands against false prophets (Deut 13:1–5). The Deuteronomy prophetic text assumes that false prophets are capable of signs and wonders, a theme picked up from the Exodus narrative (Exod 7:8–13). In fact, the text even places Moses’s words in the mouths of the false prophets (see Exod 8:1, 10:7). Discerning between false and true prophets is an exercise of belief (Deut 6:4–5), but it is necessary for faithfulness to YHWH. The rebellion (סרה) of following false gods must be met with repentance (שוב), a theme present throughout the Book of Kings (1 Kgs 8:47–48, 13:33).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Michael Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture: What the Early Church Can Teach Us* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 75–79.

<sup>60</sup> See Paul E. Dion, “Deuteronomy 13: The Suppression of Alien Religious Propaganda in Israel during the Late Monarchical Era,” in *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Deborah W. Hobson,

### Tenet 3: God Should Be Seen as Active in Israel's History

*Articulation:* “To treat the Bible as a source—as evidence for some natural phenomenon “behind” it—is to deflect attention away from the texts are saying (as testimony) in favor of a hypothetical reconstruction of ‘what actually happened’.”<sup>61</sup> Even if RM scholars allow that the biblical authors held a realist view of God, they often argue that there is no evidence of God engaged in the present in this way, and therefore there is no reason to argue that he was so engaged in Israel's history. They divorce the thinking of the biblical historians from the events they record, explicitly distrusting the perception and integrity of the biblical authors. It also demeans the original audience and treats them like gullible dupes willing to accept fiction as the basis for their cultural understanding. Indeed, the fundamental notion that must be accepted in such a view is that some sort of powerful class, whether priests or literati or some other group, presented a history which included supernatural elements to support their own ideology.<sup>62</sup>

Accepting that the authors of the Hebrews Scriptures adhered to a theological realism then logically leads to the assertion that there will be a present involvement of God in the history of the Israelite people. As Tremper Longman recently put it, “to take the biblical accounts seriously, accounts that describe God's intervention in history, one needs to think there is a God who can so intervene.”<sup>63</sup> In harmony with Longman, Paul R. House presented four reasons one must read the supernatural in the Book of Kings as historical. (1) If God is the creator of the

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JSOTSup 124 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 147–216. Dion outlines quite a bit of now-neglected scholarship on the preexilic, prophetic nature of Deuteronomy. He also notes the relationship of chapter 13 with chapter 17, which some scribes placed together (as in the Temple Scroll).

<sup>61</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 17.

<sup>62</sup> Tremper Longman, III, *Confronting Old Testament Controversies: Pressing Questions about Evolution, Sexuality, History, and Violence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019), 61.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

heavens and the earth, then he controls and safeguards the natural order. (2) As creator and sustainer of nature, God is able to control any changes in nature caused by a miracle. (3) Supernatural events which advance the well-being of God's chosen people would be in keeping with his nature. (4) Scripture indicates that miracles occur in the lives and history of people who are presented in realistic terms. He concludes, "one might not accept that they actually happened but must do so for reasons based on something other than historical, literary, or theological data."<sup>64</sup>

*Scriptural Precedent:* Again, the testimony of the biblical authors bears this out. There is an expectation in the biblical worldview of God's active involvement. The psalmist anticipates God's involvement in his crisis (Ps 13:1–2, 35:17, 90:13). The prophets anticipate the judgment of God upon the peoples of the earth (Isa 19:2; Habb 1:2). Despite the apparent silence of God at times, there was a belief that he would indeed act. Indeed, God's hearing of the Israelite's pleas and his response are fundamental aspects of the Exodus narrative (Exod 3:7–10). God's activity is seen as both sustaining the natural order and violating it in supernatural acts and miracles.

### **Section Summary**

If the mindset of the biblical author and audience included the supernatural, active work of God in history, then excluding the supernatural when interpreting the text would be a violation of the author's intent and the original perception. While advances in science and technology have certainly improved many aspects of society, there is a tendency to believe that since our society is so advanced, others must necessarily have been primitive or inferior. This is especially true in interpretation of the supernatural or "irrational" in the biblical text. Rather than discarding these

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<sup>64</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 8 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 53–54.

biblical materials, the reader should engage them with the intent to understand and value the thinking of those who composed them. Thus, Longman's perspective must be taken seriously. This does not, however, mean that we disengage the critical aspects of perception. Abandoning the critical engagement of the text is no more profitable than elevating it above the text in the first place.

#### The Need for Critical Engagement in the Historical Realities of Scripture

The trend among some of those who wish to preserve the biblical text is to separate it from history, treating it solely as literature. Although these efforts are well-intentioned, as Provan points out, "it offers the prospect of insulating both text and reader against the chilly winds of historical inquiry" but it denies the very character of the text. He argues that (1) texts like the Book of Kings have historiographical intent which should not be ignored, and (2) drawing such a line is essentially surrendering the domain of history to RM advocates.<sup>65</sup>

It is perhaps ill-advised to allow reductionist thought to interpret the historical data in isolation from the text. As has been demonstrated, those RM views are subject to interpretational bias which must be balanced in order for fair interpretation of the text to emerge. If the reader is to incorporate historical evidence with the biblical record, it is necessary to do so critically. To that end Kevin Vanhoozer has articulated three warnings about the use of the term "theological" when describing the process of reading the biblical texts. These warnings pertain to RM approaches, with their inherently low theological views, as well as those pursuing a more theologically robust approach.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Provan, *1 & 2 Kings*, 20.

<sup>66</sup> Vanhoozer, *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 16.

### **Danger 1: Imposition of an External Theological System onto the Biblical Text**

A sound theological reading is not a reading from a preexisting theological dogma. Vanhoozer freely admits that all readers bring their own matrix of biases and beliefs to the text, and one should not be quick to dismiss Robert Carroll's warning that there can be "an ecclesiastical captivity of the Bible."<sup>67</sup> Of course, one could also argue that the Scriptures can be held in academic or political or epistemological captivity as well. The tendency to impose our theology upon the text exists along the entire spectrum of beliefs, from the fundamentalist to the atheist and everyone in between. Theological reading means a reading of the text which strives to understand the text from within the theological beliefs of the author and receiving audience, rather than our own beliefs. It is assumed that the authors express enough of this shared theology to inform the modern reader of their beliefs, explicitly or implicitly.

Take for example, Richard Briggs' wide-ranging discussion of the words of the Rabshakeh before the walls of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:19–25). Right up front, Briggs casts doubt on the argument that this passage preserves an exact transcription of the Rabshakeh's words. "It is one thing to suppose that this speech had some historical backing, and another to suppose that its delivery in the midst of fraught negotiations ... would have enabled some form of memorization of transcription of the actual words."<sup>68</sup> What Briggs proposes is that imposing a modern historical view, which has been conditioned by the ability to make exact audio recordings or at least transcribe text using assorted disciplines such as shorthand or technology like the typewriter

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<sup>67</sup> Robert Carroll, *Wolf in the Sheepfold: The Bible as a Problem for Christians* (London: SPCK, 1991), xi. To this might be added, with some qualifications, the tendency to project Christian theology back into the Hebrew Scriptures. This was Gerhard von Rad's concern as he approached the Hebrew Scriptures, and he attempted to envision an Old Testament theology in which any Christological anticipations in the Hebrew Scriptures. See Gerhard von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann, trans. John Bright (Atlanta: John Knox, 1963), 36.

<sup>68</sup> Richard S. Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 76.

or computer, would not reflect the worldview or theological purposes of the original author. Even if the text is “historically constrained,” it nonetheless preserves a vital moment which can be trusted to articulate the intent of the author to present the situation.<sup>69</sup>

Briggs calls the modern reader to *trust* the text’s author to have reported the event faithfully in his own context. As Nelson puts it, “the major interpretive problem with this narrative is that most of its modern readers will simply be unable to believe that it actually happened.”<sup>70</sup> The tendency among RM commentators is to argue that since it is hard to believe it happened, it most likely did not happen unless one can find some kind of historical verification. The theological system that is applied is a limited, reduced one. On the other hand, there may be those who say it not only happened, but happened *exactly* as described, including a verbatim reproduction of the actual dialogue in its entirety. This other extreme is just as dangerous as the RM position.

One important step in preventing the imposition of this external theological system is to embrace and acknowledge the presuppositions we bring to the text. As the New Testament scholar Ben Meyer puts it, “the way to objectivity is through authentic subjectivity.”<sup>71</sup> This involves not only the admission of one’s own presuppositions as well as acknowledgement of the presuppositions of secondary sources, but also the assumption that the biblical text itself already has meaning encoded in it, giving the reader access to a real past. Put in the context of Old Testament studies, one might consider why there is a bias against anything in Scripture which

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>70</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 242.

<sup>71</sup> Ben F. Meyer, *Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Hermeneutics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1994), 4. CR is mostly a New Testament discipline. To the author’s knowledge, it has not been employed on a large scale in Old Testament studies.

lacks “non-biblical control evidence,” as Miller and Hayes put it.<sup>72</sup> These two writers proceed to reject the historicity of much of the early history of Israel based upon their criteria for control evidence, but as Provan, Long, and Longman point out, once one goes down that road uncritically, it results in a “principled suspicion of the whole Old Testament in respect of historical work.”<sup>73</sup>

## **Danger 2: Application of a General Hermeneutic to the Biblical Text**

Hermeneutics is the art of reading and interpreting a text. What Vanhoozer has in mind here is the idea that the biblical texts should not be read as if they can be interpreted “like any other book.”<sup>74</sup> This is not to say that the biblical texts do not utilize idioms, conventions, and concepts from their contemporary world. It is to say, however, that when approaching the Scriptures, we must do so with a theological hermeneutic.<sup>75</sup> First, one should not read the biblical texts as if they are not unique in their character and language from human literature. The biblical texts speak to the character of the living God, as described earlier in this text. Second, however, one cannot read the Hebrew Scriptures in the same way that the New Testament is read. Indeed, the genres and types within the Hebrew Scriptures are varied. The canon of Scripture has a number of voices. Speaking of a number of crises in the contemporary church, Seitz has written, “our crisis has to do with the failure to know how to use the OT theologically and doctrinally.

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<sup>72</sup> J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 74.

<sup>73</sup> Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 55.

<sup>74</sup> Vanhoozer, *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> For full length treatments of a theological hermeneutic, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in this Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, Landmark in Christian Scholarship (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, repr. 2009); Francis Watson, *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Christopher R. Seitz, *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004).

Our crisis has to do with not knowing how to deal in a balanced and appropriate way with the dual voice of Christian Scripture.<sup>76</sup> Our approach to Scripture is inevitably informed by our theology, but we must be cautious and read the texts as they are, in their own unique setting and style. Our theological hermeneutic must incorporate the best of all disciplines, theological and secular, but we must think critically enough to understand their role as tools rather than as boundaries.<sup>77</sup>

### **Danger 3: Treating the Biblical Text as a Natural Work**

The approach Miller and Hayes employ is the treatment of the Scriptures as a natural work, one which has no supernatural aspect to its creation.<sup>78</sup> This is the type of criticism which “brackets out a consideration of divine action,” as Vanhoozer puts it.<sup>79</sup> On the other hand, a theological reading of the biblical text employs the tools of the various forms of biblical criticism but does not grant them autonomy or magisterial function.<sup>80</sup> In a theologically robust context, the art and science of interpretation must partner with the theological rather than supersede it. Not only must we, as Dale Martin put it, “dethrone it [the historical-critical method] as the only or

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<sup>76</sup> Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 181.

<sup>77</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew, “Uncharted Waters: Philosophy, Theology, and the Crisis in Biblical Interpretation,” in *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, The Scripture and Hermeneutic Series 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 26–28. Technically, TR does not allow for the existence of truly “secular” knowledge and reprioritizes all knowledge as theological interpretation. Such a distinction is vital in the broader discussion of TR, but not fully relevant here, and so these disciplines are here still referred to as “secular.”

<sup>78</sup> Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 74.

<sup>79</sup> Vanhoozer, *Theological Interpretation*, 16. Elsewhere Provan describes the obsession with stripping away everything except what can be verified with “control evidence” as convincing yourself that history is supposed to be dispassionate and “presuppositionless.” See Iain Provan, “Hearing the Historical Books,” in Bartholomew and Beldman, *Hearing the Old Testament*, 255.

<sup>80</sup> Vanhoozer, *Theological Interpretation*, 20–21.

foundational method taught,”<sup>81</sup> but we must also be willing to allow for the supernatural as “normal” in the biblical text. Proper biblical interpretation means balancing critical thinking and theological understanding when one approaches the socio-historical and the textual. In a theological robust approach, this means that, as Mark Gignilliat has presented it, “our confession regarding the nature and role of Scripture within the divine economy as the living voice of God surely influences if not determines, the way one engages the materials.”<sup>82</sup>

Scholars cannot ignore the realities and complexities that criticism has brought to light in biblical interpretation. To the contrary, they should embrace the reality of their own presuppositions and the presuppositions of the scholars they engage with as they seek to understand the Scriptures. This goes back to Ben Meyer’s assertion, “the way to objectivity is through authentic subjectivity.”<sup>83</sup> Perhaps more difficult, however, is also engaging with the presuppositions already encoded in the biblical text itself.

#### A Theologically Robust Approach as a “Positive” Middle Ground

Returning to Miller and Hayes, in one sense they are correct. To take the biblical record as it stands without some critical thinking, one would quickly find themselves in an impossible situation. The issue appears to be, however, that in pursuing what Provan, Long, and Longman call the “falsification principle” which rejects the general possibility of reliability on the basis of their own criteria, critics like Miller and Hayes are not being critical enough. The “evidence” Miller and Hayes desire can be reinterpreted or recontextualized. In response, Provan, Long, and Longman ask, “How much history, ancient or otherwise, would we ‘know’ about if the

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<sup>81</sup> Dale B. Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: An Analysis and Proposal* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 27.

<sup>82</sup> Gignilliat, “Theological Exegesis,” 220.

<sup>83</sup> Meyer, *Reality and Illusion*, 4.

verification principle were consistently applied to all testimony about it?”<sup>84</sup> To combat this bias against the historicity of the text, Provan, Long, and Longman propose that commentators first accept that “there is no account of the past anywhere that is not ideological in nature, and therefore in principle to be trusted more than other accounts.”<sup>85</sup> In their view, truly critical thinking embraces the realities of the biblical record. One certainly must engage with data beyond the Scriptures, but when the image being reconstructed from this data is considered “more historical” than what is provided in Scripture, it is easy to see the danger of creating our own version of events.<sup>86</sup>

“There is no good reason to believe that just because a testimony fails to violate our sense of what is normal and possible, it is on this account more likely to be more than another; and there is no good reason to believe, either, that an account which describes the unique or unusual is for that reason to be suspected of unreliability.”<sup>87</sup>

### Halpern’s Reasonable Criticism

Baruch Halpern finds the minimalist arguments to be extreme. He is far from a maximalist, and yet Halpern opines, “their [the minimalist’s] argument is that there is a possibility that cannot be *utterly excluded* on the basis of evidence that the whole construct is a lie.”<sup>88</sup> To Halpern, the Book of Kings is too accurate in its depiction of things to be a fabrication or a distant reconstruction. “The fact that Kings is so accurate about the history of the eighth-

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<sup>84</sup> Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 55.

<sup>85</sup> Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 68.

<sup>86</sup> Provan, *1 & 2 Kings*, 19–21.

<sup>87</sup> Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 70. This approach is completely contrary to those like Dever, who argues that “appeals to miracles or divine intervention as explanations of events must be dismissed by the modern historian as unsatisfactory.” Dever, *Beyond the Texts*, 31.

<sup>88</sup> Baruch Halpern, “Erasing History,” 30. This is not a recent opinion. In 1981, Halpern was already suspicious of RM approaches, calling minimalism “methodological arrogance.” See Baruch Halpern, “The Uneasy Compromise: Israel between League and Monarchy,” in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith*, ed. Baruch Halpern and Jon D. Levenson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 60.

seventh centuries, *when the Temple still stood*, suggests that our authors had both continuity and records on their side.”<sup>89</sup> He ultimately concludes that the issue is not intellectual but emotional.<sup>90</sup> Here, we might also add it is philosophical or theological. Those who advocate for RM approaches have a conviction against accepting aspects of the biblical text as historical, and although Halpern would probably agree with many of their reservations concerning the supernatural, the RM side of the dialogue is guided not by the evidence but by a conviction against historicity.

As the dialogue has deteriorated, both RM and traditionalists have become more and more entrenched and confrontational. Pointing out that the extremists on either side are not contributing to the dialogue, Halpern concludes, “cacophony in scholarship is normal, and uncritical allegiance to the biblical text is, sad to say, common among students and a significant slice of scholars.”<sup>91</sup> This is an unfortunate situation, which Halpern argues is breaking down one of the most vital roles of archaeology. Without interplay with textual history, archaeology is suffering. “True, taking the archaeological evidence purely on its own, with the input from textual or artistic corpora, has the heuristic value of showing us where a particular body of material would, by itself, lead us. But we are too poor in already fragmentary evidence as it is to think that throwing some of it out of court is the road to clearer understanding.”<sup>92</sup> In his concern, he foreshadows many of the concerns expressed in this chapter. (1) Archaeology without proper respect of the biblical texts becomes unchecked in its subjectivity. (2) Without the interplay of

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<sup>89</sup> Baruch Halpern, “Erasing History,” 33.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>91</sup> Baruch Halpern, “Erasing History,” 47.

<sup>92</sup> Baruch Halpern, “Research Design in Archaeology: The Interdisciplinary Perspective,” *NEA* 61 (1998): 56.

material and textual, there is no impetus for rethinking or innovation.<sup>93</sup> Rather than placing one discipline over the other, they should be interacting freely and creatively. Halpern even employs the development of the Hebrew secondary states, which he calls “territorial states,” during Iron Age II as a prime example of a situation where such interplay should be enriching both archaeology and biblical studies and yielding a fuller, more interdisciplinary history.<sup>94</sup> He concludes, “research planning should be scrupulous to advance the maintenance, and to fix the etiquette, of such interaction.”<sup>95</sup>

### **A Proposal**

To borrow from Halpern, the concept of “fixing the etiquette” of the interaction has been the subject of this chapter. Dismissing portions of the biblical text as unhistorical or out of context simply because they contain elements that might be objectionable to the naturalist or reductionist reader’s sensibilities is far too subjective. On the other hand, understanding that the answer to every historical objection is not simply to appeal to theology, *one must approach the biblical texts with a full consideration of the historical and linguistic context while acknowledging the theological content of the texts and the theological worldview of the authors.* Likewise, the assumption that the biblical texts somehow obscure an original context assumes facts not in evidence. To that end, the arguments here begin with the basic assumption that the texts we have today are substantially faithful to the purported historical context and directly related to the events rather than distantly reconstructed as the compilers looked back at the text. Unless this is proven not to be the case, the texts should be received as historically reliable. The

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 57–58.

<sup>94</sup> Halpern, “Research Design in Archaeology,” 60–63.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 65.

methodology is well summarized by Provan, Long, and Longman. “We do not require ‘positive grounds’ for taking the biblical testimony about Israel’s past seriously. We require positive grounds, rather, for *not* doing so.”<sup>96</sup> Embracing a theologically robust approach to the biblical text gives the benefit of doubt to the testimony of those who recorded the events and believed them to be true. Therefore, for the evangelical and theologically orthodox reader, the question is not whether we accept the biblical record as true but *how* we accept it to be true.

Thus, to approach the biblical texts with a properly critical perspective will require that we be critical of our own skepticism and experience, as well as the biases that result from them. In this pursuit of a theologically robust but critical way of thinking, we do well to heed Walter Brueggemann’s advice, “For the *otherness* of reality given us on the lips of Israel makes our deciding always penultimate and provisional, always yet again unsettled by new disclosures.”<sup>97</sup> It seems reasonable to conclude that given the widely divergent ideas of biblical history which continue to emerge in the present time, one should be self-evaluative and more open to plausible explanations.<sup>98</sup> This also helps the person who takes a theologically robust approach to the biblical texts to utilize resources produced by even those in the RM spectrum. They can evaluate these secondary sources, identify the biases, and separate them from the evidence. Then, there is opportunity to examine alternative explanations for the evidence, both biblical and historical.

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<sup>96</sup> Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 74.

<sup>97</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Role of Old Testament Theology in Old Testament Interpretation and Other Essays*, ed. K. C. Hanson (Cambridge: James Clark and Co, 2015), 11. One must, however, read Brueggemann with a critical eye, as he was willing to separate the texts from their immediate context, both historical and canonical, for interpretational purposes, as he did in Walter Brueggemann and Hals Walter Wolff, *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982). For critique, see Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 13–34.

<sup>98</sup> For a discussion of the ever-expanding spectrum of approaches to biblical history, see Mark Zvi Brettler, “The New Biblical Historiography,” in Long, *Israel’s Past in Present Research*, 43–50.

## CHAPTER 3: PROPHECY IN THE LEVANTINE CONTEXT

### Introduction

The biblical prophets were part of a wider cultural landscape which included a variety of mantic practices. This term derives from the Greek μαντικός and is the root of the many specialized terms with the *-mancy* suffix. These practices predate the formation of states like Israel. It is therefore vital to the discussion that these ANE mantic practices be studied before looking at the Israelian prophets. This chapter first considers the broad categories of mantic practices. Then, the major corpuses of prophetic texts will be catalogued and discussed, including the tendency to archive these texts in central repositories. Finally, the Israelian prophets will be compared and contrasted with their predecessors within biblical history to demonstrate what might be considered continuities with their ANE and biblical forebearers but also the peculiarities of their work which may offer insight into their unique ministry in the northern kingdom of Israel.

### Categories of Mantic Practices

Thanks to the discovery of a number of cuneiform archives, most of which date to the LBA, there is a great deal of extant prophetic literature that can be considered as background for the biblical prophets. There is, however, some confusion as to what constitutes a prophetic work. Some writers, like Matthew Neujahr, propose that we cast “a far-flung net, yielding a remarkably heterogenous haul.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, anything that might be considered prophetic should be included in the prophetic corpus. Nissinen likewise makes a broad categorization of prophetic literature, arguing that if (1) there is explicit mention of an intermediary or prophet (Akk.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Neujahr, *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East: Mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World*, BJS 354 (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 2012), 5.

*raggimu/raggintu*), or (2) if there is no intermediary, the content or context of divine speech could be considered prophetic in nature, then the text should be considered prophetic.<sup>2</sup> Utilizing the far-flung net, the term prophecy here is meant to indicate any text which purports to speak for the gods. In many ways, it leaves the decision of whether a text is prophetic to the reader.

### A Note on Practices Related to Prophecy

#### **Magic**

There are many magical texts known from Mesopotamia. Modern ideas of magic must be put aside. For the ANE peoples, magic was manipulation of the physical world, usually through spoken words and specific gestures or ministrations, although many incantations also involved amulets or talismans.<sup>3</sup> The most extraordinary thing about magic is that it was not considered supernatural. Magic was a means of healing, of providing care for people who were ill, both physically and mentally.<sup>4</sup> The magical texts were highly regimented and carefully organized, and magicians were seen as part of the caste of physicians (*asū/āšīpu*) alongside exorcists (*hābu*) and assorted types of functionaries. Magic was not a means of divination per se, but it was closely

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<sup>2</sup> Martti Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Prophecies*, SAAS 7 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998), 9–11.

<sup>3</sup> A good example of this is the *Muššu'u* tablet, which goes over a series of gestures and words which are meant to loosen the attachment of evil spirits causing illness. For a translation and discussion, see Barbara Böck, “‘When You Perform the Ritual of Rubbing’: On Medicine and Magic in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *JNES* 62 (2003): 1–16.

<sup>4</sup> The intertwined fields of magic and medicine in the ANE is outside of this project’s scope, but these resources are provided for additional research. A rather compendious volume has recently appeared on the scene—Johann Scurlock, *Sourcebook for Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine*, WAW 36 (Atlanta: SBL, 2014). Brill has a series entitled “Ancient Magic and Divination” (AMD) which includes a number of monographs on the subject. Of interest is Strahil V. Panayotov and Luděk Vacín, eds., *Mesopotamian Medicine and Magic: Studies in Honor of Markham J. Geller*, AMD 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

related to divination in some respects. Maladies could be symptoms of physical illness, but also witchcraft or an omen from the gods, which is why these practitioners were closely associated.<sup>5</sup>

## Witchcraft

The Mesopotamian people acknowledged the reality and power of the witch (*kaššaptu*) in their society. These practitioners, who were usually female, could cause all kinds of maladies. Magical texts often address witchcraft, which is treated negatively. Legal texts deal with punishments for witchcraft. Medical texts from the period treat witchcraft as a legitimate matter which the physician (*āšipu*) had to deal with judiciously.<sup>6</sup> Far from being mystical curses or hexes, the witches were credited with ability to cause actual sicknesses which the physician had to purge through medical procedures accompanied by incantations and rituals. These anti-witchcraft rituals extended to Ugarit, where similar incantations in both syllabic Akkadian and consonantal Ugaritic have been uncovered.<sup>7</sup> Of particular interest in the Ugaritic corpus are the *Beschwörung* texts like KTU 1.24 and 1.178.<sup>8</sup> These appear to be something similar to

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<sup>5</sup> For a recent consideration of the Marduk-Ea incantation from Babylon, see Amar Annus, “The Spiritual Dimensions of Healing Rituals in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 59 (2020): 2486–2503. It seems that physicians could be male or female, and in some circumstances, they were consulted along with the exorcists and diviners when a prominent person was ill (*CDA* 2:344–347). There is a common refrain concerning unclear diagnosis: (*amīl*) *asā* (*amīl*) *āšipa* (*amīl*) *bârâ* (*amīl*) *šâ’ila šu-ud-di*, “notify the physician, the exorcist, the diviner, and the interpreter of dreams.” Quoted from René Labat, ed. *Traité akkadien de diagnostics et pronostics médicaux*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1951), 170. These are meant to be distinct, but related roles.

<sup>6</sup> The comprehensive catalogue of anti-witchcraft texts is Tzvi Abusch and Daniel Schwemer, eds. *Corpus of Mesopotamian Anti-witchcraft Rituals*, 3 vols., AMD 8/1–3 (Leiden: Brill, 2010–2019), abbreviated *CMAwR*.

<sup>7</sup> Gregorio del Olmo Lete, and Ignacio Márquez Rowe, *Incantations and Anti-Witchcraft Texts from Ugarit*, SANER 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014). The best known of these are the snake bite texts (KTU 1.100, 1.107). Olmo Lete deals extensively with KTU 1.107 at length on pages 157–64. See Johannes C. de Moor, “East of Eden,” *ZAW* 100 (1988): 105–11.

<sup>8</sup> Olmo Lete and Rowe, *Incantations and Anti-Witchcraft Texts*, 92. There is difficulty bringing this term into English, with the term meaning something like “invocation of presence.” Olmo Lete offers the translation of “conjuration.”

necromancy, perhaps with affinities to the practices repeatedly banned through Israel's history (1 Sam 28:3; 2 Kgs 23:24).<sup>9</sup>

## Predictive Practices

### Omens and Divination

The most common type of mantic text found in the ANE is the omen, a determination of divine favor or a prediction of events based on the observable phenomena in the physical world. Divination is essentially the means by which one obtains an omen intentionally, but omens could, and often did, occur naturally.<sup>10</sup> Practices such as astrology, extispicy, auguries, dream interpretation, and possibly even necromancy would fall in this category.<sup>11</sup> Among the Mesopotamian cultures, these kinds of omens were heavily regulated, and there was an extensive literature of commentaries on the various divination texts to ensure accurate readings.<sup>12</sup> Divination and related mantic practices like necromancy were forbidden to the Israelites, although how strictly the Israelites observed these bans is up for debate (Lev 19:31, 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11). Still, there were some divination-like practices in ancient Israel, including the casting of lots, a practice of the common people (Josh 18:10; 1 Sam 14:42; Ps 22:8), and the

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<sup>9</sup> See also Esther J. Hamori, "The Prophet and the Necromancer: Women's Divination for Kings," *JBL* 132 (2013): 827–43. Also her full volume, Esther J. Hamori, *Women's Divination in Biblical Literature*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). Hamori's analysis falls within a feminist critique, but she is correct that what was positive magic and what was negative witchcraft was generally defined along gender lines. The *āšīpu* as depicted in the literature is always male while the *kaššaptu* is female.

<sup>10</sup> Anne Marie Kitz, "Prophecy as Divination," *CBQ* 65 (2003): 26–33.

<sup>11</sup> Extispicy was, by far, the most prevalent form of divination in Mesopotamia, especially in the LBA, if the extant evidence reveals the facts on the ground. Neujahr provides excellent definitions of the use of these divination practices in Babylon and Assyria. See Neujahr, *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East*, 83–92.

<sup>12</sup> Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination*, CNIP 19 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1995), 11. The commentaries still exist, but sadly the divination manuals are largely lost. For discussion, see Uri Gabbay, *The Exegetical Terminology of Akkadian Commentaries*, CHANE 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 2–7.

Urim and Thummim, which was reserved for the priests (Num 27:21; Deut 33:8; 1 Sam 14:41; 1 Sam 28:6).

### **Visionary Revelation**

Somewhat similar to oracular revelation, visionary revelation is reception of divine message via dream or vision. These dreams and visions may come unbidden, or they may be induced by a particular process or state. There are considerable warnings against dream omens in the Hebrew Scriptures (Deut 13:3, 5; Jer 23:23–40), although a number of prominent biblical figures including Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Solomon, Ezekiel, and Daniel, received revelations via dreams. Dreams and visions are generally said to derive from “abnormal mental states,” what might be considered ecstatic states (1 Sam 10:9–14, 19:23–24). These states could, but were not necessarily, be confused with possession by a spirit or power.<sup>13</sup>

### **Oracular Revelation**

Oracular revelation is a specific type of prophecy deriving from an oracle, or non-ecstatic spokesperson. Neujahr refers to this as Sibylline prophecy, after the Greek Sibyl and her purported prophetic utterances. This seems unnecessarily biased since it, by definition, grants a certain privilege to a well-known ancient trope. Still, Neujahr provides some basic framework for these utterances. Prophecy is (1) oral, even if converted to a literary form after; (2) predictive, with a tendency toward warning against certain behaviors along with the consequences if the

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<sup>13</sup> John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 119–20; Simon B. Parker, “Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel,” *VT* 28 (1978): 271–85.

warning is not heeded; and (3) chiefly interested in the affairs of the ruler of a nation, usually as a metonym for the nation itself, rather than specific individuals.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Extant Knowledge of Prophecy**

This section will survey several of the key prophetic archives around Mesopotamia and the Levant during the MBA-Iron Age II Periods. The catchment does not include Mediterranean or African mantic practices. While these may have had some influence upon Israelite prophetic practices, the relationship of these particular sites and Iron Age IIA secondary states is relatively well-established. Additionally, since all of these sites were occupied by people who were within a greater Semitic language sphere, due to the influence of Akkadian and the constant language contact of their languages, they shared cultural and linguistic ties with the Levantine secondary states that the Mediterranean and African cultures did not. Finally, this is not an exhaustive inventory of mantic texts from the region. It is representative of the largest caches of documents, but hardly exhaustive.

### **Function of Prophetic Archives**

For the most part, the documents discussed in this section were found in large archival deposits.<sup>15</sup> It would appear that the documents were not made for single use. They were often copied and collated. The Assyrians put considerable effort into this kind of work. In contrast with the dearth of Levantine evidence, the Assyrian prophetic corpus exists almost entirely in deposits that are unmistakably archives. These records may have exerted considerable influence

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<sup>14</sup> This list is a paraphrase of Neujahr's chapter on the Sibylline prophecy type as observed through the ancient world. It does not appear in his work. His willingness to accept the Greek model as the prototype for Hebrew prophecy is debatable, but the categories do apply in a broad sense. See Neujahr, *Predicting the Past*, 191–242.

<sup>15</sup> The exceptions are Ugarit, which lacks a significant prophetic corpus, and the single, partial text found at Tušhan.

upon the way prophecy was treated in the Israelite societies.<sup>16</sup> The Assyrians had a long history of maintaining textual archives, extending back at least to the Old Assyrian Period (ca. 2025–1363 BCE). Archives are to be distinguished from libraries. While a library is a broad collection of texts in one location, an archive is “a group of texts of administrative, economic, juridical and similar types, including letters.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, a library may contain archives, but an archive does not constitute a library. Additionally, the term *archive* tends to refer to a “living archive,” one which was deposited in a location with a specific purpose and remained active during a span of time.<sup>18</sup> Official archives are significant because they were assembled by government representatives, either local or national. Private archives, however, could be accumulated by families, individuals, and even scribal schools.<sup>19</sup>

The purpose of these private archives appears to have been for reference and precedent. It is reasonable to assume documents which might have been consulted frequently were kept together. This was a necessity for business, and the existence of these substantial private archives in the Old Assyrian Period provides good evidence that the practice may have continued or been revived later. Entire archives could be transferred by individuals, and it appears that communities

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<sup>16</sup> Joachim Schaper, “Prophecy in Israel and Assyria: Are We Comparing Apples and Pears? The Materiality of Writing and the Avoidance of Parallelomania,” in *“Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela”: Prophecy in Israel, Assyria, and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period*, ed. Robert P. Gordon and Hans M. Barstad (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 225–38.

<sup>17</sup> Olof Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur: A Survey of the Material from the German Excavations*, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis 6 (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1986), 20–21.

<sup>18</sup> Cécile Michel, “Constitution, Contents, Filing and Use of Private Archives: The Case of Old Assyrian Archives (nineteenth century BCE),” in *Manuscripts and Archives: Comparative Views of Record-Keeping*, ed. Alessandro Bausi, Christian Brockmann, Michael Friedrich, and Sabine Kienitz, Studies in Manuscript Cultures 11 (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 44–46.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 48–51.

maintained knowledge of the archives they possessed as well as those others might have that spoke to the particulars of their trade or affairs.<sup>20</sup>

Most interpreters do not acknowledge the existence of such archives in the Hebrew secondary states before the Josianic period, but as with so many things in the discussion, this is an argument from silence. Although dismissive of an Israelite literary identity before the exilic period, Kratz nonetheless recognizes the historical precedent of Jewish literary archives.<sup>21</sup> The best example is the archive in Elephantine, dating from the fifth to fourth century BCE. This was only one of the archives in Egypt, as Alexandria appears to have also had a substantial Jewish archive, now sadly lost. In addition, there may have been archival centers at the Jerusalem temple and the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim.<sup>22</sup> This practice would not have suddenly appeared, and the absence of any substantial uncovered archives is not an absolute indication that they did not exist.

### Late Bronze Age Archives

#### **Mari**

The earliest of the extant archives is from the ancient city of Mari, located in northeastern Syria near the Euphrates. Mari was the center of a small kingdom that flourished in the eighteenth century BCE before it was destroyed by Hammurabi. Old Babylonian cuneiform texts

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<sup>20</sup> Such is the case of one text from Kültepe (AKT 3, 84) which was a request by a merchant for his wife to retrieve a particular tablet stored near the city gates. Michel, “Constitution, Contents, Filing and Use of Private Archives,” 61.

<sup>21</sup> Reinhard G. Kratz, *Historical and Biblical Israel: The History, Tradition, and Archives of Israel and Judah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 106–7. Kratz sees the distinction between historical and biblical Israel as being literary. Historical Israel cannot be known from the biblical record because it is an ideological product. In this, he has a great deal in common with other critics focused specifically on the Book of Kings who were discussed in chapter one.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–36.

from the reign of the last two kings, Yasmaḥ-Addu (ca. 1792–1775) and Zimri-Lim (ca. 1774–1760 BCE), have been uncovered in excavations.<sup>23</sup> For the most part, the prophetic texts from Mari can be divided into several groups. First, there are oracular letters (ARM 26 195–223, 243, 371, 414; 27 32; IM 6 1 (A.3760); 7 38 (A.1968), 39 (A.1121, A.2731). Second, letters from the gods (FLP 11674, 2064; ARM 26 192, 194). Finally, there are dream reports (ARM 26 224–240). There was also room for the consideration of references to divination which are not themselves divination texts, such as the reference in Letter A 222, which has a dream confirmed by the appearance of the *ḥurra* bird and ARM 10.81 where an omen is taken to confirm an utterance made “off stage,” as it were.<sup>24</sup> The utterance may not be recorded with the confirming omen.

Generally, the person who receives these omens is one of the *muḥḥû(m)*, a term probably derived from *maḥû*, a state of frenzy or altered state of mind.<sup>25</sup> Stökl believes these ecstatic diviners were deeply integrated into temple cults, although distinct from the “technical diviners” (*āpilum*). The *āpilum* was not an ecstatic and offered the ruler divinations based on rigid

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<sup>23</sup> Malamat notes the high number of NWS terms in the Mari texts, which he takes to mean that the prophetic texts may have originated with an NWS-speaking group. Abraham Malamat, “The Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy: The Mari Documents,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 41; Abraham Malamat, *History of Biblical Israel: Major Problems and Minor Issues*, CHANE 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 21–22. Sasson cautioned against drawing too many conclusions from this kind of similarities, given the distance from which we view the evidence. See Jack M. Sasson, “About ‘Mari and the Bible’,” *RA* 92.2 (1998): 97–123.

<sup>24</sup> Kitz, “Prophecy as Divination,” 26–27. These is an excellent anthology of mantic texts from Mari available in Jack M. Sasson, *From the Mari Archives: An Anthology of Old Babylonian Letters* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 272–89. The majority of the texts cited in this paragraph can be found in Sasson’s volume. Those not in Sasson can be found in Nissinen’s volume cited above.

<sup>25</sup> Martti Nissinen, C. L. Seow, Robert K. Ritner, and H. Craig Melchert, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, WAW 12 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 6. There is a sense from the Mari texts that this ecstatic state was sometimes difficult to accomplish: *m[u]-uḥ-ḥu-um ittalk[am] ana ma-ḥe-e-e[m] ul i-[...]*, “the ecstatic comes [and is unable(?)] to go into a trance” (*CAD* 10:90–91).

standards.<sup>26</sup> They appear to have been a part of a collective group or community while the *muhhûm* was often an individual.<sup>27</sup> Still, since both were closely associated with the temple, they were also closely affiliated with religious authority.

A third category of prophets were the “intuitive diviners” (*nabî*), which were not associated with the temples.<sup>28</sup> Malamat also sees these as “intuitive prophets,” meaning their messages came spontaneously and outside of the religious caste.<sup>29</sup> They were not trained or necessarily ecstatic, and their utterances deal mostly with the well-being of the king or issuing commands for new works.<sup>30</sup> In the case of the Mari archives, the reports of these *nabî* were mostly delivered second hand, usually reporting a dream experienced by a non-professional and recorded by a professional. There are certainly parallels to biblical prophecy in the dream interpretations particularly. For example, ARM 26 234:1'-2' reads: “Thus says the god [Dagan]: you may not build this ruined house again!”<sup>31</sup> This certainly sounds familiar to the student of the biblical prophets (1 Kgs 9:8). At least some of these dreams came without the necessary divination rituals (ARM 26 232:8).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Herbert B. Huffmon, “Prophecy in the Mari Texts as an Innovative Development,” in *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 57<sup>th</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Rome 4–8 July 2011*, ed. Alfonso Archi (Winona Lakes, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 205–14.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison*, CHANE 56 (Leiden: Brill, 2012) 65–67.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–10.

<sup>29</sup> Malamat, “The Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy,” 34–35. Elsewhere, Malamat maintained that this type of prophecy is present only in Mari and the biblical texts. See Abraham Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 59–62.

<sup>30</sup> Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, 59.

<sup>31</sup> *ummā[mi ilumma] bītam annēm ḥarībam lā te[ppesā]*. Translation from Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 65.

<sup>32</sup> *u D[aga]n bēlka ušall[i]lamma mamman ul ilputanni*. Translation from Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 61. It could be argued that the mention of a vision without the necessary preparation (*liptum*) marks this text as an outlier, and that such direct revelation was an anomaly.

Malamat sees a parallel between the biblical prophets and the prophets of Dagan in particular, because they relied upon dream omens (ARM 2 90:19, 3 40:13).<sup>33</sup> While many Hebrew prophets did receive the word of YHWH in dreams, it was hardly the normal means of revelation.<sup>34</sup> Their messages seem to have been delivered outside of the expected avenues, and yet the consistency of the message is such that it marks them not as individual anomalies but as a class or community. Unlike the court prophets of ancient Judah who will be discussed later, the Mari diviners delivered their messages from the margins of society.<sup>35</sup> One might conjecture that the northern prophets who opposed the Omride kings were the means of YHWH's revelation in the midst of false prophets who were receiving revelation very much in line with those of Mari, and this is why they received these extraordinary revelations.

## Ebla

North of Mari and often rivaling it was the much older city-state of Ebla. The palace archives from Ebla are almost contemporaneous with those found at Mari, although the culture extended back to the EBA and was often quite distinct from the rest of Mesopotamia due to the remoteness of the city. As with other sites, administrative documents comprise the bulk of the texts, but there are a handful of divination texts from Chapel G3, chiefly animal auguries.<sup>36</sup> There are two terms for diviner in the record: *bárû* (equivalent to *naṭalu*) and *lú-máš*. Since the Ebla materials date from the MBA, any etymological connection with Hebrew is somewhat

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<sup>33</sup> Abraham Malamat, "Prophetic Revelations in New Documents from Mari and the Bible," in *Volume du Congrès International pour l'étude de l'Ancien Testament, Genève 1966*, ed. P. A. H. de Boer, VTSup 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 221.

<sup>34</sup> Hans M. Barstad, "Mari and the Hebrew Bible," *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 70 (2005): 21–32. Barstad charts out parallels to the biblical narrative, but they are broad categories indeed.

<sup>35</sup> Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, 61–62.

<sup>36</sup> For a thorough survey of the Ebla divination corpus, see Alfonso Archi, *Ebla and Its Archives*, SANER 7 (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 687–98.

distant, and there is no clear connection with a prophetic office.<sup>37</sup> The Old Babylonian texts from Ebla employ *nabī* (sing. *nabû*), but Stökl asserts that “*nabû* is not attested in connection with divination anywhere in the cuneiform record.”<sup>38</sup> This is a bit of an overstatement, given the presence of the *nabī* at Mari. It is true that it does not appear in the Mari corpus in connection with prophetic work, but it does often appear in other cuneiform records within this semantic range, especially during the Assyrian period.

### Emar

Akkadian tablets from Emar testify to the presence of diviners or seers (Akk. *bārû*, Hurr. *f/wurulinni*).<sup>39</sup> The site is at the modern town of Eski Meskene, geographically proximate to Mari. The texts date later than those of Mari (ca. 1375–1175 BCE), roughly contemporary with the records from Ugarit mentioned below. The texts found in Temple M<sub>1</sub> include a number of divination texts, offering insight into the Mesopotamian view of prophecy in the Late Bronze Age. Extispicy figures prominently, including manuals such as *Emar* 666–684, Msk 74100b and 74129a, and models like *Emar* 667–668.<sup>40</sup> Celestial and calendrical omens (*Emar* 650–665) also appear regularly. Rutz points out that these texts all indicate that “divine knowledge is encoded

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<sup>37</sup> Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 159–60. Stökl details some of the sensationalism surrounding other more “direct” references to prophets which turned out to be inaccurate.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–64. This is a difficult statement to support since there are number of homonyms (*CAD* 11.1:31–40). The Akkadian root seems to be the idea of “to call” or “to name.” In general, however, *CAD* has no reference to such usage.

<sup>39</sup> This professional class of diviner appears throughout the Mesopotamian corpuses. Malamat equates it with the Roman *haruspex* or augur. See Malamat, “A Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy,” 33.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Diviners of Late Bronze Age Emar and Their Tablet Collection*, AMD 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 221–26. According to Heimpel, extispicy was the most common divination method in Mesopotamia. The complete absence of the practice from Israel is probably not an oversight. See Wolfgang Heimpel, *Letters to the Kings of Mari: A New Translation, with Historical Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, Mesopotamian Civilizations (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 173–74.

in various observable or imaginable aspects of the world.”<sup>41</sup> The types of divination practiced in both Mari and Emar were prohibited, and apparently not practiced among the Israelites.

## Ugarit

No site has provided textual materials quite like those uncovered at Ras Šamra, the ancient city of Ugarit. The most significant literary find in Ugarit was the mythological Baal Cycle.<sup>42</sup> Although there are references to mantic practices in the other Ugaritic literature, the site lacks an “official” prophetic corpus. There was, however, at least one private divination archive, belonging to a functionary named *bn ’Agaptarri*.<sup>43</sup> That archive consists of a wide variety of documents, including a copy of a document found in the archive of the High Priest (KTU 1.118, which is a copy of KTU 1.47). A large number of the texts are clearly augury or extispicy texts.<sup>44</sup> There are also a number of consultation texts, with omens granted for specific requests (KTU 1.104, KTU 1.124).<sup>45</sup>

The *muhḥû(m)/mahḥû* class is mentioned in the Akkadian tablet Ug. 5 162 (RS 25.460), which may also make reference to the type bloodletting described in 1 Kings 18.<sup>46</sup> There are a number of astrological texts, and the *Keret Epic* contains some oracular passages that could be

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<sup>41</sup> Rutz, *Bodies of Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia*, 219.

<sup>42</sup> As noted previously, a comprehensive discussion of the Ugaritic religious texts can be found in Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*.

<sup>43</sup> Greorio del Olmo Lete, “(bn) ’Agaptarri’s House: A Functional Analysis of an Ugaritic ‘Archive’ (PH Room 10),” *JAOS* 137 (2017): 483–503. See also Robert P. Gordon, “Prophecy in the Mari and Nineveh Archives,” in Gordon and Barstad, *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela*, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Pardee provides a list and interpretation of these texts. See Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, WAW 10 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 127–31.

<sup>45</sup> Olmo Lete, “(bn) ’Agaptarri’s House,” 490–92. Olmo Lete provides a complete listing of these texts.

<sup>46</sup> J. J. M. Roberts, “A New Parallel to 1 Kings 18:28–29,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 76–77; *aḥḥūa kīma maḥ-ḥe-e damīšunu ramku*, “my brothers are drenched in their own blood like ecstasies” (*CAD* 10:90).

considered prophetic in nature (KTU 1.15 ii 16–iii 16).<sup>47</sup> The final category of texts are the manuals for gathering and interpreting various omens.<sup>48</sup> Wyatt sees the oracles as developed texts rather than whole compositions, and there is good reason to think of them as a reference library of sorts.<sup>49</sup>

What is more interesting, and possibly more applicable to the Elijah and Elisha materials are the texts which see the gods active in rituals. The gods sometimes drink (*yšt*) offered wine (RS 24.252). In this participation, the gods may be transferring power to their followers. In particular, there was a connection to the Ugaritic king, a sort of blessing upon him or his successor conveyed by the divine participation.<sup>50</sup> Elijah explicitly slights the Canaanite god by exposing his absence on Mt. Carmel (1 Kgs 18:25–27) and then grants Ahab the right to drink only once the Canaanite prophets were defeated (1 Kgs 18:41–42).

## Iron Age Archives

### Tušhan

The only extant Levantine prophetic text that is roughly contemporary with the Omride period is a broken, partial tablet found at Ziyaret Tepe (ancient Tušhan) in southeastern Turkey,

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<sup>47</sup> For astrological texts, see Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 131–32. There are several competing ways to catalog the Ugaritic texts. The most cited designation, KTU or CAT, is generally used here. This is from Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: Einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Texte aus ausserhalb Ugarits. Teil 1*. AOAT 1/24 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1976). An expanded version of this is available in English as Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places*, 3rd ed. (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013). Designations like RS are excavation numbers, tied to the location and order in which they were found. The parlance is not extremely important to the discussion at hand, but a table of other common designations is available in Michael Williams, *Basics of Ancient Ugaritic: A Concise Grammar, Workbook, and Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 108.

<sup>48</sup> Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 134–48.

<sup>49</sup> Nicolas Wyatt, “Word of Tree and Whisper of Stone: El’s Oracle to the King Keret (Kirta) and the Problem of the Mechanics of Its Utterance,” *VT* 57 (2007): 483–510.

<sup>50</sup> Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit*, 192–95.

about as far north as could be considered Levantine. The tablet (ZTT 25) describes payments to both a prophet (written as *muḥḥû(m)/maḥḥû*, but probably representing Assyrian *raggimu*) and an augur (*dāgil iššūri*).<sup>51</sup> The text dates from the late 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. One of the more interesting facets of this text is the rather substantial sum paid to the prophet for his work, what Nissinen calls “a small fortune.”<sup>52</sup> It reflects well on the account of Naaman the Aramaean who brought a substantial amount of compensation for Elisha (2 Kgs 5:5). Apparently, these kinds of elaborate offerings were fairly common practice for centuries in Mesopotamia.<sup>53</sup> It is not hard to see how this applies to the narrative of Balaam, who was paid to curse Israel (Num 22:7–14). Later southern prophetic literature frowns on such largesse for prophets (Micah 3:5, 11), making a distinction between the Israelite understanding of the prophets’ compensation and that of the Assyrian model.

## Nineveh

By far, the largest contemporary corpus of mantic texts comes from the Assyrians.

Inscriptional references to prophetic activity are limited to the reigns of Esarhaddon (681–669

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<sup>51</sup> Martti Nissinen, “The Prophet and the Augur at Tušḥan, 611 B.C.,” in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, ed. David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 331–34. The Assyrian *raggimu* derives from *ragāmu*, meaning “to call out” or “summon.” It is sometimes applied to mantic practices, and in some situations bringing legal accusation (*CAD* 14:62–66, particularly definition 4).

<sup>52</sup> Nissinen, “The Prophet and the Augur at Tušḥan,” 335. ZTT 25 was first published in Simo Parpola, “Cuneiform Texts from Ziyaret Tepe (Tušḥan), 2002–2003,” *SAAB* 17 (2008): 1–113. An annotated version is available through ORACC, <http://oracc.org/atae/P481186/>. Texts quoted from this online repository will be denoted in the citation as SAAo. SAAo is an online annotation of Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, SAA 3 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989) and other volumes published under the SAA series header.

<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere, Nissinen provides a translation of ARM 26 199, where a prophetess demands compensation that includes a richly decorated garment and a nose ring. See Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 31. Barstad notes this kind of fee arrangement at Mari as well, see AEM 1 199 and 1 206. There, the female seer (*qammatum*) is compensated generously as well. It appears to have been a longstanding practice. See Barstad, “Mari and the Hebrew Bible,” 26–28.

BCE) and Ashurbanipal (669–631 BCE), perhaps because they were literate rulers.<sup>54</sup> Simon Parpola is insistent that Assyrian prophecy laid the groundwork of Hebrew and Mediterranean thought.<sup>55</sup> Assyrian prophecy seems to have been almost exclusively tied to the cult of Ištar/Mullissu and occasionally Nabû, although the prophets appear to have served outside of the deities' temples.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, they supported the king as a patron of the temples. It is no surprise then that Assyrian prophecy is overwhelmingly in favor of the monarch.

Most mantic texts are labeled as *šipir maḥḥu* (“message from the ecstatic”).<sup>57</sup> Others such as “The Dialogue Between Ashurbanipal and Nabû,” (K1285 or SAAo 3 13) have prophetic texts embedded in a larger narrative or discourse.<sup>58</sup> In the text, Ashurbanipal makes a petition to Nabû and the god responds, even advocating for the king in the council of gods. the god Nabû repeatedly affirms the leadership of the Assyrian king, commanding him *lā tapallaḥ*, “Fear not!” several times. The opposition to the king (*giššišu ayyābyu*) are shown to be insignificant. Whatever the king wishes to do, he may do it with Nabû's blessing. Similarly, Esarhaddon received a number of confirmation oracles from diviners including Nabû-hussanni, Bayâ of Arbela, and La-dagil-ili of Arbela. The prophetess Urkittu-šarrat also issued a supportive declaration (SAAo 090 002).

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<sup>54</sup> Gordon, “Prophecy in the Mari and Nineveh Archives,” 38.

<sup>55</sup> For the seminal arguments dealing first with iconography, see Simon Parpola, “The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy,” *JNES* 52 (1993): 161–208. Parpola later expanded this to include the prophetic texts in *Assyrian Prophecy*, SAA 9 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997).

<sup>56</sup> John W. Hilber, “Cultic Prophecy in Assyria and the Psalms,” *JOAS* 127 (2007): 29.

<sup>57</sup> Matthijs de Jong, *Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies*, VTSup 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 289.

<sup>58</sup> Jason Atkinson, “Prophecy in K1285? Re-evaluating the Divine Speech Episodes of Nabû,” in Gordon and Barstad, *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela*, 59–90.

## NWS Prophetic Texts

There is a smattering of extant NWS texts with prophetic elements. Although most are fragmentary, they nonetheless reflect the attitudes of NWS-speaking peoples to prophecy in the general context, and therefore are worth consideration. There are two monumental texts with allusions to prophecy, the Amman Citadel Inscription and the Zakkur Stela, and they convey a close connection between prophecy and kingship. The former is in Ammonite, dates from the ninth century BCE, and probably alludes to a prophetic message from Milchom, the Ammonite chief deity, to an unknown ruler.<sup>59</sup> The fragments of the Zakkur Stela include an Aramaic dedication to a deity, usually credited as Iluwer, the patron of the Aramaean city of Apish. The text seems to indicate that a prophet of Iluwer named Baalshamayan provided divine sanction for a military campaign against Ben-Hadad of Damascus.<sup>60</sup> The remaining NWS texts are mostly ostraca, written in the early sixth century BCE and found at the military outpost of Lachish. They are Judahite letters, and they include casual references to YHWH and refer to specific prophets (Ostrakon 3, 6, 16).<sup>61</sup> There is, however, one other text which has attracted significant attention. The Deir ‘Allā Plaster references Balaam son of Beor, who prophesied against Israel for Moab (Num 22:1–6, 24:1–25; Deut 23:4; Joshua 13:21, 24:9–10). The text is badly damaged, and there are multiple reconstructions of the text.<sup>62</sup> These NWS texts do not provide much in the way of insight into the mechanics or modes of prophecy. They do, however, show that the prophetic

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<sup>59</sup> Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 202–3; Kent P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age*, HSS 27 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 9–33. This inscription will be addressed in more detail in chapter five.

<sup>60</sup> Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 203–7. The fragments were not found *in situ*, and so are dated by the reference to Ben-Hadad. See Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo, “Tell Afis in the Iron Age: The Aramaic Inscriptions,” *NEA* 77, no. 1 (2014): 54–57.

<sup>61</sup> Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 212–18; See discussion of what the letters have to say about official attitudes toward prophets in the twilight of the Judahite kingdom, see Nadav Na‘aman, “The Distribution of Messages in the Kingdom of Judah in Light of the Lachish Ostraca,” *VT* 53 (2003): 169–80.

<sup>62</sup> Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 207–12; See also Baruch A. Levine, “The Deir ‘Allā Plaster Inscriptions,” *JAOS* 101 (1981): 195–205. See discussion of this inscription in chapter five.

office was active in the Levant during Iron Age IIA–B, and that there was both support and opposition to it not just in Israel but also in the Transjordan and in Aram.

### **The Biblical Model of the Israelian Prophets**

In the biblical record, the relationship of the Israelian prophets to their Omride context is so close that it is difficult to discuss one without the other. The Omride state will be discussed at length in the next chapter. The Israelian prophets were informed by the mantic classes in the societies around them, especially in the forms which their utterances took. There was a common language among these mantic offices in various societies. In this section, the Israelian prophets will be presented in relation to two prophetic groups. First, they will be contrasted with the prophetic classes of other ANE cultures. Second, the characteristics that distinguished the Israelite prophets from their Hebrew predecessors will be discussed. This includes considerations of how their methodology may have evolved for a distinct purpose.<sup>63</sup>

#### Distinguishing the Israelian Prophets from Other ANE Prophets

In recent years, Nissinen and Grabbe have argued that Hebrew prophecy was much more like that of other societies.<sup>64</sup> What they appear to have in mind is the affinity of expression and language rather than object of worship. The appearance of difference is the result of secondary recording by scribes since, in Nissinen's mind, prophets did not write.<sup>65</sup> He maintains that what exists of biblical prophecy has been recorded "out of time," as it were. Simon Parker maintains that the boundaries they placed upon revelation is what made Hebrew prophecy so different.

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<sup>63</sup> A fuller explanation of the various terms for prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures can be found in Appendix B.

<sup>64</sup> Martti Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy: Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 183–91.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

“Israel did not have mythic-epic literature, and no ancient Near Eastern society had a Bible.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, Parker believes Israelite prophecy was guided by YHWH’s revelation, and thus was not as unbounded as prophecy in other cultures. For Parker, this guidance may have even been in written form, as it was in Mari but uniquely Israelite in character, so the Israelites were likely to develop a unique style of prophecy as well.<sup>67</sup> In Parker’s thinking, the Mari prophecies were recorded at the time of composition and continuously archived over a long period of time, “over decades or centuries, as is usually assumed of an accumulation of levels of interpretation in the case of the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>68</sup> This kind of record would have been employed as a measuring stick for further prophetic work, which could have prevented the excesses of ecstasism found in the prophecies of other ANE cultures. While he admits there is no evidence to support the supposition, he asks why this could not be true for the Hebrew prophets as well.

Nissinen simply dismisses Parker’s argument, insisting “no general dividing line between biblical and extrabiblical prophets can be drawn in this respect.”<sup>69</sup> He argues that events such as spirit journeys (2 Kgs 5:26, 6:17; Ezek 3:12–15, 37:1–14) and visions (Ezek 1, 10; Amos 7:1–9, 8:1–3, 9:1–4; Zech 1–6) are ecstatic expressions. Likewise, Elisha’s prophecy with musical accompaniment (2 Kgs 3:15) and the assorted “extravagant behavior” of the prophets (Isa 20:1–

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<sup>66</sup> Simon Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions: Comparative Studies on Narratives in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7. Of course, Grabbe dismisses Parker and others like him as “partisans.” Lester L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 110. Some of Grabbe’s rhetoric toward more traditional scholars has already been surveyed in chapter one. He was directly criticizing Simon Parker, “Official Attitudes toward Prophecy at Mari and in Israel,” *VT* 43 (1993): 50–68. In this article, Parker took the response of Mari’s royal caste to the prophecies found there as representative of the usual official response to prophecy.

<sup>67</sup> Here, it is presupposed that the Torah existed in some written form to influence the prophets. This is not the position of many mainstream commentators.

<sup>68</sup> Parker, “Official Attitudes toward Prophecy at Mari,” 62.

<sup>69</sup> Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy*, 184.

6; Ezek 4–6, 24:15–27; Hosea 1) should be view as a form of ecstaticism.<sup>70</sup> He provides a number of other illustrations as well, but the cited events are sufficient to demonstrate his point.

Really, the issue between Parker and Nissinen is a matter of degrees. Where Parker is insistent that there is a distinction between the Israelite prophetic office, which did not include possession or loss of control, and the Canaanite practices which were frantic and out of control, as demonstrated on Carmel in the confrontation with Elijah. Nissinen does note that not all of the biblical authors approved of ecstatic prophecy, with Jeremiah and Hosea condemning it as insane behavior (Jer 29:26–27; Hosea 9:7).<sup>71</sup> He chalks this up to Second Temple Judaism (STJ) having a different view of prophecy, so essentially Nissinen admits that Parker has a point but shifts the chronology of when such a point would be applied. It would appear that the classification of Parker and others like him who see the distinction as being more pronounced in Israelite society as “partisan” might be an overstatement.

This does not mean the Hebrew prophets were not entirely isolated from the stream of prophetic style and expression. There is danger in trying to fit them into a single extrabiblical category, as Neujahr does in attempting to create an analogy between the Hebrew prophets and the Sibylline Prophecies in Greece. On the other hand, there is equal danger in projecting later paradigms, such as STJ view of prophecy and dreams back on the Omridic prophets, as Barton does.<sup>72</sup> Both alternatives ignore the uniquenesses of both the Omride setting, which has already been discussed in previous chapters, and the style of prophecy employed by northern prophets. If the materials pertaining to Elijah are historical, recorded within the immediate context as Parker

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 184–86.

<sup>71</sup> Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy*, 189.

<sup>72</sup> Barton, *Oracles of God*, 116–28.

is willing to concede, then categorizing his prophecies by either extreme might be detrimental to clear interpretation.

### The Royal Seer in the Davidic Kingdom

The Israelian prophets also had ample precedent within the history of Israel as well, as the Davidic seers were free to disagree with the king when his will contradicted that of YHWH. In this section, the pre-Omridic development of the Hebrew prophetic class will be considered. Three men in particular—Samuel, Gad and Nathan—seem to have occupied a role much closer to the Akkadian professional diviner (*āpilum*) in the reigns of David and Solomon. The following section will then show how the Yahwistic prophets of the Omride northern kingdom were quite distinct from these earlier seers.

#### Samuel: The Priestly Seer (נביא)

The word prophet (נביא) appears in the Scriptures prior to the Davidic monarchy, but this survey will begin with Samuel. Like the *āpilum*, Samuel was closely associated with the priesthood, a trait he shared with a number of literary prophets, including Hosea, Habakkuk, Joel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. He derived from an Ephrathite family living in the Ephraimite hills (Gen 35:16, 19; 1 Sam 1:2).<sup>73</sup> As a boy, he received visions (מראה) from YHWH (1 Sam 3:1–14), and as an adult he served as priest at the shrine of YHWH at Shiloh. His prophetic role was key to the anointing and accession of David as king.

Although credited as being universally recognized as a נביא (1 Sam 3:20), there is a textual clue to the nature of his role as understood by his contemporaries. It is noted in 1 Samuel

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<sup>73</sup> Ephrath is given as the original name of the site of Bethlehem. The relationship between the two toponyms is unclear, as significant individuals are called Ephrathites (Ruth 1:2; 1 Sam 1:1, 17:12). It appears to have sometimes been confused with, or perhaps simply overlapped with, Ephraim (Judg 12:5, 1 Kgs 11:26).

9:9 that in his lifetime, Samuel was called a seer (רֹאֵה). This capacity to “see” defined Samuel’s work, but רֹאֵה lacks cognates with the same mantic sense and is quite rare in the biblical text.<sup>74</sup> Within Samuel-Kings, the only other person referred to using this word is Zadok the priest (2 Sam 15:27) and outside of references to Samuel here and in 1 Chronicles (1 Chr 9:22, 26:28, 29), it is used to refer to only one other person, Hanani the Seer (2 Chr 16:7, 16:10). Isaiah uses it as a part of a couplet with prophet, which incidentally describes the literary nature of prophecy (Isa 30:10).

### Gad: The Itinerant Seer

One of David’s key spiritual advisors was Gad, who appeared before David in times of crisis, first before David is king and is on the run from Saul in the caves of Adullam (1 Sam 22:5) and then toward the end of David’s reign when he violated YHWH’s commands and conducted a census (2 Sam 24:10–25). He is called both prophet (נְבִיא) and seer (חֹזֵה). Although the Chronicler pairs Gad with the prophet Nathan, they do not appear before David together in Samuel-Kings (1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 29:25).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> The passage includes a folk etymology for נְבִיא. See Appendix D for more information on the various words. The fact that “seer” (רֹאֵה) is the root of “vision” (מְרֹאֵה) may be a clue as to the meaning. There is no cognate equivalent to רֹאֵה in Akkadian, but it appears that *amāru* covers the same semantic range. It could be applied to divination and auguries, with the diviner “seeing” the meaning of the divinatory act. The semantic range for both words is enormous, and this specific meaning of one who “sees” generally does not seem to appear in the Assyrian record. See Hans F. Fuhs, TDOT 13:211. Given the association with מְרֹאֵה, it has perhaps a meaning similar to *amāru* in passages dealing with being able to recall and understand dreams: DIŠ LÚ *šumma awīlum šu-ut-tam ša i-im-ma-ru la ukāl*, DINGIR-šU- it-ti-[š]u ze-e-ni. “If a man cannot remember the dream he has had, then his deity is angry with him.” (VAT 7525). See CAD 2:1a6’, 8. Translation from Franz Köcher and A. L. Oppenheim, “Old Babylonian Omen Text VAT 7525,” *aFO* 18 (1957–1958): 64.

<sup>75</sup> The Chronicler preserves a sense that these individuals left written records (דָּבָר) that pertained to both continuity with Samuel. Chronicles seems to shift the focus from prophets to priests, even going so far as to reattribute elements of prophetic oracles to members of the priestly class. Certainly, some of the prophets derived from the priestly caste, but not all. See Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “The Seer and the Prophet: The Case of the So-Called Linen Ephod,” in *Prophecy and Its Cultic Dimensions*, ed. Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, JAJSup 31 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 136–38.

This term *חֹזֵה* has the distinction of appearing in two of the oldest known NWS references to prophecy, a seal from Deir Rifa in Egypt, dated to ca. 1700 BCE, and the Tell Deir ‘Alla inscription which was found in Jordan.<sup>76</sup> The Deir ‘Alla inscription dates to the eighth century BCE and may be a Transjordanian dialect of Hebrew. Like *רֹאֵה*, Isaiah employed it in a couplet with *נְבִיא* (Isa 29:10). Amaziah uses it as an insult when he confronted Amos over his prophecies (Amos 7:12), indicating that this term may have been a part of the Judahite vocabulary, as distinguished from the northern speech. Alternatively, it could have been meant as an insult, pointing out Amos’s lack of sophistication and proper training. Micah used it negatively by coupling it with oracles that employed practices condemned by Deuteronomy (Micah 3:5–12, cf. Deut 18:9–14).

