A New ‘Biblical Archaeology’

If the biblical texts are not purely literary artefacts but also historical ones, they are in principle, or in theory, capable of being integrated with material artefacts. Given the dangers of biblical fundamentalism and its corresponding archaeological activities and the emerging danger of archaeological fundamentalism that believes only archaeology delivers history and only archaeologists can write a competent history, it is important to focus on the means by which textual and material data should be analysed in such a way that a history can be written that makes sense equally of both.

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By Philip R Davies (1945-2018)
Palestine Exploration Fund
Emeritus, University of Sheffield
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A Brief Retrospect

To expound the principles of ‘new biblical archaeology’ I begin with a short retrospect on what was called ‘Minimalism’. This was of course a term coined by opponents, which entirely missed the point by focusing on the (minimal) extent of biblical narrative held to contain reliable historical data. ‘Minimalist’ was attached to a small number of scholars who were supposed to form a ‘school’. In reality, what was underway was not the invention of a new revolutionary or even revisionist ideology, but a response, in an appropriate manner, to the collapse of biblical archaeology whose faults have now been recognized quite widely (see (e.g. Davis 2004). ‘Minimalism’ has remained a term of approbium, even while its conclusions have been quietly accepted. Its approach is now firmly in the mainstream.

The collapse of biblical archaeology seems, perhaps, to have occurred quite rapidly, but the entire enterprise had been under challenge for some time. Whether the patriarchs, the Exodus and the Conquest had really belonged to history was a question that occupied the teachers of my own student years in the 1960s, even if the urge was regularly to affirm some

kind of historical core. Now, these episodes are less of an issue than the so-called 'United Monarchy', or, more precisely, the figure of King David. In many quarters the word 'minimalism' is linked with the denial of the existence of this figure in particular. The reason is that a stake in biblical historicity is not now, as previously, mainly a matter of religious commitment to the Bible as scripture. It is now much more the city of Jerusalem that matters, a city now annexed and its Iron age identity named as the 'City of David', celebrated as 'Israel's eternal capital'. Biblical historicity is now even more a political than a religious issue, and this, I think, partly explains the animosity that the word 'minimalism' still evokes in some quarters, even at times attracting the label of 'antisemitic', a term evidently no longer used only to mean hatred of Jews, but opposition to the claims and deeds of the government of the State of Israel.

A review of the history of biblical scholarship written in fifty years' time will recognize that 'minimalism' represented a return to normal scholarly discourse after three quarters of a century of misdirection. that in the 20th century Palestinian archaeology, which had so much to offer to biblical scholarship, turned its back on biblical criticism and pursued its own naïve course up a blind alley.

Reinhard Kratz has recently observed (2013: 141) that Wellhausen's distinction between the religion of 'ancient Israel' and the religion of Judaism remains a fundamentally important insight. We can now entertain a much richer complex and more positive appreciation of early Judaism or Judaisms, and a rather different view of the religious practices in Iron age Israel and Judah than did Wellhausen. But he did, following the lead of de Wette, rightly perceive that Judaism invented the biblical Israel, and not the other way round.

The principle that biblical texts betray the history of the period of their production underlay the literary-critical reconstruction of ancient Israelite and Judahite history and made possible a scholarly history based on the chronological sequence of *sources* rather than the chronology within the narratives. The documentary sequence that emerged in Wellhausen's work has of course been severely reconfigured, even dismantled, during more than a century of scholarship, and the notion of a documentary structure itself has been questioned. But the central insight and conclusion of the 19th-century reconstruction has survived: that the Mosaic Torah stands not at the beginning of *Israel* but at the beginning of *Judaism*.

Just at the moment of this realization, the development of a scientific archaeology, an archaeology of tells and pottery, of chronology and history and not just the exposure of walls and buildings and the collection of museum pieces, became possible. The new discipline might have provided just what literary-historical criticism lacked: an independent means of verification, improvement and correction of its critical reconstruction. Instead, confronted with

the reemergence of the biblical stage—places, ruins, names—biblical archaeology made two fundamental mistakes: rejecting the conclusions of Higher Criticism and overturning its basic principle on the dating of sources. Instead, it took the view that, effectively, because Elsinore Castle can be seen and visited, Hamlet is a figure of history and Shakespeare a historian. Textual analysis was abandoned and instead biblical archaeology set itself to search for evidence that the biblical *story* was after all, quite true, and not the critical historical reconstruction derived from it. The goal of archaeology became its premise.

