From Plato to Moses:
Genesis-Kings as a Platonic Epic

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Introduction: recent theories of Greek influences on the Hebrew Bible

In the past decades, there has been a significant evolution in biblical scholarship in dating the Hebrew biblical texts to the Persian and Hellenistic eras. Thomas L. Thompson and Niels Peter Lemche were at the forefront of supporting such Hellenistic dating of the Hebrew Bible (Lemche 1998b [1993]; Thompson 1992; 1999). This late dating has been bolstered by several studies that have emphasised the similarities of styles and contents between ancient Greek writings and the Bible. Previously, scholars such as Cyrus Gordon (1962), Michael Astour (1965) and Martin L. West (1997) had gathered a significant number of such parallels, and concluded that these similarities were due to a common Near Eastern matrix for both Hebrew and Archaic Greek cultures (see also Brown 1995). However, even though the early formation of Greek mythology owes to traditions from the Levant, this does not exclude that the redaction of the Hebrew Bible had been directly influenced by Greek culture at a later period (Louden 2011: 12-13). In 1983, John Van Seters emphasized the resemblance between the so-called Primary History (Genesis-Kings) and Herodotus' *Histories* (Van Seters 1983; see also Lemche 2013b and 2013c).

In 2001, Thomas L. Brodie proposed the hypothesis that Genesis was modelled directly on Homer's *Odyssey* (Brodie 2001. On Homer as a source for Genesis, see appendix 3, 447-94). For Brodie, scholars should search in existing texts from antiquity as possible direct sources of inspiration for the Hebrew Bible, rather than in the alleged JEDP sources of the documentary hypothesis. Invoking Occam's Razor, Brodie argued that the documentary hypothesis may have long seemed a valid and plausible model, but Homer and, perhaps, also other Greek classical authors, seem far better candidates for possible sources of biblical authors from the Persian era. For Brodie, this hypothesis should be adopted, as it is both simpler than the documentary hypothesis and can be verified (Brodie 2001: 421). Brodie explains that ancient writers typically imitated earlier writers. This practice was not considered plagiarism, a modern and, therefore,

anachronistic notion. Brodie further listed several criteria for determining textual dependence, such as external plausibility of contact between the compared texts, as well as similarities of themes, action or plot, and, not least, similarity of order. "When random elements occur in two documents in the same order the similarity requires an explanation. […] If a series of details emerge then they become significant – especially if clustered together or in the same order." (Brodie 2001: 429).

In 2002, independently of Brodie, Jan-Wim Wesselius produced a comparative study, concluding that the nine books of the Primary History were directly dependent upon Herodotus' nine books of the *Histories* and had been written by a single author sometime in the fifth century BCE (Wesselius 2002). The idea of a single author for Genesis-Kings had already been put forward by Spinoza, in the eighth chapter of his *Theological and Political Treatise*.

In 2006, Russell Gmirkin argued that the Pentateuch had not been written before the first part of the third century BCE, drawing its inspiration from the Hellenized writers Berossus and Manetho (Gmirkin 2006). As Gmirkin explains, the tradition found in *The Letter of Aristeas* may well reflect not only the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek, but its very redaction in Hebrew during the early Hellenistic era.

> the Septuagint scholars at Alexandria appear to have been occupied with both the composition of the Pentateuch in Hebrew and its translation into Greek … access to the Alexandrian Library will have provided a major incentive for conducting the work of composition there rather than in Jerusalem. (Gmirkin 2006: 253).

In 2011, the classical scholar, Bruce Louden, also reached a similar conclusion, namely, that some biblical books might have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by Homer's writings (Louden 2011: 318-24). Brodie, Louden and I (Wajdenbaum 2011), have independently made similar observations about the story of Joseph (Gen. 37-50) in comparison to Odysseus' return to Ithaca (*Odyssey* 14-24) and have also reached similar conclusions regarding the number of parallels between Homer's *Odyssey* and Genesis. The similar order in which these parallels appear indicate that Genesis was modelled after the *Odyssey*. Louden writes (2011: 324):

> The parallels, and the divergences, suggest to me both that some form of the *Odyssey*, served as a model for individual parts of Genesis (particularly the myth of Joseph) and that, like the *Odyssey*, the redactors of Genesis linked together many different genres of myth to form parts of a larger *nostos*, return story.

Brodie writes (2001: 492):

> there is already sufficient evidence to propose that Genesis's use of Homer is a reasonable working hypothesis. The author of Genesis used the *Odyssey*, especially in composing chapters 11-50 … The unified way in which Genesis uses the *Odyssey* indicates that Genesis as a whole reflects a single process of composition.

