Making Room for Japheth – A Hellenistic Bible?

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'May God make room for Japheth, and let him live in the tents of Shem.' (Genesis 9:27).

In Genesis 9, after the flood, Noah got drunk, and when he awoke from his drunkenness, he cursed his son Ham who had seen him naked and told his brothers, and Noah blessed Japheth and Shem, who had covered their father's nakedness with a blanket. Noah's blessing for Japheth prophesies that he will dwell in the tents of his brother Shem. In Genesis 10, the genealogies of Noah's three sons are detailed. We learn that Japheth was the ancestor, among others, of the Greeks, named Yavan (Gen. 10:2-5). Shem was the ancestor of the peoples of the Near East, such as Eber (Gen. 10:24-25), who was himself the ancestor of Abram the Hebrew (Gen. 11:26). Among the descendants of Yavan, is mentioned Kittim (Gen. 10:4), which is further the subject of a prophecy by Balaam: 'But ships shall come from Kittim, and shall afflict Ashur and Eber, and he also shall perish forever.' (Numbers 24:24).

These two prophecies by Noah and Balaam, both in the Pentateuch, are cast into a distant future, when Japheth's descendants will invade the Fertile Crescent in fleets from Cyprus (Heb. *kittim* = Kittion). Together, Genesis and Numbers clearly point to the conquest over Southeast Asia by Alexander and his Macedonians in 333-323 BCE. Few have identified this historical reference, perhaps due to the traditionally early dating of Pentateuchal sources.[1]

Nevertheless, the prophecies of both Noah and Balaam clearly imply a post-conquest context in the Hellenistic era, when Greeks, descendants of Japheth, were indeed in the tents of Shem.[2] It was first in the 1970s that the patriarchal narratives and biblical origin stories

[1] Niels Peter Lemche, 'The Old Testament – a Hellenistic Book?' in L.L. Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic? – Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period*, Journal for the Study of Old Testament Supplement Series, 317, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 287-318.

[2] 'May God make room for Japheth in the Tents of Shem', indeed, became proverbial for the Hellenistic era in rabbinic literature. Pieter W. van der Horst surveys the influence of Hellenic culture on Jewish during the Hellenistic and Roman eras in *Japheth in the Tents of Shem – Studies on Jewish Hellenism in Antiquity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

from the patriarchs to the United Monarchy were shown to be unhistorical[3] and Bernd Diebner first suggested that the Hebrew Bible as a whole had been a Hellenistic project.[4] Containing minimal historical information, the Hebrew Bible offered a 'mythic past', allegorically structured for theological and philosophical purposes.[5] When John Van Seters argued in 1983 for a strong similarity in theme and patterns between the Primary History of the so-called 'Deuteronomic history' and the *Histories* of Herodotus, emphasizing that both works were written in prose (unlike ancient Near Eastern literature),[6] he complained of a resistance against any approach which might suggest a link between the Bible and Greek texts.[7] Moreover, unlike his study on Abraham in 1975, his understanding of the Deuteronomistic tradition of Joshua-Kings rejected any significant role for oral tradition behind the biblical texts.[8] Philip R. Davies, arguing for an understanding of biblical 'history' as literary fiction, written somewhere between the Persian and Hasmonean eras, demonstrated that 'ancient Israel', as portrayed by biblical scholars, was a theological construct with little resemblance to the historical kingdoms of Israel and Judah or, indeed, with the literary construct of 'biblical Israel'.[9] In 1992, Niels Peter Lemche opened a heated debate, still engaged today, with the suggestion that as there is no knowledge of the existence of the Bible before the Dead Sea Scrolls, we should consider the possibility of the Hellenistic period as a *terminus ad quem* for the Hebrew Bible.[10]

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[3] T. L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 133, (Berlin/New York: W. de Gruyter, 1974); J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (eds.), *Israelite and Judean History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); D. Gunn, *The Story of King David* (Sheffield: SAP, 1978).

[4] See Diebner's many essays in the *Dielheimer Blätter des alten Testaments*, beginning with its first number: B. Diebner and H. Schult, 'Argumenta e Silentio: Das Grosse Schweigen als Folge der Frühdatierung der "alten Pentateuchquellen,' in *DBAT* 1 (1975).

[5] T. L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) = *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).

[6] John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). See page 17 and followings.

[7] Ibid., 8.

[8] In his 1975 study and oral tradition, Van Seters closely followed H. Gunkel and Gressmann and was much inclined to the theory of an oral tradition, pre-existing the first literary traditions of Genesis. See J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), Part 2; for a rebuttal, see T. L. Thompson, 'A New Attempt to Date the Patriarchal Narratives,' *JAOS* 98 (1978), 76-84 ; *idem*, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: SAP, 1987), 41-59.

[9] Philip R. Davies, *In Search Of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: SAP, 1992).

[10] N.P. Lemche, Det gamle Testamente som en hellenistisk bog', *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 55 (1992), 81-101; E. Nielsen, En hellenistisk bog? *DTT* 55 (1992), 161-74; F. Willesen, 'Om fantomet David,' *DTT* 56 (1993), 249-65; N. P. Lemche, 'The Old Testament—a Hellenistic Book?', *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 7/1 (1993), 163-93; *idem*, 'Det gamle Testamente, David og hellenismen,' *DTT* 57 (1994), 20-39; *idem*, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 159-60. T. L. Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create A Past* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999); L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic?*.