### **Nathan: Were Seers Also Prophets?**

In the text as it stands, there is no clear-cut division among *נְבִיא*, *רֹאֵה*, and *חֹזֵה*. It may be that the use of *נְבִיא* in 1–2 Samuel to describe these seers is projected back from the author’s context to a period when it was not in use, but equally as likely, the people of the southern Levant were familiar enough with the Akkadian cognate *nabī*, in use throughout the world, that it could be applied to Samuel and Nathan without any lexical confusion. There are some plausible distinctions made in the use of *נְבִיא* in the Hebrew Bible. Where Samuel is described by *נְבִיא* without the definite article, both Nathan (2 Sam 7:2; 12:25; 1 Kgs 1:8–45) and Gad (1 Sam 22:15, 2 Sam 24:11) are generally referred to using this term with the attached definite article (*הַנְּבִיא*). While Nathan is in the center of David’s court activities, Gad appears as an outlier, so

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<sup>76</sup> Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 251. In the Deir ‘Alla inscription, it is used to refer to Balaam b. Beor who is also known from Scripture. It may be related to the Egyptian *hōzi ‘u*, borrowed from NWS. See James E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 86–87.

perhaps the role of  $\text{גד}$  was not a court role and Gad instead served in an informal capacity. They do, however, both serve a vital function in the placement of the Jerusalem temple since Nathan provided direction on the construction plans (2 Sam 7:1–17), and Gad commanded David to build the altar at the threshing floor of Araunah, which became the temple mount (2 Sam 24:18). This could be a case of the Hebrew equivalents of *āpilum* and *nabī* working in concert to build the Davidic kingdom.

### Distinctive Methods of the Israelian Prophet

After the division of the Hebrew kingdoms between Rehoboam in the south and Jeroboam I in the north, there is a silence of the seers. The seers or prophets just disappear from the south and do not reappear until Isaiah during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19:2). There is a continued prophetic activity in the northern kingdom, beginning with the appearance of Ahijah (1 Kgs 11:29) and running to the death of Elisha (2 Kgs 13:21). During this time, the only indication of a prophetic voice in the south is the man of God who travels to give an omen to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 13). These northern or Israelian prophets have certain attributes which mark them out from the seers who came before them and the southern prophets who followed.

#### 1. The Loyal Opposition

*No Court Patronage.* Parker argues that prophetic classes tended to be closely associated with the courts.<sup>77</sup> Drawing on examples from Mari, he points out that the form of Israelite prophecy varied from that at Mari, which had a developed “science” of divination, but when the Mari documents are compared to the Lachish letters, he finds affinity in the official response to and treatment of the prophets. The Davidic seers certainly appear to have maintained this close

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<sup>77</sup> Parker, “Official Attitudes toward Prophecy,” *VT* 43 (1993): 68.

proximity to the throne in Jerusalem, as did Isaiah who later appears to have been consulted regularly by the King Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19:1–7, 20:1–12).

There is always a clear relationship with the king in ANE prophecy. For example, almost all the Mari prophetic documents derive from the reign of Zimri-Lin in the early eighteenth-century BCE.<sup>78</sup> Except for three of the documents, they are all addressed directly to the king. There are several prophetic voices in the text, including visions from his queen Šibtu, some of the high officials and several from people who occupied the office of *āpilum*.<sup>79</sup> In this society, the prophets seem to have been associated with specific deities and they were named as such. For example, “Abiyu *āpilum* of Adad” (FM 7 38) and “Lupaḥum, *āpilum* of Dagan” (ARM 26 199).<sup>80</sup> The prophets of Mari were concerned solely with affirming the king’s decisions. This kind of behavior is echoed in the Scriptures, particularly in Jehoshaphat’s requests for a prophet of YHWH when allying with both Ahab (1 Kgs 22:5–7) and Joram (2 Kgs 3:11). The indication is that he did not trust prophets who never disagree with the king. The Israelian prophets in the Book of Kings appear to be a specifically oppositional class. They defy the king and the prophetic class associated with him.

The Omride monarchs did appear to have tight affinity with the prophetic class. Prophets were present at a number of crucial moments, easily within reach should the Omride king need them to answer oracular inquiries or provide omens (1 Kgs 20:13, 22, 28). Time and again, the narrative seems to indicate that kings assumed that prophets were at their service, certainly dependent upon the king’s largesse (1 Kgs 18:1–19; 2 Kgs 1:9–16). There appears to have been

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<sup>78</sup> For a survey of the reconstructions of Zimri-Lin’s reign, see Jack M. Sasson, “The King and I: A Mari King in Changing Perceptions,” *JOAS* 118 (1998): 443–70.

<sup>79</sup> Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 15.

<sup>80</sup> Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 21–23, 31–34.

at least an expectation of maintaining this same support for the king, and it would have been vital for the Omrides if they wished to maintain power. In particular, in preparation for the campaign against Moab, Joram seemed to assume that the kings would seek divine sanction through the court prophets (2 Kgs 3:11–13).

Jezebel maintained a substantial contingent of prophets at Samaria, possibly feasting in the open space around the palace known as the upper platform, which was elevated above the rest of the city via a substantial casemate wall. Recently, Finkelstein has pointed out that this was not a defensive structure (1 Kgs 18:19) but does not conjecture a purpose for it.<sup>81</sup> The necessary earthworks required an enormous investment of time and resources, and Finkelstein points out that the palace is one of the largest Iron Age buildings known in the Levant, there must have been a significant reason.<sup>82</sup> There is considerable evidence that the platforms were used for feasting and celebrations throughout the Omride period. Another assembly of four hundred prophets attended the Hebrew kings when discussed a joint campaign against the Aramaeans after the latter had seized Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kgs 22:6). Perhaps this upper platform was where such assemblies gathered, especially since the kings are depicted as sitting “at the threshing floor, at gate of Samaria” (2 Kgs 22:10). The threshing floor would have been the highest point, presumably a reference to the summit of the hill, which was built up to form the upper platform, so the assembly could have been in that space. The large assembly appears to have been present specifically for the conversation, perhaps indicating their dependence upon the king while

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<sup>81</sup> Finkelstein sees great importance in the upper and lower platforms at Samaria. He believes the lower platform functioned as the quarters for the officials who served the kingdom, but he does not speak to the function of the upper platform. Perhaps this See Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 87–94; Israel Finkelstein, “Observations on the Layout of Iron Age Samaria,” *Tel Aviv* 38 (2011): 194–207.

<sup>82</sup> Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 91.

Micaiah has to be summoned.<sup>83</sup> Later, when Elisha confronted the Omride king Joram, he points to a prophetic class that served the Omride kings, which he holds to be distinct from the prophets of YHWH (2 Kgs 3:13). There is also the implicit sense that these prophets are provided for by the king when Jehu summons the prophets of Baal to a special feast and brings out garments from the wardrobe (מלתחה) for their observance (2 Kgs 10:22).<sup>84</sup> The IPM seems to preserve a sense of court affiliation for these prophets of Baal whose function seems to have been assuring that Baal was consenting to the actions of the Omride kings.

*No Davidic Preference.* Despite their opposition to the northern kings, the Israelian prophets do not offer an alternative in the southern, Davidic kingdom. In the Davidic narratives of the Book of Kings, the Jerusalem temple is depicted as the center of covenant activity, and much of the Book of Kings, as well as much of the Latter Prophets, is focused on cultic centralization in Jerusalem.<sup>85</sup> The construction of the temple was given pride of place in the opening narrative and presented as a splendid fulfillment of the Davidic covenant (1 Kgs 6). The Book of Kings ends with the destruction of the temple when Jerusalem falls to the Babylonians (2 Kgs 25:13–17).<sup>86</sup> Elijah and Elisha, the paragons of the northern prophets, do not reference Jerusalem once.<sup>87</sup> Outside of the House of Baal which Jehu destroyed, they also do not discuss

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<sup>83</sup> Note also that the biblical text has Jehoshaphat asking for “the word of YHWH,” but the prophets answer Ahab’s question with the statement that “the lord (יְהוָה) will give it into the king’s hand.” Jehoshaphat is depicted as noticing this and reiterating his request for a message from a prophet of YHWH, distinct from the gathered prophets (1 Kgs 22:5–8).

<sup>84</sup> This term appears only here and in Jeremiah 38:11 and is likely a loan word from the Akk. *maštaku/ktu*. See HALOT, s.v. “מְלִתְחָה,” 594. There are certainly cultic affinities in both biblical references, but no indication of the nature of this wardrobe or the garments (לבוש) that are provided to the prophets. Still, the provision of the garments and the fact that there was someone in charge of their safekeeping would seem to indicate royal patronage.

<sup>85</sup> Jeffrey C. Geoghegan, “‘Until This Day’ and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 202. Geoghegan follows Cross and Childs in proposing there are two preexilic redactions of Kings. Childs relied upon the “until this day” formulation for this dating. Geoghegan’s emphasis on the Levitical priesthood stems from the priestly involvement in Josiah’s reforms.

<sup>86</sup> Keith Bodner, *The Theology of the Book of Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 67.

<sup>87</sup> Simon DeVries, *1 Kings*, WBC 12, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 148–49.

northern cult centers, whether devoted to YHWH or other gods. The destruction of these sites figures prominently in the Josianic revival, metonymically marked by the desecration of Bethel (2 Kgs 23:15–30). In that moment, Jehu spared the remains of the unnamed prophet who had confronted Jeroboam about his false cult sites (1 Kgs 13:1–10).<sup>88</sup> In essence, this moment brings the northern cults to an end and fulfills the prophecy made to Jeroboam.

This seems at odds with Cross's Josianic origin, as he believed that Jerusalem cult centralization was a key theme of the DH. Giffone discusses cult centralization in DH at length in a recent article, but never mentions the passages of the Book of Kings dealing with the northern kingdom or any northern prophets.<sup>89</sup> For the southern kingdom portions of the Book of Kings, the restoration of the temple was seen as a righteous act. By the time of Josiah, the narrative presents a confluence of the prophetic message, the Davidic monarchy and the temple worship.<sup>90</sup> There are implicit condemnations of the use of temple goods as tribute to foreign invaders, an affront to YHWH (2 Kgs 16:6–9, 18:13–18). The construction of a non-Yahwist site within the temple grounds was a corruption of the truth (2 Kgs 16:10–16, 21:1–9).<sup>91</sup> It is only logical that such records foreshadow the final desecration by the Babylonians (2 Kgs 24:13–14) and the eventual restoration in the return (Ezra 1:7–8). This focus on reconstruction may be

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<sup>88</sup> Victor H. Matthews, "Josiah at Bethel and the 'Monument' to the Unnamed Prophet from Judah," *BTB* 50. 4 (2020): 200–206.

<sup>89</sup> Benjamin D. Giffone, "According to Which 'Law of Moses'? Cult Centralization in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles," *VT* 67 (2017): 432–47.

<sup>90</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, "'The Prophets': References to Generic Prophets and Their Role in the Construction of the Image of the 'Prophets of Old' Within the Postmonarchic Readership/s of the Book of Kings," *ZAW* 116 (2004): 562. If I am understanding Ben Zvi's argument correctly, he does not see the text as prophetic in its origin but rather a generic sense of "the prophets" as a literary device.

<sup>91</sup> Later in 2 Kings, there is a reference to Manasseh's shedding of "innocent blood" (נדב נקי) in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:4, see also 2 Kgs 21:16). This resonates with murder passages from Deuteronomy (Deut 19:10–13, 21:8–9), and in context seems to be applied to his idolatry in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 21:10–16). It may be that part of his idolatry involved the violent oppression of the Yahwists in the city, and this gave rise to the Talmudic tradition that Manasseh killed Isaiah. The Jerusalem Talmud reflects this connection (y. Sanh. 10:2, 28c).

reflective of a priestly influence, as Ezra-Nehemiah focuses so strongly on the temple, but it is just as likely that the construction and restoration in Kings were the historical root of Ezra-Nehemiah's temple focus. Postexilic prophets were centered in Jerusalem, and the temple was a singular focus. Prophets like Haggai and Zechariah focus almost exclusively on it and the restored priesthood. Ben Zvi emphasizes that the Jerusalem temple would have been central to any reconstructed social memory of the past, a reasonable assertion that applies to written texts as well if they were generated in the Persian period.<sup>92</sup>

The northern prophets deal with none of these. Instead, they focused their message on YHWH's worship wherever the people were, giving the appearance that the temple was not yet elevated to a singular place of worship outside of Jeroboam I not wishing the northern people to travel there (1 Kgs 12:25–32). The overall arc of the northern narrative seems to be that the worship of YHWH remained decentralized throughout the kingdom's history.<sup>93</sup> Given the division between the Samaritans and the Jews that emerged over the site of worship, it seems reasonable to conclude that a postexilic redactor would have included some sense of Jerusalem's centrality, even if he was working from preexilic sources, and yet it is not even hinted at in the Omridic texts. This decentralized focus on YHWH may support Halpern's idea of a Hezekian first edition of the Book of Kings.<sup>94</sup>

Just as the Jerusalem cult is not mentioned, the Davidic kingdom is also not in focus. For the rest of the Book of Kings and the postexilic literature, the supremacy of the Davidic line is

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<sup>92</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, "Memory and Political Thought in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah: Some Observations," in *Leadership, Social Memory, and Judean Discourse in the Fifth–Second Centuries BCE*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Bristol, CT: Equinox, 2016), 11–12.

<sup>93</sup> For a list of Iron Age IIA cultic sites, see Israel Finkelstein, "Jeroboam II's Temples," *ZAW* 132 (2020): 250–65.

<sup>94</sup> Halpern and Vanderhoof, "The Edition of Kings," 193–94; Halpern, "Sacred History," 48. Refer back to the section on Halpern in chapter one.

incontrovertibly central. This continuity could be temporarily stunted, such as during Athaliah's control of Judah (2 Kgs 11:1–3), but these aberrations would ultimately be corrected.<sup>95</sup> In the Omridic prophets, however, there is no primacy given to the Davidic line. In fact, there is a clear break with the Davidic covenant once the Omrides appear on the scene.<sup>96</sup> With over a third of the Book of Kings occupied with the Omride-Nimshite rulers, the Davidic narrative really does not pick back up until the restorations of the kingdom under Hezekiah (2 Kgs 17). Davidic kings are relegated to a supporting role in the Omride-Nimshite drama, epitomized by Jehoash of Israel's embarrassing the southern forces under Amaziah in battle (2 Kgs 14:8–16). Unlike contemporary Assyrian and Aramaean records which emphasize continuity even through dynasty changes, the authors of the Book of Kings carefully delineate the Omrides from the southern House of David.<sup>97</sup> The northern Yahwistic prophets do not address the legitimacy of the Davidic line, nor do they undermine the claim to the throne of the Omride-Nimshite dynasty. The Omride claim to the throne was seen as divinely appointed, just as the Davidic line is.<sup>98</sup> Kings of both lines treat each other as peers. In a demonstration of YHWH's sovereignty over rulers beyond Israel,

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<sup>95</sup> Galil argues that one major chronological issue can be resolved if one marks the beginning of Joash's reign not at his acclamation (2 Kgs 11:12) but at the death of his father (2 Kgs 9:14–29). See Gershon Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, CHANE 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 46–49. See also Appendices E and F.

<sup>96</sup> 1 Kings 2:2–4 reiterates 2 Samuel 7:12–13. 1 Kings 3:3–14 harkens back to 2 Samuel 14:17. 1 Kings 5:1–6 connects the building of the temple to the relationship of Hiram and David in 2 Samuel 5:11. The ark being brought into the temple in 1 Kings 8:12–22 has deep connection to David's actions in 2 Samuel 6:17 and 7:4–25.

<sup>97</sup> Lissa M. Wray Beal, *1 and 2 Kings*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 48–50; Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 24–25.

<sup>98</sup> This is not a matter unique to Kings, as Samuel also shows this in the interaction between David and Nathan. Afoakwah has argued that the confrontation over David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah was meant to be a "mirror image" of the divine covenant. See James Donkor Afoakwah, *The Nathan-David Confrontation (2 Sam 12:1–15a): A Slap in the Face of the Deuteronomistic Hero?* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2015), 281–90.

Hazael was apparently anointed as king of Aram-Damascus not by an Aramaean prophet but by Elisha, after Elijah was told to anoint him (1 Kgs 19:15–17; 2 Kgs 8:7–15).<sup>99</sup>

In keeping with this covenantal aspect, the IPM prophets delivered condemnations that were in keeping with some sense of YHWH's covenant being extended to the northern kingdom. The condemnation formulas became the basis of Kings, and they are recalled at the fall of Samaria (2 Kgs 17:14–18). At the same time, these condemnations are not unconditional. Ahijah offered a covenant to Jeroboam I if he would obey (1 Kgs 11:38–39). Baasha had the kingdom torn from him after he was used to correct the sins of Nadab (1 Kgs 16:1–4). Ahab repented and was given grace (1 Kgs 21:25–29). Jeroboam II was able to secure his kingdom out of YHWH's compassion (2 Kgs 14:27). Such statements echo the promises to David (2 Sam 7). The giving of covenant and its reversal was placed in the hands of the prophets, something Nissinen sees as an Assyrian template but may just as easily be a component of Israelite society at the time.<sup>100</sup> This shared vocabulary could be taken either to represent some kind of later editors' handiwork or a genuine dependence upon some kind of centralized archive or source containing both narrative and oracular materials. Prophets would have readily drawn upon established tropes when delivering messages.

## 2. Non-Affiliation with a Northern Cultic Center

In the north, there was no stable cult of YHWH as there was in Jerusalem, so it is easy to see why the Israelian prophets were often encountered in out of the way places and along

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<sup>99</sup> The act of anointing is not itself reported in the text, although it appears to be assumed to have occurred in the narrative. Elisha's relationship with Hazael seems to indicate Elisha's strained relationship with Hazael as an acknowledgement of his selection as king (2 Kgs 8:7–15).

<sup>100</sup> Martti Nissinen, "Prophets and Prophecy in Joshua–Kings," in Jacobs and Person, *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History*, 112–13.

roadsides. In Judah, there was a close affinity of the prophets and priests. Depictions of the Davidic kingdom include pairings of prophet and priest (1 Kgs 1:8, 32, 38; 2 Kgs 19:2, 32:2). Isaiah is depicted in the temple (Isa 6:1, 37:1–7). Jeremiah was a son of a priest (Jer 1:1). Ezekiel was a priest (Ezek 1:3). There is good reason to assume that in the preexilic period, the Judahite prophets had a reasonable relationship with the temple and the priesthood until Jeremiah, who is often depicted in conflict with the priests (Jer 20:1–6). It must be said, however, that there was a prophetic class also aligned against him (Jer 26:7–11).

In the northern kingdom, Jeroboam I appointed non-Levites as his cult functionaries from outside of the priesthood, and there was a progression away from the Jerusalem liturgy (1 Kgs 12:31–33, 13:33). Just how this northern cult of YHWH functioned, aside from the establishment of nominally Yahwist sites at Dan and Bethel is not really described. There is no apparent indication of any kind of organized cult of YHWH in the north after Jeroboam, and one would assume at least some reference would be made in relation to the northern prophets if they were affiliated with an organized Yahwistic cult in the region. At some point during the reign of Omri and his successors, a class of priests of Baal was established in Samaria, which Jehu had to kill (2 Kgs 10:11, 19). Even if one allows that the prophets served as priests of YHWH, there is no appearance of affiliation with any site. Indeed, during the Omride period, there was an oppositional relationship between the Yahwistic prophets and the organized religious system which the Omrides instituted.<sup>101</sup> The reference to Obadiah feeding a hundred prophets of YHWH (1 Kgs 18:4) seems to indicate that there were Yahwist elements in the northern kingdom, and

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<sup>101</sup> Even Grabbe sees the prophets and priests as distinct, and sometimes even conflicting, classes. See Lester L. Grabbe, “Introduction and Overview,” in *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets, and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe and Alice Ogden Bellis, JSOTSup 408 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 9-10.

while the “official” prophets would have had their meals provided by the king in the royal district of Samaria, these Yahwistic prophets were left to fend for themselves.

It seems that not only were the Israelian prophets acting as “the loyal opposition,” operating outside of the court structure, but they were also outside of the temple structure. They seem to have yielded some kind of authority and were allowed some access to the court, but they were independent of the royal patronage which rendered so many of the court prophets of the Omride kingdom unwilling to speak against the king (1 Kgs 22:5–28).<sup>102</sup> Later, Jeremiah condemned the prophets of his day for their own willingness to compromise to please the king toward the end of the southern kingdom (Jer 23:24–40).<sup>103</sup> The test of their truthfulness would be their compliance with YHWH in the affairs of the kingdom. What is fascinating about this is that the Yahwistic prophets do this without any reference to the southern kingdom, Jerusalem, or the Davidic dynasty. Their appeal to fidelity with YHWH is instead based in covenantal statements, that their identification as the sons of Israel means they are in a vassal relationship with YHWH and their identification with Canaanite deities and the royal religion was a violation of that relationship.

### 3. The Supernatural

*The practice of magic.* In at least one place, Saul called on his prophets to perform divination through dreams and the Urim. When this failed, he is portrayed as seeking a medium (בעלה) to summon the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam 14:41, 28:3–25). Previously, Saul had expelled the

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<sup>102</sup> This makes the Omride prophets quite distinct from those at Mari who, despite the similarities in some respects, were very much integrated into a highly developed temple culture. See Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, 63–64.

<sup>103</sup> Cristiano Grottanelli offers an interesting perspective on this subject. See Cristiano Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets: Monarchic Power, Inspired Leadership, and Sacred Text in Biblical Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 118–22.

diviners (דַּעֲנִי) from Israel (1 Sam 28:3), indicating that not only was divination widely practiced in the region during Late Iron Age I, but it may have been directly associated with a cast of functionaries who served Saul when he was king. At the very least, seers like Samuel, Nathan, and Gad had to contend with these competing mantic voices. The practices themselves are not strictly condemned in the narrative, although they are prohibited in the Torah and are later credited with being the reason for Saul's downfall (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10–12; 1 Chr 10:13–14).<sup>104</sup>

The Israelites were apparently not alone in their opposition to witchcraft and its associated practices, although as Schwemer points out, “there was but a fine line between punishable witchcraft on the one hand, and legitimate aggressive rituals and defensive anti-witchcraft rituals on the other. Where this line was drawn very much depended on the particular social constellations in which a given ritual practice took place.”<sup>105</sup> Given how these practices appear frequently in juxtaposition, with a king like Saul banning the practice but then seeking a practitioner out, it is safe to say that the situation in Israel, like other nations, was unclear.

This creates an issue for the two most prominent Israelian prophets, Elijah and Elisha.<sup>106</sup> Both performed acts which, in their context, were certainly magic. Resurrections certainly fall into that category (1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:18–37), but so also would promoting conception (2

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<sup>104</sup> Rannfrid Thelle, “Reflections of Ancient Israelite Divination in the Former Prophets,” in Jacobs and Person, *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History*, 29–30. Thelle makes a side comment that “Chronicles is somehow more ‘Deuteronomistic’ than Samuel on the judgment of Saul.” This could be seen as evidence of the early date of this particular episode since it does indeed lack any direct judgment on the various divinatory practices throughout Saul's reign.

<sup>105</sup> Daniel Schwemer, *The Anti-Witchcraft Ritual Maqlû: The Cuneiform Sources of a Magic Ceremony from Ancient Mesopotamia* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 1. The ritual of Maqlû is attested throughout the Akkadian speaking world, from both royal and private archives. See pages 43–58. Although no extant copies were found at Ugarit, there are certainly allusions to a similar vocabulary. See Olmo Lete, *Incantations and Anti-Witchcraft Texts*, 147 fn. 24 for a quotation of Maqlû in KTU 1.96.

<sup>106</sup> Isaiah also seems to have functioned as a healer (2 Kgs 20:7).

Kgs 4:8–15), the purification of food (2 Kgs 4:38–41), the healing and giving of leprosy (2 Kgs 5:1–27), and striking people blind (2 Kgs 6:15–19).<sup>107</sup> Additionally, they called fire down from heaven (1 Kgs 18:36–39; 2 Kgs 1:9–16) and provided food stuffs miraculously (1 Kgs 17:8–16; 2 Kgs 4:1–6). This is not to say that the prophets performed “magic” in the same ways described in the ANE record. There appears to have been a ritual performed for resurrection which included crying out to YHWH and stretching your body over the dead person, but aside from that the supernatural acts of the prophets are presented as natural, almost casual to the prophet.<sup>108</sup> What is more, Elijah acts independent of any kind of temple, in contrast to the usual practice, even in Hebrew society, of associating healing with the priesthood (Lev 13–14) and the temple.<sup>109</sup> This is played out in the Naaman narrative as well, with Naaman expecting to receive healing in Samaria, which was both a political and cultic center, but instead must go to Elisha’s house where he is not even received by the prophet (2 Kgs 5: ).

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<sup>107</sup> At least one commentator has compared these healings to shamanic rituals from elsewhere in the world. See Stuart Lasine, “Matters of Life and Death: The Story of Elijah and the Widow’s Son in Comparative Perspective,” *BI* 12 (2004): 124–25. For his Mesopotamian example, Lasine relies upon Jean Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, trans. Zainab Bahrani and Marc van de Mieroop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 142–43. While there are a few vague similarities to the resurrection passages from the Book of Kings and the Assyrian inscriptions cited (*ABL* 439/140: 14; and 1397/299 rev.: 5), they are insubstantial. The Assyrian examples from Bottéro appear to offer some kind of substitution for the dead person’s soul, while the biblical accounts are stripped down, personal rituals.

<sup>108</sup> Considering the healing of Naaman’s leprosy, Hugo Gressman noted a century ago, “all the incomprehensible formulas and rites that usually define magicians and healing specialists are missing [...]. Instead [one finds] a simple and clear act without drama that can be carried out with playful ease.” Hugo Gressman, *Die älteste Geschichtschreibung und Prophetie Israels* (Göttingen, 1910), 297. Translated by Isabel Cranz, “Naaman’s Healing and Gehazi’s Affliction,” *VT* 68 (2018): 541–42, fn. 2. A more recent study is Laura M. Zucconi, “Aramaean Skin Care: A New Perspective on Naaman’s Leprosy,” in Dolansky, *Sacred History, Sacred Literature*, 169–78. Zucconi makes a number of points concerning the contrast between Elijah’s healing of Naaman and the attempts to discover healing for Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1:1–3).

<sup>109</sup> For a more thorough treatment of the temple’s role in health care, see Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*, HSM 54 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 263–65. Avalos argues that the Mesopotamian and Hebrew cultures shared the belief that illness divine in origin, although he does somewhat garble the distinctions between a pestilence and more common illness. See pages 238–46.

*The use of divine omens.* Ahijah's appearance on the roadside and the rending of the garment was a divinatory omen offered to Jeroboam, which was then confirmed by events (1 Kgs 11:30–32). The anonymous man of God's death was perceived as an omen of sorts (1 Kgs 13:26). Abijah received a message that Jeroboam's wife was coming in disguise (1 Kgs 14:4). Elijah and Elisha saw the withholding of rain as a sign of God's displeasure (1 Kgs 17:1–7, 18:41–46) and they received visions of the heavenly realm (1 Kgs 22:19–23). When Elijah hears from YHWH in the Scriptures, it is generally portrayed as something spoken directly to him (1 Kgs 18:1, 19:9, 21:17), and yet at times he receives messages in natural phenomena, such as the cloud over the sea (1 Kgs 18:44). In the same vein, at times Elijah and Elisha are asked questions, as if they are oracles, and they respond in kind, although almost never offering the answer their interlocutor is looking for. The testimony of the prophets in the Scriptures is as much about a counterbalance and limit to kingship, as Cross once asserted, as it was about declaring the word of YHWH.<sup>110</sup>

In all of the Book of Kings, the northern prophets are unique among the biblical prophets in this supernatural emphasis. Aside from a dream announcing Eli's death and God providing direct instruction in dealing with Saul and David, the Davidic seers served solely as mouthpieces for YHWH. They did not perform miracles. Likewise, Isaiah is able to use some level of divination, does have a single episode of controlling the shadow of the sun (2 Kgs 20:5–11), and at one point acts as a healer (2 Kgs 20:7–8; Isa 38:21–22) but other than that he serves chiefly as an advisor. Jeremiah demonstrates no supernatural powers at all. The postexilic prophets provide

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<sup>110</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Ethic*, 221.

a number of supernatural visions in their oracles, but no miracles accompany their testimony.<sup>111</sup> It is hard to deny that the Israelian prophets did present omens, including their condemnation motifs.

#### A Point of Affinity: Prophetic Archives

As will be discussed in chapter five, there are no known archives of NWS texts from the period of the Israelite kingdoms, and there are common sense reasons why such an archive would not have survived in its original state. These archives, however, are generally not composed of extraordinarily long records but rather short oracles or declarations. There is good reason to see the literary prophets as being structured in very much the same way. Examining the structure of Isaiah, de Jong sees the same effort in the compilation of Isaiah's oracles. At least the first part of Isaiah (1–39) is a carefully ordered prophetic archive, but of a higher order than the Assyrians.<sup>112</sup> Isaiah contains narrative sections as well as oracles predicting future events, including condemnation motifs.

Likewise, the books of Amos and Hosea, both of which are northern texts, are archival. They contain a number of oracles which are thematically linked but also clearly distinct.<sup>113</sup> Thus, Andersen and Freedman can describe the structure of Amos as having “more structure than a

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<sup>111</sup> The only postexilic book which comes close to the northern prophets in terms of supernatural narrative is the Book of Daniel. The setting, a solitary prophet opposing a series of kings who derive power from other gods, is quite similar to Elijah. The question of whether Daniel should be considered a prophet has been debated since the rabbinical period. Daniel was considered a prophet by the early church (Matt 24:15), reflective of some, but not all Jewish tradition. The consensus is that Daniel should not be included in the prophets from a genre or canonical perspective. For discussion, see Carol A. Newsom, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2018), 12–18, 53–54; Paul R. House, *Daniel*, TOTC 23 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 18–23; Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 497–512; Donald E. Gowan, *Daniel*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 20–24. An additional, intriguing resource that brings together threads of genre and comparative studies is Tawny Holm, *Of Courtiers and Kings: The Biblical Daniel Narratives and Ancient Story-Collections*, EANEC 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

<sup>112</sup> Jong, *Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets*, 438–39.

<sup>113</sup> The relationship of these, and other literary prophets, to the IPM is discussed in Appendix C.

mere anthology of Amos' oracles but less symmetry than a completely fresh literary work."<sup>114</sup>

Hosea is structured in more of a narrative framework, but still clearly is a compilation rather than a complete composition.<sup>115</sup>

Most Mesopotamian archives include only sayings or findings, but this may very well be a symptom of the restrictions of the cuneiform script. If the Israelites valued prophecy at least as much as the Assyrians, it is reasonable that they would have followed the impulse to archive these prophetic entries. While the records of the Israelian prophets, especially the works of Elijah and Elisha, are viewed as distinct from the literary prophets, this is as much about the fact that they are embedded in the Book of Kings rather than standing independently as it is about their style. If they were to be read as a work within a work, they would not look much different from Isaiah, Amos, Hosea or Jeremiah.<sup>116</sup>

### Chapter Summary

There is little doubt that there was an active and varied prophetic tradition in the ANE prior to the rise of the Omride state. This tradition existed primarily in Mesopotamia, but it is evident in the Levant as well, explicitly and implicitly in Ugarit in the LBA and alluded to in NWS inscriptions as well. These prophetic traditions included many that were associated with temple cults but also an intuitive tradition that operated outside of the temple cults and may have

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<sup>114</sup> Frances I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC 24A (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 10. See also James L. Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 12–14; Hans W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, trans. Walder Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 98–100.

<sup>115</sup> Hans W. Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), xxiii.

<sup>116</sup> Appendix C includes a rudimentary examination of the influence of the Israelian prophets upon subsequent northern prophets like Amos, Hosea, and Jonah as well as the southern preexilic prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah.

been closely associated with secondary state kingship. Some, but not all, of the prophetic centers discussed had large archives, intentionally organized and transmitted repositories for prophetic materials. These archives must have been fairly commonplace given the numbers of documents that have been recovered.

Prophecy was often closely tied to kingship in all these societies, and in the next chapter, we will see that the nature of kingship in Canaanite states in particular was tied to a prophetic function. The Israelian prophets, like Elijah and Elisha, functioned outside of the institutions of the kingdom. As will become clear in the next chapter, this was because kingship was closely associated with religion, and the Omrides may have been employing Canaanite religion to strengthen their claim after a century of turmoil in the northern kingdom. These Yahwistic Israelian prophets did not recognize the authority of the Canaanite form of royal religion, but they also did not completely reject the legitimacy of the Omride kings. They therefore formed a sort of loyal opposition, quite distinct from the seers who were tightly integrated into the Davidic kingdom. These seers freely disagreed with the king and seem to do so with impunity because they spoke for the God of the nation. They were very much a part of the court. The prophets who faced the Omrides in the northern kingdom, however, operated outside of the court and establishment. That court and its legitimizing principles as an Iron Age secondary state are the subjects of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: SECONDARY STATE FORMATION AND ROYAL CULT IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT DURING THE IRON AGE

### Introduction

In the Levant, the transition from Iron Age I to Iron Age IIA was defined by the presence of secondary states. These states had unclear political boundaries, so people moved rather freely among them as necessity required. Language was not a barrier to discourse, as the Aramaeo-Canaanite languages dominated the area and there is good reason to assume there was significant linguistic mingling, a matter which will be discussed in chapter six.<sup>1</sup> The states are largely identified by references in archival records, which then serve as a reference for archaeological remains. The difference in extant remains between the two Hebrew kingdoms has led many to conclude that Israel in the north was more affluent and more active earlier than Judah in the south. This chapter will deal with the political landscape surrounding the Omride kingdom of Israel before delving into the makeup of the Omride kingdom itself. Understanding this conceptual world is vital for highlighting historically unique aspects of the Israelian Prophetic Materials, allowing us to place them in their appropriate historical context.

Diachronic readers, like Römer, assume a late date of the Book of Kings because they presume to know the ideological reasoning of the authors. “They [ancient Israelite writers] seek to explain exile, and to do this ... they construct a coherent history, which they divide into periods and present all the negative events that occur in that history.”<sup>2</sup> Knoppers once offered the

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<sup>1</sup> These can be roughly divided into Aramaic, Ugaritic, and the Canaanite languages. This last category includes Ammonite, Amarna Canaanite, Edomite, Hebrew, Moabite, Phoenician, and the unidentified language from the Deir ‘Allā Plaster. The term “Aramaeo-Canaanite” comes from Na‘ama Pat-El and Aren M. Wilson-Wright, “Features of Aramaeo-Canaanite,” *JOAS* 138 (2018): 781–806. See also Aren M. Wilson-Wright, “The Canaanite Languages,” in *The Semitic Languages*, ed. John Huehnergard and Na‘ama Pat-El, 2nd ed., Routledge Language Family Series (London: Routledge, 2019), 510–32; Na‘ama Pat-El and Aren M. Wilson-Wright, “The Features of Canaanite: A Reevaluation,” *ZDMG* 166 (2016): 41–55.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Römer, “Biblical Historiography and Reconstruction of the Biblical History,” *Indian Theological Studies* 53 (2016): 378.

idea of Kings as a “living tradition that repeatedly adapted to new challenges and new settings.”<sup>3</sup> The prophetic texts are considered to be appended to this ideological story to add some kind of authority, and they are therefore marginalized.<sup>4</sup> If the historians needed elements to offer a divine voice in opposition to the sins of the monarchs, prophets were inserted. Prophets are treated as theological tropes, not historical figures.

This is a very modern reading of the prophets, one which assumes modern sensibilities are in play. Interpreters read their own social world or literary expectations into the text at hand.<sup>5</sup> It creates a dichotomy, a clearly observable difference between the way the prophets constructed their prophecies and the way modern interpreters then read them.<sup>6</sup> At root is a failure of biblical scholarship to objectively integrate discoveries from the historical context. In contrast with Römer and Knoppers, Lehnart saw the prophets as savior figures (*Rettergestalten*) meant to redeem the kingdom from the corrupted Omride kings, foreshadowing the arrival of Jehu.<sup>7</sup> Although Lehnart does believe some facets of these prophetic materials are literary creations, he affirms the essential quality of the prophets as opposing the trend toward Canaanite religion and polity in the northern kingdom. The question should not be whether the modern interpreter believes the prophetic text to be historical. It should be whether the original reader understood it

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<sup>3</sup> Gary N. Knoppers, “Theories of the Redaction(s) of Kings,” in Halpern and Lemaire, *The Book of Kings*, 88.

<sup>4</sup> For arguments in favor of marginalizing the prophets, see Nadav Na‘aman, “Prophetic Stories as Sources for the Histories of Jehoshaphat and the Omrides,” *Biblica* 78.2 (1997): 153–73. The roots of the arguments for their central position can be found in John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interaction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 144.

<sup>5</sup> Patricia Dutcher-Walls, *Narrative Art, Political Rhetoric: The Case of Athaliah and Joash*, JSOTSup 209 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 13–14. Although Dutcher-Walls brings the idea up in the context of feminist interpretation, the point is valid and one of the realizations of postmodern theology that has yet to make its presence known in areas like source criticism.

<sup>6</sup> Lester L. Grabbe and Martti Nissinen, eds., *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former and Latter Prophets and Other Texts*, ANEM 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Bernhard Lehnart, *Prophet und König im Nordreich Israel: Studien zur sogenannten vorklassischen Prophetie im Nordreich Israel anhand der Samuel-, Elija- und Elischa-Überlieferungen*, VTSup 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 477–82.

to be historical and if the texts fit in the context in such a way as to argue for contemporaneous composition. To answer that question, we must therefore look at what can be determined of the historical setting and evaluate the text from the inside as readers rather than as external analysts.

### **The Emergence of Secondary States in Iron Age Southern Levant**

The end of the LBA was marked by the collapse of large, ethnically homogenous kingdoms like the Egyptian New Kingdom (ca. 1350 BCE) and the Hittite Kingdom (ca. 1178 BCE). Peripheral kingdoms such as Ugarit collapsed as well. The collapse occurred over a relatively brief period of time across the eastern Mediterranean. What brought about this collapse is still largely unknown, and it was probably the result of a number of factors, including natural disasters and environmental changes, which may have prompted a rise in rural pastoralism because central governments could not provide for larger urban populations.<sup>8</sup> Dever summarizes the impact of the collapse in the Levant.<sup>9</sup> (1) The already marginal economy became isolated. (2) Technology in use was not able to increase production. (3) Local conflicts, possibly with the *ʿAbiru* and the Sea Peoples disrupted civic life. (4) Larger polities were stretched beyond a

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<sup>8</sup> There is some reason to assume that environment was a key component of the migration of the people of Israel from Egypt into the Southern Levant. After migrating from Egypt, the Israelites would have encountered a harsh, colder climate. At around 1000 BCE, the Holocene glaciers were at their height, so the period was dry; but then there was a rapid warming, which would have led to an agricultural explosion and a subsequent population increase. See Arie S. Issar and Mattanyah Zohar, *Climate Change: Environment and History of the Near East*, 2nd ed. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2007), 163–93.

<sup>9</sup> William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites? And Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 176. Dever places the emergence of the Israelites in the LBA, with a continuity between that period through the Iron Age I transition. He provides a good summary of other attempts to place the Israelites in this transitional period as well, 129–51. The existence of Israel before the Omride period is not within the scope of this dissertation, but Dever offers a good discussion of the historicity of United Monarchy Israel elsewhere. See William G. Dever, “Histories and Non-Histories of Ancient Israel: The Question of the United Monarchy,” in *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. John Day, JSOTSup 406 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 65–94. See also Yuval Gadot, “Continuity and Change in the Late Bronze to Iron Age Transition in Israel’s Coastal Plain: A Long Term Perspective,” in *Bene Israel: Studies in the Archaeology of Israel and the Levant during the Bronze and Iron Ages in Honour of Israel Finkelstein*, ed. Alexander Fantalkin and Assaf Yasur-Landau, CHANE 31 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 55–74; Yitzhak Meitlis, “A Re-analysis of the Archaeological Evidence for the Beginning of the Iron Age I,” in Fantalkin and Yasur-Landau, *Bene Israel*, 105–12.

critical state and became first overbearing and then absent. (5) The religious myths which provided unity alongside ruling powers faced challenges they could not meet.<sup>10</sup>

The chaotic state of Levantine affairs in the LBA collapse and Early Iron Age I is captured graphically in the books of Joshua and Judges. The collapse and decentralization of government seems to have first devolved to an increased pastoralism, with single family compounds of no more than a dozen or two people being the primary social unit. Fortified hard points ruled by tribal chieftains dotted the landscape. These were eventually unified into localized, petty kingdoms which were led by rulers (*mlk* in all NWS languages). These kingdoms are often referred to as “secondary states,” and they are a distinctive characteristic of the transition from Late Iron Age I to Iron Age IIA.<sup>11</sup>

#### Characteristics of the Iron Age Secondary State

A secondary state is difficult to define. They were clearly something larger than a local polity, but also not a state that could be classified as an empire or dominant kingdom. Joffe defined a secondary state according to a set of functional attributes. (1) There must have been a central palace which functioned as a social-religious locus. Most of the population lived beyond the practical reach of the palace itself, but they still identified with the rulers at the central site.

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<sup>10</sup> When Dever uses the term “myth,” he is describing something that is not necessarily factual in the fullest, modern sense, but is nonetheless grounded in history and formative for a society. In other words, he sees myth as primarily etiological. Elsewhere, he wrote, “A myth is simply a narrative, usually an ancient story, about the supernatural or larger-than-life legendary heroes. Myth is an attempt to provide a story—a worldview—capable of explaining *why* things are the way they are.” In his view, myths are generally historical, but not necessarily factual in a modern sense. See William G. Dever, *Has Archaeology Buried the Bible?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 22–25. See also William G. Dever, “The Patriarchs and Matriarchs of Ancient Israel: Myth or History?” in *One Hundred Years of American Archaeology in the Middle East: Proceedings of the American School of Oriental Research Centennial Celebration, Washington, DC, April 2000*, ed. Douglas R. Clark and Victor H. Matthews (Boston: ASOR, 2003), 39–56.

<sup>11</sup> The use of terms like “Iron Age” are increasingly problematic. The criteria for setting dates vary widely from author to author. The terms are used for relative and not absolute chronology. For a discussion of the age, consider Keith W. Whitelam, “Palestine During the Iron Age,” in *The Biblical World*, ed. John Barton, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2002), 386–410. See Appendix D for discussion of the various schemes for dating this period.

(2) Administration was carried out by some type of ruling elite. The distinctions between the ruling elite and the populace were not usually well-defined. Sometimes it was ethnic or tribal, but it varied culture to culture.<sup>12</sup> This ruling elite was a landed aristocracy of sorts, generally autonomous, but under obligation to support the central king in ways including various taxation systems and military levies. Joffe addresses another distinction only implicitly. (3) Generally, secondary states formed under a perceived threat from outside.<sup>13</sup> This kind of pressure is described in 1 Samuel, when the people asked Samuel for a king because of the power of the Levantine groups that had kings (1 Sam 8:4–9). (4) One component Joffe does not include is the interconnectedness of the economies of a secondary state. Throughout the Levant, most of the secondary states' territory was agricultural or pastoral. Centralizing at least a portion of the output in urban areas opened the door for trade with neighboring states for goods.<sup>14</sup> This economic necessity was perhaps a benefit of the secondary state rather than a cause, but it nonetheless helped define such states. States offered a shared political and ethnic identity, a natural cohesion, even if ethnicity was not as static a concept as modern readers assume it to be.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Alexander Joffe, "The Rise of Secondary States in the Iron Age Levant," *JESHO* 45 (2002): 425–67. Joffe covers the distinctions of the LBA and Iron Age petty kingdoms in detail, but also believes the relationship between the two is not clearly delineated in the archaeological record. The retreat of large polities and the rise of secondary states did not necessarily alter affairs on the ground. In some areas, the same pottery and practices continued through the transition. In others, there are radical alterations in the material culture.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 434–42. Joffe notes, for example, that the Phoenicians took advantage of the situation to conduct an "involution," reasserting traits like autonomous city polities, and this in turn meant they were not unified against the threat of larger polities when they emerged. On the other hand, states like Aram and Israel which created defensive forces and attempted to secure their borders from incursions, as well as forming beneficial alliances to keep the ambitions of other states in check, were able to have a more sustained impact locally.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin W. Porter, "Assembling the Iron Age Levant: The Archaeology of Communities, Polities, and Imperial Peripheries," *JAR* 24 (2016): 388–90.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.

The necessities of the LBA collapse and Early Iron Age I necessitated the development of effective, local kingship built primarily around urban centers.<sup>16</sup> These states appear to have arisen from tribes and chiefdoms because of the martial requirements of a world where the retreat of the dominant hegemonies has left a vacuum. Urban sites provided a centralizing influence for secondary states with rural populations shrinking as urban sites expanded. The means by which these urban sites maintained their secondary states is still not very well understood. Halpern saw the transition from the primarily tribal structure to monarchic states as the synchronization of two factors: (1) security provided by a king in the city-states and (2) religious fervor woven into Iron Age kingship.<sup>17</sup> Gregorio del Olmo Lete looks to the “palace cult” or royal religion as the focus of this religious fervor rather than the central mythological religions. This royal religion may have existed primarily on the non-literary level and therefore must be gleaned from oblique references in the mythological texts found at Aramaeo-Canaanite sites such as Ugarit.<sup>18</sup> These texts are superficially focused on the central mythology, but there is

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<sup>16</sup> See Bruce Routledge, “Learning to Love the King: Urbanism and the State in Iron Age Moab,” in *Urbanism in Antiquity: From Mesopotamia to Crete*, ed. Walter E. Aufrecht, Neil A. Mirau, and Steven W. Gauley, JSOTSup 244 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 130–44. This volume explores a number of factors that contributed to urbanism and the rise of secondary states. See also Dever, “Archaeology, Urbanism, and the Rise of the Israelite State,” 182–183. Also, Nicolae Roddy, “Landscape of Shadows: The Image of City in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Cities through the Looking Glass: Essays on the History and Archaeology of Biblical Urbanism*, ed. Rami Arav (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 12–13. Dever stresses the lack of precision in terminology employed in the conversation. It is a matter that has not, as of yet, been satisfactorily resolved. There was a marked decrease of rural population centers in Iron Age I, and Dever estimates that up to 20% of the population of the Levant may have been concentrated in these cities. Urban sites have certain hallmarks. Faust argues a city can be loosely defined as a site with a high population density in comparison to a village (3–60 people per ha) and evidence of socioeconomic stratification. Additionally, the presence of urban walls is a common, but not ubiquitous, urban marker. Urban walls are defensive, in contrast to rural boundary walls, which Faust sees as serving a social purpose. See Avraham Faust, “The Bounded Landscape: Archaeology, Language, Texts, and the Israelite Perception of Space,” *JMA* 30 (2017): 3–32. It is important to note that these are loose parameters, and the definition of an urban site is largely left to the excavator and/or commentator.

<sup>17</sup> Baruch Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*, HSS 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 177, 182–84.

<sup>18</sup> Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religions According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit*, trans. W.G.E. Watson, 2nd ed., AOAT 408 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014), 24–25.

good reason to see the more practical royal religion behind the creation of the particular texts that are extant.<sup>19</sup>

In the context of the Iron Age IIA Levant, secondary states can be broadly described as those political entities which emerged between the collapse of large states at the end of LBA and the reemergence of large states which ultimately ended Iron Age IIA. They were semi-stable, transitional states formed around urban centers with relatively strong leaders who could establish a bureaucratic network of some kind, primarily through a ruling elite and some kind of religious unity.<sup>20</sup> Such states did not, however, have the apparatus, whatever that entailed, to evolve past the regional level and instead were subjugated once their powerful neighbors began to project power in the Iron Age IIA–B transition. They did not disappear, but rather became clients of these larger states.

### **The Cultural Melting Pot of Secondary States**

Although they developed at different times and under somewhat varying stresses, the Levantine secondary states enter written history at the end of the ninth century BCE, although their constituent people groups existed long before their written records. These states endured in various iterations until the beginning of the sixth century BCE and the conquests of the Babylonians. The expansion of the Neo-Assyrians in the eighth century BCE caused these petty kingdoms first to compete for primacy, and then to consolidate in a variety of alliances in opposition to each other and the Neo-Assyrians before ultimately capitulating and becoming

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<sup>19</sup> Of particular interest in this area is the work of Aaron Tugendhaft, who has mined the Ugaritic Baal Cycle for contemporary political significance. Tugendhaft's work will be explored more thoroughly below.

<sup>20</sup> Although she deals with the much earlier urbanization of Sumer, Anne Porter has insight into this process, particularly the marriage of politics and religion in these societies. She sees economy, religion, and culture as three interconnected forces which may contribute more to the rise and fall of societies more than conquest or dominion. It is an interesting perspective. See Anne Porter, *Mobile Pastoralism and the Formation of Near Eastern Civilizations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 65–163.

client kingdoms. This was a dynamic situation, so the secondary state cultures were a flexible combination of indigenous, autochthonous cultures and behaviors or expectations imposed by the larger polities. All of this occurred in a relatively short time, and yet the events occupy almost the entirety of 1–2 Kings.

Outside of the ruling elites, people do not appear to have had strong city-state affinities beyond requirements imposed upon them such as taxes and military service. Primary affiliations were patronymic or toponymic, a reality that is present in both the biblical and extrabiblical records. The same pottery types appear in the same stratigraphic layers throughout the region, and while the number of sites varies from area to area, the contents of the site tend to be quite similar.<sup>21</sup> Of particular concern are the Judaeon highlands, which lack any substantial sites with material culture that can be given an absolute date through radiocarbon dating.<sup>22</sup> There is evidence of both ethnic mingling and of groups that remained in isolation, such as the Shephelah between the Judahite highlands and the coastal plain. The Shephelah remained a Canaanite enclave until the beginning of Iron Age IIC.<sup>23</sup>

Secondary states seem to have had fluid political boundaries. People living in the outlying territories where two or more polities interacted on the ground were not clearly distinguished by one affinity or the other in everyday life.<sup>24</sup> The languages appear to have been

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<sup>21</sup> David Ilan, “The ‘Conquest’ of the Highlands in the Iron Age I,” in *The Social Archaeology of the Levant from Prehistory to the Present*, ed. Assaf Yasur-Landau, Eric H. Cline, and Yorke M. Rowan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 283–84.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>23</sup> Avraham Faust, “The Shephelah in the Iron Age: A New Look on the Settlement of Judah,” *PEQ* 145, (2013): 204–6. Unfortunately, the region was almost completely destroyed by the Assyrians under Sennacherib and had not fully recovered when the Babylonians invaded a century later.

<sup>24</sup> The idea of clearly delineated political boundaries is a modern one. Until recently, most ancient societies were viewed as having a core and peripheries. Increasingly, there has been growing interest in the question of whether the common people in these “peripheral zones” had any real reliance upon central entities. See Annlee

mutually intelligible or easily acquired for the most part, and multilingualism appears to have been relatively common, although literacy may have been initially restricted.<sup>25</sup> The life ways of people did not vary greatly in the inland regions. This allowed for easy movement of people according to any number of necessities. There are numerous biblical accounts of this kind of movement, but the most important to the present survey is the Shunammite woman, whose quest to reclaim ancestral land plays a central part of the Elisha narrative (2 Kgs 8:1–6). These states should be thought of not as modern nations but rather as fluid spheres of influence and people movement which tended to have sort of gravitational wells of influence around their core city-state or networks of city-states. Understanding the basic distinctives of these secondary states has importance in Israelite study.

### The Coastal Phoenician City-States

The first city-states to evolve into a secondary state were the Phoenician coastal sites.<sup>26</sup>

Byblos was the earliest, but Sidon was probably the most economically powerful in the Late Iron

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Elizabeth Dolan and Steven John Edwards, “Preference or Periphery? Cultural Interchange and Trade Routes Along the Boundaries of Late Iron Age Moab,” *IEJ* 152 (2020): 53–72; Terence N. D’Altroy, “Empires Reconsidered: Current Archaeological Approaches,” *Asian Archaeology* 1 (2018): 95–109; Craig W. Tyson, “Peripheral Elite as Imperial Collaborators,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 70 (2014): 481–509.

<sup>25</sup> Multilingualism can be identified primarily through the written records, not just monumental texts but also graffiti and casual texts. See Izak Cornelius, “Visible Multilingualism in Anatolia and the Levant (1st Millennium BCE),” in *Multilingualism in Ancient Contexts: Perspectives from Ancient Near East and Early Christian Contexts: Perspectives from Ancient Near Eastern and Early Christian Contexts*, ed. Louis C. Jonker, Angelika Berlejung, and Izak Cornelius (Stellenbosch, ZA: Sun Press, 2021), 57–74. On the topic of mutual intelligibility, Francis I. Anderson, “Language Bridges and Barriers in Ancient Israelite Society,” *Ancient Society* 16.2 (1986): 72–78. Although this is an obscure article, Anderson applies common sense to connect the dots on mutual intelligibility and his thesis is worth consideration.

<sup>26</sup> There are a handful of recent histories of the Phoenician city-states. J. Brian Peckham, *Phoenicia: Episodes and Anecdotes from the Ancient Mediterranean* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014); Josette Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*, trans. Andrew Plummer (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2018); Josephine Crawley Quinn and Nicholas C. Vella, eds. *The Punic Mediterranean: Identities and Identification from Phoenician Settlement to Roman Rule*, British School at Rome Studies (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Josephine Crawley Quinn, *In Search of the Phoenicians* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2017); Carolina López-Ruiz, *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021). These latter

Age I–IIA. The Phoenicians spoke a Canaanite language that was written with an alphabet possibly adapted from the Egyptian phonetic signs used to write out Semitic words.<sup>27</sup> The Phoenician writing system, which was one of an assortment of systems that emerged almost simultaneously in Iron Age I to replace the adaptations of hieroglyphic and cuneiform writing systems in the LBA, was put to good use in trade. Unlike their neighbors inland, the Phoenician city-states maintained minimal local presence. The Phoenician cities were ideally situated for inland peoples to bring goods, which could be traded for materials from the Mediterranean world. Their trade, alphabet, and eventually people spread across the Mediterranean basin, founding cities like Carthage and Utica around the time the secondary states were developing in the Levant. Sidon was the dominant polity in the region, a state of affairs that is evident in Greek and Levantine interactions with Phoenicia.<sup>28</sup>

The Hebrew Scriptures elevated Sidon as the firstborn of Canaan (Gen 10:15) and referenced the city's extensive merchant trade (Isa 23:2). Solomon's inclusion of Sidonian women into his harem, while a sign of his diplomatic inclusiveness, was also seen as a sign of his moral decay leading to idolatry (1 Kgs 11:1–8). They seem to have viewed Sidon's sister city Tyre more favorably, with that city's king Hiram helping with the construction of the Jerusalem temple (2 Sam 5; 1 Kgs 7:13–14, 9:11–12). By the time of Jeremiah, however, the two cities

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two focus on the development of Phoenician/Punic identity beyond the Levant but provide historical sketches of the Phoenician homeland.

<sup>27</sup> John Coleman Darnell, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, Marilyn J. Lundberg, et al., "Two Early Alphabetic Inscriptions from the Wadi El-Hôl: New Evidence for the Origin of the Alphabet from the Western Desert of Egypt," *AASOR* 59 (2005): 63–124. While Egyptians had little interest in the affairs of the *hammu*, their word for the people of the Levant, the Canaanites borrowed extensively from the Egyptians. The Phoenician alphabet is the best known, although there were other writings systems being employed. Dominant languages with non-alphabetic writing systems tend to develop phonetic systems for writing foreign words. The best-known modern example is the Japanese *katakana*, which is used in concert with the native *hiragana* and *kanji*. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

<sup>28</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*, 116–17.

become linked as a single entity in the Hebrew mind (Jer 25:22). Writing in the first century CE, Flavius Josephus presents the two as more or less one entity. He claimed to have access to now lost local histories that detailed the dynastic change with the assassination of Phelles and usurpation of Ithobaal (אתנעל), the father of Ahab's wife Jezebel (*Ag. Ap.* 1.126). It seems likely that Ithobaal ruled both Tyre and Sidon as a single kingdom, but like Omri, he was a usurper, which may account for their willingness to form a marriage alliance.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Aramaeans**

The largest Levantine state for most of Iron Age IIA was Aram-Damascus. The Aramaeans as a people group are hardly distinguishable from Canaanites until the emergence of a recognizably Aramaic language forms. Several inscriptions from the ninth and eighth century BCE show Aramaic as distinct enough from other NWS languages to have taken form during the LBA at least.<sup>30</sup> In Deuteronomy, Jacob is referred to as a nomadic Aramaean (ארמי אבד), a reiteration of his time in the region but also perhaps as a historical allusion to the Aramaean origins (Deut 26:5, Gen 28:6–9). There are those who believe Aramaean prehistory can be found in the stories of the *aḥlamû* who appear in a few LBA reports from Mesopotamia.<sup>31</sup> This is reinforced by known historical events, as the Aramaeans are described in Mesopotamian histories as regional invaders. The Aramaeans were considered somewhat wild, beyond the

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<sup>29</sup> Elayi, *The History of Phoenicia*, 131–32.

<sup>30</sup> Holger Gzella, “New Light on Linguistic Diversity in Pre-Achaemenid Aramaic: Wandering Aramaeans or Language Spread?” in Berlejung, Maier, and Schüle, *Wandering Aramaeans*, 21–25.

<sup>31</sup> *CAD* 1:192–193.

boundaries of civilized people. Their invasions in the early Iron Age put in motion the consolidations of power that would eventually yield both the Assyrian and Babylonian polities.<sup>32</sup>

Because of their decentralized nature, it is difficult to locate the Aramaean borders during the Iron Age. Younger chooses to define their location via “four major distinct geographic spheres” where other entities encountered them.<sup>33</sup> In the Levant, the Aramaeans did not behave as looters and raiders as they did elsewhere. Because the region was ungoverned by a large polity, they took control of significant city-states.<sup>34</sup> Aramaean power coalesced into several small autonomous city-states, the chief of which were Arpad (Aleppo), Ḥama, Damascus and Gozan. Damascus eventually became the dominant Aramaean kingdom in the region, and it was referred to simply as “Aram” (אַרַם) in Scripture. Aramaean sources use the toponym “Damascus” (Old Aram. *dmšq*, EA 53:63, 107:28, 197:21).<sup>35</sup> Younger claims the Assyrians records used Damascus (*di-maš-qu*) sparingly, preferring *imērīsu* (Akk. “his donkeys”), or as they often did with subject

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<sup>32</sup> RINAP 1, Tiglath-Pileser III 37:16–21. For a thorough examination of the evidence, consult Alexander Johannes Edmonds, “A People without Borders? Tracing the Shifting Identity and Territorialities of the Ahlameans,” in *Aramean Borders: Defining Aramaean Territories in the 10th–8th Centuries BCE.*, ed. Jan Dušek and Jana Mynářová, CHANE 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 26–62. A broader linguistic survey of the poorly understood transition into the Aramaeans is available in Héléne Sader, “History,” in Niehr, *The Arameans in Ancient Syria*, 15–16.

<sup>33</sup> K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *A Political History of the Arameans: From Their Origins to the End of their Polities*, ABS 13 (Williston, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 110. See also K. Lawson Younger, Jr., “The Late Bronze Age/Iron Age Transition and the Origins of the Arameans,” in *Ugarit at Seventy-Five: Proceedings from the Symposium Ugarit at Seventy-Five Held at Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, February 18–20, 2005*, ed. K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 131–74. Younger’s idea of “geographic spheres” may be a better idiom for understanding these secondary states than the idea of borders, but as of yet, it has not been utilized in this way.

<sup>34</sup> Younger, *A Political History of the Arameans*, 191.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 549–50. The origin of the name “Damascus” is debated, as Younger points out. Albright’s concise etymology is attractive but probably not complete. See William F. Albright, “Abram the Hebrew: A New Archaeological Interpretation,” *BASOR* 163 (1963): 47. See also HALOT, s.v. “דַּמָּשְׁקַי,” 227. The Egyptians seem to have intentionally avoided learning the names of Levantine peoples. Younger references the possible Eg. transcription as *ti-ms-s-k-w* or *ti-ms-k-w*. The more common practice in Egypt, however, was to use general terms such as *ʿmw*, generally translated as “Asiatics.” In hieratic legal documents from the late 8th and early 7th centuries BCE refer to Arameans as *rmt-ḥtj*, “northern men.” See Gunter Vittmann, “Arameans in Egypt,” in Berlejung, Schüle, and Macier, *Wandering Arameans*, 233. For a more thorough survey of the interactions between Egypt and Aram, consider W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Syria and Egypt: From the Tell el Amarna Letters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

states, a *bītu-X* formulation.<sup>36</sup> The biblical record explains Damascus's rise by a subjugation by David (2 Sam 8:5) and then a rebellion under Solomon (1 Kgs 11:23–25). There is little known archaeological evidence within the city of Damascus itself, since it remains a heavily populated city, but the Aramaean presence in the region is well-attested both archaeologically and textually.<sup>37</sup>

The Aramaeans first appear in the Assyrian records during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BCE), and they were a troubling threat for quite some time.<sup>38</sup> They may have consolidated into regional kingdoms, eventually dominated by Aram-Damascus, because of the emerging Assyrian threat. They were both allies and opponents of the Assyrians over the next three centuries. On the Kurkh monument, Aleppo appears as an Assyrian enemy, while Damascus and Hama appear as allies.<sup>39</sup> The kings of Sam'al, another Aramaean kingdom, left monumental evidence which includes appeals to the Assyrians for assistance at various times, just as Ahaz of Judah did (2 Kgs 16:5–9).<sup>40</sup> After Damascus fell to the Assyrians (ca. 800 BCE), the Aramaeans merged into the Assyrian identity. The Assyrians adopted Aramaic as their

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<sup>36</sup> For this use of *imērīsu*, see CAD 8:5B, 115. A search of the ORACC digital format of RINAP shows twelve occurrences in the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (for example, RINAP 1 Tiglath-Pileser III 27), ten for Sargon II, five for Ashurbanipal (RINAP Ashurbanipal 11, viii 120, ix 9; 22 i' 1"; 194 iii 59, iv 11), and one for Sennacherib (RINAP Sennacherib 17). RIMA lists two additional uses from Sennacherib (RIMA 3.0.102.009, 3.0.102.014).

<sup>37</sup> Younger, *A Political History of the Arameans*, 553–57.

<sup>38</sup> Allan R. Millard, "Assyrians, Aramaeans, and Aramaic," in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershon Galil, Mark Geller, and Allan Millard, VTSup 130 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 204–05.

<sup>39</sup> Aleppo's ruler is not named, but the site is listed as one of those conquered. Damascus (as *imērīsu*) and Hama appear in col. II, lines 90–91. See A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of Early First Millennium BC II (858–745 BC)*, RIMA 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 23.

<sup>40</sup> Millard, "Assyrians, Aramaeans, and Aramaic," 207; Bustenay Oded, "Ahaz's Appeal to Tiglath-Pileser III in the Context of the Assyrian Policy of Expansion," in *Studies in the Archaeology and History of Ancient Israel in Honour of M. Dothan*, ed. Michael Heltzer, Arthur Segal, and Daniel Kaufman (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1993), 63–71. For a table of the participants and their polities, see Younger, *A Political History of the Arameans*, 456.

diplomatic language in the Levant. Millard believes that this was an intentional political move.<sup>41</sup> While they continued to set up monolingual Assyrian monuments in the west, for local propaganda, the Assyrians employed Aramaic in the Levant and other local languages elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> On the ground level, however, Aramaic became the workaday language of the entire region.<sup>43</sup> The legacy of these long-lived people and their short-lived kingdoms is mostly known linguistically.

### Peripheral States

Other kingdoms like Ammon, Edom, and Moab formed on the periphery of the larger secondary states. Because their languages were mutually intelligible with the Phoenicians and Israelites, these kingdoms maintained close relationships with them.<sup>44</sup> The names themselves, however, were largely geographical and not initially political. For example, Moab has been referred to as an “un-state” because the kingdom is generally believed to have been largely

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<sup>41</sup> Millard, “Assyrians, Aramaeans, and Aramaic,” 206–8.

<sup>42</sup> There are Luwian and Phoenician inscriptions Azittawada (modern Karatepe in southern Turkey) and the Çineköy inscription of Urikki (modern Çine, also in Turkey), which also includes a cuneiform version. See Recai Tekoğlu and André Lemaire, “La Bilingue royale Louvito-Phénicienne de Çineköy,” *CRAI* 144 (2000): 961–1006; André Lemaire, “West Semitic Epigraphy and the History of the Levant during the 12th–10th Centuries BCE,” in *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History*, ed. Gershon Galil, Ayelet Gilboa, Aren M. Maeir, and Dan’el Kahn, AOAT 392 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 291–308; Steven Kaufman, “The Phoenician Inscription of the Incirli Trilingual: A Tentative Reconstruction and Translation,” *Maarav* 14.2 (2007): 7–26.

