BIBLICAL PEOPLES
The World of Ancient Israel

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Marek Dospěl & Glenn Corbett—Editors

Robert Bronder—Designer

Jonathan Laden—Publisher

Cover Image: Glazed brick relief panel (heavily restored) showing a Persian archer. Excavated from the Palace of Darius at Susa, it dates to the sixth century B.C.E. Photo by Alvesgaspar, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bill T. Arnold is the Paul S. Amos Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. His areas of expertise include Hebrew, Aramaic and the history of Israelite religion.

Joel S. Burnett is Professor of Religion and Director of the Institute for Biblical and Related Languages at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. His research interests include the ancient Near East, the history of Israelite religion and the religion of Iron Age Transjordan.

Eric H. Cline is Professor of Classics and Anthropology and Director of the Capitol Archaeological Institute at The George Washington University. He is author or editor of over 15 books and 100 articles, and co-director of the Kabri Archaeological Project at Tel Kabri, Israel.

Edward L. Greenstein is Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. A prolific author in biblical and ancient Near Eastern studies, he has recently published *Job: A New Translation*, with Yale University Press.

Chris Hays is the D. Wilson Moore Chair of Ancient Near Eastern Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He is the author of *The Origins of Isaiah 24–27: Josiah's Festival Scroll for the Fall of Assyria* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2019).

Carolyn R. Higginbotham is a Team Minister at Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana. She taught biblical studies, archaeology and religion for many years, first at Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio and then at Christian Theological Seminary.

Daniel M. Master is Professor of Archaeology at Wheaton College and Co-Director of the Tel Shimron Excavations. He also directs the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, which is working toward publication of its findings.

Ephraim Stern was Professor Emeritus of the Archaeology of Eretz Yisrael at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. A specialist in Phoenician material culture, Stern directed excavations at Tel Dor, Tel Kedesh and Tel Mevorakh, among other sites.

Matt Waters is a Professor of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He is the author of *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550– 330 BCE* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014).

INTRODUCTION

Ancient Israel's history, culture, and writings were shaped by its contacts with the many peoples and cultures of the ancient world. In this eBook—carefully assembled from articles published in *Biblical Archaeology Review* and *Archaeology Odyssey* magazines—prominent biblical scholars and archaeologists introduce you to the major peoples and powers that dominated the ancient Near East and interacted socially, politically, and militarily with ancient Israel.

Situated at the heart of the eastern Mediterranean world, ancient Israel shared borders with many different peoples, kingdoms, and empires. Through trade, politics, and military campaigns, Israel was connected with peoples both near and far. Through the millennia, this included the Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Canaanites, Philistines, Phoenicians, Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, among others. Although the Hebrew Bible portrays them mostly as villains, these peoples, and the nature of their contact with ancient Israel, were much more complex and nuanced.

Chapter by chapter, explore the biblical and archaeological evidence for each of these groups and learn how they interacted with the ancient Israelites. Enjoy discovering how deeply these various peoples influenced the history and culture of biblical Israel and Judah. It will leave you with a deeper appreciation for the Bible and the cultural and historical setting in which it was written.**—Marek Dospěl and Glenn Corbett**

The Egyptians

"The Egyptianizing of Canaan"[*]
### *By Carolyn R. Higginbotham*

KING AKHENATEN (r. 1348–1331 B.C.E.), the so-called "heretic" king, broke with Egyptian religious tradition and exclusively worshiped the sun god Aten. This relief fragment of Akhenaten's figure dates to c. 1345 B.C.E. and is currently in Neues Museum, Berlin. *Photo by Gary Todd from Xinzheng, China, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.*

In the centuries before Israel emerged in the highlands of Canaan, first as a people and then as a nation, the region was essentially ruled by Egypt. But how are we to understand this hegemony?

Until a little more than a century ago, about the only source of information we had regarding Egyptian-Canaanite relations was the Bible. In 1887, however, a female peasant made a stupendous discovery at a site in Egypt called Tell el-Amarna. Digging up decayed mudbricks

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[*] This article originally appeared in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1998.

for fertilizer, she unearthed a cache of cuneiform tablets. Since such tablets had never before been found in Egypt, scholars were initially skeptical of their authenticity. Nevertheless, the tablets were peddled to those antiquities dealers, scholars, and museum curators who were interested in them.
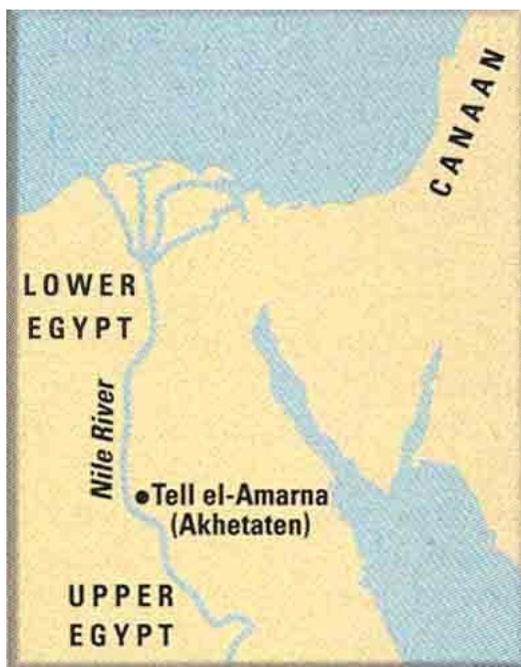
Map of Egypt and Canaan.

Once the tablets were determined to be genuine, archaeologists began excavating the site. Known in ancient times as Akhetaten, "the Horizon of (the god) Aten," Amarna was the capital of Pharaoh Akhenaten's empire. Akhenaten (r. 1348–1331 B.C.E.), the so-called "heretic" king, broke with Egyptian religious tradition and exclusively worshiped Aten, who is represented in Egyptian art by the sun disk with its myriad rays ending in hands.

Akhenaten built his city along a remote stretch of the Nile in Middle Egypt. After his death, the capital was moved back to its original location at Thebes, and Akhetaten was abandoned to the sands. Although the site was explored by Egyptologists and European travelers in the 19th century (the French novelist Gustave Flaubert, for example, noted Amarna's "charming landscape, broad and peaceful"), its true significance remained hidden until the discovery of the Amarna letters, as the cache of nearly 400 cuneiform tablets is now known.

AKHENATEN'S NORTH PALACE at el-Amarna, the "heretic" king's short-lived capital city built at the virgin site in Middle Egypt. The city's Egyptian name, Akhetaten, means "the horizon of the Aten"—in reference to the new principal deity, the solar disk called Aten. *Photo by Olaf Tausch, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

When deciphered, the tablets—which date to the 14th century B.C.E., about 100 years before Israel is thought to have emerged in Canaan—proved to be an archive of international diplomatic correspondence between Pharaoh Akhenaten and his father, Pharaoh Amenhotep III (1387–1348 B.C.E.), on one side, and the city-rulers of Syria-Palestine on the other.

The Amarna letters clearly show that the rulers of these city-states were vassals of the pharaohs. The city-rulers, often called princes by modern scholars, were bound by oath to accept the sovereignty of the pharaohs. They were obliged to pay tribute (at least theoretically on an annual basis), provide logistical support for Egyptian army units marching through the region and, upon request, supply troops to augment Egyptian forces. Above all, the vassal princes were expected to be loyal to the pharaoh and refrain from activities that could undermine Egyptian authority.

In return, Egypt allowed the princes to manage their own day-to-day affairs and simply adjudicated disputes between neighboring city-states in Syria-Palestine. The plaintive tone of the Amarna letters suggests that as long as taxes were paid and Egyptian sovereignty was not challenged, the pharaohs interfered little with the affairs of the region, adopting a policy that could perhaps be characterized as "benign neglect."

Several decades after Akhenaten's death, the 19th Dynasty of Egypt was established, ushering in the Ramesside period. For 67 years, Ramesses II, who was also known as Ramesses the Great and whom some believe to be Pharaoh of the Exodus, reigned over Egypt.

Since the discovery of the Amarna letters, archaeologists have also unearthed mounds of artifacts in Egypt and Canaan, dating to the late second millennium B.C.E., which make it clear that life in Ramesside Canaan was markedly different from that in the preceding Amarna age. In short, during the Ramesside period, the material culture of the Canaanite lowlands began to show conspicuous Egyptian influence. True, during the Amarna age, Egyptian artifacts were present in the archaeological record of Canaan. But by the 13th century B.C.E. (Late Bronze Age IIB, which corresponds roughly to the 19th Dynasty of Egypt), the amount of Egyptian-style objects had increased significantly at Canaanite sites. Egyptian-style artifacts are similarly prevalent at Iron Age IA (between about 1200 and 1150 B.C.E.) sites; thereafter, these kinds of objects decline in frequency.

Based on this evidence, some scholars have concluded that beginning in the Ramesside period, Canaanite city-rulers no longer served as vassals to the Egyptian pharaohs. Instead, they argue, Ramesside pharaohs initiated a policy of military occupation and direct imperial administration of Canaan. This model, which we may call the "direct rule" model, was given a significant boost from an influential 1981 article by James Weinstein, who catalogued the architectural and inscriptional evidence of an Egyptian presence in Canaan.[1] He concluded that the monuments and numerous small finds of Egyptian type indicate a shift in pharaonic policy toward the region. The gist of Weinstein's argument is that the rise in the frequency of finds with Egyptian characteristics corresponds to the posting of large numbers of Egyptian soldiers and bureaucrats at imperial centers in Canaan.
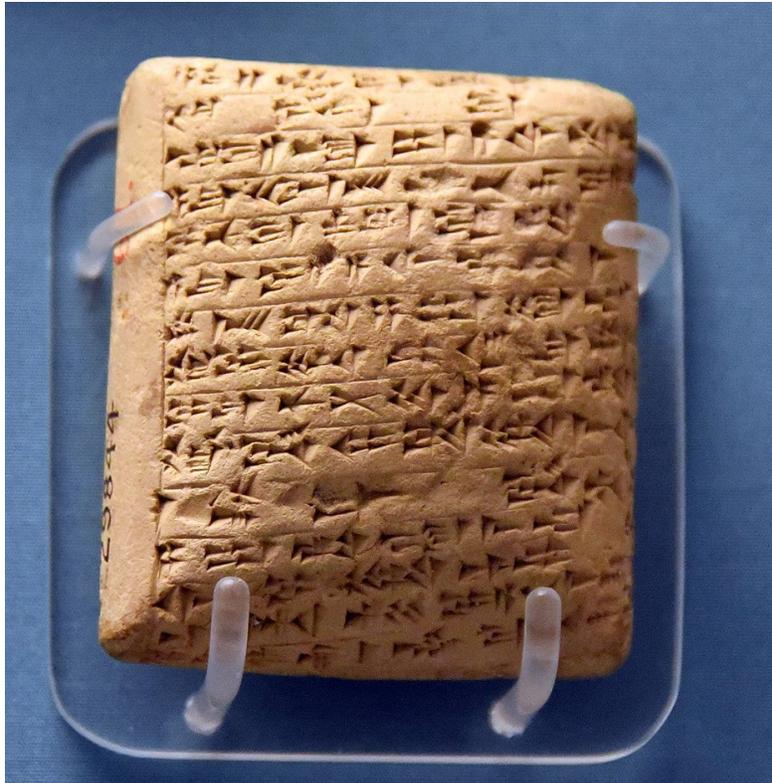
AMARNA LETTERS were mostly sent to the Egyptian throne by either the vassal rulers of Canaan or the dominant powers of the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East (e.g., the Hittites, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Mittanians). Commenting on political conditions, social customs, trade relations, even diplomatic marriages, the Amarna tablets shed light on how the Egyptians ruled Canaan in the 14th century B.C.E. *Photo by Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg),* <u>*CC BY-SA 4.0*</u>*, via Wikimedia Commons.*

A more nuanced look at the evidence, however, suggests that this view is not entirely correct and that the vassal relationship described in the Amarna letters continued into the Ramesside period. What accounts primarily for the increase in Egyptian-style objects is not direct rule, but a different model, which we may call "elite emulation."

Scholars in many fields have observed this phenomenon in relationships between prestigious cultures and surrounding communities, which tend to view these influential cultural centers as the heart of civilization and power. By linking themselves to such centers, local rulers often try to enhance their own stature and authority. They might adopt features of the great civilization—such as its language, attire, artistic and architectural styles, and symbols of governance (the scepter, crown, throne and seal, among others)—in the hopes of acquiring some of the prestige of the distant center. Scholars have observed this process in the Islamization of sub-Saharan Africa,

the Indianization of South India and Southeast Asia, and the Sinicization of the Chinese periphery,[2] for instance.

About 2,000 years ago, the same sort of transformation that occurred in Ramesside Canaan characterized the Roman invasion of Britain.[3] Romanized architecture, especially buildings modeled on the Roman forum and villa, began to appear in Britain in the period immediately following the invasion. These Romano-British structures were not identical to their continental prototypes but were adapted to local needs and circumstances. In the post-invasion period, local leaders apparently wanted to appear Romanized to enhance their prestige before both the imperial authorities and their own communities.[4]
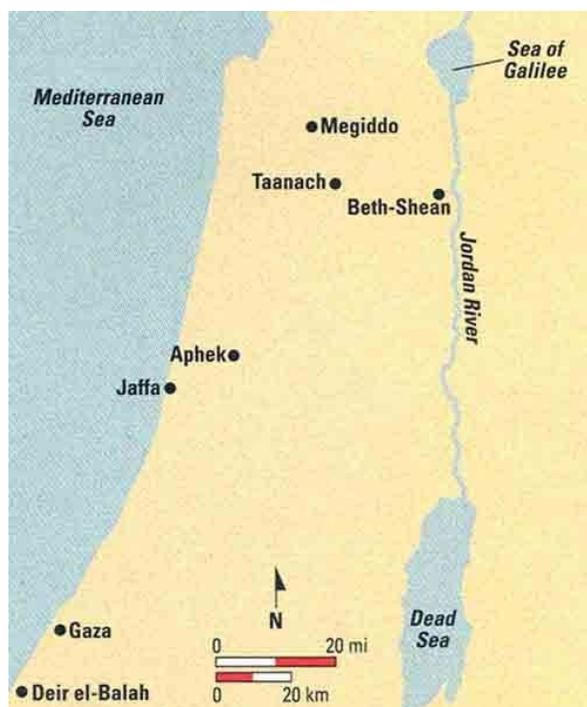
Map of Canaan.

In Ramesside Canaan, as in Roman Britain, rulers of local city-states were likewise dependent upon an external polity for their access to power. Given the prestige accorded to Egypt—not only as a military and political power, but as a center of civilization—local princes probably emulated Egyptian culture to enhance their own stature. Egypt and all things Egyptian, after all, symbolized power and authority.

As early as the reign of Pharaoh Thutmose III (1397–1387 B.C.E.), young princes from Asia were raised and educated in the Nile Valley. Upon returning home, they might well have introduced a provincial Egyptian culture to symbolize their elite status and legitimate their authority. Moreover, advancement within the pharaonic bureaucracy was historically open to Egyptianized foreigners (witness the biblical Joseph)—an additional motivation for emulation.

How does this elite emulation model comport with the archaeological evidence? What we find is that there is some truth in both the direct rule and the elite emulation models. As in the preceding Amarna age, Egypt did continue to practice direct rule to a degree by maintaining imperial centers in Canaan. On the other hand, this military presence consisted of a few sites staffed by small numbers of soldiers and administrators. Just as important to the power structure of the region were the vassal princes who Egyptianized themselves to varying degrees. In short, a mixed system of administrative styles prevailed in both the Amarna age and the Ramesside period—though elite emulation was the more significant component in the mixture.

The two principal imperial centers were Beth-Shean (south of the Sea of Galilee) in the north and Deir el-Balah (near Gaza) in the south. In addition, Egyptian installations with more strictly administrative functions were probably located at Gaza and Jaffa.

One Amarna letter shows that Egypt maintained a garrison at Beth-Shean during the Amarna age.[5] The archaeological data indicate that in the subsequent Ramesside period, the Egyptian presence was even more pronounced. In the levels from the end of the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.E.) and Iron Age I (1200–1000 B.C.E.), excavators uncovered large quantities of Egyptian-style pottery and several buildings similar to those found at Tell el-Amarna, in Egypt.[6] The name and title of Ramesses-User-Khepesh, apparently the commander of the garrison during the reign of Ramesses III (1185–1153 B.C.E.), were inscribed on the lintels and doorjambs of one of Beth-Shean's buildings. A statue of Ramesses III was found in a secondary context. Also unearthed were three royal stelae, two set up by Seti I (r. 1290–1279 B.C.E.) and one by Ramesses II (r. 1279–1212 B.C.E.).[7]

Located on the Mediterranean coast about 10 miles southwest of Gaza, Deir el-Balah marked the end of the land route across northern Sinai linking Egypt with the Levant. It is the only site in

HONORING RAMESSES III at Beth-Shean, the Canaanite town located south of the Sea of Galilee that housed an Egyptian administrative center in both the Amarna and Ramesside periods. Among the Egyptian-style artifacts from Beth-Shean is the only pharaonic statue ever found in Canaan, a basalt carving of Ramesses III (1185–1153 B.C.E.). *Photo by Davidbena,* *CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Canaan at which Egyptian-style pottery was more common than local types. According to Trude Dothan, the site's excavator, a garrison was stationed there throughout the 13th century B.C.E.[8]

An Egyptian granary at Jaffa (modern Tel Aviv) is also referred to in an Amarna letter.[9] One of the few published objects from the excavations at Jaffa is a monumental gateway, which may have stood at the entrance to the granary complex, bearing the cartouches of Ramesses II.[10]

No archaeological data are available for Gaza, but inscriptional references to the city from the Amarna period onward show that the city served as some sort of base of operations for Egyptian interests in the southern Levant.[11]

The evidence points to only these four Egyptian imperial outposts—at Beth-Shean, Deir el-Balah, Jaffa, and Gaza. The existence of two garrisons and two administrative complexes suggests a limited, rather than a massive, military-administrative presence.

Some scholars have suggested that Egypt assigned resident governors to various Canaanite sites. But no evidence exists for such a system. The officials who were always thought to be resident governors were probably either circuit officials, dispatched to make the rounds of a frontier zone or conquered territory,[12] or royal envoys sent to the Levant on a specific mission. Like their counterparts in Nubia, south of Egypt, these officials maintained their primary residences in Egypt, though they may have visited Canaan for extended periods of time.[13]

A cuneiform letter found at Taanach refers to this circuit system: An Egyptian official named Amenhotep (not one of the pharaohs of that name) complains about being slighted during a stop at Gaza, where the city-ruler of Taanach failed to appear before him.[14]

A cuneiform letter recovered at Aphek (east of modern Tel Aviv) also points to the deployment of an Egyptian circuit official. The letter was sent by an official from Ugarit (in Syria) to an Egyptian named Haya whose residence is not indicated. Since the other finds from Aphek do not suggest that the site functioned as an imperial center, the letter probably caught up with Haya while he was passing through Aphek on his circuit.

These Egyptian circuit officials fulfilled two primary functions in the Levant—taxation and oversight. A relief on the Luxor temple illustrates the first of these functions: Royal officials are depicted presenting tribute to Ramesses II. An accompanying hieroglyphic list of functionaries includes names of the overseers of northern and southern lands who were responsible for the collection of taxes in Asia and Nubia.

The oversight function is indicated in several texts. The Kadesh Bulletin—a 13th-century B.C.E. Egyptian record of an important battle between the Egyptians and the Hittites that took place on the banks of Syria's Orontes River during the reign of Ramesses II—shows that Egyptian

officials were indeed responsible for keeping abreast of developments in the Levant and providing accurate information to the pharaoh. In an earlier text (from the 15th century B.C.E.), the overseer of northern lands refers to himself as "the eyes of the King of Upper Egypt and the ears of the King of Lower Egypt."[15]

Finally, the Aphek letter from the Ramesside period demonstrates that Egyptian officials continued to be responsible for settling arguments between vassals, in this case a dispute over a grain transaction between Ugarit and another city, perhaps Jaffa.

Although Egyptians exercised oversight, collected taxes and maintained the peace, the everyday affairs of the city-states appear to have remained in the hands of local rulers. We have no textual evidence for a large-scale replacement of local princes by pharaonic functionaries. Moreover, in the Kadesh Bulletin, both local rulers and Egyptian officials are held accountable for faulty information about the location of the Hittite army. Ramesses II blames not only his own functionaries but the vassal princes too, one indication that the vassal system familiar from the Amarna letters was still in place in the Ramesside period. Total responsibility for the affairs of the region was shared between Egyptian military commanders or administrators and local city-rulers.

A comparison of the archaeological data with the expectations for the elite emulation and direct rule models also suggests that local elites remained in place. If the elite emulation model is valid, we would expect to find a sharply limited range of "foreign" features in the tools and objects of everyday life. We would also expect objects to exhibit features of both foreign and local cultures or to be used differently in local societies than in foreign ones. Objects bearing foreign elements would occur predominantly in funerary and ritual contexts, but even then they would be used in association with local artifacts. Within a site, we would not expect to find purely foreign enclaves.

If the direct rule model is true, however, we would expect to find a broad range of foreign objects at local sites that would be virtually indistinguishable from those found in their homeland. Both domestic goods (objects used in everyday life) and prestige goods (those objects valued as status symbols regardless of function) bearing foreign influence would be well

represented in domestic, as well as funerary and ritual, contexts. Foreign enclaves would also be expected, resulting in an even greater distribution of foreign material.[16]

Outside the Egyptian imperial centers of Beth-Shean and Deir el-Balah, the archaeological evidence accords better with the elite emulation model than with the direct rule model. Looking at the evidence as a whole, we find very limited examples of Egyptian-style pottery in Canaan

THESE MUMMY-SHAPED COFFINS, discovered at a vast Canaanite cemetery at Deir el-Balah (10 miles southwest of Gaza), are nearly identical to coffins found in the Nile Delta—more evidence that the material culture of Canaan bore significant Egyptian influences. Excavations at other sites, however, have uncovered only a few examples of purely Egyptian artifacts. Artifacts at most sites are stylistic hybrids, bearing both Egyptian and local influences. *Photo by yoav dothan,* *GFDL,* *via Wikimedia Commons.*

during the Ramesside period. For example, there are no Egyptian-style cooking pots, bottles or flasks, to name just a few types of artifacts we would expect to find, assuming the validity of the direct rule model.

Moreover, Egyptian-style objects are significantly more common in ritual and funerary contexts than in domestic ones. Egyptian-style glass vessels, for example, have been found only in temples and tombs.

As would be expected from the elite emulation model, objects based on Egyptian prototypes have been modified, producing hybrid types. Only one Canaanite house dating to the Amarna age resembles the prototypical Egyptian house. The others show variations in the placement of the entrance and the arrangement of columns, as well as in their construction techniques, which were influenced by local architectural traditions. Likewise, ivory furniture panels from Megiddo and an anthropoid sarcophagus with pseudo-hieroglyphic inscriptions from Lachish exhibit a mixture of Egyptian and local influences.

Even at Beth-Shean and Deir el-Balah, sites with a relatively high quantity of Egyptian-style artifacts, the assemblages reflect local influences. Local ceramic types, for example, form a significant part of the corpus. Indeed, throughout Canaan, Egyptian-style objects regularly occur side-by-side with local object types and with objects influenced by other cultural traditions: the Syrian-style ivories from the so-called Megiddo treasury, the Mycenaean-style figurines found inside an anthropoid sarcophagus at Beth-Shean and the Hittite bulla from Aphek, for example. The Egyptian-style objects that have been excavated have not been found in isolated "foreign" enclaves, as would be expected from the direct rule model.

