

Mario Liverani, Oltre la Bibbia (Roma/Bari: Editori Laterza, 2003)

In his essay on the history of Israel from ethnogenesis to the emergence of Judaism in the fourth century B.C., presented under the intriguing title “Beyond the Bible”, Mario Liverani (hereafter ML) finds himself obliged to move beyond the current stalemate between minimalists and maximalists. He is dissatisfied with histories which more or less paraphrase the biblical text even when they question or reject the historicity of this or that segment or episode. He notes how, in the course of time, it dawned on the practitioners of this kind of history that the founding events were retrojections from a later time. The early history of humanity recorded in Genesis 1-11 was the first to go, but it was followed by the ancestral narratives, then the exodus and conquest, the twelve-tribal league and the Judges, but stopping short at the United Monarchy. More recently, however, this phase too was undermined by the minimalists (a term which, together with its antonym “maximalist”, ML does not use), which of course entailed denying that Israel and Judah ever formed one political unit. They could then be viewed as two of about half-a-dozen mid-sized political entities in the Syro-Palestinian corridor, the principal difference being that the “bibles” of kingdoms like Damascus, Hamath, Tyre and Gaza have not come down to us. All of them, at any rate, were swept aside by the Assyrians or Babylonians. ML accepts this minimalist position, though unlike some of its practitioners he is prepared to find authentic source material behind the ideological constructs, and therefore believes it possible to write at least a thin history of Israel and Judah from ethnogenesis to the liquidation of the Judean kingdom. This is what ML calls “normal history”, a history narrated on the basis of the available sources unburdened with ideological concerns. The novel element in ML’s historiographical project is that he makes a systematic distinction between this “normal history” and the ideologically constructed “invented history” which replaced it, and then writes up each separately. The “invented history” embodied the response to the need for a foundation or charter myth for the new commonwealth, an essential prerequisite for those who returned from Babylon to the province of Judah during the first century of Iranian imperial rule.

The story begins with Palestine in the Late Bronze Age (1550-1180) during most of which the region was under Egyptian control and was undergoing a process which ML calls “imprinting” by Egypt. During the transition period (1200-1100), what would eventually emerge as Israel was in the process of formation along the north-south central highland ridge, in the Negev and in Gilead, far removed from the centers of Egyptian control and surveillance. ML takes the “Israel” of the Merenptah stele (ca. 1230) to refer to the emergent Israel of the biblical texts, and he also accepts the linguistic identification of habiru with ‘ibrîm. He even finds a reference to “Abrahamites” in the Banu-Raham of the Beth-Shean stele of Seti I. A telling fact is that the location of the major tribes corresponds to the distribution of what are taken to be proto-Israelite settlements. He reviews the three models for Israelite ethnogenesis - conquest, sedentarization of transhumance pastoralists either indigenous or infiltrating from outside, and revolting peasants - without declaring in favor of any of them. He gives due weight to the climatic factor in the movement of Lybians into the Nile valley, the Sea Peoples in the direction of Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean coastal area, and the collapse of the great centers in the north including Hattuša, Alalakh and Ugarit. In brief, the weakening of Egyptian control of the Syro-Palestinian region and the Levantine city-states, amply documented in the Amarna correspondence (ca.1370-1350), together with the collapse of the major LB palatine centers, left room for developments of a purely indigenous character since, apart from the Philistines, there is no evidence for immigration into the region. The development was in the direction of sedentarization, agglomeration with other nomadic-pastoral groups, technological advances, and the eventual emergence of an agrarian-urban symbiosis in what ML calls “colonization from below”. That this development eventuated in the creation of independent kingdoms including Israel and Judah was made possible by the absence of imperial control, a situation which continued down to the Neo-Assyrian Drang nach Westen in the eighth century B.C.

The next stage in the “normal history” is transitional, lasting from about 1050 to 930 B.C. At that time the salient features in the region were the Philistine cities in the south-coastal region, the Aramean city-states in the north (Hamath, Lu’ash, Bit Adini, etc), and the emergent Transjordanian kingdoms of Ammon, Moab

and Edom. The dimorphic (tribal-urban) centers of Shechem and Jerusalem, which were already foci of habiru concentration and expansion in the early fourteenth century according to the Amarna correspondence, could have served as models for similar formations in the central and southern hill country. The Song of Deborah provides evidence from the late eleventh century of tribesmen (six out of a total of ten tribes) coming down from the hills and taking on the Canaanites in the Jezreel valley. Once we peel away the moralizing judgments and the sequencing with David in the biblical traditions about Saul - they were probably contemporary - we have a small habiru state limited to the tribal areas of Ephraim and Benjamin, under pressure from Philistines to the west and Ammonites to the east. With David it is harder to get at the historical nucleus which is barnacled over with a vast amount of novelistic elaboration. The narrative traditions about a brigand chief who formed a small state based on Hebron and expanded to the north - Jerusalem, Ammon, Zoba - may have been inspired by the monumental mini-autobiography of Idrimi of Alalakh - assuming, of course, that the biblical authors were familiar with this text from the early fifteenth century B.C. David succeeded at any rate in founding a dynasty, independently evidenced by the Dan inscription. The figure of Solomon, finally, has been mythologized beyond measure. The extent of his domain, "from the Euphrates to the River of Egypt", corresponds to the Transeuphrates satrapy under Iranian rule; following Finkelstein's low chronology which ML accepts, the (in)famous Megiddo stables and impressive remains at Hazor date to Omri not Solomon; and the dimensions of Solomon's royal palace and temple, impossible for the tenth century, are based on Persian models including the Persepolis apadana. The transition period ends with the expedition of Sheshonq into Palestine (925 B.C.). The route taken by the Egyptian forces, which avoided the territory of Judah and Israel, seems to confirm that the two kingdoms were not only separate but relatively small, and that Israel had not yet expanded into the Galilee.