The Book of Daniel is commonly dated to the late Hellenistic era because of the prophecies it contains about the defeat of the Persian Empire at the hands of the Macedonians (identified as the Greeks, named Yavan, as in Genesis: Dan. 8:21; 10:20; 11:2), and the later disputes between the Lagids and the Seleucids (Dan. 11). Since the prophecies in Daniel are so accurate, most scholars conclude that they were written after the facts, or *ex eventu*. Hence these retrospective prophecies provide a *terminus a quo* for the redaction of the Book of Daniel in the second century BCE.[11] We may consider that the prophecies of Noah and Balaam in Genesis and Numbers, respectively, provide a similar *terminus a quo*, since they also refer to the conquests of Alexander. However, even if the Book of Daniel is commonly dated to the late Hellenistic era, Paul Niskanen has noticed that scholars had never considered that this book might bear some influence from Greek literature.[12] Niskanen demonstrates that the notions of the succession of world empires in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar seems borrowed from Greek historiography, as found in Herodotus, Ctesias, and Polybius (but Niskanen thinks that Daniel predates Polybius). Hence, a biblical book which is dated to the Hellenistic era has for long been thought devoid of any Greek influence. There are two other books from the Hebrew Bible which scholars usually attribute to the Hellenistic era, whereas the religious tradition claims that they were penned by Solomon himself: Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. In these cases, scholars have compared the philosophical motifs from Ecclesiastes and related them to several Greek doctrines such as stoicism, Epicureanism and scepticism.[13] The Song of Songs is believed to be a Hellenistic production because of its similarities with Greek erotic poetry and the occurrence of at least one Greek loan-word. It is thought that its author might have borrowed directly some motifs from Theocritus' *Idylls*.[14] Thus, in the case of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, a majority of biblical scholars accept that these two books, were written by authors who were at least partially Hellenized. Such comparative argument, however, is rarely applied to biblical books thought to be older, and the idea of the entire Hebrew Bible as a Hellenistic book continues to be unacceptable to most biblical scholars.

[11] It is commonly held that the author of Daniel did not know the Maccabean revolt, an argument which allows a *terminus ad quem* for Daniel in 165 or 164 BCE, a date which hardly allows that the *Kittim* in Daniel refer to the Romans (See E. Nodet, 'Les Kittim, les Romains et Daniel,' *Revue Biblique*, 118/2, (2011), 260-68.

[12] P. Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History – Herodotus and the Book of Daniel*, Journal for the Study of Old Testament Supplement Series, 396 (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

[13] See R. N. Whybray, *Ecclesiastes* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989, 1997). Whybray dates the book from the mid-third century BCE (19), but doubts Greek influence (51-5).

[14] A. C. Hagedorn, 'Of Foxes and Vineyards: Greek Perspectives on the Song of Songs,' *VT*, 53-3 (2003), 337-52. J. B. Burton, 'Themes of Female Desire and Self-Assertion in the Song of Songs and Hellenistic Poetry,' in A. C. Hagedorn (ed.), *Perspectives on the Song of Songs* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2005), 180-205.

Some have relied on archaeology to support the historicity of biblical narratives,[15] while others do not understand biblical narrative as entirely historical[16] and allow that some parts were written in the Persian and Hellenistic eras. Such late dating has bolstered new studies, comparing biblical with Greek classical texts. The discovery of Sumerian and Akkadian texts in the mid-nineteenth century has provided us with the most ancient written versions of the *Enuma Elish* and the story of the Flood, both clearly reiterated in Genesis 1-10.[17] Moreover, the Hammurabi Code displays significant parallels with the so-called Covenant Code (Exod. 20-23) and the tale of Sargon's is reiterated with striking detail in that of Moses (Exod. 2).[18] Although the laws of Exodus 20-23 could also be closely paralleled to Plato's *Nomoi* and the birth tale of Moses to that of Oedipus, the Old Babylonian parallels to biblical narrative generated an excessive trend to place the origins of biblical literature in Babylon, whereas the greatest part of biblical law and narrative displayed little resemblance to the earliest texts from Mesopotamia, but reflected a much wider spectrum of ancient literature, not least that of Ugarit, Egypt, Hatti, the later traditions of the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian periods as well as Greek literature; not least Homer and Herodotus.[19] Recently, Russell Gmirkin has argued that the Mesopotamian influence on Genesis 1-11 was drawn from the Hellenized Babylonian priest Berossus. Whereas the closeness of the parallels—especially between Atrahasis and Genesis 6-8—are such that general theories of diffusion have only limited explanatory power, Berossus' *Babyloniaca*, written in Greek in the late fourth century BCE, is a far better candidate as the Bible's source of inspiration than either oral tradition or Old Babylonian cuneiform texts. Thus, Gmirkin places the Pentateuch in the early third century BCE.[20]

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[15] William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and how Did They Know It? What Archaeology can Tell us about the Past of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans, 2001).

[16] Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed, Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001); cf. T. L. Thompson, 'Methods and Results: A Review of Two Recent Publications,' *JSOT* 15/2 (2001), 306-25.

[17] Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 21, identifies *Gilgamesh* as a prototype of Homer's *Odyssey* and the *Enuma Elish* of Hesiod's *Theogony*.

[18] D. Irvin and T. L. Thompson, 'The Joseph and Moses Narratives,' in Hayes and Miller, *Israelite and Judean History*, 181-209.