Thus the evidence does not support the theory that the Ramesside pharaohs initiated a policy of large-scale military occupation and direct imperial administration of the Levant. Far more likely, the system of vassal princes and circuit officials reflected in the Amarna letters continued until the end of Egyptian control of the region, during the latter part of the 12th century B.C.E. The changes in the archaeological record in the Ramesside period reflect the Egyptianization of the vassal rulers who sought to enhance their power and prestige by associating themselves with the mighty Nile Valley civilization.

Even a superficial reading of the Bible indicates that ancient Israel was fascinated by its neighbor to the southwest. When it came time to establish a strong central government, both David and Solomon modeled their royal courts after pharaonic bureaucracies.[17] The Bible even links Solomon directly to the Egyptian royal family through marriage to a daughter of the pharaoh (1 Kings 3:1).

Israelite wisdom literature was also strongly influenced by Egyptian prototypes. Indeed, one section of the book of Proverbs (22:17–24:22) is so heavily dependent on the Egyptian *Instructions of Amenemope* that it could almost be termed a paraphrase.

One way to understand these influences is to place them in the context of the elite emulation process. The leaders of ancient Israel, like the rulers of the city-states before them, drew upon Egyptian models to legitimate their own national authority. The more closely they resembled the great pharaohs of Egypt, the grander and more awe-inspiring they appeared in the eyes of their subjects. Even though Egypt's star had waned, the Nile Valley still represented power and civilization to the people who built the nation of Israel.

The Hittites

"Warriors of Hatti"[*]
By Eric H. Cline

IMPOSING STONE LIONS guard the gate to the ancient Hittite capital of Hattusa, about 125 miles east of modern Ankara. Around 1400 B.C.E., Hattusa was an enormous Late Bronze Age city filled with palaces, a temple complex, and a library with 3,000 cuneiform tablets. Its rock-and-brick perimeter walls ran for 6 miles around the city. *Photo by KapuskaCoFabli, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Just who were the Hittites?

When this question began to be asked a little more than a century ago, our only knowledge of the Hittites came from the Hebrew Bible.[1] Abraham buys a burial plot for his wife Sarah from "Ephron the Hittite" (Genesis 23:3–20). King David falls in love with Bathsheba, the wife of

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[*] This article originally appeared in *Archaeology Odyssey*, January/February 2002.

"Uriah the Hittite," as he watches her bathe (2 Samuel 11:2–27). David's son Solomon chooses "Hittite women" to number among his wives (1 Kings 11:1).

Perhaps the most famous biblical reference to the Hittites comes in Exodus, when God appears to Moses in the burning bush and declares:

> I have come down to deliver them [the Israelites] from the Egyptians, and
> to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing
> with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the
> Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites (Exodus 3:7).

From such biblical references, one would gather that the "country of the Hittites" was in northern Palestine or Syria. After David commands that the people of Israel be counted, for instance, the census takers visit, among other places, "Kadesh in the land of the Hittites" (2 Samuel 24:6), probably referring to a Syrian site that David is said to have conquered. The problem was that scholars could find no evidence of a Hittite kingdom in that region.

Map of the ancient Near East.

In the late 19th century, however, German and Swiss archaeologists began investigating the ruins of a strange, unknown civilization far to the north, in modern Turkey. Here was a classic conundrum: Ancient historians could name a people (the Hittites) but not their homeland, and they could name a homeland (ancient Anatolia) but not its people.

Thanks largely to archaeological excavations by German archaeologists—including Hugo Winckler in the first decade of the 20th century and Kurt Bittel in the years before World War II—we now know that those Anatolian ruins are the remains of a great Hittite empire that flourished in the second millennium B.C.E. The Hittites developed from little-known kingdoms into a fledgling empire in the mid-17th century B.C.E., when they built their capital at Hattusa (modern Bogazköy, 100 miles east of Ankara). Some decades later, they were powerful enough to attack Babylon, bringing down the Old Babylonian dynasties. Thereafter, until the collapse of Hittite civilization in the 12th century B.C.E., they rivaled Egypt as a Near Eastern superpower.

Their story is masterfully told by Australian scholar Trevor Bryce, in *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, the most important book yet written in English about Hittite civilization. It's so good— filled with interesting facts, novel insights, and rollicking stories—that it reads like a work of historical fiction.

The name "Hittites," Bryce reminds us, is something of a misnomer. Because the Bible referred to Hittites, the term was simply adopted by scholars to refer to this Late Bronze Age Anatolian kingdom. The Hittites, however, never referred to themselves as Hittites; rather, they called themselves the "people of the Land of Hatti." Had we learned about the Hittites in a more orderly way, we would probably have called them "Nesites" or "Nesians," for the earliest Hittite rulers— shadowy figures named Pithana and his son Anitta—based their kingdom at the city of Nesa (about 200 miles southeast of Hattusa), where a dagger with Anitta's name on it was discovered. Nesite was also the name the Hittites gave to their language, an Indo-European tongue that we instead call Hittite.

Our knowledge of the early Hittite kings comes from chronicles found at Bogazköy/Hattusa. These documents consist of cuneiform tablets inscribed in Hittite and Akkadian, a Semitic language spoken by the Babylonians and Assyrians. Two documents concern the first clearly attested Hittite king, Hattusili I (r. 1650–1620 B.C.E.), who established the capital at Hattusa

(Hattusili means "man of Hattusa"). The *Annals* and *Testament* of Hattusili, which survive only in later copies dating to 400 years after his reign, tell of the king's military expeditions and numerous courtly intrigues—including his wresting the throne from his grandfather and later bestowing it on his grandson, Mursili I (r. 1620–1590 B.C.E.).

According to the 16th-century B.C.E. *Proclamation* of the Hittite king Telipinu, which also survives only in later copies, in 1595 B.C.E. Mursili marched the Hittite army hundreds of miles southeast from Anatolia to Mesopotamia and destroyed Babylon; then he turned his men around and marched them home again. No one knows why Mursili conducted this "weekend raid" on Babylon; the whole affair seems gratuitous and unprovoked. But the campaign was long remembered as one of the major military triumphs of the early Hittite period. Only a few years later, however, fate turned against Mursili, who was assassinated by his brother-in-law.

The heyday of Hittite power came during the 14th and 13th centuries B.C.E. In 1991, a bulldozer operating near ancient Hattusa's famous Lion Gate uncovered dramatic new evidence from this period: a bronze sword from the Neo-Hittite kingdom's first king, Tudhaliya. The sword con-

TWELVE ARMED GODS carved on a wall of the 13th-century B.C.E. Hittite religious sanctuary of Yazilikaya near the ancient Hittite capital of Hattusa. Until a century ago, no one knew anything about this Late Bronze Age (c. 1550–1200 B.C.E.) empire. Now, Egyptian records along with archives excavated at Hittite sites tell us that during the Late Bronze Age the land of Hatti stretched across Anatolia and northern Syria—making it one of the period's great superpowers. *Photo by China Crisis, <u>CC BY-SA 2.5</u>, via Wikimedia Commons.*

tained an inscription in Hittite: "As Duthaliya [Tudhaliya] the Great King shattered the Assuwa-Country, he dedicated these swords to the Storm-God, his Lord."[2] This confirmed accounts written during Tudhaliya's reign about a rebellion by a group of small vassal kingdoms, collectively known as Assuwa, along the Aegean coast of Anatolia. Tudhaliya, the accounts tells us, marched west to crush the Assuwa Rebellion.

The texts from Tudhaliya's reign also suggest that one of the allies of the Assuwa league were men from "Ahhiyawa." This place name comes up frequently in Hittite documents; it has been the cause of debates among Hittitologists since at least the 1920s, when the Swiss scholar Emil Forrer claimed that "Ahhiyawa" was a Hittite transliteration of the Greek "Achaea," the word Homer uses to refer to mainland (or Mycenaean) Greece. Initially, Forrer's identification of the Ahhiyawans with the Mycenaeans won little support; nowadays, however, more and more scholars believe that the Ahhiyawans were in fact either people from the Greek Peloponnesus or Greek settlers along Anatolia's Aegean coast.[3] According to Bryce, the inscribed bronze sword was likely "produced in a western Anatolian/Aegean workshop" and was "booty from the Assuwan campaign." Indeed, the bronze sword looks suspiciously like weapons found on mainland Greece during this period.[4]

So here, in Hittite annals, we may well meet the Achaeans who, according to Homer, crossed the Aegean and destroyed Troy. Bryce intriguingly suggests that the Trojan War was not simply a one-time conflagration; instead, it was the consummation of centuries-long contacts—sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile—between Mycenaean and Anatolian peoples.

Not surprisingly for a Late Bronze Age power, the Hittites also had relations with Egypt. Letters from Hittite kings have been found among the Amarna Letters, the diplomatic correspondence of the Egyptian pharaohs Amenophis III (r. 1390–1352 B.C.E.) and his son Akhenaten with other Near Eastern monarchs. And Hittite annals contain similar references to letters—sometimes describing dynastic marriages—exchanged between Hittite rulers and foreign kings. One such reference comes from *The Deeds of Suppiluliuma*, a chronicle written by the Hittite king Mursili II (r. 1321–1295 B.C.E.) about his predecessor and father, Suppiluliuma I. According to the *Deeds*, Suppiluliuma, after returning from vigorous campaigns in western Anatolia and northern Syria, received an unusual letter, purportedly from the Egyptian queen:

> My husband is dead. I have no son. But they say that you have many
>
> sons. If you would give me one of your sons, he would become my
>
> husband. I will never take a servant of mine and make him my husband!

Suppiluliuma doubted that this letter was indeed from the queen of Egypt, since the Egyptians and Hittites were on hostile terms and had been fighting for decades over control of northern Syria. So he sent an emissary to Egypt, instructing the man to find out the truth. The next spring, after the winter snows had thawed, the emissary returned from Egypt bearing a furious response from the queen:

> Had I a son, would I have written about my own and my country's shame
>
> to a foreign land? You did not believe me, and you even spoke thus to
>
> me! He who was my husband is dead. I have no son! Never shall I take a
>
> servant of mine and make him my husband! I have written to no other
>
> country. Only to you I have written. They say you have many sons; so
>
> give me one son of yours. To me he will be husband. In Egypt he will be
>
> king!

Who was this queen? The *Deeds* refers to her simply as Dahamunzu, which means "the wife of the king," and to her dead husband as Niphururiya. This latter name, Niphururiya, is a fairly precise rendering in cuneiform of one of the royal names of Pharaoh Tutankhamun (r. 1336–1327 B.C.E.), Nebkheperure. Thus, many scholars argue that the vitriolic queen was none other than Ankhesenamun, the widow of Tutankhamun, who died at a young age.

Apparently persuaded that the royal marriage proposal was genuine, Suppiluliuma sent one of his younger sons, Zannanza, to forge a dynastic alliance with Egypt. But the marriage never took place: Zannanza and his party were ambushed and murdered while on their way to Egypt.

Bryce gives a riveting account of the ensuing events. Suppiluliuma retaliated for his son's death by attacking the Egyptians in northern Syria, only to be killed by a plague brought back to the Hittite homelands by captured Egyptian prisoners. This pestilence (probably the bubonic plague, which would decimate medieval Europe 2,500 years later) ravaged the Hittite homelands for the

TUTANKHAMUN AND HIS WIFE, ANKHESENAMUN, portrayed on the back of a gilded and inlaid throne. Ankhesenamun is shown anointing the sitting king. Found in the king's tomb in the Valley of the Kings, this ancient masterpiece is now on display in the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo. *Photo by Djehouty, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

next 20 years. It prompted Suppiluliuma's successor and son, Mursili II, to write a series of prayers to the gods known as the *Plague Prayers of Mursili*. In these prayers, Mursili "remonstrates with the gods for punishing his land so severely, warns them that the kingdom is falling prey to enemy forces that surround it, and seeks reasons for the divine wrath."

Relations between the two Near Eastern superpowers, Egypt and Hatti, were mended only after a furious battle in 1274 B.C.E. at Kadesh, on the Orontes River in modern Syria. We possess a great deal of information about this battle, thanks to two separate versions of the subsequent treaty signed by both powers. One version was inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphs on the walls of two temples: the mortuary temple of Pharaoh Ramesses II (r. 1279–1213 B.C.E.) in western Thebes, and the Temple of Amun at Karnak in eastern Thebes (modern Luxor). The other version of the treaty, inscribed on a clay tablet in Akkadian cuneiform, was uncovered at Hattusa (a translation of the latter is now mounted at the entrance to the Security Council of the United Nations in New York).

THE DEEDS OF SUPPILULIUMA is a chronicle narrating the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I's achievements. Inscribed in the second half of the 14th century B.C.E., this clay tablet was found in Hattusa and is now on display in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, Turkey. *Photo by Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg), CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

The Battle of Kadesh began when the Hittite king Muwatalli II (r. 1295–1272 B.C.E.) amassed a huge army of nearly 50,000 troops and marched southward through Syria, determined to crush the Egyptians once and for all. Ramesses II marched north to oppose the Hittites. Along the way, the Egyptian army came across two Bedouins, who reported that the Hittite army was far to the north, near the Syrian city of Aleppo. The Bedouins, however, had been planted by the Hittites to give false information to the Egyptians. In fact, the Hittite forces had already reached Kadesh; they were just across the Orontes River.

Ramesses fought valiantly against the surprise attack, holding off the Hittites until reinforcements arrived. The Egyptians may have been unwittingly aided by Hittite soldiers, who stopped to plunder the Egyptian camp before vanquishing Ramesses's army. As it turned out, the

battle ended in a draw, though both sides claimed victory. Ramesses had his "triumph" recorded in the usual Egyptian bombastic style:

> Then my army came to praise me … my high officers having come to
> magnify my strong arm, and my chariotry likewise boasting of my name
> and saying … "You are great of victory in the presence of your army, in
> the face of the entire land … You have broken the back of Hatti forever!"

Some 13 years after the treaty was signed, a royal wedding was arranged between Ramesses II and a daughter of Hattusili III, Muwatalli II's successor. A short time later, a second Hittite princess was married to Ramesses II as well, and Hattusili III may have visited Egypt in person. The Hittites and Egyptians agreed to divide the Near East between them.

The last great Hittite king, Tudhaliya IV (r. 1227–1209 B.C.E.), is perhaps best known for completing the rock-hewn religious shrine at Yazilikaya, less than a mile from Hattusa. Tudhaliya IV, however, was no stranger to international campaigns. He claims to have conquered Cyprus, for example, carrying away gold and silver. One text from Tudhaliya's reign is a treaty drawn up between the Hittites and Sausgamuwa, the ruler of Amurru, a small kingdom on the coast of north Syria. The treaty is primarily concerned with prohibiting trade with Assyria, with whom the Hittites were then at war.
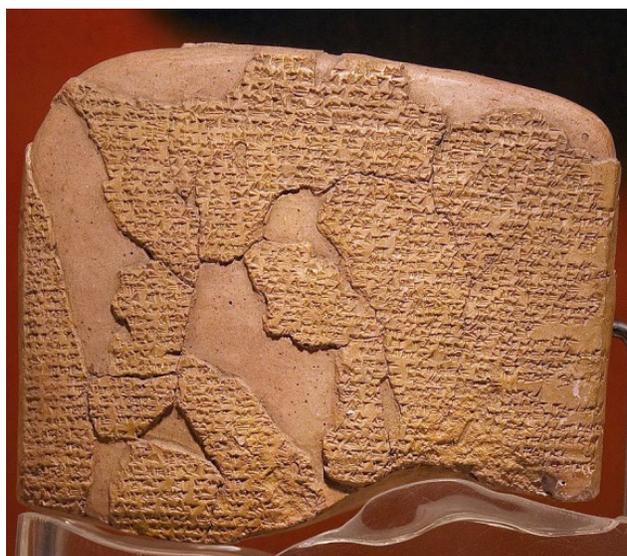
KADESH TREATY. Following the Battle of Kadesh (1274 B.C.E.), the Egyptians and Hittites entered a peace agreement. Each side wrote down its own version of the agreement. Then they exchanged the documents, with the Akkadian translation of the Egyptian version going to Hatti and the Akkadian translation of the Hittite version going to Egypt. This fragmentary, Akkadian-language tablet was found in the Hittite capital at Hattusa. *Photo by Iocanus, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

THE EGYPTIAN VERSION of the Kadesh Treaty was engraved in hieroglyphs onto the western outer wall of the Precinct of Amun-Re at the Temple of Karnak, in Luxor, Egypt. It includes descriptions of the figures and seals that were on the original tablet that the Hittites delivered. *Photo by Olaf Tausch, <u>CC BY 3.0</u>, via Wikimedia Commons.*

The most interesting part of the so-called Sausgamuwa Treaty, however, has to do, once again, with those pesky Ahhiyawans—or Mycenaeans/Achaeans—whom Tudhaliya IV's ancestor, also named Tudhaliya, had defeated in the Assuwa Rebellion 200 years earlier. In the treaty, Tudhaliya also places an embargo on trade between Ahhiyawa and Assyria. For some reason, in the surviving draft of the treaty the name of the king of Ahhiyawa was crossed out from the list of kings whom Tudhaliya considered his equals: "the king of Egypt, the king of Karadunia [Kassite Babylonia], the king of Assyria, the king of Ahhiyawa [with a line though the last phrase]."

Why Tudhaliya included, and then omitted, the king of Ahhiyawa remains a mystery. What is clear, however, is that the Ahhiyawans were still a presence in the Aegean or in Anatolia itself at

the end of the 13th century B.C.E., when the destruction of the great Late Bronze Age city of Troy took place.

The Hittite Empire collapsed around 1200 B.C.E., perhaps destroyed by the mysterious Sea Peoples—who, according to Egyptian documents, destroyed the "Land of Hatti"—or perhaps by unfriendly neighbors. After the fall of Hattusa, the so-called Neo-Hittite city-states in northern Syria continued to function for almost 500 years. Originally Hittite vassal kingdoms, these petty monarchies assumed the mantle of their former masters, keeping alive Hittite writing, sculpture and mythology. Such continuity of culture on the periphery of a former empire can often be observed in history—such as playing cricket and speaking English in India today, long after the sun has set on the British Empire.

Thus in the first millennium B.C.E., a semblance of the Hittite Empire could be found at Aleppo, Carchemish and other northern Syrian sites. It was these Neo-Hittite city-states that the writers of the Hebrew Bible would have known. In Bryce's words, "Assyrians, Urartians, and Hebrews continued to refer to Syria and the Taurus regions as 'the Land of Hatti,' and the Bible makes reference to the local Syrian rulers as 'Kings of the Hittites'." So it's not surprising that when archaeologists and historians first began to look for the Hittites, they searched in the wrong place.

The Assyrians

"Who Were the Assyrians?"[*]
By Chris Hays

ASSYRIAN DOMINANCE. This relief panel captures the Assyrian army attacking an enemy town. Excavated at the Central Palace at Nimrud, it dates to the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (730–727 B.C.E.). It is now on display in the British Museum. *Photo by Allan Gluck, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

"Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger" (Isaiah 10:5). This is how generations of readers of the Bible have come to know Assyria, as the terrifying military power that (as the poet Byron put it) "came down like the wolf on the fold," and overthrew Israel and shattered Judah. Despite this reputation—or perhaps because of it—the Assyrians have been the subject of intense fascination in the modern world. Ever since their imposing reliefs and statues were plundered and brought to Europe and America in the 19th century, they have drawn crowds and sold copies of newspapers and magazines.

The Assyrians whom the biblical authors encountered were part of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which expanded rapidly across the ancient Near East in the ninth through seventh centuries

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B.C.E. Its scale had no precedent, but it emerged in a land that already had an ancient history—and, as many nations have, it claimed its roots in distant antiquity.

The Assyrian heartland was northern Mesopotamia, the area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. More than a millennium before the Neo-Assyrians, some of the most powerful kings in the region's history had ruled not far from the same area. These included Sargon of Akkad (r. 2334–2279 B.C.E.), who was important in propagating the Akkadian language, which became the lingua franca of the ancient Near East for centuries, and Naram-Sin (r. 2254–2218 B.C.E.), who declared himself a god.
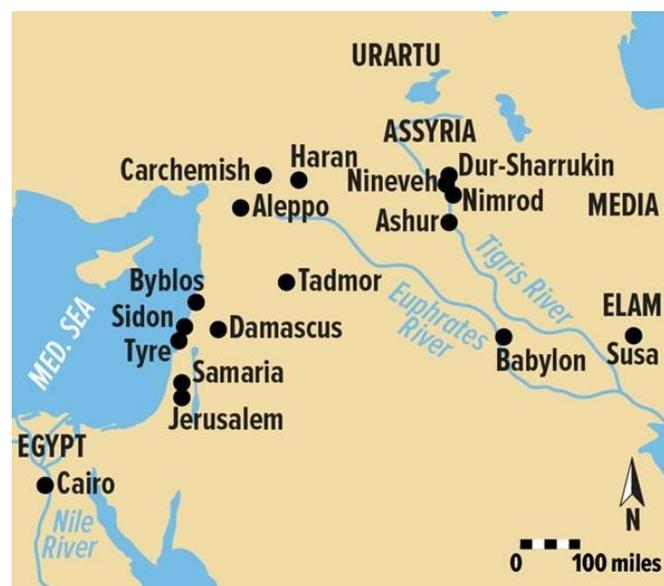
Map of the ancient Near East under Assyria.

About 400 years later, Shamshi-Adad I (r. 1833–1776 B.C.E.) briefly established another "Kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia," which included the later imperial centers of Assur and Nineveh. Already in this period, the Assyrians had an extensive trading network reaching westward into present-day Turkey. Neo-Assyrian rulers sought to connect themselves with these famous predecessors by inserting them into lists of their royal predecessors and by adopting their names.

In the Middle Assyrian period (14th–10th centuries B.C.E.), under rulers such as Ashur-uballit I (r. 1363–1328 B.C.E.) and Tukulti-ninurta I (r. 1243–1207 B.C.E.), Assyria expanded again, into

eastern Syria and Anatolia. From this period, the Middle Assyrian Laws and Palace Decrees shed light on a culture that was militaristic and controlled its court women tightly. Assyria became one of the large regional empires of the Late Bronze Age, but it had a difficult time being acknowledged as a peer by the other contemporary great powers, such as Egypt, Hatti, and Babylonia—partially because Babylonia viewed Assyria as a threat and sought to exclude Assyria through diplomacy. The two Mesopotamian powers continued to struggle against each other over the ensuing two centuries. The reign of Tiglath-pileser I (r. 1115–1077 B.C.E.) was a time of particular Assyrian flourishing.

The Assyrian kings of the late tenth and early ninth centuries campaigned in the west and helped to reestablish regional control through infrastructure. However, it is Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 B.C.E.) who is often considered the founder of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. His kingdom reached from the Taurus Mountains in the north to the Euphrates River in the west. He established a new

THE BLACK OBELISK of Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824 B.C.E.) features 20 reliefs depicting five defeated kings bringing tribute before the Assyrian monarch. In this close-up of the obelisk, the central panel references "Jehu of the House of Omri." The prostrate figure in the scene is thought to be King Jehu of Israel, although some scholars have called this identification into question. *Photo by British Museum, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

capital city in Kalhu and built it into an impressive city with imperial wealth, accumulated from taxes, trade, and the "tribute" payments extracted from vassal nations in exchange for their independence. This "yoke of Assur" was a great burden to smaller client states. Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824 B.C.E.) expanded farther and came into conflict with King Ahab of Israel, who was part of a federation of 12 western kings who had banded together to throw off Assyrian control. As recounted on Shalmaneser's Kurkh Monolith, Ahab was one of the larger contingents, with 10,000 soldiers and 2,000 chariots. Shalmaneser waged four campaigns against the coalition between 853 and 845 B.C.E. Although the outcomes of these campaigns are not entirely clear, his famous Black Obelisk includes a record of receiving tribute from King Jehu of Israel a few years later, in 841, and even depicts the Judahite contingent.