In spite of his reservations stated earlier, in tracing the history of the two kingdoms ML is obliged to follow the line of the biblical narrative. Israel, basically the tribal region of Ephraim and Manasseh, takes over the ancient name from the Merneptah stele and adopts Jacob as its founder and patronym. By removing the Philistine threat, Sheshonq made possible Israel's territorial expansion into the Jezreel valley including Megiddo, as well as the Galilee and Gilead. With the Omri dynasty and the founding of Samaria, Israel became a palatine state and came to the notice of the Assyrians as bit umria. ML estimates the population of eighth-century Israel at 250,000 and Judah at 110,000 - which incidentally renders somewhat problematic his later statement that 200,000 were deported by the Assyrians from Judah (p. 165). In tracing the history of Judah in broad strokes ML also follows il filo biblico. Judah was relatively prosperous and, unlike Israel, politically stable with the exception of the one break in the dynastic succession with Athaliah. The decisive phase of Assyrian expansion westward, leading to conquest and the destruction of local cultures by the practice of cross-deportation, was a major disaster for the entire eastern Mediterranean region and led to the extinction of Damascus and Israel. The eventual decline of Assyria instigated the ambitious program inscribed in Deuteronomy during the reign of Josiah (640-609). It entailed the idea of a Greater Israel ("from Dan to Beersheba") reflected in the town and border lists in Josh 15-19 and the twelve districts of Solomon in 1 Kgs 4:7-19; a law book of recent production but presumed to be ancient and therefore of great authority; a covenant based on the Assyrian treaty form in which YHVH takes the place of the Great King as the object of fealty and fidelity; and the myth of an exodus from subjection to imperial rule leading to the undisturbed and exclusive occupation of the land.

The hiatus between the two great empires came to an end with the Babylonian conquest, resulting in a drastic reduction in the number and size of Judean settlements and a spectacular demographic loss in the order of 85-90%. (Here, too, we note, ML's fearless approach to demographic data). What happened in Judah was part of a widespread collapse in the sixth century involving Anatolia and Elam, Urartu and Media, resulting in squatters taking over many of the major settlements. The Babylonian conquest also facilitated inroads of nomads from the Iranian highlands to the north and the Arabian desert to the south, the latter leading to the establishment of the broad and expansive Kedarite kingdom which, incidentally, provided the model for the Israelite twelve-tribal structure. After the death of Nebuchadrezzar, Awil-Marduk granted amnesty to Jehoiachin who ML believes was the leader of the diaspora communities, though in fact he is never mentioned in the biblical sources in that capacity. ML's conviction about the

central role of the monarchy in the aspirations for restoration is also postulated on the questionable identification of Sheshbazzar with the Shenazzar, son of Jehoiachin, of 1 Chr 3:18. It was during this interim period that the basic lines of the early history of humanity in Genesis 1-11 were laid down. Though composed in the early Persian period, the Garden of Eden myth reflects a Babylonian scenario with special reference to royal parks; the strong interest in genealogies is characteristic of the same period, evidenced also by the Greek logographers; the Flood story could have been suggested by the annual inundation of the Euphrates and Tigris, and the Tower of Babel reflects contemplation by the deportees of the ruined ziggurat as a symbol of the failed Babylonian imperial enterprise.

ML's "invented history" was first elaborated in the Babylonian diaspora during the "seventy years" of Jer 25:12 and 29:10 which refers not to the period of exile but to the duration of the Neo-Babylonian empire (609-539). ML's picture of the Persian period is limned with broad strokes and raises numerous queries which cannot be pursued here. Ezra-Nehemiah, the principal source, was composed two centuries after the last events described in Nehemiah, the edicts of return in Ezra 1:2-4 and 6:3-5 were originally directed against claims on behalf of the Samaritan temple, but the edict of Artaxerxes II (404-359) mandating Ezra's mission in Ezra 7 is basically authentic. The lists in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 are official lists, continually updated, of those who returned. The return itself, at first unofficial, was staggered over the first Persian century, perhaps beginning with the amnesty of Awil-Marduk. The area of settlement was initially restricted to no more than about 25 km around Jerusalem. There were no settlements south of Bethlehem because of Edomite encroachment and the territorial expansion of the coastal cities allowed for only one settlement to the west, namely, Lod. Conflicts over title to property with the indigenous population, the 'am hā'āres (the plural form implies inclusion of Edomites, Ammonites and Samaritans), broadened out into conflict over the claim to the land in general, which inevitably entailed the issue of continuity with the national and ethnic past. The history of that past, written by the dominant bēnē haggōlā in response to and in keeping with their own ideology, can, ML believes, be reconstructed from the first seven biblical books.