Because of this antagonism of 'biblical archaeology' to Higher Criticism, it was never going to be finally undone by any kind of literary-critical exegesis. It was definitively brought down only in the 1970s, with the results of the West Bank survey (see Finkelstein 1988), and many of those who then quickly became ex-biblical archaeologists claimed that archaeology itself had triumphed over the 'philologists' or 'theologians'. The belief, incidentally, that literary criticism is somehow representative of a theological or philological approach is curious, even ridiculous, but one of the paradoxes of Albrightean 'biblical archaeology' was an antipathy to theology that concealed a commitment to the integrity of the biblical literature. That it was Israeli archaeology that undid a large chunk of national history in removing the contents of Genesis to Joshua was ironic, but also enormously helpful. It 'erased history', to use the phrase coined by Halpern (1988), but also undermined the hypothesis that the stories of ancestral immigration, exodus and conquest were an early Israelite tradition, as Noth had sought to establish (Noth 1948—in what represented another backtrack from the principle established by Wellhausen). The kind of 'Israel' that might have created such a tradition had not existed.

Biblical archaeology had failed not only in its historical agenda but also in offering any alternative sense of the biblical narratives about the past, because it had, explicitly or implicitly, decreed that the truth of the Bible was essentially historical truth, and hence its narratives were to be read literally. This defect was avoided elsewhere through the postulation of Israelite 'tradition' or 'traditions', which were not necessarily always historically reliable. Such an approach permitted archaeological data to be evaluated somewhat more critically in assessing the historicity of these written 'traditions'. The essential difference between the two ways of applying archaeology to the Bible came most fully into light in a conversation in the *Expository Times*, between G. Ernest Wright (Wright 1960) and Gerhard von Rad (von Rad 1961). Each proposed his own different conception of biblical theology. Wright, who was a good archaeologist, also sought to make explicit the theology underpinning biblical archaeology (generating the so-called 'Biblical Theology' movement): the Bible was a testimony to mighty

divine acts, and it was in those acts, and not the written story about them, that the divine revelation, the 'truth', was embedded. Who had been writing these stories about the past, how, when or where, did not matter: the testimony could be evaluated quite independently by archaeology, without the aid of literary-historical criticism. For von Rad, the theology of the Old Testament lay in the sacred tradition of Israel, which von Rad did not confuse with historical truth; rather it expressed a historical *faith*. In this von Rad anticipated the more recent fashion to regard the biblical narratives of the past as expressions of collective memory, as expressions of ideologies of identity, rather than bare records of facts, paying attention to the contours of the memory/story itself rather than merely investigating its accuracy.

In any case, the collapse of 'biblical archaeology' and its associated 'biblical theology' means that a quite different agenda is required for the historian seeking to make use of the biblical narratives about the past. To begin with, the degree of discrepancy between the archaeologically reconstructed account of 'Israelite origins' and the biblical stories of a premonarchic era suggest a substantial gap between the story's setting and its composition. How big the gap is really does not matter much, although there seems to be an anxiety among some scholars to hold on as far as possible to the monarchic ('pre-exilic') period for an early consolidation of much of the content. This is part of the reason why the reign of Josiah is so popular at present (see, for example, Finkelstein and Silberman 2001, 2007). Awareness of this gap does not, of course, 'erase history' but shifts our attention to a different *segment* of history, the time of the text, not the time it writes about and creates the need for a different way of reconstructing history. From this perspective, archaeology is needed to provide a context for the creation of the writings. This is not only because, as I want to argue, the production of a text is the crucial point of intersection between exegetical and archaeological work, but also because the scriptural texts, represent the most important artefact to come out of Palestine, the one that ultimately explains the importance of the land and its history in our own times. Judaism is much more a product of the scriptures and the 'Israels' depicted in those scriptures than it is the outcome of any events that occurred in the Iron age. This enshrines a universal truth, in fact: our own actions, individually and collectively, are determined less by what happened in the past than by how we choose to remember it.