Assyria stagnated for much of the next century, struggling with centripetal forces that worked against centralized power. The period saw the rise of Queen Shammuramat, the wife of Shamshi-Adad V (r. 823–811 B.C.E.) and source of the later Greek legends about Semiramis. As mother of the crown prince, she wielded significant influence and was sometimes described as a virtual co-regent with her son.

TIGLATH-PILESER III (r. 744–727 B.C.E.) is depicted in this relief from Nimrud. King Menahem of Israel taxed every landowner 50 shekels of silver in order to pay tribute to the Assyrian ruler and maintain his royal power (2 Kings 15:19–20). *Photo by British Museum, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Tiglath-pileser III (r. 744–727 B.C.E.) brought new energy to Assyria's ambitions. He quickly re-subdued Babylonia to the south and Urartu to the north and campaigned into Syria-Palestine by 738 B.C.E. He took tribute from King Menahem of Israel (r. 746–737 B.C.E.), who taxed every landowner 50 shekels of silver to pay the Assyrians and maintain his power (2 Kings 15:19–20).

The Hebrew prophets frequently condemned Assyria, as well as Israel's and Judah's reliance on it (e.g., Hosea 5:13; 7:11; 8:9; Micah 5:5–6).

The heavy Assyrian taxation would of course have been controversial, and soon Israel joined an anti-Assyrian coalition of Syro-Palestinian states, akin to Ahab's. Judah, however, would not participate in this rebellion. Therefore, Israel's coalition attacked Judah in the Syro-Ephraimitic War in 734 B.C.E. (2 Kings 16:5–9; Isaiah 7), intending to replace Ahaz of Judah with a ruler more sympathetic to their collective goals. It did not work. Judah survived, and Tiglath-pileser wiped out the anti-Assyrian coalition by 731 B.C.E.

DURING HIS REIGN from 721 to 705 B.C.E., Sargon II (pictured in this alabaster bas-relief from his palace at Khorsabad) turned Israel into the province of Samaria and claimed that he deported more than 27,000 Israelites. *Photo by Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin FRCP(Glasg), CC BY-SA 4.0.*

At that time, Assyria placed Hoshea (r. 730–722 B.C.E.) on Israel's throne as a puppet ruler, but even he failed to pay the tribute in 725 B.C.E. and sought the support of Egypt instead. Assyria thus returned to besiege and destroy Samaria, the Israelite capital, in 722–721 B.C.E. The Assyrian emperor Sargon II turned Israel into the province of Samerina (Samaria) and claimed that he deported more than 27,000 Israelites. Surely many others fled southward to Judah as refugees.

Sargon, however, met his end on the battlefield in 705 B.C.E. This uniquely awful fate for an Assyrian king prompted his heir, Sennacherib, to inquire of the gods seeking the reason. It also perhaps brought celebration in Judah (Isaiah 14), and it prompted King Hezekiah to repeat the rebellious pattern of his neighbors by forming a coalition with Sidon, Byblos, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Edom, and Moab and withholding tribute.

Sennacherib was not free to campaign to the west until 701. When he did, he was seeking vengeance. He claimed to have pillaged 46 Judahite cities and taken more than 200,000 people and animals as spoil. His inscriptions and 2 Kings 18:14–16 agree that Hezekiah paid a heavy tribute but managed, surprisingly, to retain his throne. The events at Jerusalem and the reasons for the outcomes are disputed because of the complex and conflicting assortment of sources: Was it a Cushite intervention? A plague among the Assyrian troops? In any case, it became one of the more celebrated campaigns in ancient Near Eastern history, thanks to the impressive reliefs that Sennacherib proudly made for his palace in Nineveh, depicting his conquest of Judah's second city, Lachish. These reliefs now adorn the British Museum.

Sennacherib thus expanded the empire, though he was harassed by rival powers on various fronts and smoother succession than his had been by making his vassals and his own people swear, in the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon, that they would remain loyal to his son Ashurbanipal when he became king. These loyalty oaths are often compared to biblical covenants, especially that of Deuteronomy.[1]

Ashurbanipal had a long and seemingly successful reign, extending Assyria's control over Egypt—though it was never complete, as the Cushites continued to resist. He also suffered civil war at home, as his brother Shamash-shum-ukin, who ruled Babylon, rebelled against him.

THE SIEGE OF LACHISH. Assyrian soldiers attack the Judahite city of Lachish in this seventh-century B.C.E. relief from the walls of Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh. Pictured in this segment is a unit of archers firing towards the besieged city. *Photo by Zunkir,* <u>CC BY-SA 4.0</u>, *via Wikimedia Commons.*

Elam was a constant thorn in his side; various approaches failed Ashurbanipal until he mounted in 653a vicious campaign to wipe out the rival nation, sowing salt in its fields and disinterring its dead kings' bodies. Ezra 4:9–10 suggests that he deported some of the Elamites to Samerina. Ashurbanipal seems to have been complex, however, since he claimed to have advanced scribal training, and his patronage of scholarship allowed the famous library at Nineveh to flourish.

Historians frequently remark upon the mystery of Assyria's apparently rapid decline. Despite the problems already noted, it was near the height of its power and size in the 640s B.C.E.

Ashurbanipal's death after a long reign, in 631, was followed by succession problems, but those were common. Unfortunately, few Assyrian royal inscriptions survive from the period after 639, and we must rely on the Babylonian chronicles and other Babylonian sources. Led by the Chaldean Nabopolassar, Babylonia regathered itself in the 620s. Joined by the Medes and Scythians, it began to attack Assyrian cities in 615 B.C.E. The Assyrians were taken by surprise
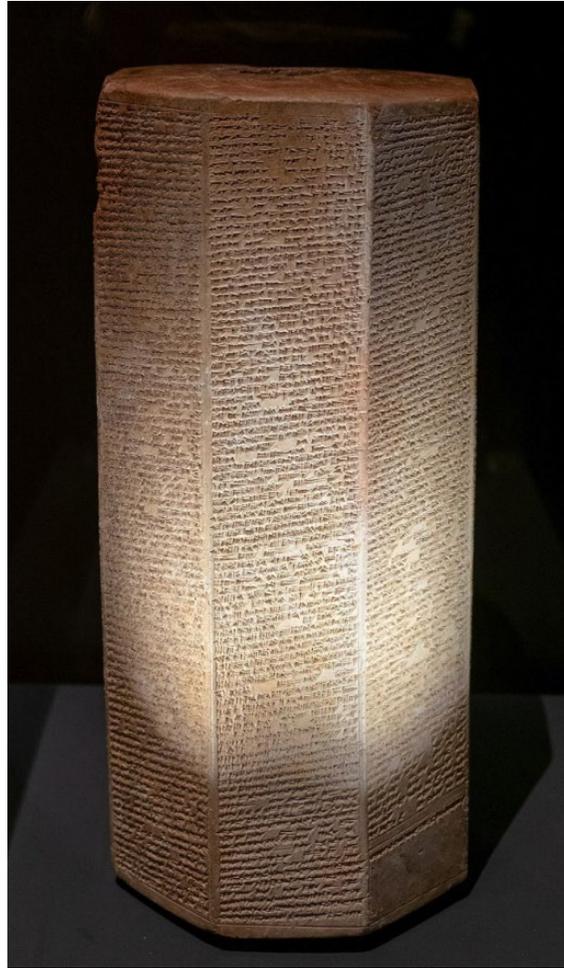
LIKE A BIRD IN A CAGE. In this cuneiform prism listing his campaigns, Sennacherib (r. 704–681 B.C.E.) boasts of having shut up King Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage." *Photo by Anthony Huan,* <u>*CC BY-SA 2.0*</u>*, via Wikimedia Commons.*

in various ways, most significantly by the sudden need to defend their heartland. They seem to have been overextended. From that point, the collapse was startlingly swift. The capital city of Nineveh fell in 612 B.C.E. after a siege of only three months. Their major cities in ruins, remnants of the Assyrian court and military apparently fled westward where they survived for a while with Egyptian support. The Babylonian Chronicle, a terse recounting of major events by year, reported Assyrians still fighting in the west in 609. Texts from the Babylonian court—written in the Assyrian dialect at the very end of the seventh century—suggest that the scribal legacy of Nineveh survived for a while, but then the Assyrians are heard from no more.

The Hebrew prophets did not overlook the fall of Assyria. Nahum raised a taunt song: "Alas, O city of bloodshed, completely deceitful, full of plunder—there was no end to [your] depre-

dations! … There is no relief for your wound, your injury is mortal. All who hear the report about you clap their hands over you. For over whom did your relentless evil not sweep?" (Nahum 3:1, 19, author's translation; see also Zephaniah 2:13–15). Ezekiel 31–32 would portray Assyria as a "world tree" that once flourished as the envy of the earth but was then cut down; it lists the Assyrians among the empires that "go down to the pit" (Ezekiel 31:16).

Among its achievements, Assyria's military stands out. Capable of mustering tens of thousands of troops, the army came to specialize in siege warfare and included expert troops drawn from the empire's numerous territories. Imperial highways and extensive support staff made the military and communications networks more effective. Although the Assyrians had the reputation of being violent, they preferred to use terror-inducing propaganda to achieve their ends—it was more efficient. Their texts and art often portrayed the horrible fates that awaited those who resisted them.

Assyrian religion is often overshadowed by the more prestigious cults of Babylonian cities, but distinctive points emerge. The Assyrians' high god Assur shared a name with the city and the nation, which was not accidental. He embodied Assyria's sense of "Manifest Destiny." Assur was seen as the instigator and guarantor of the nation's expansion through the agency of the king. In Assyrian tradition, Assur took over Marduk's role as chief deity in Enuma Elish, the Babylonian myth of creation. Ishtar was important as a goddess of prophecy, and the gods Shamash, Nabu, Enlil, and Ninurta also played significant roles. Ancestors, particularly dead kings, were also seen as divinized powers worthy of supplication. Assyrian rulers avidly practiced ancestor cults as well as numerous other ways of seeking supernatural knowledge.

Despite Assyria's fearsome reputation in Israel and Judah, its culture was quite influential, including literature, art, and architecture. Assyrian culture was not imposed on them to any great degree, but rather seems to have worked primarily through prestige and emulation, as the story of King Ahaz copying an altar from Damascus indirectly illustrates (2 Kings 16:10–16).

From a literary standpoint, a number of genres of biblical literature are better understood with a knowledge of Assyrian texts, such as the birth narratives, treaties, and historical records already mentioned. Most distinctive are the Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts. These show certain common phraseology with biblical prophecies; for example, the Akkadian term for oracles of well-being

is shulmu, etymologically related to the Hebrew shalom, "peace." The compilations of Assyrian prophecies also empirically demonstrate processes that probably mirror the early stages of the formation of biblical prophetic books. Other Assyrian texts, such as annals, chronicles, and even temple-building accounts, bear comparison with biblical cognates.

In later Jewish literature, Assyria was one of the nations that represented the prototypical evil foreign empire. It was paired with Egypt in Zechariah 10:10–12 as one of the ends of the earth in a cosmic judgment, and it was "dehistoricized" in a different way in late biblical narratives such as Jonah and Ezra, in which a Persian king is called "the king of Assyria" (Ezra 6:22; 1 Esdras 7:15). Similarly, in Judith 1:1, Nebuchadnezzar is remembered as a king "who ruled the Assyrians in Nineveh." By that time, "Assyria" was a general term for the east.

Historians in classical antiquity were prone to confuse and conflate Assyria with other imperial powers from the east, and eventually Assyria was de-emphasized as a paradigmatic empire in favor of Babylon and Rome, so that its cultural and political innovations are often underestimated. For better or worse, Assyria laid the groundwork for those later empires.

The Babylonians

"Nebuchadnezzar & Solomon"[*]
By Bill T. Arnold
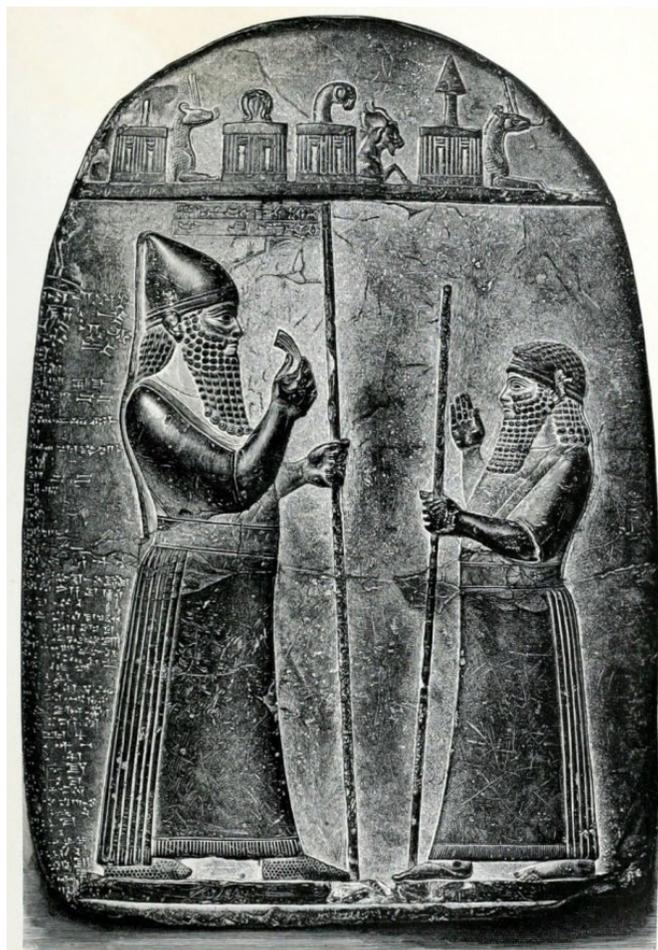
A BABYLONIAN RULER mentioned in the Bible, Merodach-baladan II (r. 721–712 B.C.E.) was one of the ethnic Chaldeans who played an important part in developing Babylonian resistance to the Assyrians. This 1.4-foot-high stela provides a rare depiction of a Babylonian ruler and records a land grant from Merodach-baladan (the tall figure on the left) to the governor of Babylon (on the right). *From Hans F. Helmolt and James Bryce,* The history of the world: A survey of a man's record, *Volume 3 (New York, 1902), overleaf between pp. 26 & 27. Public domain.*

The ongoing debate over the historical value of the biblical narrative has called into question the very existence of an "ancient Israel." Indeed, key features of the Bible's familiar storyline— Israel's arrival from outside Canaan, wars with the indigenous Canaanite inhabitants, eventual

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[*] This article originally appeared in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, January/February 2007.

emergence into nationhood and the United Kingdom—are considered by so-called minimalists to be largely legendary and without historical value.

This raises an interesting question: Were there other Semitic groups in antiquity who had historical trajectories similar to the Israelites? During the past century, scholars have sought to illuminate Israelite history by reference to parallels with groups as distant as Arab bedouin traditions, the Nabateans, Greek amphictyonies and Hellenistic historiographers. Perhaps it is time to look for parallels among Israel's neighbors in the Fertile Crescent who shared similar linguistic, cultural, and social features. If other groups have recorded a similar understanding of their own history, then a historical storyline like that portrayed in the Bible may be plausible after all.
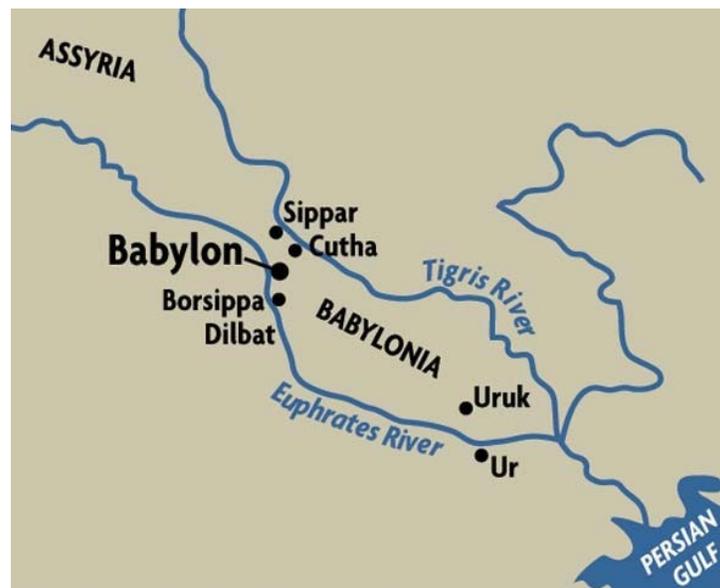
Map of Mesopotamia.

Two periods of Neo-Babylonian history together provide an instructive parallel to the history of early Israel. The first is the century prior to Nabopolassar, when Babylonia emerged from lethargy and political insignificance to become one of the great empires of the ancient world (747–626 B.C.E.), and the second is the period of the Neo-Babylonian empire proper (626–539 B.C.E.). This survey of Babylonian history provides a number of fascinating and instructive analogues to Israel's premonarchic and early monarchic periods.

This may be particularly relevant because the Neo-Babylonian empire was the only *native* Semitic state of Iron Age Babylonia. The rule of all other monarchs of southern Babylon was imposed from outside Babylon.

Moreover, the tribal groups of Babylonia were distant relatives of the early Israelites; their language and culture reflect the same West Semitic origins as Israel's.

My question is a simple one: Is the Bible's historical storyline for early Israel plausible? Could a group of Semitic tribes loosely organized in a political confederation have entered Syria-Palestine as outsiders, gradually settled in the central hills and eventually emerged as a powerful nation-state? These social and political parallels with the Neo-Babylonian period suggest that the biblical scenario is not only plausible but also attested elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern history.

Southern Babylonia in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E.—prior to the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire—was ethnically heterogeneous, as we have learned only in recent decades.[1] The country was divided ethnically into three distinct groups: what we may call native Babylonians, Arameans, and Chaldeans. The native Babylonians were native only in that they had not *recently* migrated to southern Mesopotamia. They were, in fact, an ethnic amalgam of several older groups who had arrived in the third and second millennia B.C.E. but who were, by the eighth century B.C.E., indistinguishable from one another. This "native Babylonian" group may also be referred to as "Akkadian," since Assyrian sources refer to them as such when they want to distinguish them from other tribal groups (and that is the term modern scholars apply to their East Semitic language). The heritage of these "native Babylonians" consisted predominantly of Akkadians and Sumerians of the third millennium, and Amorites and Kassites of the second.

In the eighth century B.C.E., the native Babylonians were settled urban dwellers of southern Babylonia. They made up the largest component of the population in the old cult centers along the Euphrates corridor in the northwest (Babylon, Borsippa, Cutha, Dilbat, and Sippar) and in the prestigious cities of the southwest (Ur and Uruk) (all in modern Iraq). Because of their long-standing presence in the country and their ethnic and cultural continuity with Babylonia's past, they were the bearers of traditional Babylonian culture, as witnessed by their personal names and

their continued use of Akkadian as the language of choice against encroaching West Semitic Aramaic influences.[2]

The fundamental social unit of the native Babylonians was the family. The standard formula for a personal name was "x son of y," reflecting the importance of the nuclear family. Personal names occasionally also indicate the importance of broader kin-based groups; the name may be derived, for example, from an occupation (like Potter, Smith, or Fisher). Or a name might incorporate the name of a common eponymous ancestor, for example, "x son of y descendant of z," in which the last name is regarded as the founder of the family (e.g., Muezib-Marduk *maru a* Kiribtu *mar* Sîn-nasir).[3]

The cities controlled by this Babylonian population formed the civil, religious, economic, and judicial strength of Babylonia. These Babylonian cities were also the intellectual and cultural centers of the country.

The second ethnic group was the West Semitic Arameans. Arameans begin to appear in Assyrian literary sources in the late 12th and 11th centuries B.C.E., in central and northern Mesopotamia. Aramean groups existed in southern Babylonia from the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E. The origin and early development of the Arameans is shrouded in obscurity. Traditional scholarly interpretation has the Aramean hordes from the desert steppe sweeping across Syria and Upper Mesopotamia, conquering native populations. But recent anthropological studies have questioned this massive-invasion reconstruction for the appearance not only of the Arameans but also other pastoral nomads in the ancient Near East. It now seems likely that these West Semitic-speaking peoples had lived in Syria and Upper Mesopotamia throughout the second millennium B.C.E. Although the traditional "invasion interpretation" has clearly been overstated, there is nonetheless evidence of *some* Aramean invasion eastward into Assyria and Babylonia in the early 11th century B.C.E. due to a famine in their homeland. The Arameans seized cities by force, and for much of the tenth century B.C.E., the western corridor of Babylonia was in a constant state of disruption because of the Aramean tribal groups that now controlled the important trade route along the Euphrates River.

The Arameans settled principally along the Tigris and its tributaries. We have evidence of more than 40 such tribes,[4] for example, the Gambulu, the Puqudu (the "Pekod" of Jeremiah 50:21 and

Ezekiel 23:23), the Ru'ua, and the Gurasimmu. The first two of these were the largest tribes and the only ones for which we have much information.

The third ethnic constituent were the Chaldean tribes in southern Babylonia. They first appear in Assyrian sources of the early ninth century B.C.E. Like the Arameans, they were West Semitic, and many scholars have assumed they were in fact identical with the Arameans. However, the native Assyrian and Babylonian sources consistently distinguish between them with a different tribal organization, different dates of their respective appearances in history and contrasting levels of Babylonization. All this leads to the conclusion that the Arameans and Chaldeans were two distinct groups, though perhaps ethnically related.[5]

In general, these Aramean tribes were less likely than the Chaldeans to assimilate Babylonian culture. The Aramean economy seems to have been based on animal husbandry, and the Arameans occupied fewer cities and villages than the Chaldeans. The Aramean tribesmen were

A LEGENDARY PRIDE. The Book of Daniel records Nebuchadnezzar II's boast about "magnificent Babylon" that he built "by [his] mighty power and for [his] glorious majesty" (Daniel 4:30). The cuneiform text on this cylinder of Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 604–562 B.C.E.) describes the construction of the outer city wall of Babylon. Such cylinders were buried in the corners of large buildings to record the ruler's accomplishments. *Credit: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, 1886; Accession Number 86.11.60; public domain.*

not generally inclined to become involved in the Babylonian political system, and no known Aramean ever held the throne of Babylon.[6]

The Chaldeans controlled the trade routes of the Persian Gulf area and thereby accumulated considerable wealth. In addition to trade, they also engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. They became deeply involved in Babylonian political life and, by the middle of the eighth century, became contenders for the Babylonian throne. Sometime during the second and third decades of the eighth century B.C.E., a certain Eriba-Marduk of the Bit-Yakin tribe became the first ethnic Chaldean monarch of Babylonia, out-maneuvering a temporarily weakened Assyria in the north. His reign lasted only nine years, but it set the stage for Chaldean resistance to the Assyrians for the next century and a half. Other Chaldeans attempted to rule from a Babylonian base (including Merodach-baladan II, who is mentioned in 2 Kings 20:12–19 and Isaiah 39). The Chaldeans thus played a significant role in Babylonian resistance to Assyrian rule. In the end, the unity and spirit of independence among the Chaldean tribes culminated in the rise of the so-called "Chaldean Dynasty," more appropriately known as the Neo-Babylonian empire.

These, then, were the three primary ethnic groups of southern Babylonia during the last half of the eighth and during the seventh centuries B.C.E. Socially, the older Babylonian inhabitants of the larger cities were often aligned against the more ethnic tribal groups of Arameans and Chaldeans, who were relative newcomers. The older Babylonians on the one hand, and the Arameans and Chaldeans on the other, seldom acted in concert in matters of self-governance and in fact were frequently in conflict with each other during this turbulent period. In an internecine war between two brothers, each of whom hoped to rule over both Assyria and Babylonia, for example, the Babylonian cities of the southland were typically pro-Assyrian, while the tribal groups supported Babylonian independence.[7]

How does this situation in southern Babylonia provide a comparison with early Israel? First, the sociological constituents of Babylonia during the seventh century B.C.E. may be compared with premonarchic Israel. Second, the progression from tribalism to statehood may be compared.