First, then, the invention of the ancestors. The stories about the ancestors, Abraham in particular, represent the soft ideology of the early stages of the resettlement which contemplated the assimilation of the indigenous peoples, subject of course to certain conditions. This was a time when the restoration of the national dynasty was still an option. Abraham, unknown in the preexilic period, enters Canaan from Mesopotamia as a gēr vētōšāv and he and his descendants purchase land at the going rate, and do so in accord with Neo-Babylonian land contracts (Gen 23; 33:18-20). Abraham cultivates benign and respectful relations with Arabs and others with whom he comes in contact. He initiates the custom of cross-cousin marriage while also taking two Arab brides. No threat of extermination hangs over the indigenous peoples; indeed, Jacob takes his sons to task for their vendetta against the Shechemites - "You have made me hateful to the inhabitants of the land" (Gen 34:30). ML reads this chapter about relations with Shechem as reflecting a failed attempt at rapprochement between Samaria and Jerusalem. He also notes that these stories betray little interest in Jerusalem and the temple, and he deletes Melchizedek king of Salem from Gen 14:17-24, assigning the blessing of Abraham to the king of Sodom instead. There are several issues here which would require further discussion. One question would be whether this scenario is compatible with the "Zionism" of the early settlers emphasized in the sources. Another query would be whether ML's point about aspirations for the reestablishment of the monarchy in the early Persian period is consistent with the fact that such aspirations appear only in the Priestly version of the Abraham and Jacob narratives (Gen 17:6,16; 35:11), which version would be, for ML, more in keeping with the hard ideology of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Abraham could be invoked by both those who returned and those already in situ, and in fact Ezek 33:23-29 records a claim on the land made by the latter which appeals to Abraham, a claim rejected by the author. This is one of the few scraps of information about the ideology of those who remained, which is not surprising since, in this instance at any rate, the winning side wrote the history. The hard ideology associated with Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah appealed to an original entry into the land as a globalized, unified, twelve-tribal military operation under one leader in keeping with the Deuteronomistic ideology first

sketched out at the time of Josiah, an ideology which called for the extermination of the native peoples. The geographical nucleus of the conquest narrative is the region where those who returned actually settled, namely, Ephraim and Benjamin (Joshua 6-8). The ideological, utopian (or dystopian!) and unhistorical character of the conquest narratives is apparent. Replacing one people by another was impossible before Assyrian cross-deportation. The canonical list of (mostly seven) autochthonous peoples exterminated during the conquest is fictive, while the peoples actually present in the early period - Edomites, Philistines, Phoenicians etc - go unmentioned with the exception of the Canaanites. As ML puts it, "They exterminate those who are not there, and the fact that they are not there proves that they have been exterminated" (p.304). The uncompromising and totalizing nature of the conquest is reinforced by the anxiety to provide special explanations for those who somehow escaped extermination, namely, the Gibeonites and Shechemites (Josh 9 and 24). The climax of the military campaign is the distribution of land by lot, historically incredible but perhaps reflecting procedures for land distribution in use during the resettlement in the Persian period.

The exodus from Egypt is occasionally explained as a response to the need to affirm non-autochthonous ethnic origins, somewhat parallel with the Trojan origins of Rome as presented in the Aeneid. ML goes well beyond this point in suggesting that "exodus", with the associated language of "bringing out" or "bringing up", may be no more than a formulaic and metaphoric way of stating a change of political status, namely, "going out" from imperial control to autonomy but implying no physical relocation. He finds the first use of this characteristically Deuteronomic "displacement formula" (an attempt to translate codice motorio) in Hosea (7:11; 8:13; 9:3; 11:5; 12:2) during the period of Assyrian hegemony. The formula was then backdated and adapted to Abraham's "exodus" from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 15:7). The wilderness narratives reflect issues and problems connected with the immigrations and settlements in the Persian period. The kvetching in the wilderness reflects anxieties about leaving the settled life and the "fleshpots" of Babylon, problems involved in actually getting to their destination, encounters with uncooperative and insensitive peoples, and so on. The census lists in Numbers are reminiscent of the lists in Ezra-Nehemiah and are doubtless connected with the allotment of land.

Placing exodus-wilderness-conquest after the ancestral stories was clearly dictated by the need to write a consecutive historical narrative which, however, left a gap between the occupation of the land and the monarchy. This being a period for which the authors had no information, it was filled in with the largely folkloristic stories about the šōfētīm, analogous to the dikastai of Tyre mentioned by Josephus C. Ap I 157). The geographical distribution of territory in which these "judges" operated corresponds more or less to regions occupied by those who returned. Passing from the invention of the Judges to the invention of the United Monarchy, ML makes the point that a movement towards national restoration would tend to imply the restoration of the dynasty, in spite of the fact that according to the Deuteronomistic Historian the monarchy was held responsible for the disaster of 586 B.C. The first generations of those who returned were on the whole sympathetic to monarchy, and since the Persians favored or at least permitted rule by client kings in the provinces, the restoration of the native dynasty could not be ruled out. But this option was closed off after the disappearance of Zerubbabel following on a rebellion or attempted coup d'état, at which point begins the political ascendancy of the priesthood, the "kingdom of priests and holy nation" of Exod 19:6. On this point, I believe ML is one of several historians of the period who tend to exaggerate the role of the priesthood and underestimate that of the governor of the province during the period of Persian rule. It seems more likely that the Jerusalem priesthood only attained a position of unquestioned political dominance in the Hellenistic period.