<sup>43</sup> Millard, “Assyrians, Aramaeans, and Aramaic,” 210–12. The Assyrians themselves may not have acquired Aramaic and instead relied upon a class of Aramaic scribes to work alongside the Assyrian scribes, as detailed in the Nimrud Wine Lists: *LÚ A.BA KUR.aš+šur-a-a LÚ A.BA KUR.ara-ma-a-a*, “Assyrian scribe, Aramean scribe.” (*MSL* 12:329 v 5–6). Martti Nissinen, “Outlook: Aramaeans Outside of Syria,” in Niehr, *The Aramaeans in Ancient Syria*, 294.

<sup>44</sup> Not only are the languages all NWS, but they also remained heavily influenced by Phoenician through their history. Much of their syntax and vocabulary is close enough that identifying which language an inscription is in is often quite difficult and sometimes relies solely on paleographic analysis. There are only a handful of known inscriptions in each. For an up-to-date summary of their close relationship, consider the previously cited source, Huehnergard and Pat-el, *The Semitic Languages*, 509–51. Although dated, a thorough inventory of Ammonite inscriptions is available in Jackson, *The Ammonite Language*.

pastoral, lacking a stable capital city until the 8th century BCE.<sup>45</sup> Moab did not have the diplomatic relationships that Israel had, but one of the most important Canaanite language texts is the Moabite Stone, on which Mesha memorializes his victory over Israel.<sup>46</sup>

For modern readers, the distinction between the larger secondary states and these peripheral states is one of extant records rather than what may have been true on the ground at the time. Were it not for the Moabite Stone, the kingdom would be all but invisible without the biblical record. These outlying kingdoms appear in the historical record from time to time, but it is difficult to envision them as geopolitical players on par with the larger secondary states.<sup>47</sup> Even under the Neo-Assyrians, they maintained relative autonomy.<sup>48</sup> Moab's contribution to the epigraphy of historical Israel, however, is significant and will be explored below.

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<sup>45</sup> Bruce Routledge, "The Politics of Mesha: Segmented Identities and State Formation in Iron Age Moab," *JESHO* 43 (2000): 225–27. Routledge based his conclusions on the mainstream reading of the Mesha Stela as a commemoration of a contemporary king. If it is instead a "definable literature tradition of stories about kings of the past" as Thompson has proposed, then the Moab may have been so decentralized as to not be a state in any sense of the word. See Thomas L. Thompson, "Mesha and the Questions of Historicity," *SJOT* 21 (2007): 241–60. Thompson's protests may be overly exuberant, but there is good reason to treat Mesha's claims with some skepticism. See Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window in Israel's Religious Experience*, BJS 211 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2020), 19–56; Douglas J. Green, *'I Undertook Great Works': The Ideology of Domestic Achievements in West Semitic Royal Inscriptions*, FAT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 95–135.

<sup>46</sup> By the eighth century BCE Moab and Edom had enough of a presence to warrant entering into trade with both the Judeans and the Assyrians. See Juan Manuel Tebes, "Assyrians, Judaeans, Pastoral Groups, and the Trade Patterns in the Late Iron Age Negev," *History Compass* 5 (2007): 619–31. Philip D. Stern, "Of Kings and Moabites: History and Theology in 2 Kings 3 and the Mesha Inscription," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 64 (1993): 1–14. Finkelstein and Na'aman, on the other hand, take the Moabite Stone inscription at face value and see the Moabites as a threat in the ninth century BCE, claiming they seized much of the Transjordan and Galilee in the late ninth century BCE and held them until the mid-eighth century BCE. See Israel Finkelstein, "A Corpus of North Israelite Texts in the Days of Jeroboam II?" *HBAI* 6 (2017): 262–89; Nadav Na'aman, "Historical and Literary Notes on the Excavations of Tel Jezreel," *Tel Aviv* 24 (1997): 122–28.

<sup>47</sup> For a summary of the appearances of two of the peripheral states, Moab and Edom, in the Assyrian record, see Wayne Horowitz, "Moab and Edom in the Sargon Geography," *IEJ* 43 (1993): 151–56.

<sup>48</sup> Faust has offered an excellent summary of their relationship to the Assyrians. See Avraham Faust, "The Southern Levant under the Neo-Assyrian Empire: A Comparative Perspective," in *Imperial Peripheries in the Neo-Assyrian Period*, ed. Craig W. Tyson, and Virginia R. Herrmann (Louisville, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2018), 97–127. This volume is a strong summary of the archaeological evidence for the imperial periphery. The essays from Erin Darby and Stephanie Brown in the same volume are excellent resources as well.

## The Israelite States of Israel and Judah

There is a wide diversity of views as to the time and method by which Israelite people moved into the Levant. What is firmly attested is that there were Israelite secondary states during Iron Age II.<sup>49</sup> The biblical record shows David creating a unified Israelite state around 1000 BCE which then splintered into a northern and southern kingdom around 920 BCE.<sup>50</sup> These two states had a shared language and interacted in the same general spheres, but they also appear to have had fundamentally different approaches to kingship and interaction with other states. It is important to remember that these secondary states were not entities in the modern sense. Just as

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<sup>49</sup> There was some kind of presence of people called “Israel” in the Levant at least from the reign of the Egyptian pharaoh Merenptah. That Israel appears on the Merenptah Stela has been known for over a century. See J. W. Jack, “The Israel Stela of Merenptah,” *Expository Times* 36 (1924): 40–44. In recent years, Michael G. Hasel and Anson Rainey have revived interest in the inscription. See Michael G. Hasel, “Israel in the Merenptah Stele,” *BASOR* 296 (1994): 45–61; Anson F. Rainey, “Israel in Merenptah’s Inscription and Reliefs,” *IEJ* 51 (2001): 57–75. Rainey in particular casts Israel not as passive pastoralists or an agrarian underclass but as a genuine threat to Egyptian safety. Given that Merenptah reigned ca. 1213–1203 BCE, it seems that some entity known as Israel was in the Levant during the LBA. Little more can be ascertained by the evidence available, although Rainey does present some interesting ideas about what might have been the Israelite movement into the region. As the unified kingdom is not the focus of this dissertation, the topic will not be further explored. A more detailed examination of the northern kingdom, however, will be below, beginning on page 131, because that kingdom is central to this dissertation’s arguments.

<sup>50</sup> This idea that David ruled a unified kingdom has been contested on several fronts. Wright in particular emphasizes the small, secondary nature of the early monarchy narratives in Samuel, and while he might overstate his case a bit, he is correct to see the kingdoms as regional, even parochial, at first. See Jacob L. Wright, *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 31–50; also, Alexander A. Fischer, *Von Hebron nach Jerusalem: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie zur Erzählung von König David in II Sam 1–5*, BZAW 335 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004). Israel Finkelstein has also argued against the existing of such a monarchy. See Israel Finkelstein, “The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View,” *Levant* 28 (1996): 177–87. For rebuttal, consider Amihai Mazar, “Archaeology and the Biblical Narrative: The Case of the United Monarchy,” in *One God, One Cult, One Nation: Archaeological and Biblical Perspectives*, BZAW 405, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz, Hermann Spieckerman, Björn Corzilius, and Tanja Pilger (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 29–58. In support of the presence of the southern kingdom, consider Lemaire’s reading of “House of David” on Line 31 of the Mesha Stela. For Lemaire’s rendering, see André Lemaire, “La dynastie Davidique (*byt dwd*) dans deux inscriptions ouest-sémitiques du IXe S. av. J.-C.,” *Studi epigraphici e linguistici* 11 (1998): 17–19; André Lemaire, “‘House of David’ Restored in Moabite Inscription,” *BAR* 20, no. 3 (1998): 30–37. Lemaire’s reading has been adopted almost universally but Finkelstein, among others, wishes to dismiss it as a misreading. See Israel Finkelstein, Nadav Na’aman, and Thomas Römer, “Restoring Line 31 in the Mesha Stele: The ‘House of David’ or Biblical Balak,” *Tel Aviv* 46 (2019): 3–11. While uncertain as to the extent of the Davidic kingdom, Mahri Leonard-Fleckman presents a sound case for the presence of a southern kingdom ruled by the House of David which answers all the objections of Finkelstein and others. See Mahri Leonard-Fleckman, *The House of David: Political Formation and Literary Revision* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

the Aramaean states were spheres of influence, so too the Israelite states comprised fluid territorial identities. This includes the unified state that existed under David.<sup>51</sup>

The northern kingdom of Israel was geographically the larger of the two states. Its territories included the Jezreel Valley, a key location in trade. A number of its prominent cities, particularly Samaria, Jezreel, and Megiddo, are well-attested in the archaeological record.<sup>52</sup> For this reason, some scholars such as Finkelstein have concluded that this northern kingdom was the first Israelite state, discounting the presence of a unified kingdom and subordinating the southern kingdom to a client state. In a recent essay, however, Avraham Faust has argued that the archaeological record of this period shows not a gradual development of states, the scheme Finkelstein employs to elevate the northern kingdom to primacy, but sudden shifts and transitions because of crises. In such a situation, Finkelstein's focus on the northern kingdom might be misplaced.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, Masters has called into question Finkelstein's reliance upon excavated population centers as a means of determining relative population.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> For another helpful discussion of scholarship on the misinterpretation of the Davidic kingdom in modern scholarship, consult Kyle H. Keimer, "Evaluating the 'Unified Monarchy' of Israel: Unity and Identity in Text and Archaeology," *JJA* 1 (2021): 68–101.

<sup>52</sup> Israel Finkelstein, "Stages in the Territorial Expansion of the Northern Kingdom," *VT* 61 (2011): 227–42; Hermann M. Niemann, "Royal Samaria—Capital or Residence? or: The Foundation of the City of Samaria by Sargon II" in *Ahab Agonistes*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe LHBOTS 421 (London: T & T Clark: 2007), 184–207; also David Ussishkin, "Samaria, Jezreel, and Megiddo: Royal Centres of Omri and Ahab" in same volume, 293–309. The evidence Finkelstein and Ussishkin present is valuable, despite their minimalist view of the Davidic kingdom. The view that the northern kingdom was larger and more influential in the ninth and early eighth centuries BCE is also held by those who do not minimize the southern kingdom under the House of David, as evidenced by Leonard-Fleckman, *The House of David*, 213–54.

<sup>53</sup> Avraham Faust, "The 'United Monarchy' on the Ground: The Disruptive Character of the Iron Age I-II Transition and the Nature of Political Transformations," *JJA* 1 (2021): 15–67. Faust argues well for the existence of a unified state and the coexistence of the two Israelite states.

<sup>54</sup> In essence, Finkelstein and others who share his views argue that certain traits indicate state development and higher population. First, population centers indicate urbanization and therefore denser population while the absence of such centers indicates a tribal state with a lower population. Second, increased literary output indicates states and therefore indicate a critical mass. For more on Finkelstein's view and reasonable objections to the view, see Daniel M. Master, "State Formation Theory and the Kingdom of Ancient Israel," *JNES* 60 (2001): 117–31; John

The southern kingdom of Judah, which was ruled by the House of David for its entire history according to the biblical record, was probably not very influential until after the fall of northern kingdom in 722 BCE.<sup>55</sup> Fantalkin argues that the presence of aristocratic bench tombs are the first sure signs of state formation in the south.<sup>56</sup> The southern topography is almost entirely highlands and wilderness, with the exception of the Jordan River Valley to the east. As a result, the central palatial site, Jerusalem, is far from any major trade routes, and so the small kingdom was buffered from the events that affected the northern kingdom.<sup>57</sup> The southern kingdom was eventually overrun by the Babylonians and Jerusalem was leveled. During the Achaemenid Persian period, Jerusalem was restored, and the territory of the kingdom was remade into a province of the empire.

### The Assyrian Threat

For the most part, these secondary states operated independently and did not interfere too much with each other. They lacked the reach of the LBA states, but they were stable enough to sustain themselves as long as larger polities did not press into their territories. When the Neo-Assyrians began expanding out of northern Mesopotamia, they put pressure on the secondary states. Aram-Damascus was already integrated into the Assyrian sphere by 800 BCE, and the

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S. Holladay, Jr., “The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah: Political and Economic Centralization in the Iron IIA–B (ca. 1000–750 BCE),” in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas E. Levy, New Approaches in Anthropological Archaeology (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), 368–98.

<sup>55</sup> Leonard-Fleckman, *The House of David*, 41–52 .

<sup>56</sup> Alexander Fantalkin, “The Appearance of Rock-cut Bench Tombs in Iron Age Judah as a Reflection of State Formation,” in Fantalkin and Assaf Yasur-Landau, *Bene Israel*, 17–44.

<sup>57</sup> Textual references to Jerusalem go back to Egypt’s Middle Kingdom, as attested by the Amarna Letters. There the ruler of Jerusalem, ‘Abdi-Ḥeba, pleads with the pharaoh to protect the site from raiding forces (EA 289–290). His requests go unanswered because the Judaeen highlands are just too far out of the way. The Amarna Letters are a rich resource for understanding the Bronze Age and preserve the Akkadian version of Jerusalem as *Ú-ru-sa-lim*, indicating a great antiquity for the name. Anson F. Rainey, *The El-Amarna Correspondence: A New Edition of the Cuneiform Tablets from the Site of El-Amarna based on a Collation of all Extant Tablets*, HdO 110, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1120–24.

expansion into the southern and western Levant began in earnest with the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (747–727 BCE) and Shalmaneser V (727–722 BCE) and reach its apogee with Sargon II (722–706 BCE) and Sennacherib (706–681 BCE).<sup>58</sup>

The presence of this Assyrian influence caused reactions. Beyond the obvious military and diplomatic responses, there was a drive in two directions. First, many of the kingdoms on the periphery of the empire responded by adopting Assyrian practices. The Assyrian polity radiated power, which made their culture attractive to these smaller kingdoms. Ahaz's adoption of an Assyrian altar style is an example of this (2 Kgs 16:10–20). This is observed in the southern kingdom as the McKay-Cogan Hypothesis.<sup>59</sup> According to Cogan, “the foreign innovations reported of the reigns of Ahaz and Manasseh are attributable to the voluntary adoption of Judah's ruling class of the prevailing Assyro-Aramaean culture.”<sup>60</sup> On the other extreme, there was a reactionary revivalist impulse, a push to revive or reinstate the indigenous religious or cultural practices, as evidenced by the Hezekian and Josianic revivals. This latter impulse may have been behind the revival of Baal worship in Israel as well. It was part of the indigenous religious practices, and there is good reason to believe they were revived in response to Assyrian pressure. This area will be addressed in more depth in the next chapter, but it is important to note here.

The discussion of the geopolitical hegemony of Assyria may seem to be only a political concern, but there are a number of other implications. In the early twentieth century, it was

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<sup>58</sup> Appendix F includes a list of the Assyrian rulers in parallel with the rulers of Judah and Israel.

<sup>59</sup> Mordechai Cogan, “Judah under Assyrian Hegemony: Reexamination of Imperialism and Religion,” *JBL* 112 no. 3 (1993): 403–12. Also consider Nili Wazana, “Ahaz and the Alter from Damascus (2 Kings 16:10–16): Literary, Theological, and Historical-Political Considerations,” in *In Search for Aram and Israel: Politics, Culture, and Identity*, ed. Omer Sergi, Manfred Oeming, and Izaak J. de Hulster, ORA 20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 379–400.

<sup>60</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Israel, and Judah in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.*, SBLMS 19 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974), 67. McKay's contribution can be found in John W. McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians, 732–609 BC*, SBT 2/26 (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1973).

generally accepted that Assyrian religion had infiltrated into or been imposed upon the southern kingdom after the fall of Samaria.<sup>61</sup> Through extensive examination of the reform movements in the Book of Kings, McKay became convinced that cultural and not religious influence was central to the reforms in the southern kingdom.<sup>62</sup> In particular, McKay notes the absence of any reference to Assyrian gods during the reforms. This is odd, given the inclusion of the destruction of other cult objects such as the bronze serpent (2 Kgs 18:4). As he puts it, “various deities worshipped in Judah during the period of Assyrian domination lack the definitive aspects of the Assyrian gods and generally exhibit the characteristics of popular Palestinian [by which he means Levantine] paganism.”<sup>63</sup> Cogan agrees that the issue at hand was Canaanite practices rather than the Assyrian influence, but he sees a general decay of the moral fabric of Judah that moved in sync with the reintroduction of Canaanite religion.<sup>64</sup> Cogan sees a true religious reform in the ages of Hezekiah and Josiah, with “the spirit of repentance and soul searching” being a response to the experience of one crisis after another during the eighth century BCE.<sup>65</sup> It is imperative then that consideration be made of the Canaanite religious practices of the secondary states, especially the royal cults.

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Lowry, *The Reforming Kings: Cult and Society in First Temple Judah*, JSOTSup 120 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 12–14. This idea was proposed by Theodore Oestreicher, *Das deteronomische Grundsetz*, BFCT 4/47 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1923). Lowry argues that Oestreicher’s view was the majority position during the twentieth century but then was supplanted by works from McKay and Cogan.

<sup>62</sup> McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians*, 60–69.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>64</sup> Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, 71.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

## Canaanite Kingship and Its Religious Dimensions

### Divine Kingship vs. Canaanite Royal Cults

Often the focus in ANE studies is the divine king, or more appropriately, the divinely appointed king. Egyptian pharaohs might claim to be the incarnation or vessel of Horus, but the Mesopotamian kings laid claim to divine appointment, reinforcing this through temple cult sanctions.<sup>66</sup> This was certainly the case among the Assyrians who viewed the world from a very top-down perspective. Aššur, the national deity, appointed the king as his divine representative. The king was not himself divine, but he was the regent (*iššakku*) and was regarded as the likeness (*tamšilu*) of the deity. The king was seen as the servant of the gods, and as such, spoke with the gods' voice.<sup>67</sup> For example, Sennacherib was often depicted in positions reserved for the deities who served Aššur.<sup>68</sup> In this environment, diviners and other practitioners of mantic arts

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<sup>66</sup> There is a distinction to be made between the ideas of “divine kingship,” which generally implies the deification of the king, and “sacred kingship,” which pertains to the closeness of the king. In the latter, a king might be revered in a way reserved for the gods, but as a representative of the gods and not divine himself. The Assyrian model was predominantly sacred kingship. See Nicole Brisch, “Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Religion Compass* 7.2 (2013): 37–46. For recent works on the divine kingship of the Egyptian pharaoh, see Jane A. Hill, Philip Jones, and Antonio J. Morales, eds., *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority: Cosmos, Politics, and the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, PMIRC 6 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Lisa K. Sabbahy, *Kingship, Power, and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt: From the Old Kingdom to the Middle Kingdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021). Hill, Jones and Morales's volume follows in the footsteps of Henry Frankfort in this comparative work and has essays dealing specifically with the distinction between the Egyptian and Mesopotamian models. See also Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near East Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

<sup>67</sup> Early Assyriology in the West overlaid the Victorian stereotype of the Muslim, Middle Eastern “religious tyrant” on the ancient context. For a full discussion of this and some suggested course corrections, see Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King!: Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, CHANE 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 178–93.

<sup>68</sup> Tallay Ornan, “A Silent Message: Godlike Kings in Mesopotamian Art,” in *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, ed. Brian A. Brown and Marian H. Feldman (Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 586–89. As an example, Ashurnasirpal II's Standard Inscription refers to himself as ŠID *aš-šur*, “Aššur's vice-regent” (RIA0, Ashurnasirpal II 002). The underlying term *iš-šak-ku*, has a complex usage, but shows delegated authority. See *CAD*, 262–66, particularly 2'd'.)

would have served to legitimize the right to rule and divine will of the king.<sup>69</sup> A great deal of the material of this sacred kingship is preserved, and although the breadth of this understanding of kingship in the kingdom is not easily assessed, the ideology was nonetheless present.<sup>70</sup> The Assyrian template must have made an impression on the subsequent Mesopotamian powers, and it inevitably had influence upon the Levant, especially in the early and mid-eighth century BCE.

### Mesha's Claim to Divine Patronage

In the secondary states, kings claimed divine patronage rather than divine rule. Although not as well attested as the Israelites, the Moabites paralleled the Hebrews in Iron Age II.<sup>71</sup> Their affinity may be why the biblical text often emphasizes the connection, including the familial ties (Gen 19:37) and David's Moabite heritage (Ruth 4:17–21; 1 Sam 22:3–5). On the ninth century BCE Moabite Stone, Mesha claims the divine patronage of Kemosh in lines I.3–4: “I made this high place for Kemosh in Qerihoh, the high place of salvation, because he saved me from all the kings and made me enjoy the sight of my enemies.”<sup>72</sup> Mesha claimed the patronage of Kemosh based on Kemosh siding with him in the battle against his rivals. In lines II.14–19, he claims that Kemosh personally commanded him to take Nebo from Israel, which justified the slaughter of

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<sup>69</sup> Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 72–85; Martti Nissinen, “Prophecy as Construct, Ancient and Modern” in *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela*, 16–24. Stökl observes this practice among the Old Babylonian records. As shown by Nissinen, the Assyrians seem to have adopted and expanded this practice.

<sup>70</sup> For a study of this, consult Allison Thomason, “The Materiality of Assyrian Sacred Kingship,” *Religion Compass* 10.6 (2016): 133–48.

<sup>71</sup> There are varying views on how closely the Hebrews and Moabites parallel each other. Consider Lauren A. S. Monroe, “Israelite, Moabite and Sabaean *War-ḥērem* Traditions and the Forging of National Identity: Reconsidering the Sabaean Text RES 3945 in Light of Biblical and Moabite Evidence,” *VT* 57 (2007): 318–41; Collin Cornell, “What Happened to Kemosh?” *ZAW* 128, no. 2 (2016): 284–99; Brian R. Doak, *Ancient Israel's Neighbors*, Essentials of Biblical Studies 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 98–121.

<sup>72</sup> This is Burton McDonald's translation Lemaire's transcription: *w'š.hbmt.z't.lkmš.bqrhh bm[t.-] š'ky.hš'ny.mkl.hmkl.n.wky.hr'ny.bkl.šn'y*. See Burton MacDonald, *A History of Ancient Moab from the Ninth to the First Centuries BCE*, ABS 26 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 113–14.

the inhabitants, including women and children. All told, Kemosh is mentioned twelve times on the stone, and each is a justification of Mesha's actions.

There is a great deal that is assumed about Kemosh because the deity appears prominently in the Mesha Stela, but the textual evidence for the Kemosh cult is scant. The title, at least, is found in the older Ebla archives (ca. 2400–2300 BCE), and McDonald conjectures that Kemosh may have been the deity of Carchemish, possibly an underworld god.<sup>73</sup> Sanctuaries at sites like Khirbat al-Mudayna ath-Thamad and Dhiban are often credited to Kemosh, but there is no inscription evidence proving the association.<sup>74</sup> Since the Moabites did not leave behind an extensive mythological text like the inhabitants of Ugarit did, much of what is known is based on biblical statements (Num 21:29; 1 Kgs 11:33; 2 Kgs 23:13; Jer 48:46). Still, there are a number of theophoric names derived from Kemosh (*kmš*) indicating that, at the very least, Kemosh was a popular deity even if not a national one on par with YHWH or Baal.<sup>75</sup> Much of the bias toward national deities and national cults with central shrines comes from the reading of the Bible. The archaeological record, however, provides a much less clear-cut view of religion and the locations utilized for religious activity.<sup>76</sup> The Kemosh religion was flexible, but not as transportable as Yahwism. It was most closely associated with the ruling clan of the Moabites. Other forms of

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<sup>73</sup> MacDonald, *A History of Ancient Moab*, 195–96.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 182–89.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 192–93. The various seals and bullae with theophoric names can be found in Rainer Albertz and Rüdiger Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 509–80. A number of theophoric names are listed, in parallel with Hebrew and other NWS forms.

<sup>76</sup> Diederik J. H. Halbertsma, “Between Rocks and ‘High Places’: On Religious Architecture in the Iron Age Southern Levant,” *Religions* 12 (2021): 740–66; Avraham Faust, “Israelite Temples: Where was Israelite Cult Practiced, and Why,” *Religions* 10 (2019): 106–32. Most classifications of cultic sites rely upon Colin Renfrew’s list of identifying traits. See Colin Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi* (London: British School at Athenes and Thames and Hudson, 1985). Faust does not directly contradict Renfrew, but he does argue that cultic usage was broader than modern quantifications.

Kemosh, perhaps adapted to local custom and familial cults, existed throughout the region.<sup>77</sup>

Interestingly, however, there are next to no other deities mentioned in Moabite inscriptions.

There were certainly some central cultic districts in large cities, but as shall be seen here, there is good evidence for a religious cult surrounding the king and the royal constructs which were distinct from the temples. This does not say much given the scarcity of Moabite epigraphs, and the sample size may be too small to make a complete judgment.<sup>78</sup>

### The Royal Religion in Ugarit

The Ugaritic texts offer insight into the period from the mid-fourteenth century BCE until the city was sacked in the early twelfth century BCE.<sup>79</sup> While the religion of Ugarit predates the Omride dynasty by centuries, the texts may still reflect a broad Aramaeo-Canaanite sensibility.<sup>80</sup> Drawing upon the Ugaritic record, Noll describes the key elements of Canaanite religion as follows: (1) a broad, flexible pantheon of gods with a likewise flexible mythology, (2) divine patronage of the king, and (3) multiple levels of expression and experience, namely temple, palace, and household.<sup>81</sup> Corresponding to Noll's three levels of experience, Gregorio del Olmo Lete discussed Canaanite religion as three interconnected spheres: (1) the cultic practices which

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<sup>77</sup> Albertz and Schmitt, *Family and Household Religion*, 487–88.

<sup>78</sup> McDonald, *A History of Ancient Moab*, 198.

<sup>79</sup> The earliest Ugaritic treaties (RS 19.068, RS 16.145) give us a loose *terminus post quem* for the beginning of Ugaritic diplomatic engagement. The date of the collapse remains unknown, but it roughly coincides with the rise of the “Sea People” who raided the eastern Mediterranean during the Egyptian New Kingdom. For a general overview of Ugaritic history, see Itamar Singer, “The Society of Ugarit,” in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. Wilfred G.E. Watson and Nicolas Wyatt, HdO 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 603–733; Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee, *A Manual of Ugaritic*, LSAWS 3 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 10–14.

<sup>80</sup> This is not to say that all the people of the region had the same religious ideas, but rather that they had similar sensibilities or perspectives on the broader ideas of culture, which included religion. For example, Gibson feels that some of the religious texts at Ugarit intentionally add “local colouring” to their mythological texts. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, 7–8. What is known about Aramean views of the relationship of king and the divine realm seem to be analogous. See Herbert Niehr, “Religion,” in *The Arameans in Ancient Syria*, ed. Herbert Niehr, HdO 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 137–38.

<sup>81</sup> Kurt L. Noll, “Canaanite Religion,” *Religion Compass* 1.1 (2007): 63.

can be observed in the archaeological and epigraphic record; (2) personal religion, for which we have very few records; and (3) the mythology which includes the long form myths and epics which most people equate with the Canaanite religion.<sup>82</sup> Although the mythological level certainly has relevance in any discussion of Canaanite religion, Olmo Lete argues that the mythology was the domain of the priesthood and not accessible to the general public. There was a certain decentralized pragmatism built into the multi-tiered Canaanite religion. The more common cultic sites were relatively small in scale and generally devoted to lower deities.<sup>83</sup> Chief among the sites in the northern kingdom are Dan, Bethel, Lachish, Megiddo, and Hazor. Some, such as the “high places” (בָּמֹת) embedded in the gates of Dan, were deeply integrated into the architecture of the Iron Age city and appear to have been unique to Iron Age II.<sup>84</sup> Others, like the Great Temple at Megiddo, date to the EBA and were constantly being rebuilt, enlarged, and revived.<sup>85</sup> Far from being monolithic, Canaanite religion varied from location to location, and

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<sup>82</sup> Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religions*, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Coogan offers four “fluid” criteria for defining a cultic site or space (temple or otherwise): (1) isolation from secular sites; (2) the presence of exotic or specialized materials such as miniaturized vessels, figurines, and rare or expensive objects; (3) continuity of buildings over multiple time periods, and (4) parallels of architectural features with other known cultic sites. For further delineation, see Michael David Coogan, “On Cults and Cultures: Reflections on the Interpretation of Archaeological Evidence,” *PEQ* 119 (1987): 1–8; Michael David Coogan, “Canaanite Origins and Lineage: Reflections on the religion of Ancient Israel,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. Dean. McBride (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), 115–24. Steiner notes, however, that such a definition applied to the Southern Levant “is often uncertain and per force based on insufficient data.” See Margreet L. Steiner, “Iron Age Cultic Sites in Transjordan,” *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 145–58. There are eight Iron Age sites known from the Transjordan: three in Ammon, four in Moab, and one in Edom. See also Craig W. Tyson, “The Religion of the Ammonites: A Specimen of Levantine Religion from the Iron Age II (ca. 1000–500 BCE),” *Religions* 10.3 (2019): doi:10.3390/rel10030153. Gilmour speaks of the cultic nature of a site on a spectrum, which is a useful tool here. See Garth Gilmour, “The Archaeology of Cult in the Ancient Near East: Methodology and Practice,” *Old Testament Essays* 13.3 (2000): 283–92. There is a possibility that there were numerous small sites now lost, such as the unusual structure published by Clark and Herr at Tall al-‘Umayri, Jordan, in 2006. See Larry G. Herr, “An Early Iron Age I House with a Cultic Corner at Tall al-‘Umayri, Jordan,” in Gitin, Wright, and Dessel, *Confronting the Past*, 61–74.

<sup>84</sup> Avraham Biran, “The High Places of Biblical Dan,” in *Studies in the Archaeology of the Iron Age in Israel and Jordan: With the Assistance of Ginny Matthias*, ed. Amihai Mazar, JSOTSup 331 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 148–55.

<sup>85</sup> Matthew J. Adams, Israel Finkelstein, and David Ussishkin, “The Great Temple of Early Bronze I Megiddo,” *AJA* 118.2 (2014): 285–305.

different deities had different levels of influence depending upon the state wielding the most power at the moment.

According to Olmo Lete there is a sense in which a unique group of deities who guard “the house,” were integrated with whoever was the ruling house in a particular location (KTU 1.112; 1.105; 1.106; 1.43; 1.115; 1.139).<sup>86</sup> These deities may be referred to as “king’s gods” (RS. 15.14:5–7), and they appear not to have been a part of the local pantheon.<sup>87</sup> They could, at his death, usher a king into the divine council.<sup>88</sup> This sense of a royal pantheon distinct from both the mythical and the personal may give us insight into the impetus behind Omri’s relationship with the powerful Phoenicians, themselves Canaanites.

Even the broad mythological Baal Cycle, which stands apart from the numerous religious texts found at Ugarit, may contain references to this kind of royal pantheon and its role in the royal cult.<sup>89</sup> There are six tablets (KTU 1.1–1.6) that are universally accepted to be part of the cycle, although their order is still debated.<sup>90</sup> It has similarities to Babylonian mythology, known from *Enuma Eliš*. The presence of variant versions (KTU 1.101 and 1.133 are examples) indicates a popularity of the stories. It is generally labeled a “cycle” because there is an ongoing discussion whether the tablets form a continuous narrative.<sup>91</sup> Pardee points out that the Baal

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<sup>86</sup> Various rendered as *b’lt bhtm*, *ilt bt*, *il bt*, and perhaps *bbt/btbt*. See Gregorio del Olmo Lete, “Royal Aspects of the Ugaritic Cult,” in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1991*, ed. J. Quaegebeur, OLA 55 (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1993), 51.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–53.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–58.

<sup>89</sup> A comprehensive discussion of the Ugaritic religious texts can be found in Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*.

<sup>90</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1–1.2*, vol. 1, VTSup 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 2–3. A number of other tablets include portions of the cycle (KTU 1.7–1.12, 1.133) and others (KTU 1.101) are conjectured to belong to the cycle.

<sup>91</sup> Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, 7.

Cycle consists largely of formal letters written back and forth between the parties involved.<sup>92</sup> Extraordinarily, even the name of the author/scribe of the extant tablets, 'Ilmilku, is known from the text because he signed several of them.<sup>93</sup> Although 'Ilmilku's version of the Baal Cycle dates from the late twelfth century BCE, the oral tradition predates the tablets. To date, there is not a consensus on the origins and composition date, or how much 'Ilmilku altered pre-existing traditions to produce his version.<sup>94</sup>

### The Ugaritic Baal Cycle and The Omride Royal Cult

Frank Moore Cross established the widely accepted view that the Ugaritic Baal Cycle was written for “the establishment of kingship among the gods.”<sup>95</sup> Aaron Tugendhaft has challenged this view, arguing that the Ugaritic Baal Cycle (hereafter UBC) was composed as a justification for Niqmaddu III's (ca. 1225/20–1215 BCE) ascent to the throne in Ugarit.<sup>96</sup> While El remains king of the gods throughout, Baal ascends within the world order, demonstrating that in present day life, the royal conflict is being fought through proxies. There is an inherent parallel between the divine ascent and the ascent of the earthly king.<sup>97</sup> This is not an idea original

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<sup>92</sup> Dennis Pardee, *The Ugaritic Texts and the Origins of West-Semitic Literary Composition*, Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 2007 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 52.

<sup>93</sup> In his self-referential colophons 'Ilmilku offers insight into his role as a scribe (*spr*), an official (*ta'āyu*) of Niqmaddu the king of Ugarit, and disciple (*lmd*) of 'Attēnu the diviner priest. Additionally, he claims to offer his textual version of the Baal Cycle as an original work (RS 92.2016). See Pardee, *The Ugaritic Texts and the Origins of West-Semitic Literary Composition*, 42–50.

<sup>94</sup> Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, 29–36.

<sup>95</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 78–80.

<sup>96</sup> The wider consensus is that the tablets date from the reign of Niqmaddu II (ca. 1350–1315 BCE). See Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, 1. Tugendhaft prefers the later Niqmaddu III. “More definitive, however, is the simple fact that the cuneiform alphabet used to inscribe the poem had likely not yet been invented during the fourteenth-century reign of Niqmaddu II.” Aaron Tugendhaft, *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*, *The Ancient Word* (London: Routledge, 2018), 30.

<sup>97</sup> Aaron Tugendhaft, “Unsettling Sovereignty: Politics and Poetics in the Baal Cycle,” *JOAS* 132 (2012): 368; Tugendhaft, *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*, 71.

with Tugendhaft. There is precedent in several of Martin Smith's previous considerations.<sup>98</sup>

Smith argues that a less-known, shorter Baal text from Mari (Mari A. 1968) gives us a glimpse into a "divine replacement" or the shift of divine favor to a new kingdom.<sup>99</sup>

Tugendhaft sees the UBC as a "reflection on the foundational claims of Late Bronze Age political institutions by calling into question the hierarchical principle that justifies them."<sup>100</sup> The language of the Baal Cycle echoes LBA treaties, and then upsets the expected balance. For example, he cites Greenfield's examination of Baal's declaration of vassalage to Mot, which closely follows the language in an Ugaritic treaty with Hatti.<sup>101</sup> Recent scholarship has begun to focus on kinship relationships in the UBC and how the "young king" ascends within the royal household.<sup>102</sup> Tugendhaft sees this not as a matter of local succession but of international relationships. "The poem originally aimed to inspire critical reflection on the political institutions of its day and the myths that circulated to maintain them."<sup>103</sup> In other words, the ascendancy of Baal over the other gods mirrors Niqmaddu III's rejection of the order of affairs that had existed before and his claim to unique sovereignty over his people.<sup>104</sup> Tugendhaft predicates his understanding of the UBC based on several observations.

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<sup>98</sup> Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, xxii–xxiv; Mark S. Smith, "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," *UF* 18 (1986): 313–39.

<sup>99</sup> Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, 87–96. Mari A. 1968 was published in Jean-Marie Durand, "Le mythologeme du combat entre le dieu de l'orage et la mer en Mésopotomie," *Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires* 7 (1993): 41–61.

<sup>100</sup> Tugendhaft, "Politics and Poetics," 369.

<sup>101</sup> Jonas C. Greenfield, "Some Aspects of Treaty Terminology in the Bible," in *Al Kanfei Yonah: Collected Studies of Jonas C. Greenfield on Semitic Philology*, vol. 2, ed. Shalom M. Paul, Michael E. Stone, and Avital Pinnick (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 901–6; F. Charles Fensham, "Notes on Treaty Terminology in Ugaritic Epics," *UF* 11 (1979): 265–74.

<sup>102</sup> Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 2, 17.

<sup>103</sup> Tugendhaft, *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*, 18.

<sup>104</sup> Tugendhaft, "Politics and Poetics," 374. It is of note that Mark Smith sees a correlation between the language Baal employs in throwing off suzerainty to the other gods and Ahab's rejection of Ben-Hadad's assertion of authority over Israel in 1 Kings 20:1–4. See Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, 294.

## 1. The Use of Vernacular Ugaritic

Given that Akkadian was the language of literature and diplomacy at the time, this is a significant change.<sup>105</sup> This localization of the text is a political move, shifting the focus of the mythology away from the Mesopotamian context to the periphery, making Ugarit the center of the narrative's setting. Since Cross, it has been accepted that the UBC parallels the Babylonian *Enuma Eliš* and functions primarily as a cosmogony.<sup>106</sup>

## 2. The Use of LBA Treaty Language.

This point has been observed by Smith as well.<sup>107</sup> Tugendhaft sees the poem as “taking advantage of local religion” and using the narrative of the gods to comment on earthly international interactions.<sup>108</sup> The poet 'Ilīmilku is able to craft a world in which his sovereign Niqmaddu is elevated along with Baal to a position not only of local sovereignty but of international acclaim.

## 3. Reinterpretation of Common Motifs

In the UBC, Baal is in conflict with Yamm and Mot, while in the *Enuma Eliš*, Marduk fights with Tiamat. Beside this broad similarity, the two epics do not cover the same materials, as Baal does not then establish the physical world from the remains of Yamm. While the UBC

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<sup>105</sup> Seth L. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 54–57; Robert Hawley, Pardee, and Roche-Hawley, “The Scribal Culture of Ugarit,” 260.

<sup>106</sup> Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 78.

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, Smith's comparison of KTU 1.2.36–38: (36) [ ]°.tr. 'abh. 'abh. 'il[.] 'bdk.b 'l. yymm. 'bdk.b 'l (37) [nhr]m.bn.dgn. 'a[s]rkm.hw.ybl. 'argmnk.k 'ilm (38) [ ]ybl.wbn.gdš.mnhyk 'ap. 'anš.zbl.b '[l] (“[and] bull El his father [answers]: “Your slave is Baal, O Yamm, Your slave is Baal, [O River], The son of Dagan your captive. He will bring tribute to you, Like the gods, [a gift to you] he will bring, like the Holy Ones, offerings to you) with KTU 3.1.24–26, 'argmn nqmd mlk 'ugrt dybl lšpš mlk rb b 'lh (“the tribute of Niqmaddu king of Ugarit which will be brought to the Sun, the Great King, his lord”). Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, 260, 266, 308.

<sup>108</sup> Tugendhaft, *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*, 38.

might borrow the motif, there is something else going on, and both Tugendhaft and Smith believe that it somehow connected to the political activities of the present world.<sup>109</sup> Subtle distinctions make it clear that the UBC is striving for a familiarity of broad ideas, but practical applications. For example, Yamm is not the primordial waters in the Ugaritic mythology. For the Babylonians, Tiamat was vanquished and gone. Yamm, on the other hand, was still considered active in the world.<sup>110</sup> The intention then is to present not a foundational struggle against chaos, but a present battle, which Baal has won against an enemy still active in the world.

#### 4. Divine Dynamics Reflect a Present Authority Crisis

Tugendhaft asks why, if Yamm is defeated and killed in the first part of the UBC, does Yamm send an envoy to El in the second part? For Tugendhaft, the answer is that the battle with Yamm represents an ongoing conflict.<sup>111</sup> In the exchange, he draws on Smith's comparison with the way Ben-hadad sends messengers to the Omride king Ahab (1 Kgs 20:1–4).<sup>112</sup> According to Tugendhaft the similarity is because of the way a king might be forced to submit to another king. He argues that this type of humiliating negotiation is a contrast with the ascendance of Baal. "If Baal eventually acquires the right to rule, it is not because his kingship is a constituent element of an ordered universe. By implication, neither the kingship of Baal's human devotee (the king

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 64; Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, xxv–xxvi. See also Noga Ayali-Darshan, "The Bride of the Sea: The Traditions of Astarte and Yamm in the Ancient Near East," in *A Woman of Valor: Jerusalem Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Joan Goodnik Westenholz*, ed. Wayne Horowitz, Uri Gabbay, and Filip Vukosavović (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2010), 19–33.

<sup>110</sup> Wayne T. Pitard, "The Combat Myth as a Succession Story at Ugarit," in *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaostkampf Hypothesis*, ed. JoAnn Scurlock and Richard H. Beal (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 201. This is corroborated by the god lists from Ugarit, which list Yamm is listed in such a way that he is one of the present deities rather than one of Cross's "olden gods." Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 78.

<sup>111</sup> Tugendhaft, *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*, 87.

<sup>112</sup> Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, 294.

of Ugarit) nor the suzerainty of that king's overlord (the king of Hatti) enjoys cosmic grounding."<sup>113</sup> In other words, the king of Ugarit claims the right to rule because he has succeeded to rule. His patron deity ascends of his own volition, and so does the king of Ugarit.

### **Summary**

Although the Ugaritic kingdom was LBA and fell hundreds of years before the rise of the Hebrew secondary states, it provides an intriguing glimpse into the way an Aramaeo-Canaanite kingdom would lay claim to divine sanction as a key component of the assertion of rule for a particular dynasty. The religio-political undercurrent found in the UBC is indicative of what might have been a template for stability in the region. Mesha seems to have employed a similar religio-political approach in stabilizing his kingdom, which was contemporary with the Omrides. Although evidence on the ground is admittedly thin, given how little remains from the other secondary states in the southern Levant, these clues open the door to a possible interpretation of Omri and Ahab's decision to align themselves with a Canaanite religious identity rather than the Yahwistic identity that their predecessors had employed. Let us now turn our attention to the dynamics of secondary state formation that might have precipitated such an alignment.

### **The Rise of the Omrides and the Samaria Polity**

The religious aspects of the Omride kingship may reflect the unique context of Canaanite development. It seems unlikely that authors writing in the postexilic Persian period or later would have been able to reconstruct the details of this society the way that they are depicted in the Book of Kings. Non-written sites of memory rarely include details like this, so the presence of uniquely Omride behaviors indicate the possibility of preservation through some kind of

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<sup>113</sup> Tugendhaft, *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*, 95.

literary source, otherwise the texts will have obvious anachronisms, constructs of the present read into the mnemonic landscape.<sup>114</sup> Ian Wilson examined the social memory of kingship, focusing entirely upon Davidic kingship, either in the failed past or in the hopeful future.<sup>115</sup> Wilson points to three formative kingship models for this period. First is YHWH as king. In his thinking, YHWH is a king in contrast to the evil kings of the nations such as Assyria and Tyre.<sup>116</sup> He sees the prophets depicting all future kingship as being underpinned by the kingship of YHWH, an earthly fulfillment of YHWH's sovereignty. Second, he argues all Israelite kingship is a depiction of Davidic kingship. Again, we must remember that Wilson sees most but not all depictions of historical Israelite kings as looking forward to future kingship, and as such, conforming to a Davidic ideal.<sup>117</sup> Third, Wilson views Israel as a king. He argues that prophetic passages that do not look to a future Davidic ideal have Israel's kingship in focus.<sup>118</sup> Such kings

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<sup>114</sup> The nature of written preservation of memory is a key to the development of memory studies. Aleida Assmann cites Jacob Burckhardt's division of memory into two components: messages and traces. Messages are written and preserved. Speaking generally, messages are to be distrusted because they are preserved, and the preserving agents are ideologically motivated to shape the present with the past. Traces are therefore what must be extracted, although they are more difficult to interpret. For Assmann, traces belong to the *passive* memory. These are "halfway between canon and forgetting" and recall true memory. The downside, however, is that these traces are "shot through with forgetting." See Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive" in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, Media and Cultural Studies 8 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 98–99. At the same time, one must be cautious about treating this idea of a social memory as an absolute. Ian Wilson cautions that "there is no such 'thing' as a social or collective memory.... In theorizing about social memory, one may transfer what we know about the processes of individual cognition to the level of society, but only metaphorically and heuristically." Ian D. Wilson, *History and the Hebrew Bible: Culture, Narrative, and Memory*, Brill Research in Biblical Interpretation 3/2 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 23.

<sup>115</sup> Ian D. Wilson, *Kingship and Memory: in Ancient Judah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 182–222. It is worth noting, however, that Wilson has also discussed the problems inherent with interdisciplinary approaches to history, even those he employs himself. It is true that incorporating things like cultural memory "pushes us to ask not only how the Bible's texts came together, but also why the complex compositions would have had meaning, and what kinds of meaning they would have had, in their ancient social contexts. It pushes us, too, to question our long-held assumptions about the relationships between social actors and activities in the ancient Near East." Wilson, *History and the Hebrew Bible*, 13. At the same time, too much focus on these elements of the "New Criticism" can create a sort of fog in which the text itself can be lost. Care must be employed.

<sup>116</sup> Wilson, *Kingship and Memory*, 189–98.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 198–216.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 216–20.

do not fit into the ideas of a social memory unless there is some kind of record of this period which must be incorporated into the history.

Wilson fails to make any kind of mention of the northern Omride kings, and there is good reason for that. They stand out against the scheme of kingship which he proposes. It is not just that the Omride kings are not Davidic kings. In the Book of Kings, they function in ways distinctly outside of what Wilson believes to be experience and expectations of the Persian literati which Wilson supposes were presenting the social memory of the past. This argues strongly for some kind of written record which preserved not just royal annals but something more. Ben Zvi allows for the broad sense that “in that world of memory, kings (and their people) could be remembered as not listening to prophets, to be sure, but as importantly, kings of the past could be remembered as prophetic voices teaching the community about YHWH and YHWH’s ways.”<sup>119</sup> This is only a general idea of connection, but if there were in fact some kind of literary sites of memory of this type of Canaanite kingship, then it would explain their details present in the social memory.<sup>120</sup> That such details exist argues that this memory was in a written form, and it seems reasonable that if the biblical texts bear an uncanny resemblance to the historical context they purport to represent, they would plausibly have been composed close to that historical context.

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<sup>119</sup> Ehud Ben Zvi, “Memories of Kings of Israel and Judah within the Mnemonic Landscape of the Literati of the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Period: Exploratory Considerations.” *SJOT* 33, no. 1 (2019): 12.

<sup>120</sup> While this dissertation is seeking more confidence in the written record than is immediately obvious from Ben Zvi’s project, which was discussed in chapter 1, his work presents us with the possibility that even if the final form of the Book of Kings was created in the Persian period, as he proposes, there are plausible arguments for a written record of these details. Again, Ben Zvi does not disallow the existence of written sites of memory. He simply does not believe there is historical evidence for such written records, nor is he seeking to explore their plausible existence.

### The Biblical Account of the Omrides

Now it is time to turn our attention to the rise of the Omride-Nimshite dynasty, which ruled over the northern kingdom of Israel from 885/4 to 749/8 BCE.<sup>121</sup> From the extrabiblical perspective, this is the better attested of the two Israelite states, and as the subject of the northern materials, which make up a third of the Book of Kings, they are well documented biblically as well.<sup>122</sup> According to the Book of Kings, the kingdom of Israel was born out of Rehoboam's refusal to offer relief to the twelve tribes ruled by his father and grandfather as the Davidic kingdom. The majority of the tribes abandoned Rehoboam and the House of David, following the military commander Jeroboam in forming a breakaway state (1 Kgs 12:16–24). Initially, Jeroboam was given a promise of a perpetual covenant similar to that given to David (1 Kgs 11:37–39). The northern kingdom was centered in the highlands of Ephraim, first at Shechem and then Tirzah. One of Jeroboam's first acts was to set up cult centers to rival Jerusalem at Bethel and Dan.<sup>123</sup> According to the biblical record, this provoked YHWH's anger, and the kingdom descended into a period of civil war which was only ended with the ascent of yet another military commander, Omri in 885 BCE (1 Kgs 16:15–28).

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<sup>121</sup> Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, 21–22. Galil's chronology is not perfect, but it does make sense of the often-confusing chronological data in the Book of Kings and so the dates from his work are generally utilized here. His chronology is reiterated in Appendices D and E. The details of Omri's relationship to the rest of the Hebrew population will be explored later in this chapter.

<sup>122</sup> Despite a bias toward his lower chronology which compresses Iron Age I significantly, Israel Finkelstein provides a good summary of the monumental and archaeological evidence of the northern kingdom under the Omrides. See Israel Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel*, ANEM 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 83–118.

<sup>123</sup> The purpose of these cult centers has been debated. Toews insists that they were not only devoted to YHWH but also not opposed by the prophets or Jehu. This is something of an argument from silence. The identification of the golden calves at both sites would indicate at least some syncretistic intent. See Wesley I. Toews, *Monarchy and Religious Institution in Israel under Jeroboam I*, SBLMS 47 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 41–46.

## Omri's Questionable Claim to the Throne

Despite receiving a fuller treatment than other claimants to the northern throne, Omri's succession is still somewhat veiled from our eyes in the biblical record (1 Kgs 16:16). Before becoming king, he was a commander of the armies (שָׂרֵי־צְבָא), and like Zimri, the usurper he overthrew, he is never ascribed a patronym or toponym.<sup>124</sup> It is generally assumed that Omri was an Israelite, but his name (עֹמְרִי) does not appear to be Hebrew in origin.<sup>125</sup> Timm suggests a non-Israelite origin as a possibility, but since no Canaanite cognate has been found, he rejects the idea in favor of an obscure Issachar origin based on a singular reference to a chief of that tribe (1 Chr 7:8).<sup>126</sup> The presence of the name in a later name list such as found in Chronicles does not preclude a non-Israelite origin.<sup>127</sup> When he first appears in the biblical record, Omri is leading a campaign against the Philistines at Gibbethon, the same place where Baasha had assassinated Nadab b. Jeroboam (1 Kgs 15:27). Baasha is stated as being from Issachar, so the omission of a

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<sup>124</sup> This martial title fits the extrabiblical evidence as well. Omri appears on the Mesha Stele as *'mry.mlk.yšr' l*. For discussion of Omri's appearance on the stele, see André Lemaire, "The Mesha Stele and the Omri Dynasty," in Grabbe, *Ahab Agonistes*, 135–44. There are those who reject Lemaire's dating of the stele. See Thompson, "Mesha and Questions of Historicity," 241–60. If Thompson is correct, then the stele may not be an independent witness.

<sup>125</sup> Gesenius extrapolated the name as עֶמְרִיָּה, "servant of YHWH," or "young learner of YHWH." GCHLOT s.v. "עֶמְרִי," 641A. John Gray proposed עֶמְרִיָּהוּ, "the life YHWH has given." See John Gray, *I and II Kings*, OTL, 3rd ed. (Knoxville, TN: Westminster John Knox, 1971), 365. It seems more likely that the name is rooted in the Amorite *hamru*. Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985), 318A. Hereafter designated as *AHw* followed by volume, page, and column designation, such as 3.318A.

<sup>126</sup> HALOT, s.v. "עֶמְרִי," 850; Stefan Timm, *Die Dynastie Omri: Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Israel im 9. Jahrhundert vor Christus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1982), 21–22. "Auch im kanaanäischen Sprachraum der Zeit, genauer: im phönikisch-punischen, fehlt bislang eine sicher vergleichbare Namensform." Timm concludes the name is Phoenician-Punic, which is not outside the realm of possibility. Additionally, Soggin suggested that Omri had the support of an army made up of mostly foreign mercenaries. See J. Alberto Soggin, *A History of Israel from the Beginnings to the Bar Kochba Revolt, AD 135*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 202.

<sup>127</sup> Even if Omri was an Israelite, he undoubtedly ruled over a partially assimilated Canaanite majority with the Israelites representing what Pitkänen has argued was a colonizing minority. Whether Pitkänen's argument can be substantiated is yet to be seen, but it does shed light on the population diversity of the Levant in Iron Age II. See Pekka Pitkänen, "Ancient Israel and Settler Colonialism," *Settler Colonial Studies* 4.1 (2014): 64–81; Pekka Pitkänen, "Ancient Israelite Population Economy: *Ger*, *Toshav*, *Nakhri* and *Karat* as Settler Colonial Categories," *JSOT* 42, no. 2 (2017): 139–53.

detail like this when dealing with Omri seems out of place. If on the other hand, Omri was a non-Israelite recruited to lead the military forces, as many before him were, like Uriah the Hittite and the Gittites who served David, it would certainly not be surprising. The legitimacy of his reign could have been questioned, given the warning against foreign kings in Deuteronomy 17:15.<sup>128</sup> His otherness would explain a great deal about his dependence upon Canaanite religion.

### Consolidation of Royal Authority

To combat his questionable rise, Omri consolidated his rule in three ways. Two are explicit in the biblical record. The third is implicit and best seen in comparison to the text known as the Ugaritic Baal Cycle. After coming from Philistia and removing other claimants to the throne, his first act of consolidation of power in the north was the purchase of a previously unoccupied site in the Ephraimite highlands where he constructed his new capital of Samaria (1 Kgs 16:24). The Omride site was occupied for roughly one hundred and eighty years, approximately 900–720 BCE, and it shows heavy Phoenician/Canaanite influence, including ivory houses (Amos 3:16, 6:4) and significant cult worship of the Canaanite deities.<sup>129</sup> Omri and his successors constructed a number of other sites around the Jezreel Valley, including Jezreel

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<sup>128</sup> The term employed in Deuteronomy is אִשׁ נָכְרִי, “foreign man.” There is a sense of otherness, but primarily because the person is not tied to the Israelite land itself, and possibly to the covenant, by extension. The root is common in Semitic languages, generally with the same semantic range. Isaiah uses it in parallel with strangeness (זָר), again with just the sense of not belonging (Isa 28:21). The sense seems to be more distant than the Canaanites (Deut 29:22). See TDOT 9:424; HALOT, s.v. “נָכְרִי,” 700. Albright took it to be cognate with Akk. *nukra*, found at Mari, which he took to mean “exotic.” See William F. Albright, “New Light on the History of Western Asia in the Second Millennium BC,” *BASOR* 77 (1940): 31. This seems to be a reasonable interpretation of the word class. See CAD 11:328. Whether the Hebrew would apply this term to a non-Israelite but still NWS Semitic person is unclear, given that it is used to describe Moabites another Canaanites elsewhere (Ruth 2:10, 1 Kgs 11:1).

<sup>129</sup> For a brief overview, see William G. Dever, “Ahab and Archaeology: A Commentary on 1 Kings 16–22,” in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Post-Biblical Judaism: Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, vol. 1, ed. Chaim Cohen and Shalom M. Paul (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 478–81. The most complete analysis is found in Ron E. Tappy, *Early Iron Age through the Ninth Century BCE*, vol. 1 of *The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria*, HSS 44 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

and Megiddo, which point to this northern region as the focus of the kingdom. Overall, the Omrides embarked on ambitious building projects throughout the region to provide people with a sense of stability. All of these projects also indicate some level of affluence, perhaps from increased trade due to alliances with all the secondary states around them.<sup>130</sup> The new capital of Samaria represented a shift of focus as Omri and his successors would increasingly have to deal with the threat of the Aramaeans and Assyrians to their north.<sup>131</sup> Finkelstein dubs this period of focus on northern expansion and regional contact the “Samaria polity,” distinct from the earlier “Tirzah polity” which was focused on the Gibeon-Bethel plateau.<sup>132</sup>

Omri’s second act of consolidation was to form a marriage alliance with the Phoenicians through the marriage of his son Ahab to Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre. Ahab succeeded Omri in 873 BCE, and during his reign, Israel became increasingly involved with the Aramaeans and Assyrians. Ahab’s own son Jehoram ruled until 842 BCE, when the general Jehu killed Amaziah, Ahab’s eventual successor, and established his own dynasty, known as the Jehuites or Nimshites, which lasted until 749 BCE.<sup>133</sup> When the last Nimshite king was killed by Shallum in 749 BCE, the kingdom began a twenty-eight year long period of instability which ended with the Assyrian conquest of Samaria (722 BCE). Baruchi-Unna has proposed that this

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<sup>130</sup> For an excellent survey and bibliography on this, see Tal Rusak, “The Clash of Cults on Mount Carmel: Do Archaeological Records and Historical Documents Support the Biblical Episode of Elijah and the Ba’al Priests?” *SJOT* 22 (2008): 36–39. See also Finkelstein, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 85–105. The Omride constructions were marked by (1) elevated podiums, (2) casemate compounds, (3) a particular gate design in the walls, and (4) rock-cut moats.

<sup>131</sup> Jeroboam’s two sacred sites were in the extreme south (Bethel) and the extreme north (Dan). Greer argues that these cultic sites were tied to attempts to gain tribal allegiances for the northern polity. Once the Omrides took over, however, the focus shifted to the central capital and Jezreel. Greer concludes the sites were Yahwistic, at least originally. See Jonathan S. Greer, *Dinner at Dan: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sacred Feasts at Iron Age II Tel Dan and their Significance*, CHANE 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>132</sup> Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 63–82.

<sup>133</sup> The term “Nimshite” is derived from Jehu’s father Nimshi and some literature employs it rather than Jehuite.

second dynasty was a branch of the Omrides, with Jehu being a descendant of Omri.<sup>134</sup> If his theory is correct, then the combined Omride dynasty lasted for nearly a century and a half.

Omri's third consolidatory act will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter because it is implicit in the biblical record. Omri and his son Ahab were intentional in developing the worship of the Canaanite deities, chiefly Baal and Asherah, in their kingdom. Unlike their predecessors like Jeroboam who at least made an effort to revere YHWH as the Hebrew God, the Omrides devoted their kingdom's resources to Canaanite practices. According to the biblical record, Ahab constructed a "house of Baal" in Samaria (1 Kgs 16:33), his consort Jezebel sustained a cadre of 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah who are said to "eat at Jezebel's table," an allusion to a centralized prophetic class associated with the royal family (1 Kgs 18:19).<sup>135</sup> The centralizing power of these religious actions can be seen in the succession of Jehu when he declares his devotion to Baal by declaring a celebratory feast (עצרה), complete with specialized garments (לבוש) and then executing the gathered prophets (2 Kgs 10:18–27). This is the only time in the Bible that this particular kind of assembly is associated with a deity other than YHWH (Lev 23:26; Num 29:35; Deut 16:8; 2 Chr 7:9; Neh 8:13; Joel 1:14, 2:15)

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<sup>134</sup> Baruchi-Unna, "Jehuites, Ahabites, and Omrides," 3–21. Baruchi-Unna's thesis is that Jehu was a descendant of Omri. He bases his argument on Assyrian evidence and the use of "house of Ahab" in biblical condemnations rather than "house of Omri" (1 Kgs 21:22; 2 Kgs 9:7–9). In Assyrian records, Jehu is uniquely referred to as belonging to "son of Omri" while Ahab is "the Israelite" and other kings are referred to as "the Samarian." Na'aman argues against this, supporting the consensus that there was no familial relationship. See Nadav Na'aman, "Jehu Son of Omri: Legitimizing a Loyal Vassal by his Overlord," *IEJ* 48 (1998): 236–238; Tammi J. Schneider, "Did Jehu Kill His Own Family?" *BAR* 21.1 (1995): 26–33, 80; Tammi J. Schneider, "Rethinking Jehu," *Biblica* 77 (1996): 100–107. For text and reference to "Jehu of the House of Omri" (*ia-ú-a DUMU hu-um-ri-i am hur*), see Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of Early First Millennium BC*, 42–48.

<sup>135</sup> Timm and Niehr argued that the text we have today is ideologically corrupted and the text should read "House of Elohim" or "House of YHWH." See John A. Emerton, "The House of Baal in 1 Kings XVI 32," *VT* 47 (1997): 293–300. Finkelstein, on the other hand, points to the inscription at Kuntillat 'Ajrud to "YHWH of Samaria" as evidence of the YHWH cult in Samaria. See Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, 138–40; Nadav Na'aman, "In Search of the Temples of YHWH of Samaria and YHWH of Teman," *JANER* 17 (2017): 76–95. This evidence does not contradict the biblical record. The presence of this appellation hardly countermands the biblical evidence for a Baal cultic center since prophets of YHWH frequent Samaria in the biblical narrative. It may also be that the biblical prophets viewed the worship of YHWH in Samaria as false because of Canaanite influences. The Omrides may have referred to it as a house of YHWH while the Yahwist prophets saw it as a false house of Baal.

although it is employed several times in a negative sense (Isa 1:13; Jer 9:2; Amos 5:2). One interesting omission in the text is a priesthood. Prophets are the emphasized functionaries of both the Omride royal cult and the opposing faction of YHWH worshipers. This may perhaps indicate Ahab's religious reforms were not the importing of a religion, but the reclamation of a Canaanite practice of royal religion.

### The General Historicity of the Omride-Nimshite Dynasty

The Omride rulers are well-attested in the extrabiblical record. The Mesha Stela famously records, "Omri was the king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab for many days, for Kemosh was angry with his land."<sup>136</sup> Ahab appears on the Kurkh monolith, a monumental chronicle that includes Ahab as an Assyrian ally at the Battle of Qarqar (853 BCE).<sup>137</sup> The Tel Dan inscription mentions the death of Joram b. Ahab.<sup>138</sup> Jehu, who eventually overthrew the descendants of Ahab and replaced them with his own dynastic branch of the family, appears on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III with the moniker, "son of Omri."<sup>139</sup> While these extrabiblical

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<sup>136</sup> *mr.y.mlk.yšr'l.wy'nw't.m'b.ymn.rbn.ky.y'np.kmš.b'ršh* (lines 4–6). Kent P. Jackson and Andrew J. Dearman, "The Text of the Mesha' Inscription," in *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, ed. Andrew J. Dearman, ABS 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 93–95. Jackson and Dearman discuss the various transcriptions. Consider André Lemaire, "The Mesha Stela and the Omri Dynasty," in Grabbe, *Ahab Agonistes*, 135–44. This reading of the text is widely accepted, although Thompson rejects the historical reference to Omri. His view is considered extreme. See Thomas L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (London: Basic Books, 1999), 13. For discussion of the weaknesses of Thompson's arguments, see Dever, "Ahab and Archaeology," in Grabbe, *Ahab Agonistes*, 476–77.

<sup>137</sup> Moshe Elat, "The Campaigns of Shalmaneser III against Aram and Israel," *IEJ* 25, no. 1 (1975): 25–35; Nadav Na'aman, *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction*, vol. 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 1–12; Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 171. For the text and its reference to Ahab (*A-ḥa-ab-bu*) see Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of Early First Millennium BC*, 11–24.

<sup>138</sup> Most scholars believe the Tel Dan inscription was commissioned by an Aramean king, probably Hazael. Jan-Wim Wesselijs offered a fascinating theory that it was constructed by Jehu. See Jan-Wim Wesselijs, "The First Inscription from Ancient Israel: The Tel Dan Inscription Reconsidered," *SJOT* 13 (1999): 163–86. For the exchange between Wesselijs and Bob Becking, who defended the consensus argument, see Bob Becking, "Did Jehu Write the Tel Dan Inscription?" *SJOT* 13 (1999): 187–201; Jan-Wim Wesselijs, "The Road to Jezreel: Primary History and the Tel Dan Inscription," *SJOT* 15 (2001): 83–103.

<sup>139</sup> For discussion, see Na'aman, "Jehu Son of Omri," 236–37.

references make it undeniable that the Omrides ruled, scholars have cast suspicion upon the historicity of the biblical record of their rule. For example, Doug Stulac sees the biblical record as “a thought experiment through which to consider YHWH’s character and relationship with Israel in a world where such institutions [the temple, Davidic rule] have been stripped away ... Israel’s hope endures because YHWH is a God who brings forth life from the shadow of death.”<sup>140</sup> Stulac dispenses with the question of historicity through the expediency of an etiological explanation. He ignores the question of historical context by arguing there is a valid ideological reason for the stories. The question must be asked: what value is an ideology not founded in history? It is esoteric and therefore evanescent.

### **Possible Canaanite Religio-Political Dynamics in Omri’s Ascent**

The shift to Baal worship and the legitimization of Canaanite sensibilities in the Israelite kingdom may have been a way for the Omrides to establish themselves as the rightful rulers of the population, which probably had a healthy Canaanite population. The expression of royal religion was a component of the broader Canaanite religion. While the practice may have evolved in the intervening centuries, it would have followed the same basic blueprint as the ascension Niqmaddu III in Ugarit. If Tugendhaft is correct in his political interpretation, it has significant implications for the Omride shift to Baal veneration. As Tugendhaft puts it, “A human king who takes Baal’s kingship as an archetype would gain no more support for his own kingship than he could muster through successfully ordering his affairs. One might call such an archetype historically solipsistic.”<sup>141</sup> It would only have value for the king himself. In order to

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<sup>140</sup> Doug J. Stulac, *Life, Land, and Elijah in the Book of Kings*, SOTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 87.

<sup>141</sup> Tugendhaft, *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*, 74.

have some kind of divine sanction for a new ruler and the establishment of a new dynasty, something else would need to be in play. What Tugendhaft proposes is that Niqmaddu III did not look to an archetype but rather saw his own ascent as paralleling his Baal's. Discussing the poetic forms of Yamm's opposition to El, Tugendhaft argues that the Baal Cycle begins with the premise that "no ruler is inherently legitimate, and no order is really fixed."<sup>142</sup> Niqmaddu III did not reign because Baal selected him. He ascended as Baal ascended. This allows not simply for the divine sanction or stewardship for a king, but rather for the ascendancy of the king and his progeny, his dynasty, as long as Baal was ascendant.