Like southern Mesopotamia during the century prior to the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire, ancient Palestine was composed of two distinct sociological groups. There were the settled urban-dwellers, who were the bearers of the older, traditional culture: the Canaanites. Then there

were the pastoralist tribal groups: the tribes of Israel. As in Babylonia, conflict between these groups persisted over several centuries.

Whether these two groups in Palestine were ethnically distinct and whether the tribal pastoralists were newcomers or long-standing inhabitants of the land are subjects of ongoing controversies among biblical scholars. But a simple comparison with Babylonia demonstrates that it was quite possible for tribal pastoralists to overtake an established culture, whether by sudden invasion (as some of the Arameans undoubtedly did) or by gradual infiltration (as some of the Chaldeans apparently did). On the basis of this comparison with southern Babylonia, it seems quite reasonable that the Israelites could have included tribes that originated outside of Palestine and were ethnically distinct from the Canaanites.

A second comparison involves the transition from a loosely organized tribal confederation into statehood. Babylonia was under-populated, impoverished and politically fragmented at the beginning of this period. The eminent Assyriologist John A. Brinkman has demonstrated that the foundations of future Neo-Babylonian strength were in fact established during this period of weakness, and surprisingly it was the Assyrian threat in the north that provided the impetus. The constant threat of Assyrian domination transformed heterogeneous anti-Assyrian elements within Babylonia into a political coalition that would eventually provide a power base for a Babylonian empire.[8] Because of the *pax Assyriaca*, the Babylonian economy improved dramatically through agriculture, animal husbandry and international trade. Population levels rapidly increased, though the sources of the new residents are not entirely clear. Social organizations changed as family-centered structures gradually gave way to broader kin-based groups. Ultimately, the role of the ever-present Assyrian threat from the north played a significant role in the rise of Babylonian statehood. Paradoxically, anti-Assyrianism provided the rallying cry for the populations of Babylonia and stimulated their political unity.

This portrait of a rapid population increase, improved economic conditions and a movement toward unified socio-political organization is exactly paralleled in early Israel. Surface surveys in the hill country of Ephraim, for example, located only five occupied sites in the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 B.C.E.), but in Iron Age I (1200–1000 B.C.E.) there were 115.[9]

Some archaeologists interpret these data as shifts in the living patterns of inhabitants already in Canaan. Regardless of how we explain the changes, however, it is clear that the central hill region of Palestine witnessed a rapid population growth in Iron Age I, just as Babylonia did prior to the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire.

The other main features that gave rise to statehood in Babylonia were also present in Israel, that is, improved economic condition and external military threat. Due to the rise of iron technology and improved agricultural techniques, the early Israelites eventually enjoyed economic improvement, though nothing quite as dramatic as the Chaldean advances in Babylonia.[10] And just as the tribal groups of southern Mesopotamia were united politically by the long history of Assyrian aggression, so the Philistine threat attested in the Bible provided motivation for centralization of Israelite authority. Recent sociological and archaeological studies demonstrate that the Philistine problem intensified as the Israelite population grew and expanded westward. These circumstances provided an impetus for the rise of the Israelite monarchy.[11]

The Neo-Babylonian empire was characterized by military conquests, expansive building activities, as well as literary accomplishments. This, too, may be compared with the situation in Israel.

Two of the largest Chaldean tribes, the Bit-Amukani and Bit-Yakin, had suffered most at the hands of the Assyrians. Despite repeated Assyrian attacks on these tribes, it was they who provided the most important impetus and resources for Babylonian independence from the Assyrians. Ultimately, it was Bit-Yakin from which the royal dynasty of the nascent Neo-Babylonian, or Chaldean, empire emerged.[12]

As the state emerged, the need for unification grew greater, as did the need for a strong central authority. These needs were met partially by the massive rebuilding of Babylon undertaken by Nabopolassar (r. 625–605 B.C.E.), Nebuchadnezzar (r. 604–562 B.C.E.) and, later and to a lesser extent, Nabonidus (r. 556–539 B.C.E.). The rebuilding efforts concentrated on public works: palaces, fortifications, streets and temples. Without doubt, the early motivation for such rebuilding was the need to unify all Babylonia administratively and religiously.

FOUNDATION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH. Some Babylonian temples—like the Esagil of Marduk— were built at ground level, but others were placed on top of stepped platforms, or *ziggurats*. When Nebuchadnezzar came to power, he continued his father's work to restore the *ziggurat* at Babylon called Etemenanki, which is sometimes believed to be the biblical tower of Babel. The platform he built stood at a towering height of 295 feet, but very little remains of it today. Pictured here is the earliest known *ziggurat*, located in Ur and dating to the Neo-Sumerian period (2112–2000 B.C.E.) and partially reconstructed. *Photo by Hardnfast, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

During Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Babylon saw extensive replanning and new construction unparalleled in its history. Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt the walls of Babylon and joined the halves of the city on either side of the Euphrates with a bridge. In addition to a new royal palace on the Euphrates in the northern district, he focused on cult centers. He continued the work of his father and completely restored the temple tower (*ziggurat*) named Etemenanki ("The building that is the Foundation of Heaven and Earth") and the temple of Esagil (Marduk's shrine) adjacent to it, along with its subsidiary chapels. Nebuchadnezzar's pride in his accomplishment became legendary, as recorded in the Bible: "Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?" (Daniel 4:30 [4:27 in Hebrew]).

The reconstruction of the city of Babylon was motivated by the need to unify the confederation of Chaldean tribes, together with Arameans and native Babylonians.

The literary contributions of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar were only slightly less impressive than their architectural accomplishments. Here we need to distinguish between "literature" in the strict sense and non-literary inscriptions such as lexical, economic, and administrative texts. Documents of the latter kind were produced in quantity by Babylonian society throughout most of the first millennium, so these texts are not really a fair indication of royal strength later on. We may assume this kind of text was more common in ancient Israel than epigraphic finds would attest due to the perishable types of writing materials used in ancient Canaan (as opposed to clay tablets in Babylonia), given the apparent widespread availability of writing in Israelite society.

Many cuneiform Neo-Babylonian archives have Aramaic dockets scratched on the clay or are otherwise marked with black ink summarizing the cuneiform texts for the benefit of those who could not read cuneiform. Judging from the cuneiform records,[13] the Neo-Babylonian period was one of the most productive in all of Mesopotamian history. More than 4,600 economic, business and legal documents (including letters) dated to the Neo-Babylonian kings have been published.[14] The majority of these come from temple and private archives, not state archives, apparently because state chanceries used Aramaic-speaking scribes who wrote on perishable leather and papyrus.[15]

This period also produced, however, a valuable historiographic source, the so-called Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series.[16] These chronicles record outstanding events of each year beginning with the reign of Nabonassar (747–734 B.C.E.) and continuing into the third century. These chronicles are objective and as close as the Babylonians came to genuine historiography.[17]

We also know of significant libraries at Babylon and Borsippa from both the Old and Neo-Babylonian periods. In 1986, archaeologists from the University of Baghdad discovered the library chamber in the Neo-Babylonian temple of Shamash at Sippar. Only a few of the texts have been published, but it appears that this find will shed light on the contents of Neo-Babylonian collections and on the physical arrangement of a Babylonian library. The tablets were shelved in deep cubicles with markings on the tablet edges for easy access by librarians ("call numbers").[18]

In sum, the age of Nebuchadnezzar saw significant architectural achievement as well as increased literary activity and a renewed interest in the past. The ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's magnificent palace even contained a museum in which he housed a large collection of "antiquities," revealing his interest in archaeology and history.[19]

What occurred in the Neo-Babylonian empire may actually reflect a wider cultural phenomenon. Among ancient Semitic cultures that rose to nationalistic empires, a period of literary florescence and architectural accomplishments occurred under the aegis of their most successful and dominant monarchs. Curiously, among some scholars working on the Hebrew Bible, such a possibility has been denied for ancient Israel. These scholars deny that Israel ever had dominant and successful monarchs like David and Solomon. For those minimalist scholars who admit the bare existence of David and Solomon, the age of literary greatness is nonetheless assumed to be not their reigns, but the Babylonian Exile, though this would be an unparalleled situation among ancient Semitic peoples.

A close comparison of these two ancient Semitic cultures—Israel and Neo-Babylonia—suggests that the literary traditions of Israel preserved in the Hebrew Bible genuinely reflect the architectural and literary activities of Israel's United Monarchy. The building of Jerusalem as a unifying factor for previously disparate tribes is socially and politically paralleled in the Chaldean architectural achievements at Babylon. And just as the Neo-Babylonian monarchy preserved its great literary heritage and emphasized a previously little-used form of historiography (the chronicle series), Israel appears to have preserved its own literary heritage (perhaps the sources of the Pentateuch) and created new forms of historiography (the earliest layers of the Deuteronomistic History: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings).

This scenario appears to have been quite typical among ancient Semites whenever tribal groups rose to statehood. Wherever nationalistic empires developed among Semites (Akkad, Ashur, Mari, etc.), the period of greatest military and political strength also became an age of flourishing literary and architectural accomplishment.[20] Such periods of enforced peace were the only times in the turbulent ancient Near East when monarchs and their state guilds had the time, inclination and resources to turn their attention to the architectural and literary achievements. In Babylonia, they used durable writing materials (clay). Moreover, the royal city of Babylon was later

unoccupied (yielding magnificent archaeological testimony to the empire's building activities). Alas, we have no such luxury in the case of ancient Israel. Scribes would write almost exclusively on perishable papyrus and leather, and Jerusalem was built and rebuilt many times after the reign of Solomon.

As a result, extrabiblical testimony for the United Monarchy remains elusive. Nonetheless, these parallels with the Neo-Babylonian period suggest that David and Solomon may have more in common with Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar than might at first be supposed. These institutional and socio-political analogies should provide limits to our skepticism[21] about early Israel and the biblical picture of the United Monarchy.

The Persians

"Making (Up) History"[*]
By Matt Waters
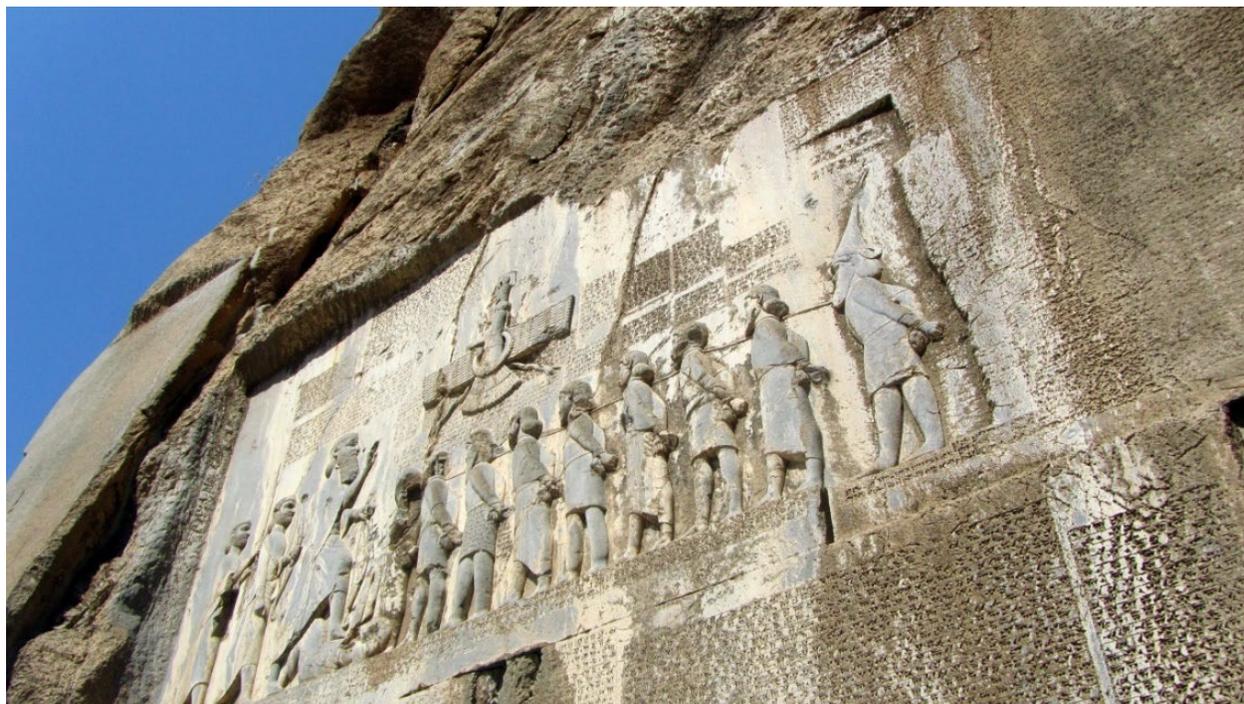
HIGH UP ON A CLIFF FACE in Bisitun, in western Kurdistan, Darius had his claim as rightful successor to Cyrus the Great carved into stone. The tall figure of Darius stands at left, with his foot on the supine Gaumata "the Magus," pretender to the throne, before nine rebel kings who are bound at the neck. The relief is accompanied by a trilingual cuneiform inscription in Elamite, Babylonian, and Old Persian; in the text, Darius claims that he restored the kingship to "our family." *Photo by PersianDutchNetwork,* <u>*CC BY-SA 4.0*</u>*, via Wikimedia Commons.*

The ancient Persian empire, founded by Cyrus the Great (r. 559–530 B.C.E.), was on the verge of chaos. In 525 B.C.E., Cyrus's son and successor, Cambyses II, led a campaign in Egypt to expand the empire's territories. Just three years later, however, Cambyses was forced to return to Persia to put down a revolt by his brother, Bardiya, but the king died on the journey.

The revolt was quelled by a man named Darius, who later became known as King Darius the Great (r. 522–486 B.C.E.). According to an inscription left by Darius at Mount Bisitun (or Behistun) in present-day Kermanshah, Iran, the man who claimed to be Bardiya was really an

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[*] This article originally appeared in *Archaeology Odyssey*, November/December 2005.

imposter named Gaumata, whom Darius called "the Magus." The real Bardiya had died some years earlier, perhaps even murdered by Cambyses himself.

> This kingdom that Gaumata the Magus stripped from Cambyses, that kingship from long ago had belonged to our family ... No one dared to say anything about Gaumata the Magus, until I came ... Afterwards I beseeched [the god] Ahuramazda; Ahuramazda bore me aid ... then I with a few men slew that Gaumata the Magus and those who were his foremost followers. I took the kingship from him ... The kingship that had been taken away from our family, that I reinstated.[1]
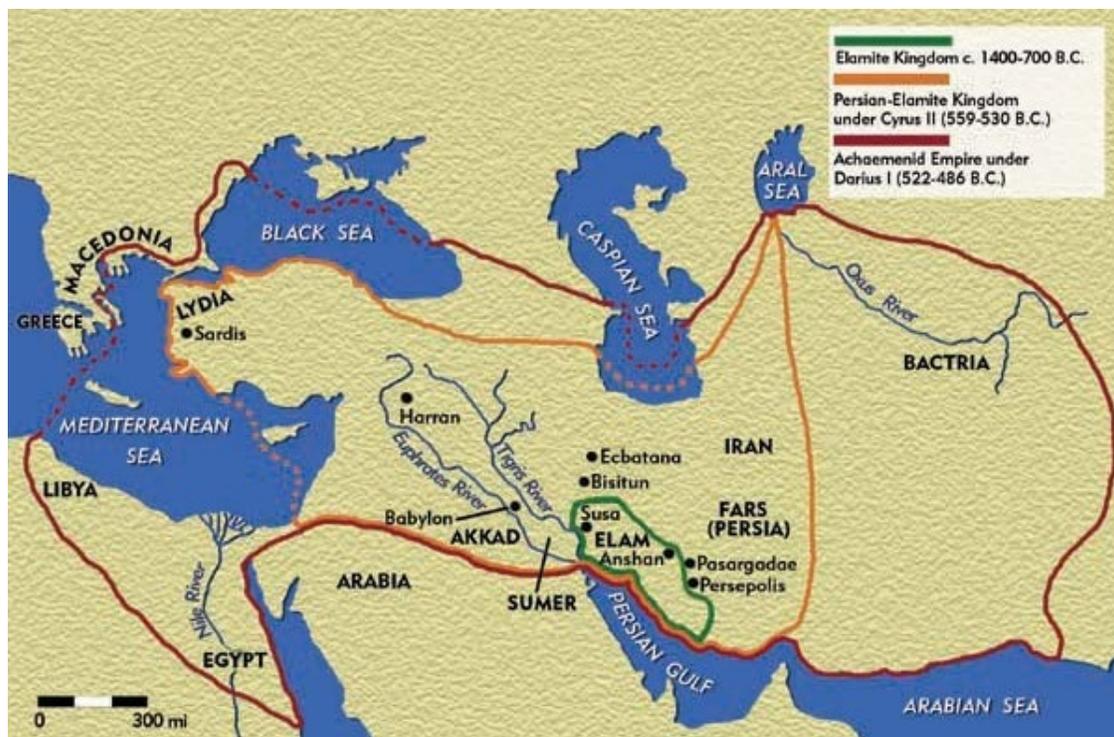
Map of the Persian Empire.

The fifth-century B.C.E. Greek historian Herodotus provides colorful details about Darius's seizure of the throne, but his account does not always square with Darius's.[2] For example, Herodotus credits a nobleman named Otanes with organizing resistance to the rebel Smerdis (Herodotus's name for Bardiya/Gaumata)—whereas Darius, in the Bisitun Inscription (DB §68), includes Otanes in a list of his helpers. In Herodotus's version, Darius was only a late addition to

the plot, though he did strike the killing blow against Bardiya/Smerdis/Gaumata. The conspirators, Herodotus tells us, decided to leave the selection of the next king to portent: The rider of the first horse to neigh at sunrise would become king. Darius's groomsman, Oebares, allowed his master's horse to mate with a favorite mare at the site of the contest, so when the riders approached the site the next morning,

> Darius' horse plunged forward and neighed. At the same time this
> happened, there was a flash of lightning from a clear sky, and thunder.
> These additional signs clinched the selection for Darius (3.84–86).

Once in power, Darius had to deal with rebellions throughout the empire: Elam, Babylonia, Media, Assyria, Egypt, Parthia, Armenia, Margiana (in modern Turkmenistan), Sagartia (in central Iran), Sattagydia (in modern Afghanistan), Scythia and Lydia. By 519 B.C.E., Darius was in full control, and the empire that Cyrus and Cambyses had built was intact.

Although Darius claimed that he was the legitimate successor to Cambyses ("The kingship that had been taken away from our family, that I reinstated"), the fact that he encountered so many rebellions—some in the very core of the empire—suggests that his claims were not, at least initially, recognized. (Indeed, Herodotus's very different account reveals that Darius's version was not the only one in circulation.) In the early years of his reign, therefore, Darius moved quickly to put his own imprint upon the Persian empire—in texts, monumental architecture and art. He not only used brute force to put down rebellions across the realm, but he created and solidified his royal lineage through propaganda.[3]

In particular, Darius formulated the Achaemenid dynasty, named after an ancestor named Achaemenes, to justify his succession to power. The term "Achaemenid" is still used by scholars to refer to the entire line of kings from Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great) to Darius III, whose defeat by Alexander in 331 B.C.E. ended the Persian empire.

Darius gives his version of the events of this turbulent period in the monumental Bisitun Inscription, which was inscribed in the Elamite, Babylonian Akkadian and Old Persian languages. Darius also dispatched this account throughout the empire, as we know from an Aramaic copy found at Elephantine in Egypt and from fragmented inscriptions found in Babylon.

PORTRAYING A KING with bow and arrows, this coin likely represents the Persian king Darius I (r. 522–486 B.C.E.). It is called *siglos* and is made of silver. *Credit: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc., CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

The Bisitun Inscription, which was carved high up on Mount Bisitun's sheer cliff face, consists of the trilingual text and a central relief scene. This scene is all that would have been discernible from the road, some 150 feet below; it shows an over-sized, triumphant Darius hailing the god Ahuramazda (the winged disk figure) and resting one foot upon the prostrate Gaumata (Bardiya/Smerdis). Behind (to the left of) Darius are two attendants; in front of Darius stand the nine rebels he defeated, each of whom is bound by a rope attached to his neck. The captions identifying the rebels were placed above and below the figures, or on the figure itself (for example, on the third rebel from the left, Phraortes). The addition of the final figure, Skunkha the Scythian, necessitated the obliteration of part of the Elamite version of the inscription. A full copy of the Elamite version was subsequently added to the lower left of the relief, below the Babylonian version, with the Old Persian version inscribed directly beneath the relief.

In the text, Darius traces his lineage to one Achaemenes:

> My father is Hystaspes, the father of Hystaspes is Arsames, the father of Arsames was Ariaramnes, the father of Ariaramnes was Teispes, the father of Teispes was Achaemenes ... For this reason we are called "Achaemenids" (DB §2–3).

CYRUS CYLINDER (sixth century B.C.E.) is inscribed with a Babylonian Akkadian text documenting Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon and the capture of Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king, in 539 B.C.E. In this 10-inch-long clay barrel found at Babylon, Cyrus refers to himself as "king of Anshan" but not as "king of Persia," and certainly not as an Achaemenid. *Photo by Prioryman, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Teispes was the great-grandfather of Cyrus the Great (and the father of Cyrus I, about whom very little is known). Darius thus claims a shared descent with Cyrus from Achaemenes.[4] However, this claim to a common ancestry is exaggerated and misleading, if not an outright lie.[5]

In his own dedicatory inscriptions, all from Babylonia, Cyrus II emphasized his lineage as "king of Anshan," a center of great importance throughout most of Elamite history. This is curious in that the archaeological record suggests that Anshan ceased to be an important urban center by about 1100 B.C.E.[6] Although we know little about the region Cyrus had ruled before he began his conquests, the title "king of Anshan" appears to have been a modification of the traditional title "king of Anshan and Susa," which was used by many Elamite kings during the Middle Elamite and early Neo-Elamite periods (c. 1400–700 B.C.E.).

In the Cyrus Cylinder, a 10-inch-long clay barrel modeled after Assyrian and Babylonian foundation inscriptions, Cyrus traces his lineage through three generations:

> I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, strong king, king of Babylon,
> king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters [of the world], son of

> Cambyses the great king, king of Anshan, grandson of Cyrus the great
>
> king, king of Anshan, great-grandson of Teispes the great king, king of
>
> Anshan (lines 20–21).

Cyrus is called "king of Anshan" earlier in this inscription (line 12) and in a dedicatory brick inscription from Ur. Cyrus adopted the grander, Mesopotamian-styled titulary ("king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters") at the appropriate point in the Cyrus Cylinder. The title "king of Anshan" clearly resonated with Cyrus, even after his extensive conquests; he clearly felt, at some level, that he was the heir and conveyor of an Elamite tradition.