In the chapter with the heading "The Priestly Option: the Invention of the Solomonic Temple", the author points out that the description of Solomon's temple is based not on Syro-Phoenician models available in the tenth century but on Persian architectural blueprints. The rebuilt temple of the early Persian period functioned after the manner of a Babylonian temple, but of course on a much smaller scale, serving as a center of economic redistribution in addition to being a place of worship. ML seems to accept the Bürger-Tempel-Gemeinde thesis of Joel Weinberg which appears to have fallen out of the discussion in recent

years. He notes the increasing commercialization of the priesthood and the gradual expansion of the role of Levites, processes which would have important consequences after the fall of the Persian empire.

Turning finally to the invention of the law, ML concedes that the legal codes contain much ancient jurisprudence. He follows a fairly standard dating for the Deuteronomic law during the reign of Josiah, the Holiness Code from the time of Ezekiel, and the Priestly matter from the post-exilic period, possibly associated with the priest Ezra. The covenants made by the founders from Abraham to David are seen as a kind of mirror image of the historical covenants and assemblies from the reign of Josiah to Ezra and Nehemiah. Along both lines, the imagined and the historical, he detects a development away from the political to the religious and cultic model, with an increasing role assigned to the people and their priestly representatives. This law, conceived in its mature formulation at a time when the monarchy had passed from the scene, is projected back into a time before the monarchy came on the scene. By the same token the figure of the lawgiver, portrayed in legendary fashion (compare the legends about Sargon and Cyrus), had to be located at the birth of the nation, before entry into the land and the passage to monarchy. In the post-exilic period, law observance took the place of political structures no longer available as a principle and source of distinctive and exclusive self-identification. It resulted that the dominant impulse was religious and ethnic self-closure (p.391), though the more ambitious and utopian strategy of openness to all has left notable traces in the texts.

In his summing up, ML defends his decision to bring the story to an end in 398 B.C., which he takes to be the date of Ezra's arrival in the province, rather than the more common option of 586 B.C. He maintains that the intervening period, when the founding events were being put in place, was primarily retrospective, and that by the time of Ezra the process of self-identification was complete. In the context of current historiographical debates, ML differentiates his essay from those of the more traditionalist authors which, while accepting the thematic elaboration of traditions in the Persian period, leave the founding events from the ancestors to Solomon in place. He also distances himself from the minimalists who reject the possibility of finding authentic source material behind the ideological constructs. The "normal history" is not without ideological values and the "invented history" is not without reference to real events. He concludes by stating that the integration of these parallel histories remains as a task for the critical historian, but it remains unclear what the composition of this integrated history would entail or what it would look like.

Preface

Histories of Israel have generally been paraphrases of biblical text or have followed the biblical outline of events. Since the late 1800s archaeology has been mostly in service of proving historicity of biblical texts. Then a gradual dismantling of the history beginning with creation, primeval history, ancestors, exodus, conquest, 12tribal league, Judges, but stopping at United Monarchy and the First Temple. Then it began to dawn on scholars that the founding events as described were retrojections from post-exilic period. The next step was to undermine the idea of a united monarchy thereby denying the link between Israel and Judah. Israel becomes just one of several small kingdoms swept away by Assyria. Recent radical essays are by way of being Prolegomena but have not followed through by writing a history based on these premises, i.e., based on what the sources tell us about the conditions at the time they were composed. Postmodernist critics have given up on the enterprise and broken off any contact with a historical use of the literary sources.

Two phases of the history of Israel: (1) normal history - two kingdoms not much different from e.g. Carhemish, Damascus, Tyre, Gaza whose traditions have (for the most part) not survived; their Bibles" have disappeared. (2) Invented history: The United Kingdom idea was the fruit of Josiah's project of a Greater Israel, reinforced by Yahvistic monotheism, "Mosaic" law, rewritten history (Josiah = Joshua!) + return of deportees not assimilated, attempt to set up a temple-city on Babylonian model, create a nation called Israel, involving an enormous effort at rewriting the history. The birth of Judaism.

Palestine in LB (14-13 centuries BC) (5-33) — LB = 1550-1180

Landscape and resources: semi-arid to arid; pluvial not irrigational; 200 by 80 km; pastoral with smaller herd animals (sheep, goats); terracing; few metals; no good harbors; population max. 250,000; in Iron II maybe 400,000; a broken-up land; corridor between the great riverine cultures; strong symbolization: Holy and, Promised Land. Settlements = max. 3000-4000 inhabitants with pastoral and agrarian hinterland, under a "king"; villages 6-50 houses; to the north "cantonal states" as Ugarit, Alalakh; twice the size of those in Palestine proper.

Discontinuity in settlements: centres of population, and therefore "cities" (Amarna letters) coastal area, Jezreel, Shephela, Jordan valley; in highlands transhumance pastoralism; Jerusalem and Shechem isolated; from EB, MB, LB gradual restriction of settlement area and increasing concentration of population in regions more adapted to agriculture; agrarian and pastoral workers inhabit the same villages

Egyptian control 1460-1170 — political "imprinting": Amarna 1370-1350: Eg. Governors in Gaza, Kumidi in the Beqa, Sumura on Med. Coast; garrisons at Jaffa, Beth Shean, Ullaza; controlled by no more than 700! In 13th century forts guarding the trade routes: copper mines of Timna, etc.; ideology and protocol; capitals of small city-states walled, palace e.g. Megiddo VIIB: king's men (military aristocracy, priests, scribes, artisans, guards etc who can receive land in exchange for service) and free men who produce; temples, scribal schools, artisanate producing luxury items; importation of Cypriot and Mycenaean ware, export of olive oil, grain; village: elders (shibuti), full assembly, mayor (hazanu); peasants and pastorals together; sacred trees.