[19] Such ancient Near Eastern literature is easily accessed in a great number of standard anthologies today, among which are: H. Gressmann (ed.), *Altorientalische Texte zum alten Testament* (Berlin: Toppelman, 1926) ; J. B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (eds.), *The Context of Scripture,* 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1997-2003) and the multi-volume, genre-oriented series of anthologies published since 1990 by the Society of Biblical Literature under the title: *Writings From the Ancient World.* On the influence of ancient Near Eastern thought and literature on classical Greek as well as Greek and Jewish thought of the Hellenistic period, see the very important series of articles in J. M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, vol. I, Part I :* 'The Ancient Near East in Western Thought' (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995), 3-120.

[20] R. E. Gmirkin, *Berossus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus: Hellenistic Histories and the Date of the Pentateuch, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 433; Copenhagen International Seminar* 15 (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2006).

The earliest comparisons between Greek and biblical literatures are found in apologetic writings of ancient Hellenized Jews, such as Aristobulus, Philo of Alexandria and Josephus Flavius, as well as Christians such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Eusebius. All were well aware of narratives and laws which were similar in both Greek texts and the Bible. All were also aware of the similarities of Plato's doctrine concerning the divine and the ideal State and the Pentateuch. Whether Jews or Christians, they assumed that Moses and the prophets lived long before Plato and most Greek writers. Accordingly, there was little question but that the Greeks reused the stories and philosophy of the Bible. 'Theft by the Greeks' was a charge developed by Josephus in *Against Apion* and expanded by the Church Fathers for apologetic purposes. They argued that the Jews had received direct revelation from the one true god, whereas the Greeks had maintained an idolatrous religion, with immoral fables about many gods. With Philo and Josephus, they argued that Plato was an exception among the superstitious Greeks. Through philosophy and reason, he held a notion of the divine similar to that found in the Bible.[21] With few followers in the Greek world, however, Plato's philosophy was a mere beginning, whereas Moses and the prophets had raised a holy nation and a perfect state governed with divine laws.[22] Eusebius did notice that the state in Plato's *Nomoi* was much like biblical Israel. Plato, the greatest of philosophers, imitated Moses.[23] As Christianity, once recognized, became the state's religion, Justinian closed the debate together with the Academy in Athens, as the philosophers were reduced to silence.

In modern scholarship, such debates have often been judged irrelevant, under the assumption that both parties had supported arguments for their own doctrines on what were merely vague resemblances. Plato is not thought to have borrowed anything from the Bible. The emergence of his thought is usually traced to so-called Pre-Socratic philosophers, Homer, Herodotus and Euripides, which Plato, indeed, cited. Similarly, Old Testament scholars rarely pay attention to the Church Fathers. This dismissal of the traditional debate over priority coincided with the 19th dominance of higher criticism in Germany. In the 18th century, however, the supersessionist arguments of both Josephus and the Church Fathers had influenced

[21] Josephus Flavius, *Against Apion*, II 167-8; on the similarity of Plato's ideal State with biblical Israel, see II 222-4; on Plato's imitation of Moses, see II 257, 280-81; on the reproach of Plato's worship of idols, see Origen's *Against Celsus* V 43; VI 17; on Origen's claim of the Bible's independence, see *Against Celsus*, VI, 19; VII, 30.
[22] Origen, *Against Celsus* V, 43.
[23] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Preparation for the Gospel*, XII 52:35.

scholarship considerably, as, for instance, in Bishop Dom Calmet's *Dictionnaire historique et critique de la Bible* (1722-1728), which listed biblical figures in alphabetic order, and offered comparisons with Greek heroes and gods, supporting the claim that mythic classical texts were dependent on historical biblical tradition. For instance, Samson was historical, which the mythical story of Heracles reiterated. Most of the dictionary's comparisons can be traced to Clement, Origen, and Eusebius. Radical scepticism towards church traditions also influenced 18th century thought. Voltaire's popular parody of Calmet, *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (1764), insistently mocked the early Christian claims.[24] The parody concluded with an argument which directly inverted Calmet's: the Old Testament was a world made of Greek myths translated into Hebrew.[25] Voltaire's critique closed the issue as 19th century scholarship turned towards internal analysis in its search for origins: a development which, in its turn, would eventually give place to the immense discoveries of ancient Near Eastern texts, supporting the influence of archaeology and its discoveries in both biblical and classical studies of the 1920s and 30s, finally dominating the field in the wake of World War II and shifting historicity's pendulum towards an historical Bible and Homer.[26]

Archaeological discoveries of Early West Semitic and Hittite texts have, however, allowed scholars to compare the common literary ground between Europe and Syria-Palestine already from the Bronze Age, not least in regard to mythic development and implications for early religion. Most notable have been the rich archives from Ugarit in Syria and Khattusha in Anatolia.[27] These texts have brought considerable support and refinement to the theories of the mid-20th century which had understood that the Greek archaic period writers, Homer and Hesiod and the earliest biblical writers had drawn from a shared background since the Bronze

[24] Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994). Voltaire often cites Origen and Eusebius. See the articles '*Genèse*', 281-95, '*Fables*', 262-3, '*Job*', 332-6. In the article '*Salomon*', 464-74, Voltaire claimed that not only the books attributed to Salomon, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, had been written in Alexandria during the Hellenistic era, but many other biblical books as well.

[25] Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article '*Abraham*', 44.

[26] The development of Old Testament scholarship and the debates of the past 70 years, let alone a comparable development in the classical field goes far beyond the interests of this volume. For one perspective on a much debated topic up to 1990, see T. L. Thompson, *The Early History of the Israelite People From the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 1-126. For developments since 1990, see *idem,* 'Changing Perspectives on the History of Palestine,' *Biblical Narratives and Palestine's History: Changing Perspectives 2* (London: Acumen, 2013), 305-42.