I have been focussing in this first part of the essay on historical-critical exegesis. But in the new perspective the historical exegete must also utilize other literary-critical techniques, especially those that relate to narrative analysis. The biblical stories have to be seen as works of fiction rather than as reportage, and hence we have to look more closely at literary features such as genre, point of view, type-scene, character and plot in order to understand their purpose

and dynamics. While these features can be examined without any reference to the historical production of the text, my own view is that even fiction has its 'political unconscious' (to coin the phrase of Fredric Jameson) and that in principle no story, no telling or retelling of a story, can entirely mask its historical context, even if we cannot always decode that context adequately. Hence, even if, for instance, the stories of David (or of Jesus) are nothing more than a reworked assemblage of types and tropes, there remains the question: why tell this story? Why now? Why tell it this way, deploy this particular repertoire, impart these variations? These are also the kinds of questions that invoke the study of cultural memory, whose essential feature, in my view, is its focus on the act of remembering, its purpose and function, not on the degree of reliability of the memory. Remembering, especially in writing, is still a historical act and a written memory is a cultural artefact, part of the cause and effect of the historical process that we seek either to understand or to create, depending on our philosophy of history. These considerations mark the difference between the now defunct 'biblical archaeology' and whatever kind of negotiation between archaeology and the biblical text may now be necessary—which I have called the 'new biblical archaeology'. But first: is such a negotiation any longer possible or desirable?

Text and Artefact

In the history of altercation between biblical text and archaeology several different methodologies have been proposed. One is the old biblical archaeology procedure of finding events and circumstances in the archaeological record that 'confirm' or 'correspond to' or 'converge with' individual biblical data. This is what, for example, Dever maintains, though with decreasing confidence, as his latest book demonstrates in offering, despite his rhetoric, very much very traction or 'intersection' from the biblical text (Dever 2012). Dever exhibits some awareness of the results of literary-historical criticism, but his work has little or no place for them. Most archaeologists working on Iron age Palestine are knowledgeable about the biblical story but equally ignorant about biblical scholarship. One example of many that could be offered is the comment by Avi Faust (Faust 2012:2), that observes that '[i]n contrast to previous studies, archaeological evidence constitutes the main source of information for this work, while the information that can be obtained from the Bible … will be presented, in most cases, as an additional and complementary tool'. Note 'information obtained from the Bible', not 'information acquired through biblical scholarship'! Israel Finkelstein is something of an exception to this general criticism, and his two books with Neil Asher Silberman (2001, 2007), show more interest than most of his colleagues in reconciling critical textual scholarship with

archaeological data. But his comment (quoted in *Ha-Aretz* [English language edition August 27 2013] that 'I see myself as a historian practicing archaeology' gives the impression that the history of ancient Israel and Judah can be left to those who know archaeology.

The opposite view, that history should be left to literary-critics, is rarely to be found nowadays (there is a hint of in Provan, Long and Longman [47]: 'History is *fundamentally* openness to acceptance of accounts of the past that enshrine other people's memories': how 'openness' interacts, if at all, with critical analysis is not clear. Yet a good deal of biblical scholarship still operates in something of a data-vacuum, projecting historical contexts for texts without due regard to what archaeology, anthropology or sociology may imply. On the whole, however, biblical scholars dealing with history are aware of the necessity of integrating exegesis with archaeological data. What we may be less good at is recognizing just how partial the data often are and just how provisional, open to dispute and subject to ideological bias archaeological work can be. Analysts of the biblical texts should not feel obliged to play a subsidiary role on *that* score.

A common approach to the relationship between archaeology and text is that each addresses essentially different kinds of phenomenon. Archaeology reveals lifestyles, architecture, diet, ecology, large-scale events, while the biblical stories deal with individuals, conversations, private transactions, most of which are invisible to excavation and survey. This observation is true, but only up to a point. Increasingly, archaeology is inferring the functioning of households, distribution of gender roles, belief systems, symbolic universes, ethnicity, and many other issues that impinge on the setting of biblical narratives. Conversely, literary-critical exegesis can amplify, explain and perhaps adjudicate on incomplete or disputed archaeological data (or more usually, their iinterpretation). Private conversations or transactions lie beyond the recovery archaeology, of course, but in the grey area where neither the text nor archaeology can individually quite reach, each may in fact benefit from trying to touch the other, making it possible jointly to understand where neither can alone. At all events, the different kinds of data that each discipline deals with cannot be used as an excuse for non-engagement.