Since the Homeric epics were written in the eighth or seventh century BCE, their spreading throughout the Levant in the Persian or Hellenistic eras would make them probable sources of inspiration and emulation for Judean writers. All these recent hypotheses converge in considering possible Greek sources of inspiration for the Hebrew Bible.

Plato's *Laws* as a framework for the Pentateuch and Joshua

In recent years, I have compared the works of Plato, and especially his political treatises such as the *Republic* (*Politeia*), *Critias* (or *Atlantis*) and the *Laws* (*Nomoi*), with Genesis-Kings (I have discussed some of these parallels in Wajdenbaum 2010, 2011 and 2013). Plato is well known for having first conceived the *Republic*, which describes a utopian State, where knowledge was the privilege of an educated elite, while the common people would be told myths and fables, with the social function of producing virtue (Plato, *Rep.* 414e-15d). According to Plato's *Letter VII*, it seems that the philosopher tried to establish his ideal state in Sicily, after gaining the support of local tyrants, but he failed in this effort and returned to Athens. Therefore, in his old age, Plato conceived a revised version of the ideal state, which he understood to be based on legislation and more realistic than his earlier version in the *Republic*. Plato wrote the *Laws* around 350 BCE, his last and longest dialogue. Plato's state in the *Laws* was introduced through a discourse attributed to an Athenian, a Spartan and a Cretan. The three protagonists of the dialogue reflect how the future state will blend Athenian laws with Spartan and Cretan customs (Morrow 1960). Plato, through the voice of his Athenian character, describes the territorial organization of the state. It will be conquered by military force, after which the settlers will draw lots and divide the land into twelve parts given to twelve tribes. These tribes will be subdivided into paternal families, and into plots of land, one part being in the main city and one part in the countryside. These estates will be transmissible from fathers to sons, and it will be forbidden to sell them, so that the cadastre will remain eternally immutable. This territorial organization is very similar to biblical Israel as seen in Leviticus

25:23 (not to sell the plots of land // Plato, *Laws* 741b-c), Numbers 26 (the census of the twelve tribes and the plan for the division of the land // *Laws* 745b-c) and Joshua 14-19 (the division of the conquered land by lottery). It is also reminiscent of Ezekiel's vision of a restored Israel, with twelve equal pieces of land for the twelve tribes stemming from Jerusalem (Ezek. 47:13-48:35). This similar division of the land is only the most obvious similarity between Plato's *Laws* and the Pentateuch. Plato discusses all the laws of his imaginary state, among which, some thirty are common to the Pentateuch. In *Laws* 718b-723d, Plato writes, through the voice of the Athenian, that the legislator should use mythical preambles so as to persuade the people of the divine origin of all the laws. These preambles should illustrate how the god rewards obedience and punishes disobedience. Further, Plato gives advice to the hypothetical legislator who would found the ideal state: he should become himself a poet, using myths in order to illustrate the laws (817 a-d. On Plato's use of myth as a means of persuasion in order for the people to accept the laws as divine, see Brisson 1994; Mouze 2005). But as explained previously by Plato in the *Republic* (370–83), these revised myths should depict the deity in a more moral way than in the stories found in Homer and Hesiod. In both the *Republic* and the *Laws*, Plato suggested that one rewrite Greek myths into moral tales in order to produce virtue.

In Exodus, children of slaves shall belong to their masters (Exod. 21:4 // *Laws* 930d-e). Murder and outrage to parents shall be punished by death (Exod. 21:12-17 // *Laws* 872d-73b). If someone injures someone else by hitting him, he shall pay for his recovery (Exod. 21:17-19 // *Laws* 876e-77b). A master may kill his own slave (Exod. 21:20-21 // *Laws* 865c-d). If an ox kills someone, it shall be killed and so his master (Exod. 21:28-32 // *Laws* 873e). A thief breaking in at night can be killed (Exod. 21:37-22:3 // *Laws* 874c). One shall pay if he lets his flocks graze on his neighbour's field and if a fire arises (Exod. 22:5-6 // *Laws* 843d-e). Although several of these laws common to Exodus and Plato can be traced back to the ancient Code of Hammurabi, most of them appear in Plato in sections 870ff. and Exodus 20-23 in a rather similar order, which might be significant evidence of literary dependence in accord with Brodie's criterion.

In Leviticus 18, the prohibition of incest and male homosexuality is formulated in rather similar terms to what is used in Plato's *Laws* (836b-42a). Another significant parallel with Leviticus, defines how a bloodline for the priests will be developed for the new state. The purity of the line and the physical integrity of the priests will be accordingly checked (Leviticus 21:1-24 // *Laws* 759a-d). In both Plato's state and biblical Israel, slaves (permanent slaves in the Bible) must be of foreign origin and are not to be treated with harshness (Lev. 25:39-47 // *Laws* 777b-d).