[27] On the texts from Ugarit, see A. Caquot and M. Sznycer, *Ugaritic Religion. Iconography of Religions, Section XV: Mesopotamia and the Near East; Fascicle 8* (Leiden: Brill, 1980); J. C. De Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Leiden: Brill, 1987); S. B. Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition*, SBL Resource for Biblical Study, 24 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: the Worlds of Ilimilku and his Colleagues*, The Biblical Seminar, 53 (Sheffield: SAP, 2002) and for those from Khattusha, see H. Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 2nd edition (Atlanta: SBL, 1998); *idem, The Laws of the Hittites: A Critical Edition*. Documenta Et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui, 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

Age. This, however, did not support the early theory of Cyrus Gordon and Michael Astour that early Greek mythology had West Semitic origins.[28] That is more than we can know. Indeed, both the Bible and the Greek archaic literature are 1st millennium refractions of a linguistic tradition which had a common heritage from the Bronze Age. Today, new approaches are needed.

Relying on a comparative analysis of existing and verifiable texts, Thomas Brodie has recently suggested that we consider Homer as a direct source for Genesis[29] and argues that Genesis' many repetitions are not the result of careless editing of sources with similar narratives. They function rather as diptychs: reiterated narratives, which mirror each other with thematic purpose. While this argument finds support in John Van Seters' claim that the purported 'editors' for a 'Deuteronomistic history' are part of an obsolete construct, which had been modelled on 17th century Homeric scholarship[30] Brodie reverses Van Seters' understanding of Herodotus as dependent on the 'Deuteronomist' and would, undoubtedly clearly prefer Flemming Nielsen's preference for Herodotus' priority.[31] Also Jan-Wim Wesselius, inspired by Flemming Nielsen's research,[32] understands the biblical tradition to be dependent on Herodotus in both content and technique.[33] For example, the conquest of Canaan is likened to Xerxes' march on Greece, marking a victory, which also ultimately failed. Like Van Seters, Wesselius also suggests that repetitive, though contradictory, biblical narratives with similar plots do not mark an editor of disparate sources, but rather are a

[28] See the works of C. Gordon, *Before the Bible: The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilisations* (London: Collins, 1962); M. Astour, *Hellenosemitica* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965); Martin L. West, *The East Face of Helicon – West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford/New York: Clarendon Press, 1997); John Pairman Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, BZAW, Bd. 231 (Berlin/New York: W. de Gruyter, 1995).

[29] Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue, A Literary, Historical and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Brodie supports, with Wesselius and Wajdenbaum (see below), that a single writer wrote Genesis-Kings (71-2). On Homer as a direct source for Genesis, see 447-94.

[30] J. Van Seters, *The Edited Bible – The Curious History of the 'Editor' in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

[31] J. Van Seters, *In Search of History*, is unequivocal in his argument that Herodotus was the later text and dependent on Van Seter's 'Deuteronomist'. On Nielsen's misunderstanding of Van Seters, see I. Hjelm, *Jerusalem's Rise to Sovereignty: Zion and Gerizim in Competition, CIS* 14 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), esp. 20-22, with reference to F. A. J. Nielsen, *The Tragedy in History, Herodotus and the Deuteronomistic History*, CIS 4, (Sheffield: SAP, 1997), 14-15; 89-90; 163.

[32] Flemming A.J. Nielsen, *The Tragedy in History*. See also S. Mandell and D. N. Freedman, *The Relationship Between Herodotus' History and Primary History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); for an alternative understanding of biblical narrative as theological and mythic allegory, see T. L. Thompson, 'Why Talk about the Past? The Bible, Epic and Historiography'; 'Historiography in the Pentateuch: Twenty-Five Years After Historicity' and 'Kingship and the Wrath of God: or Teaching Humility,' *Biblical Narrative and Palestine's History: Changing Perspectives 2* (London: Acumen, 2013), 147-62; 163-82 and 205-34, resp.

[33] Jan-Wim Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel - Herodotus' Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible*, JSOTSS 345 (London/New York: SAP, 2002), 72.

stereotypical technique of a single author,[34] closely akin to Herodotus' use of reiteration. What formerly seemed redundant now appears intentional, creating the appearance of a summary collection of a rich variety of sources.[35]

Several scholars have suggested that biblical and Homeric parallels were far too numerous and detailed to be merely examples of literary diffusion.[36] Bruce Louden has argued that the pantheon of Homer reflects origins in West-Semitic (e.g., Athena from Anath).[37] Nevertheless, the Hebrew Bible (not to mention the New Testament[38]) has in its turn borrowed from both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[39] The *Iliad*'s shared motifs appear notably in the Prophets, lamenting the fall of Jerusalem, much as Trojans foretell the fate of Ilion. Battle scenes in Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings display patterns found in the *Iliad*. The *Odyssey*'s theme of the *nostos*: the journey abroad and the return home, structures the narratives from Jacob to Joshua. Similarly, the *Odyssey*'s *theoxeny*: the welcoming of a god in the guise of a human not only occurs several times in Genesis (18-19), [40] but is itself the object of caricature in Judges 13. Odysseus' return to Ithaca also finds a home in the story of Joseph (Gen. 37-50), reiterating parallel motifs to structure pivotal turns of the narrative (*Odyssey* XIV-XXIV). Both heroes interpret dreams; both test their loved ones and both hide their identity from their families to await a dramatic moment of revelation. It is noteworthy that Louden, like Wesselius, concludes his analysis with an observation on the neglect with which scholarship, both biblical and classical, has dealt such comparison.[41] Louden supposes that in Antiquity the Homeric epics journeyed widely, notably in relationship to trade, and it seems to him likely that the Bible has borrowed such motifs and structures from Homer.[42]

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[34] See also the discussion of the three-fold wife-sister and shepherd-conflict episodes of Genesis 12, 20 and 26 in T. L. Thompson, 'A New Attempt to Date the Patriarchal Narratives,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 98 (1978), 20-27.