As a usurper from outside of the power structure of Israelite society, Omri could have married his ascension to the revival of Phoenician cults, which had been marginalized in Israelite society. Literally, his Baal was challenging the authority of the elder god, El, although in this case, El was the Hebrew's YHWH. With entities such as Baal and Asherah named in the text, it seems that Omri and Ahab reframed the mythical and royal Canaanite worship to support their own authority.<sup>143</sup> In other words, as Omri ascended to the throne, he could declare that Baal was also ascending, the earthly mirroring the heavenly, just as in the UBC.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Tugendhaft, *Baal and the Politics of Poetry*, 84.

<sup>143</sup> It may be, as John Day has proposed, that the references to "Baal and Asherah" in the text is meant to be a generalization for all gods and goddesses, just as *ilānu u ištarāti* is in Akkadian. John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, JSOTSup 265 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 131; Daniel C. Snell, *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2020), 324–25. In this dissertation, Baal is used as a shorthand for whatever gods the Omrides had revived for their purposes. It may have been a specific Canaanite deity, or the editors of the Book of Kings may have employed it generically.

<sup>144</sup> The focus in this section is on Baal worship, but Asherah (Heb. אֲשֶׁרָה, Ug. *ʾaḥrt*) also played a significant role in the Canaanite religions. The biblical record uses אֲשֶׁרָה to refer to both a deity and a cultic object. The latter usage is universal when the definite article is absent. Usage with the definite article must be determined by context. For the distinction of usage of אֲשֶׁרָה between the deity and cultic object, see Sung Jin Park, "The Cultic Identity of Asherah in Deuteronomistic Ideology of Israel," *ZAW* 123 (2011): 553–64. Asherah is also present in the Ugaritic materials, and although the focus here is on Baal, she was distinctly elevated at Ugarit as a creator in her own right and unlike the consorts of the Assyrians, she was far more active there. Importantly, she was the consort of the high god El, and not Baal. Baal's consort was Anat, who does not appear in the biblical record at all. For the

## Preexilic Religious References in the Biblical Account

The narrative in the Book of Kings is largely confined to the actions of the kings, and there is a paucity of detail about the makeup and conduct of the majority of the populations who lived beyond the walls of the capital districts. Given the archaeological evidence, it would appear that the Yahwist cult of Jerusalem did not become prominent in the general populace until the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. Therefore, one may be forgiven for thinking of their reforms as something that was largely limited to the royal compound.<sup>145</sup> When discussing the Israelite religion, we must consider it in the context of what is known about the religious behavior of such decentralized peoples in the Levant. Kingship had both a military application, signified by the anointing to the role of *נגד* (1 Sam 9:16, 10:1; 1 Kgs 1:35, 14:7, 16:2; 2 Kgs 20:5), and a civil one which was defined by the more familiar *מלך*.<sup>146</sup> There was also a profound religious aspect to the

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Canaanite view of Asherah, see Tilde Binger, *Asherah: Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel, and the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 232 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 49–86; Marjo C. A. Korpel, “Asherah Outside Israel,” in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah*, ed. Bob Becking, Meindert Dijkstra, Marjo C. A. Korpel, and Karel J. H. Vriezen, *The Biblical Seminar 77* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 127–50. There are also a few rising trends in feminist scholarship which is seeking to invert the biblical portrayal of Asherah and other goddesses. For a summary, see Peggy L. Day, “Hebrew Bible Goddesses and Modern Feminist Scholarship,” *Religion Compass* 6 (2012): 298–308. This trend is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>145</sup> Halpern’s discussion of this issue, while dated in some places, is worth continued examination. See Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*, 175–250. Some see these reforms as appropriation or usurpation of the native role of Baal. Anderson sees a “non-polemical appropriation” at work in the text, with later editors and redactors swapping Baal for YHWH in the superior position. See James S. Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh’s Appropriation of Baal*, LHBOTS 617 (New York: T & T Clark, 2015), 43–46.

<sup>146</sup> The Akk. cognate *nāgīru(m)* has the sense of a herald of the king, but the Aramaic cognate *ngdy* in the Sefire III treaty and the Letter of Adon have the sense is an exalted individual, someone designated. See G.F. Hasel, TDOT 9:188–90; HALOT, s.v. “נגיד,” 667. The evolution of the biblical usage seems tied to the divinely appointed aspect of kingship, distinguished from the acclamation by the people (1 Kgs 1:35, 14:7). Albright first argued this nuanced interpretation because he saw *נגד* as quite distinct from kingship itself. See William F. Albright, *Samuel and the Beginnings of the Prophetic Movement* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1961), 15–16. See also Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 220; Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*, 1–11. In this, Albright is adapting the same sentiment as Martin Noth, *History of Israel*, trans. Stanley Godman (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 169. See also GHCLLOT s.v., “נגד” where Gesenius notes a wide semantic range encompassing the idea of a first or primary person to the anointing of a chosen leader (as in Dan 9:25; Job 29:10). There appears to be quite a bit of flexibility in the use of this term over time. In later texts, it is parallel to a king (Ps 76:13, Ezek 28:2), but there is a sense of the king-elect or king in prospect (1 Sam 13:14). The application of the term to sitting kings would seem to indicate the division mentioned here, but it is far from certain.

role, since the king claimed divine appointment and served as a sponsor of the state religion. The Omride kings, however, seem to have taken on the Canaanite model of kingship, as seen in the UBC and the Mesha Stela.

The sponsorship of the prophetic schools of Baal and Asherah (1 Kgs 18:19) was a supplement to his own devotion to the Canaanite gods. Ahab not only took an active role as a sponsor of the religious practice but also became an active functionary in it with his construction of both a house of Baal and an Asherah site (1 Kgs 16:32–33). The introduction of the Canaanite religions was a provocation to YHWH. Elijah’s emergence could represent a contest between Baal and YHWH through the proxies of the Canaanite royal religion and the Israelite Yahwist religion. It is not coincidence that the prophet Elijah’s name (אליהו) is literally, “my El is YHWH” or “YHWH is my El.”<sup>147</sup> The presence of such a theophoric name is unlikely to be a coincidence. While אל can be used to denote the specific God of the Israelites, this rarely occurs without an attributive or additional cognomen (Gen 46:3; Josh 22:22; Ps 50:1).<sup>148</sup> Given that El was the king of the Canaanite pantheon in mythology, and therefore the great power behind the Canaanite royal religion, the prophet stands in the gap to declare that Baal is a corrupt substitute—YHWH is the true El.<sup>149</sup> This contest was played out not in a mythical battle but by proxy in the lives of the kings and prophets.

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<sup>147</sup> HALOT, s.v. “אלֹהֵי,” 55. The theophoric nature of the name is straightforward. The use of אל as a proper name for a Canaanite deity is well-attested. See Frank M. Cross, “אל,” TDOT 1:242–43. Elisha’s words in 2 Kings 2:14 offer an inversion of the name: אֵלֵהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אֱלִיָּהוּ.

<sup>148</sup> GHCLLOT, “אל,” 45. Gesenius saw the addition of the personal possessive (אלי), as is the case in the name Elijah, as identification of YHWH’s distinctiveness among the gods.

<sup>149</sup> El may have figured prominently in the religion of the northern kingdom well into the reign of Jeroboam II. See Aren M. Wilson-Wright, “Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30,” *JBL* 138 (2019): 705–20. While Wilson-Wright’s argument is literary and not historical, her argument is not entirely groundless. A persistent El cult would explain some elements of the context between Canaanite and Israelite religion.

The role of prophets in this royal cult will be discussed in chapter five, but here it should be said that prophets played a key part in the Canaanite royal religion, offering some context for the nature of Elijah and Elisha's opposition to the Omride kings. Auld has argued that Elijah and the prophets of YHWH—Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:7), Oded (2 Chr 28:9), and Elisha (2 Kgs 3:11)—are depicted in a particular rivalry with the prophets of Baal for literary reasons.<sup>150</sup> He argues that this is because they were created as resonances of later southern prophets, because he believes there were no archives, royal or otherwise, and instead both the Book of Kings and Chronicles derive from a now-lost “shared integrated narrative.”<sup>151</sup> Of course, this assumes that such a narrative existed in a world which he admits did not have the infrastructure to create such a literary narrative. This part of Auld's argument demonstrates one of the issues inherent in a late date of the prophetic materials. They assume that these details are literary creations in a “shared integrated narrative,” rather than evidence of a historical precedent. Writers in the postexilic world, no matter how well-trained they were in Persian-era literacy, would scarcely have been aware of things like the UBC or the type of regional religio-political maneuvering detailed in it. In order for Auld's thesis to stand, he has to argue that these details of Canaanite culture survived intact until the Persian period wholly through oral transmission, something that seems unlikely. If, on the other hand, an allowance is made for the preservation through Campbell's genre of reported story, with the core and “color” of the narrative preserved in writing for storytellers to present it cohesively, then such preservation is plausible. There are three aspects of the biblical narrative that point to a historical uniqueness of the Canaanite religions as reported in the Elijah-Elisha materials.

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<sup>150</sup> Auld, *Life in Kings*, 117–40.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 192–94.

(1) *The Elevation of Baal Worship under the Omrides*. Here, it is necessary to look to the biblical text because there is little the archaeological record can tell us about motivations or decisions. Materials remains can tell us what was built, but absent textual evidence, they do not tell us the reasons. In the biblical text, there is an explicit reference to Omri's abandonment of YHWH (1 Kgs 16:25–26). The formula used here is the same used for the failures of the northern kings who preceded Omri except for the reference to “provoking YHWH, the God of Israel, by their idols (בהבליהם),” which intensifies in its repetition of the condemnation on Baasha (1 Kgs 16:13). Omri's actions are said to exceed that of previous kings. The association with Baasha, a previous king whose idolatry ultimately led to Omri's ascension, would indicate a continuity, but the additions to the text at every stage are meant to indicate an increase in the activity.

The use of *הבל* to refer to objects of worship is rare (here, Deut 32:21; 2 Kgs 17:15; Ps 31:7; Jonah 2:8). Generally, it means emptiness or worthlessness, but as Staples noticed, when it is used in reference to the gods of the Canaanites, it takes on cultic dimensions.<sup>152</sup> There is, therefore, good reason to believe Baasha and Omri are described as adding Canaanite cults to their lists of provocative sins. From the perspective of those recording these narratives, Omri did something Jeroboam I was not willing to do. This would appear to indicate the elevation of the Canaanite royal religion, something Baasha had attempted to do, and which Omri adopted as his own. This makes sense, since Omri is depicted as a faithful general under Baasha and his son.

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<sup>152</sup> Staples made a connection with the pre-Islamic Arabic *hubal*, arguing that it meant something closer to “unknowable” in this context. HALOT, s.v. “הָבַל”; W. E. Staples, “The ‘Vanity’ of Ecclesiastes,” *JNES* 2 (1943): 95–104. The connection of *הבל* with the divine can also be found in Carey Walsh, “Theological Traces in Qoheleth,” *BTB* 42.1 (2012): 12–17. On the other hand, Greenspahn sees the use of *הבל* as parody of these false gods. See Frederick E. Greenspahn, “Syncretism and Idolatry in the Bible,” *VT* 54 (2004) 484–85. It may also be worth noting that although accusations of idolatry are made against later kings, *הבל* is not used. It is used generally in 2 Kings 17:15, but not fixed to any individual king.

Ahab then followed explicitly in his own father's footsteps by erecting a house of Baal in Samaria, thus earning his own formulaic condemnation (1 Kgs 16:32–33).<sup>153</sup> As will be seen in the next chapter, the prophets who serve Ahab's gods practice things like bloodletting (1 Kgs 18:28), characteristic of the Canaanite cults.

(2) *The Unique Contest Between Baal and YHWH*. Perhaps the best biblical evidence for the Omrides' use of royal religion is the way that their religious reforms were contested by the prophets of YHWH. Throughout the Elijah-Elisha materials, the prophets of YHWH directly contest not the kings' authority and power but the authority and power of their gods. Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Carmel is a clear example of this, but also his rejection of the power of Baal-Zebub (2 Kgs 1:1–4). This kind of direct confrontation with false gods is not typical of prophets in the biblical record. They often condemn worship of false gods, but actually challenging them to contests seems characteristic of Elijah and Elisha. Jeroboam I rightly saw his ascendance as the will of YHWH but offered Israel an alternative form of YHWH worship. The Omrides appear to have seen their ascendance as tied to the ascendance and blessing of a different set of gods, whom YHWH then challenged directly.

(3) *The Postexilic Absence of Baal*. The Book of Chronicles is universally held to be a postexilic recapitulation of Samuel-Kings.<sup>154</sup> It is also the only postexilic work which features Baal as a deity (2 Chr 17:3, 23:17, 24:7, 28:2, 33:3, 34:4). All of these references are either

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<sup>153</sup> The narrative of Omri's purchase of Samaria has shadows of the Davidic narrative. David established a dynasty, purchased the threshing floor of Araunah and then his son Solomon constructed the house of YHWH. Here, Omri purchases the hill of Shemer, and his son Ahab constructs the house of Baal.

<sup>154</sup> There is considerable debate as to when in the postexilic period it was composed. For discussion, see Ralph W. Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 13–16; Frederick J. Maple, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 40–42; William Johnstone, *1 Chronicles 1–2 Chronicles 9: Israel's Place Among the Nations*, vol. 1 of *1 and 2 Chronicles*, JSOTSup 253 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 11–12; Martin J. Selman, *1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 10 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1994), 72–74.

directly parallel to or drawn from passages in the Book of Kings. Beside the Book of Kings and the northern prophetic book of Hosea (Hosea 2:8, 13, 17; 11:2; 13:1), the deity Baal appears only in a single psalm (Ps 106:28, quoting Num 5:3), Zephaniah (Zeph 1:4), and Jeremiah (Jer 2:8, 23; 7:9; 9:14; 11:13, 17; 12:16; 19:5; 23:13, 27; 32:29, 35).<sup>155</sup> Asherah are likewise absent in postexilic passages, except in 2 Chronicles (14:3; 15:16; 17:6; 19:3; 24:18; 31:1; 33:3, 19; 34:3, 4, 7).<sup>156</sup> The absence of these hallmarks of Canaanite religion in postexilic texts, particularly postexilic prophetic works, would seem to indicate either that Baal worship was no longer a concern in that period or that somehow Baal had been redacted from the text or absorbed by YHWH.<sup>157</sup> The former is a simpler explanation. It only seems reasonable that if postexilic authors were familiar with the Canaanite religion, they would have employed it at least occasionally. Other cultural touchpoints continued through into the postexilic period, but the Canaanite deities were replaced with generic references to false gods and idols.<sup>158</sup>

### Chapter Summary

The Omride-Nimshite dynasty of Israel fits the profile of a Levantine secondary state during Iron Age II. The conditions that gave rise to these states meant they were necessarily small and often in contact as they bridged the gap between the LBA collapse and the rise of the great empires of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. The Phoenicians were the first of the states, but

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<sup>155</sup> Although there are a number of toponyms that include Baal in the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures, the deity appears almost exclusively in Judges–Kings.

<sup>156</sup> Even Jeremiah makes only oblique references to Asherah as “the queen of heaven” (Jer 7:18, 44:18–25).

<sup>157</sup> At least one scholar has argued this latter point. See James S. Anderson, *Monotheism and Yahweh’s Appropriation of Baal*, LHBOTS 617 (London: T & T Clark, 2015).

<sup>158</sup> Even Auld is sensitive to the disappearance of Baal from the biblical record in the exilic and postexilic period, although he observes it only in passing. See A. Graeme Auld, “Elijah and the Prophets of Baal and of Asherah: Towards a Discussion of ‘No Prophets?’” in *New Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy and History: Essays in Honour of Hans M. Barstad*, ed. Rannfrid I. Thelle, Terje Stordalen, and Mervyn E. J. Richardson, VTSup 168 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 7–16.

their coastal orientation and their tendency toward autonomous cities meant that they were not territorial powers and transitioned to their Mediterranean colonies as pressures from Assyria developed. The Aramaeans were not one kingdom but several spheres of influence which ebbed and flowed, forming alliances and fighting wars with other secondary states. Their language, which used an alphabetic writing system, was used in trade, and after they were conquered by Assyria, it became the language of trade outside of the Assyrian homelands. The peripheral states of Moab and Ammon interacted mostly with the other secondary states, and Moab's wars were memorialized in the Mesha Stela, which offers a great deal of insight into the secondary states.

The Hebrew kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, are fundamental to the discussion of the biblical record. The northern kingdom came to be dominated by the Omride kings, and it is their rule which is the setting for the materials that make up the IPM. Aspects of the way the Omrides consolidated power are unique to the period of secondary states. In particular, the ways that religion was employed has similarities to the UBC, as interpreted by Tugendhaft. While others have attempted to draw parallels between the UBC and YHWH's "ascent" as the Hebrew king of the gods,<sup>159</sup> Tugendhaft offers a view of the UBC which may instead inform the study of the Omride rise, with the rising king manipulating religious sentiment for political gain. This kind of religio-political structure contributed to the development of Niqmaddu III's ascendance in Ugarit and hints of it can be found in Mesha's appeal to Kemosh.

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<sup>159</sup> This idea originally derives from Sigmund Mowinkel. See Sigmund Mowinkel, *Psalm Studies*, trans. Mark E. Biddle, vol. 1, *History of Biblical Studies 2* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 223–236. This single volume translates two of Mowinkel's German works: *Psalmstudien I: Awdn und die individuellen Klagepsalmen* SVK 4 (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1921) and *Psalmstudien II: Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie*, SVK 6 (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1922). Mowinkel's six volumes on the Psalms were revised and republished in a single volume in 1961. The English translation published by SBL appeared in two volumes. Mowinkel relied heavily upon Gunkel, who was mentioned in the first chapter, for his definition of myth. Petersen summarizes Mowinkel well. See Allan Rosengren Petersen, *The Royal God: Enthronement Festivals in Ancient Israel and Ugarit?* JSOTSup 259 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 1–33. For recent attempts, see again Flynn, *YHWH is King*, 163–170. Flynn sees the transition from "ascent as king of the gods" to monotheism as a southern event. See also Nissim Amzallag, "Yahweh, the Canaanite God of Metallurgy?" *JSOT* 33 (2009): 387–404.

In short, it is how one gained power over the masses, particularly when constructing a kingdom that sat at the crossroads of many groups. The northern kingdom of Israel sat at such a crossroad, and as such a return to the Canaanite model of royal religion would not have been unreasonable for the Omrides as they attempted to consolidate power.

As a usurper looking to establish a dynasty, Omri would have been well-advised to establish the Canaanite royal religious order among his people.<sup>160</sup> He and his successor Ahab would have needed to develop something to gain the support of the Canaanite population, which would have included at least some of the northern Israelites who had “gone native” over the period of northern chaos.<sup>161</sup> Rather than relying upon charismatic leadership, Omri could have laid the groundwork for a religious unity with his household as the center. The Baal worship condemned by the prophets Elijah and Elisha could have plausibly been this royal cult, meant to unite the populace in a neo-Canaanite religious fervor.<sup>162</sup> There is good reason to see this Yahwist opposition to the Canaanite revival as a marker of preexilic origins, although it must be admitted that there are other valid explanations for it.

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<sup>160</sup> Liverani maintains that Omri’s kingdom was initially in conflict between a rural, tribal population and a growing urban society. It is not difficult to assume this rural population was primarily still engaged in household Canaanite religious practices, even if nominally Israelite. See Mario Liverani, *Israel’s History and the History of Israel*, trans. Chiara Peri and Philip R. Davies (London: Routledge, 2014), 104–110. Niemann points out that the Omrides ruled over a decentralized, mixed population of Israelites and Canaanites. While the same could be said of the southern kingdom, it comes to the fore in the north. See Hermann Michael Niemann, “Royal Samaria—Capital or Residence? Or The Foundation of the City of Samaria by Sargon II,” in Grabbe, *Ahab Agonistes*, 184–207.

<sup>161</sup> Liverani, *Israel’s History*, 107–8.

<sup>162</sup> Of interest here is Flynn’s adaptation of Amitav Ghosh’s arguments for ANE contexts. See Shawn W. Flynn, *YHWH is King: The Development of Divine Kingship in Ancient Israel*, VTSup 159 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 87–89. Flynn relies heavily upon the idea of cultural translation from the writings of Amitav Ghosh. Flynn’s third chapter is devoted to applying cultural translation to the ANE generally and Israel specifically. Ghosh’s theories were built upon contemporary events in the 20th century, but Flynn feels there are hints of this kind of development. For Ghosh’s arguments, see Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land: History in the Guise of a Traveler’s Tale* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

## CHAPTER 5: WRITING AND LITERACY IN THE IRON AGE LEVANT

### Introduction

The absence of significant, lengthy epigraphic materials is one of the key components of the RM argument against the historicity of the Book of Kings. This is tied to the question of whether the Hebrew states had developed sufficient infrastructure to produce such materials. As Van Seters agrees, “not until the late 8th century was Judah sufficiently advanced as a state that it could produce any written records, and not until the end of the monarchy did it make any attempt.”<sup>1</sup> Nadav Na‘aman argues there are no alphabetic texts from the regions of Israel and Judah before the eighth century BCE.<sup>2</sup> Writing is said to reflect the bureaucratic nature of a secondary state, thus without evidence of writing, there could be no secondary state.<sup>3</sup> This position is taken as axiomatic in virtually all RM histories of the Hebrew kingdoms.

Answering this objection must begin with a consideration of the epigraphic evidence. Before considering the evidence, however, the situation should be clarified and qualified. The dating of this evidence is more art than science. While this is true of virtually all archaeological interpretation, it is especially true of inscriptions for a number of reasons. First, inscriptions are almost never found in their original context. As will be seen in the section below, important texts like the Mesha Stela and the Tel Dan Inscription were used in secondary construction. Even the Rosetta Stone, possibly the most significant inscription found in the modern era, was found in a

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<sup>1</sup> John Van Seters, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 119. Strictly speaking, Van Seters is dealing with the Davidic narratives and not the later Omride material. The idea of “little cities such as Jerusalem in the earlier period” would apply to Samaria and the northern administration as well. He allows for the development of some literary works by the end of the eighth century BCE, but he sees these as “likely quite brief” and insists on late Persian period date for all significant literary works.

<sup>2</sup> Nadav Na‘aman, “The ‘Conquest of Canaan’ in the Book of Joshua and in History,” in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, ed. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na‘aman (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 219–22.

<sup>3</sup> Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 150–54.

secondary usage. Second, even those which are found in their original context, as was the case with the plasters at Kuntillit ‘Ajrud and Deir ‘Alla, are often fragmentary. Inscriptions found in secondary usages are often even more fragmented. Third, the period under consideration was a transitional time for writing technologies. In such periods, experimentation and variety are normal. The partial nature of the evidence, however, leaves the reader with gaps in the information which must be filled in with evidence from other sources and no small measure of inference. As discussed in chapter two, this is the nature of historical reconstruction, but it does allow for a diversity of interpretations. This diversity extends to the assigned dates of many of these texts.<sup>4</sup>

The first section of this chapter will be a survey of the types of texts from the Iron Age I-II Levant. This is not meant to be an exhaustive catalog of the texts, but it is meant to show what kind of extrabiblical epigraphic evidence exists from the time period. The second section will then deal with the question of literacy among the NWS-speaking peoples of the period. To address this question, two connected matters must be addressed. First, the scribal traditions of the preceding age need to be summarized. Second, it will be necessary to consider the nature of orality and the oral register of writing in a primarily oral society. The transitional nature of this period due to two revolutionary technologies—the alphabetic writing system and organic writing materials, such as papyrus—will be considered throughout the chapter since they would have had an impact on the nature and degree of literacy.

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix D provides a comparison of some of the versions of Iron Age chronology, which shows the diversity of approaches. Appendix G provides a list of NWS Inscriptions from the LBA and Iron Age I-II periods. The dates provided by Israel Finkelstein and Benjamin Sass are dependent upon their Low Chronology, and so in the footnotes of this appendix are alternative dates, often those provided by the discoverers.

### Types of Texts from the Iron Age I–II Levant

Millard chose to classify ancient texts from the southern Levant into three categories: monumental, formal, and occasional.<sup>5</sup> Monumental texts were generally inscribed in stone, meaning they were erected by someone with sufficient economic foundation to afford such works, usually kings or rulers. These texts were meant to be permanent, either as legal codes or as annals. Formal texts include treaties, legal decisions, and official correspondence. They served a definite function within the secondary state and therefore were meant to have a moderate permanence. They were commonly the texts being archived. Occasional texts are those which are written without the intention of permanence. The media of these occasional texts is generally peripheral. Seals placed on jar handles, the imprints of seals, and ostraca are generally considered occasional texts. They are primarily short texts, meant for less formal purposes—from identification of property to simple graffiti.

There is not a large corpus of texts. Aḥituv and Mazar argue there are no more than thirty-five alphabetic ostraca and inscriptions for the tenth and ninth centuries BCE combined.<sup>6</sup> Finkelstein and Sass set the number at forty-five, but they include six LBA texts and four

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<sup>5</sup> Alan R. Millard, “The Question of Israelite Literacy,” *BR* 3.3 (1987): 22–31. This chapter offers a survey of scribal media, but for a thorough examination, see Philip Zhakevich, *Scribal Tools in Ancient Israel: A Study of Biblical Hebrew Terms for Writing Materials and Implements*, History, Archaeology, and Culture of the Levant 9 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020). In the standard text, *The Context of Scripture* (COS) Hallo and Younger employ a system of categorization similar to Millard’s, classifying texts as (1) canonical, (2) monumental, and (3) archival. The approach they employed was to classify primarily by genre of text. Here, Millard is followed because the dissemination of texts is the key consideration. Also, Hallo and Younger examine the broadest possible context, and as such, include many documents beyond the scope of the Levantine secondary states. Their canonical category spans many media, and all their categories have a large catchment. See William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions, and Archival Documents from the Biblical World*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2003). Hereafter, this work is abbreviated simply as *COS* with a volume designator and page number.

<sup>6</sup> Shmuel Aḥituv and Amihai Mazar, “The Inscriptions from Tel Reḥov and their Contribution to the Study of Script and Writing during Iron Age IIA,” in “*See, I will Bring a Scroll Recounting What Befell Me*” (*Ps 40:8*): *Epigraphy and Daily Life from the Bible to the Talmud*, ed. Esther Eshel and Yigal Levin, *JAJSup* 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2014), 40–59. Their corpus includes eleven dating from the ninth and tenth century BCE from Tel Reḥov, twelve from the tenth century BCE, and another fourteen from the ninth century BCE.

additional, uncertain texts.<sup>7</sup> These texts are of a widely scattered provenance, and there is no evidence of any type of archives in the region. In the last few decades, advances have been made in terms of NWS epigraphy which inform our reading of the Hebrew Scriptures generally, but they also help understand how the NWS languages were utilized in the Levant during Iron Age I–II.<sup>8</sup>

### Monumental Texts

Stone was regularly used for monuments and other permanent or semi-permanent texts for public reading. Large monumental texts require significant resources, and therefore they are a sign of a reasonably well-established state.<sup>9</sup> Monumental texts represent careful versions of the language, often a formalized, “high” version of the language. That language is generally a language of imperial commerce such as Akkadian or Imperial Aramaic, but there are examples in local languages as well. Perhaps the best example of a monumental text produced in quantity is Ashurnasirpal II’s “Standard inscription,” which was inscribed 650 times on interior orthostats of the northwest palace of Nimrud (RIMA 2.0.101.23).<sup>10</sup> The complexity of producing this

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<sup>7</sup> Israel Finkelstein and Benjamin Sass, “The West Semitic Alphabetic Inscriptions, Late Bronze II to Iron Age IIA: Archaeological Context, Distribution and Chronology,” *HeBAI* 2 (2013): 149–220. A full list of Finkelstein and Sass’s catalog can be found in Appendix G.

<sup>8</sup> Of value in this discussion is Aaron Demsky, “Reading Northwest Semitic Inscriptions,” *NEA* 70 (2007): 68–74. Demsky responded to an open request from Christopher Rollston for essays pertaining to this specific subject. See also, Edward Lipinski, “Epigraphic Crisis—Dating Ancient Semitic Inscriptions,” *BAR* 16.4 (1990): 42–43, 49; P. Kyle McCarter, “The Contribution of Frank Moore Cross to Northwest Semitic Epigraphy,” *BASOR* 372 (2014): 161–65.

<sup>9</sup> Kitchen defines a monumental text broadly, depending primarily upon scale and means of display. Thus, a monumental text would be one meant for a broad audience and inscribed on a large surface in a permanent means. Size also figures into her definition, but it somewhat loosely described. See Kenneth A. Kitchen, “Now You See It, Now You Don’t! The Monumental Use and Non-Use of Writing in the Ancient Near East,” in *Writing and Ancient Near East Society: Papers in Honor of Alan R. Millard*, ed. Piotr Bienkowski, Christopher Mee, and Elizabeth Slater, LHBOTS 426 (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 175–77.

<sup>10</sup> The “Standard Inscription” is twenty-two lines long, beginning with a declaration of Ashurnasirpal II’s place as “viceroy” of Aššur and then surveying the history of his reign. Only sixteen partial panels are extant. There

monumental text meant that it took quite some time and significant resources to inscribe it on the panels.<sup>11</sup>

The examples here are monuments that were (1) found in or near the Levant and (2) are in vernacular languages. For the most part, these are NWS inscriptions, although one hieroglyphic Luwian inscription (the Yariri inscription) is included because of a possible mention of NWS languages. While Levantine monumental texts do not approach the scale of Assyrian or Babylonian texts, they do seem to follow similar templates.<sup>12</sup> This is especially true of royal texts. The two non-royal texts included here (the Yariri inscription and the Siloam inscription) break from these templates. Taken together with the other monumental texts not included in this list, these selections demonstrate that the production of these monumental texts was viewed as an important function of society in the Levantine secondary states, on both an official and unofficial level.

### **The Mesha Stela/Moabite Stone (*KAI 181*, Moabite)**

The most outstanding of the NWS monumental texts is the Mesha Stela, also called the Moabite Stone. It is the longest NWS inscription known to date, featuring thirty-four lines of text in Moabite concerning the Moabite king Mesha's claims of military victories over surrounding nations, such as Judah, Edom, and Ammon.<sup>13</sup> This stone inscription dates from the second half of the ninth century BCE, although as Lemaire has pointed out, there is no way to date it except to

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are variants in the text, indicating that it took quite some time for the panels to be completed, and a reconstruction of the full text can be viewed through the Royal Inscriptions of Assyria Online (RIAO), "Ashurnasirpal II 023," <http://oracc.org/riao/Q004477>.

<sup>11</sup> J. Caleb Howard, "On Mass-Producing the Standard Inscription of Ashurnasirpal II," *JNES* 79 (2020): 65–82. Howard demonstrates the length of time it would have taken to produce the 650 copies of the Standard Inscription and provides a reconstruction of the method it must have been created.

<sup>12</sup> For a further discussion, see Green, *I Undertook Great Works*, 33–86.

<sup>13</sup> Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 46; Green, *I Undertook Great Works*, 95–135.

compare it to the biblical text.<sup>14</sup> Originally found whole, only about two-thirds of the stone is extant today, but impressions were made of the text, which allow for filling most of the missing pieces.<sup>15</sup> There have been a number of reconstructions and transcriptions of the text, and some of the readings are still being debated.<sup>16</sup>

### The Ammon Citadel Inscription (*CAI 59*, Ammonite)

Although badly damaged, the Ammon Citadel Inscription was most likely a temple dedication text of some length. Only eight lines remain, three of which are reasonable intelligible.<sup>17</sup> The inscription dates from somewhere in the mid-ninth to early eighth century BCE, and it has some unique letter forms that Cross saw as archaic.<sup>18</sup> The text is dedicatory with the first line possibly reading, “The temple which I [RN] built for you, Lord Milkom, building (also) for you the entrances to its courts.”<sup>19</sup> As Cross ends his discussion, however, “unhappily,

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<sup>14</sup> André Lemaire, “The Mesha Stela and the Omri Dynasty,” in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 421 (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 136.

<sup>15</sup> K. A. D. Smelik, “Moabite Inscriptions,” *COS* 2, 137.

<sup>16</sup> See Lemaire, “The Mesha Stela” in Grabbe, *Ahab Agoniste*, 136; Kent P. Jackson and Andrew J. Dearman, “The Text of the Mesha’ Inscription,” in *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, ed. Andrew J. Dearman, ABS 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 93–95. See examples in John A. Emerton, “Lines 25–6 of the Moabite Stone and a Recently Discovered Inscription,” *VT* 55 (2003): 293–303; Aaron Shade, “New Photographs Supporting the Reading *ryt* in Line 12 of the Mesha Inscription,” *IEJ* 55 (2005): 205–8; André Lemaire, “New Photographs and *ryt* and *hyt* in the Mesha Inscription, Line 12,” *IEJ* 57 (2007): 204–7.

<sup>17</sup> Sigfried H. Horn, “The Ammān Citadel Inscription,” *BASOR* 193 (1969): 2–13; Victor Sasson, “The ‘Ammān Citadel Inscription as an Oracle Promising Divine Protection: Philological and Literary Comments,” *PEQ* 111 (1979): 117–25; William F. Albright, “Some Comments on the ‘Ammān Citadel Inscription,” *BASOR* 1970 (198): 38–40; Walter E. Aufrecht, “The Amman Citadel Inscription,” *COS* 2, 139; Andrew Burlingame, “Line Five of the Amman Citadel Inscription,” *BASOR* 376 (2016): 63–82.

<sup>18</sup> Frank M. Cross, “Epigraphic Notes on the ‘Ammān Citadel Inscription,” *BASOR* 193 (1969): 13–19. Ammonite script can be distinguished by the following traits: (1) the *ʾ* (𐤀) has archaic traits that mark it as possibly the earliest form of the letter; (2) the tale of *d* (𐤃) is more fully developed than in Hebrew and Phoenician of the period; (3) the *h* (𐤄) is semi-cursive as in Aramaic; (4) *t* (𐤅) lengthens early; (5) *ʿ* (𐤆), *h* (𐤄), and *z* (𐤇) have Aramaic form tendencies not seen in other scripts.

<sup>19</sup> Cross, “Epigraphic Notes,” 18. For possible Hebrew equivalence, compare to the dedicatory language in 1 Kgs 7:13. See also Craig W. Tyson, *The Ammonites: Elites, Empires, and Sociopolitical Change (1000-500 BCE)*, LHBOTS 585 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 81–82.

we have only a small fragment of the left side of what originally was a magnificent inscription, no doubt a royal monument.”<sup>20</sup>

### **The Yehimilk Stela (*KAI 4*, Phoenician)**

This stela was erected by Yehimilk, a king of the Phoenician city of Byblos. The stela is extremely fragmented making it difficult to date, although Segert put it at mid-tenth century BCE.<sup>21</sup> It appears to be a dedication of some construction done as part of a revival effort in the city, possibly a new temple or the restoration of an older structure.<sup>22</sup> The language resonates with typical Assyrian motifs of restoration.<sup>23</sup> Most interestingly, however, is that the alphabetic text is written over a now indecipherable hieroglyphic text.<sup>24</sup> If this text could be reconstructed, it might provide a clue as to the development of alphabetic scripts. It is possible that this inscription was something of a template for later temple dedications, as the text is quite similar to that found in a temple to the otherwise unknown goddess *ptgyh*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cross, “Epigraphic Notes,” 19.

<sup>21</sup> Stanislav Segert, “Phoenician Inscriptions,” *COS* 2, 146. Albright placed *Yehimilk* stela in the tenth century BCE, but later examinations have moved the date to as late as the Persian Period. See William F. Albright, “The Phoenician Inscriptions of the Tenth Century B. C. from Byblus,” *JOAS* 67, no. 3 (1947): 153–60; Matthew James Suriano, “The Historicality of the King: An Exercise in Reading Royal Inscriptions from the Ancient Levant,” *JANEH* 1, no. 2 (2014): 102.

<sup>22</sup> *h't. hwy. kl. mplt. hbtm*, “he revived all the fallen sections of the houses” (line 2). Transcription from Green, *I Undertook Great Works*, 91. In the biblical text the Hebrew cognate יהיה verb is used to describe the rebuilding of a city, as in ויֹאבֵד יְהִיֵה אֶת־שָׂאר הָעִיר (1 Chr 11:8) and Sanballat’s rhetorical question הֲיִחְיוּ אֶת־הָאֲבָנִים מֵאֲרָמוֹת הָעֵפֶר (Neh 3:34, Heb.; 4:2, Eng.). It is also used twice to describe a resurrection (2 Kgs 8:5) and once to inform Hezekiah he would not recover from his illness (2 Kgs 20:1; Isa 35:7).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 92–93.

<sup>24</sup> Malachi Martin, “A Preliminary Report after Re-examination of the Byblian Inscriptions,” *Orientalia* 30 (1967): 46–78.

<sup>25</sup> Seymour Gitin, Trude Dothan, and Joseph Naveh, “A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron,” *IEJ* 47 (1997): 11–12.

### The Kilamuwa/Kulamuwa Declaration (*KAI 24*, Aramaic)

Lesser-known monumental texts include the *Kulamuwa* inscription (*KAI 24*), a ninth century BCE monument with sixteen lines of Phoenician script, found in Zincirli, Turkey (ancient Sam'al).<sup>26</sup> It is a bombastic declaration of Kulamuwa's superiority over his neighbors and the language is highly stylized, declaring how his rule has improved everything from the security of the kingdom to the size of the flocks of sheep. It ends with a curse upon anyone who would destroy the monument. The text therefore declares Kulamuwa's accomplishments and offers a warning to those who would challenge him. Parker argues that the text was probably meant as a monumental representation of propaganda distributed throughout the kingdom, because the text veils the fact that the kingdom is still under threat.<sup>27</sup>

### The Katamuwa/Katumuwa Stela (Aramaic)

Closely related to the Kilamuwa/Kulamuwa inscription is the recently published Katamuwa Stela. This is a magnificently preserved and unique stela commissioned by a functionary of the Samalian king Panamuwa II (r. 743–727 BCE), the penultimate Aramaean ruler of that city.<sup>28</sup> This text is unique, not only because it was commissioned by a non-royal, but also because of its unusual artistic style. For one thing, the letters are in raised relief rather than incised. The letters are thicker than other inscriptions as well, but most similar to those on

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<sup>26</sup> The *Kulamuwa* inscription is a fascinating combination of Phoenician language with Luwian religious ideas. See Alfonso Archi, "Luwian Monumental Inscriptions and Luwians in Northern Syria," in *Audias fabulas veteres: Anatolian Studies in Honor of Jana Součková-Siegelová*, ed. Šárka Velhartická, CHANE 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 35–38.

<sup>27</sup> Parker, *Stories in Scripture*, 79–82. Parker summarizes the text as an ancient version of "you've never had it so good."

<sup>28</sup> Dennis Pardee, "A New Aramaic Inscription from Zincirli: The New Excavations at Zincirli and the Stele of KTMW," *BASOR* 356 (2009): 51–71; K. Lawson Younger, Jr., "The Ördekburnu and Katumuwa Stelae: Some Reflections on Two Grabdenkmäler," *BASOR* 384 (2020): 1–19. There is an inscribed stela commemorating Panamuwa II, which was discovered in the late nineteenth century, and is significant for its mention of the encroachment of Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser III. See Parker, *Stories in Scripture*, 83–88.

Kulamuwa, as well as some of the last inscriptions (*KAI* 215, 215, and 216 in particular).<sup>29</sup>

Analysis reveals a curious blending of native Luwian and Aramaean thinking, although expressed in the latter language.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Siloam Inscription (Hebrew)**

The earliest Hebrew inscription is the now well-known dedicatory inscription at Siloam, which dates from the late eighth century BCE.<sup>31</sup> The inscription is unique in a number of ways. First, the text makes no mention of the person who commissioned it and appears not to have been made by a king or an official but possibly by the workers themselves.<sup>32</sup> Second, it does not include any kind of dedication to a deity, YHWH or otherwise. Third, it was installed inside the water tunnel it describes and thus was not publicly accessible.<sup>33</sup> Fourth, it was inscribed directly into the living rock of the tunnel rather than on a stela or statue, as the other inscriptions in this list were.<sup>34</sup> Fifth, and perhaps most interesting, is that the text is not written in the generally elevated style found in other inscriptions like the Mesha Stela or Ammon Citadel Inscription. It

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<sup>29</sup> See the table in Pardee, “A New Aramaic Inscription,” 55.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Hogue, “Abracadabra, or ‘I Create as a I Speak’: A Reanalysis of the First Verb in the Katumuwa Inscription in Light of Northwest Semitic and Hieroglyphic Luwian Parallels,” *BASOR* 381 (2019): 193–202.

<sup>31</sup> The origin and authorship of the Siloam inscription is debated, but the date is relatively settled. See Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 47; Stephen Llewelyn, Natasha Heap, and Alexandra Wrathall, “Reading the Siloam Inscription as Narrative,” *JSOT* 43 (2019): 343–58; Klaas A. D. Smelik, “A Literary Analysis of the Shiloah (Siloam) Tunnel Inscription,” in *On Stone and Scroll: Essays in Honour of Graham Ivor Davies*, ed. James K. Aitken, Katharine J. Dell, and Brian A. Mastin, BZAW 420 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 101–10.

<sup>32</sup> K. Lawson Younger, Jr., “Hebrew Inscriptions,” *COS* 2, 145–146.

<sup>33</sup> For discussion of these unique features, see Smelik, “A Literary Analysis of the Shiloah (Siloam) Tunnel,” 101–2.

<sup>34</sup> Zhakevich, *Scribal Tools*, 47. Two tomb inscriptions from this period have also been found in the Kidron Valley. See Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period*, trans. Anson F. Rainey (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), 44–49.

is in a more workaday, narrative style dealing with the practicalities of construction, rather than divine attribution or regnal pomp.<sup>35</sup>

### **Samarian Royal Stela (Hebrew)**

The existence of a single eighth century BCE fragment of what might have been a royal stela from Samaria indicates there may have been more of them at one time.<sup>36</sup> If such stela ever existed in the southern capital of Jerusalem, they have not yet been found. The scarcity of these stelae may be due to the thoroughness of destruction of the northern kingdom's monumental and architectural identity during conquest and reoccupation. The people who occupied the northern kingdom sites after the Assyrian conquest were not monument builders, and the other stela were probably destroyed and reused in later construction. Also, while the finer extant stelae, such as the Mesha Stela, were inscribed into the stone, many may have been made with plaster, as described in Deuteronomy 27:1–12.

### **Yariri (Karkamiš A15b, Hieroglyphic Luwian)**

The Luwian society was on the wane by the ninth century BCE, but one tantalizing inscription from that society is worth considering here. Around 800 BCE, the eunuch Yariri had a statue erected with a hieroglyphic Luwian inscription in which Yariri makes the bold claim that he could write using four systems (*la-li*), “the city’s writing, the Suraeon writing, the Assyrian writing, and the Taimani writing” (line 19) of the twelve he could speak (line 20).<sup>37</sup> There is a

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<sup>35</sup> Klaas A. D. Smelik, *Writings from Ancient Israel: A Handbook of Historical and Religious Documents*, trans. G. I. Davies (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 69–71.

<sup>36</sup> Eleazar L. Sukenik, “Note on a Fragment of an Israelite Stela Found at Samaria,” *PEQ* 68 (1936): 156.

<sup>37</sup> Translation from John D. Hawkins, *The Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions of the Iron Age*, vol. 1 of *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, UISK 8.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 131; K. Lawson Younger, Jr.,

diversity of opinions on what scripts Yariri was referring to, but “the city’s writing” would almost certainly have been Luwian. As to the others, Starke believes Suraeen to be the Phoenician alphabet, Assyrian to be Imperial Akkadian, and Taimani to be the Aramaic alphabet.<sup>38</sup>

### Prophets and Monumental Texts?

This type of monumental text would not have been typical of prophetic output, but there is a possible allusion to it in Isaiah 8:1 where Isaiah is given a command with a peculiar phrasing: קח־לך גליון גדול וכתב עליו בחרט אנושׁ. This is generally rendered as something along the lines of “take a large tablet and write on it common characters.”<sup>39</sup> The passage includes two rare words. First is גליון, which many take to mean papyrus.<sup>40</sup> Some support of this translation comes from LXX’s rendering as καινος, denoting a fresh or clean document. The second word is חרט, which means some kind of engraving tool (Exod 32:4). It is assumed that it derives from טע, “reed” or “stylus” (Jer 8:8, Ps 45:2). Williamson argues that this is not describing writing on papyrus but the preparation of a stone that was used for specific, concise summaries of prophetic

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“The Scripts of North Syria in the Early First Millennium: The Inscription of Yariri (KARKAMIŠ A15b) Once Again,” *Transeuphratène* 46 (2014): 169–83. For more on the Indo-European Luwian language, its unique cuneiform and hieroglyphic scripts, and its relationship to the Semitic languages of the region, consider Annick Payne, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, WAW 29 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 84–87; H. Craig Melchert, ed., *The Luwians*, HdO 68 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), particularly John D. Hawkins, “Scripts and Texts,” 128–69 and H. Craig Melchert, “Language,” 170–210. See also John D. Hawkins, “A New Look at the Luwian Language,” *Kadmos* 52.1 (2013): 1–18.

<sup>38</sup> Franke Starke, “Sprachen und Schriften in Karkamis,” in *Ana šadī Labnāni lū allik: Beiträge zu altorientalischen und mittelmeerischen Kulturen: Festschrift für Wolfgang Röllig*, ed. Beate Pongratz-Leisten, Hartmut Kühne, and Paolo Xella, AOAT 247 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 388–92. He makes a point to distinguish between the Phoenician and Aramaic alphabets.

<sup>39</sup> This is the rendering of the ESV. Other renderings include “ordinary letters” (NASB95) or “with an ordinary pen” (NIV).

<sup>40</sup> HALOT, s.v. “גליון,” 193. LXX translates it as a substantive, καινοῦ μεγάλου, “new, large [media],” which offers no insight into the meaning

messages.<sup>41</sup> First, Williamson sees גליון as wed to גדול, indicating a large inscription, which would imply a medium other than papyrus. Second, ט appears to have been used for many kinds of writing implements, including those used to engrave stone (Job 19:24, Jer 17:1). There is some merit to Williamson's argument, and if he is correct then this records a kind of monumental writing for prophets, perhaps reflecting the stelae Moses commanded to be erected on Ebla and Gerizim (Deut 27:2). Alternatively, Isaiah could be referring to plaster and ink, as was employed at Kuntillit 'Ajrud (see below). Regardless of whether Williamson is correct or not, this passage does provide some insight into one aspect of monumental or occasional text creation. At least in the case of Isaiah, the erection of such a text was seen as a function a prophet could fulfill, perhaps indicating a literary tradition among the prophets. If monumental prophetic texts did exist, however, they would not have been the majority of the prophets' output, and it bears repeating that Williamson's approach is in the minority.

### **The Importance of Monumental Texts**

However iconic the role of monumental texts, the presence of such inscriptions assumes that a significant number of people could read them to make their public presence and the variety of their texts worth recording. This is all the more true when these texts were written with no indication of accompanying artwork that might substitute for or at least summarize the contents of the text."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, "The Practicalities of Prophetic Writing in Isaiah 8:1," in Aitken, Dell, and Mastin, *On Stone and Scroll*, 357–70; Alan R. Millard, "'Take a Large Writing Tablet and Write on It': Isaiah—A Writing Prophet?" in *Genesis, Isaiah and Psalms: A Festschrift to Honour Professor John Emerton for His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Katharine J. Dell, Graham Davies, and Yee Von Koh, VTSup 135 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 105–18.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Hess, "Writing about Writing: Abecedaries and Evidence for Literacy in Ancient Israel," *VT* 56 (2006): 344.

This point is debated, of course. Millard believes there can be no clear connection made between monumental texts and general literacy.<sup>43</sup> There is no way to argue against Millard's position except to point out that it avoids dealing with the purpose of such monumental texts if they were not intended for public consumption. If a ruler went through the trouble of constructing a stela or inscription, it is only reasonable that he did so for public declaration. Even if people could not read them, which was almost certainly true of cuneiform and hieroglyphic inscriptions, the alphabetic texts were more easily accessible, as shall be discussed later. The fact non-rulers also undertook monumental projects, especially innovative works like the Katamuwa stela, may indicate a transition to more general literary awareness. One way or the other, monumental texts bear witness to a society in which literary expression was considered significant.

## Formal Media

### Tablets

Clay was the common medium for cuneiform scripts, and given that cuneiform existed as a writing system across Mesopotamia and the Levant from at least Uruk IV (3400–3200 BCE) until the time of Alexander the Great, it is no surprise that the overwhelming majority of extant texts are cuneiform on clay or stone.<sup>44</sup> NWS Semitic first appears in cuneiform record in glosses, names and lexical lists from the Amarna letters, some of which also show NWS influence on

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<sup>43</sup> Alan R. Millard, "The Practice of Writing in Ancient Israel," *BA* 35 (1972): 103. See also Jeremy D. Smoak, "Inscribing Temple Space: The Ekron Dedication as Monumental Text," *JNES* 76 (2017): 319–36. Smoak argues that dedications like the Siloam inscription were never intended for public consumption, like the inscription found in 1996 inside the temple at Ekron. For the discovery report, see Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh, "A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron," 1–16.

<sup>44</sup> For a brief but insightful history, see Amalia E. Gnanadesikan, *The Writing Revolution: Cuneiform to the Internet*, The Language Library (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009), 13–32.

their syntax.<sup>45</sup> While LBA Ugarit yielded a number of NWS texts using cuneiform alphabets, only three are extant from the southern Levant during Iron Age I-II. The corpus of NWS tablets from Ugarit is substantial, numbering over 1,500 from Ras Shamra, Ras Ibn Hani, and several lesser sites.<sup>46</sup> To date, only three NWS cuneiform tablets have been found in the southern Levant and all date to the LBA. They are exceedingly fragmentary, so their linguistic affinity is indeterminate, but they are most likely Ugaritic. The texts are Beth Shemesh 1 (a partial abecedary), Taanach 15 (two personal names on the obverse and a single phrase on the back), and Tabor 1 (an ownership inscription on a knife blade).<sup>47</sup> There is some speculation that a large cuneiform library may have existed at Hazor, but to date only eighteen extremely small fragments of documents have been uncovered there.<sup>48</sup>

In contrast, no tablets in NWS alphabetic scripts have been found, which would support the idea that these Canaanite alphabetic systems had their independent origins in Egypt and worked north into Gaza and the region of Philistia before finally arriving in the northern regions

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<sup>45</sup> The most thorough treatment of this is Anson F. Rainey, *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets: A Linguistic Analysis of the Mixed Dialect Used by Scribes from Canaan*, 4 vols, HdO 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995). There is a succinct summary in Wayne Horowitz, Takayoshi Oshima, and Seth L. Sanders, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 2nd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2018), 17.

<sup>46</sup> For discussion, see John Huehnergard, *An Introduction to Ugaritic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012), 3–6. The current catalog of the Ugaritic texts is Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places*, 3rd ed (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 161–71.

<sup>48</sup> Yigal Yadin believed a royal archive would eventually be brought to light at Hazor, but his excavations did not uncover one. Such an archive would go a long way to suggesting a direction for further reconstructions. Recently, fragmentary texts have begun to surface during the ongoing excavations. For the most recent find, see Wayne Horowitz, Takayoshi Oshima, and Filip Vukosavović, “Hazor 18: Fragments of a Cuneiform Law Collection from Hazor,” *IEJ* 62 (2012): 158–76. Unfortunately, the first two were discovered by amateurs and removed from the site. Sharon Zuckerman, “Where is the Hazor Archive Buried?” *BAR* 32.2 (2008): 28, 30–37; Horowitz is Yadin’s successor at Hazor, which is the largest archaeological site in Israel. To date, excavations have produced eighteen small fragments of letters and legal texts.

of Phoenicia and the Galilee in an evolved, cursive form by Iron Age II.<sup>49</sup> They were distinct from the syllabic cuneiform tradition which existed in Mesopotamia and Aram. As Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders describe it, “cuneiform in Iron Age Canaan was in a sense no longer a local writing system but an extension of foreign hegemony in the land, particularly during the height of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.”<sup>50</sup>

After Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, the exiled Jews living in Mesopotamia appear to have reverted back to cuneiform and clay tablets, at least for official correspondence. There are many cuneiform tablets from the region of *Āl-Yāhūdu*, which are clearly Hebrew in context although written in Akkadian.<sup>51</sup> The Jews in Egypt continued using papyrus and their Hebrew script, but these Mesopotamian exiles seem to have acculturated well to their Babylonian setting by the mid-sixth century BCE.<sup>52</sup> Their postexilic record is a mixture of alphabetic and cuneiform texts, largely preserved in secondary copies.

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<sup>49</sup> Benjamin Sass and Israel Finkelstein, “The Swan-song of Proto-Canaanite in the Ninth Century BCE in Light of an Alphabetic Inscription from Megiddo,” *Semitica et Classica* 9 (2016): 37–40. This essay examines the implications of an inscribed fragment from Megiddo (field no. 14/Q/38/AR5) which pushes the transition from Proto-Canaanite to the cursive Phoenician and Hebrew scripts in the north back to the early Omride period. See also André Lemaire, “The Spread of Alphabetic Scripts (c. 1700–500 BCE),” *Diogenes* 55.2 (2008): 45–58. A recent discovery is documented in Felix Höftmayer, Haggai Misgav, Lyndelle Webster, and Katherina Streit, “Early Alphabetic Writing in the Ancient Near East: the ‘Missing Link’ from Tel Lachish,” *Antiquity* 95 (2021): 705–19. This appears to be a LBA ostraca, which may contain the NWS word *’bd* (slave) in a very early proto-Canaanite alphabet, clearly derived from Egyptian. This often appears with a name in NWS inscriptions, and so perhaps this is a personal identifier.

<sup>50</sup> Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 18.

<sup>51</sup> *Āl-Yāhūdu* appears in various forms in the tablets. *URU<sup>lu</sup>ia-a-ḥu-du* (sometimes with the designation for a foreign group *a-a* appended) is common. For variations, see fn. 7 in Laurie E. Pearce, “New Evidence for Judeans in Babylon,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, eds. Oded Lipschitz and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 402. The corpus of texts is in private hands. For published editions, see Laurie E. Pearce and Cornelia Wunsch, *Documents of Judean Exiles and Western Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer*, CUSAS 28 (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2014). A subsequent volume is supposed to be published but had not appeared at the time of writing.

<sup>52</sup> Dalit Rom-Shiloni, “The Untold Stories: Al-Yahūdu and/or versus Hebrew Bible Babylonian Compositions,” *WO* 47.1 (2017): 124–34.

## Plaster

Although they do not age as well as stone or clay, there have been a number of key texts inscribed in plaster discovered in recent years which have demonstrated the significance of the medium. Plaster was an inexpensive alternative to inscribing a rock stela, and both inscriptions were probably part of stelae. Plaster (יִשֵּׁ) was used for insulation and decoration alike. The biblical record includes this type of inscription (Deut 27:1–12), which involved covering a stone surface so it could be inscribed (כִּתַּב).<sup>53</sup> Two plaster inscriptions are considered here, but given how poorly preserved they are, their survival is a testament to the conditions in the two sites and not the durability of the material. It is quite possible that this medium was very common, but there is no extant evidence to confirm that.

*Kuntillit 'Ajrud.* Three ink on plaster inscriptions were found at the remote site of Kuntillit 'Ajrud in the Sinai.<sup>54</sup> At the same site were a number of pithoi which had possible religiously significant inscriptions, and as a result they receive more attention. The plaster texts are a mix of Hebrew and Phoenician scripts, but they are such a small sample size that it is difficult to be definitive about their origin or content. They date from the mid-eighth century BCE, and this date makes the origin of the script of some importance. If, as Dijkstra argued, the Phoenician script indicates a northern Israelite origin, then it would mean that the Omride

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<sup>53</sup> Zhakevich, *Scribal Tools in Ancient Israel*, 72–83. The Hebrew word is יִשֵּׁ, appearing two other times in the Scriptures but without the same sense of being used for an inscription. Zhakevich is of the opinion that יִשֵּׁ derives from central Semitic and therefore represents the method employed at Kuntillit 'Ajrud while Deir 'Alla, which is closer to Egypt, represents an Egyptian method.

<sup>54</sup> For the full report on Kuntillit 'Ajrud, see Zeev Meshel, *Kuntillit 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012). The inscriptions were discovered in 1976, but full publication was delayed, so a copious amount of literature has been generated. For recent reconsideration and a robust bibliography, see Jeremy Smoak and William Schniedewind, "Religion at Kuntillit 'Ajrud," *Religions* 10 (2019): 211–29.

kingdom was projecting power as far south as the Sinai.<sup>55</sup> Still, the uncertain origin of the plasters is less important the fact that NWS-speaking people as far away as at Kuntillit ‘Ajrud were planning and executing large projects which featured significant amounts of text in recognizably NWS scripts.<sup>56</sup>

*Deir ‘Alla in Jordan (KAI 312)*. The plaster inscription found at Deir ‘Alla is later than the Kuntillit ‘Ajrud, possibly by as much as a century.<sup>57</sup> The fragment was probably part of a stela that was rough cut, filled in with clay and then plastered over with quicklime so it could be used as a writing surface. It has garnered attention because of the mention of the prophet named Balaam (Num 22–25). While it was in fragments when found, the text was reconstructed and was found to be fairly lengthy, continuous text which is divided into two panels dubbed Combination I and Combination II. Reconfigurations have continued ever since.<sup>58</sup> Hackett concludes that the text is probably “South Canaanite,” her term for the Levantine NWS languages.<sup>59</sup> In recent analysis, this has been refined, with Dennis Pardee arguing for even greater localization of the dialect due to the isolation of the site.<sup>60</sup> If Pardee is correct, then by the

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<sup>55</sup> Meindert Dijkstra, “I Have Blessed You by YHWH of Samaria and His Asherah: Texts with Religious Elements from the Soil Archive of Ancient Israel,” in Becking, Dijkstra, Korpel, and Vriezen, *Only One God*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Brian A. Mastin, “The Inscriptions Written on Plaster at Kuntillit ‘Ajrud,” *VT* 59 (2009): 106.

<sup>57</sup> The find at Deir ‘Alla was published in Jacob Hoftijzer and Gerrit van der Kooij, eds. *Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla*, Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1976). While early commentators like Franken believed the inscription to be from the Persian period, Levine believes Deir ‘Alla to date from the eighth century BCE. His view is generally accepted now. See also Henricus J. Franken, “Texts from the Persian Period from Tell Deir ‘Alla,” *VT* 17 (1967): 480–81; See also Levine, “The Deir ‘Alla Inscription,” 195–205; Baruch A. Levine, *In Pursuit of Meaning: Collected Studies of Baruch A. Levine*, vol. 1, ed. Andrew D. Gross (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 143–58. See also Monique M. E. Vilders, “The Stratigraphy and the Pottery of Phase M at Deir ‘Alla and the Date of the Plaster Texts,” *Levant* 24 (1992): 187–200.

<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Miles Robker, *Balaam in Text and Tradition*, FAT 131 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebek, 2019), 273–74.

<sup>59</sup> Jo Ann Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā*, HSM 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 109–24.

<sup>60</sup> Dennis Pardee, “The Linguistic Classification of the Deir ‘Alla Text Written on Plaster,” in *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla Re-Evaluated: Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at Leiden, 21–24 August 1989*, ed. Jacob Hoftijzer, Gerrit van der Kooij (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 100–5.

early seventh century BCE, lengthy compositions were being produced in distant outposts which reflect intentional planning and some degree of literacy. While Deir ‘Alla dates to a period after the fall of the northern kingdom, such literary awareness did not emerge overnight. The presence of such committed works at the periphery of the NWS sphere of influence greater than the extant evidence supports.

## Papyri

Papyrus is made by compressing long strips of the papyrus plant together, producing sheets that can be used for writing. Because the papyrus plant is native to Egypt, the writing material was developed there. Unlike the drier areas of Upper Egypt, the Levant has extremely rainy and damp periods, meaning that organic material decomposes quickly.<sup>61</sup> Papyrus is therefore much less durable than clay or even plaster in the Levant, but it has the advantage of being relatively inexpensive to prepare and since it can be rolled into a scroll, it is also easier to transport.

The oldest extant papyrus from the Levant is the Murabba‘ât Papyrus, dating from the mid-seventh century BCE document.<sup>62</sup> It is in very poor condition and really is only a fragment. Papyrus evidence is sparse throughout the postexilic period as well, with substantial finds like

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<sup>61</sup> Aḥituv agrees with Richelle on the assumption that there was once a substantial papyrus corpus now missing. See Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 2–3. Around 600 papyrus documents of any age are known from the Near East (Levant, Mesopotamia) in contrast to the 50,000 known from Egypt, many of which are a thousand years older than the Murabba‘ât Papyrus, and the oldest dating to the reign of Khufu (ca. 2580–2550 BCE). See Jean Gascou, “The Papyrology of the Near East,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 475; Pierre Tallet and Gregory Marouard, “The Harbor of Khufu on the Red Sea Coast at Wadi al-Jarf, Egypt,” *NEA* 77 (2014): 4–14.

<sup>62</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *Letters from an Epigrapher’s Notebook: Collected Papers in Hebrew and West Semitic Palaeography and Epigraphy*, HSS 51 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 116–24. Another well-preserved papyrus is the Adon letter, an Aramaic papyrus dated from the late seventh century BCE and only preserved because it was found in Egypt. See Bezalel Porten, “The Identity of King Adon,” *BA* 44.1 (1981): 36–52.

the cache at Wādī ed-Dāliyeh dating from the late fifth to mid-fourth century BCE.<sup>63</sup> The large corpus of bullae, many of which would have been affixed to papyrus documents, testifies to the now lost archives of this world. The question arises: why is the corpus of extant papyri so small? Matthieu Richelle provides a succinct response.<sup>64</sup>

*(1) The sigillographic evidence (discussed below) points to widespread use of papyrus.*

The enormous sigillographic evidence in the region indicates literary output on perishable, organic media. In particular, there are observable ribbed traces on the reverse of many bullae, indicating that they bound documents made of papyrus fibers.<sup>65</sup> In addition, plain bullae, which lack any epigraphic impressions, such as those found by Reich and Shukron in the city of David in Jerusalem. Some of these also have impressions of papyrus fibers, but since the documents are both plain and relatively numerous, the discoverers argue that the site “points to the existence of an administrative and commercial center” in Jerusalem, which they date to the late ninth or early eighth centuries BCE.<sup>66</sup>

*(2) Due to the Levantine climate, the papyri would have deteriorated.* While papyrus keeps well in Egypt’s dry climate, the Levantine highlands can be quite wet for part of the year. It must be acknowledged then that what exists in the archaeological record is only the works made on imperishable media, like clay or stone. Even sites that were known to be active scribal

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<sup>63</sup> For the catalog of these texts, see Jan Dušek, *Les manuscrits araméens du Wadi Daliyeh et la Samarie vers 450–332 av J.-C.*, CHANE 30 (Leiden: Brill, 2007). For a summary, see Cross, *Letters from an Epigrapher’s Notebook*, 44–46.

<sup>64</sup> Matthieu Richelle, “Elusive Scrolls: Could Any Hebrew Literature Have Been Written Prior to the Eighth Century BCE?” *VT* 66 (2016): 556–94. Richelle’s statistical analysis of the problem is both thorough and convincing.

<sup>65</sup> Consider here the description made by Yuval Goren and Eran Arie, “The Authenticity of the Bullae of Berekhyahu Son of Neriyahu the Scribe,” *BASOR* 372 (2014): 151–53.

<sup>66</sup> Ronny Reich, Eli Shukron, and Omri Lernaut, “Recent Discoveries in the City of David,” *IEJ* 57 (2007): 156–57, 161–62.

hubs, like Samaria, have yielded only a small number of imperishable texts, epigraphic or otherwise.<sup>67</sup> After all, as Richelle notes, there is not a single long literary text known from the Persian period either, but it is universally acknowledged that this was a period of tremendous literary production among the Jews.

(3) *There is no simple correlation between extant evidence and actual usage.* Richelle points to known scribal habits of making dual copies of a document, one which was sealed and sent, while the other stored unsealed (1 Kgs 21:8; Jer 31:10–14; Neh 9:38).<sup>68</sup> This is an example of how variable the papyrus output might have been, since one bullae might represent two copies. On other hand, there were bullae affixed to parcels and other non-textual items. In short, there is simply no way to know how many papyrus documents were being generated during the period. In other words, Richelle argues for a situation but cannot provide detailed data, but the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Given the amount of NWS inscriptions known from this period, it seems unlikely that the papyrus output would have been anything but voluminous. Richelle concludes, “the dearth of inscriptions dating to the early royal period does not constitute a reason to doubt the possible existence of literature at that time.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Richelle, “Elusive Scrolls,” 558–71. In terms of the survivability of papyrus in the Levantine climate, Richelle points to the New Kingdom garrison site of Tel Beth-Shean. The excavations there have yielded all sorts of expected Egyptian artifacts but not a single papyrus. Nothing exists of the NWS papyri until the fifth century BCE, and those were found at Elephantine in Egypt. At the time of writing, there are ninety-seven cuneiform texts of mixed quality known from the Canaanite regions. They are in Akkadian, Sumerian, Elamite as well as the NWS languages. These texts derive not only from scattered locations but are also scattered chronologically. For a catalog of these texts, see Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders, *Cuneiform in Canaan*.