Cyrus's new capital of Pasargadae, about 50 miles southeast of Anshan, was to serve as a physical statement of the empire's power and prestige. Although not much of the city remains, its ruins are enough to suggest its former grandeur: palace complexes, gardens, a sacred precinct and the Zendan (a 45-foot-high stone tower, called the "Prison of Solomon" by the Persian poet Firdausi [940–1020 C.E.]). Many of Pasargadae's buildings were unfinished when Cyrus died, and some of these were completed by Darius[7]—a sign of piety to his predecessor and, perhaps more significantly, an opportunity to promote his own dynastic agenda. Several cuneiform inscription fragments have been found at the site, but only two inscriptions survive in full: CMa and CMc (CMb is fragmentary). The inscriptions were written in Elamite, Akkadian and, in the case of CMa, Old Persian:

> I am Cyrus the king, an Achaemenid. (CMa)
>
> Cyrus the great king, an Achaemenid. (CMc)

These inscriptions link Cyrus with the Achaemenid lineage espoused by Darius. There is no mention in the Pasargadae inscriptions of Anshan or any of Cyrus's predecessors. The authorship of these inscriptions, however, has been the subject of acrimonious debates in modern scholarship. They were likely the work of Darius, who installed them to link himself to the dynastic line of Cyrus the Great, founder of the empire.[8]

Once these inscriptions are attributed to Darius, there is no compelling reason to label Cyrus an Achaemenid. Cyrus traced his lineage only to Teispes, and he emphasized his dynastic line's

kingship of Anshan. Although Cyrus ruled the territory of Parsa (at that time, Parsa was geographically synonymous with Anshan, that part of Iran roughly equivalent to modern Fars), his titulary retained an Elamite focus. Darius, on the other hand, never used the toponym "Anshan" and called himself instead the "king of Parsa" (that is, "king of Persia"). Elamites and Persians had clearly been living together in Parsa/Fars for quite some time, and Elamite influence on the Persians was pervasive.[9] But the choice of titulary reflected a deliberate emphasis: Elamite for Cyrus, and Persian for Darius.

What do we make, then, of Darius's claims of legitimacy via a familial link with Cyrus? Did he make it up out of thin air?

Maybe not. In the Bisitun Inscription (DB §10), Darius refers to Cambyses II (the son of Cyrus the Great) as a member of Darius's family (that is, as an Achaemenid). Darius's claim that Cambyses was "of our family" may be reconciled through the person of Cambyses's mother, Cassandane, an Achaemenid woman who married Cyrus. According to Herodotus, "Cambyses was the son of Cassandane, the daughter of Pharnaspes, an Achaemenid" (*History* 2.1). Herodotus also noted her death and the subsequent mourning:

> He [Cambyses] was the son of Cyrus and Cassandane, the daughter of Pharnaspes, and Cassandane had died before Cyrus himself; Cyrus had mourned greatly for her and instructed all his subjects to do likewise. Cambyses, then, was a son of this woman and Cyrus (3.2).

No Near Eastern source mentions the name of Cyrus's wife and Cambyses's mother, but her death, in 538 B.C.E., is described in a document from Babylon called the Nabonidus Chronicle:

> In the month [Adar] the wife of the king died. From the twenty-seventh of the month Adar [February-March] to the third of the month Nisan [March-April] there was mourning in Akkad. All the people bared their heads.[10]

In describing Cassandane's death, Herodotus clearly used the Nabonidus Chronicle, or they shared the same source. What Herodotus supplied for us is her name and her clan affiliation: "Achaemenid."
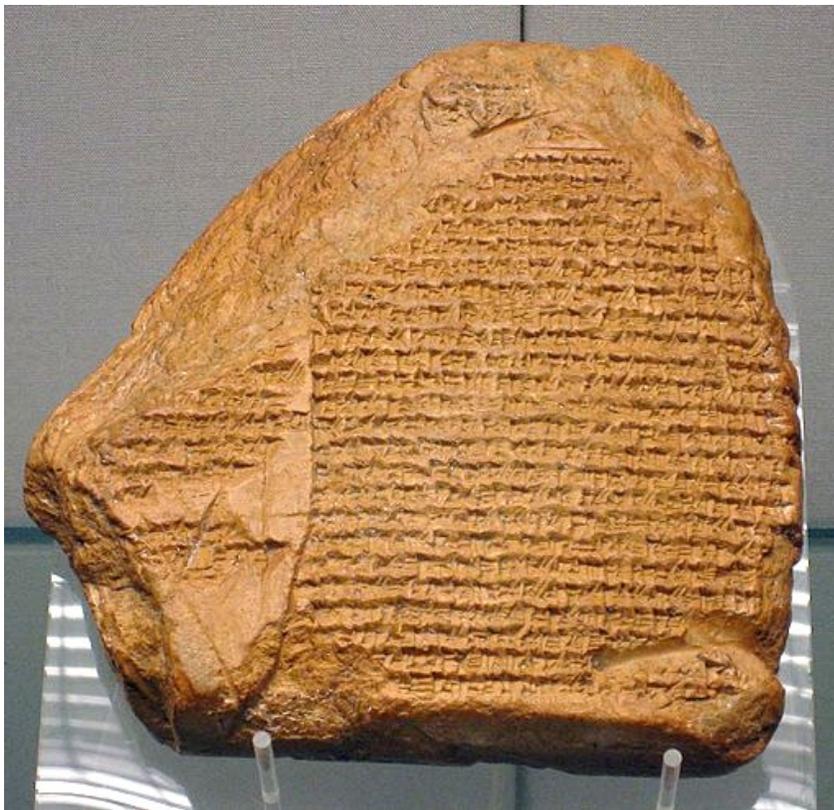
ONE PRINCIPAL SOURCE of information about the rise of Cyrus the Great (r. 559–530 B.C.E.) is the so-called Nabonidus Chronicle. It consists of a series of cuneiform tablets (such as the 5.5-inch-high fragment) listing important events that took place during the reign of the Babylonian king Nabonidus (555–539 B.C.E.). *Credit: British Museum,* <u>*CC BY-SA 3.0*</u>*, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Darius may well have linked Cambyses to his family (or, more broadly, his clan, the Achaemenids) through Cassandane's marriage to Cyrus the Great. In the Bisitun Inscription, Darius strengthened this shared descent with Cyrus by stating that Cyrus's great-grandfather, Teispes, was a son of Achaemenes. Thus Darius legitimized his own claim to the throne. That this claim was indeed problematic is also suggested by the fact that both Darius's father, Hystaspes, and paternal grandfather, Arsames, were living when he took the throne, which vitiates Darius's implication that the kingship had descended in a direct line to him.[11] Notably, when Darius claimed in the Bisitun Inscription that he was the ninth king in succession, he did not provide the names of those who reigned before him (DB §4).

So who was this Darius who took control of a great empire in a time of turmoil and made it even greater, by extending its territories in central Asia and Europe?

According to Herodotus, Darius's father, Hystaspes, served as governor (*hyparch*) of Persia under Cyrus the Great (*History* 3.70). In the Bisitun Inscription, on the other hand, Darius indicates that his father held an important post in Parthia (DB §35). Herodotus states that during Cambyses's reign Darius himself was a "spear-bearer" (*doryphoros*) and thus "not yet a man of great account" (*History* 3.139). But Herodotus likely underestimates the importance of the Persian title "spear-bearer." In an inscription from Darius's tomb at Naqsh-i Rustam, one of Darius's six co-conspirators, Gobryas, is also given the title "spear-bearer" (*arshtibara*, in Old Persian), and it is clear from the context that this position was one of high honor.[12] Thus, Darius held a position of influence under Cambyses and perhaps under Cyrus as well.[13]

Darius's association with the god Ahuramazda tells us something about his background. Ahuramazda was the supreme god in Zoroastrianism, a religion that did not reach its mature form until the Sasanian period, around the third century C.E. The cultic strain observed by the Achaemenid kings is usually referred to as "Mazdaism." Ahuramazda was probably not a new arrival in Parsa/Fars at this time, but there is little clear evidence of Mazdaism there before Darius's reign. The prophet Zoroaster, for instance, is not mentioned in Persian texts of this period (though he is mentioned in fourth-century B.C.E. Greek sources). In any event, Zoroaster's homeland, and thus the origins of Zoroastrianism, is thought to have been in eastern Iran. Darius's introduction of Ahuramazda into his inscriptions is consistent with his emphasis on Persia, as opposed to Cyrus's Elam. In some inscriptions, Darius even refers to his "Iranian" ethnicity.[14]

In taking power, Darius incorporated the empire founded by Cyrus II into his own "Achaemenid" Persian empire. He proclaimed his rule in numerous, monumental, trilingual inscriptions—for which he adapted cuneiform script for the Old Persian language. He built the magnificent citadel of Persepolis as a visual emblem of his power, a kind of panegyric in stone. And he continued the work of Cyrus in expanding the empire, eastward into central Asia (where Persian influence remained paramount for hundreds of years), and westward into Europe.

The ancient Persians are perhaps best known in the West for the incursions into Greece by Darius in 490 B.C.E. (a Persian force was defeated at the Battle of Marathon) and by Darius's

CARVED INTO A ROCK outcrop near Persepolis called Naqsh-i Rustam are the tombs of the Persian kings Darius I, Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I, and Darius II. The 75-foot-high, cruciform entrance to Darius's tomb leads to a three-chambered burial crypt that had been emptied by the time excavators explored the tomb in the 1930s. *Photo by Diego Delso, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

son and successor, Xerxes, in 480–479 B.C.E. Although defeated in a naval battle at Salamis, Xerxes destroyed Athens and posed a serious threat to Greek independence.

After Xerxes's invasion of Greece, the empire built by Cyrus and Darius remained dynamic and active. The Achaemenids continued to rule a vast territory from modern Afghanistan to Libya, despite a civil war between Artaxerxes II and his brother, Cyrus the Younger, which lasted from 404 to 401 B.C.E. (immortalized by Xenophon's *Anabasis* and Plutarch's *Life of Artaxerxes*), and also despite the successful revolt (also in 404) of Egypt, which was not reintegrated into the Persian empire until 342.[15] The Persian empire left a massive imprint on Central Asia, the Middle East and the West. Its like was not seen again until the Roman Empire under Augustus, and has been seldom seen since.

The Canaanites

"Texts from Ugarit Solve Biblical Puzzles"[*]
By Edward L. Greenstein

UGARITIC GODDESS. A part of what used to be a lid from a cylindrical pyxis (box), this 13th-century B.C.E. ivory engraving shows a goddess feeding a pair of wild goats. It was discovered in Tomb 3 of the Ugaritic necropolis at Minet al-Beida and is now at the Louvre. *Louvre Museum, CC BY-SA 2.0 FR, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Hebrew is a "language of Canaan," says the prophet (Isaiah 19:18), a conclusion amply

confirmed by archaeologically recovered inscriptions. In scholarly terms, Hebrew is a south

Canaanite dialect.

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[*] This article originally appeared in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, November/December 2010.

As with the language, so with the alphabet: From its earliest appearance until the Babylonian destruction, Hebrew was written in the Canaanite alphabet.[1]

As with language and the alphabet, so with culture generally: Ancient Israelite culture was in many respects a subset of Canaanite culture.

Map of ancient Canaan.

The most powerful and extensive demonstration of this last statement comes from the body of literature uncovered at the site of Ugarit on the Mediterranean coast of Syria. The discovery of Ugarit has a certain fairytale typicality to it. A peasant was plowing below the tell of Ras Shamra in 1928 when he struck a solid mass, which later turned out to be a stone covering to a tomb. The French authorities—in charge of Syria at the time—were alerted, and in 1929 archaeologists from France, headed by the now-famous Claude F.A. Schaeffer, began the first season of excavation. The French have continued to dig at Ras Shamra until today, although with more involvement from the Syrians in recent years.

These excavations have revealed an extensive Late Bronze Age city (14th–13th centuries B.C.E.) with palaces, temples and houses of notables, most of which have yielded troves of texts. This

city was destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Age by the Sea Peoples—of whom the Philistines are perhaps the best known—and only modestly occupied thereafter.

The heavily fortified city gate of Ugarit protected entry into the palace area. The largest of the palaces, the royal palace, was a spectacular edifice covering three acres. A roughly rectangular structure, it measured 390 feet by nearly 300 feet. Smaller palaces provided sumptuous quarters for lesser figures, like the palace of the queen mother.

The Ugaritic language, like Hebrew and other Canaanite dialects, is part of the language group known as Northwest Semitic. As Hebrew is a south Canaanite dialect, Ugaritic is a north Canaanite dialect.

The other language commonly found at Ugarit, also written in cuneiform, is Akkadian, the *lingua franca* of the time. It was used for commercial and diplomatic documents and is part of the language group known as East Semitic and centered in Mesopotamia.

On the main acropolis of Ugarit were the temples and the House of the Chief Priest. The mythological tablets from this house (and some inscribed metal adzes) were the basis on which the Ugaritic language was deciphered, mainly in 1931. It took only a year or so to decipher because the script consists of only 30 characters and the language strongly resembles Hebrew and Arabic. The alphabetic signs are written in cuneiform but are derived from the Proto-Canaanite alphabet.

Inside the temple of Baal (the chief Canaanite deity) was a magnificent stela of Baal bearing a weapon in his right hand and a thunderbolt in the form of a flowering spear in his left. Elsewhere on the acropolis, excavators uncovered a seated statue of the god El, a name also used in the Bible for the Hebrew God but in the Ugaritic texts the head of the pantheon. In the statue from Ugarit, El is pictured as an old man, the father of the gods; he sits on an armless chair, wearing a cloak and a conical hat.

Within a few years after the initial decipherment, scholars had translated extensive texts relating to the stories of Baal and his sister Anath; and of their nemeses Yamm, the sea god, and Mot, the god of aridity and death, and others.

THE WALLS OF UGARIT were sloped to prevent siege engines from being brought too close to the top of the wall. Protruding from the wall line on the left is one of the towers that provided covering fire. The small gate, called the postern gate, could be opened and closed quickly without the danger of opening the larger city gate. *Photo by Dosseman, <u>CC BY-SA 4.0</u>, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Another lengthy text, the Epic of Aqhat, illustrates the relationship between Ugaritic literature and the Bible. The Epic of Aqhat is a narrative in epic verse preserved in part on three clay tablets. Its language and style are startlingly similar to biblical poetry.

To begin with, the Epic of Aqhat solves a biblical mystery in the Book of Ezekiel. The prophet Ezekiel is living in exile in Babylonia. In Ezekiel 14, the prophet utters a prophecy in the name of the Lord:

> O mortal, if a land were to sin against me and commit a trespass and I stretched out my hand against it and broke its staff of bread and sent famine against it and cut off man and beast from it, even if these three men—Noah, Daniel and Job—should be in it, they would by their righteousness save only themselves, declares the Lord God ... [Even] those three men in it would save neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be saved. (Ezekiel 14:13–14, 16)

The same language repeats in the immediately subsequent verses of the chapter. (Then, at the end of the chapter, the prophet notes that even after the Babylonian destruction, survivors are left and they will be consoled.)

The problem in this oracle concerns the inclusion of Daniel along with Noah and Job. In the disaster that befell Noah, he was able to save his family—by virtue of his own righteousness. Noah's wife and children were not necessarily meritorious, but they were nevertheless rescued from the great flood. In the disaster that Ezekiel is talking about, however, not even Noah's children would be saved. The same, says the prophet, goes for Job, who also lost his children; it is not difficult to imagine their redemption along with Job himself.

But the case of Daniel is different. Ezekiel's reference to Daniel presents a very difficult chronological problem. At the time of Ezekiel, Daniel was a teenager and not the father of a family. It makes no sense for Ezekiel to include Daniel here.

THE BAAL CYCLE, or Baal Epic, recounts the career of the Canaanite storm god Baal, who defeats Yammu ("the sea"), then builds a royal palace on his divine mountain, and finally clashes with the god Motu ("death"), which leads to Baal's death and ultimate resurrection. The six clay tablets date to c. 1500 B.C.E. and were found at Ugarit. *Credit: Louvre Museum,* <u>*CC BY-SA 2.0 FR*</u>*, via Wikimedia Commons.*

The mystery is solved by the Ugaritic Epic of Aqhat. The Daniel that Ezekiel is talking about is not the Daniel we know from the Bible. Instead, it is the Daniel we know from the Epic of Aqhat. In the Ugaritic epic, Daniel is the father of Aqhat himself.

How do we know that Ezekiel is referring to the Ugaritic Daniel? For one thing, we know it from a careful examination of the Ugaritic text compared to the biblical text. In the Ugaritic text, it is not exactly Daniel; it is Danel. Look carefully at the biblical text in Hebrew. When you do this, you will see that it is missing one Hebrew letter, a *yod* (i, in English). The resulting name would be pronounced Danel, not Daniel, as in our English translations.

There is additional confirmation that Ezekiel is really talking about Danel, rather than Daniel. In Ezekiel 28:1–3, Ezekiel is delivering an oracle against the Phoenician prince of Tyre who is "so haughty" as to consider himself a god. Ezekiel addresses him sarcastically: "You are wiser than Daniel." In this context, it makes no sense for Ezekiel to mock the prince of Phoenician Tyre by reference to young Daniel living in Babylon. But it does make sense to mock the prince of Tyre by reference to Danel, the renowned father of the young hunter Aqhat. And, indeed, this is confirmed by looking closely at the spelling of Daniel in the Hebrew text of Ezekiel 28:3: It, too, is Danel, without the *yod*, not Daniel.

In the Ugaritic epic, Danel is a pious judge who pays homage to the gods for seven days in a row until Baal takes Danel's plea to El. El blesses him with a son, Aqhat, who is the hero of the Ugaritic epic. Ezekiel's reference to the Danel of the Ugaritic epic makes perfect sense. Danel lost his son Aqhat to a murderous scheme of the goddess Anath, and it is widely assumed that, in the missing final tablet of the epic, he gets him back. More than that, it emphasizes that Ezekiel's audience was doubtless familiar with the Aqhat legend and could easily understand the prophet's allusion to Danel.

In David's lament over the death of Saul and Saul's son Jonathan, David cries out: "O hills of Gilboa, let there be no rain or dew on you" (2 Samuel 1:21).

This verse was taken almost directly from Danel's exclamation of grief over the death of his son in the Epic of Aqhat.[2] By evoking a classic Canaanite expression of grief, David adds depth to his lamentation for Saul and Jonathan.

That is not all. Almost every word in this Ugaritic passage has a cognate in Hebrew, and it is replete with biblical associations. A couple examples will suffice. Earlier in the epic, Danel's son Aqhat is killed by the jealous goddess Anath. When Danel discovers that his son is dead, as mentioned above, he lays a curse on the earth:

> For seven years may Baal make drought,
>
> For eight, the Rider of the Clouds!
>
> There be no dew, no rainfall,
>
> No welling up of the two watery deeps,
>
> No sweetness of Baal's voice [that is, no rain following thunder]!

The parallelism of "seven" and "eight" recalls the many biblical verses where a number X is parallel to a number X + 1.

For example, in Job 5:19 one of Job's friends tells him:

> [God] will deliver you from six troubles;
>
> In seven no harm will reach you.

In the first chapter of Amos, the prophet delivers an oracle in the name of the Lord against Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom and the Ammonites. In each case, the prophet intones:

> For three transgressions of [the particular place or people],
>
> For four, I will not revoke it.

Baal is referred to, in the passage from the Aqhat Epic quoted above, as "the Rider of the Clouds." The same epithet is applied to the Israelite God[3]:

> Sing to God, chant hymns to his name;
>
> extol him who rides the clouds.
>
> (Psalm 68:5; verse 4 in English)[4]

The Ugaritic epic quoted above also juxtaposes the waters from above ("no rainfall") with the waters from below ("no welling up of the two watery deeps"). The juxtaposition of these two sources of water is familiar to any reader of the Bible. For example, in the account of the flood (Genesis 7:11), this is how it is described:

> All the fountains of the great deep burst apart,
>
> And the windows of the sky broke open.

Moses' blessing of Joseph is recited in Deuteronomy 33:13:

> Blessed of the Lord (YHWH) be his land
>
> With the bounty of dew from heaven,
>
> And of the deep which lies below.

Finally, in Proverbs 3:19–20, we are told that

> the Lord (YHWH) founded the earth by Wisdom.
>
> He established the heavens by understanding.
>
> By his knowledge the depths burst apart,
>
> And the skies dripped dew.

It is clear that the Aqhat Epic, like so much of Ugaritic literature, served as the literary background for some of the most classic moments in the Hebrew Bible. We have other examples of Ugaritic literature, mostly incomplete, that must have been known to the Israelites writing hundreds of years after they were circulating at Ugarit. Moreover, these were part of a larger Canaanite literature that is now lost. Surely, there were many more poems, mostly oral but also written. And for each of them, there were doubtless many versions.

The ancient Hebrew authors were apparently trained in the conventions of ancient Canaanite literature, and in the course of their training, they learned the classics of that tradition. The biblical writers assume their audience's familiarity with this Ugaritic literature.

Understanding the Ugaritic background to a biblical passage often imparts new meaning to it. One example: When Moses comes down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments and sees the Israelites singing and dancing about the golden calf, he becomes enraged and hurls the tablets from his hands, shattering them. Then he directs his attention to the golden calf:

> He took the calf they had made. He burned it with fire; he ground it till it
>
> was fine; he scattered it over the water and so made the Israelites drink it
>
> (Exodus 32:20).

This combination of burning, grinding, and scattering over water may seem puzzling—until we look at an Ugaritic parallel. In one of the Ugaritic Baal myths, the hero is swallowed by Mot, the ravenous god of death; in revenge, the goddess Anath destroys Mot in much the same way that Moses destroyed the golden calf:

> She seizes the god Mot. With a sword she cleaves him; with a sieve she
> scatters him; with fire she burns him; with millstones she grinds him; in
> the field she sows him.

In this Ugaritic myth, we find the same combination, albeit perhaps in a different order, of burning, grinding and scattering.

In the Ugaritic myth, birds consume Mot's remains, just as the Israelites were made to drink the remains of the golden calf from the finely ground remains scattered in a nearby stream. When a
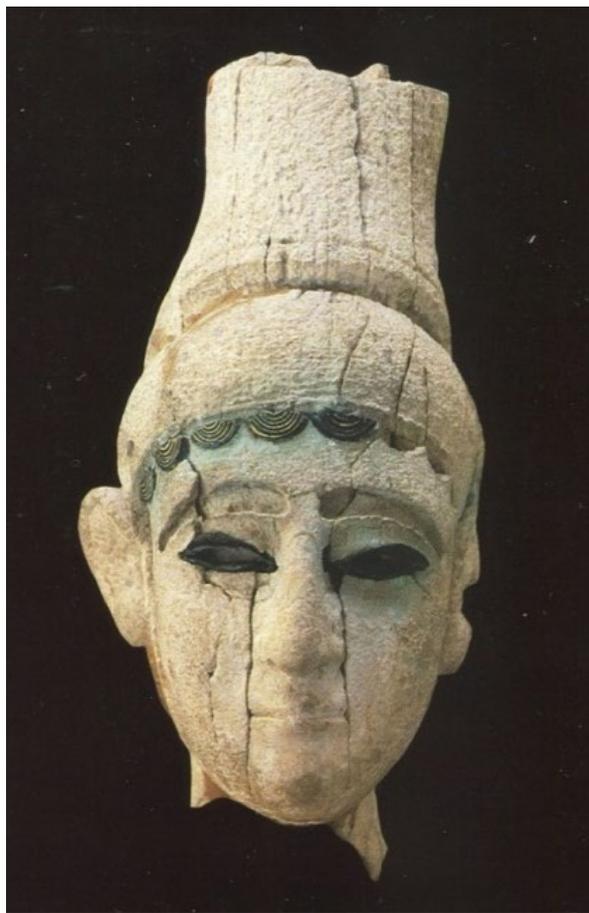
IVORY HEAD of an unnamed prince, from the royal palace at Ugarit. Remnants of bitumen indicate that eyes were once attached to the figure. *Credit: Haubi|Gerhard Haubold, <u>CC BY-SA 4.0</u>, via Wikimedia Commons*

reconstituted Mot later recalls what happened to him, he says he "was sown in the sea!" Like the golden calf, Mot was scattered over water.

In the golden calf story, the animal was being treated by the Israelites as a god. Suddenly the strange combination of burning, grinding and scattering over water makes sense. As we learn from the Ugaritic myth, this is the stereotypical method of destroying a deity. The ancient Hebrew audience, upon hearing the story of the golden calf's disposal, would understand that the statue was being treated like a god in need of elimination. Knowing the Ugaritic source enables us to understand the biblical narrative more authentically.