"External" nomads: Sutu (Akkadian) and Shasu (Eg.); no Israelite tribal names at end of LB; Set I stele of Beth-Shean c.1289 refers to Habiru and Raham tribe, Banu-Raham, their eponym = Abu-Raham = Abraham! (29-30); Israel tribal name in Merenptah stele c.1230 in central highlands; therefore Abrahamites and Israelites in the interstices (30,59 Israel in formation, proto-Israel)

Tensions: free peasants insolvent (hupshu/hofshi); forced sale of land; flight; habiru associated linguistically

and historically withy 'ivrim; symbiosis between habiru and nomads; leading to revolution, cf. case of Abdi-Ashirta ruler of Amurru (33) + famine, demographic, meteorological

Transition 1200-1100 (37-58)

The current hypotheses: (1) conquest (2) sedentarization of pastoralists in situ or infiltration, transhumance (3) revolting peasants, now out of favor for political reasons but which L. accepts in modified form; all could be used as part of a larger scenario. Today we tend to privilege socioeconomic factors against external (immigration) and climatic.

LB-Iron I transition profound for the entire region; switch from agro-urban to agro-pastoral; palatine culture (including writing, scribal schools) to village and kinship-based culture

technological: iron, alphabet, domestication of camel, use of horse, terracing canals, irrigation, shipbuilding.
new settlements

Climate: aridity of Sahara and Arabia; incursion of Lybians to Nile; famine, loss of rainfall in Anatolia and Balkans; probably caused inroads of Sea Peoples (Sherdana, Zeker, Danuna (Dan?), Philistines);

General collapse: Ugarit, Alashya, entire eastern Med. Region; Hittite empire total c. 1200 ad eventual development of Neo-Hittite states (Karkemish); less dramatic collapse in Egypt; Arameans in Mesopotamia; result: Palestine free to develop indigenously for first time — from c. 1200 to Neo-Assyrian 8th century (745!)

combined with continuity — no evidence for immigration into Palestine except Sea Peoples

Turn to tribalism, also in Syria (49)

nomadization
sedentarization — village culture, kinship based, genealogies
eventually merged with city culture

Net result: Palestine opened up; indigenous development possible; new settlements in hill country and the semi-arid areas (56)

The new society 1150-1050 (59-87)

Development of agro-pastoral settlements in hill country; from LB 29 to Iron I 254, ninefold increase; consist in tribal elements already there + those escaping city control; proto-Israelite, attested c 1230 Merenptah stele; less developed in the Negev because semi-arid; decline in cities; also N. Transjordan (Gilead) = “colonization from below” (61)

In semi-arid zone pastoral camps of transhumance pastoralists = huts and tents (12-11 century); round partially buried houses; pillared houses 11-10 cent. Central space taken from tent arrangement.

Clan = village; indicators: collared rim jars; absence of pig bones in tribal region.

Ethnogenesis of proto-Israelites (66)

Requires cautious approach; characters can be invented more easily than social scenarios; genealogies easily falsified; individual tribal names - many early but structure systematized from 6th century based on nomad (Arab) tribes; Gen 49 and Deut 33 from 8th century (67); census in Num 2 and 26 from 4th century; but location of individual major tribes corresponds to distribution of proto-Israelite villages; “Israel” first applied to tribes of central hills (Manasse, Ephraim, Ben).

Juridical norms: some e.g. levirate, go'el ancient; Decalogue: first not before Josiah; 4th ancient; Covenant

Code has elements of ancient customary law, especially 'eved 'ivri (not ethnic).

The “new society” in highlands of Galilee, Central Highlands, Judah, Negev, Gilead; as against the Canaanite-Philistine city-states; Eg. Control restricted mostly to coastal region (intepretation of Josh 10:1 Sun = Pharaoh, 81!) == difference between city-state and ethnic state, which eventually adapted to city state.

Deities: YHVH not aboriginal; no patriarch, tribal eponym, judge, king before Jehoshaphat has YHVH name; several deities, some more in evidence than YHVH; became national deity of Judah c 900-850, of Israel 850-800.

Observations

Merenptah stele plays a crucial part; is the reading “Israel” assured? Habiru = 'ibrim assured?

Was Ugarit destroyed or depopulated because of climatic conditions? This factor deserves more thorough treatment

The crucial issue in this “colonization from below” (61) is the ethnic character of the new settlements, for which the only indication given is reading back from the biblical texts.

Does not discuss origins of YHVH cult as reflected in Ps 68, Hab 3, Song of Moses, etc.

The process of formation (1050-930) (88-116)

The formation of small states made possible by collapse of the palatine centers, combined with demographic expansion of agro-pastoral, tribal entities and technological advances. The result: about half-dozen mid-size political units.