The point is that both literary-historical textual exegesis and archaeology are human sciences. Biblical scholarship is *not* a theological science: the biblical texts may or may not be telling us about the nature and activity of a god, but that belief represents a historical datum. The texts tell us about how human beings, individually and collectively, imagined and lived as if gods existed, and how the thoughts and behaviours of people were informed and controlled by those who claimed to have access to the gods, and who had the power to declare what had happened, what was happening and what would happen in the future. The biblical texts show us

how religion works, what it does to people and what people do with it. Both archaeology and biblical exegesis study human behaviour, and aim at the same goals, by examining the relics of past human life.

The word 'relic' hints at how these two approaches *really* converge. The shared object of examination is the object, the artefact. It is from artefacts—whether buildings, art objects, flora and fauna, pottery, traces of habitation, pollen, that archaeology gleans most of its data. But the biblical text is an artefact too. In the case of literary-historical exegesis, exegetes are in effect hypothesizing or reconstructing an artefact, one that is dated to one particular time, place and kind of author, or perhaps to a series of these during its evolution. The artefact was not, of course, recovered by the spade, but it *might* have been. I have had the personal pleasure of hypothesizing from exegesis of the Qumran War Scroll a certain stage of literary development that was subsequently demonstrated from a Cave IV fragment. Indeed, the Qumran manuscripts actually provide a very helpful resource as both literary *and* material artefacts, and indeed have to be analyzed as both, by the exegete and the archaeologist. In the case of biblical texts, however, only the exegete can operate. Yet while the exegete's conjectured artefacts may be hypothetical, it cannot be denied that there *were* once upon a time discrete pieces of writing that became prototypes of the canonized texts that we now possess. These texts need to be explained, and until an archaeologist recovers a surviving piece of that text's history, it is the job of the literary-historical critic to decide where best these conjectured artefacts should be placed. *Then* perhaps the archaeologists should dig with the spade in one hand and the scholarly monograph in the other!

Text and archaeology: contradiction, concurrence, collaboration

In this last section I will offer three case studies of ways in which historical research involves or might involve the combination of archaeology and historical-critical exegesis. These are meant to illustrate how collaborative historical enquiry is achievable, whether through agreement or disagreement between the two discplines.

Contradiction: Jerusalem and text production

The belated arrival of archaeology in any serious sense into the sixth century BCE has opened up several important new questions. Rather than do our best with the biblical stories of mass deportation and empty land, of dramatic restoration and of almost complete silence about seventy years or more of Palestinian history, we can now draw upon surveys and excavations. Who lived in Judah after 586, and where? How poor was the economy? These are questions for

archaeology, and, with some disagreement, it is trying to answer them. When was Jerusalem and its temple rebuilt? Where was the Persian-era city of Jerusalem located exactly? Here we have evidence from both kinds of data. In several recent articles, Israel Finkelstein (e.g. Finkelstein 2008, 2009) has advanced an argument based purely on archaeology, deducing from the rubble from a small excavation on the Temple mount, and from remains on the Ophel hill, that Jerusalem in the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods at this time had a very small population. He concludes that the northern part of the ridge of the City of David was uninhabited, the southern part of the ridge was probably uninhabited as well, and the population was confined to the central part of the ridge, a total of 20–25 dunams, according to his estimate containing 400-500 people, of whom there were 100 adult men. He concludes: 'On a broader issue, the archaeological evidence from Jerusalem casts severe doubt on the notion that much of the biblical material was composed in the Persian and Early Hellenistic periods' (2008: 514).

I emailed Finkelstein to ask where he thought Haggai, Zechariah, Second Isaiah, Chronicles, and ben Sira were written and he replied, in effect, 'that is your problem', as if archaeology dictates and the biblical scholar has to live with its verdict. But these writings were created as historical artefacts, and if he claims to be doing history and not just archaeology, it is also his job to take them also into account. To be fair, Finkelstein's reply does not really represent his position, since he has recently begun to engage with Thomas Römer on the historical setting of the figures of Abraham and Jacob (2014a, 2014b). But a similar interdiscplinarity is needed here, too. Biblical scholars might conclude that ben Sira was not written by the grandfather of the translator, that Chronicles is a Hasmonean composition, and likewise Haggai and Zechariah. It might be argued that the variety of scriptural texts found at Qumran developed over a few generations. But if all of these conclusions taken together seem improbable, then Finkelstein's reasoning must be defective. In fact, his data are defective. For example, he has not been able to accurately estimate settlement on the Temple mount, where the bulk of the population may have lived, since Jerusalem was almost certainly a temple and palace city. Second, a disproportionate number of the population may have been adult males, namely priests and scribes, whose families did not necessarily live in the city. And even if he is right about the population estimate, how many men does it takes to write a scroll? How many to staff a temple and a provincial governor's residence? If the production of biblical books, including authoring and editing and copying, *was* undertaken by a small elite, sufficient to service temple and palace and no more, we can use that information to resolve issues such as the number of copies of a text that may have existed at any one time, to explain the conservatism of Hebrew language and style, assess the degree of knowledge among all the