<sup>68</sup> Christopher A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age*, ABS 11 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 77.

<sup>69</sup> Richelle, “Elusive Scrolls,” 576. Richelle also looks to Samaria, listing the known inscriptions from that period and noting “nobody doubts that scribal activity took place there from the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century at least. And yet, only two or three years of administrative activity out of half a century are represented in the ostraca, and only five years out of three decades.” *Ibid.*, 569.

## The Significance of Formal Media Inscriptions

Van Seters' argument against lengthy text composition which opened this chapter does not appear to hold up to scrutiny. It is certainly true that the extant documents discussed to this point are not numerous. Clay cuneiform tablets outnumber plaster and papyrus by an order of magnitude. Given what is known about the loss rates of clay tablets, even in preserved archives, one can only imagine what the loss rates for plaster must be. The absence of evidence is not, however, evidence of absence. Matthieu Richelle points to the enormous sigillographic evidence in the region, which will be discussed in the next section, as evidence of a significant literary output on perishable, organic media. It must be acknowledged then that what exists in the archaeological record is only the works made on imperishable media, like clay or stone, survive not because they were more numerous but because they were more durable. Even sites that were known to be active scribal hubs, like Samaria, have yielded only a small number of imperishable texts, epigraphic or otherwise.<sup>70</sup>

### Occasional and Casual Media

The third category of inscription evidence to be examined here are the occasional or casual media. These are media which were produced in large numbers and easily discarded. The overwhelming majority of epigraphic evidence for NWS are occasional media. The Akkadian employed in the Levant during the LBA, such as what appears on the Amarna tablets, had a distinct "creolized" flavor, mixing NWS elements of syntax, as well as some glosses.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Richelle, "Elusive Scrolls," 558–71. At the time of writing, there are ninety-seven cuneiform texts of mixed quality known from the Canaanite regions. They are in Akkadian, Sumerian, Elamite as well as the NWS languages. These texts derive not only from scattered locations but are also scattered chronologically. See Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders, *Cuneiform in Canaan*.

<sup>71</sup> Wayne Horowitz, Takayoshi Oshima, and Seth L. Sanders, "A Bibliographical List of Cuneiform Inscriptions from Canaan, Palestine/Philistia, and the Land of Israel," *JAOS* 122 (2002): 755.

Occasional media were among the first to appear in the archeological record. While the Ugaritic scribes were developing their own unique alphabetic cuneiform, someone in the southern Levant was developing the Proto-Canaanite alphabetic writing system independently. Finkelstein and Sass have catalogued six Proto-Canaanite alphabetic LBA texts. All are southern: three from Lachish and one each from the sites of Qubur el-Walaydah, Nagil, and Gezer.<sup>72</sup> They are clearly occasional, giving the names of the owners of pottery. After a period in which Finkelstein and Sass claim there are no known alphabetic texts in the Levant, the rise of the secondary states was accompanied by the rapid divergence of the three main NWS scripts—Phoenician, Hebrew, and Aramaic—and an equally rapid increase in the production of occasional texts, which are distributed over a number of media and evidence extremely diverse styles and levels of literacy. The corpus of these occasional media is large, so individual examples are listed only briefly.

### **Ostraca**

The practice of writing on *ostraca* (plural of the Gk. ὄστρακον), broken pieces of pottery, was common throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>73</sup> Here, Finkelstein and Sass's survey is of great help.<sup>74</sup> The ostraca are among the oldest texts in Hebrew. Probably the oldest known ostrakon that can be considered Hebrew is the tenth century BCE 'Išba'al Inscription

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<sup>72</sup> Finkelstein and Sass, "The West Semitic Alphabetic Inscriptions," 153–56. The collected figures featured in this article are invaluable, as they collect an extremely wide range of early epigraphs in a single place. A table of the inscriptions is provided in Appendix G.

<sup>73</sup> For background and history, consult Clementina Caputo, "Pottery Sherds for Writing: An Overview of the Practice," in *Using Ostraca in the Ancient World: New Discoveries and Methodologies*, ed. Clementina Caputo and Julia Lougovaya, *Materiale Textkulturen* 32 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2020), 31–59.

<sup>74</sup> Finkelstein and Sass, "The West Semitic Alphabetic Inscriptions," 163–66.

from Khirbet Qeiyafa in the Shephelah, unearthed by Yosef Garfinkel in 2008.<sup>75</sup> This inscription is fascinating because of its close affinity to Canaanite society. The theophoric name, as well as the type of pottery from which the ostrakon derived, indicate a northern origin.<sup>76</sup> Another similarly aged inscription was found in the Ophel in 2013.<sup>77</sup> While the inscription 'Išba'al Inscription is in the Phoenician script, an inscribed jug in the Hebrew script has been found at Tel Rehov that dates only slightly later.<sup>78</sup> Recently, another ninth century BCE inscription with a theophoric *Benyaw* came to light at Tel Abel Beth Maacah. It bears remarkable similarities to those found at Kuntillit 'Ajrud in the Sinai.<sup>79</sup> The script from Kuntillit 'Ajrud is similar to that in one of the larger caches of ostraca, which was found at Samaria. These texts are largely from the late eighth century BCE.<sup>80</sup>

These ostraca represent only a fraction of the corpus that has been found throughout the Levant. Although the majority are later, the presence of these early examples argues for widespread usage. Since many of them were inscribed prior to firing, this also communicates

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<sup>75</sup> Yosef Garfinkel and Hoo-Goo Kang, "The Relative and Absolute Chronology of Khirbet Qeiyafa: Very Late Iron Age I or Very Early Iron Age IIA?" *IEJ* 61 (2011): 171–83; Yosef Garfinkel, Saar Ganor, and M. G. Hasel, "The Contribution of Khirbet Qeiyafa to Our Understanding of the Iron Age Period," *STRATA* 28 (2010): 39–54. For a survey of other early Hebrew texts such as the Gezer Calendar, see Christopher A. Rollston, "What's the Oldest Hebrew Inscription?" *BAR* 38.3 (2012): 32–40, 66–68.

<sup>76</sup> Yosef Garfinkel, Mitka R. Golub, Haggai Misgav, and Saar Ganor, "The 'Išba'al Inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa," *BASOR* 373 (2015): 217–33; Alexander Fantalkin and Israel Finkelstein, "The Date of Abandonment and Territorial Affiliation of Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Update," *Tel Aviv* 44 (2017): 53–74.

<sup>77</sup> Eilat Mazar, David Ben-Shlomo, Shmuel Ahituv, "An Inscribed Pithos from the Ophel, Jerusalem," *IEJ* 63, no. 1 (2013): 39–49; Douglas Petrovich, "The Ophel Pithos Inscription: Its Dating, Language, Translation, and Script," *PEQ* 147 (2015): 130–45.

<sup>78</sup> Shmuel Ahituv and Amihai Mazar, "The Inscriptions from Tel Rehov," 39–68; Christopher A. Rollston, "Scripture and Inscriptions: Eighth-Century Israel and Judah in Writing," in *Archaeology and History of Eighth-Century Judah*, ed. Zeb I. Farber and Jacob L. Wright, ANEM 12 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 457–74.

<sup>79</sup> Naama Yahalom-Mack, Nava Panitz-Cohen, Christopher A. Rollston, Anat Cohen-Weinberger, and Robert A. Mullins, "The Iron Age IIA 'Benyaw Inscription' on a Jar from Tel Abel Beth Maacah," *PEQ* Available Ahead of Publication (2021): doi:10.1080/00310328.2021.1975070; Shmuel Ahituv, "Notes on the Kuntillit 'Ajrud Inscriptions," in Eshel and Levin, *See I will Bring a Scroll*, 29–38.

<sup>80</sup> Ahituv, "Notes on the Kuntillit 'Ajrud Inscriptions," 30; Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 259.

intentionality and a sense of permanence. The creators were not simply sketching on shards. These were items that were intended to be inscribed.

### School Texts

Mesopotamian societies had a long history of scribal training. Postgate's acknowledgement that literacy was already a millennium old when Hammurabi committed his code to writing gives a sense of the depth of scribal tradition.<sup>81</sup> Hazor 6 is an example of a scribal exercise which probably dates from the MBA and has parallels in texts found at Urra, Emar, and Ugarit.<sup>82</sup> A possible LBA example is Ashqelon 1 (Ash 97–50.49.L.485), which may have originally featured parallel columns of text in Sumerian, Akkadian, and some NWS language.<sup>83</sup> Many of the texts from Ugarit and other archives are school texts, meaning they are sections of text reproduced by those in scribal training.<sup>84</sup> The overwhelming majority of extant school texts are clay tablets, but other media are employed, especially in the Levant. Demsky catalogues two categories: abecedaries and exercises.<sup>85</sup> Abecedaries are found throughout the region on many different media including ostraca, vessels, and, in one case at Lachish, a set of stairs. They are of wildly varying quality. There are some very fine examples with clear, ruled lines and evenly spaced letters, and then others like the 'Izbet Şarṭah Abecedary, which was scribbled haphazardly, and the extremely poor quality fragment found at Tel Abu Ḥaraz, which may be an

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<sup>81</sup> J. Nicholas Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (London: Routledge, 1992), 69; Dominique Charpin, *Writing, Law, and Kingship in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 7–24.

<sup>82</sup> Hayim Tadmor, "A Lexicographical Text from Hazor," *IEJ* 27 2/3 (1977): 98–102; Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 70–71.

<sup>83</sup> John Huehnergard and Wilfred van Soldt, "A Cuneiform Lexical Text from Ashkelon with a Canaanite Column," *IEJ* 49, no. 3/4 (1999): 184–92; Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 40–41.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Hawley, Dennis Pardee, and Carole Roche-Hawley, "The Scribal Culture of Ugarit," *JANEH*, 2, no. 2 (2015): 229–67.

<sup>85</sup> Aaron Demsky, "School Texts," in *COS*, vol. 1, 362–65.

abecedary dating from as early as the ninth century BCE.<sup>86</sup> Four of the pithoi texts found at Kuntillit 'Ajrud were abecedaries (KA 3.11–14).<sup>87</sup>

One of the most remarkable texts is the Gezer Calendar, which McCarter and others view as a practice text. It is not strictly speaking a calendar as much as a list of seasonal activities.<sup>88</sup> Generally dated to the tenth century BCE, the Gezer Calendar shows development of a southern Canaanite language which many identify as early Hebrew.<sup>89</sup> The presence of texts like the Gezer calendar indicates “literalization” of local culture, with writing commonplace enough that it was employed to represent languages as they were spoken rather than within strict scribal parameters. “The literalization of a small documentary language is a crucial moment in the history of the displacement of a big language.”<sup>90</sup> The presence of the varying school texts indicates that literacy was not necessarily a restricted activity. A simple alphabet, which could be learned in a short time and practiced on virtually any medium was inevitably a democratizing influence.

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<sup>86</sup> For an image of the 'Izbet Šarṭah Abecedary, see Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 249–52. The Tel Abu Ḥaraz fragment was published in Von Omar Al-Ghul and Lamia El-Khoury, “Ein Graffito aus Tell Abū Ḥaraz,” *ZDPV* 114 (1998): 155–61. It is difficult to determine which Aramaeo-Canaanite language is represented.

<sup>87</sup> Schniedewind offers a full discussion of these exercise texts. See Schniedewind, *The Finger of the Scribe: How Scribes Learned to Write the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 23–48.

<sup>88</sup> P. Kyle McCarter, “The Gezer Calendar (2.85),” in *COS*, vol. 2, 222.

<sup>89</sup> William F. Albright, “The Gezer Calendar,” *BASOR* 92 (1943): 16–26. In more recent analyses, Sivan has argued for specific Hebrew uses of the dual and the definite article. See Daniel Sivan, “The Gezer Calendar and Northwest Semitic Linguistics,” *IEJ* 48 (1998): 101–5; John A. Emerton, “How Many Months are Mentioned in the Gezer Calendar?” *PEQ* 131 (1999): 20–23. Contra Sivan, Aaron Koller has argued for a non-Hebrew origin. See Aaron Koller, “Ancient Hebrew מַעַצַּד and מַעַצַּד in the Gezer Calendar,” *JNES* 72 (2013): 179–193.

<sup>90</sup> Sheldon Pollock, “Power and Culture Beyond Ideology and Identity,” in *Margins of Writing, Origins of Cultures*, ed. Seth L. Sanders, Oriental Institute Seminars 2 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2007), 285. See also Seth L. Sanders, “Writing and Early Iron Age Israel: Before National Scripts, Beyond Nations and States,” in *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context*, ed. Ron E. Tappy and P. Kyle McCarter, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 100–102. Although he leans to a Phoenician origin, Koller discusses that the text lacks the marks of a professional text. See Koller, “Ancient Hebrew מַעַצַּד and מַעַצַּד,” 191. See also Ian Young, “The Style of the Gezer Calendar and Some ‘Archaic Biblical Hebrew’ Passages,” *VT* 42 (1992): 362–375.

Like many of the text types discussed in this section, these extant school texts probably represent only a small proportion of what might have existed. It is reasonable that one could practice these exercises on perishable media like papyrus.<sup>91</sup> One cannot discount the realities of the wear and tear of thousands of years of continued occupation. When one considers that what might have been a substantial library of tablets at Hazor are only now being found in fragmentary forms, it is not out of the realm of plausibility that any school texts on organic materials that did exist are now lost.<sup>92</sup> Certainly, nothing of such a corpus of papyri has been uncovered, and without some kind of evidence, this can be nothing more than conjecture.

### Seals, Bullae, and Weights

As Richelle pointed out, the sigillographic record seems to represent a large but now lost, yield of written documents. Despite the existence of hundreds of purported Hebrew seals, only about twenty-five have been found *in situ* and can definitively be considered authentic.<sup>93</sup> Bullae, the imprints of seals, are known in profligate numbers. Robert Deutsch has published hundreds of bullae from a cache that was recovered from the site of Keilah.<sup>94</sup> Many of these date to the

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<sup>91</sup> Richelle, “Elusive Scrolls,” 564–66.

<sup>92</sup> See Zuckerman, “Where is the Hazor Archive Buried?” 30–37 and previous discussion on page 180.

<sup>93</sup> Pierre Bordreuil, “On the Authenticity of Iron Age Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals,” in *“An Eye for Form”*: *Epigraphic Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Jo Ann Hackett and Walter R. Aufrecht (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2014), 127–31. The antiquities market has been flooded with purported seals, but since they are sold without context or provenance, they are incredibly difficult to verify. The count of other NWS seals is as follows: 58 Phoenician, 115 Aramaic, 166 Ammonite, 45 Moabite, and 14 Edomite. See also Alan Millard, “Hebrew Seals, Stamps, and Statistics: How Can Fakes Be Found?” in *New Inscriptions and Seals Relating to the Biblical World*, ed. Meir Lubetski and Edith Lubetski, ABS 19 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 182–92.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Deutsch, *Messages from the Past: Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Isaiah through the Destruction of the First Temple* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 1999); Robert Deutsch, “A Hoard of Fifty Hebrew Clay Bullae from the Time of Hezekiah,” in *Shlomo: Studies in Epigraphy, Iconography, History, and Archaeology in Honor of Shlomo Moussaieff*, ed. Robert Deutsch (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 2003), 45–98; Robert Deutsch, *Biblical Period Epigraphy: The Josef Chaim Kaufman Collection: Seals, Bullae, Handles*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publications, 2011); Robert Deutsch, “Six Hebrew Fiscal Bullae from the Time of Hezekiah,” in Lubetski and Lubetski, *New Inscriptions and Seals Relating to the Biblical World*, 59–68.

Hezekian period with quite a few being royal in origin. Royal bullae are relatively common, and Cross and others have published several imprints of Hezekiah's seal.<sup>95</sup> The number of bullae testify to a prolific production of documents requiring clear identification of the originator.

Many of the Samaria Ostraca are copies of seals from vessels shipped to the Omride capitals.<sup>96</sup> The vessels, which contained wine and oil, were probably catalogued on the ostraca as they were received, then the records transferred to an inventory list which was undoubtedly papyrus. While these fragmentary records offer nothing in the way of literary value, they do nonetheless argue for literacy at some level. Seals were used to record production at the source, and then the chain of possession was continued via the ostraca. Ryan Byrne sees these ostraca as "the cosmetics of statecraft," a clear statement of an established and internationally integrated state.<sup>97</sup>

There are also a handful of weights inscribed with Hebrew texts, including one marked as אבן שרעא, "stone of the gate."<sup>98</sup> Two tortoise-shaped weights have been found, one in Samaria inscribed with רבע שקל, "quarter shekel" and a similar weight from Ashkelon, which has only a fragmented inscription but probably read the same way.<sup>99</sup> These weights were used in trade, and all date from the Omride period.

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<sup>95</sup> Frank M. Cross, "King Hezekiah's Seal Bears Phoenician Imagery," *BAR* 25, no. 2 (1999): 42–45, 66; Meir Lupetski, "King Hezekiah's Seal Revisited," *BAR* 27, no. 4 (2001): 44–51, 59. A number of Hezekiah bullae have been uncovered since, and Eilat Mazar believes she has also discovered a bulla linked to Isaiah alongside a cache of them. See Eilat Mazar, "Is This the Prophet Isaiah's Signature?" *BAR* 44, no. 2 (2018): 64–73, 92.

<sup>96</sup> See Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 258.

<sup>97</sup> Cited from a forthcoming work in Sanders, "Writing and Early Iron Age Israel," 99.

<sup>98</sup> Volkmar Fritz, "Kinnereth: Excavations at Tell el-'Oreimah (Tel Kinrot) 1982–1985 Seasons," *Tel Aviv* 20 (1993): 209–11.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Chaplin, "An Ancient Hebrew Weight from Samaria; A Stone Mask from Er Râm," *PEQ* 22 (1890): 267–69; R. B. Y. Scott, "Shekel-Fraction Markings on Hebrew Weights," *BASOR* 176 (1964): 55. There is no catalog of weights found in Israel, but Kletter offers an exhaustive catalog of the Judean weights. Raz Kletter, *Economic Keystones: The Weight System of the Kingdom of Judah*, JSOTSup 276 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 150–247.

### Section Summary

Taken as a whole, the monumental, formal, and occasional textual evidence seems to indicate that something was happening with the alphabetic scripts employed for transcribing the NWS languages in the Levant. There was a proliferation of expression, and significantly, the quality of these expression was widely varied. Many of these works reflect casual rather than professional acquaintance with the scripts, something that was rare with cuneiform scripts. The development of new media, especially papyrus and ostrakon but also other materials like skins and the innovation of the scroll, contributed to widespread usage.<sup>100</sup> While there is not a substantial extant corpus of texts, what remains indicates that a much greater corpus once did exist. The question that must be asked next pertains to the use of this corpus. Could the Yahwistic prophets of the northern kingdom have had the capacity to produce lengthy written works, and if so, would those lengthy works have had forms similar to what appears in the Hebrew text of the Book of Kings?

### Literary Awareness in the NWS-speaking Levant

Based on the evidence provided in the section above, it is clear that there was some level of engagement with written language in the NWS-speaking Levant. This does not in any way lead to the conclusion that there was widespread literacy in the Hebrew states. This transitional period, which was brought on by the introduction of the alphabetic scripts and more readily available media, may be referred to not as literacy but as literary awareness. In other words, it was a society where even people who could not be considered literate had come to see written language as a component of everyday life rather than a distant practice performed behind closed

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<sup>100</sup> The Hebrew word for scroll, מגללה, was apparently borrowed from Akkadian at some point in the preexilic period. According to Hurvitz, no cognate appears in any other NWS text. See Zhakevich, *Scribal Tools*, 89–94.

doors. It is important to first understand the nature of textuality within a culture still operating with a predominantly oral register. After considering this, the condition of literary awareness as opposed to the modern concept of literacy can be examined more closely.

### The Conditions of Mass Literacy

In a trio of seminal essays, Ian Young applies William V. Harris's approach to Roman literacy to the conditions of the Iron Age Levant, proposing that in order for mass literacy to exist, four conditions must be met: (1) the technology to produce vast numbers of inexpensive texts, (2) a network of schools, supported by some religious or governmental institution, (3) economic complexity that requires semi-educated masses to have literacy skills, and (4) a widespread ideology that promotes literacy as worthwhile.<sup>101</sup> Young summarily concludes that these conditions did not exist in the Iron Age, and therefore the Hebrew kingdoms could not be said to be literate. In answer to this conclusion, each of Harris's points should be considered individually.

#### 1. The Alphabet as a Technological Innovation

First, the alphabet and papyrus represent an innovative synergy that, while not as revolutionary as the printing press, nonetheless was a leap forward in document production. The shift from hieroglyphic and syllabic writing systems to the alphabet meant that any communication could be replicated in text if one could master fewer than thirty phonemes. These texts could be rendered in ink, which was inexpensive; and it could be written on papyrus,

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<sup>101</sup> Ian Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence, Part I," *VT* 48 (1998): 241–44. The other two are Ian Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence, Part II," *VT* 48 (1998): 408–22; and Ian Young, "Israelite Literacy and Inscriptions: A Response to Richard Hess," *VT* 55 (2002): 565–68. See also William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 11–21.

ostraca, or plaster. While papyrus could not be produced locally, it could be obtained already in useable condition, minimizing the need for specialized skills for preparing media. Ostraca were readily available anywhere there was pottery, and plaster was easily applied to any surface.

Akkadian, the language of diplomacy of the Mesopotamian cultures, was syllabic but also employed an array of determinatives which had to be memorized along with the sound values to form logograms. There is also a system of marking loanwords which adds complexity since these words might be written in a number of ways. Powell estimates that roughly 600–700 logograms had to be learned before someone could be considered functionally literate.<sup>102</sup> On top of this, the cuneiform writing system was fitted to the Akkadian language rather than arising from it, and so the writing system is asymmetrical. This meant that reproducing even simple texts in Akkadian required extensive training, which was a tremendous investment of time and work to acquire functional literacy, nonetheless true fluency.<sup>103</sup>

The NWS alphabets were not the first attempt to break with the syllabic writing system. Sometime before 1250 BCE, scribes in Ugarit developed a cuneiform alphabet, which was incised into clay or stone, so although the number of symbols required for writing was reduced from the 600–700 in Akkadian to twenty-seven, there was still the difficulty of incising the symbols into media.<sup>104</sup> Despite its innovative nature, the Ugaritic alphabetic script seems to have remained localized to Ugarit and its surroundings. It is possible that the Ugaritic cuneiform

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<sup>102</sup> Barry B. Powell, *Writing: Theory and History of the Technology of Civilization* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 153.

<sup>103</sup> For an excellent summary of the Akkadian writing system, see Eric Reiner, *A Linguistic Analysis of Akkadian*, *Janua Linguarum* 21 (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1965), 23–32. For variations in Akkadian, see Stefan Weninger, ed., *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook*, HSK 36 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 330–421.

<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Sass, “The Genesis of the Alphabet and Its Development in the Second Millennium BC, Twenty Years Later.” *De Kemi à Birît Nari* 2 (2004): 147–66. This is a revisiting of Sass’s dissertation which was published as a monograph as Benjamin Sass, *The Genesis of the Alphabet and Its Development in the Second Millennium BC*, ÄAT 13 (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988).

alphabet and the NWS alphabet coexisted, but the Ugaritic system died out around the end of the LBA while the NWS alphabet systems became widespread by Iron Age IIB. It is difficult not to view this as a technological innovation that allowed comparatively inexpensive production of texts, as Young says is required for mass literacy. Barry Powell is correct when he refers to this as a “revolution.”<sup>105</sup>

## 2. Scribal Schools

Young’s point concerning the necessity of scribal training is grounded in the scholarship. Half a century ago, Whybray maintained quite adamantly that there was no sort of professional scribal tradition in the southern Levant until the second century BCE.<sup>106</sup> Recent scholarship has come to understand that the secondary states could not have existed without some level of literacy and a scribal class, and so Jamieson-Drake argues that writing was essential for a secondary state’s bureaucracy, pushing the origin of scribal schools back to whatever point is determined to be the origin of the secondary states.<sup>107</sup> Such a society, according to M. C. A. Macdonald, is one in which “reading and writing have become essential to its functioning.”<sup>108</sup> Rollston agrees with this assessment, and he goes more in-depth concerning the role of a professional scribe. These professionals did much more than simply write. They had to be versed

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<sup>105</sup> Powell, *Writing*, 148–62.

<sup>106</sup> R. Norman Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, BZAW 135 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974), 5–54.

<sup>107</sup> David W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach*, JSOTSup 109 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991), 11–15. Jamieson-Drake argues for an eighth century BCE development of scribal literacy. See also André Lemaire, *Les Écoles et la formation de la Bible dans l’ancien Israël*, OBO 39 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981), 45–47. Lemaire refined and restated his theory in André Lemaire, “Schools and Literacy in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism,” trans. Aliou Niang, in *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 207–17.

<sup>108</sup> M. C. A. Macdonald, “Literacy in an Oral Environment,” in Bienkowski, Mee, and Slater, *Writing and Ancient Near East Society*, 49.

in complex numeral systems, such as the Egyptian hieratic system as well as, one would assume, the ability to read and write correspondence from other literate nations.<sup>109</sup>

The question must be whether literacy ended at the professional scribe or if there were less formal schools which focused not on the full scribal task but only the use of the written language using the alphabetic systems. Albright and many who followed him, such as Crenshaw, believed the alphabetic systems could be acquired quickly, in a matter of weeks at the most.<sup>110</sup> Rollston posits that learning the alphabetic system required professional training, basing his position on modern studies of children learning to write in the modern educational system.<sup>111</sup> These studies do not reflect ancient cultural settings, orthography or educational methods. Additionally, the studies focus on spelling as the key component of literacy acquisition, but NWS epigraphic evidence shows a wide array of spelling conventions, if they can be called that, and variability. In Hebrew, for which we have the most textual evidence, spelling followed spoken convention closely. Discussing spelling conventions in the copying of the rabbinical literature, Moshe Bar-Asher wrote, “orthographic forms reflect unique scribal practices already forgotten in ancient times. Those early scribes who copied the texts written by their predecessors did not understand the forms in question and thus passed on forms with no bearing in the given

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<sup>109</sup> Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel*, 111.

<sup>110</sup> William F. Albright, “Discussion” in *City Invincible: A Symposium on Urbanization and Cultural Development in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Carl H. Kraeling and Robert M. Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 123; James L. Crenshaw, *Education in Ancient Israel: Across the Deadening Silence* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 107. See also David W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah*, 154–156; Graham Davies, “Some Uses of Writing in Ancient Israel in the Light of Recently Published Inscriptions,” in Bienkowski, Mee, and Slater, *Writing and Ancient Near East Society*, 155–74.

<sup>111</sup> Rollston, *Writing and Literacy*, 92–94; Linnea C. Ehri, “Learning to Read and Learning to Spell are One and the Same, Almost,” in *Learning to Spell: Research, Theory, and Practice Across Languages*, ed. Charles A. Perfetti, Laurence Rieben, and Michel Fayol (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997), 237–70; Linnea C. Ehri, “Phases of Acquisition in Learning to Read Words and Implications for Teaching,” in *Learning and Teaching Reading*, ed. Rhona Stainthorp and Peter Thomlinson, *British Journal of Educational Psychology Monograph Series 1* (Leicester: British Psychological Society, 2002), 7–28.

context.”<sup>112</sup> Linguistic variation is the nature of the transition from oral to written culture, chiefly because written language is subordinated to spoken language.<sup>113</sup> Without the strictures of a modern literate society that utilizes the written language and has implemented numerous conventions, acquisition of written language would not need to require a lengthy period, despite Rollston’s protests.

While such a scribal class undoubtedly existed, writing need not to have been limited to them. As Hess argues, (1) since writing existed at all stages of the Iron Age, and (2) it is not possible to say who did or did not write from the extant evidence, (3) it follows that there is no way to limit the activity of writing because evidence is widespread.<sup>114</sup> To add to this, Ferrara argues that scribal schools seemed to have considerable independence in methodology from state to state.<sup>115</sup> This was true not just state to state but also stage to stage within a state. The Amarna scribes largely appear to have been trained in the Middle Babylonian style, but the Jerusalem scribe employed a bewildering style that blended Middle Assyrian, Middle Babylonian, and hybrid NWS styles.<sup>116</sup> There may be precedent here that the Levantine scribal training tended to

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<sup>112</sup> Moshe Bar-Asher, “From Oral Transmission to Written Transmission: Concerning the Meaning of Some Orthographic Forms in the Manuscripts of the Mishnah and of Rabbinic Literature,” *Hebrew Studies* 52 (2011): 202.

<sup>113</sup> Uri Mor, “Two Case Studies of Linguistic Variation in Mishnaic Hebrew,” *JSS* 65 (2020): 118.

<sup>114</sup> Richard S. Hess, “Literacy in Iron Age Israel,” in *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of “Biblical Israel,”* ed. V. Philips Long (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 95.

<sup>115</sup> See Silvia Ferrara, “Writing Away: Mobility and Versatility of Scribes at the End of the Bronze Age,” *OJA* 35.3 (2016): 227–45. It is true that Ferrara argues that the Cypriot and Ugaritic scribal schools were different from each other, but the existence of diversity in the task only highlights the importance placed upon it.

<sup>116</sup> Anson F. Rainey, ed. *The El-Amarna Correspondence: A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of el-Amarna Based on Collations of All Extant Tablets*, HdO 110 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 12–13; Anson F. Rainey, “The Hybrid Language Written by Canaanite Scribes in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE,” in *Language in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 53<sup>e</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, vol. 2, ed. Leonid E. Kogan, Natalia Koslova, Sergey Loesov, and Serguei Tischenko (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 851–62; William L. Moran, “The Syrian Scribe of the Jerusalem Amarna Letters,” in *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Hans Goedicke, and J. J. M. Roberts, *The Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies* 7 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 146–66. Moran refers to the Jerusalem scribe as *extra chorum*, literally “out of chorus,” essentially saying the scribe is out of step with convention.

be a little less formal even in the highly controlled world of cuneiform scribal practices. Carr allows that this variation extended well into what would be considered informal education.<sup>117</sup> Add to this, however, the presence of an advanced, accessible writing technology in the form of the alphabetic script, and the use of language and writing could extend far beyond the necessities of secondary state formation.

Richelle follows a line of logic similar to Hess. In his case, Richelle argues not only for the presence of writing but for the capacity to produce works of considerable length. In his thinking, the idea of a scribal class has to be expanded because of the nature of the alphabetic script. It loosened the parameters of who could create texts, and this can be observed in the texts themselves.

*(A) There existed in the Levant “traces of a continuous scribal tradition” going back to the second millennium.* Richelle appeals to Horowitz, Oshima, and Sanders’ catalog of cuneiform texts and the Amarna tablets as demonstrating that there was a cuneiform scribal tradition in place, but also he points to the rise of Proto-Sinaitic and Proto-Canaanite inscriptions in the southern Levant that existed alongside the cuneiform tradition.<sup>118</sup> Based on this, Richelle concludes that scribal traditions continued, evolving perhaps out of site of the epigraphic evidence due to the adoption of organic materials. This is something of an argument from silence, since Richelle concludes that there was both a need and support for a scribal class; but he also points toward the idea mentioned earlier in this dissertation that the alphabetic script did not require as much training as cuneiform, and so could exist in an unofficial capacity, with varying

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<sup>117</sup> David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>118</sup> Richelle, “Elusive Scrolls,” 585, n. 114–20. The number of resources Richelle cites here is substantial. Rather than including them all here, refer to the cited notes.

levels of literacy. What he concludes, however, is that while writing is a hallmark of a state, it can exist without what we might define as a state, and this point is worth consideration. The alphabetic script was a “low-budget and multimedia writing technology ... tied to a local, less differentiated social structure.”<sup>119</sup>

(B) *Scribal training was more widely available, earlier than usually supposed.* The standardization of letters and writing direction seem to be indicative of some kind of scribal tradition as early as the tenth century BCE.<sup>120</sup> While there may have been widespread, casual use of the alphabetic scripts, some kind of formalization may have been occurring in this early date, as evidence by the Qeiyafa ostrakon and Tel Zayit abecedary. Richelle concludes, “even a very low rate of literacy would be enough to allow for literary works to be produced in Iron Age IIA Judah.”<sup>121</sup>

(C) *Evidence of semi-cursive traditions indicate scribes needed to write quickly, perhaps indirectly pointing to longer works.* Admittedly, this argument is a bit vague, but Richelle cites Sass’s conclusion that there must have existed a “lost scribal output on papyrus or parchment” that predated the ninth century inscriptions like the Tel Dan inscription and Mesha Stela.<sup>122</sup> Sass relies upon the Low Chronology for his dates, so if, as Richelle does, one places Sass’s evidence in a High Chronology such as Mazar’s, then such a tradition could have existed ca. 1000 BCE.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, 101.

<sup>120</sup> Aaron Demsky, “An Iron Age IIA Alphabetic Writing Exercise from Khirbet Qeiyafa,” *IEJ* 62 (2012): 186–99.

<sup>121</sup> Richelle, “Elusive Scrolls,” 588–89. This is not an isolated opinion. See Jeremy M. Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest: The Overwritten Texts of Personal Exile and Transformation in the Deuteronomistic History*, BZAW 396 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 171–72. Contra Jamieson-Drake, Hutton concludes, “scribalism need not have been strictly limited to the palace or temple functions.”

<sup>122</sup> Benjamin Sass, “Aram and Israel during the 10th–9th Centuries BCE, or Iron Age IIA: The Alphabet,” in *In Search of Aram and Israel: Politics, Culture, and Identity*, ed. Omer Sergi, Manfred Oeming, and Izaak J de Hulster, *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike* 20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 217.

<sup>123</sup> Richelle, “Elusive Scrolls,” 590–91.

Richelle does not argue for modern literacy rates but rather for a loose literary awareness. There is a clear distinction between training in a scribal school and general education, which Young had in mind when he speaks of “a network of schools.”<sup>124</sup> What Rollston and others argue is that scribalism existed among the elites of the society, and that scribal schools were for training a proportionally small group of professionals. This statement is certainly true for professional scribal training, although the lines seem to have been blurry in this transitional period. Hess insists that scribal education was more widely available, basing his position on what might be considered the anecdotal evidence of poor-quality school texts, graffiti and other informal uses of writing technology.<sup>125</sup> There is no reason for this informal network of training could not have existed alongside the professional training programs.

Duboský has recently argued that scribal practices developed along different paths throughout the sphere of Assyrian influence, and practices on the periphery, which would have included the Levant, would not have been as formal. Literary forms varied even within the empire, and with them there was variation of vocabulary and even syntax.<sup>126</sup> It is impossible to isolate scribal practices in such a dynamic scenario. If scribal education varied within the empire, one can only imagine what kind of informal scribal training might have existed in the periphery, especially given the existence of the much simpler writing technology in the Levant. While formal education appears to have been reserved for the elites, Hess has a point that the alphabet

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<sup>124</sup> See Harris’s section on “The Hellenistic State and Elementary Education,” Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 116–50.

<sup>125</sup> Hess, “Literacy in Iron Age Israel,” 82–102; Richard S. Hess, “Questions of Reading and Writing in Ancient Israel,” *BBR* 19, no. 1 (2009): 4–6. For Young’s dismissal of Hess’s argument, see Young, “A Response to Richard Hess,” 565–68. See also Roy Harris, “How Does Writing Restrict Thought?” *Language and Communication* 9.2/3 (1989): 99–106.

<sup>126</sup> Peter Duboský, “The Birth of Israelite Historiography: A Comparative Study of 2 Kings 13–14 and Ninth–Eighth Century BCE Levantine Historiographies,” in *Stone, Tablets, and Scrolls: Periods of the Formation of the Bible*, ed. Peter Duboský and Federico Giuntoli (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 65–112; Ian Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, FAT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 25–26.

was clearly being employed outside of such schools by people who used it poorly, but nonetheless had some kind of knowledge of it.

### 3. Economic Complexity and Basic Literacy

What Young has in mind in his discussion of economic complexity is that there must be some form of “semi-literacy of the masses” in order for the common people to participate in an advanced economy.<sup>127</sup> Here Young is following Sean Warner’s assertion that social stratification in ancient Israel was rigid, and therefore peasants were locked into particular agrarian vocations that did not require literacy.<sup>128</sup> Certainly as already discussed, the average person in the Levant in this period would not have been literate in the modern sense, but Warner’s argument is based on a modern class evaluation of Israelite society. The overwhelming number of surviving inscriptions from this time are simple names or dedications on pottery.<sup>129</sup> Such a simple text could be easy to recognize even by people who could not reliably read texts of any length. Warner, and subsequently Young, seems to fail to take into consideration that exposure to literary technology fosters interest and development among at least some of the people who may not require literacy for employment. Put another way, the potential for literacy is much greater when the means of written expression is a simple alphabet that can be copied, as was done throughout the ancient Levant, as the many casual abecedaries testify. Therefore, while we may not see mass literacy in the NWS-speaking secondary states, we must admit that awareness of literacy creates greater opportunity for literacy beyond the scribal class.

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<sup>127</sup> Young, “Israelite Literacy, Part I,” 243.

<sup>128</sup> Sean Warner, “The Alphabet: An Innovation and Its Diffusion,” *VT* 30 (1980): 89.

<sup>129</sup> Such an inscription may be what is referred to in Isaiah 44:5—יִכְתֹּב יָדוֹ לִיהוָה. Bullae and pottery often consisted of a symbol and a similar designation of ownership. See Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, NAC 15B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2009), 220; Paul notes that slaves could be branded in this way as well. See Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 228.

#### 4. An Ideology that Promotes Literacy

Responding to Young's fourth point is difficult because it is hard to prove or disprove if such an ideology existed among the ancient Hebrew societies. One could certainly argue that a religious faith based on revealed Scripture meets the criteria Young sets out, but there are simply too many variables in the equation to argue that Israelite religion at this time had such a view of revealed Scripture. To date, there is no sense in which an ideology promoting general literacy existed in the Israelite society. On this point, nothing can be added to Young's protest. This does not, however, invalidate the weight of the evidence concerning the other three points.

#### Section Summary

There is no way to deny that Israelite literacy in the tenth and ninth centuries BCE did not approach modern levels, but modern levels of literacy are not the concern here. One must conclude that literary awareness appears to have been much more widespread than has long been thought.<sup>130</sup> Ancient Israelite society, as a part of a larger NWS-speaking sphere would have met at least three of Young's four criteria relative to other societies of the time. Certainly, written language was far more accessible for them than it was for those people living in cultures that still employed cuneiform or hieroglyphic scripts. Harris estimates the literacy of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE to be around 10%, and one would naturally conclude that literacy in the Levant several centuries previous would have to be lower.<sup>131</sup> Marc Zvi Brettler, on the other hand, refuses to allow for a literacy rate in ancient Israel greater than 3%, despite making this

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<sup>130</sup> Alan R. Millard, "Scripts and Their Uses in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE," in Galil, Gilboa, Maier, and Kahn, *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE*, 404–12; Christopher A. Rollston, "Scribal Education in Ancient Israel: The Old Hebrew Epigraphic Evidence," *BASOR* 344 (2006): 47–74; Alan R. Millard, "Books in the Late Bronze Age in the Levant," in *Past Links: Studies in the Languages and Cultures of the Ancient Near East, Essays in Honour of Anson Rainey*, ed. Shlomo Isre'el, Itamar Singer, and Ran Zadok, IOS 18 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 171–81.

<sup>131</sup> Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 114.

statement after listing several aspects of Hebrew literature that make it an outlier among ANE literature generally.<sup>132</sup> The presence of the alphabet produced a flourish of occasional inscriptions, possibly indicating an expansion of scribal practices beyond the governmental corridors.<sup>133</sup> Of course, the quality of these texts does not approach that of an established power like Assyria. Most NWS school texts are ostraca written in ink, charcoal, chalk or similar media, and are of a generally poorer quality than the cuneiform examples, indicating a less organized didactic method. Inscriptions like the abecedary found at Tel Zayit, which some scholars date to early Iron Age I and is one of the oldest NWS inscriptions found in the Shephelah, demonstrate this.<sup>134</sup> The abecedary is scratched into stone, but it was found in secondary fill of a domestic wall, indicating that it was discarded. Hess insists that it serves as proof that everyday people were learning to use the script as it evolved, while Rollston argues that the text does not necessarily indicate widespread literacy.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Marc Zvi Brettler, “Historical Texts in the Hebrew Bible?” in *Thinking, Recording, and Writing History in the Ancient World*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub, *The Ancient World: Comparative Histories* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 215.

<sup>133</sup> Philip R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 76–78.

<sup>134</sup> For some reason, the Tel Zayit abecedary was not included in Finkelstein and Sass’s catalog. See Ron E. Tappy, et al., “An Abecedary of the Mid-Tenth Century B.C.E. from the Judaeen Shephelah,” *BASOR* 344 (2006): 5–46. A recent discovery at Lachish may supplant the Tel Zayit text. The text (B10969) was published in 2018 and was found below the LBA IB layer, which pushes the date to around 1500–1450 BCE. See Höflmayer, Misgav, Webster, and Streit, “Early Alphabetic Writing in the Ancient Near East,” 705–19. B10969 is typologically similar to inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadim, but far earlier than others of that type. It could be considered a truly alphabetic inscription. It is unclear, however, what purpose B10969 served, because only a couple of letters are legible.

<sup>135</sup> Richard S. Hess, “Writing About Writing: Abecedaries and Evidence for Literacy in Ancient Israel,” *VT* 56 (2006): 342–46; Christopher A. Rollston, “The Phoenician Script of the Tel Zayit Abecedary and the Putative Evidence for Israelite Literacy,” in Tappy and McCarter, *Literature Culture and Tenth Century Canaan*, 61–96. Strictly speaking, the ‘Izbet Şarṭah abecedary is earlier (dating from the LBA), but, given that it is written in a transitional proto-Sinaitic to proto-Canaanite script, it is unclear whether this abecedary can be considered in the same light. See Aaron Demsky, “A Proto-Canaanite Abecedary Dating from the Period of the Judges and Its Implications for the History of the Alphabet,” *Tel Aviv* 4 (1977): 14–27.

The nuances of what constitutes literacy are still debated, but it seems clear that there were varying levels of literary awareness in the NWS speaking cultures of the Iron Age II. This casual engagement with written language would have existed in a primarily oral society. Understanding how this might have worked is the focus of this final section of the chapter.

### Language, Oral Register and Textuality

#### **Oral Register**

Susan Niditch's classic work *Oral World and Written Word* addresses the complex relationship between oral society and textuality. She argues that the literature of ancient Hebrew societies belongs "somewhere in an 'oral register'."<sup>136</sup> This term relates not to the composition of the text but rather the style of the language employed. "'Oral register' applies to the patterns of content that are the plots of biblical narrative and to various recurring literary forms, employed by a range of biblical authors."<sup>137</sup> In the biblical text, these are traits that shine through the written text which, in Niditch's estimation the biblical authors were far less formulaic and controlled over the breadth of the text, perhaps because of the timespan that the composition of these texts would have covered.<sup>138</sup> When a specific register exists in a language, it can be used more effectively and quickly for composition or reconstruction. Those dedicated to its uses understand the register through training and practice. As Foley describes it, the register is embedded in real life, meaning it is not a specialized form of language, only a specialized

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<sup>136</sup> Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 10.

<sup>137</sup> Susan Niditch, "Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto," *Oral Tradition* 10 (1995): 389.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

style.<sup>139</sup> The register is a matter of the language as a whole, a language which depends upon orality for its fundamental structure and function. Texts can exist, but they are not texts in the modern sense. A language still operating in the oral register would not be non-textual. In fact, it could produce texts in abundance. The ANE cultures existed on an oral-literary continuum, and the lines between oral and textual are not easily discernible.

### **Written Transmission on the Oral-Literary Continuum**

The linguistic Edgar Schneider offers five possible means of the transition from oral to written record: (1) a direct recording or transcription of the speech is made simultaneously with the utterance; (2) the utterance is written down at some time after it was spoken, presumably from notes or memory; (3) the text is imagined *before* being uttered, which may also be considered a directly written text; (4) a general class of utterance is observed and the written text represents the characteristics of the speech rather than preserving the speech itself; and (5) the utterance is invented by a writer other than the speaker without an association with a real-life event.<sup>140</sup> Schneider's fifth category fits the minimalist view of the Hebrew texts, and the third corresponds to certain situations where an oracle was written before being presented. His first, second and fourth categories would all be viable options for ancient textualization of oral performance, and according to Person, would not necessarily be seen as distinct categories by the creators or receivers of the text.<sup>141</sup> This sense of oral-literary continuum is presented here to

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<sup>139</sup> John M. Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 15–17. This is an extension of the idea of an Oral-Formulaic Performance, such as that which Lord observed in the Homeric works. Whereas the formulas of oral composition are memorized tropes, the register is more of the feel of vocabulary and syntax utilized around the tropes.

<sup>140</sup> Edgard W. Schneider, "Investigating Variation and Change in Written Documents," in *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*, ed. J. K. Chambers, Peter Trudgill, and Natalie Schilling-Estes (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 72–81.

<sup>141</sup> Raymond F. Person, Jr. "The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer," *JBL* 117 (1998): 602.

broaden the sense of what might be perceived as literary transmission or conversion from oral to literary in a community like Israel during the Iron Age IIA–B period. The alphabet and the availability of inexpensive media would have brought the oral and written closer together, blurring the line between the two.

Niditch traces four specific traits of oral register in the biblical text.<sup>142</sup> First, repetition in a passage is generally considered a mnemonic device, but it can also be a stylistic preference. As examples, she lists three cases in Genesis: (a) “fill in the blank” phrase such as “and the LORD said let there be x” or “and the LORD called the ‘x’ ‘y,’ and it was evening and it was morning of the nth day” (Gen 1); (b) news being delivered and then repeated as with Rebecca hearing Isaac’s plans to bless Esau and repeating them to Isaac (Gen 27:2–33); and (c) the use of a keyword such as אכל (eat) and ברכ (bless) in the Isaac narrative already mentioned (Gen 27).<sup>143</sup> Second, she explores formulas and formula patterns used throughout the tradition to express similar ideas and images. For Niditch, these formulas are not limited to Scripture but culturally present and therefore understandable to a wider audience. Niditch distinguishes between epithets such as אביר, often translated as “mighty one” but cognate with other NWS forms meaning “bull” (Ps 22:12, 50:13; Isa 1:24, 10:13, 49:26, 60:16), and longer formulas such as the use of קרא along with a series of officials or functionaries (Gen 41:8; Exod 7:11; Jer 50:35; Dan 1:20, 2:2).<sup>144</sup> Third, the use of conventionalized patterns or literary forms that reference other aspects of the tradition as a framework. In this category, Niditch places broad references to the creation epic of

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<sup>142</sup> Niditch, “Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto,” 390.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 393–94. On the last example, Niditch cites Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture: A Literary Reading of Selected Texts* (New York: Scholars Press, 1979; repr. Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), xii, 50–54; Joel Rosenberg, “Bible,” in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 38.

<sup>144</sup> Niditch, “Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto,” 394–98.

Genesis 1–2, such as Moses’s mother perceiving he was good (Exod 2:2, cf. Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). For Niditch, this reference is about more than Moses. It is about establishment of a new, free people.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, Genesis 49:14–15 uses similar phrases describing the founding of the tribe of Issachar. Therefore, this phrase is a common reference throughout at least part of Hebrew literature.<sup>146</sup> Fourth, specific patterns are used to tell different stories. These are larger frameworks than the referential patterns of the third item. Patterns like “victory-enthronement,” a pattern very familiar from the Mesopotamian *Enuma Eliš* tradition (Isa 55), and light and dark in the liberation or justice of YHWH (Amos 5:18–20. “The skilled biblical author at home in the oral world and aware of his audience’s expectations within the tradition can quite consciously invoke traditional patterns to manipulate them recognizably less than traditional ways in order to shock and to make those who receive his message take notice.”<sup>147</sup>

Niditch argues then that there are signs in the biblical text of a society which was oral in nature but transitioning to written forms. Niditch means when she writes, “Israelite writing is set in an oral context.”<sup>148</sup> Working from Niditch, Raymond Person argued as follows:

The ancient Israelite scribes were literate members of a primarily oral society. As members of a primarily oral society, they undertook even their literate activity—that is, the copying of texts—with an oral mindset. When they copied their texts, the ancient Israelite scribes did not slavishly write the texts word by word but preserved the texts’ meaning for the ongoing life of their communities in much the same way that performers of oral epic represent the stable, yet dynamic, tradition to their communities. In this sense, the ancient Israelite scribes were not mere copyists but were also performers.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Niditch, “Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto,” 398; Susan Niditch, *Folklore and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 49.

<sup>146</sup> Niditch, “Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto,” 398–402.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 403. See also Foley, *The Singer of Tales*, 39–40.

<sup>148</sup> Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, 88.

<sup>149</sup> Person, “The Ancient Israelite Scribe as Performer,” 602. In this argument, Person draws on the following: A.N. Doane, “The Ethnography of Scribal Writing and Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Scribe as Performer,” *Oral Tradition* 9 (1994) 420–39; and K. O. O’Keefe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

At the center of Person's argument is that modern readers mistakenly project their own distinction between oral and written memory onto ancient cultures. He contends that Israelite scribes would have recorded something much more akin to oral text, with all of the pliability of oral replication. The barrier between these two media was not distinct, and transmission was not the same as the modern perception of perfect replication. This strikes at the fundamental nature of ideas like Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis which assumes that texts were created as *written* works, with an apparent assumption that editors were basically sitting at a desk, looking over the various source materials and copying the parts they liked. Niditch takes issue with this anachronistic image and argues for a process by which much of the text came to its present form, which she calls an oral-literary continuum, something not readily observable through diachronic means. A prophetic school might, in her opinion, preserve an archive in their own particular style and expression because they were the ones most familiar with the conventions of prophecy and the language involved, something she refers to as "insider intervention" in the conversion from oral tradition to literary work.<sup>150</sup> Early texts were not written for the non-initiated reader, and the transmission within the oral-literary continuum could have been very consistent, even at a linguistic level.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, 117–29. This is one of four methods of transition from oral to literary that Niditch proposes: (1) performance dictated and copied, (2) longer "pan-Israelite" narratives being constructed in the postexilic period, (3) literary imitation, usually for polemic purposes, and (4) written sources for written composition, as in the case of the Chronicles.

<sup>151</sup> Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 4–8. Such writing practices did not emerge until the Hellenistic Period, when education broadened beyond scribal classes. Consider Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 91–92; Jocelyn Penny Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1997), 11–25.

## The Genre of Reported Story

This idea of an oral register and the recording of texts in a society transitioning along the oral-literary continuum leads to the question of what these texts might look like. Along the way, it is worth pausing to return to the subject of sites of memory and Ehud Ben Zvi's sense of social memory. As was noted before, Ben Zvi allows for some written records to exist as a site of memory for later social memory. In this chapter, it has been made clear that writing was relatively widespread in NWS-speaking cultures during Iron Age IIA–B, and that this writing, or at least some of it, existed in movement along the oral-literary continuum. The question then arises as to the relationship that written prophetic records of the time might have had with oral tradition. What can be asserted positively, however is that oral and literary sites of memory could coexist and complement each other without competing with each other.

*The issue with applying classical oral theory to the biblical texts.* There exists, however, an issue with addressing the orality of these texts if we are to consider them within the oral-literary continuum. Much of the scholarship on Hebrew orality, particularly after Gunkel, follows Lord and Parry's analyses of the Homeric poems as recorded oral performance.<sup>152</sup> As

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<sup>152</sup> For further reading, see Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and Albert Bates Lord, *The Singers of Tales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). See also Cristóbal Pagán Canovas and Mihailo Antović, "Construction of Grammar and Oral Formulaic Poetry," in *Oral Poetics and Cognitive Science*, 79–98. Parry and Lord did groundbreaking field work into oral poetics in what was then Yugoslavia, but they were the inheritors of a European or Western approach to story which descended from Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's collection of German folktales. The Western approach has advanced almost unquestioned, informing scholars like Gunkel. Part of the issue is that orality in the Western world must inevitably be influenced by not just written language but printed language, which was firmly entrenched in Europe by the times Grimm was working. In 2014, a new peer-reviewed journal called *Narrative Culture* appeared which intentionally shifts away from this Western approach to one which embraced the narrative cultures of south and east Asia. This emphasis on societies which maintain largely unknown narrative traditions sheds light on cultures which might have a closer affinity with the NWS-speaking secondary states. Of particular interest are works that deal with orality in other Semitic-speaking cultures. For example, Ulrich Marzolph, "Making Sense of the Nights: Intertextual Connections and Narrative Techniques in the Thousand and One Nights," *Narrative Culture* 1 (2014): 239–58. Marzolph discusses the idea of "embedded tales," components of the transmitted story that have no significant relationship to the main story but also anchor it. Modern readers of the

Lord articulated it, non-literate oral tradition could be characterized by certain traits: (1) specific metric schemes; (2) completion of thought at the end of each line (disenjambment); (3) highly developed and repeated conventions or formulas; and (4) equally developed patterns of plot or content patterns which are created by the formulaic language.<sup>153</sup> In short, non-literate oral traditions tend toward culturally unique poetic forms. Lord and Parry applied these principles to the Homeric tradition, a corpus that certainly conforms to their criteria. Such poetic structure is necessary for the recitation of such epic poetry.<sup>154</sup>

Since Gunkel, this idea of oral poetry has been taken as more or less a given in consideration of the biblical record. James Kugel has pointed out, however, that the biblical record does not, for the most part, conform to Lord and Parry's characteristics. He warns against imposing this concept upon the Hebrew Scriptures, especially if it requires some kind of reconstruction of a proposed original poetic form. The chief characteristic of poetry, regular meter, is quite evident in ancient works of poetry, such as the Aeneid, but attempts to develop

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*Nights* treated these stories as interpolations, but Marzolph proposes this is a failure of the modern reader to understand the oral register. "They serve a narrative device to delay the action and keep the readers or listeners in suspense by diverting them with a number of strange and amusing short narratives" (243). Of course, the *Nights* is a work of fiction, but Marzolph shows how oral transmission employs devices that seem "superfluous" to the modern reader. Also, in terms of memory studies, Marilena Papachristophorou, "Narrative Maps, Collective Memory, and Identities: Through an Ethnographic Example from the Southeast Aegea," *Narrative Culture* 3 (2016): 67–86. In her essay, Papachristophorou offers perspective on how geography anchors narrative within a storytelling tradition. It need not be detailed because the people of the tradition live in the geography, and therefore the storyteller can expand his telling from the anchors. Finally, Askari discusses three different versions of collected medieval tales in Persian (*Jāmi' al'ḥikāyāt*, "Compendium of Tales," Turkish (*Faraj ba'd al-shidda*, "Relief after Hardship") and French (*Les mille et un jours*, "One Thousand and One Days"). He notes how texts moving among cultures often drop storytelling formulas because function is lost and narratives are recontextualized, especially when presented in written form. Nasrin Askari, "A Mirror for Princesses: *Mūnis-nāma*, A Twelfth-Century Collection of Persian Tales Corresponding to the Ottoman Turkish Tales of the *Faraj ba'd al-shidda*," *Narrative Culture* 5 (2018): 121–40.

<sup>153</sup> Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, 8–9. See also Raymond F. Person, Jr., "From Grammar in Everyday Conversation to Special Grammar in Oral Traditions: A Case Study of Ring Composition," in Antović, Cánovas, and Pagán, *Oral Poetics and Cognitive Science*, 36–41.

<sup>154</sup> Here we employ the word *epic* in the sense of a lengthy composition featuring heroic or legendary sources. This definition conforms to the usage of *epic* when referring to ANE materials such as the *Enuma Eliš* or *Gilgamesh*. Cross prefers to see epic as any work which appeals to divine agency, but this is not really a technical usage as much as a reflection of perspective. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, viii–ix.

schemes of meter in the Hebrew Scriptures have met with a disappointing array of schemes, none of which really demonstrate the strong, regular presence of meter.<sup>155</sup> He concludes, “the distinction between ‘poetry’ and ‘prose’ is, as noted, not native to the texts: it is a Hellenistic imposition based, at least originally, on the faulty notion that parts of the Bible were metrical.”<sup>156</sup>

The situation may not be exactly as Kugel framed it. As Wilfred Watson has argued, the issue is one of poetic styles particular to the NWS languages. Attempting to read Semitic poetry as if it follows Greek conventions inevitably yields confusing results. Watson instead argues for a purely Semitic understanding of poetry. Watson explores relatively lengthy poetic works in Ugaritic and Akkadian, attempting to find common ground among the three languages.<sup>157</sup> More recently, Matthew Ayars undertook a careful analysis of the Egyptian Hallel (Pss 114–118), focusing on structural poetics and cohesion as the primary poetic form in Hebrew.<sup>158</sup> The results of both studies show that Hebrew poetry is a rich literary genre. Of course, the Elijah-Elisha stories are not poetic in any form. They do not satisfy Lord and Parry’s criteria, and they fall short of the type of poetic devices that Watson and Ayars present.<sup>159</sup> Since they are not poetic

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<sup>155</sup> James L. Kugel, *The Ideas of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 69–84. Kugel explores a number of these attempts and shows quite convincingly that they all often blinded by confirmation bias.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>157</sup> Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOTSup 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 4–5.

<sup>158</sup> Matthew Ian Ayars, *The Shape of Hebrew Poetry: Exploring the Discourse Function of Linguistic Parallelism in the Egyptian Hallel*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 70 (Leiden: Brill, 2019). A recent study worth noting in passing is J. Blake Couey and Elaine T. James, eds., *Biblical Poetry and the Art of Close Reading* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Couey and James present a reading of poetry that flows from the New Criticism, a postmodern literary movement. Essentially, they argue that there is no need for poetry to have structure or meter. The essays in their volume assign poetic value more to individual turns of phrase and concepts like ring structure rather than classically defined poetics.

<sup>159</sup> Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 4–6; Ayars, *The Shape of Hebrew Poetry*, 34–38. In particular, Ayars argues that while poetry and narrative use the same language, their conventions are distinct. In this case, we are left to ponder whether these conventions are distinct enough that one cannot apply typical oral transmission theory to narrative because the type of oral tradition reflected in Lord and Parry, as well as subsequent scholars in the same

epics, one could argue that perhaps they are epic cycles like the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, but the Ugaritic epics and the accompanying heroic sagas found alongside it, are poetic in structure. They do not parallel the prophetic materials. A prose solution is required.

*The Genre of Reported Story.* In his commentaries on 1-2 Samuel, Antony Campbell offered an innovative concept which he dubbed “reported story.” He became convinced “that no storytellers worth their salt would be able to tell some of the stories [in Samuel and Kings] the way they are in the text.”<sup>160</sup> He concluded that while there are recorded stories in the biblical text, there are also what he referred to as reported stories which include the essential elements of the story but leave areas for expansion and embellishment when the story was performed. The core of the story is presented, which includes characters, key plot shifts, and what Campbell refers to as “color” elements. These reported stories are relatively short (ten to forty verses), the germs of a tradition of storytelling.<sup>161</sup>

Campbell proposed a set of key aspects of reported story, which we may consider alongside Niditch’s traits of oral register. First, there are evident gaps which are spaces left intentionally for fuller development during performance.<sup>162</sup> Second, there will be indications of variant versions of basically the same story.<sup>163</sup> While some commentators see these as a deficit in

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vein, is reserved for poetry. This is far from a settled debate, and it continues to develop, but here it is worth noting the distinctiveness of poetic transmission.

<sup>160</sup> Antony F. Campbell, “The Reported Story: Midway between Oral Performance and Literary Art,” *Semeia* 46 (1989): 77.

<sup>161</sup> Antony F. Campbell, “The Storyteller’s Role: Reported Story and Biblical Text,” *CBQ* 64 (2002): 428–29. Their brevity attracted the disdain of writers like Gunkel. As Rylaarsdaam put it, “Gunkel may have missed the point of the brevity of the present texts. They individual stories are not brief because ancient narrations were brief, but because these texts only present basic plots which in any actual narration would be expanded and elaborated according to the skill of the storyteller and the occasion of his performance.” J. Coert Rylaarsdam, “Narration” in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. J. H. Hayes (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1974), 65.

<sup>162</sup> Campbell, “The Reported Story,” 78.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

the biblical record, Campbell emphasizes that such inclusions could be reflective of the variants in the way the story came down to the textualizing agent. These variants do not undermine the sense of the story, so their presence allows for the telling of the story without compromising its message. The question arises as to why such a genre would be present, and Campbell suggests that could be seen as “a means of reducing to writing ... stories and traditions that would have been far more extensive when told in full.”<sup>164</sup> In a sense, such a presentation suggests a transitional form somewhere between recorded oral tradition and fully literary texts. The storyteller is given latitude because of familiarity. In other words, the reported story is a sort of narrative shorthand.

Elsewhere, Campbell notes that texts which preserve seemingly conflicting versions of a narrative, as he states a reported story may do, may be the subject of conservation. The failure in these cases to present a “unified text” indicates that the authors were conserving something of value and were not at liberty to alter it to present a unified form.<sup>165</sup> Rather than the differences and gaps representing diachronic layers and their ideological distinctions, they could represent space for the storyteller’s art. That these spaces were not filled in by later redactors could indicate that those redactors were beholden to the reported story as it was being copied.

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<sup>164</sup> Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O’Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 205. Rofé noted the paucity of details in the prophetic narratives as well, applauding the skill required for the preparation of these shortened narratives, even if he rejected their historicity. Alexander Rofé, “The Classification of the Prophetic Stories,” *JBL* 89 (1970): 432–33.

<sup>165</sup> Antony F. Campbell, “Past History and Present Text,” 7–8. Here, Campbell stands in opposition of those who think of the prophetic materials as disjointed and incoherent. See, for example, W. J. Bergen, “The Prophetic Alternative: Elisha and the Israelite Monarchy,” in *Elijah and Elisha in Socioliterary Perspective*, Semeia (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 127–37; G. W. Anderson, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*, Studies in Theology (London: Duckworth, 1959), 87.

### Do IPM Narratives Fit the Criteria for Reported Story?

Campbell rejected most of the Elijah-Elisha materials as legendary material and so never applied his own genre of reported story to them. He did, however, consider other components of the IPM as part of his prophetic record (1 Kgs 11:29–40; 14:1–13; 17:1; parts of 18, most of 21; 22:40; 2 Kgs 1:2–8, 17; 9:1–6, 9, 10b–27, 30–35; 10:1–9, 12–27). He excluded figures like Jehu son of Hanani (1 Kgs 16:1–4), Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:8–28), and all of the anonymous prophetic figures because he believed the prophetic record pertained only to the succession of kings. A brief consideration of excluded narratives, and whether they meet Campbell’s criteria for reported story is worthwhile.

*The Man of God out of Judah (1 Kgs 13:1–34)*. Campbell, and most RM readers, reject this narrative because it foresees the emergence of Josiah (1 Kg 13:2). The literary structure of the first part of this narrative (1 Kgs 13:1–10) is a superb chiasm.<sup>166</sup> The sign (1 Kgs 13:4) is an aside, a specific comment to the hearer. Niditch’s hallmark elements of repetition and motif are present throughout. Jeroboam I specifically constructed his religious site at Bethel to avoid people going to Judah, so God sent a prophet from Judah, apparently during his special northern feasts (1 Kgs 12:28, 32; 13:1). Jeroboam attempts to point at the man of God, but his hand is withered in the process (1 Kgs 13:4–5). Jeroboam seems to repent, but the man of God is prohibited from joining him (1 Kgs 13:7–8). Having refused Jeroboam’s hospitality, however, the man of God is deceived or willfully disobeys and accepts the hospitality of an old prophet (1 Ks 13:15–19). Motifs abound with the presence of bones (עצם, 1 Kgs 13:2, 32), favor or presence (פני, 1 Kgs 13:6, 34), saddling (הבש, 1 Kgs 13:13, 23, 27), and countless others.

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<sup>166</sup> Jerome T. Walsh, *1 Kings*, Berit Olam (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 176.

In terms of the traits of reported story, the narrative appears to open abruptly, apparently without some contextual comment.<sup>167</sup> There is space there for additional commentary concerning the purpose of the prophet. The reference to Josiah certainly leads to another narrative altogether. There are variant motivations for the actions of all involved. Jeroboam seems to be committed to his course and yet repentant and willing to destroy his own altar. The man of God is easily deceived by an old prophet who lies like a false prophet, but then mourns the man of God's death as if the old man was a follower of YHWH. The only element of the narrative that would cause suspicion that this is not a reported story is the supernatural element.

*Jehu son of Hanani (1 Kgs 16:1–7).* This is a brief exchange with Jehu simply delivering the word of YHWH to Baasha. At first glance, it might be difficult to point to gaps in the narrative for elaboration because it is so short, but they are everywhere. The wording echoes Ahijah's words to Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 14:7–11), and they seem to hint at a previous prophecy upon Baasha's ascension.<sup>168</sup> There are components of a traditional curse upon the descendants of the failed king (1 Kgs 14:11, 21:24; 2 Kgs 9:10). Given that Baasha reigned for twenty-four years, it would seem there should have been more to his story. This is confirmed by a reference to the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 Kgs 16:5). There are also small variations between the two versions of Jehu's prophecy (1 Kgs 16:1–4, 7). All in all, the story seems very open to elaboration and variation. There are any number of reasons why the author might have condensed this version, and it is clearly meant to bridge between Jeroboam I and the Omrides.