The scene in the region:

- 1) Philistine cities
- 2) Shechem & Jerusalem already in place, dimorphic (urban-tribal) centers; in Amarna expansionist and going over to habiru = Hebrews; became models for other formations in central and southern hill country; Gen 39 (alliance with Hebrews) and Judg 9 (Abimelek) show post-exilic editing.
- 3) Transjordan: Ammon, Moab, Edom (12-clan structure) with which associated Amalek in Negev, Ishmael, Midian; control of caravan routes vital
- 4) Aramean city-states in the north (map p.92): Hamath, Lu'ash, Bit Agushi, Bit Adini, etc)
- 5) Megiddo, Yize'el and Galilee: Song of Deborah as source: 10 tribesm 6 take part; come down from hills and villages (perazot) and take on Canaanite forces; late 11th century

Saul (100-104)

First, peel away the pan-Israelite context, the moralizing judgments, sequencing with David (they were contemporary), and we have a case of formation of a small habiru state under a chieftain, ranged agst. Philistines on the west and Ammonites on east; confined to Ephraim and Benjamin.

David (104-9)

Harder to get at historical nucleus; a brigand chief who formed a small state based on Hebron, expands to the north and east (Jerusalem, Ammon, Zoba); the narrative tradition may have started out from monumental mini-autobiography cf. Idrimi of Alalakh (ANET 557-8); succeeded in forming a dynasty attested in Dan inscription ca. 840 (bvt dvd)

Solomon (109-13)

Greatly mythologized, e.g. “From Euphrates to River of Egypt” = Transeuphratene satrapy; his territory reduced rather than augmented; according to Finkelstein’s low chronology, the famous Megiddo stables and Hazor from Omri (885-853); administrative system; palace and temple based on Persian period with a view to building up the past; novelistic elements in the tradition could be based on inscriptions, cf. Yehimilk, Bar-Rakib, Kilamuwa.

Inroads of Sheshonq 925

Marks the end of the period of formation: 180 names moved through areas of traditional Eg. Control with a view to re-establishing control; went round the two states which were (a) already separated or never joined (b) small and relatively unimportant.

The Kingdom of Israel 930-740 (117-42)

In this and the following section on Judah L. follows the biblical text fairly closely.

Israel = Ephraim and Manasseh which take the ancient name of the Merenptah stele 13th century and adopt Jacob as founder, patronym. Sheshonq had removed the Philistine threat, which facilitated expansion to include Megiddo, Yizreel, Galilee, Gilead; main threat from parallel development and expansion of Aramean kingdom of Damascus, including Hamath. A time for the consolidation of these smaller states.

Omri — dynasty, Bit Umria; urban development; Samaria, a palatine state; Samaria ostraca attest to luxury living, the kind condemned by Amos; strong social tensions; Jehu

Dan inscription cf. 2 Kgs 8:28-29 Hazael vs Joram son of Ahab

Consultation of deity as in Assyria; 1 Kgs 13 post-Josian; political involvement of prophets, especially Elisha with Damascus.

Demographics: 8th century Israel: 250,000; Judah: 110,000; Philistia: 50,000 (136)

Judah 930-720 (143-158)

follows filo biblico

Judah & Benjamin; latter, cause of hostility with Israel; Jehoshaphat the first with a Yahvist name

A time of flourishing also for Tranjordanian states

Break in dynasty with Athaliah 841-835; the legend of the hidden heir

Religion: YHVH-alone party prevailed ca. 850-800; see names of rulers, but never took firm hold in Israel

Impact of Assyrian Imperialism 740-640 (159-82)

Two phases: 9th century Shalmaneser III (858-824) - Ahab at battle of Qarqar 853; Jehu submits 841
8th centry T-P III 745-727; Sargon II 727-705; Damascus 732; 722; Assyria provinces

(p.162)

40,000 deported from Israel, 200,000 from Judah (p.165) ?

The intent was to undermine the culture w/o destroying the economy; cross-deportation; imperial aggression a disaster for the Eastern Med. region.

Hezekiah: demographic and economic expansion; religious reforms in view of the Assyrian peril

Pause between two empires (640-610) (182-202)

The decline of Assyrian empire late in reign of Assurbanipal (668-631) provided respite for western provinces, including Tyre, Ammon, Cilicia which briefly prospered.

Josiah Project reflected in Josh 15-19 and 12 districts Solomonic 1 Kgs 4:7-19; ultimate goal of unification, Greater Israel (Dan to Beersheba); the discovery of the law book, to bestow authority on a recent text

fidelity to YHVH in place of to the Great King; idea of covenant originates here
emphasis on exodus (from subjection), conquest and occupation of the land
perhaps Josiah responsible for temple as represented in 1 Kgs and familiar later
Dtr — perhaps > Shaphan ? (202)

Babylonian Empire (610-585) (203-220)

For archaeology follows Stern re. destruction extent

Omits Ezek on Babylonian failure at Tyre; did Tyre capitulate in 585? (p.218)?

From 7th to 6th century:

settlements reduced from 116 to 41
size of settlements from 4.4. to 1.4 hectares
population fell by 85-90% ; post-586 = 10,000 - 20,000

[Problem: Judah in 8th century: 110,000 (p.136); Assyrians deported 200,000 from Judah (165); though we only know of one deportation, 701; the population fell by 85/90% to max. 20,000. Doesn't add up.]