[35] A similar alternative to source theory had been offered for Exodus: T. L. Thompson, 'Some Exegetical and Theological Implications of Understanding Exodus as a Collected Tradition,' in N. P. Lemche and M. Müller (eds.), *Fra Dybet: Festskrift til John Strange, Forum for bibelsk eksegese* 5 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1994), 233-42.

[36] See, however, below, chapter 5.

[37] B. Louden, *The Iliad, Structure, Myth, and Meaning* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

[38] See D. R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Marc* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

[39] B. Louden, *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[40] See further, J. Taylor, *Classics and the Bible – Hospitality and Recognition* (London: Duckworth, 2007).

[41] Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel*: 'It is in a way amazing that its dependence on Herodotus has never been noticed before, as it is in a way so evident that it proves almost impossible to ignore it once one becomes aware of it.' (100).

[42] Louden, *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East*: "When we consider which language, Greek or Hebrew, had the greater number of speakers, which culture, Greek or Israelite, was spread over a larger area, which people, by virtue of its maritime facility, was in contact with a greater number of other peoples, the odds grow far greater

Lukasz Niesiolowski-Spano has shown that many motifs in the so-called 'primeval history' (Genesis 1-11) echo Plato. The creation narrative can be likened to Plato's *Timaeus*, the notion of human breath is comparable to Plato's notion of the soul in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* and the separating from the primordial human being into two of different sex has similarities with the *Symposium*.[43] Niesiolowski-Spano goes on to suggest that the Genesis narrative is a Hellenistic reiteration of Plato, the Platonic influence providing a simpler and thus more scientific explanation of origin.[44] He argues that this narrative, or perhaps Genesis as a whole, post-dates a *Torah*, which comprises legislative books from the Persian era. On the other hand, it has been noted by scholars, such as Moshe Weinfeld and Yaakov Kupitz[45] (and previously by Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, XII), that Plato's Ideal State bears a striking resemblance to biblical Israel: both are founded on land conquered by force, and divided by lottery to twelve tribes, each subdivided into paternal families; each family receiving its plot of land for cultivation, transmitted from father to son, unless that father had only daughters, in which case such daughters would need marry men from their own tribe that the land—which also could not be sold—remain within the same tribes, forever.[46]

Suggesting that Homer, Herodotus and Plato were sources for the Bible, Philippe Wajdenbaum has built an argument on some fifty laws which are common to both Plato and the Pentateuch, at times presented in the same order; as in the so-called 'covenant code' (Exodus 20-23), others in Leviticus and Numbers, and Deuteronomy 12-26. As Plato's *Laws* have no narratives, but are discussed by three protagonists in a dialogue, Wajdenbaum suggested the possibility that Plato's text may have been the framework used by biblical authors in creating the biblical Israel and many of its secular laws, the specifically religious

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that Greek culture would have exerted its influence, direct or indirect, on Israelite culture, rather than vice versa." (321). T. L. Brodie has reached similar conclusions. *Genesis as Dialogue*, 472-81.

[43] L. Niesiolowski-Spano, 'Primeval History in the Persian Period?' *Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament*, n°12, Vol. 21, (2007), 106-26; see also L. Niesiolowski-Spano, *Origin Myths and Holy Places in the Old Testament: A Study of Aetiological Narratives*, Copenhagen International Seminar (London/Oakville: Equinox, 2011).

[44] Niesiolowski-Spano, 'Primeval History?' 122.

[45] M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land, The Inheritance of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites* (Berkeley/ Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1993), 22-4. Y. Kupitz, 'La Bible est-elle un plagiat?' *Science et Avenir*, hors-série n° 86, (1997), 85-8. See also A. C. Hagedorn, *Between Moses and Plato – Individual and Society in Deuteronomy and Ancient Greek Law* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004). Hagedorn states that there was a common background to Greek and Hebrew law, and does not discuss questions of possible borrowings, 38.

[46] Compare Leviticus 25:13-17, Numbers 26, 27 and 36, with Plato, *Laws*, 741 b-c, for the prohibition of selling the plots of land, and 745 b-c for the division by lottery through twelve tribes, and 924 c-e for the *epiclerate*, the wedding of the inheriting daughter in her own tribe.