*The War with Aram (1 Kgs 20:13–43).* This prophetic narrative is placed right in the middle of a siege. The theme of prophets alongside the Omride kings during these kinds of

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<sup>167</sup> Cogan, *1 Kings*, 367.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

military crises is repeated often, in keeping with Niditch's traits of oral register. There appear to be three prophetic voices, one which speaks in the initial battle (1 Kgs 20:13–14, 22), one who reveals the Aramaean intentions in the spring campaign (1 Kgs 20:28), and another who is part of a company of prophets that go with the king in the following spring campaign (1 Kgs 20:35–43). It is conceivable they are meant to be the same person, but it is unclear. The repetition of concern over the comparative sizes of the armies (1 Kgs 20:13, 27), the various stances that Ahab adopts throughout the narrative, and of course the presence of other prophets, which must have been the case in a situation like the Omride court provide a sense of continuity with other narratives. At the same time, despite the details, there are enormous gaps in the narrative. There is no explanation for how Ahab was able to defeat the Aramaean cavalry, why Israel had 232 military districts or units, or any number of important pieces of information. This instead hints at Ahab's military prowess, the origin of his commitment to chariotry, which became his hallmark among the Assyrians.

*Summary.* Hopefully, these three prophetic narratives suffice to demonstrate that the IPM materials do indeed fit Campbell's genre of reported story. Others fit the genre as well. The gaps, which many analysts see as errors, could very well be the means of effective storytelling among the prophetic class. They could have been recorded in a way reminiscent of Niditch's oral register, which explains why they seem so unwieldy to the modern reader. The reason they are dismissed as legendary or later additions is simply the supernatural element. There is nothing inherently erroneous about them, nothing odd in any way except that they involve prophetic gifts, divine messages, and God's active involvement in the affairs of mankind.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter has been wide ranging, and such an approach was necessary because the topic of written language is a complicated one with a diversity of opinions in the scholarship. When the extant evidence is considered, it is hard to deny that the tradition of written language was alive and well in the NWS-speaking secondary states at virtually every level, as Hess maintains. The supposed absence of lengthy compositions is an argument from silence, which does not bear up under scrutiny. If only a tiny fraction of durable cuneiform texts survive until the present, can the modern historian expect to find large numbers of texts on perishable casual media? That the two plaster inscriptions at Kuntillit 'Ajrud and Deir 'Alla are extraordinary enough. That ink on parchment would have survived the turmoil that turned and overturned southern Levantine cultures for centuries would be incredible indeed.

There is strong evidence not of general literacy but literary awareness in an oral culture. This awareness should have been sufficient to produce works on the oral-literary continuum, but these works were not being produced in the palaces or the scriptoriums. They could have been produced on these same perishable organic materials, and the only means of preservation would have been copying and performance. In short, the argument that this period did not produce lengthy literary works is not as strong as it is often presented. Casual literary creation could and did exist, in a dizzying array of expressions. What is more, the portions of the IPM which were considered show the hallmarks of being reported stories, not straightforward literary creations but also not transcriptions of oral performances. They are transitional in form, just as they are transitional in context.

## CHAPTER 6: THE ISRAELIAN CHARACTER OF PROPHETIC MATERIALS IN THE BOOK OF KINGS

### Introduction

The epigraphic evidence may point to literary awareness in the Omride period, but it does not demonstrate if the text of the IPM as they exist in the Book of Kings were written in that period. The presence of NWS scripts in extant monumental, formal and casual inscriptions from the period does not necessarily translate into a preexilic origin for the IPM. In previous chapters it was shown that there are historical indications in the narrative that point to a preexilic, northern origin, but this alone does not prove the case. In this chapter, the linguistic profile of the IPM will be considered. Because linguistic data has been used to date texts to “late” origins, this is a vital area of inquiry concerning the prophetic materials. First, there will be a survey of the methods employed for dating biblical texts. This will be followed by an articulation of Rendsburg’s proposal of form of Israelian Hebrew (IH).<sup>1</sup> Along the way, consideration must be made for diglossia and language contact as dynamic forces behind the formation of this northern dialect. Finally, the IH proposal should be tested against a sample text to demonstrate if the presence of these characteristics is incidental or a demonstration of a northern origin.

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<sup>1</sup> The Israelian portion of the Book of Kings are those texts which focus on the northern kingdom of Israel. These texts include the following: 1 Kings 12:25–14:20; 1 Kings 15:25–2 Kings 8:15; 2 Kings 9:1–10:36; 2 Kings 13:1–25; 2 Kings 14:23–29; 2 Kings 15:8–31; and 2 Kings 17:1–41. Because the term is used frequently in this dissertation, it is important to define the term “Israelian” when speaking of the materials in the Book of Kings. The term “Israelite” is applied to the Hebrew societies in general, usually synonymous with the biblical בני ישראל (“sons of Israel”). Gary Rendsburg describes the dialect of Hebrew spoken in the northern Hebrew kingdom of Israel as “Israelian” and the term is here adapted to the materials produced in that kingdom as well. This northern kingdom is referred to “Israel,” as compared to the southern kingdom of “Judah” throughout the Book of Kings, but there is a distinction between Judah and the rest of Israel throughout the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. For example, David was anointed king of Judah first and then king of Israel later, essentially uniting two confederacies into a single kingdom.

### Survey of Approaches to Dating Biblical Hebrew

The use of linguistic markers for chronological dating of the biblical texts is an academic minefield. The convention is to designate various forms of Biblical Hebrew (BH) in the following fashion. The classical, preexilic literary language is usually referred to as Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) while the postexilic form, which is identified by Aramaic influences, is called Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH).<sup>2</sup> Two competing schools of thought are prevalent concerning the linguistic development of BH. The first, here dubbed as “the Sequential Development Argument,” maintains that BH can be divided into chronologically sequential periods. Within this school, there are those like Robert Polzin who argue for distinct forms of BH and those who follow Avi Hurvitz and argue that the forms are not reliable dating criteria and instead rely upon the frequency or tendency of linguistic characteristics. Essentially, this first school argues that postexilic authors lost the ability to write in SBH. The second school, which argues that the various forms of BH coexisted and overlapped, is still very much a project under development. The primary scholars involved are Ian Young, Robert Rezetko, and Martin Ehrensward. In their thinking, a postexilic book could be written in SBH, contemporary with LBH books. In this section, this is referred to as “The Coexistence Argument.” A third set of arguments, which derive from Gary Rendsburg, is here referred to as the “Dialect Argument.” Like Young and Rezetko, Rendsburg responds to Hurvitz, but he takes the position that linguistic markers are not necessarily representative of clearly defined stages of Hebrew development but

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<sup>2</sup> Standard Biblical Hebrew (SBH) is sometimes called Early Biblical Hebrew (EBH) or Classical Biblical Hebrew (CBH) in the literature. For simplicity, SBH will be employed here. For a good sample of this position, see the essays in the first half of Young, *Biblical Hebrew*. A more specific and broadly articulated case can be found in Mark F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 90 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990). Both Young and Rooker were students of Avi Hurvitz, who dominates the field of linguistic dating. In his review of Young’s volumes, Schniedewind took issue with some of the “romantic” and “naïve” notions of Young’s volume, but his basis for criticism was often Young’s failure to treat the text diachronically. Rejection of diachronic dating is fundamental to Young’s views. See William M. Schniedewind, “Steps and Missteps in the Linguistic Dating of Biblical Hebrew,” *Hebrew Studies* 46 (2005): 377–84.

may represent dialect and language change within various regions of the Hebrew-speaking world.

### The Sequential Development Argument

#### Robert Polzin

Comparing the language of 1–2 Chronicles and the hypothetical Priestly Source (P) with earlier texts, Robert Polzin argued that the transition from SBH to LBH involved nineteen grammatical features, divided between thirteen features that were the result of natural evolution and six Aramaic influences. These six Aramaic influences are listed here.<sup>3</sup>

(1) *Inversion of Measurement and Weight*. Older texts use an appositional order when listing measured items, usually weight or measure, then material weighed or measured. This is seen in the phrase ככרים־כסף (“two talents of silver,” 2 Kgs 5:23). LBH texts tend to invert the order as material followed by measure, as כסף אלף אלפים ככרים (“silver, one million talents,” 1 Chr 5:14). This ordering also appears in Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra 2:69, 8:26; Neh 5:15, 7:69–71). It also appears in the Aramaic portion of Ezra (Ezr 7:22), and Polzin argues it is typical of official Aramaic throughout the ANE.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose*, HSS 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 61–69. The other trends Polzin lists are as follows: (1) radically reduced use of אָה with the pronominal suffix, (2) increased use of אָה before nominative case nouns, (3) possession expressed with prospective pronominal suffixes with a following noun, such as ל+noun or שָׁל+noun, (4) collectives treated as plurals, (5) use of plurals where earlier texts employ singulars, (6) less frequent use of the infinitive absolute combined with the finite verb of the same stem or as an imperative, (7) more frequent use of infinitive construct with בָּ and כֹּ not preceded by וְיִהְיֶה, (8) repetition of a singular word, (9) the third person feminine and plural suffixes are combined, (10) lengthened cohortative in the first person singular appears seldom, (11) וְיִהְיֶה is rare, (12) substantives occur before the numeral and in the plural, and (13) the infinitive construct with ל appears more readily. The lexical variations are not addressed in the present dissertation simply because of the volume of arguments. Polzin lists eighty-three lexical features. They are of interest, however, and can be found in Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 123–150.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 64. Polzin does note that this is not employed consistently in MH, which tends to revert to the older idiom.

(2) *The particle ְ marking the accusative.* According to Gesenius-Krautzsch, this was a common Aramaic usage.<sup>5</sup> It also appears frequently in MH, although there is quite a bit of diversity of marked and unmarked accusatives in MH.<sup>6</sup> The idiom is fairly common across texts, however, appearing in both verifiably late texts (for example, Ezr 3:11, 4:2, 6:21, 10:14; Neh 11:2; 1 Chr 15:29, 25:1, 26:27; 2 Chr 6:42, 7:14, 25:10; Dan 11:38) and texts that may be earlier (Num 32:15; 2 Sam 3:30; 2 Kgs 19:21; Isa 12:4). As Polzin notes, “there is little doubt that the frequency of this idiom in Chronicles/Ezra is the result of Aramaic influence,” but he also allows that the idiom is widespread within BH generally and it could have a non-Aramaic origin.<sup>7</sup>

(3) *Non-assimilation of ך in the preposition ך before anarthous nouns.* Noting that this trait is common in Biblical Aramaic, Polzin is convinced this is a trait of postexilic Aramaic influence.<sup>8</sup> Two-thirds of the occurrences are in postexilic works (Chronicles, Jeremiah, Proverbs, Daniel, Nehemiah). While assimilation is rare in Biblical Aramaic, the ך does tend to assimilate in MH, presenting a case of the MH reverting to a classical formulation.

(4) *In lists, ְ is used to emphasize the last item.* This is a trait of Biblical Aramaic (Ezr 6:7; Dan 4:33) but also appears in some Hebrew texts known to be late (1 Chr 28:1, 29:6; 2 Chr 24:12, 26:14). The actual use of this emphatic ְ is not a late trait or an Aramaism, as it exists in many early texts, including many psalms, and also is a feature of Ugaritic.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Emil Kautzsch, ed. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. Arther E. Cowley, 2nd ed (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 363. Hereafter abbreviated GKC.

<sup>6</sup> Moses H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 168.

<sup>7</sup> Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 65.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>9</sup> Here Polzin follows Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I, 1–50: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, ABC 16 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 20, fn. 9 187, fn. 3. While Polzin prefers to describe this as *lamed emphatic*, Dahood clumps it with the *lamed vocative* in Ugaritic texts.

(5) *Attributive use of ׀׀ before a substantive.* Polzin labels this as a possible Aramaic dialectal influence because there is no clear explanation for it.<sup>10</sup> Some occurrences can be attributed to poetic license with word order (Jer 16:16; Prov 31:29), but outside of Hebrew, it is only observed in later Syriac.

(6) *The use of ׀ + ׀, often before a substantive or in time delimitation.* Noting that the use of the ׀ prefixes in LBH, Polzin draws attention to the frequency of use in the Book of Chronicles and Ezra (1 Chr 4:39, 12:23, 23:25, 28:7; 2 Chr 14:12, 16:12, 17:12, 26:8, 16:14, 26:15, 28:9, 29:30, 36:16; Ezra 3:13, 9:4) and the absence of the combination in earlier Hebrew text, although each particle appears separately in the same role.<sup>11</sup>

Polzin argued that his list of features could be used to validate or invalidate the unity of a proposed text portion. In his conclusion, Polzin parses the postexilic works, separating components of Nehemiah which employ “archaic” forms (N<sup>1</sup>) from the texts which are more Aramaic in character (N<sup>2</sup>). “The language of Ezra is almost identical to Chronicles from a linguistic point of view.... The language of N<sup>2</sup> differs significantly from N<sup>1</sup>. The nature of the difference places N<sup>2</sup> as close linguistically to Chronicles as Ezra is.”<sup>12</sup> This is linguistics in the hands of diachronic analysis. Chronologically discrete units are parsed from the greater work to demonstrate redactional layering.

It is worth noting as well, that many of these features are not unique to LBH. Items three, four, and six appear in earlier texts with lower frequency. Item five is of uncertain character and the only connection to Aramaic is its presence in later Syriac. There is, therefore, some room for ambivalence as to the late introduction of these forms, even if they do increase in frequency in

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<sup>10</sup> Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew*, 66.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

LBH texts. The next scholar to be discussed, Avi Hurvitz, sought to deal in broader principles in his consideration of the dates, chiefly because he saw the weakness of relying solely upon frequency of appearance.

### **Avi Hurvitz**

Publishing slightly earlier than Polzin, Hurvitz argued that one could not date the biblical text internally. He argued that assuming a text is late and then marking its linguistic features as late is circular reasoning. Put another way, the presence of Aramaic markers is not itself an indication of the age of a text, and one cannot therefore use linguistic data to show redactional layering.<sup>13</sup> Acknowledging the same data that Polzin did, Hurvitz nonetheless favored collating the linguistic data of an entire work and then dating that work, in its known form. More importantly, he sought to avoid separating works like Nehemiah into linguistically discrete components. Hurvitz looked for three late text features: (1) *late frequency*, the element should appear mainly in biblical texts which are accepted by scholars as late, such as Daniel, Ezra, or Esther; (2) *linguistic opposition*, there should be alternative elements that express the same meaning found in books acknowledged to be earlier; and (3) *external sources*, the element must be vital in postexilic sources other than LBH.<sup>14</sup> For Hurvitz, the true test of the age of a text was the contrast between the text being examined and texts known to be earlier or shared features with texts known to be late. This contrast should be empirically verifiable, meaning text features could be analyzed statistically. Changes were not made consciously, but rather as the result of unconscious language change.

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<sup>13</sup> Avi Hurvitz, "The Chronological Significance of 'Aramaisms' in Biblical Hebrew," *IEJ* 18 (1968): 234–40.

<sup>14</sup> Avi Hurvitz, "Linguistic Criteria for Dating Problematic Biblical Texts," *Hebrew Abstracts* 17 (1973): 76.

As an example of the issues with dating a text using linguistic characteristics, let us consider Rofé's late date arguments for the Naboth incident in 1 Kings 21. He based his argument on the following linguistic evidence: (1) the title מלך שמרון followed Persian norms, (2) the verb דבר without being followed by a form of אמר, (3) the use of the ו consecutive + imperfect, (4) the use of the expression קרב אצל, (5) the use of ההרם (20:8, 11), and (6) העיד with a direct object (20:10, 13). In Rofé's opinion, these syntactic and historical markers point to a Persian origin. In brief, Rofé argues that the text has an Aramaic feel, and therefore it must be late.<sup>15</sup>

Hurvitz was reluctant to date a section of a book as Rofé does here. Gary Rendsburg deals with Rofé's Aramaism arguments succinctly following Hurvitz's three criteria.<sup>16</sup> First, he argues that points one and two are irrelevant and that points three and four indicate continuity of language, not dating criteria. He points out that Rofé's fifth point, the use of ההרם, could easily be a marker of a northern variant of Hebrew and not an Aramaism. The only trait he sees as a possible marker of the late date is the sixth one, the use of העיד with the direct object. He borrows from Frank Polak in his analysis but concludes that this is not itself enough to date the text to a

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<sup>15</sup> Alexander Rofé, "The Vineyard of Naboth: The Origin and Message of the Story," *VT* 38 (1988): 97–100. Rofé's article will be revisited later in this chapter but for a more thorough treatment of Rofé's view on Aramaisms, see Alexander Rofé, "An Enquiry into the Betrothal of Rebekah," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Erhard Blum, Christian Macholz, and Ekkehard Stegemann (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 27–39. It must be said that Rofé's interpretation is novel. He uses the linguistic evidence to place the story in the Persian period where it is voicing "the complaint of the oppressed against the upper class." This kind of class struggle, he argues, is representative of that later period, not the Omride period. While many agree with this late postexilic date, some consider it pre-Deuteronomistic. For a bibliography of the major arguments, see Nadav Na'aman, "Naboth's Vineyard and the Foundation of Jezreel," *JSOT* 33 (2008): 197–98. Na'aman argues the core of the story is preexilic, although he maintains that when it was included in the narrative, it was misunderstood. For a recent article arguing for historical and linguistics connections to an earlier context, see Anne Marie Kitz, "Naboth's Vineyard after Mari and Amarna," *JBL* 134 (2015): 529–45.

<sup>16</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, "Hurvitz Redux: On the Continued Scholarly Inattention to a Simple Principle of Hebrew Philology," in Young, *Biblical Hebrew*, 119–20. Rendsburg is a strong advocate of understanding the text as Israelian Hebrew, a subject that will be discussed later in the chapter.

late period.<sup>17</sup> He goes so far as to say that any dating based solely on Aramaisms rather than the total linguistic profile of a text is rushing to judgment.<sup>18</sup> He makes the point that there are synchronic reasons that Aramaism and other linguistic code switching could have occurred in the recording and preservation of texts which are not distinctly LBH. The presence of linguistic “signals” often employed to date the text simply does not indicate a late text. In many cases, as in Rofé’s, perceived ideology precedes linguistics, creating an *a priori* bias.

### The Coexistence Argument

The determination of linguistic chronology is often dependent upon sound change over time. Since the nineteenth century, linguists have been developing schemes for interpreting sound change and reconstructing proto-languages and relationships of existing languages. The focus on sound change is extremely useful, but it is somewhat limited when dealing with textual sources in an area with high language contact like the Iron Age Levant. Sound change may not necessarily be reflected in the written records, especially if there is translation involved.<sup>19</sup> This is especially true in consonantal texts like Hebrew, which lack vowel indicators. Polzin’s criteria serve as something of a way marker, and the consonantal shifts that he identified dictate

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<sup>17</sup> Rendsburg refers to Frank H. Polak, “Development and Periodization of Biblical Prose Narrative,” *Beit Mikra* 43 (1997–1998): 30–52, 142–60; Frank H. Polak, “The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics, and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative,” *JANESCU* 26 (1998): 59–105.

<sup>18</sup> Rendsburg, “Hurvitz Redux,” 127.

<sup>19</sup> Dariusz R. Piwowarczyk, “Chronology and Dating of Linguistic Corpora,” in *Change, Continuity, and Connectivity: North-Eastern Mediterranean at the Turn of the Bronze Age and in the Early Iron Age*, ed. Łukasz Niesiolowski-Spanò and Marek Węcowski, *Philippika – Contributions to the Study of Ancient World Cultures* 118 (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 328–33.

phonology to some degree, but there is also the fact that written works tend to be conservative in spelling, even if the language itself may be changing.<sup>20</sup>

Young and Rezetko contend that multiple forms of BH could, and probably did, coexist throughout the development of Hebrew literature. Issues like Aramaisms are particularly complex since, as they point out, “Hebrew’s exact origin is surrounded by mystery. According to biblical tradition, the mainstream of the Hebrew people was Aramaean (Gen 31:47; Deut 26:5), and they learned Canaanite after settling in Palestine.”<sup>21</sup> In essence, they suggest that Hebrew could have *started* as an early branch from Aramaic and then largely replaced the Aramaic with a Canaanite derivative once the Hebrews settled in the southern Levant. If this is taken as a given, then it is logical to conclude, as they have, that it is necessary to “empty these labels [ABH, SBH, LBH, etc.] of their temporal meaning, instead using them for several different synchronic styles of BH.”<sup>22</sup>

Young points out that Aramaisms should be relatively common in Hebrew before the SBH period, what he calls Archaic Biblical Hebrew (ABH), because ABH would have been in constant, non-literary contact with Aramaic. SBH would have perhaps reduced the Aramaisms as it became a literary language distinct from Aramaic. The Aramaisms then would be reintroduced once the Hebrews were in a primarily Aramaic environment such as the postexilic period,

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<sup>20</sup> Spelling *tends* to be conservative, but that does not mean it always is. In fact, spelling can be changed because of shifts in the language as well as poor copying practices. One can observe spelling changes most often in parallel versions of a presumed original. For a fuller discussion of why spelling may or may not change, consider A. Dean Forbes and Frances I. Andersen, “Dwelling on Spelling,” in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Cynthia Miller-Naudé and Ziony Zevit, Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 8 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 127–46.

<sup>21</sup> Ian Young and Robert Rezetko, *An Introduction to Approaches and Problems*, vol. 1 of *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* (London: Routledge, 2014), 7.

<sup>22</sup> Young and Rezetko, *An Introduction to Approaches and Problems*, 4. The authors do not hold to an early date, but they disprove the idea that the language itself can provide a certain dating scheme. The contribution of Young and Rezetko’s volume to the linguist conversation cannot be overstated. Their second volume surveys the various views of Biblical Hebrew in such depth that those details need not be repeated here.

producing LBH.<sup>23</sup> It is likely, however, that Aramaism continued throughout the entire development of Hebrew, at a level not seen in the literature, so similar features could appear at chronologically distant points. Polzin's six points concerning Aramaic influence are therefore not reasonable markers, since Aramaisms could enter SBH just as easily as LBH. Determining whether a text is likely to be LBH or SBH is somewhat subjective, based on the proportion of LBH markers and Aramaisms. All that can be offered is a probability given perceived circumstances, not chronological certainty.

### Israelian Hebrew and the Dialect Argument

Both of the previous viewpoints hold that Aramaisms in the Israelian materials should appear less frequently than in LBH if they are preexilic, but this position neglects to consider the evidence that the northern kingdom was in almost constant contact with the Aramaeans throughout its history. The prophet Elisha has numerous points of contact with Aramaean officials in several places (2 Kgs 5:1–15, 8:7–16). There was regular discourse between the Hebrew-speakers and the Aramaeans. At least some of the Israelite elites could speak Aramaic (2 Kgs 18:26; Isa 36:11).<sup>24</sup> Hebrew did not exist in a vacuum, and Israelian Hebrew may have been closer to Aramaic than is generally assumed about SBH. As Young points out, “it is

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<sup>23</sup> Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, 60–62. The assumption is that once the Aramaic influence was removed, there would be a conscience attempt to purge it and produce a “pure” Hebrew, known as Mishnaic Hebrew.

<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, how the Assyrians knew Judahite Hebrew (JH) is an interesting question. The Babylonian Talmud tractate *b. Sanh* 60a solves the problem by suggesting he was a renegade Israelite. See Yigal Levin, “How Did Rabshakeh Know the Language of Judah?” in *Marbeh Hokman: Studies in the Bible and Ancient Near East in Loving Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz*, ed. Shamir Yonah, Edward L. Greenstein, Mayer I. Gruber, Peter Machinist, and Shalom M. Paul (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 323–38; Peter Machinist, “The *Rab Šāqēh* at the Wall of Jerusalem: Israelite Identity on the Face of the Assyrian ‘Other’,” *Hebrew Studies* 41.1 (2000): 151–68. One interesting inscription that speaks to the Assyrian familiarity with Hebrew is the eighth century BCE ivory inscription found at Tel Nimrūd by Alan Millard. It is a fragment of a particularly fine Hebrew text. See Alan R. Millard, “Alphabetic Inscriptions on Ivories from Nimrud,” *Iraq* 24 (1962): 45–51.

possible for typologically older and younger sorts of languages to co-exist in the same chronological period.”<sup>25</sup>

Gary Rendsburg approaches these differences in a unique way. He often speaks of how indebted he is to Hurvitz for developing the methods of understanding SBH linguistically, but he inverts Hurvitz’s axiom concerning Aramaisms.<sup>26</sup> Hurvitz wrote, “Aramaisms are of no real significance as evidence for *early* dating of chronologically problematic texts. One may at times find Aramaisms in older sections of the Bible, but they are by no means typical of early biblical texts as such. Aramaisms may, however, be useful for arguing a possible *late* date.”<sup>27</sup> To give a sense of his perspective, Rendsburg once applauded Jeffrey Tigay comment on Deuteronomy 33, “It is also possible that the poem uses words or forms from regional variations of Hebrew spoken by the individual tribes.”<sup>28</sup> Rendsburg holds firmly to the preexilic, northern origin of the northern materials in the Book of Kings, which would include the IPM, and therefore contends that Israelite Hebrew (IH) developed in the north, quite separate from Judahite Hebrew (JH), which roughly equates to SBH.<sup>29</sup> This IH was just as literary as SBH, but because its speakers

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<sup>25</sup> Ian Young, “Introduction: The Origin of the Problem,” in Young, *Biblical Hebrew*, 2–3.

<sup>26</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, Occasional Publications of the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Program of Jewish Studies 5 (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>27</sup> Hurvitz, “‘Aramaisms’ in Biblical Hebrew,” 235.

<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 519; Gary A. Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew Features in Deuteronomy 33,” in *Mishneh Today: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. Nili Sacher Fox, David A. Glatt-Gilad, and Michael J. Williams. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 167.

<sup>29</sup> Rendsburg is not without his detractors. For opposition, see Na’ama Pat-El, “Israelian Hebrew: A Re-Evaluation,” *VT* 67 (2017): 227–63; Daniel Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah’s Bible: History, Politics, and Reinscribing of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 302–3. Pat-El agrees with Fleming that the distinctions between north and south were political, not linguistic. Pat-El’s argument is essentially that it is difficult to detect when language contact may cause changes in a receiver language and dismisses any proposed IH characteristics as “problematic.” Her claim is that Rendsburg does not sufficiently demonstrate that IH characteristics do not fully replace SBH/JH characteristics in the text and therefore his methodology is incomplete.

were engaged in continual commerce with the Aramaean kingdoms to the north, IH has unique features which can be confused with late additions.<sup>30</sup>

First, he argues that there is a difference between Aramaic-like features and Aramaisms. While accepting Hurvitz's core tenet of late frequency, Rendsburg calls into question the nature of perceived Aramaisms utilized for late dating many of the biblical texts. For example, when discussing Rofé's interpretation of Genesis 24, Rendsburg points out the weakness of Rofé's reliance upon single words as indications of a late date. He cites Hurvitz's principle of linguistic opposition.<sup>31</sup> It is not enough that a word be apparently Aramaic. It must also supplant an older Hebrew word. In Rendsburg's view, Rofé was correct to observe the Aramaic character of the chapter, but Rofé fails to appreciate the literary setting of the so-called Aramaisms. They are often used in narrative-switching, and so could be explained as literary devices, given the setting of Abraham as someone who had some roots in Aram.<sup>32</sup> Rendsburg's solution to the appearance of Aramaisms in early texts is to speak of them in terms of language contact. IH was in constant contact with Aramaic. It is only logical that since Hebrew was not a tightly regulated language, it would have varied gradually but widely across locations. Therefore, Aramaic-like spellings and syntax could be an attribute of IH varieties. As Rendsburg puts it, "*Aramaisms* are those features, mainly lexical items, found primarily in the postexilic corpus—clear borrowings from Aramaic; while *Aramaic-like features* are those features, again mainly lexical ones, which are found in

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<sup>30</sup> See Appendix A for Rendsburg's proposed list of IH texts, as well as his list of IH features.

<sup>31</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, "Some False Leads in the Identification of Late Biblical Hebrew Texts: The Cases of Genesis 24 and 1 Samuel 2:27–36," *JBL* 121 (2002): 25.

<sup>32</sup> Rendsburg, "Some False Leads," 32–34. Although it is beyond the scope of this example, one of Rendsburg's students has made an extensive study of the language of Genesis 24 and shown fairly conclusively that it is not LBH in character because of its situation within the larger text of the book. See Richard M. Wright, "Linguistic Evidence for the Pre-Exilic Date of the Yahwist Source of the Pentateuch," (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1998).

preexilic texts and carry a different explanation.<sup>33</sup> While it has to be admitted that Rendsburg's "different explanations" are often based on linguistic possibilities rather than substantial textual evidence, they still offer alternative explanations to late dates. His alternatives could account for the original context described in the texts.

On this point of language contact and variety, Young identified word pairs in preexilic texts that he sees as marking a Canaanite prestige language that existed in the region for quite some time.<sup>34</sup> He conjectures that Phoenician probably served as the prestige language.<sup>35</sup> If this is the case, then IH would have been a fusion of SBH, Phoenician, and Aramaic. Such a fluid, and primarily oral, fusion would have produced curious linguistic constructs. Discerning Phoenician from Hebrew is not as easy as identifying Aramaic-like features, but nonetheless the point remains that IH would have been highly blended. IH must be treated as a spectrum, not as a single, monolithic language.

Second, Rendsburg argues that "style-switching" is a common feature of preexilic authors when addressing foreign subjects or setting narratives in foreign settings.<sup>36</sup> In particular, when the authors set a narrative in a context with foreigners, especially Aramaeans, the language takes on a distinctly Aramaean flavor. He argues in several places that this was an intentional

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<sup>33</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, "Aramaic-Like Features in the Pentateuch," *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006): 164.

<sup>34</sup> Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, 5. Word pairs are usually employed for poetic effect such as "fatherless" (*ytm*) and "widow" (*'lmt*) in the Phoenician *ytm bn 'lmt*, Ugaritic *ydn dn 'almt ytp̄t̄ ytm* and SBH in Exod 22:22, קַל־אֶלְמָנָה וְיָתוּם לֹא תַעֲזוּב.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–30.

<sup>36</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, "Linguistic Variation and the 'Foreign' Factor in the Hebrew Bible," in *Language and Culture in the Near East*, ed. Shlomo Isre'el and Rina Drory, IOS 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 177–90. Also of interest are the chapters on style-switching and code-switching in Cian Joseph Power, "Attitudes toward Linguistic Diversity in the Hebrew Bible," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2015), 155–262. The Hebrew authors were perfectly capable of stylistically representing the speech of Arameans. See also Brian A. Bompiani, "Style Switching: The Representation of the Speech of Foreigners in the Hebrew Bible," (PhD diss., Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 2012), 14–15.

literary effect.<sup>37</sup> While IH may itself have Aramaic-like features, narratives written by anyone familiar with Aramaic would be likely to employ Aramaisms as a feature of honest expression.

### **Language Contact and Change in Israelian Hebrew**

Aramaic itself was also widely varied, as Holger Gzella has demonstrated. In Gzella's view, written Aramaic may have been significantly different and more diverse than the written forms we rely upon for linguistic analysis.<sup>38</sup> The relationship with IH and Aramaic would therefore have been much more dynamic than what is represented by the extant documents. To understand just how complex any kind of diachronic analysis of the language relationships would be, it is necessary to understand some of the sociolinguist dynamics of language change.

The biblical authors were all too aware of the constant language contact that created a mix of linguistic flexibility in Iron Age II. At several points in the Hebrew Scriptures, the authors point out language change (Judg 12:6; Neh 8:8, 13:23–24). This language blending made it difficult for people to understand Hebrew, but as shown in Nehemiah, the solution was to “explain” it in language people could understand.<sup>39</sup> In the LBA world, such contact produced hybrid languages in diplomatic correspondence, such as the Giano's “interlanguage” in the Amarna tablets, a highly Canaanized version of Akkadian, as well as some Aramaeo-Canaanite

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<sup>37</sup> Rendsburg, “Some False Leads,” 35.

<sup>38</sup> Gzella, “New Light on Linguistic Diversity in Pre-Achaemenid Aramaic,” 20; Holger Gzella, *A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam*, HdO 111 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 95–101; Helger Gzella, *Aramaic: A History of the First World Language*, trans. Benjamin D. Suchard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 60–63. Gzella has broken new ground on a truly important aspect of non-literary Aramaic and potential language contact, and his assessment of his own ideas is suitably tempered with caution.

<sup>39</sup> For discussion of the variant of Aramaic used to describe this method of cross-language explanation, see Philip Y. Yoo, “On Nehemiah 8,8a,” *ZAW* 127 (2015): 502–7.

language written in Egyptian hieratic.<sup>40</sup> This continued into the Iron Age, with the monumental texts of Sam'al employing three different languages separately.<sup>41</sup> Keeping in mind that this is language contact evident from formal, not occasional texts, one can only imagine what kind of blending was occurring outside of the state administration where orality was still the norm. Written language is an approximation of spoken language and often lags behind spoken language and, to some extent, will maintain artifacts of "accepted" forms of the language even when the spoken form has changed.<sup>42</sup>

### Theories of Diglossia in Israel

There have been a number of arguments for the Elijah and Elisha materials having an IH character.<sup>43</sup> Not everyone agrees with the position, with Schniedewind and Sivan being the most vocal critics.<sup>44</sup> Here, recent studies of language contact become important. The Israelite society would have been dealing with a number of dynamics, chief among them the issue of diglossia or

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<sup>40</sup> Augustinus Gianto, "Amarna Akkadian as a Contact Language," in *Languages and Cultures in Contact*, ed. Karel Van Lerberghe and Gabriella Voet, OLA 96 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 123–32; Rainey, "The Hybrid Language," 851–61; Nadav Na'aman, "Egyptian Centres and the Distribution of the Alphabet in the Levant," *Tel Aviv* 47 (2020): 29–54. Where the Akkadian of Amarna has Canaanite attributes, the hieratic is wholly Aramaeo-Canaanite written with Egyptian symbols.

<sup>41</sup> Ian Young, "The Languages of Ancient Sam'al," *Maarav* 9 (2002): 93–105; Peter Swiggers, "The Aramaic Inscription of Kilamuwa," *Orientalia* 51 (1982): 249–53.

<sup>42</sup> Per Linell, *The Written Language Bias in Linguistics: Its Nature, Origins, and Transformations*, Routledge Advances in Communication and Linguistic Theory 5 (London: Routledge, 2005), 18–29.

<sup>43</sup> Ian Young, "The 'Northernisms' of the Israelite Narratives in Kings," *ZA* 8 (1995): 63–70, adapting some of the arguments from Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text*. Also, Christopher B. Hays, "The Date and Message of Isaiah 24–27 in Light of Hebrew Diachrony," in *Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27*, ed. J. Todd Hibbard and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, AIL 17 (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 7–24. Young is more than willing to accept the differences that Rendsburg has presented in his various publications, but he staunchly defends his position that these differences do not support a preexilic origin of the IH texts. See also Gary A. Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, American Oriental Series 72 (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1990), 175–83.

<sup>44</sup> William Schniedewind and Daniel Sivan, "The Elijah-Elisha Narratives: A Test Case for the Northern Dialect of Hebrew," *JQR* 87 (1997): 303–37. Rendsburg addresses their conclusions respectfully but succinctly in Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 21–22.

triglossia.<sup>45</sup> Ferguson's classic definition of diglossia applies here: "a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language which may include a standard or regional standard, there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complete) superposed variety."<sup>46</sup> In diglossia, there is a low variety (L) and a high variety (H). These can coexist, and in contact, they can overlap. Diglossia does not necessarily refer to the coexistence of separate languages, as it can also pertain to dialects of the same language or language group. It is any kind of significant language divergence in a population. It was first observed in Greek culture in the early twentieth century, when people were able to employ both Demotic and Katharevousa forms of the language unconsciously. Diglossia is still prevalent among Arabic speakers.<sup>47</sup> In these situations, there will be a low variety (L) which is generally the spoken language familiar to the population and a high variety (H), the form of language used in elevated discourse and formal writing. The spoken languages can remain distinct, but borrowings occur frequently in these situations, and these are not limited to vocabulary. Structures, meaning and morphology can all be relatively fluid and unconscious between L and H. The borrowings can also be direct or synthetic, producing meaning or forms which did not exist previously in either form.<sup>48</sup> Diglossia further complicates the linguistic profile because of

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<sup>45</sup> There is a distinction to be made between diglossia and bilingualism. In bilingualism, a person distinguishes strongly between two languages which are acknowledged as distinct generally. With diglossia, there are different expressions of what is perceived as a single language in the low and high settings, without any awareness of equivalency. In practical terms, there is a continuity rather than a clear categorization. One of the key works on this subject is Joshua A. Fishman, "Bilingualism with and without Diglossia; Diglossia with and without Bilingualism," *Journal of Social Issues* 23.2 (1967): 29–38.

<sup>46</sup> Charles A. Ferguson, "Diglossia," *Word* 15 (1959): 328–29.

<sup>47</sup> In addition to Ferguson's seminal "Diglossia," which was quoted above, consider Lotfi Sayahi, *Diglossia and Language Contact: Language Variation and Change in North Africa*, Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) for consideration of modern Arabic diglossia.

<sup>48</sup> Sayahi, *Diglossia and Language Contact*, 125–27.

the tendency among diglossic people toward unconscious code-switching.<sup>49</sup> Words and phrases from both the L and H can be integrated in oral utterance but then corrected or modified when the utterance is converted to text.<sup>50</sup> Texts are generally conservative, but texts that begin as oral—such as prophecies—and are committed to writing are more likely to include variants introduced through language contact.

Pat-El argues that the indicator of late borrowing through language contact is syntax.<sup>51</sup> While the evidence Pat-El offers is qualitative and strong, it does not in itself indicate a late borrowing. Consider the Amarna tablets which feature both lexical and syntactic borrowing from Canaanite into Akkadian. Because the Amarna tablets have a definitive date, no one would propose that they were created later than the Amarna period in Egypt. The only difference is that the Amarna tablets are extant in the originals while the biblical text has been transmitted via copying. Rendsburg's "different explanation" is just as much in play in this scenario.

Diglossia was a fundamental component of Rendsburg's doctoral dissertation.<sup>52</sup> His early exploration of colloquial Hebrew eventually gave birth to his understanding of a distinct IH, primarily based on Hurvitz's theories. The concentration of IH features in the speech of the

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<sup>49</sup> Code switching is the tendency of diglossic people to switch between languages or dialects, without conscious effort. This occurs most often in conversation, but it can happen in written texts as well. For recent general works on the phenomenon, see Penelope Gardner-Chloros, *Code-Switching* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Rene Torres Cacoulios and Catherine E. Travis, *Bilingualism in the Community: Code-switching and Grammars in Contact* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>50</sup> Yaron Matras, *Language Contact*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 101–45. Matras deals specifically with codeswitching and how it alters spoken speech patterns. For analysis of how oral communications are altered when converted to text, see Ian Worthington, ed., *Voice into Text: Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece*, Mnemosyne Supplements 157 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Ruth Scodel, ed. *Between Orality and Literacy: Communication and Adaptation in Antiquity*, vol. 10 of *Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World*, Mnemosyne Supplements 367 (Leiden: Brill, 2014). The entire *Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World* series speaks to these issues in various ways.

<sup>51</sup> Na'ama Pat-El, "Syntactic Aramaisms as a Tool for the Internal Chronology of Biblical Hebrew," in Miller-Naudé and Zevit, *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, 259.

<sup>52</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, "Evidence for Spoken Hebrew in Biblical Times," (PhD diss., New York University, 1980). This was modified and published as Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*.

Omridic prophets should be hardly surprising if they are recorded and archived utterances. What is more, the Aramaic-like features of IH would be more likely to surface in the Omridic engagements because of their regular diplomatic and linguistic contact with the Aramaeans. This occurred not just on the state level, but also due to the mobility of people and the close relationship of the languages. Rendsburg therefore now favors the idea of a distinct dialect, IH, rather than seeing diglossia as the explanation for the Aramaic presence.

### The Question of Israelian Hebrew in the IPM

In his seminal work, Burney recognized a characteristic dialect in the Omridic narrative, which he referred to as “the dialect of Northern Palestine.”<sup>53</sup> This idea has been repeated more recently by Cogan and Tadmor who refer to “a residue of the north-Israelite dialect of Hebrew.”<sup>54</sup> Rendsburg’s work has shed a great deal of light on the nature of this dialect, treating it as the broad spectrum of dialects he refers to as IH. It is remarkable when reading through Rendsburg’s survey of the Book of Kings how his northern features appear in clumps as soon as the narrative focus shifts to the northern kingdom. In particular, Aramaic-like lexemes begin to appear and the language deviates from the norms of SBH. Fittingly, the first two characteristics that Rendsburg describes appear in the apostasy of Jeroboam I. First, Jeroboam chooses “priests from among all the people,” (כהנים מקצות העם). The word מקצת appears only in northern contexts, chiefly this event (1 Kgs 12:31, 33, 2 Kgs 17:32) and once with the migration of the Danites to their secondary lands in the north (Judg 18:2). The Aramaic occurs in later texts but with a different connotation (Dan 1:2, 15, 18, 2:42; Neh 7:69).

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<sup>53</sup> Burney, *Notes*, 208–9. For discussion of Burney’s proposed northern dialect, see Appendix I.

<sup>54</sup> Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC 11 (New Haven: Doubleday, 1988), 9.

A thorough treatment of these features would comprise a volume of its own, and indeed Rendsburg's volume on the topic demonstrates the pervasive character of these features.<sup>55</sup> In their 1997 response to Rendsburg's previous work, Schniedewind and Sivan commented on what they saw as the exaggerated and random nature of Rendsburg's analysis, particularly in the Omridic materials. One can only wonder if this prompted Rendsburg's shift of attention to the Book of Kings. As he puts it, "the most obvious place to look for IH is in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel recorded in the book of Kings ... the material in [the Book of] Kings serves as a template for the identification of IH texts elsewhere in the corpus."<sup>56</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan have not yet offered a response to Rendsburg's full treatment of the Book of Kings or his later works; but in their earlier volume, they offered a number of "linguistic anomalies" from the Omridic materials. Their areas of concern which will be addressed briefly here with comments from Rendsburg's later works.<sup>57</sup>

### **Lexical Anomalies**

(1) "Food" (אכילה), *1 Kings 19:8*. The supposition that this *hapax legomenon* is northern goes back to Burney's landmark work.<sup>58</sup> While Schniedewind and Sivan argue that אכילה is simply a technical word for which we no longer have specific meaning, Rendsburg points out the

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<sup>55</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 27–28. See Appendix H.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 17–18.

<sup>57</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan, "Elijah-Elisha," 334–35. For the sake of space, this does not include a couple of the categories that the authors deal with in the article. Rather than dealing with issues addressed elsewhere in this dissertation, like Rendsburg's distinction between Aramaisms and Aramaic-like features, this discussion is limited to the authors' sections on "problematic terms" and "unique linguistic features."

<sup>58</sup> Burney, *Notes*, 209.

rarity of the construction in Hebrew.<sup>59</sup> The construction occurs exclusively in IH texts (Judg 5:16; 1 Sam 13:21; Job 41:10) and one postexilic text (2 Chr 30:17).

(2) “Palace” (הֵיכָל), 1 Kings 21:1. Here Rendsburg believes the usage for “palace” instead of “temple” reflects a Phoenician connection because הֵיכָל appears frequently in personal names, a point which Schniedewind and Sivan debate. They argue that the usage is due to postexilic language development since it does appear in SBH texts with the meaning of “palace” (Nah 2:7; 2 Chr 36:7). Their point is not debated, and it certainly appears that the usage was more common in postexilic usage. At the same time, it cannot be denied that הֵיכָל has the meaning of “palace” in texts that are definitively northern (Ps 45:7; Amos 8:3) as well as in the Phoenician context (Joel 4:5).<sup>60</sup>

(3) “To be thoughtful” (תָּרַח), 2 Kgs 4:13. Again, this is a northernism that was noticed long before there was a debate on the existence of IH.<sup>61</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan makes a valid point that Driver’s external connection to Christian Syriac is weak because of the distance of time. Rendsburg does not address this lexeme, probably because he agrees with them on Driver’s derivation. It is, at best, a tenuous connection.

(4) “From” (מִן), 2 Kings 4:24, 13:13, 28. Rendsburg argues that Phoenician lacks the מִן preposition, which shows a reliance upon Phoenician here. Sivan, however, points out that Ugaritic also prefers מִן to מִן in similar contexts.<sup>62</sup> Of course, Sivan’s point is accurate, but it

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<sup>59</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan, “Elijah-Elisha,” 314; Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 56.

<sup>60</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan, “Elijah-Elisha,” 315; Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 70–71.

<sup>61</sup> Godfrey R. Driver, “Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament II,” *JTS* 32 (1931): 257; Burney, *Notes*, 208–9.

<sup>62</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selected Psalms*, SBLMS 43 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 21–23; Daniel Sivan, *A Grammar of Ugaritic Language: Second Impression with Corrections*, HdO 28 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 196. See also Ziony Zevit, “The So-Called Interchangeability of the Prepositions *b*, *l*, and *m(n)* in Northwest Semitic,” *JANES* 7 (1975): 103–111.

does not preclude a Phoenician connection, especially since Ugaritic had no perceivable contact with Hebrew, despite their relatively close affinity. Rendsburg acknowledges the Ugaritic connection as well.<sup>63</sup>

(5) “*Indeed*” (אָל), *1 Kings 20:23, 25; 2 Kgs 8:10*. Burney treats this as an asseverative, arguing that it is an Aramaism. Schniedewind and Sivan reject this argument, arguing instead that these are quotes in direct speech, two of which are in the mouths of an Aramaean.<sup>64</sup> Rendsburg does not address this usage. Since the usage is in Aramaean speech, this is a reasonable exclusion. It only makes sense that the compilers included Aramaic speech characteristics in the speech of Aramaeans.

(6) “*What?*” (אָל), *1 Kings 22:16; 2 Kings 1:7, 4:13, 14*. In particular, it is the presence of the *segol*, the result of a vowel shift preceding nonlaryngeal consonants, that draws attention.<sup>65</sup> While Schniedewind and Sivan are correct that this can hardly be considered exclusively northern, Rendsburg never argued that it was. He describes its appearance in “a disproportionate number of non-Judahite contexts.”<sup>66</sup> Rendsburg does not argue this is an exclusively northern trait but rather an isogloss that was distributed widely outside of Judah.

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<sup>63</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, “A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon,” *Orient* 38 (2003): 19.

<sup>64</sup> Burney, *Notes*, 237; Schniedewind and Sivan, “Elijah-Elisha,” 316; Daniel Sivan and William M. Schniedewind, “Letting Your ‘Yes’ be ‘No’ in Ancient Israel: A Study of the Asseverative אָל and אָל in Hebrew,” *JSS* 38, no. 2 (1993): 209–26.

<sup>65</sup> Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence*, 39; Gary S. Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects in Ancient Hebrew,” in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, ed. Walter Ray Bodine (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 71.

<sup>66</sup> Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence,” 71.

## Phonology

*The construct כהשדך preposition+article, 2 Kings 7:12.* This is the only phonological issue raised by Schniedewind and Sivan in their essay, but Rendsburg does not deal with this specific example.<sup>67</sup> He deals instead with the non-elision of the vowel in the definite article before prefixed prepositions generally (Ps 45:18; Ps 116:6).<sup>68</sup> In his view, this trait can appear in both IH and LBH, but it can feel like a northern trait in certain passages where preexilic, northern provenance is already likely. In other words, this is a minor tendency observed only once while other more prominent IH features indicate a northern origin.

## Syntax

(1) *Anticipatory pronominal suffix, 1 Kings 19:21, 21:13.*<sup>69</sup> Another case of Burney relying upon Syriac, this is a construction that Rendsburg does not employ. Schniedewind and Sivan are answering James Davila's argument that the form was not widespread in SBH because it developed under Assyrian influence.<sup>70</sup> Davila was repeating Burney's position in asserting it is a northernism, and Schniedewind and Sivan are correct to point out the anachronistic argument in Burney.<sup>71</sup> There is little that can be said for or against the argument.

(2) *Periphrastic perfect construction, 1 Kings 22:35, 2 Kings 6:8.*<sup>72</sup> This particular construction is typical of Aramaic and in these examples appears in the context of the Israel-Aram wars. It is likely, as Schniedewind and Sivan argue, that these were Aramaizing stylistic

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<sup>67</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan, "Elijah-Elisha," 317.

<sup>68</sup> Rendsburg, "Morphological Evidence," 74–75.

<sup>69</sup> בשלם בשר, "he cooked meat for them," (1 Kgs 19:21); ויעדהו...את-נבות, "and they testified ... against Naboth," (1 Kgs 21:13).

<sup>70</sup> James R. Davila, "Qoheleth and Northern Hebrew," *Maarav* 5–6 (1990): 85.

<sup>71</sup> Burney, *Notes*, 209.

<sup>72</sup> היה מעמד "was propped up," (1 Kgs 22:35); היה נלחם, "was warring," (2 Kgs 6:8).

choices and not indications of a northern trait. The periphrastic perfect is common in BH at all stages, but certainly increases in the postexilic period.<sup>73</sup> Rendsburg does not rely upon the construct, only noting that it does seem to occur more frequently in IH.<sup>74</sup> He therefore is not relying upon the trait in isolation, but rather that it tends to be present under Aramaic influence. This influence need not be postexilic.

### Linguistic Features

Schniedewind and Sivan list twelve lexical items (lexemes or idioms) unique to the Omridic materials which they explain using a variety of arguments. In their analysis, the northernisms are actually: (1) stylistic choices or colloquialisms (אחלי, 2 Kgs 5:3; הלז, 2 Kgs 4:12, 25; מכבר, 2 Kgs 8:15; מעוג, 1 Kgs 17:12; תחנון, 2 Kgs 6:8), (2) misspellings or misappropriations (אפר, 1 Kgs 20:38, 41), (3) atypical conjugations (גנר in *hithpoel* rather than *qal*, 1 Kgs 17:20), (4) unique turns of phrase (הנה והנה, 1 Kgs 20:40; 2 Kgs 2:8, 10, 4:35; כברת ארץ, 2 Kgs 5:19), or (5) loan words (כעת חיה, 2 Kgs 4:16–17; כרה, 2 Kgs 6:23; סנורים, 2 Kgs 6:18).<sup>75</sup> In addition, they offer four examples of verb forms that Rendsburg has categorized as IH features. First, they address לקחי in 1 Kings 17:11. This is a *hapax* form (3fs imperative from לקח) which appears in direct speech. They question the retention of the ל as a feature of IH, especially since this retention occurs in Akkadian and only occasionally in Aramaic. The second and third examples, ויהתל in 1 Kings 18:27 and התקדרו in 1 Kgs 18:45, are odd or unusual conjugations. The fourth

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<sup>73</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan, “Elijah-Elisha,” 319; Jonas C. Greenfield, “The ‘Periphrastic Imperative’ in Aramaic and Hebrew,” *IEJ* 19, no. 4 (1969): 209.

<sup>74</sup> Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence*, 26.

<sup>75</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan, “Elijah-Elisha,” 320–23.

example is תתן (Qal infinitive of נתן) in 1 Kings 17:14, which Rendsburg interprets as a northernism because it is distinct from לתתן in 1 Kings 6:19.<sup>76</sup>

### **The Possibility of Noise-induced Weakness**

Thus far, the assumption has been that the form of the text we are engaging with reflects the speech patterns of the authors. It is only fair that before concluding this section, the matter of what A. Dean Forbes calls “noise-induced weakness” should be mentioned. There are three types of textual “noise” which disrupt any kind of linguistic analysis. First, there is textual transmission noise. Because the texts have been copied over centuries, there will inevitably be some linguistic variation from the process of transmission. One could happily embrace whatever reading satisfies his thesis, but awareness of scribal tendencies and influence is important. This means that sometimes the reading that is most convenient may in fact be the result of textual noise. The second is feature noise. This relates to simply the nature of language over time. As we read the text, we must be conscious that certain features exist side-by-side while others were chronologically distinct. This is much of what Rendsburg refers to as “different explanation.” Finally, there is the issue of class-assignment noise. If textual transmission noise is due to the process of the original getting to the current reader and feature noise is due to the variety of backgrounds and work of the authors, class-assignment is noise that exists with the reader. Readers tend to classify certain elements of the text according to whatever scheme they are used to. Thus, if someone is taught that a text is SBH, then they will naturally see the features of that

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<sup>76</sup> Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 102 fn. 21.

text as SBH and not necessarily understand that the classification of SBH in particular circumstances does not apply to all circumstances.<sup>77</sup>

This idea of noise is important in this discussion because it has an effect on how we receive the texts. There is simply no way to be sure of the origin of a particular variation or feature, which means that at some point every interpretational scheme must inject a level of subjectivity into the analysis. It is not wrong to make assumptions in the process of the analysis, but awareness of the assumptions and a willingness to describe features in terms of plausibility within an array of options helps further the conversation.

### Section Summary

Generally, the decision as to categorization of these lexical items is dependent upon the researcher's particular approach. While Rendsburg is willing to include features that may not themselves be conclusive proof of northern origin, Schniedewind and Sivan seem willing to accept any alternative solution to the cruces that Rendsburg presents. Rendsburg attempts to approach the issue systematically, employing a list of constructions. In contrast, Schniedewind and Sivan offer solutions coming from multiple disciplines and foci. To be sure, there are a few cases where their criticisms are legitimate, and Rendsburg has offered clarifications in several of his subsequent publications.<sup>78</sup> In evaluating this linguistic information, one must be cautious

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<sup>77</sup> A. Dean Forbes, "On Dating Biblical Hebrew Texts: Sources of Uncertainty/Analytic Options," in *From Ancient Manuscripts to Modern Dictionaries: Select Studies in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek*, ed. Tarsee Li and Keith Dyer, *Perspectives in Linguistics and Ancient Languages* 9 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2017), 248–50. 247–72. Forbes's list is only one of the many contributors to uncertainty. His statistical analysis, which has overlap with a number of analyses from Miller-Naudé and Zevit, *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew*, is very involved but it can be reduced to some of the same arguments offered in this dissertation. One cannot speak of dating the Hebrew text with anything more than high probability and the margin of error due to noise and other sources of uncertainty can be substantial.

<sup>78</sup> The bibliography contains a full list of Rendsburg's publications on the topic of Israelian Hebrew. Works published after Schniedewind and Sivan build out his methodology and application. In particular, see Rendsburg,

about being definitive. This is the reason behind the inclusion of the section on noise-induced weakness. While Rendsburg's arguments appear convincing, they offer only the plausibility of IH in the narrative texts. There are numerous variables, including the means of transmission as well as the linguistic preferences or inclinations of the transmitting scribes, which might affect the language in ways we cannot definitively know. Still, a case can be made for the possibility of earlier IH traits being preserved in the text which indicate a preexilic origin.

### **A Linguistic Examination of 1 Kings 21**

Since Alexander Rofé provided a specifically linguistics-based argument to place the Naboth narrative (1 Kgs 21) in the postexilic period, let us return to his argument as a test case for the existence of IH markers in a text, this time examining his linguistic evidence.<sup>79</sup> Not all of Rofé's arguments are linguistic as much as stylistic. He does, however, bring up a few elements that are linguistic in nature. Rofé's arguments will be listed along with discussion.

#### The Rare Form קרוב אסל (verse 2)

While it is true that this particular form is rare in SBH, it is in the mouth of Ahab and he is speaking to Naboth, who lives on the northern edge of the Jezreel Valley. There is a recurring issue with Rofé's identification of LBH forms in the narrative, and that is that they tend to appear in direct speech. This is the first example in this pericope, but this issue has been encountered previously when dealing with the use of לָא (1 Kings 20:23, 25; 2 Kgs 8:10). Direct speech is often a place for style switching because speech does not conform to written norms. Rofé rarely

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*Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings* and Gary A. Rendsburg "A Comprehensive Guide to Israelian Hebrew: Grammar and Lexicon," *Orient* 38 (2003): 5–35

<sup>79</sup> Rofé, "The Vineyard of Naboth," 97–101. These arguments are presented in a different order than they appear in Rofé's article. The original order is preserved on page 7 of this dissertation.

allows dialect or idiolect variation, and in many of his writings, he treats SBH in a very formulaic way when it is convenient for his thesis.

#### The Anachronistic Use of the Title “King of Samaria” (מלך שִׁמְרוֹן) (verse 3)

While the text reads מלך שִׁמְרוֹן (king of Samaria), Rofé argues the more appropriate title should be מלך יִשְׂרָאֵל, as this was the title more often employed during the Omridic period, both in the biblical record and in extrabiblical sources.<sup>80</sup> If a term appears in non-Hebrew texts, Rofé tends to assume it is the “proper” form that the Hebrew texts should also use, but foreign usage does not indicate domestic usage. It is true that “king of Israel” is the more common title in the Book of Kings and is the most common designator in the Assyrian record, but that does not mean that other titles were not used. Royal inscriptions from the reigns of Adad-Nirari III and Tiglath-Pileser III both referred to the kingdom as “the land of Samaria.” Other inscriptions from Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V, and Sargon II refer to “the city of Samaria.”<sup>81</sup> There is therefore evidence that Samaria may have occasionally been a metonym for the northern kingdom, just as Jerusalem did at times for the southern kingdom.

#### The Verb דָּבַר not Followed by לֵאמֹר or Any Form of אָמַר (verses 5–6)

According to Rofé, the independent use of דָּבַר is “not correct” in SBH.<sup>82</sup> He argues that the early form of Hebrew (SBH) would employ this doubling, but “Second Commonwealth Hebrew” (LBH) lost this form because there was no longer a distinction between the two verbs.

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<sup>80</sup> Rofé made the same kind of argument concerning the title “God of heaven” in Genesis 24:3 and 7, and Rendsburg admitted in that case that the appearance was an Aramaism. See Rendsburg, “Some False Leads,” 25.

<sup>81</sup> *KUR Sa-me-ri-na-a-a* (Rimah Stela, Layard 45b+ III R 9,1, Iran Stela); *URA Sa-me-ri-na* (Layard 50a + 50b + 67a, Babylonian Chronicle, Nimrud Prism). For a full table of the various terms, see Brad E. Kelle, “What’s in a Name? Neo-Assyrian Designations for the Northern Kingdom and their Implications for Israelite History and Biblical Interpretation,” *JBL* 121 (2002): 640.

<sup>82</sup> Rofé, “The Vineyard of Naboth,” 97–98.

The fundamental issue with Rofé's argument is the assumption that there was such a thing as "not correct" for the authors of the text. There is no way to verify the correctness of a syntactical form if there is the possibility of diglossia or the use of regional dialects. This is certainly not a definitive piece of evidence. Given that אַמַר is used elsewhere in the narrative in reference to the same dialogue (1 Kgs 21:7), Rofé's argument seems to be a distinction without a difference. In fact, there may be a sense in which the author is drawing a comparison between Ahab's dialogue with Naboth, in which אַמַר is employed (1 Kgs 21:2–3) and the dialogue between Jezebel and Ahab, which utilizes דַּבֵּר (1 Kgs 21:5–6). There is no reason why it cannot be style-switching rather than evidence of a late addition.<sup>83</sup> What is more, Rendsburg points out that the use of prefixed conjugations as appear here and elsewhere in the Ahab materials (1 Kgs 20:8) are generally seen as "archaic" forms, which he prefers to see as IH traits.<sup>84</sup>

#### The Use of the Aramaic Loanword הַחֲרִים (verses 8–11)

At least according to Rofé, the use of הַחֲרִים is from Rabbinical (Midrashic) Hebrew, and the expected word should be חֲפָשִׁי. He argues that הַחֲרִים did not enter the Hebrew lexicon until the fifth century BCE, and that this inclusion indicates a LBH origin. Rofé assumes the word appears only in Imperial Aramaic, but there is nothing to say that an earlier Aramaic form did not exist. Rendsburg points to usage throughout the development of Aramaic.<sup>85</sup> Naboth's vineyard may have been on the northern hillsides of the Jezreel Valley. If so, his town may well have had

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<sup>83</sup> Consider Gary A. Rendsburg, "Kabbîr in Biblical Hebrew: Evidence for Style-Switching and Addressee-Switching in the Hebrew Bible," *JAOS* 112 (1992): 649–51. Style-switching was a common literary device for presenting the speech of individuals. It was often used to differentiate the speech of people outside the Hebrew sphere, such as Edomites (Gen 25:29–32), Ammonites (1 Sam 11:2), and Arabians (Isa 21:11–14). For a more thorough discussion, see Brian Bompiani, "Style Switching in the Speech of Transjordanians," *Hebrew Studies* 57 (2016): 51–71.

<sup>84</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 67.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

contact with the Aramaeans, which influenced their town polity. Despite Rofé's protests, there is another possibly preexilic usage in Isaiah 34:12, where it is placed in parallel with princes (שָׂרֵי). This is a judgment upon foreign nations, and Isaiah's usage is focused on relations with other states. It is totally reasonable for the narrative to employ specific Aramaic vocabulary in reference to government in a region where the Imperial Hebrew had influence.

#### The Use of LBH Forms of עוֹד (verses 10, 13)

Rofé calls this “the best piece of evidence for the late date of our story.”<sup>86</sup> He maintains that the use of the LBH forms represents a “semantic ‘blunder’ by a late, postexilic author who was trying hard to imitate good Classical Hebrew.”<sup>87</sup> The form עוֹד occurs only in late texts (Mal 2:14, Job 29:11) and STJ texts. Rofé contends that SBH uses עָנָה for this sense of testifying to the truth of something. Even if Rofé is correct in both assertions, his argument still fails to meet Hurvitz's criteria. A single “late” lexeme does not mean the text is late. For one thing, such a single occurrence could simply be a late gloss. While Rofé does demonstrate the replacement of an earlier form with a later one, the argument is tenuous at best. As Na'aman has pointed out, the two words have overlapping meaning, and this may be nothing more than a stylistic choice on the part of the author.<sup>88</sup>

#### The Perfect Instead of ו-Consecutive+Imperfect (12)

It has been argued that the perfect replacing the ו-consecutive+imperfect construction appears more frequently in later books of the Hebrew Scriptures, so Rofé is presenting a

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<sup>86</sup> Rofé, “The Vineyard of Naboth,” 99.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 100–101.

<sup>88</sup> Na'aman, “Naboth's Vineyard and the Foundation of Jezreel,” 202. Na'aman argues that the Naboth story is old in its essentials but maintains that the final author “misunderstood the original historical background.” He believes that Naboth's vineyard corresponds to the site where the Omrides built Jezreel.

reasonable argument here.<sup>89</sup> He also admits, however, that the text “puzzled experts,” so his solution is hardly the only possible one. As in many of these cases, Rofé does not take into consideration that the perfect may appear as a form of direct speech, which is often tinged with variations, especially if it is being recorded as it was spoken, and although this is not a quote of speech, it could be, as Klostermann argued, a quotation of Jezebel’s letter (1 Kgs 21:9), with the imperative changed to the perfect.<sup>90</sup>

Rendsburg may offer another solution in his argument that verb form variations are quite common in IH. It is true that there are not any examples of this particular shift, but Rendsburg catalogued fifteen Israelian verb forms, almost all of which have Aramaic influences.<sup>91</sup> When Semitic languages come in contact, verb systems tend to fluctuate, as observed by Moran and Raimey in the Canaanite influence on the Akkadian of the Amarna Letters.<sup>92</sup> The verb systems of the period were not as stable as Rofé might have envisioned them to be. Although there may have been a preference for the perfect in SBH, there was nothing to restrict  $\gamma$ -consecutive+imperfect forms. Indeed, if as Young proposed, SBH was a compromise form with Hebrew speakers having a diverse array of dialects, then it is reasonable to assume that some variant forms would appear in texts deriving from outside of Judah and Jerusalem.<sup>93</sup> Still, this particular marker is difficult to explain in terms of IH usage, and there is no simple answer to his argument.

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<sup>89</sup> The  $\gamma$ -consecutive became more unstable in the post-Biblical Hebrew period, at least according to Abegg. For a full list of late features Abegg sees influencing Qumran, see Martin G. Abegg, Jr., “The Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Hebrew Syntax,” in *Celebrating the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Canadian Collection*, ed. Peter W. Flint, Jean Duhaime, and Kyung S. Baek, *Early Judaism and Its Literature* 30 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 165–171.

<sup>90</sup> August Klostermann, *Die Bucher Samuelis und der Konige* (Nordlingen: C. H. Beck, 1887), 383, fn. 9.

<sup>91</sup> See Appendix A: II, C.

<sup>92</sup> Tamar Zewi and Mikhal Oren, “Semitic Languages in Contact—Syntactic Changes in the Verbal System and in Verbal Complementation,” in *Semitic Languages in Contact*, ed. Aaron Michael Butts, SSSL 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 406–12.

<sup>93</sup> Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, 17–18.