Axial Age (223-234) 6th century

world wide

great empires

intellectual elites as critical counter

ethical religion, monotheism, towards universalism

factors in development of monotheism: Assyrian imperialism; national henotheism reinforced in the exile; Marduk monotheism (Isa 47); Isa 43:10-12

rational thought (Greeks)

individual; personal responsibility

(law independent of ruler)

[232 New covenant not in Deutero-Isaiah]

Diaspora (235-253)

562 Death Nebu., accession of Awil-Marduk - amnesty - emphasizes role of monoarchy and hope for restoration: Jehoiachin recognized by Awil-Marduk, head of the diaspora community; but Sheshbazzar is not the son of Jehoiachin (1 Chr 3:18 Shenazzar; see my Ezra-Neh. 79), and the ruler not mentioned in diaspora literature; not certain that no temple (p.237); the remnant idea (Akk: sittu; survivors of a campaign after killings, executions etc); disputes between "returnees" and indigenous peoples.

Loss of temple led to abandoning presence theology for theology of Name (suma) and Kavod (shakanu); transfer of language from imperial protocol to YHVH

Dtr inspired by Babylonian chronicles: judgment on kings; cultic sins; sin — punishment nexus

The Empty Land (254-72)

Widespread collapse in 6th century: Anatolia, Upper Euphrates, Urartu, Media, Assyria, Elam; squatters taking over; suggests that the idea of the empty land could have been suggested by the Babylonian scenario; revival of tribalism and nomadism; Babylon expanded (500,000 cf. Nineveh 300,000 !) (255,257)

Deluge > annual inundation of Tigris/Euphrates

Tower Babel > ziggurat; ruins interpreted as failed enterprise; linguistic confusion; original language = Sumerian

Eden > Babylonian scenario (parks) but composed early Persian period

Table of Nations > 690-550 (no Persians)

Genealogical interest - common in 6th century cf. Cousilaos of Argos c.550; Hecataeus of Miletus c.490 - Greek logographers; tying in present with mythic past (Flood, Trojan War)

Antiquarian interests in Babylon and Egypt: literary style, figurative art, architecture, palaeography

The Babylonian conquest made room for inroads; mythicized in Ezek 38-39: from N. Iranian highlands and Arabs from south and east (Ishmaelites, Kedarites — model for tribal structure)

INVENTED HISTORY

Those who returned and those who remained: the invention of the patriarchs (275-296)

[Gen 1-11 in “Intermezzo” 257-68]

Jeremiah’s 70 years = Neo-Bab. Empire (609-539); defeat and exile as expression of the Wrath of YHVH cf. Marduk in fall of Babylon (Sennacherib). New exodus from Bab. modelled on from Eg.

What happened: Cyrus knew and cared nothing for Jerusalem cult; there was a staggered return 539-445, at first unofficial before Persian control effected; documents in Ezra 1:2-4 and 6:3-5 originally directed agst. claims on behalf of the Samaritan temple; Ezra 7:12-26 and Neh 2:7-8 basically genuine for reign of Artaxerxes I (445 for Nehemiah); also Ezra 2 = Neh 7 a list of returnees in continuous updating; Ezra-Neh. written 2 centuries later (therefore some time in mid-third century?)

The census list: no settlement south of Bethlehem because of Edomites; only Jerusalem and circle of c. 20-25 km around it; only Lod to west because of coastal cities takeover; returnees were upper class, more educated, wealthier; rejected the locals (‘am ha’ares, also at Byblos; when used in pl. includes Edomites, Ammonites, Samaritans) ; ideology developed in Bab.

Conflict over title to property developed into conflict over claim to land in general; significant shift from nahala to ahuzza (P); cannot reconstruct the position of “those who remained” who lost out; internal divisions among “those who returned” (gola group):

1) soft ideology: assimilation subject to conditions, from the first generation when monarchy was still an option = ancestor narratives

2) hard ideology: time of E/N and priesthood; strong rejection, force = conquest under Joshua
[N.B In Gen 12-50 it is P that contemplates the monarchy as descendants
Ref. to priesthood too vague; some aspects of priestly theory and practice open to outsiders; D

more rejectionist.]

Abraham (recall, the name is ancient; see above! But Abraham unknown in pre-exilic period, to Isa 63:16): ger ve toshav; purchases land cf. Neo-Bab. Land contracts: Gen 23; 33:18-20; 15-33; moral objections to extermination of enemies (Gen 20:4; 16:3); benign and careful relations with Arabs, Ammon, Moab; also, patriarchs not referred to in E/N; scene set ostly in south; marriages cross-cousin between “Babylonians” and “Palestinians”.

Inter-ethnic relations: with Edomites (Lot, Esau); Arameans (Laban); Arabs (Ishmael; 2 groups descended from Abraham); Gen 21:18 - Kedarite expansion; Moab & Ammon - tainted origin, therefore excluded from qahal ; opposition to project of return and reconstruction,

Little interest in Jerusalem and temple in Gen 12-50 — Gen 14:19-20 (delete Melchizedek king of Salem; the one blessing is the king of Sodom); many sanctuaries [How then compatible with the “Zionism” of those who returned?] Gen 34 Shechem alliance = attempt at rapprochement betw. Jerusalem and Samaria; the hostility of Simeon and Levi taken to task (Gen 34:30).

Joseph story Persian connections: Ahiqar; Democedes (Her. III 129-37); Dan 1-6; certainly post-exilic; wisdom factor, cf. Thales 6th century ; Joseph story etiological (see 47:26); presupposes developed Eg. Diaspora; no earlier than 5th century.