scribes of the entire corpus, and much else about the production of the scriptural canon. The sociology of text-production is precisely an area in which biblical exegesis and archaeology need to collaborate. But there needs to be a serious conversation involving a critical look at the whole range of apparently contradictory evidence. If it were not for the literary artefacts that we have reason to think once existed there, we might well conclude on the basis of Finkelstein's reasoning that nothing was written in Jerusalem. But we cannot conclude that without much more consideration. Biblical scholars and archaeologists have to query each other's data in cases like this, for we have a problem that needs sharing, not passing over for the other side to deal with.

Concurrence: An original 'Israel'?

My second case study concerns the question of whether the populations of Israel and Judah comprised some kind of political union before the appearance of the Omride kingdom based on Samaria. The evidence of the West Bank survey, which has not been increasingly developed, tends to show a difference not only in the time and rate of political and social development but also in social habits, between the two populations, leading to the suggestion that they originated independently. That is, there was no original 'Israel' comprising them together.

The question formed one chapter of Thompson's quite comprehensive and far-sighted 1992 *Early History of the Israelite People*: but here only archaeological evidence was considered, though there was a section on the 'Intellectual Matrix of Biblical Tradition'. What I want to bring into the issue is the content of that 'tradition' (I would rather speak more precisely of the 'narrative' and employ narrative-analytical methods) concerning the origins of Israel and Judah, starting with the observation that the Pentateuchal texts speak unambiguously of a 12-tribe 'Israel' without any indication of a separate Judah, and yet the books of Samuel speak of two 'houses' of Israel and Judah which develop into the two 'kingdoms' of Judah and Israel in the books of Kings. It is, fro the point of view of narrative analysis, remarkable that there is no explanation of how Judah became a separate 'house', how it even formed its own kingdom (see further on this Davies 2013). The first appearance of a *separate* 'house of Judah' is in 1 Sam. 17, where in the battle against the Philistines, 'men of Judah' suddenly materialize among 'men of Israel'. But the transition is not quite unanticipated: in Joshua and Judges Judah is already acquiring some kind of special status, though still as a member of a single 12-tribe entity. There is also a deep shadow of that ambiguity in the specifically Judahite canonical collection of Prophets, which largely condemns Israel/Samaria for apostasy and even ultimately questions Samaria's status as part of Israel, yet accepts that the two kingdoms are in some way

part of a single religious entity, even if that entity is not called ‘Israel’, at least in the Former Prophets.

Is this ambivalence a refraction of a political controversy in the Persian-Hellenistic era, within Judah, concerning relations with Samaria? Yes, to some extent that seems very probable. But is the portrait of two separate ‘houses’ also reflecting a memory that accords with historical facts or with continuing historical identities, such as ‘Judahite=Jew’ (see Schwartz 2013 for a brilliant analysis of this identity). Insofar as it accords with archaeological indications, it should be considered as a persistent memory rather than as a newly-invented one. The appearance from nowhere of a ‘house of Judah’ in 1 Samuel, the failure to explain how this house apparently seceded from the ‘house’ of Israel, the failure to be clear about whether Judah was part of Saul’s kingdom or not, about whether David was an Israelite or not, all require some kind of explanation. In my view, the most plausible explanation is that these features betray an incomplete fusion of conflicting memories of, on the one hand the origins of Judah, and on the other the origins of a twelve-tribe Israel—which, I have argued, is a more recent memory dating from the sixth century (Davies 2007). The biblical critic might not be able to answer this with any certainty on literary analysis alone, but if taken with other data, a more confident answer is possible. For if Judah and Israel were distinct polities from the beginning, they will have had different origin stories. There seems to be a growing consensus among those who consider the question (see now Fleming 2011) that the Pentateuchal narrative is largely Samarian in content. If so, what was the story told in Judah about its own origins? Where does that story diverge from the Pentateuchal story? The divergence seems to begin with David. Now, if we for a moment take the references to the ‘house of David’ in the Tel Dan and Mesha inscriptions—despite some reservations about both of these—we have a conclusion consistent with other data: that Judah and David are more or less synonymous. Both archaeology and the biblical narrative suggest that the ‘house of David’ (or the kingdom of Judah, according to Kings) behaved as a vassal of the king of Israel, and perhaps to speak of a ‘kingdom of Judah’ before the 8th century is anachronistic. But my point is not to argue for a particular conclusion, but to show that while attempts to understand the nature of the historical relationship between the neighbouring kingdoms through either biblical exegesis or archaeology alone will transgress the limitations of either, an integration of their data, including data from inscriptions, can yield historical knowledge.