THE HUNT SCENE embossed in this gold patera from Ugarit features a man riding in a chariot drawn by two horses and shooting arrows at one ibex and four bovines. Found near the Temple of Baal at Ugarit, the patera is now on display at the Louvre. *Photo by Zunkir,* <u>*CC BY-SA 4.0,*</u> *via Wikimedia Commons.*

This taste of Ugaritic does not even begin to survey the extent and depth of the literary linkage between Ugaritic literature and the Hebrew Bible. Taken as a whole, it demonstrates that Israelite literature is an outgrowth of Canaanite literature, just as the Hebrew language is an outgrowth of the Canaanite language. In short, Ugaritic and biblical literature belong to the same stream of tradition.

The Philistines

"Piece by Piece: Exploring the Origins of the Philistines"[*]
By Daniel M. Master

PHILISTINE CAPTIVES. Wall reliefs in Ramesses III's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu depict Egypt's military confrontation with invaders. Accompanying inscriptions identify the perpetrators as a confederation of island tribes—including the Denyen, Tjeker, and Peleset (Philistines). These "Sea Peoples" sought food and a new homeland. After an intense fight, the Egyptians defeated the Sea Peoples and resettled some of them in Canaan. *Photo by I, Rémih, <u>CC BY-SA 3.0</u>, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Who were the Philistines? For centuries, the answer seemed clear: The Philistines were ancient

people from the Bible, villains fighting against God's people. Every Philistine success was

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lamented, every defeat celebrated in a classic clash between the forces of light and darkness. No one cheered for Goliath's military prowess or applauded Delilah's seduction.

But what was the origin of these ancient villains? The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 seems to connect the Philistines with the Egyptians (Genesis 10:13-14). Other texts in Deuteronomy, Amos, and Jeremiah place them in Caphtor, leading some to speculate that Caphtor was in the Egyptian Delta. According to this hypothesis, the Philistines must have arrived some time before the era of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Map of the eastern Mediterranean.

Building on the discoveries of the past 200 years, we are not reliant solely on the Bible to formulate our conclusions. Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian texts all speak of the Philistines. Archaeologists have now excavated four of the five major Philistine cities listed in the Hebrew Bible (Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath). More recently, geneticists have sequenced Iron Age genomes from the city of Ashkelon, providing dramatic new insights into Philistine origins. All these sources clarify the Philistine story.

Map of ancient Philistia.

As soon as hieroglyphs were deciphered, in the 19th century, references to "Peleset" were observed in ancient Egyptian texts. The Peleset were immediately connected to the Philistines—an equation still considered valid today. Because the Egyptian New Kingdom had dominated the land of Canaan in the preceding centuries, Egyptian records would likely have mentioned any Philistines even tangentially involved in the southern Levant. So when they suddenly appear in the 12th-century inscriptions from the walls of Ramesses III's temple at Medinet Habu, we have a good indication of when they first arrived in the region. In the Egyptian texts, the Peleset appear as part of a confederation of peoples from the "islands" who wreaked havoc across the eastern Mediterranean and finally attacked Egypt itself.

Even with the Egyptian clues, many questions remained: The Egyptian texts noted that these peoples came from "islands" but did not specify which islands. Further, it was not clear if all of the groups linked with the Peleset came from the same region: Did they start out together, or did new groups join them during their travels?

PATENT POTTERY. These pottery vessels come from Ekron and Tel Azor and were decorated by the early Philistines with patterns that include spirals and geometric designs, connecting their makers to similarly decorated vessels in Cyprus and the Aegean. *Photo by Hanay, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

In the 19th century, scholars called the Peleset and their coconspirators "Sea Peoples," connecting them with the myths of Homer. The movements of Sea Peoples noted in the Egyptian texts seem to echo tales of Odysseus and Aeneas. In addition, the classical legend of Mopsus, a survivor of the Trojan War, recalled his leading people through Cilicia, ultimately arriving with a group at Ashkelon. The mention of the Philistines in such contexts led scholars to wonder if the Philistines of the Bible could be connected to classical legends, although any speculative connections with the heroes (or villains) at Troy remained shrouded in the same uncertainty as the rest of Homer's world—with no clear basis in the history of the second millennium B.C.E.

Such an incomplete story opened the way for archaeologists to fill in the gaps. Early 20th-century excavators in the southern Levant (first under the Ottoman empire, then under the British Mandate) focused their attention on the 12th century B.C.E., based on the date of the Egyptian texts. At just this chronological horizon, they discovered locally made pots with decorations that reminded them of patterns from the Bronze Age Aegean.[1] Archaeologists saw the ceramics as

key to demonstrating that a new people had moved into the region from the Aegean as mentioned in Egyptian texts. The picture was becoming clearer.

In the late 20th century, archaeologists turned to the cities that the Bible lists as "Philistine," with modern excavations at Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, and finally Tell es-Safi/Gath (Gaza remaining unexplored). Each excavation team made similar discoveries. In the 12th century B.C.E., at all of these sites, new ideas about architecture, family, food, and art appeared suddenly and broadly. The patterns were only rarely found elsewhere in the southern Levant, but they could be connected to the west, either to Cyprus or to the Mycenaean archaeological culture encompassing mainland Greece, Crete, and the western coast of Turkey.

But patterns of objects can never tell the whole story of a people. Even today, if we reflect on the clothes we wear or the daily objects we use, we must admit that the place of their manufacture—

ASHKELON'S CEMETERY is the first extensive burial ground found at a Philistine city. Archaeologists uncovered more than 210 burials in the cemetery—located outside the ancient city and used from the eleventh to eighth centuries B.C.E. Although the majority of the Philistines in Ashkelon's cemetery were buried in simple pits, others were cremated in jars or even buried in built tombs, such as the multi-chambered tomb in this photo. *Photo by Megan Sauter.*

and even the details of their style—do not always reflect our own location or background. Much is traded; much is imported. The same was true in the ancient world. It is up to archaeologists to determine whether the objects found in the excavation trench are characteristic of a particular group or simply imports from another region.

In 1995, Lawrence Stager, the late director of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, tried to address this specific difficulty by building a checklist to determine whether there was enough evidence in the region of Philistine occupation to show an actual migration, as opposed to internal developments or trade. He argued that the material culture in Philistia was distinct from its surroundings and linked to earlier cultural patterns in the Aegean. There was a plausible route that linked the two areas. As a result, Stager supported the long-held idea of an Aegean migration in the 12th century. Other archaeologists agreed, arguing that when the cultural change is wide and deep enough, when it touches the very patterns of hearth and home, it can be considered a "deep change" and can therefore be linked to migration.[2]

Yet, as much as archaeologists were tempted to infer that this group had migrated based on the objects that they used, the conclusion was still indirect. While some things changed in Philistine cities, many cultural features stayed the same. Did this mean that only a few people migrated? Additionally, some Philistine objects were rare in the Aegean but common in Cyprus. Did this hint that Cyprus played a more important role? It was difficult to weigh the evidence amid the uncertainties.

One set of scholars even argued that the whole trajectory was off target. They asked whether the interpretation of texts, both Egyptian and biblical, had biased archaeologists so much that a few trinkets were privileged, while the mass of local material was ignored. Some revisited the basic Egyptian texts that started it all, placing the battles in the days of Ramesses III farther north, at the margins of the Egyptian empire. A few years ago, texts found in southeastern Turkey that referred to "Walastin" or "Palastin" prompted the idea that this was the location of the Philistines in the 12th and 11th centuries. Some scholars went so far as to argue that there was no evidence for associating early Iron Age material from the southern Levant with the Philistines.[3]

Beginning in 2013, however, the first direct evidence for the origin of the inhabitants of Philistia in the 12th and 11th centuries emerged. The Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, in concert with

the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History, launched a program to chart the genetic profiles of the ancient Bronze and Iron Age inhabitants of the city.[4] (By then I had joined Lawrence Stager as a director of excavations at Ashkelon.) Rather than examining ancient texts, perhaps written much later and having an agenda of their own, or looking at ancient artifacts that provide only indirect evidence, this project sought to look at the genetic material of the inhabitants themselves.

DISTINCTLY PHILISTINE. The Philistines created and used a distinct assemblage of artifacts— from everyday objects, such as pottery and loom weights, to special objects, like weapons and religious paraphernalia. The ceramic figurine above dates to the early Iron Age and measures about 7 inches in height. It resembles a chair with a female torso and head as its back. Archaeologists call this figure an Ashdoda, after the Philistine city of Ashdod where it was first identified. *Photo by שועל, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

The first part of this genetic research examined people who lived at Ashkelon during the middle of the second millennium. These individuals were buried in typical multigenerational family tombs of the Bronze Age. Each of the Bronze Age individuals from Ashkelon contained genetic material similar to groups that lived up and down the coast of the Levant in the Bronze Age, similar to the inhabitants of Sidon and Megiddo. These were "local" groups of the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, and they provided a baseline for understanding the 12th century at Ashkelon.

In the late 12th century, just when the material culture changed and the Egyptian texts suggest migration, the inhabitants of Ashkelon buried infants in shallow graves under the floors of their houses. Our excavations uncovered eight of these rare burials. It is extremely unusual to find any human remains from 12th-century Philistia. These infants were too young to have traveled, and their interment burial beneath houses is a mark of the permanent settlement of their families in the homes above.

In the first round of testing, the genetic sequence of one of these infants was very different from that of Ashkelon's Bronze Age inhabitants. The infant's ancestors had come from somewhere else. In fact, this infant showed genetic characteristics of "Western European Hunter-Gatherers." This name is shorthand for a Stone Age population that lived in Europe long ago and never left. These genetic anomalies can be found in many European populations, though it is not something as specific as Spanish, French, or German would be in modern Europe. It is a much broader marker, noted in varying degrees in populations from Crete to the British Isles.

Here, for the first—and really only—time in the Bronze or Iron Age world, this geographically foreign genetic material appeared in families in Ashkelon. When all the genetic material was taken into account (not just the small Western European Hunter-Gatherer component), no place was a better match for the genetic material found than Crete—though places farther west also produced good, possible matches. This result was so interesting that it needed further confirmation. After looking at all the infants, three additional individuals from Ashkelon, all infants buried beneath houses, still had enough preserved genetic material for analysis. The results in each case showed the same nonlocal genetic heritage, but, interestingly, none of the four individuals was closely related to the other. This was not just one new family; this was a decidedly new population.

For researchers, this definitive evidence established a 12th-century migration. These tests showed that a significant number of the Iron Age I inhabitants of Ashkelon came from somewhere else. Even though 100 percent of the infants with preserved DNA showed some of this ancestry, this does not mean that Ashkelon's entire 12th-century population was made up of immigrants. But it does show, unequivocally, that a migration occurred. When these new data were combined with the contemporary Egyptian references that describe the Peleset, or Philistines, as part of a migrating group along with the later biblical references to Philistine Ashkelon, the origin story becomes clear: People came to Ashkelon in the 12th century and settled there, probably as part of a migration that started in Crete. These were the original Philistines of Ashkelon.

But, as soon as they arrived to inhabited Levantine cities like Ashkelon, the situation became quite complicated. Typically, human societies are divided into named groups. But there is often uncertainty around the edges of a group and ambiguity about whether a person belongs on one side or another of the social boundary. This does not detract from the importance of such groups in the social landscape. From the Iron Age texts, it appears that the Philistines were one such group, repeatedly called out by the people around them. Yet even though the name "Philistine" did not change for the entirety of the Iron Age, that does not mean that everything stayed the same. Even as social names persist, how people live—in their technology, economy, or simply taste and style—changes frequently. So it was with the Philistines.

For the first decades of their settlement, the Philistines lived in the shadow of the Egyptians. The Egyptians circumscribed their movement with a ring of fortresses, forcing them inward to live alongside the earlier inhabitants of the region. Even then, at each of the Philistine sites, a similar general pattern began to appear. Their distinctive pottery has designs or shapes that combined Aegean and local ceramic patterns into something uniquely Philistine.

With the decline of the Egyptian New Kingdom, Egypt withdrew from Canaan in the late 12th century. At that point, the breadth of regional interactions between the Philistines and others accelerated. Distinctive Philistine artifacts were taken across the region and then imitated, and more local motifs appear in the Philistine decorative repertoire. This was a dynamic process involving choices and influences at every level of society. Although archaeologists have used

various bits of jargon to describe this phenomenon (*hybridity, creolization, transculturalism*, etc.),[5] it was no doubt a complex cultural process that does not fit easily into our conceptual models and explanations.

Over time, though, the cultural development of the region faced a new constraint. From the middle of the 12th century, many parts of the eastern Mediterranean experienced a massive decline in trade, often considered the beginning of a "dark age." For the inhabitants of Philistia, this meant that, in practice, the only new influences that they had in their world were regional, connected either to Egypt, to Levantine coastal cities, or to their inland neighbors. While aspects of the Aegean remained part of their heritage, their Aegean connections were never renewed with fresh cultural, linguistic, or genetic contributions from that world. As would be expected, the Philistines began to look more and more like their neighbors. The pottery lost its characteristic Aegean appearance and then even much of its distinctiveness within the region. Their linguistic differences diminished so significantly that, by the tenth century, Philistine writing used local alphabetic scripts that conveyed a Semitic language. The Philistines looked, at least to modern archaeologists, much like their neighbors.

By the middle of the Iron Age, there was virtually nothing left in the material record that was distinctive to the cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath—and nothing that would have been recognized as "Philistine" by those earlier migrants from the 12th century.

At Ashkelon, a third genetic study looked at the patterns visible in the Philistine cemetery, dated to the tenth and ninth centuries. While there was some evidence of the same Western European Hunter-Gatherer genetic input, for all statistical purposes, it could not be identified for certain. The best models showed that these people were descendants of both the 12th-century inhabitants and the earlier Bronze Age inhabitants. It appears from these results that so much intermarriage had taken place between the original immigrants and the people around them that the genetic makeup of Ashkelon's inhabitants had lost its immigrant distinctiveness.

An unsophisticated reading of this evidence might lead one to argue that these people had ceased to be "real" Philistines. But popular definitions often confuse biology and ethnicity, a combination that does not reflect most ancient—or, it must be said, modern—societies. Despite rampant intermarriage, the inhabitants of Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod were still

called "Philistines" by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and biblical writers throughout the rest of the Iron Age. This is a critical witness to the survival of the Philistines as a distinct group. The genetic tests reveal that their ongoing social self-definition did not revolve around a particular inherited, biological characteristic. Something else must have been key to their identity in their eyes and in the eyes of others.

Toward the end of Philistine history, the biblical prophets Amos and Jeremiah both share an interesting observation about the Philistines of their day. Amos's oracle sees the divine hand in earlier events: "Didn't I bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir?" (Amos 9:7, author's translation). In Amos's telling, all three groups were immigrants to the region.

The Philistine reference fits together in a surprising way with research on the very idea of Caphtor itself. In Egypt, in New Kingdom tombs, a group called the Kephtiu was pictured with dress and objects that seem to connect to the Minoan archaeological culture, centered in Crete and its vicinity. An inscription on the base of a statue at Kom el-Hetan similarly seemed to connect Kephtiu with an itinerary of named cities from this part of the Aegean. So, quite apart from the study of the Philistines, scholars linked Kephtiu and Caphtor to Crete.[6] Of course, this identification is based on Egyptian perceptions in the 15th and 14th centuries, and Amos is writing in the eighth century, when the term is a rarely used archaism.

As we have seen, Crete is one of the closest matches to the genetic heritage of the Ashkelon individuals from the 12th century, much closer than that of mainland Greece, Turkey, or any other options represented in the current database of ancient samples. But Amos was writing in the eighth century, past the time where that genetic material can be meaningfully identified in the Philistine genome and past the time when Caphtor was a common term. Amos's connection between the Philistines and Caphtor is not something that could have been derived *de novo* in the eighth century, even with the most advanced tools in our modern toolkit. Indeed, if archaeologists and geneticists had not been able to sequence genomes from that sliver of time in the 12th and 11th centuries, no one would have caught this at all.

Jeremiah, writing more than a century after Amos, says something similar: "The Lord is about to devastate the Philistines, remnant of the Island of Caphtor. Baldness has come upon Gaza;

EKRON INSCRIPTION. Discovered within a temple at Ekron, this Philistine dedicatory inscription, dated to the seventh century B.C.E. and written in a Semitic language, records that King Ikausu (or Achish) built the city's temple for the goddess Ptgyh. The name Ikausu, meaning "Achaean" or "Greek," shows a Philistine connection to the West even in the seventh century—500 years after they had settled in Canaan. *Credit: Oren Rozen, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Ashkelon is destroyed" (Jeremiah 47:4). Jeremiah still saw Ashkelon and Gaza (and Ekron) as distinctively Philistine cities, and Jeremiah draws again on the idea that this group was connected to Caphtor. In this case, Jeremiah rephrased the concept. The "remnant of Caphtor" is not primarily a description of a place from which they came; it is a way of identifying the peoples themselves.

There is no reason to suggest that this connection to Caphtor was particularly important or meaningful to Amos or Jeremiah; it hardly mattered to them from where the Philistines came. Yet someone was carefully remembering this information. An important late Philistine inscription from Ekron helps us to see the rest of the story. In a famous seventh-century text found at the site, the name of the king is Ikausu, a name also used by the king of Gath in the history of David's rise to kingship (e.g., Achish in 1 Samuel 21:10). This name has been translated as "Achaean"—a term that, at least in the Homeric tradition, refers to the Aegean world in general.[7]

Some have tried to link this foreign name to the influence of contacts with the Aegean world in the later Iron Age but, from the standpoint of archaeology, this is a mirage. At the Philistine sites, even at the port of Ashkelon, there is a huge gap in the evidence for connections between the Aegean world and Philistia extending from the beginning of the "dark ages" in the middle of the 12th century through the very end of the seventh century. From the archaeological record, it appears that substantive connections to the Aegean only resume several decades after the Ekron text was inscribed.

Other scholars have been skeptical that the Iron Age peoples could remember a name or an Aegean connection for five centuries. And, no doubt, much was forgotten over the centuries. But now, with the genetic results from 12th-century Ashkelon paired with the texts of Amos and Jeremiah from the end of the Iron Age, it is certain that someone could and did accurately remember at least one key aspect of Philistine history—their origin.

As continued use of the name Ikausu suggests, the Philistines were proud of their origin, and, I would argue, they remembered the name Caphtor as well. Despite all the cultural and political changes and despite intermarriage, their shared memory retained this idea. The self-image of the eighth- and seventh-century Philistines was still rooted in a long-distant, but very real, immigrant experience that took place in the 12th century. Their memory of this event defined them as a social group from their beginning until their demise at the hand of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, in 604 B.C.E.

The Philistines valued their distinctive origins, and, despite the vicissitudes of the Iron Age, their memory defined who they were. Only now, with ancient texts deciphered, ancient cities excavated, and ancient genomes decoded, can we begin to see the Philistines as they saw themselves. They were not merely the enemies of the Israelites. They were a proud immigrant people, defining themselves for almost 600 years as the "remnant of Caphtor," heirs of the Bronze Age Aegean.

The Phoenicians

"Phoenicia and Its Special Relationship with Israel"[*]
By Ephraim Stern

PHOENICIAN FINANCES. This half-shekel coin from Sidon features a galley under sail on one side and an uncertain king (or hero) drawing a bow on the other. Made of silver, it dates to about 430 B.C.E. *Photo by Classical Numismatic Group.*

The Phoenicians were the nearest people to the ancient Israelites in every respect. They spoke the same language and wrote in the same script. Even their religion was similar, at least during the First Temple period. The Phoenicians and the Israelites built Jerusalem together, as well as several other cities, and they went on joint trading expeditions. By marriage, Phoenician royal houses and those of Israel and Judea were related. The clearest sign of the close relationship between the two peoples must have been the fact that they never went to war against each other (in complete contrast to the Israelites' relationship with all their other neighbors).

The Phoenicians were the late Canaanites of the first millennium B.C.E. (Iron Age through Roman period), descendants of the Canaanites of the second millennium B.C.E. (Middle Bronze Age through Late Bronze Age). "Phoenicians" was the name given to this people by the Greeks, but the Phoenicians continued to refer to themselves as Canaanites or by the names of their

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principal cities. During the second millennium B.C.E., the Canaanites controlled Palestine, Transjordan and Syria—from Ugarit down to the Egyptian border—and they developed a rich culture. Around 1200 B.C.E., they were forced out of these countries by the Arameans and the Neo-Hittites in the north, the Israelites and the Sea Peoples (Philistines, Sikils and Sherden, etc.) in the south, and by the Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites in the east. Between about 1200 and 1050 B.C.E., they retained control of a greatly reduced area—the narrow coastal strip of Lebanon between Arwad, Tyre and Akko. Most of the population lived in five main cities: Arwad, Byblos, Berytus, Sidon and Tyre.

Map of the ancient Mediterranean.

From about the end of the 11th century B.C.E. onward, the Phoenicians began to expand once again from these centers—but this time to the west. First, they reached Cyprus, whence they proceeded to the coasts of Sicily, Sardinia and Malta and subsequently to southern Spain and northern Africa. These western settlers soon established a huge commercial empire that lasted about a millennium.

Apart from the relatively few references to the Phoenicians in the Bible and in some ancient royal inscriptions, principally of Assyrian kings, our only information about the Phoenicians comes from Greek sources, most of which are hostile in tone (since the Greeks and Phoenicians competed for control of the Mediterranean for more than 500 years). The Phoenicians themselves

left behind some written sources, but these consist mostly of dedicatory inscriptions and contain almost no important historical facts.

The Phoenicians inherited all the earlier rich Canaanite culture that had been developed during the entire second millennium B.C.E.—in contrast to the other peoples who settled in the region and who in the beginning were but simple nomads.

Yet the Phoenicians succeeded in creating a material culture of their own in many respects. The major elements of the Phoenician architectural style were alternating courses of headers and stretchers built of long, well-dressed blocks; walls constructed of ashlar piers with fieldstones in the spaces between them; proto-Aeolic capitals, Hathor capitals and Papyrus capitals; recessed openings (both doors and windows); ornamented window balustrades; and ornamented orthostats.

THE PHOENICIAN TEMPLE AT AMRIT, on Syria's Mediterranean coast, is probably dedicated to the Phoenician god Melqart (the primary god of Tyre) and the Phoenician god of healing Eshmun (the main god of Sidon). Built in the sixth–fourth centuries B.C.E. (when the area was under Persian control), this temple functioned until the site was abandoned. *Photo by Dosseman,* <u>*CC BY-SA 4.0*</u>*, via Wikimedia Commons.*

This Phoenician architecture was adopted and imitated by all the peoples of Palestine—Israelites, Judahites, Philistines and all the peoples of the eastern Jordan. Each of them modified aspects of it, adding some characteristic features of their own. All faithfully followed this style in the public buildings and palaces of their capitals and main towns until the Assyrian conquest at the end of the eighth century B.C.E. The Assyrian conquest of the Israelite monarchy brought an abrupt end to the Phoenician building style. Only in Phoenicia—that is, in the narrow coastal strip running from Lebanon to western Galilee, the Carmel, and the Sharon down to Jaffa and Ashkelon—did this architectural style continue uninterruptedly through the entire Assyrian (700–530 B.C.E.) and Persian periods (530–300 B.C.E.) and perhaps even into the early Hellenistic period (300–100 B.C.E.).

The number of excavated sanctuaries attributed to the Phoenicians is surprisingly small. Most of those are dated to the Persian period, rather than to the earlier Iron Age (1200–600 B.C.E.), when the Phoenicians were at the peak of their entrepreneurial power. Of the sanctuaries dated to the Iron Age, those discovered at Kition on Cyprus are the best known.