### Interpreting Rofé's Arguments

None of the linguistic features that Rofé identifies in 1 Kings 21 are necessarily late. Even he argues that it is only the “cumulative effect” that led him to believe the text to be LBH.<sup>94</sup> Again, we must return to Hurvitz's argument that supposed late features do not correlate to a late date unless they meet the criteria of late frequency, linguistic opposition, and external support. While Rofé identified valid linguistic variations in the text, they occur neither with frequency nor with external support. Even the minimal linguistic opposition he pointed out is easily answered. He argued instead that the aberrant presence of these features was sufficient evidence for a late date. If one is not predisposed to read these variations as late and instead view them as dialect variations or even affectations in direct speech, there is no need to make them late. In conclusion, one must say that Rofé's arguments are not sufficient for late dating unless one is already predisposed to see the text as late.

### Israelian Hebrew in the Literary Prophets

Young identifies Amos and Hosea as two definitively northern texts in the canon. Amos does not employ any of the Aramaisms used by either Polzin or Rofé to identify the text as LBH, which is in keeping with the purported preexilic provenance, and Young says that Hosea has “one of the highest number of passages considered unintelligible in the Old Testament.”<sup>95</sup> Rather than seeing IH as a distinct dialect, Young insists that the Aramaisms are the result of Aramaic functioning as the low language of the culture while the high language of both Hebrew kingdoms was SBH. While being willing to allow that Amos and Hosea are both preexilic in

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<sup>94</sup> Rofé, “The Vineyard of Naboth,” 97.

<sup>95</sup> Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, 168. For an early version of his argument, see Ian Young, “Evidence of Diversity in Pre-Exilic Judahite Hebrew,” *Hebrew Studies* 38 (1997): 7–20. He refuses to use Rendsburg's IH designation and instead describes the language as simply northern, but that it is a distinction without a difference.

origin, he dismisses any perceived Aramaic influence as incidental. “Standard Biblical Hebrew was a nationalized form of the ancient Canaanite prestige language. Originating in the days of the unified Davidic monarchy, it was carried on as the compromise dialect of not only the South, but the North.”<sup>96</sup> In other words, Young believes the presence of Aramaic-like elements is not an indication of a dialect but rather of diglossia.

Those of Rendsburg’s school of thought are not convinced by Young’s argument. Yoon Jong Yoo addressed the book of Hosea in his doctoral dissertation, showing that the book was not just occasionally distinct from SBH. In his view, Hosea is fully IH, which accounts for the peculiarities.<sup>97</sup> He accounts for eighty-five IH features in Hosea, of which twenty-five are Aramaic-like features. “The overall picture points overwhelmingly to a northern origin for the book of Hosea.”<sup>98</sup> This is not a work in which someone’s low language creeps into the text. Hosea is a carefully composed work with a high level of rhetorical composition. Amos is likewise a careful composition, but it is constructed around a series of oracles which are delivered in a formal tone.<sup>99</sup> Of particular interest in Amos is the use of the word אַרְמֹן, which appears eleven times in Amos. This is one of Rendsburg’s IH lexemes, appearing almost

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<sup>96</sup> Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew*, 167–68.

<sup>97</sup> Yoon Jong Yoo, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Hosea,” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1999), 183–87. Yoo’s arguments are not without a detractor. In his own dissertation, James Bos argued that these same IH characteristics were more in keeping with a Persian period composition. His dissertation was published as a monograph, James M. Bos, *Reconsidering the Date and the Provenance of the Book of Hosea: The Case for Persian-Period Yehud*, LHBOTS 580 (London: T & T Clark, 2013). Bos’s objections are as follows: (1) he rejects the idea of any sort of written records from the prophets, (2) he sees anti-monarchical ideology in Hosea, (3) he believes Hosea employs anti-northern sentiments, reflecting a bias against the Samaritans, and (4) the idea of a dual return from exile evidences a Persian period date. None of these concerns actually address Yoo’s linguistic arguments. They are meant to demonstrate that given the context, Yoo must be mistaken in a preexilic date. The issue is that none of these arguments, except perhaps the fourth, are necessarily postexilic. It would be surprising indeed if a Yahwist prophet like Hosea did not oppose the Omride dynasty or speak against the Israelites who were following them.

<sup>98</sup> Yoo, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Hosea,” 181–82.

<sup>99</sup> Göran Eidevall, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC 24G (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 10–13; Shalom M. Paul, *Amos*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 7–11.

exclusively in northern texts. HALOT lists it as the indigenous word, and yet it is a minority reading everywhere except IH passages.<sup>100</sup> The more common word **היכל** does not appear in Amos, nor does it appear in the northern texts in the Book of Kings, indicating that **היכל** may have been the JH word while IH preserved the older Canaanite term.

What is particularly interesting is the presence of possible IH traits in the books which have a Judahite, southern provenance. In his doctoral dissertation, Gregory Wolfe explored what he called “non-Judahite features” throughout the Hebrew Bible. His focus is on the books with a northern origin, concluding that because the northern kingdom of Israel had numerous northern borders with other nations, but Judah was restricted in this regard, “one would expect more linguistic influences from neighbors on the language of Israel than on that of Judah.... Aramaic forms, constructions, and words could easily have crept into the Hebrew vocabulary at any point in the history of Israel.”<sup>101</sup> Wolfe expresses surprise over finding these features in books of Judahite origin as well, particularly in the works of Isaiah and Jeremiah.<sup>102</sup>

### Chapter Summary

It should be reiterated again that there is nothing definitively chronological about the language profile of the Book of Kings. With that said, the preceding discussion has demonstrated that language contact between the northern Israelites and the Aramaeans could have plausibly resulted in a northern, Israelian dialect of Hebrew which would have existed alongside what is Standard Biblical Hebrew, or Judahite Hebrew. Close examination of the biblical text, such as performed by Rendsburg, shows that such this dialect could show through in passages with a

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<sup>100</sup> HALOT, s.v. “אָרְמֹן,” 89.

<sup>101</sup> Gregory Alan Wolfe, “Non-Judahite Dialects within the Hebrew Bible: An Evaluation of the Methods and Evidence,” (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), 172–75.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 153–56.

northern origin. Given that there are explicit statements of language contact between the northern kingdom of Israel and the Aramaeans, it is plausible that they could have been composed in the preexilic northern kingdom of Israel.

Rendsburg's proposal is in keeping with Hurvitz's three criteria for dating Hebrew texts. Hurvitz recognized the inherent complexities of Hebrew's relationship with other languages and the tendency to misunderstand and misinterpret the language changes.<sup>103</sup> Davies reduced the entire relationship of Hebrew and Aramaic to a single footnote, a move which Hurvitz rightfully labeled as a misunderstanding the complexity of the language contact relationship. This chapter is not intended as an exhaustive analysis of the linguistic relationships that gave birth to the various forms of BH. It is only a synthesis of some of the evidence, but the intent is to point toward a more balanced, historically reasonable approach to the text, seasoned with an appreciation of at least the strong possibility that what is seen as "late" is really a sign of language contact and dynamic human interaction that was characteristic of the secondary states of the Levant.

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<sup>103</sup> Avi Hurvitz, "The Historical Quest for 'Ancient Israel' and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations," *VT* 47 (1997): 304–5.

## CHAPTER 7: CONVERGENCE AND CONCLUSIONS

Diachronic analysis and archaeological reconstruction are important disciplines for biblical exposition. Unfortunately, there is a tendency in these disciplines to exclude those who are not specialists and reject any position that allows for the texts to be essentially original and historically viable.<sup>1</sup> This is especially true when it comes to the prophets in the Book of Kings. They are almost uniformly rejected as historical. Antony Campbell at least allows for a continuity of preexilic prophetic sources, even if he rejects as late additions most of the texts that have been proposed as being part of the IPM.<sup>2</sup> Gary Knoppers provides at least half a dozen alternative solutions, but even he argues that if there was a preexilic source for the Book of Kings, it did not include any references to the northern Yahwistic prophets.<sup>3</sup> Stephen McKenzie sees these prophetic passages as reflecting “a complex history of development that cannot be reconstructed with certainty.”<sup>4</sup> It has become a standard trope to reject these northern prophetic materials. The question must be raised whether this trope reflects realities or if it is a construct which should itself be revisited critically.

When David J. A. Clines called for a stop to the bifurcation of the Scriptures in pursuit of either historicity or literary value, he was asking for a holistic approach to the text.<sup>5</sup> Of course,

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<sup>1</sup> Grabbe, *1 and 2 Kings*, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Campbell and O’Brien, *Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History*, 391–92. At one point, Campbell described the Elijah and Elisha materials as “a complex thicket,” chiefly because he insisted on identifying different theological themes within the materials. See Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings*, 93, fn. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Gary N. Knoppers, “Theories of the Redaction(s) of Kings,” in Halpern and Lemaire, *The Book of Kings*, 67–88. See also Halpern and Lemaire’s joint essay “The Composition of Kings” in the same volume.

<sup>4</sup> McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 82.

<sup>5</sup> David J. A. Clines, “Story and Poem: The Old Testament as Literature and as Scripture,” *Interpretation* 34.2 (1980): 121. Elsewhere, Clines ordered approaches to the text as first order (rhetorical criticism, the idea of a “literary work of art,” engagement), second order (feminist criticism, materialist/political criticism, reader-response criticism, deconstructionism), and third order (historical criticism, source criticism, and form criticism). See David J. A. Clines, *On the Way to Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967–1998*, vol. 1, JSOTSup

His initial impulse was toward reading the text as it stands. A theologically robust reading, as has been presented in this dissertation is an attempt not only to read the text as it stands, but also as it stood when it was first composed. Clines was well-intentioned but his postmodern, pragmatic approach faltered in assuming that the text was not historically viable except as “imagined literature” which allows the reader to create a version of the past that they can appreciate and from which they can learn.<sup>6</sup> Still, Clines’ point about separating the text is valid. Diachronic analysis strips the text of unity and coherence. Dependence upon archaeological interpretation without tempering it with a theologically robust reading of the text excises the supernatural, a key component of the author’s worldview. The deeper the critic chooses to cut, the more fragmented the text appears to that critic. These divided texts then have divided voices, widely separated by the many veils of repeated redactions. At what point does the reader of Scripture look at the chaos and consider a different course?

This dissertation sought to answer three fundamental biases against the historicity of many early texts generally, but specifically against the Israelian Prophetic Materials found in the Book of Kings. The first bias is theological. Most modern critics refuse to accept the supernatural aspects of the narrative as viable history. The second bias is historical and founded on two assumptions. These assumptions are first that the texts cannot be historical because no lengthy texts are extant before the eighth century BCE and second that there was not sufficient infrastructure in the Hebrew states to produce such texts. The third bias is linguistic, arguing that the language of the biblical text is too late to be original to the historical context.

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292 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 24–45. Note that Clines places source criticism (diachronic approaches) in the bottom tier of his system. The citation of Clines is not in any way an indication of agreement with Clines’s approach, but rather an appreciation for the perspective he brought to what came before him.

<sup>6</sup> Clines, “Story and Poem,” 127. This understanding eventually led Clines to attempt to deconstruct the idea of a diachronic/synchronic dichotomy. See Clines, “Beyond Synchronic/Diachronic,” 52–71.

To answer these three biases, the content of this dissertation has been wide-ranging, making three independent arguments. At the end of each chapter, independent conclusions have been presented. In this final chapter, the evidence opposing these biases that has been presented in the previous chapters will be synthesized to demonstrate the probability of the contemporaneous dating of the IPM. The convergence of these conclusions demonstrates the viability of a view which accepts the IPM as preexilic, literary works.

### **Addressing the Theological Bias**

The contrast between the common reductionalist/minimalist (RM) position and a theologically robust approach (TRA) is about more than just the treatment of socio-historical evidence. It has to do with the presuppositional ideology one brings to the text. While the RM position elevates the socio-archaeological evidence to a higher priority than the natural reading of the biblical texts. The issue with this is not the evidence itself but the interpretation which is inherent in reporting the text. Interpretation is inherently variable; and given the gaps which exist in the archaeological record, a considerable amount of conjecture is employed in any reconstruction. On the other hand, a TRA method is grounded first on attempting to understand the theology of the authors, reading the text as it is without deconstruction. Since the authors believed God is a necessary being, that he disapproves of falsehood, and that he is reported as being active in the biblical world, the TRA interpreter must conclude that the supernatural aspects of the narrative should be treated as historical. This approach must be tempered with a well-reasoned, critical approach to both text and socio-historical evidence. The dissertation proceeded with the understanding that one must approach the biblical texts with a full consideration of the historical and linguistic context while acknowledging the theological content of the texts and the theological worldview of the authors.

## Facing the Historical Bias

### Prophecy in the Levantine Context

It was necessary to begin the historical discussion with an overview of prophecy in the ancient world because prophets and divination were a key component of the ANE societies, and it was integrated into the royal practices of many of these societies. There was a wide array of diviners. There were many who were trained in very specific types of divination and reliant upon a corpus of texts and commentaries. Intuitive diviners were outside of most of the religious castes. Most important to the study of these mantic roles is the understanding of prophetic archives. The discovery of divination texts at several Bronze Age sites has been treated as a boon for the study of Israelite prophecy, and indeed it is, but many scholars miss the most important thing about these discoveries. If it was this common for prophets to maintain archives of their divinations, one has to ask why the Israelian prophets would not have done so as well. It is only reasonable to assume that such archives did exist, but since they were written in alphabetic texts on organic materials, the original repositories would not be preserved in the same way as the cuneiform tablets from other sites have survived.

The Israelian, Yahwistic prophets who confronted the Omride kings seem to have emerged in the north as a distinct group in an unusual context. They were distinct from other ANE prophetic classes. While some, like Nissinen, argue that these differences mark the Israelian prophets as “out of time,” others believe these differences are reflective of unique circumstances, among them the idea of YHWH revealing himself directly to his people. These northern Israelian prophets were also distinct from the Davidic seers like Samuel, Nathan, and Gad who preceded them. They did not focus on the centrality of the Davidic line, nor did they emphasize Jerusalem or the temple. Where the seers occupied an official place in the court of the

Davidic kings, the Omridic prophets opposed the Omrides, with their message built around condemnation oracles. Their prophetic office served as a check on the abuses of the monarch to whom they presented their oracles, honoring them as rightful monarchs but calling them to abandon the Canaanite practices and religions the monarchs were using to consolidate their power.

#### Secondary State Formation and Royal Cult in the Southern Levant During the Iron Age

In chapter four, the religio-political context of the Omride kingdom was discussed at length. The Israelian prophets ministered within the matrix of this society, and therefore the record of their ministry should reflect that world. The focus of study in these chapters was the development of Levantine secondary state kingship and how this institution is reflected in literature and architecture. The northern kingdom of Israel was one of several secondary states that emerged in the Levant during the Iron Age I-II period. To reconstruct secondary state formation, we observed the development of these states. The Omrides are undeniably historical with their existence confirmed by multiple extrabiblical texts. The way the IPM reports their consolidation of power seems to match the patterns of secondary state formation in Iron Age II. Secondary states relied upon various forms of divine sanction, and Omride Israel appears to have relied upon a pattern of royal cult which is known from several LBA polities. The turn to Baal worship in Omride Israel was not an invasive religious idea but rather an attempt to revive the indigenous Canaanite royal cult to preserve and extend the dynasty. This use of a royal cult dates at least back to Ugarit where the Baal Cycle was used to provide support for the reign of Niqmaddu III. Discussing Tugendhaft's interpretation of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, there are some observable parallels to the rise of the Omrides.

## Answering Linguistic Bias

### Writing and Literacy in the Iron Age Levant

The fifth chapter delved into the nature of the literary evidence from the NWS-speaking secondary states of the Levant. It is generally held that preexilic Israelite society did not produce lengthy literary works such as the IPM materials. The consensus is that any lengthy materials in Hebrew must be postexilic in origin. Superficially, the evidence would seem to support this position since there are no extant non-biblical literary compositions in NWS languages from the secondary state period. As the argument goes, there was not sufficient state infrastructure to sustain a scribal class.

In answer to this criticism, however, it was demonstrated that the arguments against lengthy works are circumstantial. The secondary states were fully developed states with sufficient infrastructure. Since lengthy works and large archives were being produced in the region during the LBA, especially in sites like Ugarit, it is only reasonable that this would have also been the case in the NWS-speaking secondary states. Lengthy works in NWS languages likely do not exist because they were written on papyrus which decomposes quickly in the Levantine environments. If there was no scribal school replicating the texts, they would be lost relatively quickly. Given that there is strong evidence for a variety of scribal traditions during the Omridic period, there is a viable argument to be made that although no papyrus materials exist from the time, there was a strong literary tradition and class of scribes, along with general awareness of literacy which would have accommodated the development of something akin to the IPM. To add to this argument, it is clear that the literary works of these states existed within Niditch's oral register, and therefore were not fully realized textual works but rather transitional

forms. One such form, Campbell's reported story, provides a template for considering the IPM materials within this oral register.

### The Israelian Character of Prophetic Materials in the Book of Kings

Chapter six presented an involved linguistic argument for the presence of Israelian Hebrew in the IPM as evidence for its preexilic origin. One of the arguments made by critics such as Alexander Rofé is that the text of the Omridic materials is "late" because of the features such as Aramaisms and foreign loanwords. It was shown that the presence of Aramaisms and Aramaic-like characteristics is not an indication of a late date. Language contact between the Israelites and the peoples around them, including the Phoenicians and Aramaeans, and the necessity of diglossia because of these interactions resulted in a uniquely northern dialect of Hebrew, Israelian Hebrew according to Rendsburg. This was not a single form of the language but a spectrum of dialects. Within this spectrum, Aramaic had varying impact. Spoken dialects would have been more widely colored, but the written form would inevitably be affected as well. The "late" features of the Omridic materials are almost entirely confined to direct speech by those who would have been involved in diplomatic affairs and therefore were likely to utilize more Aramaic in the first place. Without any kind of standardization in place, the assumption of a monolithic SBH form is, at best, wishful thinking. Dialects and variations due to language contact should be expected, and their impact is often too random to be ordered in the neat, orderly categories offered by those who favor linguistic dating.

The presence of IH in the biblical text has been protested by a number of scholars, but there is good reason to accept that it is historical. It can be shown to exist in the literary prophets, with Amos and Hosea in particular having a number of unique traits in their language which can be attributed to IH. Even Isaiah has a number of non-Judahite traits which show the influence of

the northern prophetic tradition. While these traits could be the result of oral influence, they could also testify to the existence of a northern prophetic archives which may have still been in use in the training of prophets in Isaiah's day. The northern kingdom is the likely vector for these traits because it had shared borders with the kingdoms that would have produced the Aramaic-like and Phoenician influences in IH.

### **The Convergence**

Let us now look at the conclusions from the three lines of argument. (1) If the authors of the biblical text believed in the direct involvement of a necessary God in history, then their recording of the supernatural would have been in keeping with their theology. Therefore, the supernatural aspects of the IPM need not be later additions or legends, but could plausibly be treated as history, despite our own modern objections. (2) If the Israelian prophets were operating as the loyal opposition within the uniquely Omride religio-political world, and details to that context are present in the biblical text, then one must admit that there is a plausible argument for the texts to be, at the very least, essentially original to the Omride period and setting. (3) If it can be demonstrated that the absence of lengthy literary works from the Omride period is the result of the shift to new technology which was more perishable, then it could be argued that such lengthy works would have been copied and preserved. They would therefore have hallmark linguistic traits of that northern, Omride context. Therefore, it is plausible that if such linguistic traits exist in the biblical record of the IPM, then the biblical text may preserve those traits because the texts originated in the north and were transmitted via copying in the later periods.

These three lines of reasoning all point to a plausible argument for the preexilic origin of the IPM. They are not absolute and excluding other views of the text was not the intent of this

dissertation, only the plausibility of a preexilic origin. The dissertation was an attempt to revive a theologically robust approach to the text and demonstrate that one does not need to exclude the tremendous scholarship in the socio-historical disciplines in order to accept the text as historical. One also does not need to exclude or denigrate the realities of the biblical authors' approach to the text in order to incorporate socio-historical evidence. Admittedly, the tension between these two approaches can be challenging to navigate. It requires a critical eye and a willingness to hold in abeyance one's own modern interpretation of the text, whether conservative or minimalist, in favor of seeking balance.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In reading and rereading the IPM texts, this scholar was struck by the centrality of two particular pericopes, which may serve as thematic axes for the ring compositions of the Elijah and Elisha materials.<sup>7</sup> Elijah's encounter with Ahab concerning Naboth's vineyard (1 Kgs 21:1–28) and Elisha's work on the behalf of the Shunamite woman (2 Kgs 8:1–6) stand out from the narratives. They both concern land rights, particularly the rights of those who are outside of the sphere of Omride-Nimshite influence. Since they deal with land, they also seem to be connected to the concept of inheritance evident in Joshua (Josh 11:23, 13:6). If these are taken as the center point of two ring compositions, there is a symmetry worth exploring. Such a literary exploration could certainly aid in understanding the narrative as a unit, this would not aid in understanding the dating of the narratives. Since the biblical texts represent essentially the only lengthy literary works from the Omride period, the substantial corpus of texts necessary for comparative literary

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<sup>7</sup> Douglas referred to these axes as "turning points" and said they would be well-marked and inflected in any composition which employs them. To identify a ring composition then, one must identify potential thematic axes and then search for patterns around them. Keywords, imagery, and compositional clues point to symmetry, but that symmetry is rarely as simple as an *inclusio* or chiasmic structure. Douglas, *Thinking in Circles*, 34–38.

analysis may not exist. This is an area for further research, and it may bear fruit in time. Given the tangential nature of this research, this area of exploration was not included in this dissertation.

Another vital area of further research is the rethinking of architecture and city planning in terms of the royal religion. During the preparation of this dissertation, it became increasingly clear that many assumptions have been made about the structure of Canaanite cities, and in quite a few cases where unique structures have been shoehorned into categories that were convenient for some researchers but did not adequately categorize the structures. Overall, the archaeological survey of Omride sites tends to find the kinds of buildings that the surveyors expect to find. Perhaps with an understanding of the royal cult as utilized by the Omrides, an intrepid field surveyor may begin reconsidering these sites and see whether they can confirm architecturally the presence of these religio-political entities. This endeavor is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but worthwhile, nonetheless.

A third area that begs for further research is the nature of Israelian Hebrew and its presence in the biblical text. Rendsburg and his students are working on this project almost in isolation, but they continue to produce dissertations, monographs, and essays that demonstrate the volumes of data yet to be understood. As Rendsburg and his students produce more analyses, it will be necessary to have these consolidated into a tool, which could be on par with Young and Rezetko's *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts* in scale. Really, his work is a synchronic application of Hurvitz's criteria for late texts, which still contains vestigial diachronic biases implicit in its arguments. The criticisms often leveled against the IH theory look increasingly weak as more data is compiled, and it seems that the critical responses have waned in recent years.



## APPENDIX A: A NOTE ON נביא, OTHER HEBREW TERMS AND SEMITIC COGNATES

The English term *prophet* lacks the precision of the Hebrew. The English word is a transliteration of the Greek προφήτης, which was employed in LXX to translate three Hebrew words: ראה, הזה, and נביא. In Greek society, προφήτης has a general meaning as someone who speaks for another. There is not necessarily a religious connotation, although the interpreters of the Delphic oracles were referred to as prophets. The person who received the message from divinities was a μάντις, hence “mantic” practices.<sup>1</sup> The translators of LXX probably opted for προφήτης to avoid confusion with the Greek oracles, which were still very active in the Roman period.

The origin of נביא is lost to history, but the meaning is quite different from μάντις which is etymologically tied to ecstatic practices. The Hebrew term may have been employed broadly in ancient contexts, with only a portion of this semantic range remaining in scriptural texts. Curtis presents a possible folk etymology for the term in 1 Samuel 9:5–10.<sup>2</sup> He argues that the Hebrews tied the title to the practice of bringing gifts to the seer/prophet, seeing Saul’s question in verse seven as wordplay.<sup>3</sup> This certainly provides an interesting literary interchange, and it may be that the Hebrews were unaware of the origins of the title and therefore employed the wordplay. It may also be that this is a legitimate exploration of the reason they replaced two older terms (ראה, הזה) with prophet (נביא). It would have served to distinguish a unique Hebrew institution.

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<sup>1</sup> For recent treatments of Greek mantic practices, see Georg Luck, trans. *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Collection of Ancient Texts*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 285–368; Michael A. Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 22–70.

<sup>2</sup> John Briggs Curtis, “A Folk Etymology of Nābi,” *VT* 29 (1979): 491–93.

<sup>3</sup> לנערך והנה גלך ומה־נביא לאיש – Curtis points to the use of the verb נביא, “to bring” here.

ANE cultures had a number of terms associated with mantic practices. There are a number of cognates of נביא in Semitic languages, but these cognates tend not to be related to prophetic acts. Akkadian *nabû(m)* is attested in the Ebla tablets as an honorific for kings. Elsewhere in Akkadian literature, *nabû(m)* is employed in some sense of divination, but not in the sense that Hebrew uses נביא.<sup>4</sup> Stökl follows Fleming in asserting that in these texts, the words indicate divination and not prophetic oracles.<sup>5</sup> The most common is an idiomatic expression, *ilānī u mētī/ilāti nubbû*. This translates as something like “to call to my gods and dead/goddesses.” It is important that the idiom be understood as being an invocation, focused on a specific divine group and not a presentation of a message from the gods.<sup>6</sup> At Temple M<sub>1</sub> in Emar, it is used as an adjective to refer to sacred objects and sacrificial lists, again focused on divination rather than a person performing prophetic speech.

In Old Akkadian, there was a sense of naming or declaration, with it appealing with *mala* and perhaps designating existence.<sup>7</sup> According to Fleming argues <sup>lú.meš</sup>*na-bi-i* from the Išharra cult at Emar was a temple functionary.<sup>8</sup> Female functionaries, *munabbiātu*, also appear. Both male and female are described in groups. Additionally, Fleming distinguishes between two idiomatic uses of *nabû*, arguing that when employed in a private context, it is a calling upon family deities.<sup>9</sup> At no point, however, do these functionaries serve a mantic purpose. Their role

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<sup>4</sup> H. P. Müller, TDOT 9:133. For more on the divination practices in Chapel G3, see Nicolò Marchetti, “Divination at Ebla During the Old Syrian Period: The Archaeological Evidence,” in *Exploring the Longue Durée: Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager*, ed. J. David Schloen (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 279–96.

<sup>5</sup> Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 161–66.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 163. For example, Stökl offers as an example CM 13 3:23–24, *DINGIR.MEŠ u me-te-ia la-<aḥ>-te-ia* <sup>24</sup>*a-bi-šu-nu lu-ma-ab-bu*, “May they invoke/call the gods and the dead of Laḥeyta, their father.”

<sup>7</sup> CDA, “*nabû(m)* II,” 228–229.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Fleming, “*Nābû* and *Munabbiātu*: Two New Syrian Religious Personnel,” *JAOS* 113 (1993): 175–83.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 178. He distinguishes from the less common usage of “lament.

in the temple cult is not articulated in the texts. On the other hand, *āpiltu(m)/āpilu(m)* was employed regularly for someone who was asked to answer for the gods.<sup>10</sup> Diviners (*bārû*) were those that directly and professionally engaged in various auguries, and they had a corpus of texts to consult for determinations.<sup>11</sup> According to Gabbay, these diviners acted only when requested by the king.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the ubiquity of these divinatory practices throughout the region, they were flatly condemned in Torah (Deut 18:9–14), and it may be that the Hebrew culture adopted נביא as the term for their prophets to distinguish them from the ANE practices. Mantic divination existed in the region at least from the MBA but the absence of נביא cognates as well as the use of these auguries and other divinatory practices gives us reason to draw a sharp contrast between Hebrew prophecy and the mantic practices of other cultures.

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<sup>10</sup> CDA, s.v. “*āpilum*,” 20.

<sup>11</sup> CDA, s.v. “*bārû(m)*” 39; CAD 2:115–18 for the process and 121–25 for the person. Literally, “one who sees.” There was a large corpus of extispicy and astrology texts which were consulted by these professional diviners. The study of these texts is a complicated, specialized field. See Uri Gabbay, *The Exegetical Terminology of Akkadian Commentaries*, CHANE 82 (Leiden: Brill, 2016). This recent volume illuminates the means by which the diviners did their work.

<sup>12</sup> Gabbay, *The Exegetical Terminology of Akkadian Commentaries*, 275.

## APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF PROPHETIC WORDS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

One must be cautious about defining these terms too discretely because there is some overlap and word usage changes over time and location. The brief definition and discussion here are provided more as a brief reference than as a resource. The Akkadian section is drawn mostly from *CAD*, although aspects of the research from chapter three have inevitably colored the comments. Greek definitions are from *BGD*, and Hebrew is drawn from *HALOT* and *TDOT*.

### Akkadian (Babylonian/Assyrian)

<i>āpiltu(m)/āpilu(m)</i>	Answerer	A technical diviner, associated with the temples.
<i>amāru</i>	To see, to look into, understand	Broad term encompassing roughly the same semantic range as 𐎠𐎢𐎽𐎢.
<i>bārû</i>	One who sees	A diviner or seer.
<i>dāgil iššūri</i>	Observer of birds	The bird augur, the one who determines omens by bird movement.
<i>mahhû(m)/muḥḥû</i>	Ecstatic, frenzied	Probably associated with the temple; possibly trained interpreters.
<i>munabbiātu</i>	Wailer	This affiliation is possibly why some associate the <i>muḥḥû(m)</i> with lament.
<i>nabû(m)/nabī</i>	Call, speak	Generally, not used to describe an individual but rather an action.
<i>naṭalu</i>	One who looks into	Synonymous with <i>bārû</i> .
<i>ragāmu</i>	To declare, evoke	The act of prophetic utterance.
<i>šipir mahḥu</i>	A letter or message of the ecstatic	A message from the ecstatic, usually second hand.

### Greek

μάντις	ecstatic	The common Greek term for any kind of prophetic activity (Ac 16:16).
προφήτης	speaker, representative	Used exclusively in LXX and NT to translate Hebrew words below, to distinguish from pagan practices.

### Hebrew

הוה	Seer	Old Aramaic origin, tied to the seeing of visions (Gen 15:1).
נביא	One who names or calls	The generic term translated as “prophet”; a spokesman for the divine.
האג	Seer	Possibly tied to the idea of visions, or just seeing what others do not.



### APPENDIX C: CONTINUITY WITH PREEXILIC LITERARY PROPHETS

The relationship between the Omridic prophets and the literary prophets is a question that has been discussed at length by others.<sup>1</sup> As previously noted, the assumption among many mainstream critics is that the northern Yahwistic prophets were literalized much later, and if this is true, there should be no impact on the preexilic literary prophets, if those books were indeed written in the preexilic period.<sup>2</sup> Some go so far as to argue that the absence of the “classical” prophets in the Book of Kings is an indication of incompatibility between the literary prophets and the DH theology.<sup>3</sup> This absence is curious only if one assumes a postexilic composition of the prophetic materials in the Book of Kings. Gregory Goswell has called for an “ethical reading” of the canonical ordering of the prophetic books.<sup>4</sup> By this, Goswell means that the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures were organized in such a way that there is “narrative” linkage. The canonical order shows a progression of narrative. From this canonical perspective, it is understandable that the literary prophets would not appear in the Book of Kings. They flow from the central narrative. Isaiah’s presence shows a continuity from north to south, as only the key prophets of each region are named.

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<sup>1</sup> The Book of Jonah is not included in this section because it appears in the previous one.

<sup>2</sup> Where appropriate, this question is answered as it is brought up with each prophetic work discussed below.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher T. Begg, “A Biblical Mystery: The Absence of Jeremiah in the Deuteronomistic History,” *IBS* 7 (1985): 139–64; Christopher T. Begg, “The Non-Mention of Amos, Hosea and Micah in the Deuteronomistic History,” *BN* 32 (1986): 41–53; Christopher T. Begg, “The Non-Mention of Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk in the Deuteronomistic History,” *BN* 38/39 (1987): 19–25.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory Goswell, “The Macro-Structural Role of the Former Prophets and the Historical Books in the Old Testament,” *JETS* 63 (2020): 461.

### Northern Literary Prophets

Forty years ago, it was commonplace to believe that the text of the northern literary prophets was carried to the south when Samaria fell.<sup>5</sup> Such confidence has evaporated in recent scholarship. The primary reason for this is the rejection of the Elijah and Elisha materials as historical, with the materials being reclassified as mythical or legendary because of the supernatural content. There must have been, then, separate sources for the northern traditions. Such an assumption does not really fit with the relationship that the IPM have with preexilic, northern prophets. Thematic examination of the oracles of the northern literary prophets Amos, Hosea, and Micah show affinities with the IPM and the Yahwistic prophets who confronted the Omrides.

#### Amos

Of the northern prophets, Amos bears the closest resemblance to the IPM message and setting, although his book lacks a supernatural element. This does not mean there was not a supernatural element, only that his prophetic oracles were recorded without a great deal of explicit narrative. What context that can be gleaned from the book makes it clear that Amos was an outsider to the court, possibly a wealthy herdsman or tribal leader disinterested in the affairs of court.<sup>6</sup> His message of condemnation is completely in line with the IPM, and Barstad saw in

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the way Greenwood mentions this as axiomatic. David C. Greenwood, "On the Jewish Hope for a Restored Northern Kingdom," *ZAW* 88 (1976): 376.

<sup>6</sup> Amos is described with two unique terms. First is the *dis legomenon* נָקֵד, which appears in Amos 1:1, but also is used to describe Mesha the king of Moab (2 Kgs 3:4). The other, בּוֹקֵר, is a *hapax legomenon*. Based on a cognate of נָקֵד in Akkadian and Ugaritic, it would appear that Amos was not so much a goatherd himself but a wealthy man who only reluctantly joined in the prophetic calling. Glück goes so far as to associate the term with the Sumerian NA.GAD, a title of kings which he claims lost some of its royal associations with time. See Peter C. Craigie, "Amos the *nōqēd* in Light of Ugaritic," *Studies in Religion* 11 (1982): 29–33; J. J. Glück, "Nagid-Shepherd," *VT* 13 (1963): 144–50.

Amos's oracles an implicit battle against Canaanite worship.<sup>7</sup> This unites the message of Amos and the prophets of the Book of Kings, showing that they at least were battling the same general issues. Amos seems to have a sense of the prophets as a particular class within society whose role is to be the voice of YHWH (Amos 3:7, 7:14).<sup>8</sup> This may perhaps indicate the success of the project to develop "the sons of the prophets."

While Amos does not hesitate to reiterate condemnations for national sin, he also has a broad theological perspective on the calling and covenant of nations (Amos 3:2, 9:7).<sup>9</sup> This echoes the role of the Omridic prophets in appointing kings of Aram, ministering to foreign military commanders (1 Kgs 19:15; 2 Kgs 5:1–14, 8:7–15). Damascus and the Phoenician states are singled out for punishment along with the states in the Transjordan. Unlike the unhearing, unresponsive Baal that Elijah faced, YHWH is actively involved in the affairs of all nations (Amos 2:1).<sup>10</sup>

Amos is filled with subtle allusions to the Elijah and Elisha materials. The condemnation of the luxuries of Samaria is well known (Amos 6:4–6). There are also references to "garments taken in pledge," possibly an allusion to Gehazi's sin (Amos 2:6–8; 2 Kgs 5:22–27). There is a clear bias against the women of Samaria, which perhaps reflects the corruption not just of

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<sup>7</sup> Hans M. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos: Studies in the Preaching of Amos ii 7B-8, iv 1-13, v 1-27, vi 4-7, viii 14*, VTSup 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 2–6. Barstad admits his position is in the minority. See also Arvid. S. Kepulrud, *Central Ideas in Amos* (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1971), 67. See also Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books*, 25–29. Admittedly, Barstad's position is dated, but in its essentials, it has been reiterated recently in Göran Eidevall, *Amos*, 150–51, fn. 16. Eidevall notes that Amos possibly employs Aramaeo-Canaanite victory motifs in his descriptions of YHWH (Amos 4:13).

<sup>8</sup> John Barton, *The Theology of Amos*, Old Testament Theology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113–17. Because of his diachronic view of the text, Barton feels there are two competing views of prophecy in Amos.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 70–77.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 184–85.

Jezebel but also the women encountered in the siege of Samaria (Amos 4:1; 2 Kgs 6:24–32).<sup>11</sup> Also, the attempts to silence the prophets are parallel (Amos 2:12). Finally, the work of Jehu as the destroyer is found in both Amos and Elijah (1 Kgs 19:17; 2 Kgs 9:1–10; Amos 3:13–15). Amos is, at the very least, a part of a continuity with the IPM.

### Hosea

Although the chronological data at the beginning of Hosea lists Judahite kings, the book itself has a northern milieu.<sup>12</sup> Gomer's firstborn is named Jezreel (Hos 1:4–5). An emphasis is placed on cavalry, a characteristically northern military unit (Hos 1:7). The emphasis on Baal worship (Hos 2:17) and the type of Canaanite cultic sites (Hos 4:13, 17) also point to this northern origin.<sup>13</sup> Hosea addresses both Israelite kingdoms, but direct address is often pointed to the northern kingdom (Hos 4:15, 5:5–6), and Israel is singled out for direct rebuke in several chapters. While Hosea lacks extraordinary supernatural elements such as healings and resurrections, the extraordinary living metaphor of his marriage to the adulteress Gomer is somewhat in the strain of Elijah and Elisha's lifestyle prophecy, the way in which they were actively involved in the narrative of their oracles, participating in practical manifestations of their

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<sup>11</sup> For discussion, see Hans W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos: A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos*, trans. Walder Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 203–7.

<sup>12</sup> As mentioned in chapter 2, there are some like James Bos, who prefer to date Hosea to the Persian period. For the linguistic reasons reviewed in that chapter, Hosea should be viewed as a preexilic, Israelian composition, see that earlier discussion.

<sup>13</sup> Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books*, 44–45. Huber has recently argued that the Baal worship reflected in the book has more to do with the internal cohesiveness of the worship of YHWH than a specific Canaanite cult, and if one dates Hosea later. See Caitlin Huber, “‘No Longer Will You Call Me ‘My Ba’al’’: Hosea’s Polemic and the Semantics of ‘Ba’al’ in 8th Century BCE Israel,” *JSOT* 44, no. 4 (2020): 616–23. To make her argument, however, Huber argues that the presence of Baal does not necessarily indicate opposition to YHWH and that in Hosea’s day, the name no longer denoted a deity. She dismisses the presence of cultic practices associated with Canaanite religion as being equally associated with YHWH worship. She even goes so far as to bring the debate concerning a female consort for YHWH into the conversation, arguing that Hosea’s entire prophetic motif is reflective of a more syncretic YHWH worship. In other words, she sees Hosea’s witness as both later and in a more syncretistic mindset.

message such as their relationships with resurrections and healings in concert with their calls to return the kingdom—resurrect the kingdom—through a return to covenant.

Hans Walter Wolff argued that the Hosea was a direct successor of a prophetic tradition which would have included the northern prophets of the Book of Kings like Ahijah, Elijah, and Elisha (Hosea 4:5, 6:6, 9:7–9, 12:10–14).<sup>14</sup> In this thinking, this was an obvious conclusion. This particular line of prophets represented the voice of YHWH amidst the corruption of the priesthood and “official” religion.<sup>15</sup> This seems to place Hosea in line with the northern Yahwistic prophets and the IPM.

### Southern Literary Prophets

#### Micah

Micah and Isaiah both lived and ministered through the fall of Samaria, so their testimony is the first beyond the northern prophetic class. In the case of Micah, there is an explicit reference to the northern kingdom in parallel with the southern (1:1, 3:1). The references to the presence of the Assyrian armies in Judah (5:5–6) and the exile of “the remnant of Jacob”

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<sup>14</sup> Hans W. Wolff, “Hoseas geistige Heimat,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 81 (1956): 83–94. “Gewiß aber sieht er sich in einer Phalanx, die durch die Generationen Israels hindurchgeht, aus der Ahia von Silo, Elia und Elisa, Micha ben Jimla und Amos für in die Geschichte des Nordreichs gehören.” See also Hans W. Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), xxii–xxiii. Wolff’s arguments may be dated, but more recently, Hubbard sees a broader succession of the prophetic message, reaching back to Moses. David Allan Hubbard, *Hosea*, TCOT 24 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 137. See also J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 35, 234. Dearman allows for an implicit succession from the northern prophets but is not more definitive due to the lack of references to the prophets by name.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Odell challenged Wolff’s conclusion, arguing that Hosea saw himself as distinct from these prophets, even in opposition to them. Margaret S. Odell, “Who Were the Prophets in Hosea?” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 18.1 (1996): 78–95. She relies upon a “Deuteronomistic prophet” as her template for this criticism, and in some places she stumbles. For example, she splits a semantic hair in Hosea 12:10, arguing that it should be rendered as a speech about prophets rather than YHWH saying he spoke to the prophets, but she completely ignores verse 13, which is a reference to Moses that clarifies the meaning of verse 10. Hubbard allows for an amalgamation of YHWH and Baal cults, but still sees Hosea as rejecting what came from the Canaanite Baal worship. See Hubbard, *Hosea*, 88–90; Wolff, *Hosea*, 215–16.

(5:6–8) seem to testify to parts of the book being written after the fall of Samaria. According to Jeremiah, Micah’s ministry was the impetus behind Hezekiah’s reforms (Jer 26:17–19).<sup>16</sup> There have been multiple attempts to create a redactional history of the text of Micah, mostly motivated by the sense that it must be reflective of the DH’s influence on the message. It is more likely that the text is a coherent literary work dating to the appropriate time.<sup>17</sup> Like many of the prophets, Micah endured opposition from the authorities (Micah 2:6). He opposed false prophets, whether devoted to other gods or speaking in the name of YHWH, credits his visions to the filling of the Spirit (Micah 3:5–8). There is also a sense in which Micah sees Israel’s opposition as being led by YHWH as retribution for apostasy (Micah 2:13). Unlike the northern prophets in the Book of Kings, however, Micah focuses on the Jerusalem temple (Micah 4:2), but this is due to his southern origin.

### Isaiah

Even those who separate Isaiah into two or three chronologically distinct redactions acknowledge that the so-called “First Isaiah” is an eighth century BCE work by a historical

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<sup>16</sup> It may be that there is a subtle affinity with Deuteronomy in Micah’s call to “Arise, plead your case before the mountains” (6:1–2). Consider that the exiles from the north would have likely journeyed to the south via the main road that passed between Ebal and Gerizim, where Moses commanded the Israelites to erect two stelae with the curse and blessings on them (Deut 11:29–31). This not a verifiable connection, but an interesting possibility.

<sup>17</sup> For a summary of the various theories, see Anton Schoors, *The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.*, trans. Michael Lesley, *Biblical Encyclopedia* 5 (Atlanta: SBL 2013), 175–79. Although he credits Micah 4:1–4, 6–8 and 7:8–20 to possible later hands, Allen concludes there is no reason to assume complex redaction of the text. Common sense perceives the text as a composite of multiple oracles, but there is no reason to assume extensive or multiple redactions. Redactional theories have abounded, especially as the focus of redaction has shifted to treating the twelve Minor Prophets as a single redactional work. See Jakob Wöhrle, “So Many Cross-References! Methodological Reflections on the Problem of Intertextual Relationships and their Significance for Redactional Critical Analysis,” in *Perspective on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations, Redactional Processes, and Historical Insights*, ed. Rainer Albertz, James D. Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle, BZAW 433 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 3–20. For a non-redactional consideration, see Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 215–24. Although Allen is dated, his reasoning makes sense. The issue really is whether a reader comes to the text looking for reasons to date portions to a later period or if one wishes to see the text as whole unless there is incontrovertible evidence that a passage cannot date to the original context.

prophet.<sup>18</sup> As such, the text would likely reflect some understanding of the prophetic school or “sons of the prophets” who appear in the IPM. Isaiah lived through the fall of Samaria, and his role during the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:1–37) closely paralleled Elisha’s role in an Aramaean siege of Samaria (2 Kgs 6:24–7:20), but with very different responses from the respective kings. The dissonance between the two siege accounts highlights the high view of the IPM. The relationship of Isaiah to the IPM will be dealt with below.

Consider Isaiah’s words concerning revelation (Isaiah 8:16–20). There, the prophet asks, “Should not a people inquire of their God? ... To the teaching (תורה) and to the testimony (תעודה)!” In context, these two authorities are held up in opposition to the mutterings of mediums and necromancers (Isa 8:19), so they must have some significance. Since the two words stand in the same relationship to their roots, it is worth considering what is meant here.<sup>19</sup> If תורה speaks to the teaching or instruction of YHWH, then what is תעודה? The most reasonable explanation would be that these represent two harmonious authorities, one which teaches the will of YHWH and the other which bears witness. In other words, it may be that Isaiah is appealing to the Law and the Prophets, or rather the acknowledged testimony of the prophets.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The division of the text of Isaiah has a diverse literature, and it is not the focus here, but a note is necessary. It was Bernhard Duhm who first proposed that the book may consist of three prophetic collections. See Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*, HKAT 3/1, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914; 1st ed., 1892). The first thirty-nine chapters were seen as original, with a “Second Isaiah” or Deutero-Isaiah writing or editing a second collection. For theories, see R. Norman Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, NCB (Greenwood, NC: Attic Press, 1975), 20–23; Paul D. Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), xliii–xlvi. See also Klaus Batzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary*, trans. Margaret Kohl, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001). Some recent works have turned away from this thesis, but it is still relatively prevalent.

<sup>19</sup> תורה deriving from ירה (to teach) and תעודה deriving from עוד (to witness or confirm), TDOT 10:495, 1e. There was a correlation to the prophetic office (2 Kgs 17:13–15, Amos 3:13). It is worth noting as an aside that the translators of LXX had significant trouble with תעודה, which they rendered as both φανερός and βοήθεια. Alex Douglas suggests this was an intentional change to enforce strict Torah observance among Gentiles in later periods. See Alex P. Douglas, “A Call to Law: The Septuagint of Isaiah 8 and Gentile Law Observance,” *JBL* 137 (2018): 87–104.

<sup>20</sup> Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch*, 260.

While the separation into two terms may indicate the combined witness of Law and Prophets, Blenkinsopp sees this phrase as connecting to the sealed tablet mentioned earlier in this oracle (Isa 8:1–4), and he identifies a strong connection to prophetic teaching, arguing that it was meant to be a transmission of prophetic texts to Isaiah’s disciples.<sup>21</sup> It is unlikely that Isaiah would have had the full corpus of prophetic texts in mind, including his own, but rather a corpus of prophetic witnesses that supported the Law.<sup>22</sup> This prophetic witness must, of necessity, predate Isaiah. He is describing the precedents of his prophetic office, which apparently was being transmitted to his disciples or the school of prophets that would follow him.<sup>23</sup> Only one commentator, J. J. M. Roberts, sees the phrase as corresponding not to the prophets but rather to their rivals, the necromancers.<sup>24</sup> Roberts bases his position on a particular semantic reading in which he rejects the usual reading of the Hebrew words and an implied shift of speakers.<sup>25</sup> Such a view rejects not only the scholarship of others such as Bleckinsopp, Goldingay, and Wildberger (cited above) but also the line structure of the Masoretic Text, something Roberts admits freely.

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<sup>21</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ABC 19 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 244–45. Some have argued this is a late addition, perhaps postexilic in nature, but Blenkinsopp does not agree. See, for example, Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 371. Resorting to dark means of divination such as necromancy would fit with the period of military struggle that the oracle is set in.

<sup>22</sup> H. G. M. Williamson sees תעודה as connecting to the prophetic testimony, probably not in its entirety but certainly what came in the tradition of Moses, the credited prophet of the Torah. H. G. M. Williamson, *Isaiah 6–12*, vol. 2 of *Isaiah 1–27: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, ICC (London: T & T Clark, 2018), 337–38. Wegner sees it as the specific prophecies Isaiah had presented concerning the kingdom, especially as it is entrusted to Isaiah’s followers (למד). Wegner, *Isaiah*, 117. Although differing in degree, all agree that תורה refers to prophecy alongside Torah.

<sup>23</sup> This is Goldingay’s position. “This may denote entrusting the contents of his message to his disciples, or perhaps actually putting it into writing and literally sealing it. That might be the beginning of the origin of the book called Isaiah.” In this, he agrees with Blenkinsopp. See John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 114. Wildberger, while rejecting the early date of this portion of the text, still describes this passage this way: *Er fordert Hinwendung zum überlieferten prophetischen Wort*, (“He [Isaiah] demands turning to the traditional prophetic word”). Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja*, vol. 1, *Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament 10* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 354.

<sup>24</sup> J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 142.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

Certainly, there could have been rival instructions and testimonies from the necromancers, but given that the same phrase appears in previous verses and clearly speaks to the prophetic message, Roberts position must be relegated to the minority.

In the biblical record, this distinct kind of prophets appear in Judah only after the fall of the northern kingdom.<sup>26</sup> It was a primarily northern phenomenon (2 Kgs 17:23). Jehoshaphat acknowledged the existence of prophets, and yet had none of his own to call upon (2 Kgs 3:11). The determination that he was a “righteous” king may have more to do with welcoming prophets and their voices.<sup>27</sup> It was only during the reign of Hezekiah that Judah accepted the prophetic office, including Micah and Isaiah and extending through the end of the kingdom in Jeremiah.<sup>28</sup> These prophets emerge at the time of Judah’s first great apostasy – from the death of Uzziah until the reign of Hezekiah (Isa 1:1). Na‘aman makes a great deal of the “addition” of the prophetic materials to the Book of Kings, but he does not seem to notice that supposed righteous kings, like Uzziah/Azariah receive only seven verses (2 Kgs 15:1–7). If the author was filling in areas of ignorance in the northern kingdom, why did he not fill in areas of ignorance for a king who reigned for fifty-two years? This idea of filling in narrative gaps falls short. The prophets and their interactions occupy the central position in the narrative from the north/south split until the fall of Samaria. Isaiah’s reference to “the law and the testimony” may refer back to this period. Additionally, the language of portions of Isaiah may have a particularly northern flavor.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> These Judahite prophets are distinct from the Davidic seers due both to their setting and their role. See pages 199–203.

<sup>27</sup> Na‘aman, “Prophetic Stories as Sources,” 158–59.

<sup>28</sup> Ernest W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 100–102. The synchronization data with kings of Judah does not indicate activity in Judah, such as Hosea 1:1.

<sup>29</sup> The issue of Israelian and Judahite Hebrew has been addressed in chapter two. See Christopher B. Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27: Josiah’s Festival Scroll for the Fall of Assyria* (New York: Cambridge University

Hays argues that the language is not quite as difficult as Hosea, but nonetheless it clearly depends upon a language tradition that is distinct from SBH.

### Jeremiah

Decades ago, Greenwood observed that Jeremiah includes clear prophecies about the restoration of the northern kingdom, “perhaps the most conspicuous example in the Tanak of patently false prophecy.”<sup>30</sup> In his mind, the northern kingdom was completely gone, and these prophecies were the wishful thinking of a remnant of northerners living in isolation in the southern kingdom. It is not hard to hear Cross’s influence in this argument. Let us consider the proposed existence of the IPM at this point. If the IPM had somehow been transmitted to the prophetic schools in the south, then this northern kingdom, now lost for a century, would be the subject of prophetic inquiry.

Hays sees northern influence in Jeremiah, and Huffmon sees the Rechabites as possible successors of Elijah’s northern school (Jer 35).<sup>31</sup> The framing of the Rechabites makes it clear that Jeremiah is acquainted with them, but certainly not a member of the group. Jeremiah resonates strongly with Deuteronomy in many places, and part of that resonance gives him certain affinities with the IPM.<sup>32</sup> This contrasts strongly with postexilic authors who tended to marginalize the northern kingdom of Israel, given the association with the Samaritans, but

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Press, 2019), 160–71; Scott B. Noegel, “Dialect and Politics in Isaiah 24–27,” *AuOr* 12.2 (1994): 177–92. Although Hays argues for a Josianic origin of the Isaiah text, he nonetheless presents a number of arguments that support this dissertation’s thesis.

<sup>30</sup> Greenwood, “On the Jewish Hope for a Restored Northern Kingdom,” 385.

<sup>31</sup> Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27*, 148–49; Herbert B. Huffmon, “The Rechabites in the Book of Jeremiah and their Historical Roots in Israel,” in *The Book of Jeremiah: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, eds. Jack R. Lundbom, Craig A. Evans, and Bradford A. Anderson, VTSup 178 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 191–210.

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of these resonances, see Georg Fischer, “Jeremiah— ‘The Prophet Like Moses’?” in Lundbom, Evans, and Anderson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 45–66.

Jeremiah treats the restoration of the north as a key aspect of prophetic vision.<sup>33</sup> Recently, Benedetta Rossi has pointed to Jeremiah's reliance upon his scribe Baruch as a possible indication of prophetic continuity. Rossie argues that the language of Jeremiah indicates a plurality of prophets who employed writing as their chief act of mediation.<sup>34</sup>

When Jeremiah has YHWH asking, "Is not Ephraim still my dear son?" (Jer 31:20), Jeremiah is clearly pointing to a potential restoration alongside Judah (Jer 31:31). Jerusalem is about to be destroyed, but there is a promise for restoration. The same could be true for Israel. How could such a kingdom be lost without hope of restoration? James Muilenburg commented extensively on the continuity of "covenant mediators" which included Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah.<sup>35</sup> He saw Hosea and Jeremiah tied together as the greatest of these mediators because they mediate the covenant for condemned kingdoms. Hosea declares that Israel will once more be YHWH's people, despite the fact that they scorned YHWH at present (Hosea 2:1, 6:11–7:1).<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Jeremiah calls for repentance among a sinful people who seem unrepentant, but YHWH still says he will heal them (Jer 3:21–25). The description of Judah in Jeremiah 14:10 is not much different from Hosea's description of Israel in Hosea 7. In fact, Judah's sin is so great that YHWH says even Moses and Samuel could not mediate the covenant between him and his people (Jer 15:1). Still, in the end a new covenant is given to Judah (Jer 31:31–34), and by extension, the possibility of this new covenant also welcoming Israel back cannot be ignored. In

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<sup>33</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *I and II Chronicles*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 54; H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 112–14; Hays, *The Origins of Isaiah*, 150–51.

<sup>34</sup> Benedetta Rossi, "Reshaping Jeremiah: Scribal Strategies and the Prophet Like Moses," *JSOT* 44 (2020): 578–81. The relationship of Jeremiah and Baruch was discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>35</sup> Jack R. Lundbom, "Jeremiah as the Mediator of the Covenant," in Lundbom, Evans, and Anderson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 437–55. Lundbom received Muilenburg's unpublished lecture texts upon Muilenburg's retirement in 1972 and relies heavily upon them in his exploration of this topic.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 445–46.

essence, Lundbom sees Jeremiah as the capstone of the great mediation for all of Israel which began with Moses.

## APPENDIX D: IRON AGE CHRONOLOGY

The establishment of the Iron Age chronology is somewhat dependent upon state formation. Thus, Iron Age IIA is really defined by the northern Israelite kingdom which rose around 920 BCE and had all but folded by the transition to Iron Age IIB. Unsurprisingly, Iron Age IIB ends with Jerusalem falling to the Babylonians. These date ranges have what might be considered “fuzzy” borders, as shifts in ceramic production never occur in an instant, and geopolitical dynamics rarely shift in a moment. There are two primary views of the history of Israel within the Levant. The “High Chronology” or “Conventional Chronology” was first presented by William F. Albright, who utilized a simplified scheme.<sup>1</sup>

<b>Periods</b>	<b>Chronology</b>	<b>Biblical History</b>
Iron I	Twelfth–Tenth centuries inclusive	Judges and United Monarchy
Iron II	Ninth Century to beginning of sixth	Divided Monarchy
Iron III	ca. 550–330 BC	Exile and Restoration

The “Low Chronology” or “minimalist view” of Levantine archaeology is perhaps best represented by the works of Israel Finkelstein. Below is the table of ceramic phases in the Iron Age in the Levant which Finkelstein and Piasezky published in 2010.<sup>2</sup> While Finkelstein and Piasezky offer quite concrete and specific dates in the table, there is good reason to allow that the edges of the dating are porous. Notice that in some cases, as in the transition between Middle Iron Age I and Late Iron Age I, the transition spans almost the entirety of a purported period. These categories are therefore somewhat flexible.

<sup>1</sup> William F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1971), 112.

<sup>2</sup> Israel Finkelstein and Eli Piasezky, “Radiocarbon-dated Destruction Layers: A Skeleton for Iron Age Chronology in the Levant,” *OJA* 28 (2009): 381.

<b>Iron Age ceramic phase</b>	<b>Date of phase [BC]</b>	<b>Transition [BC]</b>
Late Bronze III	–1098	
		1125–1071
Early	1109–1047	
		1082–1037
Iron I	1055–1028	
Middle		1045–1021
Late	1037–913	
		960–899
Early Iron IIA	920–883	
		902–866
Late Iron IIA	886–760	
		785–748
Transitional Iron IIA/B	757–	

Each individual site has different strata, so for example Stratum VA-IVB at Megiddo and Stratum X at Hazor contain the same Iron Age IIA pottery assemblages as Jezreel, which is known to be an Omride site. Therefore, despite the difference in total number of strata at the sites, these are the Omride layers. Herzog and Singer-Avitz provide a careful analysis of Jezreel's pottery.<sup>3</sup> They argue for a "variegated" settlement pattern throughout the southern Levant during most of the Iron Age.<sup>4</sup> They provide some insight into the most debated transitions, chiefly that of Late Iron I to Iron IIA. In particular, they mark out phases in Iron Age IIA which accommodate the differences between this and other chronologies.

Between Albright and Finkelstein sits what Amihai Mazar calls the "Modified Conventional Chronology."<sup>5</sup> Mazar utilizes radiocarbon dating differently, electing to date each site separately because of the imprecise nature. He provides a comparative chart which is useful

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the settlement patterns, see Ze'ev Herzog and Lily Singer-Avitz, "Sub-Dividing the Iron Age IIA in Northern Israel: A Suggested Solution to the Chronological Debate," *Tel Aviv* 33 (2006): 163–95.

<sup>4</sup> Ze'ev Herzog and Lily Singer-Avitz, "Redefining the Centre: The Emergence of State in Judah," *Tel Aviv* 31 (2004): 209–244.

<sup>5</sup> Amihai Mazar, "The Iron Age Chronology Debate," 105.

for seeing how Greek pottery, which is more readily dated, appears in the strata at various sites.<sup>6</sup> Incidentally, the chart also illustrates some of the bewildering array of stratification methods can be confusing at times.

Period	Traditional Date	Tel Rehov	Megiddo	Tel Abu Hawam	Samaria	Hazor
Iron IIA	Tenth century BCE	VI	VB(?)	III	Period I	Xb Xa
	Tenth/ninth(?) century BCE	V	IVB–VA		Periods II–III	IXb IXa
	Ninth century BCE until 840–830 BCE	IV				VIII
Iron IIB	Late ninth–eighth century until 732 BCE	III	IVA		Periods IV–VI	VII VI VB VA
Iron IIC	Assyrian, post-732 BCE	II	III		Period VII	IV

Avi Ofer provides a ceramic chronology which rivals Finkelstein.<sup>7</sup> Here, he deals with only Judahite sites. There is an overall agreement with Mazar, particularly in Iron Age IIA–B. The northern chronology has an abrupt break in Iron Age IIC due to the destruction of Samaria after the Assyrian siege.

Phase	Chronology	Judahite Sites
Iron I	Twelfth–mid-eleventh century BCE (1200–1050 BCE)	Izbet Zarta III, Ebal 2–1, Giloh
Iron IIA	Mid-eleventh–tenth century BCE (1050–925 BCE)	Tel Qasileh XI–IX, Izbet-Zartah II–I, Beer-Sheba VIII–VI, Tel Esdar III–II, Arad XII–XI.
Iron IIB	Ninth century BCE (925–800 BCE)	Lachish IV, parts of V.
Iron IIC	Eighth century BCE (800–675 BCE)	Lachish III, defined by destruction phase
Iron III	Seventh to mid-sixth century (675–550 BCE)	Lachish II and parallel strata in Judah, defined by destruction phase

<sup>6</sup> Amihai Mazar and Nicolas Coldstram, “Greek Pottery from Tel Rehov,” *IEJ* 53 (2003): 41.

<sup>7</sup> Avi Ofer, “The Monarchic Period in the Judaeian Highland: A Spatial Overview,” in *Studies in the Archaeology of the Iron Age in Israel and Jordan*, ed. Amihai Mazar, JSOTSup 331 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 31–32.

Radiocarbon dating has varying degrees of precision. The advent of archaeomagnetic dating has offered an alternative method which may yield more precise results. Stillinger, Hardin, Feinberg, and Blakely opened the conversation with their 2016 study.<sup>8</sup> The value in archaeomagnetic dating is that it takes into account variations in <sup>14</sup>C production caused by the fluctuations of the earth's magnetic fields. Relying on Lee's Modified Chronology, the researchers were able to verify the ages of certain strata at Khirbet Summeily.<sup>9</sup> The method is new, and there is a lively debate as to its application, and more importantly, its integration with other methods.

Phase	Modeled Date (BCE)	
	68.2%	95.4%
End of Data Set	701–449	738–318
<i>Iron Age IIA</i>	795–701	790–737
Iron Age IIA-IIB Transition	819–796	831–791
<i>Iron Age IIA</i>	939–818	934–830
Iron Age IB-IIA Transition	959–940	976–934
<i>Iron Age IB</i>	1057–958	1045–976
Iron Age IA-IB Transition	1090–1058	1110–1046
<i>Iron Age IA</i>	1154–1089	1133–1111
Start of Data Set	1211–1153	1248–1134

As broad categories with uneven, sometimes blurry edges, these chronological labels are useful as a shorthand. The chronologies here present just a few of the variations. These chronologies cannot be treated as absolutes, as they are relative to individual sites. Albright's broad categories might lack in precision, but they can still be used with accuracy. The various approaches to dating utilizing radiocarbon and archaeomagnetic data can be further confusing.

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<sup>8</sup> Michele D. Stillinger, James W. Hardin, Joshua M. Feinberg, and Jeffrey A. Blakely, "Archaeomagnetism as a Complementary Dating Technique to Address the Iron Age Chronology Debate in the Levant," *NEA* 79 (2016): 90–106.

<sup>9</sup> Sharen Lee, Christopher Bronk Ramsey, Amihai Mazar, "Iron Age Chronology in Israel: Results from Modeling with a Trapezoidal Bayesian Framework," *Radiocarbon* 55 (2013): 731–40. Lee's model includes two outlier probabilities. This means that the chronology dates frame a range of probability rather than offering the kind of specificity usually offered.

The confusion has led to calls for methodological integration. Lee and Mazar are working toward this, but there is an ongoing debate as to how the data should be integrated.<sup>10</sup> The debate is often marked by entrenched views and an unwillingness to prefer “competing” data.

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<sup>10</sup> This specialized, and admittedly partisan, debate has gone on mostly in the pages of journals. For examples, see Ilan Sharon, Ayelet Gilboa, A. J. Timothy Jull, and Elisabetta Boaretto, “Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project in Israel: Supporting a Low Chronology,” *Radiocarbon* 49 (2007): 1–46; Amihai Mazar, and Christopher Bronk Ramsay, “<sup>14</sup>C Dates and the Iron Age Chronology: A Response,” *Radiocarbon* (2008): 159–180; Katharina Strit and Felix Hofmayer, “Archaeomagnetism, Radiocarbon Dating, and the Problem of Circular Reasoning in Chronological Debates: A Reply to Stilling et al.,” *NEA* 79 (2016): 233–35; Michele D. Stilling, Joshua M. Feinberg, Erez Josef, et al., “A Rejoinder on the Value of Archaeomagnetic Dating: Integrative Methodology is the Key to Addressing Levantine Iron Age Chronology,” *NEA* 81 (2018): 141–144.

## APPENDIX E: THE OMRIDE DYNASTIES ACCORDING TO GALIL

The selection of Galil's chronology of the kings of Judah and Israel warrants some explanation. After some false starts with Wellhausen and Begrich, it was Edwin R. Thiele and William F. Albright who presented the most widely accepted chronologies. Thiele's reconstruction has been utilized by the likes of Kitchen and DeVries.<sup>1</sup> Albright's chronology was taken up and adapted by Bright.<sup>2</sup> Over the years, as evidence became available, Albright updated his chronology. Competing chronologies have been presented by Tadmor and Hughes, but neither has gained traction like Albright's.<sup>3</sup> Galil's attempt falls largely in line with Albright and Bright, but he includes a number of criteria that clear up some of the more confusing parts of the synchronization.

Galil claims he has reconciled around 90% of the available biblical and external data, taking into account the variations between the Book of Kings and Chronicles as well as the variation between the MT and LXX. He based his chronology on six guiding principles. (1) The new year in Judah began on 1 Nisan while in Israel, it fell on 1 Tishri (Jer 36:22). (2) Judah postdated reigns while the northern kings were antedated until the end of the ninth century BCE and were postdated in the eighth century BCE. (3) Coregencies were common in both kingdoms but not always clearly marked in the text. As a result, some long-reigning kings such as Uzziah of Judah, had a number of coregents within their own reigns. This attribute in particular makes

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<sup>1</sup> Edwin R. Thiele, "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," *JNES* 3 (1944): 137–186; Kenneth A. Kitchen and Terence C. Mitchell, "Chronology of the Old Testament," *The New Bible Dictionary*, (London: 1962), 212–23; Simon J. DeVries, "Chronology of the Old Testament," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York), 580–99.