Collaboration: the Exodus and self-identity

I said earlier that Moses stands not at the beginning of Israel, but the beginning of Judaism. In this last section I am going to deal with the origins and ethnicity of Israel: not the 'ancient Israel' of the Pentateuch or of 20th century scholarship, but the real historical 'Israel', the two communities that bear the name, Jews and Samari(t)ans.

For centuries, the reciting of the Exodus story has been the central ritual of Jewish identification, one shared by religious and non-religious Jews. The failure of efforts to verify the Exodus historically has left the crucial question: how did this story arise? Is it a disguised rehearsal of escape from Egyptian hegemony in Palestine? Is it an amalgam of numerous flights from Egypt by Palestinian residents who had once fled there in times of famine? Was there a 'core group' within the earliest Israelites that had experienced such an event.

Here, I suggest, is a question whose answer lies within the competence of the biblical exegete and not the archaeologist. It is a case where we should also begin with the principle that the historical setting of a text is that of its telling and not of the time it narrates. And from the perspective of cultural memory, we should be asking, *who* is remembering this, *when* and *why*. It may seem perverse to omit the question 'how true is it?' but it is unlikely that the tellers of the story had any way of asking this question themselves, let alone knowing the answer. It was the past as imagined, and its historicity is frankly quite irrelevant to analysis of the memory. Where we can compare a memory, a story, a text, with a known historical fact, then we have a basis for studying the history of the memory, which is extremely useful both to the historian and the analyst of cultural memory. But here we don't have any historical event we can identify.

So we start with a text. First, 2 Kings 17:24-29:

> The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria, and settled in its cities. When they first settled there, they did not worship Yhwh; therefore Yhwh sent lions among them, which killed some of them. So the king of Assyria was told, 'The nations that you have carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the god of the land; therefore he has sent lions among them; they are killing them, because they do not know *the law of the god of the land*.' Then the king of Assyria commanded, 'Send there one of the priests whom you carried away from there; let him go and live there, and teach them the law (+p#$m) of the god of the land'. So one

> of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and lived in Bethel; he taught them how they should worship ()ry) Yhwh.

This story is well known because it provides the basis for the traditional Jewish belief that the Samaritans are not Israelites and their worship, though superficially Jewish, is invalid. But it also has some curious features, the idea that the *mishpat* of Yahweh could be successfully disseminated by a priest from a sanctuaryand that this would be authorized by the imperial ruler. It also invites to enquire after the meaning of 'the *mishpat* of the god of the land', and the 'worship' of Yahweh.

Whether the story has any historical truth in it remains to be investigated. But two factors need considering. First, that the cult of Yhwh *was* established in the province of Samaria, to the extent that the identity of 'Israel' was preserved there, and that an Israelite identity, based not on custom and worship, was shared with Judah, at least after the end of the Judahite kingdom. Second, that almost exactly this process of artificial enculturation seems to be reflected in the book of Deuteronomy, where the king is handed a book consisting of *mishpatim*, by the priests, and where the levites are dispersed among the town and villages, present not at the cult centres—which can no longer offer animal sacrifices—but assisting in the resolution of local disputes, building up in the process a body of traditional customs relating mostly to social and domestic lifestyles. Within Samaria, there would after 722 have been some variety in these customs, but within Judah much less. Let us recognize that Deuteronomy reflects an effort to define or redefine 'Israel' in terms of *mishpatim* and of exclusive worship of Yahweh.