In recent years, a few small prayer chapels have also been discovered, each consisting of one relatively small room. These, too, follow an old Canaanite pattern, an example of which is at Hazor in Israel. In these rooms, there was usually the statue of the god or goddess or sometimes a line of stone stelae. Chapels of this type were found in various Palestinian excavations, such as near the city gate at Tell Dan. Many more chapels have been found in the Phoenician settlements along the coast, as well as overseas.

We learn about the cult practiced in Phoenician sanctuaries through biblical and Greek references, as well as Phoenician inscriptions, all found in excavations. The longest one, an ostracon (potsherd with writing) found at Akko, probably at the site of a sanctuary, is an order issued by the city authorities to the guild of metalworkers to present a precious metal basin.

Long lists of cult items appear in the Phoenician inscriptions from Kition, which mention dozens of metal objects, mostly of copper. Lists of tariffs found at Marseilles, France, which probably originated in one of the nearby Punic colonies and were intended for the temple of Ba'al-Zaphon, include the prices of the various animals brought there and resemble similar biblical lists (Leviticus 1–7).
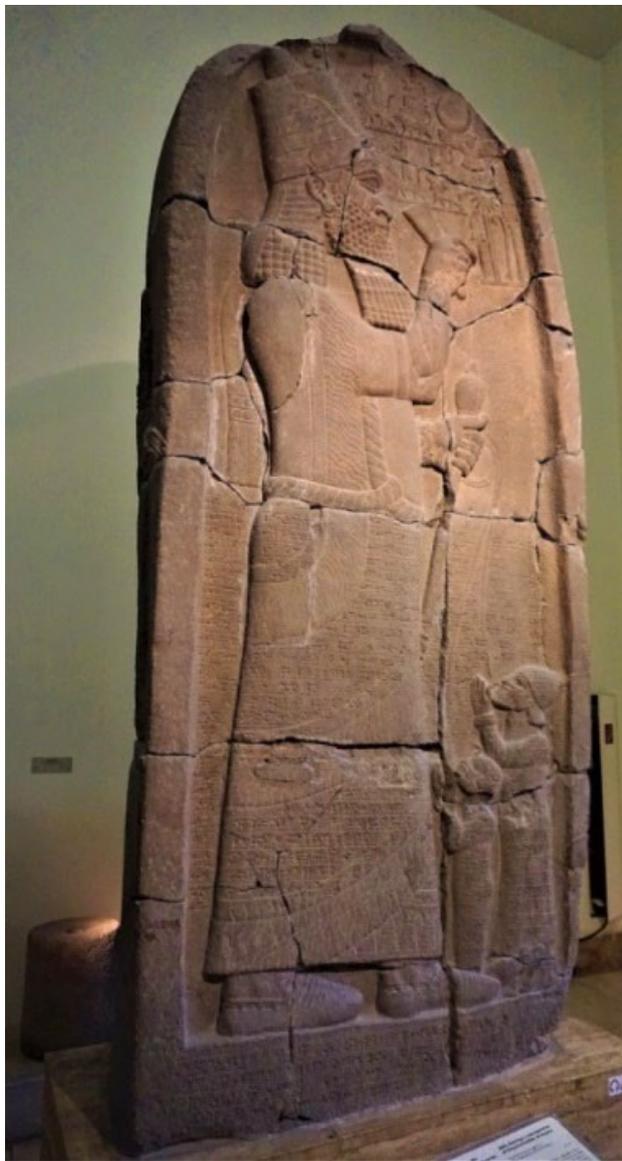
ESARHADDON STELA commemorates the Assyrian king Esarhaddon's victory over the Egyptians and their allies. Esarhaddon is pictured leading two figures with ropes that are connected to their nose rings. The smaller figure may be the Egyptian prince Ushankhuru, and the larger figure is possibly Baal I, the Phoenician king of Tyre. Found at ancient Sam'al (modern Zincirli in southern Turkey), the stela stands 11.4 feet tall and dates to c. 671 B.C.E. *Credit: Joyofmuseums, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Two major types of ceramic figurines appear in all Phoenician assemblages: (1) an adult male, represented as a king sitting on a throne or standing, or as a warrior on a horse; and (2) a fertility goddess, sometimes pregnant, supporting her breasts, at other times either holding or nursing a child. Sometimes the child is depicted separately.

Additionally, clay models of sanctuaries, usually depicting a one-room chapel, have been found in Phoenician settlements. Beside the official religion, there existed a popular cult based on masks, pendants, vases and figurines of the Egyptian god Bes, which were intended to ward off bad luck and disease.

TEL DOR was an ancient Mediterranean port on the Carmel Coast of modern Israel. During the Iron Age, it was successively ruled by the Sikils (a tribe of the Sea Peoples), Israelites, and Phoenicians—before eventually falling under Assyrian control. *Photo by Bukvoed, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

During the Iron Age, the Phoenicians typically burned their dead and placed the ashes into clay urns, which were then buried. Above the urns, they placed stone stelae that were inscribed with the names of the deceased, as well as the names of the deities to whom the dead were dedicated.

These cemeteries, usually called by the biblical name *tophet*, have been uncovered in the Phoenicians' western Punic colonies, such as at Carthage, and also in the heartland of Phoenicia, recently at Tyre.

The Phoenicians later started to bury their dead in rock-cut tombs of various types and even half-cut and half-built graves. Clay vessels and other personal belongings have been found buried with the deceased in tombs.

Above all, the Phoenicians were renowned as master craftsmen, and there was a market for their luxury goods across the ancient Mediterranean world. From the ninth to the early sixth centuries B.C.E., the Phoenicians produced decorated objects—especially those associated with cosmetics—made of limestone, alabaster, shell, glass, faience, metals and other materials.

Phoenician ivory carvings, the finest expression of the Phoenician school, have been found at many Palestinian sites. Although these ivories often originated in Phoenicia, the local artisans in Palestine adopted and imitated these objects and produced them at the local centers of all the nations of the country. At the end of the eighth century B.C.E., but mainly in the seventh century under Assyrian domination, these began to disappear from the entire eastern Mediterranean coastal region. Perhaps the cause was a lack of raw material. In any case, at that time artisans began using cheaper materials, such as bone, stone and alabaster. The change in materials appears to have caused a change in production quality and an increased use of simple designs.

The most common Phoenician decorated objects of the period are the cosmetic palettes made of hard limestone in imitation of marble. Some were plain, but the majority was decorated with

PUNIC TOPHET at Carthage, one of the Phoenicians' western colonies. Phoenician burials have been uncovered throughout the Mediterranean world. Beginning in the Iron Age, the Phoenicians generally burned their dead, placed the ashes in urns, buried the urns and set up stelae to mark these burials. The stelae often included the name of the deceased and the gods to whom the deceased was consecrated. The Phoenicians adopted other burial methods as well, but tophets remained their trademark. *Photo by Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

concentric circles with dots in their centers or with net designs in various shapes. Other common decorated objects include flat alabaster cosmetic palettes, probably used to mix paints or powders, and decorated *Tridacna squamosa* shells, originating in the Red Sea. One end of the alabaster cosmetic palettes was usually engraved in the shape of a goddess's head. Similarly, at the edge of each shell, a female human head was engraved. While the reverse depicts her garment and jewelry, the inside was left plain except for the decorated edges. Akin to other aspects of Phoenician culture, the production of these objects ceased at the end of the Iron Age.

Among the later Phoenician products common to coastal sites were coins, some from Sidon and Tyre, with others having been struck in Dor, Samaria, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Gaza.

The heartland of Phoenicia was subjugated in turn by the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and Hellenistic empires, but their western colonies continued to enjoy autonomy until the second century B.C.E. The Phoenicians' commercial empire was brought to an end by the Romans who came into conflict with the Phoenicians—whom they described as "Punics"—in a series of wars that became known as the Punic Wars. The Carthaginians had no standing army (they employed mercenaries) and relied on their fleet for defense. The Punic Wars culminated in the Roman destruction of the Punic capital, Carthage, in 146 B.C.E., thereby ending a millennium of Phoenician influence, success and power.

Throughout their existence, the Phoenicians encountered numerous groups. With some of these groups, they competed, and with others, they warred. With almost all, they traded—exporting their culture and their goods throughout the Mediterranean world. Yet their relationship with the Israelites was distinct from all the others. It should not surprise us that when the kingdom of Israel fell, the Phoenicians suffered, too. The loss of their close neighbor and ally disrupted the growth and strength of the Phoenician empire.

Ammon, Moab, and Edom

"Gods and Kingdoms East of the Jordan"[*]
By Joel S. Burnett

EDOMITE GODDESS. Among the large assemblage of Edomite figurines, statuettes, stands, and other cultic vessels uncovered at the site of Ḥorvat Qitmit in southern Judah was this Edomite goddess figurine wearing a three-horned headdress dated to the late seventh or early sixth century B.C.E. Photo by *Anagoria, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

Although we have no Ammonite, Moabite or Edomite Bible, a growing wealth of archaeological and epigraphic evidence from Jordan substantiates the existence of these Iron Age kingdoms closest to Israel and Judah, just as presented in the Hebrew Bible. My work as a historian of Israelite religion has led me through an ongoing firsthand exploration of this material east of the

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Jordan River, most recently, a larger-than-life statue of an Ammonite king, the first Iron Age statue on this scale ever discovered east or west of the Jordan. These discoveries in Jordan reveal Iron Age kingdoms that, like Israel and Judah, formed on the basis of tribal structures, named their own kings and worshiped their own national gods.

We know them in the Bible and increasingly in archaeology as Ammon, Moab and Edom.

Map of Judah and the Transjordanian kingdoms.

AMMON

The Hebrew Bible's usual designation of the Ammonites as "the children of Ammon" (bĕnê 'Ammôn, e.g., 1 Kings 11:7, 33) matches the threefold reference in the Ammonite Tell Siran Inscription, "the king of the children of Ammon" (mlk bn 'mn; c. 600 B.C.E.; cf. mlk bny 'mwn, Jeremiah 27:3). This kin-based formulation of political identity reflects a tribal social makeup and kingdom organization analogous to that of ancient Israel, "the children of Israel" (bĕnê yiśrā'ēl).

The Ammonite heartland comprised the north-central Transjordanian Plateau encircled by the upper Jabbok (modern Wadi Zarqa), within a 12.5-mile radius of its capital at the headwaters of

THE AMMAN CITADEL in downtown Amman, Jordan, is one of seven hills that comprised the Ammonites' capital, Rabbah. A large Iron Age structure—built of limestone boulders—lies buried on this hill, most of which is concealed underneath the later, Roman-period temple to Hercules, pictured here. Votive figurines recovered at the site, as well as the structure's size and location, suggest that this might be the main temple to Milcom, the Ammonites' primary deity. *Photo by Berthold Werner, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

the Jabbok, Rabbah, "the Great (City)," or Rabbat běnê ʿAmmōn, "the Great (City) of the Children of Ammon" (2 Samuel 12:26, 29), the modern Amman Citadel (Jabal al-Qalʿa).

Archaeological excavations at the Amman Citadel over the past five decades have unearthed monumental architectural remains from the Iron Age II (1000–580 B.C.E.), including portions of the city's defense walls and water system. The excavations also exposed a large building complex resembling an Assyrian palace on the lower terrace. Running beneath a later Roman-period temple to Hercules, still visible today, are remains of an Iron Age megalithic building of limestone boulders containing several votive figurines, possibly the Ammonite kingdom's main temple to its leading deity.[1]

AMMONITE KING. On display at the Jordan Museum in Amman, this statue depicts a deified king. He is wearing a shawl over a garment in the Aramaic-Syrian tradition and an Egyptian-style Atef crown, a symbol of kings and gods in Syria-Palestine. Dating to the mid-eighth century B.C.E., the statue was found near the Amman Citadel. *Public domain, CC0 1.0 Universal, via Livius.org.*

References to building and architectural terms in the first-person speech of a king or god make up the apparent focus of the famous Amman Citadel Inscription, dating to the late ninth century B.C.E. The inscription begins with a partially restored mention of Milcom, regularly named in the Hebrew Bible as the leading god of the Ammonites (see, e.g., 1 Kings 11:5, 33; 2 Kings 23:13). Milcom is also invoked in personal names, including the name of a royal official—"Milkom'ur servant of Baalyasha"—on a clay seal impression from excavations at Tall al-'Umayri, dating to c. 600 B.C.E. Baalyasha is identified with the Ammonite King Baalis mentioned in Jeremiah 40:14. Just as the worship of Yahweh set Israelites apart from other peoples during the Iron Age II, so did the Ammonites' worship of Milcom distinguish them from their closest neighbors and rivals.

The Ammonite god Milcom receives artistic representation in a series of stern-faced (usually bearded) stone statues and sculpted heads from Amman wearing a variant of the Egyptian *Atef* crown, an emblem depicting deities in Syria-Palestine since the second millennium B.C.E.[2]

A collection of double-faced female sculpted heads in limestone from the Amman Citadel might represent a goddess or group of Ammonite goddesses within an architectural design.

Ammonite stone sculpture also includes depictions of human royal figures. For example, the inscribed limestone statuette of Yarḥ-ʿAzar is identified as the grandson of Shanib, perhaps the Ammonite king mentioned by Tiglath-pileser III around 734 B.C.E. And now we can include a monumental basalt statue of an Ammonite king preserved to more than 6.5 feet in height and excavated in 2010 in front of the Roman theater in downtown Amman.[3] These two statues portray human royal figures not wearing a crown but, rather, wearing a headband or diadem with the head uncovered. Both figures hold a drooping lotus flower, also of Egyptian derivation, representing a deceased ruler in the art of Syria-Palestine. This larger-than-life image of an Iron Age king is the first statue of this size ever discovered east or west of the Jordan.

MOAB

Turning to Moab, the famous Mesha Stele (c. 840 B.C.E.) presents the longest Iron Age epigraphic text surviving from the southern Levant. The basalt stone monument once stood in Mesha's capital, Dibon (modern Dhiban), marking a worship place that the king built in honor of Moab's god Chemosh, whom Mesha credits in the inscription with his achievements of territorial expansion, building cities and defeating enemies. The principal enemy in the inscription is the northern Israelite kingdom previously ruled by Omri and "his son."* According to Mesha, Moab had suffered in the past under these Israelite kings because Moab's god Chemosh "was angry with his land." In describing the lands he rules and conquers, Mesha reveals a kin-based society, invoking his father, Chemosh[yat],[4] who ruled before him, identifying himself by the people-group designation "Daybonite," and discussing "the men of Gad," doubtless the same Gad figuring as an Israelite tribe in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 49:19; Deuteronomy 33:20–21; etc.). Though built on this tribal basis, Mesha's kingdom is identified primarily by geography, namely, the ancient country of Moab appearing in Egyptian texts centuries earlier and united from territorial segments through warfare in the name of the god Chemosh.[5] Like ancient Israel, Moab's practices of ritual warfare included *ḥerem*, the execution of whole populations in devotion to the vanquishing deity (Deuteronomy 13:15; 20:16–17; Joshua 6:17–19; etc.).

MESHA STELE. Almost 4 feet tall and 2 feet wide, the Mesha Stele from the ninth century B.C.E. is the longest Moabite inscription. Its 34-line-long text chronicles how the Moabites were subjected to Israelite rule until King Mesha—with the divine help of Chemosh, the main Moabite deity— overthrew the Moabites' oppressors. *Louvre Museum, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.*

The Mesha Stele views Moab and Israel as analogous kingdoms in irreconcilable opposition: each with its own territory, people, king, royal lineage (Chemoshyat and Mesha vs. Omri and "his son") and god (Chemosh vs. Yahweh). These oppositions resolved at the boundaries through warfare, conquest and *ḥerem*.[6]

The full name of Mesha's father in the Mesha Stele (*kmš*[*yt*]) is supplemented in the Kerak Inscription fragment, another monumental inscription on stone in the same Moabite language, with a similar script of comparable date, that begins with the same formulary naming of the "King of Moab."[7]
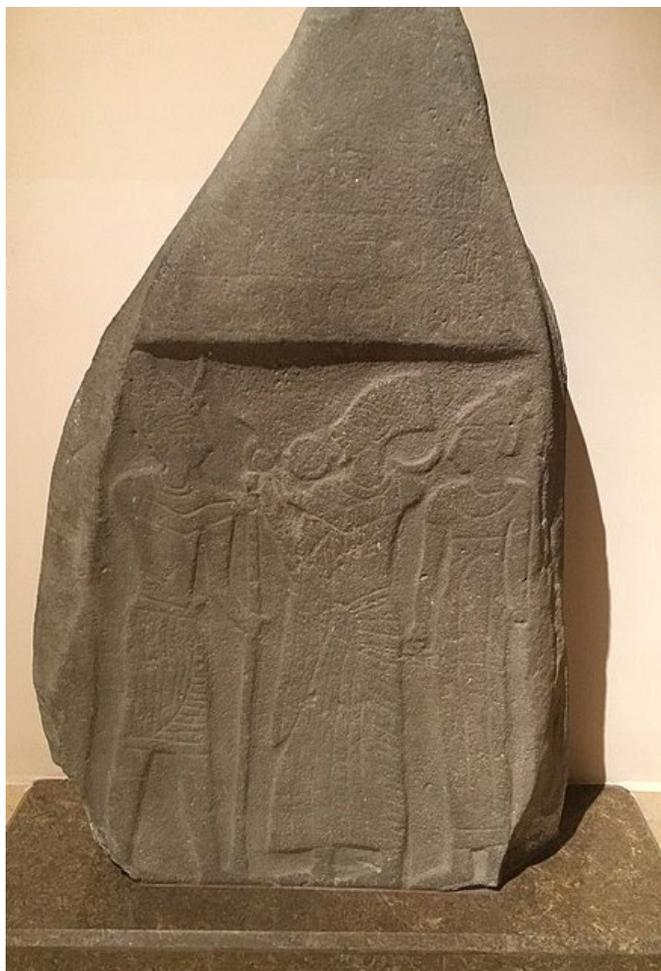
THE BALUA' STELA—usually dated to the end of the Late Bronze Age (c. 1550–1200 B.C.E.)—depicts a king or chieftain flanked by a god on the left and a goddess on the right. Both gods appear in Egyptian-style attire, while the central figure wears a Shasu headdress, an emblem typically used in Egyptian iconography to denote pastoral peoples from Transjordan. The god—possibly the Moabite god Chemosh—hands the central figure a scepter (divine right to rule). Coming from the Iron Age site of Balua' in Jordan, the stela is about 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide and includes several lines of undeciphered writing. *Photo by Makeandtoss, CC0 1.0 Universal, via Wikimedia Commons.*

These and other Moabite inscriptions, monumental architecture and royal sculpture indicate a Moabite kingdom spanning territory both north and south of the Arnon River.

Like the Ammonites, the Moabites developed their own sculptural forms drawing on broader ancient Near Eastern artistic traditions, portraying divine support of royal power. Monumental basalt sculpture from the land of Moab includes several impressive examples, most prominently the stela from the Iron Age site of Balua', which guarded southern access to the Arnon River from the Kerak Plateau.

The Balua' Stela (which recent scholarship has dated variously between 1400 and 800 B.C.E.) displays a section of undeciphered writing and a relief scene showing an Egyptian-style god and goddess conferring emblems of authority on a human leader wearing a *Shasu* headdress, an emblem recognized from Egyptian artistic depictions.

The Egyptian term *Shasu* refers to mobile pastoral peoples with a kin-based social and political structure, often in connection with southern Transjordan in Egyptian texts of the 19th Dynasty (13th–early 12th centuries B.C.E.).[8] At the Arnon River crossing, the Balua' Stele reflects a vision of divinely sanctioned kingship on the basis of tribal political authority, suggesting formative dynamics for the Iron Age II Kingdom of Moab.

The Shihan (or Rujm el-Abd) relief discovered just a few miles northwest of Balau' shows a warrior figure wielding a spear and reflects Egyptian artistic motifs.[9] A basalt orthostat from Kerak in the form of a lion resembles Neo-Hittite and Aramean palace and temple traditions in Syria.[10]

Recent archaeological discoveries from Moab have added important religious evidence for the Iron Age. These include a plethora of limestone altars from the fortified outpost of Khirbat al-Mudayna (Mudeiniyeh).[11] A small temple just inside the town's six-chambered fortified gate yielded three limestone altars ranging in height from c. 19.5 to 37.5 inches, one of which is a rectangular shaft altar for pouring libations (as indicated by a drain hole).[12]

The archaeological site Khirbat 'Aṭaruz about 7 miles east of the Dead Sea has been identified with Ataroth, which is mentioned in the Mesha Stele as a town of Israelite Gad that the king of Moab conquered and from which he pillaged an important cultic item ("the altar hearth [?] of its DWD").

Excavations at 'Aṭaruz have revealed an elaborate temple complex yielding spectacular cultic artifacts, including a ceramic bull statue and a multi-story shrine model with male figurines attached.[13] The 'Aṭaruz temple complex has also yielded a cylindrical sculpted stone pedestal, ostensibly part of an altar or other cultic object, bearing an inscription dated to the ninth century B.C.E.[14]

EDOM

Like Moab, Edom figures primarily as a territorial designation in Late Bronze Age Egyptian texts and in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Genesis 32:4; 1 Kings 11:14–16). As reflected in biblical etiologies connecting to Esau (Genesis 25:25, 30), Edom refers to the mountainous "red" land of sandstone, granite and soil east of the Arabah, extending south of the Zered (modern Wadi Hasa) to the Gulf of Aqaba. Along with the closely associated place-name Seir (cf. Genesis 36:8–9, 21), Edom appears in Egyptian texts with frequent associations to the tent-dwelling mobile pastoralists designated Shasu.[15] These Egyptian references to Edom's Shasu peoples may provide the textual background for the kin-based population known from the enormous cemetery labeled Wadi Fidan 40 at the entrance to the Faynan wadi system in the northeast Arabah.[16]

The god Qaus/Qos is by far the most frequently invoked deity in Edomite personal names from various inscriptions. The role of Qos as Edom's leading deity receives further corroboration from the names of Edomite kings mentioned in Assyrian sources.[17] A royal seal impression of "Qaus-ga[bri], King of E[dom]" (qws g[br]/ mlk '[dm]) was recovered from a palace on Umm el-Biyara in Petra.[18] The deity's name was also found on a vessel sherd from Busayra (Buseira), whose impressive architecture indicates the site's status as the Edomite royal city by the late eighth century B.C.E.[19] At Tell el-Kheleifeh near the Gulf of Aqaba shore, multiple impressions come from the seal of a royal official, "Qos'anal, servant of the king" (qws'nl/ 'bd hmlk,).[20]

The Hebrew Bible's mysterious silence regarding Qos, or any Edomite deity for that matter,[21] along with Yahweh's associations with the territory of Edom and its vicinity in biblical poetry (Judges 5:4; Habakkuk 3:3, 7) and the biblical traditions of Edom's "brotherhood," may reflect a possible close connection—if not an original equation—between Israelite Yahweh and Edomite Qos.

The best-preserved candidates for Edomite worship places have been excavated not in Edom proper but west of the Arabah in the southeastern Negev, where Qos is invoked during the late seventh or early sixth century B.C.E., in an epistolary blessing in the Ḥorvat 'Uza ostracon inscription and in dedication inscriptions engraved on vessel rims at the sanctuary site of Ḥorvat Qitmit.[22] It is at Qitmit that some scholars recognize the most abundant assemblage of evidence for Edomite worship, including Edomite pottery, ceramic cylindrical statuettes and stands,

figurines and cultic vessels.[23] At Ein Hazeva in the northwest Arabah, a similar assemblage of ceramic statues and other objects was excavated from a pit outside the Iron II fortress.[24] Renewed excavations at Busayra (Buseira) by Benjamin W. Porter hold promise for new discoveries on religion in Edom proper.

How do these kingdoms compare with Israel and Judah on the other side of the Jordan River? As we have seen, Israel, Judah and these Transjordanian kingdoms are similar in many respects. Each had its own national god. Each was a tribal kingdom. Each battled against the others over territory and boundaries. Israel even claimed territory east of the Jordan.