<sup>2</sup> William F. Albright, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *BASOR* 100 (1945): 16–22; John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 4th ed. (Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), originally published 1959.

<sup>3</sup> Hayim Tadmor, "Chronology," *Encyclopedia Biblica*, vol. 4 (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1962): 245–310; Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in the Biblical Chronology*, JSOTSup 66 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 182–232.

Galil's dates shift away from Albright and Bright, particularly in the reign of Uzziah. (4) Both kingdoms counted reigns from the date of coronation, but there were certain cases in which the accession year was not considered the first year. (5) Pekah of Israel and Joash of Judah dated their reigns retroactively as an invalidation of their predecessors. (6) The Judahite calendar did not necessarily coincide with the Assyrian or Babylonian calendars.<sup>4</sup>

One peculiar aspect of Galil's approach is the compression of the Ahabite kings Ahaziah and Joram (Jehoram). He admits this is one of the most difficult and complicated subjects in biblical chronology.<sup>5</sup> To make his approach work, Galil argues that Ahaziah was crowned either immediately after Ahab's death or, as is preferred here, right before the Battle of Ramoth-Gilead where Ahab was killed. The issue with this is that Ahaziah had two regnal years, and then his brother Jehoram reigned for eleven years. It is recognized that Jehoram was killed in 842 BCE, which puts his ascension at 853/2 BCE. The simplest solution is to argue that because Ahaziah's reign was so short and since he was injured very early, Jehoram was made coregent at some point and dated the beginning of his reign to the same year Ahaziah was crowned (852/1 BCE). This would allow for twelve regnal years between his coronation and his death as long as partial years are counted as whole years. In his scheme then, the Ahabites rule from 874 BCE, when Ahab becomes coregent with his dying predecessor to 842 BCE when Jehoram is killed by Jehu. The Jehuite or Nimshite dynasty then takes up the throne in 842 BCE and holds it until 749 BCE when Shallum son of Jabesh assassinated him.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Judah Synch.</b>
885	Omri deposes Zimri	1 Kgs 16:15–20	27 Asa
881	Omri defeats Tibni b. Ginath	1 Kgs 16:21–23	31 Asa
879	Capital moved to Samaria	1 Kgs 16:23–24	32/3 Asa
<i>Ahabite Dynasty (874–842)</i>			

<sup>4</sup> Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, 9–10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

874	Ahab begins coregency	1 Kgs 16:29	36/7 Asa
874/3	Omri dies, Ahab's solo regency begins	1 Kgs 16:25–27	37/8 Asa
852	Ahaziah becomes coregent		18/19 Jehoshaphat
852	Ahab dies in battle with Aram		18 Jehoshaphat
852/1	Ahaziah dies and Jehoram becomes king	2 Kgs 1:17	2 Joram (Judah)
842	Jehu kills Jehoram and Ahaziah of Judah		1 Ahaziah
<i>Jehuite Dynasty (842–749)</i>			
841	Jehu's Ascension year in Israel		1 Joash
820/19	Jehoahaz begins coregency		22 Joash
815	Jehu dies, Jehoahaz begins solo regency		28 Joash
806	Joash coregency begins		36 Joash
803	Jehoahaz dies; Jehoash solo reign		39 Joash/ 2 Amaziah
790	Jehoash dies; Jeroboam II becomes king	2 Kgs 1:23–28	14 Amaziah
750	Pekah retroactive first year		38 Uzziah/ 8 Jotham
750/49	Jeroboam II dies		
<i>Final Civil War Stage</i>			
749	Zechariah	2 Kgs 15:8–12	
749	Shallum	2 Kgs 15:13–16	
749	Menahem ascends the throne	2 Kgs 15:17–22	38 Uzziah/ 9 Jotham
739/38	Menahem dies; Pekahiah retroactive ascension year	2 Kgs 15:23–26	49 Uzziah/ 3 Ahaz
737/36	Pekah's actual ascension year; 2 Pekahiah	2 Kgs 15:27–31	52 Uzziah/ 6 Ahaz
732/31	Pekah's death; Hoshea's ascension year <sup>6</sup>		10/11 Ahaz
722	Hoshea final year		6 Hezekiah

In Appendix C, I provide only the portion of Galil's chronology that deals with the northern kingdom of Israel. The first column is the years in modern BCE notation. The second column is Judah's primary king, with co-regencies and retroactive dating in the third column. The fourth and fifth columns provide the same data for the northern kings of Israel. The sixth column is reserved for the Assyrian kings, following the synchronizations that Galil provides. There is only one place in which I have altered Galil's chronology. This is the accession of

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<sup>6</sup> This date has been collaborated by Na'aman. See Nadav Na'aman, "Historical and Chronological Notes on the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Eighth Century BC," *VT* 36 (1986): 71–92.

Ahab's sons Ahaziah and Joram.<sup>7</sup> I have opted to utilize a variation of Galil's "possibility B," showing Ahaziah as being crowned before Ahab and Jehoshaphat went to the Battle of Ramoth-Gilead, which seems the most reasonable option.

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<sup>7</sup> Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, 37–41.

## APPENDIX F: CHART OF GALIL'S CHRONOLOGY

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
	Postdating		Antedating		
BCE	Primary	Coregent or Claimant	Primary	Coregent or Claimant	
THE SCHISM					
930	<i>Rehoboam</i> Accession year		<i>Jeroboam</i> 1		<i>Ashur-Dan II</i> 3
	1		2		4
929	2		3		5
928	3		4		6
927	4		5		7
926	5		6		8
925	6		7		9
924	7		8		10
923	8		9		11
922	9		10		12
921	10		11		13
920	11		12		14
919	12		13		15

Year	Judah	Israel	Assyria
918	<i>Rehoboam</i> 13		16 <i>Ashur-Dan II</i>
917	14	<i>Jeroboam</i> 14	17
916	15	15	18
915	16	16	19
914	17 <i>Abijam</i> Accession Year	17	20
913	1	18	21
912	2	19	<i>Adad-Nirari II</i> Accession Year
911	3 <i>Asa</i> Accession Year	20	1
910	1	21	2
909	2	22 <i>Nadab</i> 1	3
908	3	2 <i>Baasha</i> 1	4
907	4	2	5
906	5	3	6
905	6	4	7
904	7	5	8

Year	Judah	Israel	Assyria
		<i>Baasha</i> 6	
903	<i>Asa</i> 8	7	<i>Adad-Nirari II</i> 9
902	9	8	10
901	10	9	11
900	11	10	12
899	12	11	13
898	13	12	14
897	14	13	15
896	15	14	16
895	16	15	17
894	17	16	18
893	18	17	19
892	19	18	20
891	20	19	21 <i>Tukulti-Nimurta II</i> Accession Year
890	21	20	1
889			

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
	<i>Asa</i>				<i>Tukulti-Ninurta II</i>
	22		<i>Baasha</i>		2
888			21		
	23				3
887			22		
	24				4
886			23		
	25		24		5
885			<i>Elah</i>		
	26		1		6
			2	<i>Zimri</i>	
884			<i>Omri</i>	<i>Tibni</i>	
	27		1	1	7
					<i>Ashurnasirpal II</i>
883			2	2	Accession Year
	28				1
			3	3	
882					2
	29				
881			4	4	3
	30				
			5	5	4
880					
	31		6		5
879					
	32		7		6
878					
	33		8		7
877					
	34		9		8
876					
	35		10		9
875					
	36		11		

Year	Judah
874	<i>Asa</i> 37
873	38
872	39
871	40
870	41 <i>Jehoshaphat</i> Accession Year
869	1
868	2
867	3
866	4
865	5
864	6
863	7
862	8
861	9
860	10

Israel
<i>Omri</i>
12 <i>Ahab</i> 1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14

Assyria
<i>Ashurnasirpal II</i> 10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23



Year	Judah		Israel		
	<i>Jehoshaphat</i> 25	<i>Jehoram</i> 6			14
844	7		<i>Joram</i> 9		15
843	8 <i>Ahaziah</i> Accession Year		10		16
842	1		11		17
841	Accession Year	Accession Year	<i>Jehu</i> 1		18
	<i>Jehoash</i> 1 <i>retroactive</i>	<i>Athaliah</i> 1	2		19
840	2	2	3		20
839	3	3	4		21
838	4	4	5		22
837	5	5	6		23
836	6	6	7		24
835	7	7	8		25
834	8		9		26
833	9		10		27
832	10		11		28
831	11		12		

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
830	<i>Jehoash</i> 12				<i>Shalmaneser III</i> 29
829					
828	13				30
827	14				31
826	15				32
825	16				33
824	17				34
823	18				35 <i>Shamshi-Adad V</i> Accession Year
822	19				1
821	20				2
820	21				3
819	22				4
818	23			<i>Jehoahaz</i> 1	5
817	24			2	6
816	25			3	7
	26			4	8

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
			<i>Jehu</i> 27	<i>Jehoahaz</i> 5	
815	<i>Jehoash</i> 27				<i>Shamshi-Adad V</i> 9
			28	6	
814	28		7		10
813	29				11
			8		
812	30				12
			9		
811	31				13 <i>Adad-nirari III</i> Accession Year
			10		
810	32				1
			11		
809	33				2
			12		
808	34				3
			13		
807	35				4
			14		
806	36				5
			15	<i>Joash</i> 1	
805	37	<i>Amaziah</i> Accession Year			6
			16	2	
804	38	1			7
			17	3	
803	39	2	4		8
802	40	3			9
			5		
801					

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
	<i>Amaziah</i> 4				<i>Adad-nirari III</i> 10
800	5		<i>Joash</i> 6		11
799	6		7		12
798	7		8		13
797	8		9		14
796	9		10		15
795	10		11		16
794	11		12		17
793	12		13		18
792	13		14		19
791	14		15		20
790	15		16 <i>Jeroboam II</i> Accession Year		21
789	16		1		22
788	17	<i>Uzziah</i> Accession Year	2		23
787	18	1	3		24
			4		

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
786	<i>Amaziah</i> 19	<i>Uzziah</i> 2	<i>Jeroboam II</i> 5		25
785	20	3			6
784	21	4	7		27
783	22	5	8		28 <i>Shalmaneser IV</i> Accession Year
782	23	6	9		1
781	24	7	10		2
780	25	8	11		
779	26	9	12		
778	27	10	13		
777	28	11	14		
776	29	12	15		
775	13		16		
774	14		17		
773	15		18		10 <i>Ashur-Dan III</i> Accession Year
772	16				1

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
			<i>Jeroboam II</i>		
771	<i>Uzziah</i>		19		<i>Ashur-Dan III</i>
	17		20		2
770	18		21		3
769	19		22		4
768	20		23		5
767	21		24		6
766	22		25		7
765	23		26		8
764	24		27		9
763	25		28		10
762	26		29		11
761	27		30		12
760	28		31		13
759	29		32		14
758	30	<i>Jotham</i>			
		Accession Year	33		15
757					

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
	<i>Uzziah</i> 31	<i>Jotham</i> 1	<i>Jeroboam II</i> 34		16
756	32	2			17
755	33	3			18
754	34	4			<i>Ashu-nirari V</i> Accession Year
753	35	5			1
752	36	6			2
751	37	7			3
750	38	8			<i>Pekah</i> 1 <i>retroactive</i>
749	39	9			2
748	40	10			<i>Zechariah</i> <i>Shallum</i> <i>Menahem</i> Accession Year
747	41	11	3		
746	42	12	4		
745	43	13	5		
744	44	14	6		
743	45	15	7		
			8	10 <i>Tiglath-Pileser III</i> Accession Year	
			9	2 (1)	
			6	3 (2)	

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria		
742	<i>Uzziah</i> 46	16	<i>Menahem</i> 6	<i>Pekah</i> 9 <i>retroactive</i>	<i>Tiglath-Pileser III</i>		
741		<i>Ahaz</i> Accession Year			4 (3)		
740	47	1		10	5 (4)		
739	48	2		11	6 (5)		
738	49	3		12	7 (6)		
737	50	4	10	13	8 (7)		
736	51	5	<i>Pekahiah</i> Accession Year		9 (8)		
735	52	6	1	14	10 (9)		
734	7		2	15	11 (10)		
733			<i>Pekah</i> Accession Year	16	12 (11)		
732			8	1	17	13 (12)	
731			9	2	18	14 (13)	
730			10	3	19	15 (14)	
729			11	4	20	16 (15)	
728			12	5	<i>Hoshea</i> Accession Year		17 (16)
			13	1			
			14	2			

Year	Judah		Israel		Assyria
					18 (17) <i>Tiglath-Pileser III</i>
727	<i>Ahaz</i> 15		3		19 (18) <i>Shalmaneser V</i> Accession Year
726	16 <i>Hezekiah</i> Accession Year		4		1
725	1		5		2
724	2		6		3
723	3		7		4
722	4		8		5 <i>Sargon II</i> Accession Year
721	5		9		1
720	6		<i>Siege of Samaria</i> 1		2
719	7		2		3
718	8		3		4

## APPENDIX G: NWS INSCRIPTIONS, LATE BRONZE AGE TO IRON AGE II

The list below is a partial adaptation of Israel Finkelstein and Benjamin Sass's 2013 catalog.<sup>1</sup> Most of the texts are extremely fragmentary, but the number of them indicates that some level of popular literacy through the region. The footnotes represent either the first publication of the inscription or the best-known discussion of the text. The footnoted texts are not included in the general bibliography of the dissertation since there are a large number of single citations.

The table below lists the dates that Finkelstein and Sass provided in their catalog, however, Finkelstein advocates for a low chronology, and their dates reflect his chronology rather than the more widely accepted middle chronology. For example, their statement that “inscriptions from secure, exclusive early or middle Iron I contexts have not been found yet” is a reflection of the low chronology bias.<sup>2</sup> To answer their chronologies, where possible alternative dates are provided in the footnotes.

### Late Bronze Age (prior to 1100 BCE)

Lachish ewer <sup>3</sup>	Fosse Temple III	Proto-Canaanite	Painted before firing
Lachish bowl <sup>4</sup>	Single-burial tomb	Proto-Canaanite	Chalk post-firing
Lachish bowl fragment <sup>5</sup>	General Excavation	Proto-Canaanite	Engraved post-firing
Qubur el-Walaydah bowl <sup>6</sup>	Pit with other pottery	Proto-Canaanite	Painted after firing

<sup>1</sup> Finkelstein and Sass, “The West Semitic Alphabetic Inscriptions,” 149–220. The collected figures featured in this article are invaluable, as they collect an extremely wide range of early epigraphs in a single place.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. To support their position, Finkelstein and Sass shift the date of a number of texts, such as the Beth-Shemesh Baal sherd and ‘Izbet Şarṭah ostrakon.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Moore Cross, “The Evolution of the Proto-Canaanite Alphabet,” *BASOR* 134 (1954): 19–22.

<sup>4</sup> Frank Moore Cross, “The Origin and Early Evolution of the Alphabet,” *Eretz Israel* 8 (1967): 10.

<sup>5</sup> David Ussishkin, *Excavations at Tel Lachish 1978–1983: Second Preliminary Report* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1983), 155–57.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Moore Cross, “Newly Found Inscriptions in Old Canaanite and Early Phoenician Scripts,” *BASOR* 238 (1980):1–4.

Nagil sherd <sup>7</sup>	General Excavation	Proto-Sinaitic?	Incised before firing
Gezer Sherd	General Excavation	Proto-Sinaitic?	Incised before firing

### Early to Middle Iron I (1109–1028 BCE)

No secure inscriptions			
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### Late Iron I to Early Iron IIA (1037–883 BCE)

Beth-shemesh Baal sherd <sup>8</sup>	Secondary deposition	Proto-Canaanite	Incised before firing
ʿIzbet Šarṭah Ostrakon <sup>9</sup>	Secondary deposit in silo	Proto-Canaanite	Incised after firing; abecedary
Khirbet Qeiyafa Ostrakon <sup>10</sup>		Proto-Canaanite	Ink on broken pottery
Beth-Shemesh ostrakon <sup>11</sup>		Proto-Canaanite	Ink on broken pottery
Tell eš-Šafi sherd 821141 <sup>12</sup>	Occupation Debris	Old Canaanite	Incised after broken
Khirbet Raddan handle <sup>13</sup>	Surface find	Old Canaanite, possibly archaic	Incised after firing
Tel Reḥov sherd		Evolved Proto-Canaanite	Incised before firing
Tel Reḥov inscriptions 1–3 <sup>14</sup>	Under floor material	post Proto-Canaanite	Incised before firing, #2 incised twice
Kefar Veradim bowl <sup>15</sup>	Sealed cave tomb	Mixed Proto-Canaanite	Inscribed bronze, mixed language

<sup>7</sup> Ruth Amiran and Avi Eitan, “A Canaanite-Hyksos City at Tell Nagila,” *Archaeology* 18.2 (1965): 113–23.

<sup>8</sup> P. Kyle McCarter, Shlomo Bunimovitz, and Zvi Lederman, “An Archaic Baʿl Inscription from Tel Beth-Shemesh,” *Tel Aviv* 38 (2013): 179–93.

<sup>9</sup> Aaron Demsky, “A Proto-Canaanite Abecedary Dating from the Period of the Judges and Its Implications for the History of the Alphabet,” *Tel Aviv* 4, no. 1 (1977): 14–27.

<sup>10</sup> Haggai Misgav, Yosef Garfinkel, and Saar Ganor, “The Ostrakon,” in *Khirbet Qeiyafa Vol. 1: Excavation Report 2007–2008*, ed. Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2009), 243–57.

<sup>11</sup> Cross, “Origin and Early Evolution,” 19. Cross pushes the date of this inscription back to 1200 BCE.

<sup>12</sup> Aren M. Maier, Stefan J. Wimmer, Alexander Zukerman, and Aaron Demsky, “A Late Iron Age I/Early Iron Age II Old Canaanite Inscription from Tell eš-Šafi/Gath, Israel: Palaeography, Dating, and Historical-Cultural Significance,” *BASOR* 351 (2008): 39–71.

<sup>13</sup> Zvi Lederman, “An Early Iron Age Village at Khirbet Raddana: The Excavations of Joseph A. Callaway (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1999), 73–73, 140.

<sup>14</sup> Aḥituv and Mazar, “The Inscriptions from Tel Reḥov,” 39–68.

<sup>15</sup> Yardenna Alexandre, “The Iron Age Assemblage from Cave 3 at Kefar Veradim,” in *Eretz Zafon: Studies in Galilean Archaeology*, ed. Zvi Gal (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2002), 52–63; Yardenna Alexandre, “A Canaanite Early Phoenician Inscribed Bronze Bowl in an Iron Age IIA–B Burial Cave at Kefar Veradim, Northern Israel,” *Maarav* 13 (2008): 7–42.

Sarepta sherd <sup>16</sup>		post Proto-Canaanite	Painted before firing
Byblos cone A <sup>17</sup>		Transitional Proto-Canaanite	Possibly incised before firing
Ophel pithos sherd <sup>18</sup>	Fill of an Iron Age IIA floor	post Proto-Canaanite	Incised before firing
Nine Arrowheads <sup>19</sup>	No context	post Proto-Canaanite	

### Late Iron Age IIA and Early Iron IIB (886–722 BCE)

<i>Hebrew, late Iron IIA1</i>			
Tell eṣ-Şafi Jar 747028/1 <sup>20</sup>	Stratum A3	Archaic Hebrew	Incised before firing
Reḥov Jars 5, 7 <sup>21</sup>	Strata V and IV	Archaic Hebrew	Incised before firing
Reḥov Jar 8 <sup>22</sup>	Strata V and IV	Hebrew(?)	Incised after firing
Reḥov Sherd 9	Strata V and IV	Archaic Hebrew	Red ink incised after firing
Tel Amal Jar <sup>23</sup>	Strata IV-III	Archaic Hebrew	Incised before firing
Batash bowl sherd <sup>24</sup>	Stratum IV	Archaic Hebrew	
<i>Undifferentiated non-Hebrew, late Iron IIA1</i>			
Tell eṣ-Şafi jar 450313/1 <sup>25</sup>	Stratum A3	Unknown	Incised before firing
Tell eṣ-Şafi sherd 1491025	Stratum A3	Unknown	Red ink, unpublished

<sup>16</sup> Émile Puech, “Origine de l’alphabet,” *Revue Biblique* 93.2 (1986): 161–213.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Moore Cross and P. Kyle McCarter, “Two Archaic Inscriptions on Clay Objects from Byblos,” *Rivista di Studi Fenici* 1 (1973): 3–8.

<sup>18</sup> Eilat Mazar, David Ben-Shlomo, and Shmuel Aḥituv, “An Inscribed Pithos from Ophel, Jerusalem,” *IEJ* 63 (2013): 39–49. One of the first to be written left to right.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Sass, “Arrowheads with Phoenician Inscriptions: If Not Instruments of Belomancy, What?” in *Magie et divination dans les cultures de l’Orient: Actes du colloque organisé par l’Institut du Proche-Orient Ancien du Collège de France, la Société Asiatique et la CNRS (UMR 7192), les 19 et 20 juin 2008*, ed. Jean-Marie Durand and Antoine Jacquet (Paris: Maisonneuve, 2010), 61, 68–69.

<sup>20</sup> Maier, et al., “Old Canaanite Inscription from Tell eṣ-Şafi/Gath,” 31–32.

<sup>21</sup> Mazar and Aḥituv, “Inscriptions from Tel Reḥov,” 302–307.

<sup>22</sup> André Lemaire, “West Semitic Inscriptions and Ninth-Century B.C.E. Ancient Israel,” in *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel*, ed. H. G. M. Williamson, PBA 143 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 208.

<sup>23</sup> Shalom Levi and Gershon Edelstein, “Cinq Années de Fouilles a Tel ‘Amal (Nir David),” *Revue Biblique* 79.3 (1972): 325–67.

<sup>24</sup> Amihai Mazar and Nava Panitz-Cohen, *Timnah (Tel Batash) II: The Finds from the First Millennium BCE, Text*, Qedem 42 (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001), 190.

<sup>25</sup> Maier, et al., “Old Canaanite Inscription from Tell eṣ-Şafi/Gath,” 31.

Rehov sherd 4 <sup>26</sup>	Stratum VI or V	Unknown	Incised after firing
Tel Rehov jar 6 <sup>27</sup>	Stratum IV		
Tel Rehov shard 10 <sup>28</sup>	Stratum IV	Unknown	Single, non-Hebrew letter incised before firing
Roš Zayit sherd <sup>29</sup>	Destruction layer	Unknown	ink
Tel Zayit abecedary <sup>30</sup>	Secondary use, stone wall of local Level III	Proto-Canaanite	Incised stone
Gezer Calendar <sup>31</sup>	Unstratified	Phoenician(?)	Incised stone
Ein Gev Jar <sup>32</sup>	Stratum III	Debated	Incised after firing
Kinneret sherd <sup>33</sup>	Pit 855, Stratum IV	Debated	Incised after firing
Arad ostraca 76–79, 81 <sup>34</sup>	Stratum XI	Unknown	Ink
Beth-Shemesh game-board <sup>35</sup>	Iron IIB pit	Possible Hebrew (?)	Inscribed
Esthemoa' jugs <sup>36</sup>	Unstratified	Possible Hebrew (?)	Inscribed <i>ḥmš</i> , containing silver jewelry
<i>Undifferentiated non-Hebrew, late Iron Age IIA2 and early Iron IIB</i>			
Revadim seal <sup>37</sup>	Chance find	Unknown	Engraved scene and letter

<sup>26</sup> Mazar and Aḥituv, "Inscriptions from Tel Rehov," 302.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 303–304.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>29</sup> Zvi Gal and Yardenna Alexandre, *Horbat Rosh Zayit: An Iron Age Fort and Village*, IAA Report 8 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2000), 133–34.

<sup>30</sup> Tappy, et al., "An Abecedary," 6. Tappy dates the abecedary to the mid-tenth century, as does Rollston. See Rollston, "The Phoenician Script," 62.

<sup>31</sup> Joseph Naveh, *The Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 63; Rollston, "The Phoenician Script," 72.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Mazar, Avraham Biran, Moshe Dothan, Isaak Dunayevsky, "'Ein Gev Excavations in 1961," *IEJ* 14 (1964): 27–29.

<sup>33</sup> Volkmar Fritz, *Kinneret: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen auf dem Tell el-'Orēme am See Gennesaret, 1982–1985*, ADPV 15 (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz), 37–40.

<sup>34</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981), 98–100.

<sup>35</sup> Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Beth-Shemesh: Cultural Conflict on Judah's Border," *BAR* 23.1 (1997): 48, 75–76.

<sup>36</sup> Ze'ev Yeivin, "The Silver Hoard of Esthemoa'," *Atiqot* 10 (1990): 43–56.

<sup>37</sup> Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1997), no. 1067.

Hazor sherd 440 <sup>38</sup>	Stratum IX	Non-Hebrew, unclassified	
Amman Citadel inscription <sup>39</sup>	Unstratified	Ammonite	
Far'ah South jar sherd <sup>40</sup>	Unstratified	Unknown	Ink inscribed inside of jar
Tell el-Hammah handle <sup>41</sup>	Surface find	Non-Hebrew	Incised after firing
Byblos clay cone B, bronze spatula, Abda sherd <sup>42</sup>	Unstratified	Non-Hebrew	Incised after firing

Nothing about these texts is necessarily useful for understanding prophetic or biblical texts, but they nonetheless demonstrate a widespread usage of the alphabetic scripts throughout the Southern Levant.

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<sup>38</sup> Yigal Yadin, Yohanan Aharoni, Ruth Amiran, Moshe Dothan, Isaak Dunayevsky, and Jean Perrot, *Hazor III–IV: An Account of the Third and Fourth Seasons of Excavations* (Jerusalem: Magnus Press, 1961), pl. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Siegfried H. Horn, “The Ammān Citadel Inscription,” *BASOR* 193 (1969): 2–13.

<sup>40</sup> Gunnar Lehmann and T J. Schneider, “Tell el-Farah (South) 1999 Ostrakon,” *UF* 31 (1999): 251–54.

<sup>41</sup> Ram Gophna and Y. Porat, “The Survey in the Land of Ephraim and Manasseh,” in *Judaea, Samaria, and the Golan: Archaeological Survey 1968–1969*, ed. Moshe Kochavi (Jerusalem: Archaeological Survey of Israel, 1972). 195–241.

<sup>42</sup> Cross and McCarter, “Two Archaic Inscriptions,” 3–8; H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, vol. 3 (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969).

## APPENDIX H: RENDSBURG'S FEATURES OF ISRAELIAN HEBREW

### Texts Considered Israelian Hebrew

According to Rendsburg, the 700 verses of 1–2 Kings include 161 with IH features. Because roughly half of the occurrences are in direct discourse, Schniedewind and Sivan believe that the IH traits are literary constructs. Rendsburg's response was a massive expansion of his structure and features list. His list does not include the seventy-nine nouns, seventy-two verbs, and two particles that he marks as northern in origin.<sup>1</sup> Passages that Rendsburg marks as IH are as follows: the blessings in Genesis 49; Leviticus 25:13–24; Deuteronomy 32; the blessings in Deuteronomy 33; some sections of Judges; 2 Samuel 23:1–7; all of the northern materials in the Book of Kings; Hosea; Amos; Micah 6–7; Proverbs; Song of Solomon; Ecclesiastes; Nehemiah 9; and Psalms 9, 10, 16, 29, 36, 45, 53, 58, 74, 116, 132, 133, 140, 141, as well as the Korah and Asaph psalms.<sup>2</sup> The following features appear throughout. It is important to note that some of them also appear in LBH texts, which Rendsburg attributes to “reunion” of IH and JH in the exilic form of the language. In this appendix, I have chosen to preserve Rendsburg's transliterations because the texts reflect features of multiple NWS languages. The sources cited are the ones that Rendsburg relied upon in his text. In addition to the grammatical features, Rendsburg also provided a short IH lexical list, which is not included here.<sup>3</sup>

### Grammatical Features in 1–2 Kings

#### I. Phonology

##### A. Consonant modifications

1. /t/ > /t/, Aramaic (Judg 5:11, 11:40; Song 1:17)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rendsburg, “A Comprehensive Guide,” 25–31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–24.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–31.

<sup>4</sup> Rendsburg, “Hurvitz Redux,” 21; Gary A. Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in the Song of Songs,” in *Biblical Hebrew in its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Steven A. Fassberg and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 320.

2. /z/ > /t/, Aramaic (Song 1:6, 8:11, 12)<sup>5</sup>
3. /ḏ/ > /ʿ/, Aramaic (1 Sam 28:16; Hos 12:2; Ps 9:7, 139:20)<sup>6</sup>
4. /ḏ/ > /d/, Aramaic (Song 7:10)<sup>7</sup>

B. *Vowel shifts*

1. /a/ to /ō/, Phoenician (2 Kgs 3:19, 19:24; Ps 87:6)<sup>8</sup>
2. /ō/ > /û/, Phoenician (Hos 7:14)<sup>9</sup>

C. *Diphthong monophthongizations*

1. /ay/ > /ê/ and /aw/ > /ô/, Ugaritic and Phoenician<sup>10</sup>
2. /ay/ > /ā/, Syrian Semitic and modern Arabic dialects in Lebanon, Syria, and northern Israel (1 Sam 10:14; 2 Kgs 5:25; Job 8:2, 9:9' Ps 141:5)<sup>11</sup>

## II. Morphology

A. *Pronouns*

1. 2fsg independent pronoun 'attî, Aramaic and Samaritan Hebrew (Judg 17:2; 1 Kgs 14:2; 2 Kgs 4:16, 4:23, 8:1; Jer 4:30; Ezek 36:13)<sup>12</sup>
2. 2fsg pronominal suffix -kî, Deir 'Alla and Aramaic (2 Kgs 4:2–3, 7; Ps 116:7, 19; Song 2:13; Jer 11:15; Ps 103:3–5, 135:9, 137:6)<sup>13</sup>
3. 3msg pronominal suffix -ôhî, Aramaic, Deir 'Alla, and possibly Moabite (Ps 116:12)<sup>14</sup>
4. 3mpl pronominal suffix -ham in the form *kullāham*, Aramaic (2 Sam 23:6)<sup>15</sup>
5. 3mpl objective pronoun *hēm*, Moabite, Aramaic (2 Kgs 9:18)<sup>16</sup>
6. Relative pronoun *ze<sup>h</sup>/zû*, Aramaic, Byblian dialect of Phoenician (Judg 5:5; Ps 9:16, 10:2; Prov 23:22; Job 15:17, 19:19)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Rendsburg, "Israelian Hebrew in the Song of Songs," 319.

<sup>6</sup> Yoo, "Israelian Hebrew in Hosea," 144; Scott B. Noegel, "Dialect and Politics in Isaiah 24–27," 182.

<sup>7</sup> Rendsburg, "Israelian Hebrew in the Song of Songs," 319.

<sup>8</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 85.

<sup>9</sup> Yoo, "Israelian Hebrew in Hosea," 92.

<sup>10</sup> Rendsburg, "A Comprehensive Guide," 33, n. 8. Rendsburg has an interesting footnote on this trait, discussing primarily the perspective of William R. Garr, *Dialect Geography in Syria-Palestine, 1000–586 BCE* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35–40.

<sup>11</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 97; Gary A. Rendsburg, "Monophthongization of *aw/ay* > *ā* in Eblaite and in Northwest Semitic," *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language*, ed. Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, vol. 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 91–126.

<sup>12</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 86; Rendsburg, "Israelian Hebrew in the Song of Songs," 319; Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Dialect of the Deir 'Alla Inscription," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 50 (1993): 316–17.

<sup>14</sup> Rendsburg, "The Dialect of the Deir 'Alla Inscription," 311–12; Rendsburg, "Hurvitz Redux," 6–13.

<sup>15</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Northern Origin of 'The Last Words of David' (2 Sam 23:1–7)," *Biblica* 69 (1988): 118–19.

<sup>16</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 115–16.

<sup>17</sup> Yiyi Chen, "Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs," (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2011), 175–76.

7. Relative pronoun *še-* (including the case of the genitive particle *šel*), Phoenician and Ammonite (Judg 5:7, 6:17, 7:12, 8:26; 2 Kgs 6:11, Ps 133:2–3)<sup>18</sup>
8. Feminine singular demonstrative pronoun *zô<sup>h</sup>/zô*, Phoenician and Aramaic (2 Kgs 6:19; Hos 7:16; Ps 132:12)<sup>19</sup>
9. Interrogative pronoun *me<sup>h</sup>* before non-laryngeal consonants (Judg 16; 1 Sam 1:8, 4:6, 14, 6:2, 15:14, 29:4; 1 Kgs 22:16; 2 Kgs 1:7, 4:13–14; Ps 10:13; Prov 4:19, 31:2; Job 7:21)<sup>20</sup>

#### B. Nouns

1. Feminine singular nominal ending *-at* (pointed with either *pataḥ* or *qameṣ*), Phoenician, Moabite, and Aramaic (Gen 49:22; 2 Kgs 9:17; Hos 7:5; Ps 10:2, 16:5–6, 74:19, 132:4; Ecc 8:12; Jer 48:36, 49:25; Ezek 28:13)<sup>21</sup>
2. Feminine singular nominal ending *-ôt*, Phoenician (Judg 5:29; 2 Kgs 6:8; Ps 45:1, 16, 53:7, 73:22, 132:12; Prov 1:20, 9:1, 14:1, 24:7, 28:20; Ecc 1:17, 2:12, 7:25, 9:3; Ezek 26:11)<sup>22</sup>
3. Reduplicatory plural of geminate nouns, Aramaic (Num 23:7; Deut 33:15; Judg 5:14–15; Ps 36:7, 50:10, 76:5, 77:18, 87:1, 133:3; Prov 29:13; Song 2:17, 4:6, 8; Neh 9:22, 24; Jer 6:4; Ezek 4:12, 15)<sup>23</sup>
4. *qētīlā<sup>h</sup>* formation (Judg 5:16; 1 Kgs 19:8; Job 41:10; Ecc 12:12; 1 Sam 13:21)<sup>24</sup>
5. *’ēšet* “woman” in absolute state, Phoenician (Ps 58:9)<sup>25</sup>
6. *’išīm* “men” as plural of *’iš*, Phoenician (Ps 141:4; Prov 8:4)<sup>26</sup>
7. Feminine nominal plural ending in *-ān*, Aramaic (Song 2:12)<sup>27</sup>
8. Masculine nominal plural ending *-în*, Aramaic, Moabite, Deir ‘Alla (Judg 5:10; 1 Kgs 11:13; Prov 31:3; Ezek 26:18)<sup>28</sup>

#### C. Verbs

1. 3msg *qtl* form with *Shewa* in first syllable, Aramaic (Judg 5:13)<sup>29</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Rendsburg, “Hurwitz Redux,” 23; Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 319.

<sup>19</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 105; Yoo, “Israelian Hebrew in Hosea,” 178.

<sup>20</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 75, 81, 87; Rendsburg, “Some False Leads,” 41.

<sup>21</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew Features in Genesis 49,” *Maarav* 8 (1992):167–68; Gary A. Rendsburg, “The Strata of Biblical Hebrew,” *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 17 (1991): 88.

<sup>22</sup> Rendsburg, “The Strata of Biblical Hebrew,” 90; Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 99.

<sup>23</sup> Rendsburg, “Linguistic Variation and the ‘Foreign’ Factor,” 183; Yoo, “Israelian Hebrew in Hosea,” 160; Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects,” 84–85.

<sup>24</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 56.

<sup>25</sup> Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Select Psalms*, 65–66.

<sup>26</sup> Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects,” 85–86; Rendsburg, “The Strata of Biblical Hebrew,” 91.

<sup>27</sup> Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 319.

<sup>28</sup> Chen, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs,” 221; Rendsburg, “Hurwitz Redux,” 20–21.

<sup>29</sup> Rendsburg, “Hurwitz Redux,” 19–21.

2. 3fsg *qtl* form of IIIy verb ending in *-t*, Aramaic (2 Kgs 9:37; Jer 13:19; Ezek 24:12)<sup>30</sup>
3. 3fsg *qtl* form of strong verbs (and some weak verbs other than IIIy) ending in *-t*, Aramaic and Deir 'Alla (Deut 32:36; Isa 23:15)<sup>31</sup>
4. Non-elision of *he* in Hiph'il/Hoph'al verbs, Aramaic (Ps 45:18, 81:6, 116:6; Isa 52:5; Jer 9:4; Ezek 46:22; Job 13:9; Neh 11:17)<sup>32</sup>
5. Retention of *yod* in IIIy verbs, Aramaic and Deir 'Alla (Num 26:4; Deut 32:37; Ps 36:8–9, 77:4, 78:44, 83:3, 140:9; Prov 26:7; Isa 17:12, 21:12)<sup>33</sup>
6. Retention of *lamed* in imperative of *lqh* “take”, Aramaic (1 Kgs 17:11; Ezek 37:16; Prov 20:16)<sup>34</sup>
7. Retention of *he* forms in *hlk*, Moabite and Phoenician (Ps 58:9; Jer 9:3; Ecc 6:8; Jer 51:50)
8. Unusual infinitive construct of *ntn* (1 Kgs 6:19, 17:14)<sup>35</sup>
9. Infinitive construct of IIIy verb, Ugaritic (Judg 13:21; 1 Sam 1:9, 3:21; 2 Kgs 13:17; Hos 6:9)<sup>36</sup>
10. Irregular infinitive form *behištahawāyātī* “in my prostrating,” Aramaic (2 Kgs 5:18)<sup>37</sup>
11. Masculine singular participle of IIIy verb ending in *-ē<sup>h</sup>*, as in MH (1 Kgs 20:40)<sup>38</sup>
12. Inflected participles, Aramaic (Gen 31:39; 2 Kgs 4:23; Jer 10:17, 22:23, 51:13; Ezek 27:3; Lam 4:21)<sup>39</sup>
13. Pronominal suffixes attached to *wayyiqtol* forms<sup>40</sup>
  - a. 3sg pronominal suffix *-ennû/-ennā<sup>h</sup>* (Judg 15:2; 2 Kgs 9:33; Job 7:18, 33:24)
  - b. 2msg pronominal suffix *-ekkā* (Ps 81:8; Prov 7:16)
14. *'Etpolel* forms, Aramaic and Deir 'Alla (Ps 76:6)<sup>41</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 118–19.

<sup>31</sup> Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir 'Alla Inscription,” 318.

<sup>32</sup> Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects,” 76–77.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 81–82; Noegel, “Dialect and Politics in Isaiah 24–27,” 185–86; Chen, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs,” 31, 193; Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir 'Alla Inscription,” 319.

<sup>34</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 46–48; Chen, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs,” 158.

<sup>35</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> Rendsburg, “Some False Leads,” 42; Yoo, “Israelian Hebrew in Hosea,” 82–83.

<sup>37</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 88–89; Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects,” 82–84.

<sup>40</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 117–18; Chen, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs,” 77.

<sup>41</sup> Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir 'Alla Inscription,” 316.

15. *Hitpa 'el* used with passive sense, Aramaic and MH (Prov 31:30; Ecc 8:10; Mic 6:16)<sup>42</sup>

*D. Particles*

1. Prepositions *b-/l-* “from,” Ugaritic and Phoenician (Josh 3:16; 2 Kgs 4:24, 14:13, 28; Ps 10:1, 29:10, 140:11)<sup>43</sup>
2. Preposition *'ad le*, Aramaic (1 Kgs 18:29)<sup>44</sup>
3. Preposition *'ad 'el*, as above (2 Kgs 9:20)<sup>45</sup>
4. Confusion of prepositions *'el* and *'al*<sup>46</sup>
5. Conjunction *'ad* meaning “while,” Aramaic (Judg 3:26; 2 Kgs 9:22; Ps 141:10; Jonah 4:2)<sup>47</sup>
6. Conjunction *'ad še* meaning “until,” cognate with Aramaic *'d dy* (Judg 5:7; Son 1:12, 2:7,17, 3:4–5, 4:6, 8:4)<sup>48</sup>
7. Conjunction *'ad lô'* “ere, before,” Aramaic (Prov 8:26)<sup>49</sup>
8. Preposition *qābol* “before,” Aramaic (2 Kgs 15:10)<sup>50</sup>
9. Non-elision of the definite article *he* after uniconsonantal prepositions *b-*, *l-*, *k-*, Punic (1 Sam 13:21; 2 Kgs 7:12; Ps 36:6; Ecc 8:1; Neh 9:19)<sup>51</sup>
10. Interrogative *'ykh* “where,” Aramaic (2 Kgs 6:13; Song 1:7)<sup>52</sup>
11. Negative particle *bal* “no, but,” Ugaritic and Phoenician (Ps 10, 16, 44:15, 46:6, 49:13, 58:9, 78:44, 140:11–12, 141:14; Hos 7:2, 9:16)<sup>53</sup>
12. Particle of existence *'iš*, cognate with Ugaritic *it*, Aramaic *'yty* (2 Sam 14:19; Mic 6:10; Prov 18:24)<sup>54</sup>
13. Conjunction *šallāmā<sup>h</sup>* “lest,” Aramaic *dylm'* (Song 1:7)<sup>55</sup>

### III. Syntax

#### A. Syntagma, Aramaic, Phoenician<sup>56</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Chen, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs,” 231.

<sup>43</sup> Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects,” 80–81.

<sup>44</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 52.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 54, 69. See III.H below.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 116–17.

<sup>48</sup> Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 320.

<sup>49</sup> Chen, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs,” 89.

<sup>50</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 126–27.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 107–8; Rendsburg, “Morphological Evidence for Regional Dialects,” 74–75.

<sup>52</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 104; Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 319.

<sup>53</sup> Rendsburg, “The Strata of Biblical Hebrew,” 91; Noegel, “Dialect and Politics in Isaiah 24–27,” 184–85.

<sup>54</sup> Chen, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs,” 147–48.

<sup>55</sup> Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 319.

<sup>56</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 38, 106; Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 320.

1. *ze<sup>h</sup> laḥmēnū* “this our bread” and others (Josh 9:12–13)
  2. *ze<sup>h</sup> hayyôm* “this day” (1 Kgs 14:14)
  3. Also see 2 Kgs 6:33; Song 7:8; Isa 23:13
- B. Indefinite noun + indefinite pronoun, Phoenician<sup>57</sup>
1. *ḥolī ze<sup>h</sup>* “this illness” (2 Kgs 1:2; 2 Kings 8:8–9)
  2. *yôm hū’* “that day” (Micah 7:12)
  3. *gepen zô ’t* “this vine” (Ps 80:15)
- C. Double plural construction, Byblos Amarna, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Deir ‘Alla<sup>58</sup>
1. *benê gil ‘ādīm* “Gileadites” (2 Kgs 15:25)
  2. *benôt melākīm* “daughters of the kings” (Ps 45:10)
  3. Also Ps 29:1, 47:10, 77:6, 78:49, 116:9; Song 1:17
- D. Use of *’ehād/’aḥat* as indefinite article, Aramaic (Judg 9:53; 1 Sam 1:1, 6:7, 7:9, 7:12; 1 Kgs 13:11, 19:4–5, 20:13, 22:9; 2 Kgs 4:1, 7:8, 8:6)<sup>59</sup>
- E. *yqtl* preterite in prose, Phoenician, Aramaic, and Moabite (1 Kgs 20:33, 21:6; 2 Kgs 8:29, 9:15)<sup>60</sup>
1. *wehā’anāšīm yenaḥašū* “and the men divined” (1 Kgs 20:33)
  2. *kī ‘ādabbēr ’el nābôt*, “because I spoke to Naboth” (1 Kgs 21:6)
  3. *’ašer yakkūhū ’arammīm*, “which the Aramaeans had inflicted upon him” (2 Kgs 8:29, 9:15)
- F. Passive participle with active voice, Aramaic and MH<sup>61</sup>
1. *neḥittīm* “descending” (2 Kgs 6:9)
  2. *’āḥūzē ḥereb*, “skilled in the sword” (Song 3:8)
- G. Infinitive absolute used as narrative tense, Byblos Amarna, Ugaritic and Phoenician<sup>62</sup>
1. *wenāpôš hakkaddīm* “and they shattered the jugs (Jdg 7:19)
  2. *hiṯhappēs wābô’ bammilāmā<sup>h</sup>* “I will disguise myself and go into battle” (1 Kgs 22:30)
  3. *’āsô<sup>h</sup> hannaḥal hazze<sup>h</sup> gēbīm*, “I will make this wadi full of pools” (2 Kgs 3:16)
  4. Also Lev 25:14; 1 Sam 2:28; 1 Kgs 9:25; 2 Kgs 4:43; Neh 9:8, 13; Amos 4:5; Prov 12:7, 15:22, 17:12
- H. Confusion of prepositions *’el* and *’al*, Aramaic interference (1 Kgs 13:4, 17:21–22, 18:46, 20:43; 2 Kgs 7:7, 8:3, 9:3, 9:6)<sup>63</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 81, 109.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 129; Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir ‘Alla Inscription,” 322–23; Rendsburg, “Hurvitz Redux,” 10–12.

<sup>59</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 56.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 66; Rendsburg, “Hurvitz Redux,” 12–13.

<sup>61</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 101–3; Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 320.

<sup>62</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 76–78; Gary A. Rendsburg, “The Northern Origin of Nehemiah 9,” *Biblica* 72 (1991): 351–55.

<sup>63</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 54, 69.

- I. Preposition *min* followed by anarthous noun, Aramaic and Deir ‘Alla (Num 23:7; Judg 5:20, 7:23, 10:11, 19:16; 2 Kgs 15:28; Ps 45:9, 73:19, 116:8; Prov 27:8, Song 4:15; Job 30:5, 40:6)<sup>64</sup>
- J. Use of *’ôt-* forms for expected *’itt-* forms, Aramaic interference (1 Kgs 20:25, 22:7–8, 24; 2 Kgs 1:15, 3:11–12, 26, 6:16. 8:8)<sup>65</sup>
- K. Interrogative *’êze<sup>h</sup>* governing verb, MH<sup>66</sup>
1. *’êze<sup>h</sup> ’ābar rūaḥ YHWH*, “which way did the spirit of the LORD pass?” (1 Kgs 22:24)
  2. *’êze<sup>h</sup> yikšār* “which will prosper?” (Ecc 11:6)
- L. Interrogative series *ha-... ’ô*, Deir ‘Alla (Judg 18:19; 2 Kgs 4:14, 6:27; Job 16:3, 38:28, 31; Ecc 2:19, 11:6)<sup>67</sup>
- M. Periphrastic genitive, Aramaic, Amurru Akkadian (Song 3:7)<sup>68</sup>
- N. Negative particle *’al* followed by a noun, Deir ‘Alla (Ps 83:2, 141:5; Prov 8:10, 12:28, 17:12, 27:2; Amos 5:14)<sup>69</sup>
- O. Numeral syntax with “one,” Aramaic (Song 4:9)<sup>70</sup>
- P. Omission of *’et* from prose narrative (throughout 2 Kgs)<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 132; Rendsburg, “Hurvitz Redux,” 24; Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir ‘Alla Inscription,” 314.

<sup>65</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 61–62. This form appears a number of times in the Book of Kings, eleven times by Rendsburg’s count.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 88; Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir ‘Alla Inscription,” 322.

<sup>68</sup> Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 320.

<sup>69</sup> Rendsburg, “The Dialect of the Deir ‘Alla Inscription,” 317; Chen, “Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Proverbs,” 85.

<sup>70</sup> Rendsburg, “Israelian Hebrew in Song of Songs,” 320.

<sup>71</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 155. Again, this is a widespread form, and Rendsburg reports thirty-three appearances in the Book of Kings. Rather than including them in the main body, he listed them in the afterword.

## APPENDIX I: CHARLES BURNEY AND THE SUGGESTION OF A NORTHERN DIALECT

The modern idea of a northern origin for portions of the Book of Kings seems to have originated with Charles F. Burney (1868–1925), a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. Burney was a generation older than Martin Noth, and so his writings reflect the array of redactional theories that existed before Noth brought some order to things. Burney held to some fascinating views, such as his conclusion that the final form of the Book of Judges seemed to be influenced by the prophet Hosea.<sup>1</sup> In terms of the literary form of the Book of Kings, Burney believed was the result of two redactions (R<sup>D</sup>, R<sup>D2</sup>). The first redaction (R<sup>D</sup>) was strongly influenced by Deuteronomy, and, based on his ideas concerning Josiah’s role in the discovery of that work, Burney dates it to ca. 600 BCE.<sup>2</sup> The second redaction (R<sup>D2</sup>) added post-Josianic materials, and he dates this editor to ca. 561 BCE. Burney believed the text then diverges, with another redactor who was influenced by the “Priestly Code” (R<sup>P</sup>) altering portions of the text postexile while the unaltered text continued to be preserved and eventually became the basis for LXX.<sup>3</sup>

Burney’s suggestion of the “dialect of Northern Palestine” comes somewhat out of nowhere.<sup>4</sup> He did not provide any parameters of this dialect, but it undoubtedly grew out of similarities he saw with Aramaic and Syriac, languages he knew well.<sup>5</sup> It seems that Burney employed common sense reasoning. Since he assumed the underlying sources were historically reliable, it was only reasonable that Aramaic influences would appear in northern Hebrew texts.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles F. Burney, *The Book of Judges with Introduction and Notes* (London: Rivingtons, 1918), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Burney, Notes, xvii. In his views, Burney largely followed the template that was first presented in Samuel R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel with an Introduction on Hebrew Palaeography and the Ancient Versions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1890), xxxvi–lv.

<sup>3</sup> Burney, Notes, xix.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>5</sup> Burney also believed that the Gospel of John was originally written in Aramaic. See Charles F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922).

In the following discussion, Burney's brief notes are supplemented utilizing more recent scholarship.

### Syntax Markers

2fs Pronominal Suffixes in *Ketiv* readings (כי- in 2 Kgs 4:2, 3, 7; אחי- in 2 Kgs 4:16, 23; 8:1)

Burney separates these two cases of 2fs changes in *ketiv* readings, but Rendsburg rightly treats them as a single case.<sup>6</sup> Burney sees this as paralleling the Syriac 2fs suffix. It occurs appended to a preposition to create a possessive construction (לכ, 2 Kgs 4:2), a simple possessive (שכנכי, 2 Kgs 4:3), and a possessive in the accusative (את-נשיכי, 2 Kgs 4:7). Outside of a text which might be a corruption (Jer 11:15), this construction is generally found in poetry (Ps 103:3–5, 116:7; Song 2:3). Following Burney, Cogan and Tadmor see the shift to אחי- as a distinctively northern trait, which explains why the text is not altered even though the pronunciation is.<sup>7</sup> For Rendsburg, the *ketiv* readings derive from an earlier Semitic source, and therefore indicative of both the northern provenance and possibly Canaanite origin of the forms.

ל"י Infinitive Construct with Prefix and Suffix (2 Kgs 5:18)

Burney's focus is on the morphology of בהשתחויתי (prefixed *hithpael* infinitive construct with 1ps pronominal suffix, שחה, "in my bowing down"). Of interest is the preserved וי rather

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<sup>6</sup> There are places in the Masoretic text where what is written (כתיב) is marked for a specific way of reading (קרי), which is denoted by certain markings. The most common of these is the reading of the divine name אדני as יהוה, but here it is just a subtle shift. For an explanation, see Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 86–87.

<sup>7</sup> Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 60.

than the expected ן without the י (בהשתחווית).<sup>8</sup> This seems to follow an Aramaic construction rather than Hebrew one, which makes sense and could be a case of style-switching.<sup>9</sup>

#### Relative Pronoun –ש in משלנו (2 Kgs 6:11)

This form appears in the mouth of the Aramaean king, so the logical conclusion would be that this is an Aramaic feature. Burney, however, sees this as a possible Phoenician influence rather than Aramaic. This may have been quite the insight, as there are cognate forms found in both Phoenician, Ammonite, and possibly at Deir ‘Alla.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of the origins of the form, the transition from אשׁר to –שׁ began early and took place over time. It appears first in the Song of Deborah (שקמתי, Judg 5:7) and a handful of other times in Judges (Judg. 6:17, 7:12, 8:26), all of which are generally seen as northern texts. Some LBH works, such as the Song of Songs, use –שׁ exclusively, and there is no hint of the older form in MH.<sup>11</sup> Hurvitz saw this as a possible calque of the Aramaic, attempting to capture the foreignness of the speaker.<sup>12</sup> If this is indeed a non-Aramaic borrowing, it may be a hint as to the primary influence Phoenician or other non-Hebrew Canaanite languages could have had there.

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<sup>8</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 96. For the morphological nuances of ל״י verbs, see GKC 207–11.

<sup>9</sup> Burney and Rendsburg cite Gustaf Dulman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch: nach den Idiomen des palästinischen Talmud, des Onkelostargum und Prophetentargum und der Jerusalemischen Targume* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905), 289, 349–50.

<sup>10</sup> Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origin of Selects Psalms* SBLM 43 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 90; Garr, *Dialect Geography*, 85–86; Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā*, 31. In the case of the Deir ‘Alla inscription, there is debate as to whether the š represents this relative pronoun or possibly ’š, “man.”

<sup>11</sup> Eduard Y. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, ed. Raphael Kutscher (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982), 32.

<sup>12</sup> Rendsburg records this from personal communication with Hurvitz, see *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 129, fn 29.

איכה as “Where” (2 Kgs 6:13)

Another *Ketiv* reading, this is a case in which a clearly Aramaic form appears in texts that should be chronologically distinct. Thus, איפה appears in Judges 20:3–4 in the mouth of an Ephraimite. Rendsburg is convinced of a northern origin, but he is not alone.<sup>13</sup> This is generally an interrogative but here and in Song of Songs 1:7, it is indirectly. Such usage is close to the Aramaic *’ayko*.

זה– Demonstrative Pronoun (2 Kgs 6:19)

The expected form here is זה–, and it is generally accepted that this shift is a northern, spoken variant.<sup>14</sup> Rendsburg in particular sees this as evidence of a continuity of spoken forms between IH and MH, with the expected written form not in common usage. It has been proposed that due to its already existing Aramaic influences, northern or Israelian Hebrew may have had an impact upon postexilic developments in LBH.<sup>15</sup> This is a case when a regional explanation falls somewhat flat, which is when Rendsburg’s theory of Hebrew diglossia, discussed below, may come into play.<sup>16</sup>

Preservation of the Definite Article ה after Preposition ב (2 Kgs 7:12)

Hebrew generally drops the definite article ה when prefixing a prepositional particle. In rare cases, such as בהשדה (“in the field”) here, the definite article does not elide. This trait

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<sup>13</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 104; BDB, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, 31; Schniedewind and Sivan, “Elijah-Elisha Narratives,” 327; Rendsburg, *Diglossia*, 133–34.

<sup>15</sup> Although dated, consider Cyrus H. Gordon, “North Israelite Influence on Postexilic Hebrew,” *IEJ* 5.2 (1955): 85–88. Gordon’s consideration of seemingly older Canaanite styles appearing in LBH texts such as Ecclesiastes is an idea which should be revisited.

<sup>16</sup> Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 134.

appears in the Punic *bhšt* (KAI 130:3, “in the year”).<sup>17</sup> The construction does appear elsewhere in works Rendsburg considers northern (1 Sam 13:21; Ps 36:6; Eccl 8:1) as well as LBH texts (Neh 9:19, 12:38; 2 Chr 10:7, 25:10, 29:27). He concludes that the non-elision is rooted in northern Canaanite dialects, and that it must have existed in oral communication alongside the eliding literary form.

עֲד־אֱלִיהֶם/עֲד־הֶם Construction (2 Kgs 9:18, 20)

Burney provides no comment on his inclusion of this example, and many commentators dismiss this construction as a scribal change or spelling variation.<sup>18</sup> Rendsburg is more open to the possibility of a Moabite or proto-Canaanite influence, citing a similar construction from line 18 of the Mesha Stela: *w'shb.hm*, “I dragged them.” Based on this, Rendsburg believes this to be a non-Judahite construction, possible from a Transjordanian dialect based on Jehu’s possible association with that region (1 Kg 19:16; 2 Kgs 9:1–6).<sup>19</sup> This is quite a linguistic leap, but not outside the realm of possibility.

Anticipatory Pronominal Suffix before Objects (1 Kgs 19:21; 21:13)

The anticipatory pronominal suffix before the object marks the construction as referring to the same item. Rendsburg sees the construction as a colloquialism which might have been

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<sup>17</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 107; Stanislav Segert, *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1976), 108. Segert argued that the article was restored to the Punic, presumably because it had been lost as Punic developed away from Phoenician.

<sup>18</sup> See for example, Gray, *I and II Kings*, 545. This is in keeping with the BHS apparatus and standard grammars such as GKC, but Burney dismisses it as unnecessary. See Burney, Notes, 299.

<sup>19</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 115.

common in spoken Hebrew but rarely found in text until the Midrashic period.<sup>20</sup> In the first case, the *piel* form of בשל takes the 3mp suffix: בשלם הבשר (1 Kgs 19:21). The second case describes the calling of witnesses against Naboth, with the *hifil* of עיד taking the 3ms suffix in the narrative: ויעדהו ... את-נבזות (1 Kgs 21:13).<sup>21</sup>

Indefinite use of אחד (1 Kgs 19:4, 5; 20:13, 35; 22:9; 2 Kgs 4:1; 7:8; 8:6)

Burney does not directly reference this usage of אחד in 1 Kings 13:11, but Rendsburg is convinced that it is the same.<sup>22</sup> Although the subject has not been explored in-depth, there seems to have been some sort of shift toward numerals being used in an indefinite construct at various points in the development of Hebrew.<sup>23</sup> The usage appears more commonly in LBH texts (Ezek 8:7), and it is fairly widespread in MH and Aramaic.<sup>24</sup> There is, therefore, a good possibility that this represents an early Aramaic influence on northern Hebrew.

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<sup>20</sup> Godfrey R. Driver, “Colloquialisms in the Old Testament,” in *Mélanges Marcel Cohen: Études de linguistique, ethnographie et sciences connexes offertes par ses amis et ses élèves à l’occasion de son 80ème anniversaire*, ed. Marcel Cohen, *Janua Linguarum* 27 (The Hague: Moulton, 1970), 236. Rendsburg refers to this as “a very common syntactic device in MH,” but argues it went against syntactic norms for written text in SBH. See Rendsburg, *Diglossia in Ancient Hebrew*, 125, 129.

<sup>21</sup> Rendsburg rejects some occasions of the suffixed ך as being anticipatory, citing David A. Robertson, “Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry,” PhD diss., Yale University, 1966, 76–77. It would appear he sees it as some kind of poetic form akin to the examples Robertson presents. Perhaps this is why Rendsburg omitted this particularly category from *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*.

<sup>22</sup> Burney, Notes, 181. Rendsburg cites as confirmation James A. Montgomery and Henry Snyder Gehman, eds. *Kings I and II: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, International Critical Commentary (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 1976), 264. Whether Montgomery and Gehman actually present confirmation or just repeat Burney’s position

<sup>23</sup> Although not specifically addressing the use of אחד except in a single place, Moshavi and Rothstein have recently looked at this phenomenon. See Adina Moshavi and Susan Rothstein, “Indefinite Numerical Construct Phrases in Biblical Hebrew,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 63 (2018): 99–123. They note that the phenomenon is mostly connected with measurement expressions, so the type of usage that Burney and Rendsburg address may be a precursor to that later development. According to Rubin, the grammaticalization of the numeral for one (אחד) as an indefinite article is quite common in Semitic languages throughout history. See Aaron D. Rubin, *Studies in Semitic Grammaticalization*, HSS 57 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 18.

<sup>24</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 31. Although speaking positively of this statement, Rendsburg does note that Segal omits this in his *Grammar*, which is an odd omission. Biblical Aramaic usages include Daniel 2:31, 4:16, 6:18; Ezra 4:8, 6:2.

### Lexical Markers Such as Aramaic Roots and Hapax Legomena

Burney lists three words which he sees as having Aramaic roots, indicating development within the Hebrew language. There is an immediate challenge in any argument like this because it has to be acknowledged that Aramaic and Hebrew descend from a common ancestral language. As such, the exchange of lexemes, especially at the root level, is difficult to prove. This is something Burney was aware of, and he speaks in conditional terms when describing them. He additionally proposed that at least two words are *hapax legemona*, entering the vocabulary and displacing native Hebrew words. These are native Hebrew words which appear sparingly in BH but then appear in postbiblical forms of the language.

#### Aramaic Root 1: פִּקַּשׁ (1 Kgs 20:10)

Some dictionaries indicate this is an alternate spelling of פִּקַּח, although Rendsburg maintains they are distinct roots.<sup>25</sup> The switching of שׁ and ח was fairly common, so the possibility of an affinity cannot be excluded. Since 1 Kings 20:10 is the only appearance of this spelling, any conclusions are tentative. Also, the word is used in a direct quote from the Aramaean king Benhadad, and so may be evidence of style-switching and not an IH linguistic trait.<sup>26</sup>

#### Aramaic Root 2: מְדִינָה, “province” (1 Kgs 20:14, 15, 17, 19)

It must be said that 1 Kings 20 is rife with Aramaic-like characteristics, and the four appearances of מְדִינָה (“district governor”) is one of the most prominent. This term appears almost exclusively in LBH texts, most prominently twenty-six times in Esther (also Dan 8:2, 11:24;

<sup>25</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 60. HALOT, “פִּקַּח, II,” 765.

<sup>26</sup> Schneidewind and Sivan conclude it is simply a stylistic choice. Schneidewind and Sivan, “Elijah-Elisha Narratives,” 325.

Ezra 2:1; Neh 1:3, 7:6, 11:3). Rather than showing a late date, this perhaps shows the influence of Aramaean organization, or at the least organizing language, upon the northern kingdom.

Aramaic Root 3: חררים, “nobles” (1 Kgs 21:8)

Driver agreed with Burney that the presence of this word denotes northern origin because it derives from the Aramaic *hrr* or “free.”<sup>27</sup> For Rendsburg, the appearance of an Aramaic-like lexeme in a northern narrative that is absent elsewhere until reappearing in MH, as in the case of חר here, indicates a northern colloquialism.<sup>28</sup> Still, in this case there is the complication of other texts which include חר, particularly Isaiah 34:12, which is an oracle against Edom. Rendsburg struggles with this, proposing several reasons the word might be included in an otherwise Judahite context. So little is known about the organization of the kingdom of Edom, but it was overseen by the Judahites and appears to have political connections with both Hebrew kingdoms (1 Kgs 22:37; 2 Kgs 3:9, 8:20). Perhaps the Edomites acquired it from the northerners and Isaiah is using the term as they used it.

Aramaic Root 4: תשלה, “mislead” (2 Kgs 4:28)

This is a distinctly Aramaic usage of the verb root, referred to as a “strong Aramaism” in BDB.<sup>29</sup> Cogan and Tadmor reject this classification, referring to it as “part of the patois of north Israel.”<sup>30</sup> Certainly it does not displace the usual BH synonyms כזב, תעי, or שגג/שגט to describe

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<sup>27</sup> Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 188. n. It must be said, however, that Driver seems not to have questioned Burney, accepting Burney’s lists without critical consideration.

<sup>28</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 72.

<sup>29</sup> BDB, 1017.

<sup>30</sup> Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 58.

deceit or misleading.<sup>31</sup> More likely, this is a reflection of the northern idiom and given that the prophets were chiefly northerners in this period, that is consistent.

Hapax 1: שָׁנַס, “gird” (1 Kgs 18:46)

Burney sees this usage standing in for the more common SBH verbs אָזַר (15 times, including 2 Kgs 1:8) and חָגַר (44 times, including 1 Kgs 20:11, 32; 2 Kgs 3:21, 4:29, 9:1). A similar construction is employed elsewhere, including the same object of girding, namely the hips (מִתְּנִיָּם) but using חָגַר (Exod 12:11). It is possible that שָׁנַס has similar roots with Ug. *šns* and may therefore share a common root with Aramaic.<sup>32</sup>

Hapax 2: אֲכִילָה, “food” (1 Kgs 19:8)

While the cognate אָכַל (א) appears over two hundred times, this particular form that Rendsburg refers to as *qētilā<sup>h</sup>*, appears only here.<sup>33</sup> Burney saw this as a replacement, and there could be some kind of dialect involved here. While Schniedewind and Sivan argue that אֲכִילָה is simply a technical word which has lost its specific meaning, Rendsburg points out the rarity of the construction in Hebrew.<sup>34</sup> This particular suffixed construction occurs exclusively in IH texts, often with these constructions appearing only once (פִּלְגָה, Judg 5:16; פְּצִירָה, 1 Sam 13:21; עֲטִישָׁה, Job 41:10) and one postexilic text (2 Chr 30:17). In MH, it takes the place of the BH infinitive construct, and Segal notes that it appears only in Aramaic where there was contact with Hebrew,

<sup>31</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 91.

<sup>32</sup> HALOT, s.v. “שָׁנַס,” 1607. *šnst / kpt . bhšh*, “she binds the palms to her sash.” *CAD* 1.3 II 11–13.

<sup>33</sup> Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew in the Book of Kings*, 56.

<sup>34</sup> Schniedewind and Sivan, “Elijah-Elisha,” 314; Rendsburg, *Israelian Hebrew*, 56.

indicating that it was a spoken form first.<sup>35</sup> It is absent in LBH texts, reinforcing the idea that it is a native Hebrew construction that was late to enter the written vocabulary.

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<sup>35</sup> Moses H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 103. As in the reference under consideration, this substitution for the infinitive construct occurred in the preexilic period and only came into common use in the written form well into the exilic period.

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