But while behaving the same way, sharing the same customs, is an essential ingredient of identity-formation, we might say *ethnic* identification, it is not sufficient to endow that identity with a distinct character. For that it is necessary to have a shared story. Here Deuteronomy also prescribes the mechanism. While its authors express little or no interest in cultic matters, they do endorse the notion of a central sanctuary. Partly this may be in order to remove the influence of local cults on *mishpat* and *yir'ah*, but more importantly to provide a single focus of national identity, a place where the name of the god was reserved and to which Israelites were expected to go at three great festivals (16:6). These were already well-established agricultural festivals, but probably locally celebrated. They are now converted into moments of national memory, the memory of the founding of Israel: the Exodus, the lawgiving and the wilderness wanderings. The book itself addresses the Israelites, individually and corporately, in the name of Moses, and on the eve of entry into the promised land, close to that remembered moment of foundation.

From this perspective, Deuteronomy is a document that prescribes the content of Israelite ethnic identity and also shows how it is to be achieved. The text in 2 Kings 17 actually describes such a process as having occurred, and I take this little story to allude to a process that was not purely imaginary but something that the authors knew of. The question of imperial authorization is also significant, because although it seems unlikely in the case of Assyria, that it did in either Judah or Samaria or both under the Persians is a possibility that has recently been much discussed. But the authorization of the mishpat of Yahweh is in Deuteronomy ultimately not imperial but divine. Unlike other national customs, those of Israel are not developed normally, but imposed. Israel remembers and configures itself as a divinely created nation. And this Israel is created, according to the Kings story, in the postmonarchic period, in imperial provinces, and after a period of crisis, when ethnic identity needs definition—something not required in a kingdom where alternative forms of collective identity are available, such as the king himself.

Deuteronomy, on this view, is not a programmatic document, and certainly not a Josianic lawbook. It is the codification of an enterprise that was deliberately undertaken. My immediate suspicion is that this process originated not in Judah but in Samaria, and that the story of Josiah's lawbook is an effort to Judaize it as well as give it native royal authority rather than Persian imperial authority. But that is for further research

This entire hypothesis may be wrong. But it has postulated an artefact, created for a specific reason that fits with a particular historical context. It places Moses and the Torah at the beginning of the biblical Israel, the beginning of monotheistic and aniconic religion of Judaism and Samarianism, which Deuteronomy addresses together as an *ethnos* of twelve tribes. The hypothetical artefact I have proposed can be challenged by others who would set the scroll, and perhaps even the creation of the new Israel, in another time or place, and I see no way in which exegesis alone can determine the correct placement. But can or will, the resources of archaeology be applied to clarifying this?

Such a task would represent a new agenda for archaeology. Archaeology is already able to tell us about the evidence for worship of a single aniconic god in postmonarchic Judah and Samaria. Instead of pursuing the chimera of a historical Exodus, it would be looking for evidence of the birth of a new Israel, for the evidence of pilgrim festivals, including trips from communities in Egypt, across the Sinai. Negatively, it might look more closely at the reign of Josiah and his successors for any sign that a new kind of Israel had been born late in the seventh century. It would, in short, not be chasing the biblical story, but a critical reconstruction of history. It would be following biblical scholarship instead of ignoring it or

dictating to it. It would be looking for the origins of a real, historical 'Israel' instead of (like Faust) trying to create a spurious ethnic awareness between populations in Israel and Judah on the basis of four-roomed houses or avoidance of pork.

Prospects

I fear that the prospects for this agenda for a new 'biblical archaeology' are not that good. Nearly all the work integrating textual and material data is done by biblical scholars knowledgeable about archaeology and not archaeologists knowledgeable about biblical exegesis. Archaeologists and biblical scholars have separate formations, recognize largely separate goals, are institutionally and professionally isolated. On the positive side, many biblical scholars, if they can find the time, participate in digs, although they do not contribute much of their professional expertise to these operations, and there are several conferences attended by both, with the resultant conversations. But how biblical scholars can have a conversation with an archaeologist about literary-historical criticism? Biblical scholars are not going to be able to control excavation in Israel in the way that religious fundamentalists can. Nowadays motor shows increasingly feature concept cars, vehicles that look stunning but will never be built. Perhaps we can think of the new 'biblical archaeology' as a concept vehicle and just enjoy fantasizing about it.

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