laws finding no Greek equivalents. Indeed, Plato himself had suggested that the founder of his would-be State use mythology in an effort to persuade the people of such laws' divine origin and perfection. The legislator as poet should use stories to illustrate how obedience is rewarded by god and how disobedience punished.[47] Wajdenbaum's analysis fits well the observations of numerous parallels between biblical and classical literature, which encouraged him to conclude that the Pentateuch and Joshua may have reused the framework and laws from Plato's *Laws* as well as moral precepts from *The Republic*. In the conquest narrative, twelve-tribe Israel is created after a plan Moses received from Yahweh. A series of tales from Exodus to Kings reiterate how Israel, which should have been perfect and hence eternal, failed to obey Yahweh. They would choose their own land even before they entered the promised-land; they would have local gods and be like other nations; they would have their own king (Deut. 17:15), a head taller than his neighbour; David would build Yahweh a house![48] Saul would not wait and made his own decisions (1 Samuel 15), David, the rich man, took the one thing Uriah had (2 Samuel 11), and Solomon murdered his own brother (1 Kings 2:23-25) and collected horses, women and gold (1 Kings 10:28-11:1-10, in contradiction to Deut. 17:16-17). Such a mythic and philosophical framework is also found in Plato's *Critias*, in the story of Atlantis, in which a divinely founded society should likewise have been perfect and eternal. The first ten kings of its ten tribes made a covenant to obey its divine laws.[49] Yet, with the passage of generations, its kings too grew more and more unfaithful. Zeus, like Yahweh with Israel and Judah, destroyed Atlantis. The ancient debate of Jewish and Christian writers comparing Platonic and biblical ideas and texts again resurfaces. One might well surmise that the modern field of biblical studies was indeed a reaction against the radical criticism of the Enlightenment's efforts to provide a new model for the origins of the Bible.[50] Current biblical and classical scholarship has reached a turning point where, on the one hand, a dating of the Hebrew Bible to the Persian and Hellenistic eras grows increasingly likely, and, on the other hand, a number of biblical and classical scholars have begun to observe that the influence of Greek literature on the composition of the Hebrew Bible becomes increasingly clear. However, Niels Peter Lemche, who has been at the forefront of support for

[47] Plato, *Laws*, 817 a-d.
[48] Compare Samuel's warning of the dangers of kingship in 1 Samuel 8:11-18 with Theseus' speech against tyranny in Euripides, *The Suppliants*, 430-60.
[49] Plato, *Critias*, 119 d-120 c. Compare with Exodus 24:1-11. In both cases, the assembly swears to respect the divine laws forever, engaging their offspring. Bulls or oxen are sacrificed and their blood is dashed on the assembly.
[50] Roland Boer, 'The German Pestilence: Re-assessing Feuerbach, Strauss and Bauer,' in Thomas L. Thompson and Thomas S. Verenna (eds.), '*Is This Not the Carpenter?*' *The Question of the Historicity of the Figure of Jesus*, CIS (Sheffield/Bristol (USA): Equinox, 2012), 33-56.

a Hellenistic dating of the Hebrew Bible, has also warned scholars against the temptation of a 'Panhellenism.'[51] Such religious practices as the Sabbath, circumcision, the specific alimentary prohibitions of Leviticus, are not found in ancient Greek practices, and may thus be considered as original to Samaritan and Judean custom. Moreover, the observation that the Hebrew Bible reused many mythical and legislative themes of Greek literature does not alter its similar dependencies on ancient Near Eastern literature, not least in relationship to royal ideology.[52] The sophistication of biblical reiteration of Greek literature, is well compared to that of Hellenistic and Roman epics such as Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica* or Virgil's *Aeneid* – both multiplying in almost every verse references to Homer and other Greek authors.[53] If indeed the authors of the Hebrew Bible had their part in a Hellenistic literary milieu, they were familiar with such baroque techniques of writing. Reiterating yet more ancient authors, Homer being the most prestigious one, was not a form of 'plagiarism', a modern, anachronistic notion. Quite the contrary, it is the hallmark of literary craftsmanship.[54] The way the biblical authors appropriated Greek tradition and transformed it into allegorical epic, parallels the way Roman authors, such as Virgil, drew on Greek literature.[55]

This book offers a collection of essays comparing the Hebrew and Greek Bibles with the Greek classics, as well as methodological discussions of the historical conditions under which Greek literature may have influenced Jewish and early Christian writings. These essays are collected in three parts. The first consists of discussions of methodology regarding a Persian or Hellenistic dating of biblical tradition and the implications of such a dating. The second consists of comparative studies of specific books or chapters. The third part gathers contributions related to Roman era texts, such as 1-2 Maccabees, the Dead Sea scrolls, Josephus and the New Testament.

In the first essay of Part I, Emanuel Pfoh addresses questions related to the historical and cultural contexts in which literary influence and dependence of biblical stories may have occurred. A historical and cultural epistemology is employed, when one interprets the biblical

[51] Niels Peter Lemche, 'Does the Idea of the Old Testament as a Hellenistic Book Prevent Source Criticism of the Pentateuch?' *Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament*, Volume 25, Issue 1 (2011), 75-92
[52] T. L. Thompson, *The Messiah Myth: The Ancient Near Eastern Roots of Jesus and David* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005). On the status of such traditions in the Hellenistic period, see R. Gmirkin, *Berossus and Genesis.*
[53] On this literary technique in the third century in Alexandria, see Virginia Knight, *The Renewal of Epic. Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius* (Leiden/New York/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1995).
[54] See Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue*, 426-7.
[55] N. P. Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, 119; Wesselius, *The Origins of the History of Israel*, 63-6.

narrative in hopes of understanding how such stories depict reality, past and present, in ancient and modern interpretive contexts, respectively. He then attempts to construct a historical context for producing stories in order to provide potential intentions and functions for their existence. Finally, Pfoh relates such influence and dependence to a broad cultural background from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean, during the second half of the first millennium BCE, while giving special emphasis to the spread of Hellenism in the Levant. Pfoh compares how Roman authors appropriated Greek literary tradition with the way biblical authors may have done the same.