Those who returned and foreigners; the invention of the conquest (297-321)

Abraham could be invoked by both parties: by those who entered, he too entered from Mesopotamia; by those who stayed: he was willing to share space; the return came staggered, perhaps beginning with the amnesty of Awil-Marduk [Ezek 33:23-29 immigrants quote natives who claim Abraham as model for occupying the land R/ but they were already in the land! The claim is rejected] The strong model comes from time when process already far advanced; Zerubbabel and E/N; utopian: entry is unified, globalised, simultaneous, militarised,

State of Palestine: Persians main interest coastal region incl. Phoenicia and control of trade routes E-W; depopulated but not empty: “The ideological denial of the right of other groups to inhabit Palestine - a denial associated with the theory of the promise - was unable to cancel out their existence” 302

Population

550-450 12,000

450-330 17,000

Samaria 42,000

The canonical list of (usually) seven peoples exterminated in conquest either anachronistic or non-existent, and those who were there not included except Canaanites, a broad range term. “They exterminate those who are not there, and the fact that they are not there proves that they have been exterminated” 304, (cf. 319: the real peoples - Philistines, Phoenicians, Edom, Moab, Ammon remained); To be historically credible, the list would have to include Philistines, Phoenicians, Edomites, Moabites, etc.

Exodus (305-8) Function: non-autochthonous origin; “codice motorio” (movement formula?): exodus as metaphor for change of political status: “bringing out”, “bringing in”, without physical movement, passing from imperial control to freedom; already in Hosea 7:11; 8:13; 9:3; 11:5; 12:2); in some texts migratory; = proto-D formula which came into use at time of Assyrian imperial control and the hope of “going out” from it; the “new exodus” of post-exilic period, then applied to Abraham (Gen 15:7, from Ur of Chaldees”)

Census in Num 2:26 cf. E 2/N 7 concerned with land tenure

Moses, wilderness, itineraries

Relative silence re. Moses and Sinai pre-exilic texts (but see Mic 6:4); the mumblings reflect debates about return to Palestine; difficulties of transit, arguments back and forth; leadership: Joshua/Jeshua high priest (311); no information on military aspects of resettlement except hostility towards N by Sanballat, Tobia, Gashmu [see Judg 19-21 and alleged archaeological indications for destructions in later Persian period at Bethel and perhaps elsewhere];

Joshua and the “holy war” (313-16)

unified, one leader, 12-tribal, violent; nucleus = Josh 6-8 conquest of Ephraim/Benjamin where most of the immigrants settled; distribution of land by lot historically incredible but maybe reflects usage after return; “holy war” (315); the idea of replacing one people by another impossible before Assyrian deportations; in its implacable rigidity must be utopian; Horma, Jericho, Ai reflect etiologies of the conquest; cities assimilated required a special explanation: Gibeon (Josh 9), Shechem (Josh 24); frontiers of the land: Gt. River to River of Egypt = eber-nari

A State without a king: the invention of the Judges (322-39)

Persian provincial administration [ML: from 539 Neo-Bab. Empire = 1 satrapy; under Darius divided in 2, with eber-nari capital at Damascus; Pal. Highlands ruled from Samaria, until Nehemiah {367} ??]; yehud subdivided into pelakim; declines to use seals, bullae for governors 324; sofetim cf. dikastai in Tyre (C.Ap. I 157) and rule by judges and elders from Cyrus to Darius (?); geographical distribution of territory of judges corresponds to zones reoccupied after 539; 12-tribal system modelled on Ishmaelites and Kedarites, late and utopian; the Judges stories use folkloristic material to fill the gap before monarchy for which the authors had no information; Judg 19-21: scene between Bethlehem and Benjamin = exactly the region reoccupied by those who returned; a dangers lurking, hostile elements, etc.

The Monarchic Option: the Invention of the United Monarchy (340-51)

A national restoration naturally implied monarchy, but ideological opposition because of role of monarchy in producing the disaster (Dtr, therefore a different type needed; more “constitutional”, more power-sharing with priesthood responsible for law-observance (Deut 17); practically, thinkable because of other client kings and Persians allowed Zerubbabel to return; disappeared perhaps after a coup d’etat (341 ?) Or involvement in rebellion (Hag 2:22-23); temple in function of monarchy, but after the disappearance of Z the priests took over - a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (Exod 19:6; (exaggerates role of priesthood at that time; there was a governor; see N vis-a-vis temple personnel)

First D generation under Josiah positive to monarchy; united monarchy embodies ideals of unified people, land with extended boundaries, Greater Israel, cf. extent of Transeuphrates satrapy; temple as adjunct of monarchy;

The founding charter for the dynasty from post-exilic period (2 Sam 7); also 2 Sam 11-1 Kgs 2

The Priestly Option. The Invention of the Solomonic Temple (358-77)

The monarchic model a retrograde and impractical fantasy, given the Persian imperial system @/ what about a client kingdom like others?; a theocracy more congenial (YHVH malak); 2T based on Babylonian model (centre of redistribution, etc) rather than Syro-Pal.; 1 Kgs 6-7 based on Persian apadana and Neo-Bab temple not on models available in 10th century for temple and palace; Yehud a temple-city (BTG); accepts late date for Ezra; overestimates position of priesthood, Joshua takes place of Zerubbabel; excludes Bethel and other regional sanctuaries;