Yet from Israel we do not have a single piece of monumental sculpture comparable to those from Ammon and Moab. When it comes to inscriptions, the disparity is even more dramatic. The great inscriptions confirming the history (even the very existence) of Israel and Judah and shedding light on national (and international) religious life come from kings and kingdoms *other* than Judah and Israel—most important, the Mesha Stele, the Tel Dan Stele and the Balaam inscription from Deir 'Alla. Go to the archaeological section of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. There is not a single piece of impressive Iron Age sculpture from Judah or Israel. Even more surprising—not a single lengthy Hebrew inscription from this period exists.

Why is this the case? Is there some cultural reason that Israel has not produced great visual Iron Age art? And why aren't there long inscriptions? Is it simply the luck of the archaeological draw? Or, is there some deeper cultural or historical distinction between the kingdoms west and east of the Jordan?

Could it have something to do with the fact that we also have no Ammonite, Moabite or Edomite Bible?

Notes

"The Egyptianizing of Canaan"

[1] James A. Weinstein, "The Egyptian Empire in Palestine: A Reassessment," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 241 (1981), pp. 1–28.

[2] Mary W. Helms, *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographical Distance* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 137–144.

[3] Martin Millett, *The Romanization of Britain: An Essay in Archaeological Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990).

[4] Millett, *Romanization*, pp. 69–85, 91–99.

[5] EA 289. The abbreviation EA refers to the numbering of the Amarna letters in J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1915).

[6] Frances W. James and Patrick E. McGovern, *The Late Bronze Egyptian Garrison at Beth Shan: A Study of Levels VII and VIII* (Philadelphia: Univ. Museum, 1993) and James, *The Iron Age at Beth Shan: A Study of Levels VI–IV* (Philadelphia: Univ. Museum, 1966).

[7] The statue and stelae had been moved from their original locations and set up in a room of one of Beth-Shean's later temples.

[8] Trude K. Dothan, "Deir el-Balah: The Final Campaign," *National Geographic Research* 1 (1985), pp. 32–43.

[9] EA 294. See n. 5.

[10] J. Kaplan, "Jaffa's History Revealed by the Spade," *Archaeology* 17 (1964), pp. 270–276.

[11] EA 289, 196. See n. 5.

[12] Much of the scholarly confusion about resident governors seems to have arisen from efforts to correlate Akkadian titles with pharaonic officials. In particular, the occurrence of the Akkadian title "governor" in international correspondence like the Amarna letters has led some scholars to propose the existence of resident governors whose Egyptian title was either "overseer of northern lands" (see Hans Wolfgang Helck, *Die Beziehungen Agyptens zu Vorderasien im. 3. und 2. Jahrtausend* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1971], pp. 250–251) or "royal envoy." See E. Edel, "Weitere Briefe aus der Heiratskorrespondenz Ramses' II. KUB III 37 + KBo I 17 und KUB III 57," in *Geschichte und Altes Testament*, ed. G. Ebeling (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1953), p. 56. More recently, scholars have recognized that the use of Akkadian titles indicates only that the scribes were unaware of or indifferent to the officials' Egyptian titles. (See Michel Valloggia, *Recherche sur les "messagers" (wpwtyw) dans les sources Égyptienne profanes* [Paris: Librairie Droz, 1976], p. 240; Donald Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], p. 201.)

[13] Redford, *Egypt*, p. 201.

[14] William F. Albright, "A Prince of Taanach in the Fifteen Century B.C.," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 94 (1944), pp. 12–27.

[15] Kurt Heinrich Sethe, *Urkunden* IV (18. Dynastie) (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche, 1903–1958), p. 1508.

[16] R.D. Whitehouse and J.B. Wilkins, "Greeks and Natives in South-east Italy: Approaches to the Archaeological Evidence," pp. 102–126 in *Centre and Periphery: Comparative Studies in Archaeology*, ed. Timothy C. Champion (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

[17] Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *Solomonic State Officials* (Lund: Gleerup, 1971).

"Warriors of Hatti"

[1] Biblical references to the Hittites include: Genesis 15:20, 23:3–20, 25:9–10, 26:34, 27:46, 36:2, 49:29–32, 50:13; Exodus 3:8, 17, 13:5, 23:23, 28, 33:2, 34:11; Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 7:1, 20:17; Joshua 1:4, 3:10, 9:1, 11:3, 12:8, 24:11; Judges 1:26, 3:5; 1 Samuel 26:6; 2 Samuel 11:3–24, 12:9–10, 23:39, 24:6; 1 Kings 9:20, 10:29, 11:1, 15:5; 2 Kings 7:6; 1 Chronicles 11:41; 2 Chronicles 1:17, 8:7; Ezra 9:1; Nehemiah 9:8; and Ezekiel 16:3, 45.

[2] Ahmet Ünal, Ahmet Ertekin and Ismet Ediz, "The Hittite Sword from Bogazköy-Hattusa, Found 1991, and its Akkadian Inscription," *Müze* 4 (1991), pp. 46–52; Ahmet Ertekin and Ismet Ediz, "The Unique Sword from Bogazköy/Hattusa," in *Aspects of Art and Iconography: Anatolia and Its Neighbors. Studies in Honor of Nimet Özgüç*, Machteld J. Mellink, Edith Porada, and Tahsin Özgüç, eds. (Ankara, 1993), pp. 719–725.

[3] Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier, "The Mycenaeans in Western Anatolia and the Problem of the Origins of the Sea Peoples," in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries B.C.E.*, Seymour Gitin, Amihai Mazar and Ephraim Stern, eds. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998), pp. 17–65.

[4] To Bryce's bibliographic references to the sword should be added the following articles, which appeared while Bryce's book was in press: Eric H. Cline, "Assuwa and the Achaeans: The 'Mycenaean' Sword at Hattusas and its Possible Implications," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 91 (1996), pp. 137–151 and "Achilles in Anatolia: Myth, History, and the Assuwa Rebellion," in *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael Astour on His 80th Birthday*, Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas, and Richard E. Averbeck, eds. (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997), pp. 189–210.

"Who Were the Assyrians?"

[1] Christopher B. Hays, *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), pp. 161–189.

"Nebuchadnezzar & Solomon"

[1] J.A. Brinkman, *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747–626 B.C.* Occasional Publications of the Babylonian Fund, 7 (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1984); Manfried Dietrich, *Die Aramäer Südbabyloniens in der Sargonidenzeit (700–648) AOAT* 7 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon and Bercker Kevelaer, 1970); and Grant Frame, *Babylonia 689–627 B.C.: A Political History* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1992).

[2] Jonas Greenfield, "Babylonian-Aramaic Relationship," in H.J. Nissen and J. Renger, eds., *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im Alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient, 1 (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1982), pp. 471–482.

[3] Frame, *Babylonia*, p. 34, and Brinkman, *Prelude*, p. 11. Brinkman and Frame have also demonstrated how many of the important larger kin groups came to dominate the civil and religious hierarchy of cities in northern Babylonia (J.A. Brinkman, "Babylonia under the Assyrian Empire, 745–627 B.C." in M.T. Larsen, ed., *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* [Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979], pp. 237–238, and G. Frame, "The 'First Families' of Borsippa during the Early Neo-Babylonian Period," *JCS* 36 [1984], pp. 67–80).

[4] Brinkman, "Babylonia under the Assyrian Empire, 745–627 B.C.," p. 226.

[5] Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia* (Biblical Institute Press, 1968), pp. 266–267, 273–275.

[6] On the mistaken identity of Adad-apla-iddina, a ruler of Babylonia, as an Aramean, see C. B. F. Walker, "Babylonian Chronicle 25: A Chronicle of the Kassite and Isin II Dynasties," in G. van Driel, ed. *Zikir šumim: Assyriological Studies Presented to F. R. Kraus on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Leiden, 1982), pp. 414–415.

[7] On the evidence for Uruk, see Bill T. Arnold, "Babylonian Letters from the Kuyunjik Collection: Seventh Century Uruk in Light of New Epistolary Evidence," (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew Union College, 1985).

[8] Brinkman, *Prelude*, p. 123.

[9] Israel Finkelstein, "The Land of Ephraim Survey 1980–1987: Preliminary Report," *Tel Aviv* 15–16 (1988–1989), p. 167.

[10] Oded Borowski, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel: The Evidence from Archaeology and the Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1987).

[11] Robert P. Gordon, "Who Made the Kingmaker? Reflections on Samuel and the Institution of the Monarchy," in A.R. Millard, J.K. Hoffmeier and D.W. Baker, eds., *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), pp. 257–260, and Israel Finkelstein, "The Emergence of the Monarchy in Israel: The Environmental and Socio-Economic Aspects," *JSOT* 44 (1989), pp. 59–61, 63.

[12] The evidence is not unambiguous regarding the ethnic identity of the Neo-Babylonian kings. Though the Bible and classical authors designate this dynasty as "Chaldean," the term in these sources is synonymous for "Babylonian" and may not denote ethnic specificity. We still have no irrefutable proof, for example, that Nabopolassar was himself a Chaldean, and in this sense, the term is strictly inappropriate when referring to the Neo-Babylonian empire. See Bill T. Arnold, "Who Were the Babylonians?" *SBLABS* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), p. 91.

[13] M.A. Dandamayev, "The Neo-Babylonian Archives," in K.R. Veenhof, ed., *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1986), p. 273; A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1977), pp. 94–95.

[14] Dandamayev, "Neo-Babylonian Archives," p. 274; and David B. Weisberg, *Texts from the Time of Nebuchadnezzar*, Yale Oriental Series, 17 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980).

[15] Dandamayev, "Neo-Babylonian Archives," pp. 275–276.

[16] Bill T. Arnold, "The Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series" in M.W. Chavalas, ed., *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), pp. 407–426.

[17] Grayson, *Chronicles*, p. 8; and Bill T. Arnold, "The Weidner Chronicle and the Idea of History in Israel and Mesopotamia," in Millard, Hoffmeier, and Baker, eds., *Faith, Tradition, and History*, pp. 129–148.

[18] A.R. George, "Review of K.R. Veenhof (ed.), *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries," JNES* 52.4 (1993), p. 303; and see "Excavations in Iraq, 1985–86: Sippar (Abu Habba)," *Iraq* 49 (1987), pp. 248–249, and photograph at pl. 47.

[19] See Lionel Casson, "The World's First Museum and the World's First Archaeologists," BAR, January/February 1979.

[20] Indeed, anthropological studies support the correlation between the rise of bureaucratic states and the use of writing in general (Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1986], pp. 89–99).

[21] To borrow an expression from William W. Hallo ("The Limits of Skepticism," *JAOS* 110.2 [1990], pp. 187–199).

"Making (Up) History"

[1] Excerpted from Darius, Bisitun, §12–14; Darius claimed that Cambyses killed his own brother in DB §10. Translations from the Old Persian are adapted from R.G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon* (New Haven, 1953); and R. Schmitt, *Bisitun: Old Persian Text* (London, 1991). Subsequent references to the Bisitun Inscription will be cited in the text, abbreviated "DB" with the paragraph (§) number. Parts of this article are adapted from the author's "Cyrus and the Achaemenids," published in *Iran* 42 (2004), 91–102.

[2] See Book 3 of Herodotus's *History*.

[3] See, for example, P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. P. Daniels (Winona

Lake: Indiana, 2002), p. 111; and A. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–300 BC* (London, 1995), vol. 2, p. 665.

[4] Darius also took other measures to secure his legitimacy, such as marrying Cyrus's daughters Atossa and Artystone (Herodotus, *History* 3.88). This ensured that all later Achaemenid kings—indeed all the kings who ruled the Persian empire, save Darius himself—could trace their bloodline directly to Cyrus the Great.

[5] See Briant, *Persian Empire*, pp. 111, 138.

[6] For an overview of archaeological evidence for Anshan and the problems of interpretation associated with this site, see *Yeki bud, yeki nabud: Essays on the Archaeology of Iran in Honor of William M. Sumner*, ed. N. Miller and K. Abdi (Los Angeles, 2003), especially the articles by T.C. Young, David Stronach, and R. Boucharlat (Chapters 22–24).

[7] See David Stronach, *Pasargadae. A report on the excavations conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 95–97; and "On the Genesis of the Old Persian Cuneiform Script," in *Contribution à l'histoire de l'Iran: mélanges offerts à Jean Perrot*, ed. F. Vallat (Paris, 1990), pp. 195–203.

[8] Darius's claim to have created the Old Persian script has been a contentious issue in modern scholarship, but most scholars accept Darius's claim. See Briant, *Persian Empire*, pp. 111, 138; and Stronach, "Darius at Pasargadae: A Neglected Source for the History of Early Persia," *Topoi: Orient-Occident*, Suppl. 1 (Lyon, 1997), pp. 351–363.

[9] For discussion and references, see Elizabeth Carter, "Bridging the gap between the Elamites and the Persians in Southeastern Khuzistan," *Achaemenid History VIII: Continuity and Change*, ed. H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, A. Kuhrt, and Margaret Root (Leiden, 1994), pp. 65–95.

[10] Column iii, lines 22–24. After A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources (Locust Valley, NY, 1975), vol. 5, pp. 110–111 and J.-J. Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, SBL Writings from the Ancient World (Atlanta, 2004), pp. 238–239.

[11] Darius, Susa f §3b and Xerxes, Persepolis f §3; see Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 144 and 150; and Schmitt, *The Old Persian Inscriptions of Naqsh-i Rustam and Persepolis* (London, 2000), p. 84.

[12] For DNc (Naqsh-i Rustam), see Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 140; and Schmitt, *Old Persian Inscriptions*, p. 45 and plate 22a.

[13] Aelian, *Varia Historia XII*.43, identified Darius as a "quiver-bearer" (*pharetrophoros*) for Cyrus.

[14] (DNa §2) and Susa (DSe §2) and of Xerxes at Persepolis (XPh §2). See Kent, *Old Persian*, pp. 138 and 142; and Schmitt, *Old Persian Inscriptions*, pp. 25 and 30 (DNa §2).

[15] See Briant, *Persian Empire*, pp. 619 and 685–686.

"Texts from Ugarit Solve Biblical Puzzles"

[1] See Shmuel Aḥituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period*, trans. Anson F. Rainey (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008), pp. 249–252.

[2] The Hebrew text adds "Nor steppes of offerings!" This makes no sense. Slight emendation of the Hebrew letters (*sh-d-y t-r-w-m-t*) following the Ugaritic (to *sh-r-' t-h-m-w-t*) produces a perfect line: "No welling up of the watery-deeps!" In a footnote, the JPS translation suggests this emendation on the basis of the Ugaritic parallel. With this emendation, the Hebrew text follows the Ugaritic parallel exactly, invoking both the rain from the heavens and the springs from the deep.

[3] In the Hebrew text referred to below, the Israelite God is called Elohim. The text goes on to say, however, Yah, short for Yahweh, is his name (Psalm 68:4). See also verses 18 and 20, where the name YHWH is used. Compare also verse 1 with Numbers 10:35—in the latter of these two almost identical verses, YHWH stands in place of Elohim.

[4] In old translations we often find the rendering "who rides through the desert." Hebrew '*arava* is a term for "desert." However, even before the discovery of Ugaritic, some translated "rider of the skies," by comparing verses 33–34 and verses from elsewhere. We now know that the Hebrew term '*aravot* refers not to "deserts" but to clouds, like the cognate Ugaritic term.

"Piece by Piece: Exploring the Origins of the Philistines"

[1] The ceramic connections have been developed in recent times with extraordinary precision in Penelope Mountjoy, *Decorated Pottery in Cyprus and Philistia in the 12th Century BC: Cypriot IIIC and Philistines IIIC*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2018).

[2] Lawrence E. Stager, "The Impact of the Sea Peoples (1185–1150 BCE)," in Thomas E. Levy, ed., *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), pp. 332–348; see also Assaf Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and the Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), pp. 9–33.

[3] Guy D. Middleton, "Telling Stories: The Mycenaean Origins of the Philistines," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 34.1 (2015), pp. 45–65; Ido Koch, "On Philistines and Early Israelite Kings: Memories and Perceptions," in Joachim J. Krause, Omer Sergi, and Kristin Weingart, eds., *Saul, Benjamin, and the Emergence of Monarchy in Israel: Biblical and Archaeological Perspectives* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), pp. 7–14.

[4] Michal Feldman et al., "Ancient DNA Sheds Light on the Genetic Origin of the Early Iron Age Philistines," *Science Advances* 5 (July 2019), pp. 1–10.

[5] See, e.g., Shlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Migration, Hybridization, and Resistance: Identity Dynamics in the Early Iron Age Southern Levant," in A. Bernard Knapp and Peter van Dommelen, eds., *Hybridisation and Cultural Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), pp. 257–261.

[6] Shelley Wachsmann, *Aegeans in the Theban Tombs* (Leuven: Peeters, 1987); Eric H. Cline, *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2014), pp. 44–49.

[7] See, e.g., Homer, *Iliad* 1.1–25; Seymour Gitin, Trude Dothan, and Joseph Naveh, "A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron," *Israel Exploration Journal* 47.1–2 (1997), p. 11.

"Gods and Kingdoms East of the Jordan"

[1] Rudolph H. Dornemann, "The Beginning of the Iron Age in Transjordan," *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 1 (1982), pp. 135–140; F. Zayadine, J.-B. Humbert and M. Najjar, "The 1988 Excavations on the Citadel of Amman—Lower Terrace, Area A," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 33 (1989), pp. 357–363 and plates 50–52; Ahmed Momani and Anthi Koutsoukou, "The 1993 Excavations," in A. Koutsoukou et al., eds., *The Great Temple of Amman: The Excavations* (Amman: American Center of Oriental Research, 1997), pp. 157–171; Sahar Mansour, "Preliminary Report of the Excavations at Jabal al-Qal'a (Lower Terrace): The Iron Age Walls," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 46 (2002), pp. 141–150.

[2] Joel S. Burnett, "Egyptianizing Elements in Ammorite Stone Statuary: The Atef Crown and Lotus," in Oskar Kaelin, ed., *9 ICAANE: Proceedings of the 9th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (June 9–13, 2014, University of Basil)*, vol. 1, Traveling Images (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016), pp. 57–71.

[3] Joel S. Burnett and Romel Gharib, "An Iron Age Basalt Statue from the Amman Theatre Area," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 58 (2014).

[4] The name of Mesha's father in line 1 is partially restored from the Kerak Inscription fragment, another roughly contemporary monumental inscription on basalt that preserves the last part of a name]šyt as king of Moab.

[5] This geographically "segmented" kingdom model represented by Moab has been identified by Bruce Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age: Hegemony, Polity, Archaeology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). For the Egyptian texts of Ramses II mentioning Moab, see Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Egyptian Evidence on Ancient Jordan," in P. Bienkowski, ed., *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan* (Sheffield: Collis, 1992), pp. 27–28.

[6] Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, p. 150.

[7] The most recent study suggests that the black stone may be granodiorite, rather than basalt, and may have once belonged to a statue. See Heather Dana Davis Parker and Ashley Fiutko Arico, "A Moabite-Inscribed Statue Fragment from Kerak: Egyptian Parallels," *BASOR* 373 (May 2015), pp. 105–120.

[8] Kitchen, "Egyptian Evidence," pp. 26–27.

[9] Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, pp. 178–179; Fawzi Zayadine, "Sculpture in Ancient Jordan: Treasures from an Ancient Land," in P. Bienkowski, ed., *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan* (Sheffield: Collis, 1992), pp. 35–36.

[10] Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, p. 182.

[11] P.M. Michèle Daviau, "Stone Altars Large and Small: The Iron Age Altars from Hirbet el-Mudēyine (Jordan)," in S. Bickel et al., eds., *Bilder als Quellen/Images as Sources: Studies on Ancient Near Eastern Artefacts and the Bible*

Inspired by the Work of Othmar Keel, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis Special Volume (Fribourg/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), pp. 125–150.

[12] P.M. Michèle Daviau and Margreet Steiner, "A Moabite Sanctuary at Khirbat Al-Mudayna," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 320 (2000), pp. 1–21, especially pp. 8–14; Paul E. Dion and P.M. Michèle Daviau, "An Inscribed Incense Altar of Iron Age II at Hirbet el-Mudēyine (Jordan)," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 116 (2000), pp. 1–13.

[13] Chang-Ho Ji, "The Early Iron Age II Temple at Hirbet 'Aṭārūs and Its Architecture and Selected Cultic Objects," in Jens Kamlah, ed., *Temple Building and Temple Cult: Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Mill. B.C.E.)*, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 41 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 203–222 and plates 46–49.

[14] Chang-Ho Ji, "Architectural and Stratigraphic Context of the 'Ataruz Inscription Column" (Presentation at the ASOR Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, November 16, 2012); Christopher A. Rollston, "The New 'Ataruz Inscription: Late Ninth Century Epigraphic Evidence for the Moabite Scribal Apparatus" (Presentations at the ASOR Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, November 16, 2012).

[15] Kitchen, "Egyptian Evidence," pp. 26–27.

[16] Thomas E. Levy, Mohammad Najjar, and Ben-Yosef, *New Insights into the Iron Age Archaeology of Edom, Southern Jordan*, 2 vols. (Los Angeles: The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2014).

[17] Qausmalak by Tiglath-pileser III (c. 734 B.C.E.) and Qausgabri by Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal (early seventh century B.C.E.).

[18] See the cautious comments of David Vanderhooft, "The Edomite Dialect and Script: A Review of the Evidence," in Diana Vikander Edelman, ed., *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother: Edom and Seir in History and Tradition*, Archaeology and Biblical Studies 3 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), p. 151. Qausgabri of Edom is named among those supplying labor and materials for Esarhaddon's building projects in Nineveh (c. 673 B.C.E.; ANET 291) and providing assistance in Ashurbanipal's wars against Egypt (beginning 669 or 667 B.C.E.; ANET 294).

[19] Piotr Bienkowski, *Crystal Bennett and Marta Balla, Busayra: Excavations by Crystal M. Bennett 1971–1980*, Monographs in Archaeology 13 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002).

[20] Vanderhooft, "The Edomite Dialect and Script," p. 153.

[21] The only exception is the personal name Barqos, "Qos gleamed forth" (Ezra 2:53; Nehemiah 7:55). The name Kushaiah (1 Chronicles 15:17) has the variant form Kishi in 1 Chronicles 6:29 (6:44, English) and in any case involves a spelling with shin that is never used for Qos in other texts. See E.A. Knauf, "Qôs," in Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), p. 674.

[22] Itzhaq Beit-Arieh and B. Cresson, "An Edomite Ostracon from Horvat 'Uza," *Tel Aviv* 12 (1985), pp. 96–100; Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, *Horvat Qitmit: An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev*, Monograph Series of the Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology 11 (Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, 1995).

[23] Beit-Arieh, "An Edomite Ostracon"; J. Andrew Dearman, "Edomite Religion: A Survey and an Examination of Some Recent Contributions," in Diana Vikander Edelman, ed., *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother*, pp. 121–131; Pirhiya Beck, "Horvat Qitmit Revisited via 'En Hazeva," *Tel Aviv* 23 (1996), pp. 102–114; André Lemaire, "Edom and the Edomites," in André Lemaire and Baruch Halpern, eds., *The Books of the Kings: Sources, Compositions, Historiography and Reception*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 129 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), pp. 225–243.

[24] Rudolph Cohen and Yigal Yisrael, "The Iron Age Fortresses at En Haseva," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58 (1995), pp. 223–235; P.M. Michèle Daviau, "Diversity in the Cultic Setting: Temples and Shrines in Central Jordan and the Negev," in Jens Kamlah, ed., *Temple Building and Temple Cult: Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Mill. B.C.E.)*, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 41 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2012), pp. 435–458 and plates 63–64.