Etienne Nodet argues that the recent discovery of a large Israelite-Samaritan shrine on Mount Gerizim has significant consequences of challenging a Jewish bias in biblical studies. After assessing biblical hints at the importance of Shechem, Nodet opens the question of why the Samaritan Bible is so short, containing only the Pentateuch along with a *Chronicle* of little authority, beginning with a short variant of Joshua, poorly preserved, but akin to the version of Joshua that Josephus used. Nodet then asks how we are to explain the huge difference in the ideologies of Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 Maccabbees, whose views are strictly legal and national and the Prophets as a whole, including 'post-exilic' layers, where the general mind-set is both ethical and eschatological. Finally, Nodet points out that the common view held by Jews since, at least, the writings of the priest Aristobulus, in the 2nd century BCE, and later by early Christian writers, was that the Greek philosophers, especially Plato, borrowed from Moses. Nodet suggests that an answer to all such problems is first of all that no biblical editing had ever been done in Babylonia. Secondly, the final shape of most of the Hebrew Bible was given at the library of Alexandria, in two major steps: the Pentateuch in the 3rd century BCE and the Prophets and Writings in the 2nd century BCE after the final split between Samaritans (=Shechem in the biblical allegory) and Jews, which occurred first after the Maccabean crisis. The main sources used by Nodet in this survey, besides Josephus, are Ben Sira and the *Letter of Aristeas.*

Russell Gmirkin discusses how the Hebrew Bible relates events, earlier or contemporary to the rise of Classical Greek culture. Having previously argued that the Pentateuch was written around 270 BCE, using Greek sources from the Library of Alexandria, he also responds to Lester Grabbe's critique of his Hellenistic dating on the strength of the alleged testimony of Hecataeus of Abdera (late 4th century BCE), quoted by Diodorus Siculus. Gmirkin attempts to show both that this testimony cannot be attributed to Hecataeus and is not evidence for a pre-

Hellenistic dating of the Hebrew Bible. He concludes that understanding the Hebrew Bible as an ancient text, drawing primarily from Near Eastern influences, as Grabbe does, is not a valid position and that the evident Greek influence on the Bible, as witnessed by comparative analysis, should now be accepted.

Lukazs Niesiolowski-Spano, in his essay, suggests a new way of understanding oriental influence on Aegean literature. Although an assertion of Near Eastern influence on the Aegean is dominant in much scholarship, there are numerous indications of a change in this perspective, which does not deny such influence, but suggests a reciprocal cultural transmission from West to East. Niesiolowski takes up the role of Philistines, who had originally settled in Palestine as refugees from the Mycenaean world, to point out possible media, forms and time of transmitting traces of 'Aegean' elements in the religious traditions of Palestine.

Thomas Thompson closes Part 1 with a discussion on narrative reiteration in a comparative literary analysis to point out some of the difficulties related to assertions of borrowing and dependency in ancient literature. Primarily using his previous analyses of birth stories, testimonies of the good king and the poor-man's song, he concentrates on the problematic flexibility of literary transmission and diffusion. Taking his starting point in an acceptance that chronological priority, coupled with judgments of uniqueness of the elements shared between two texts as well as explicit or implicit citations of an earlier text do support judgments of dependency, the cultural-wide developments of stereotypical narrative motifs, epithets, plot-lines, themes, narrative structures, episode patterns, as well as scene and tale types typically create a complex narrative rhetoric, the recognition of which precludes most judgments of direct literary dependence or borrowing related to concrete examples of such reiterations.

Opening Part 2, Yaakov Kupitz discusses how the English scholar Zacharias Bogan, in his book *Homerus Hebraizon* (Oxford, 1658), noticed the striking similarity between the scene of the young Rebecca, a pitcher of water on her shoulder (Gen. 24:15), going to meet Eliezer who had come as a stranger seeking a bride for Isaac with that of Athena meeting Odysseus in the guise of a young maiden, also carrying her pitcher of water (Hom. *Od.* 7:19-20), who takes him to meet the family of his bride-to-be, Nausicaa. This 'fingerprint' is but one of many complex similarities between two highly romantic texts. Kupitz points out these

similarities, analyses them and tries to follow the trend of associations of the author of Gen. 24, whom, Kupitz thinks, without a doubt, used Homer (*Od*. 6-7) as a source. He also analyses two other occurrences in the Pentateuch of a man meeting a woman at a well, namely Jacob meeting with Rachel (Gen. 29) and Moses with Zipporah (Exod. 2). Both can be compared similarly with the meeting of Odysseus and Nausicaa.

Philippe Guillaume follows with a wide range of comparisons of characters in Judges with Greek heroes, most notably from Hesiod's myth of the races in *Works and Days*. He first reviews references for the period of the Judges from Ben Sira, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Nehemiah and Psalms, as well as texts from Eupolemus and Demetrius the Chronographer. Guillaume reviews Hesiod's myth of the metallic races, representing different declining stages of humankind. Between the Bronze and Iron ages was the age of heroes with its demi-gods and terrible wars. He reviews how the notion of 'heroic age' was a reference for authors such as Herodotus, Thucydides and Plato and suggests that this may also have influenced the Book of Judges. Special attention is given to the figure of Othniel, the first Judge as a transition from the period of Joshua and Caleb, which can be compared to Hesiod's Bronze Age. Further, Guillaume compares the tribe of Dan with the Greek myth of the Danaids. The abduction of women as the cause of a war that put an end to the heroic age appears in Judges 19-21 as well as in the Trojan epic, leading him to conclude that Judges may have emulated Herodotus and Thucydides in creating an age of heroes that might mirror contemporary conflicts like the Hasmonean wars.

Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme proposes a comparison of the episode of the rape of the Levite's concubine by the men of Gibeah and the subsequent war of Israel's tribes against Benjamin with the foundation myth of the abduction of the Sabines by the Romans, known notably from Livy and Plutarch. The motif of the dismemberment of the concubine is reminiscent of the myth of Osiris, known widely from ancient Egyptian to Hellenistic sources and Plutarch. Gudme raises the question of a shared context between Egyptians, Jews and Romans, resulting in stories showing similar patterns.

Flemming Nielsen compares Greek and biblical traditions of heroes. Solon unifies functions which biblical texts ascribe to Solomon and Moses respectively. Like Solomon, Solon was a poet, and fragments of his poetry have been transmitted by classical and later authors. On the other hand, Solon was a lawgiver and can be compared to Moses. The motif of the

forgiveness of debts, for which Solon was famous, is reminiscent of the books of Ezra-Nehemia.

Part 3 gathers contributions about biblical and para-biblical texts from the Roman era. Philippe Wajdenbaum compares 1 Maccabees to Polybius. Scholars have noticed that historical information about the Seleucids, the Lagids and Rome displayed in 1 and 2 Maccabees, as well as in chapter 11 of the book of Daniel, often seem confirmed by Polybius' *Histories*. 1 Maccabees and Polybius both tell of the stories of the Seleucid kings and their weakening in the face of the rising power of Rome as the new ruler of the Mediterranean. In his contribution, Wajdenbaum compares common narratives and other details in Polybius and 1 Maccabees. As the books of Maccabees were likely written in the late Hellenistic or early Roman era, this study raises the question whether Polybius might have been used as a source for historical information by 1 Maccabees.

Ingrid Hjelm's contribution discusses the status of Greek authors in Josephus' *Against Apion*. Hjelm surveys how Josephus considered Greek authors to be less reliable than Eastern authors, such as the Chaldeans, the Phoenicians and the Jews. As the Jews faced accusations of being a recent religion, Josephus opposed the arguments of such authors as Apion, by claiming the high antiquity of the Jewish nation and its institution. In this perspective, Josephus claimed that the Greek authors and philosophers had borrowed many of their notions from the Jews.

Reinhard G. Kratz addresses the relationship between the Dead Sea scroll commentaries (*pesharim*) on Prophets and Psalms and Hellenistic commentaries on pagan authors. The paper focuses on the *Pesher Nahum* and Greek commentaries on Aristophanes and provides a comparison of formal aspects, interpretation techniques and content as well as the hermeneutic concept behind two types of commentaries. Kratz concludes that the method of philological interpretation of Alexandrian provenance must be taken into account in explaining the Qumran *pesharim*.

John Taylor explores, once again, themes outlined in Chapter 1 and 4 of *Classics and the Bible: Hospitality and Recognition*. He focuses particularly on similarities between the *Odyssey* and Mark, though without attempting to demonstrate a direct debt. The function of

recognition scenes in both biblical and Greek literature is also considered, as Taylors shows how stories in both traditions function as theological and literary parables or metaphors.

Bruce Louden discusses striking parallels between Hesiod's *Theogony* and the Book of Revelation. Revelation, the youngest book of the New Testament, employs motifs found in some of the oldest surviving myths. Though common in Near Eastern myths, the motifs are also central to Hesiod's *Theogony*. A heavenly choir ceaselessly sings praises of the sky Father. Both choirs are associated with a similar formula (what is, what was, what will be). An immortal being waits to devour the immortal offspring of a 'goddess', who safely gives birth and takes refuge in a place prepared for her. The special child and future ruler over all, is whisked away to safety. A war breaks out in heaven between two groups of immortals. The defeated group is imprisoned in the underworld and a dragon, who wants to rule the universe, is defeated, and imprisoned in the underworld. Earth is personified, and acts as an agent. According to Louden, the *Theogony* unexpectedly provides a context for interpreting and understanding aspects of Revelation. Using Hesiod's poem as a lens to engage Revelation not only reaffirms its own significance, but extends its scope to subject areas with which it is rarely associated. Christian myth uses some of the same genres of myth to depict Jesus and his reign much as Hesiod used Zeus. Louden suggests that the authors of Revelation were aware of Hesiod's *Theogony* and, in some instances, saw themselves as 'correcting' it.

The fourteen contributions gathered in this volume all agree that Hellenic culture influenced, directly or indirectly, the Hebrew Bible and later texts such as the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls' *Pesharim*, Josephus and the New Testament. Although each essay offers a unique understanding of how Hellenic influences permeated the Near East, we are in general agreement that most of the books known as 'the Bible' were written when 'God made room for Japheth in the tents of Shem'; that is, at a time when the influence of Hellenism was likely to have reached Samaritans and Jews. Japheth, known in Genesis as the son of Noah and the ancestor of the Greeks, is known in the Greek tradition as Iapetos, the father of Prometheus, himself the father of Deucalion, who had survived the great Flood in the Greeks' version of the myth. Among Deucalion's descendants, was one named Ion; that is biblical Yavan. Our title indeed implies not only that the Hebrew Bible was written in a Hellenistic context, but that the authors of Genesis had made room for Hesiod's *Theogony*.