In Numbers, not only do we find the similar tribal organization as explained above, but the rule known in Greece as *epiclerate*, the marriage of the daughter(s) of a man who had no sons within their tribe and preferably within their own family. This rule is applied in the story of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27 and 36 // *Laws* 924c-e). It is significant that this biblical law is illustrated with the help of a story in accordance with Plato's advice.

In Deuteronomy, one finds similar laws to Plato's as in the laws concerning cult centralisation (Deut. 12 // *Laws* 909d-10a). So, too, the prohibition against offering sacrifices in any place (Deut. 17:2-7 // *Laws* 910b-c). Also the "law of the king" reiterates Plato's moderate king, which reflects a common notion; namely, that a king is not needed in the ideal state. However, if the people request a king, such a monarch must follow the laws (Deut. 17:14-20 // *Laws* 709e-10b). Other significant parallels are found among the prohibitions, such as of witchcraft (Deut. 18:9-14 // *Laws* 933c-e) and of judges, accepting gifts (Deut. 16:18-20 // *Laws* 955c-d). The prescription of exile for involuntary homicide is similar (Deut. 19:4-6, the cities of refuge // *Laws* 865a-c, exile from the country), as is the legislation regarding proportionality of punishments (Exod. 21:22-25; Lev 24:17-21; Deut. 19:21 // *Laws* 933e-34a) and the very old, ancient Near Eastern law prohibiting the removal of the sacred boundary stones (Deut. 19:14 // *Laws* 843a-b. In regard to the order of the laws in both texts, it is important to note that this law is found right after the laws against homosexuality in Plato). Common laws are also found in regard to false witnesses (Deut. 19:16-19 // *Laws* 937b-c) and the honesty of merchants (Deut. 25:13-16 // *Laws* 916d). In both texts, the discovery of a corpse, when the murderer is unknown, is followed by a ritual purification of the city (Deut. 21:1-9 // *Laws* 874b. In Plato, this law is found right after the murderous animal and the nocturnal thief). One also finds similar laws regarding the protection of orphans (Exod. 22:22-24; Deut. 24:17 // *Laws* 927b-e), disowning a son (Deut. 21:18-21 // *Laws* 929a-d), not lending with interest (Exod. 22:25; Deut. 23:19-20 // *Laws* 742b) and freedom in regard to the gathering of fruit when passing through a field (Deut. 23:24-25; 24:19-22 // *Laws* 844d-45d. This law is placed right after the boundary stones in Plato). There are similar laws defining the principle that the sins of the fathers not fall on their children (Deut. 24:16 // *Laws* 856c-e). Finally, a juridical fiction is created to preserve a male inheritor of a plot of land: namely, that an extinct lineage be preserved through the adoption of a son who is named after the deceased (Deut. 25:5-10, the levirate // *Laws* 877e-78b).

The resemblance between the Pentateuch's presentation of Israel's future laws and Plato's ideal state in the *Laws* is substantial and has been noticed, at least since Josephus (*Against Apion* 2.222-4). In the fourth century CE, Eusebius of Caesarea, in the twelfth book of the *Preparation*

for the Gospel, discussed the possibility that Plato had borrowed his laws from Moses, as Moses was then understood to have lived a thousand years before Plato. It is quite significant that Eusebius produced this comparison around the time that the Roman Emperor, Constantine, converted to Christianity. Since then, modern scholars have only rarely addressed this striking comparison. (For several exceptions, see Weinfeld 1993: 22-4; Kupitz 1997; Kaiser 2000. Hagedorn (2004: 38) states that there was a common background to Greek and Hebrew law, and does not discuss questions of possible borrowings. Sinks (1934) believes that Plato copied Moses, relaying the argument of the Church Fathers. His comparisons seem a development of those found in Eusebius' *Preparation for the Gospel*. See also the work of Gmirkin in this volume, as well as his forthcoming monograph, *Plato and the Creation of the Hebrew Bible* (forthcoming).) Rather, modern biblical scholars invented the documentary hypothesis, which posited that the legislative parts of the Pentateuch, P ("Priestly source") and D ("Deuteronomist"), were not part of the earliest text of the Pentateuch, which consisted of narratives from J ("Yahwist") and E ("Elohist") strata. This "historical-critical" hypothesis of the redaction of the Pentateuch has grown into what is almost an academic dogma, which needs be addressed in any scholarly discussion. However, it has been criticised by many as built on circular reasoning (see Rendtorff 1997). The biblical narrative from Genesis to Kings consists of both stories and laws and, today, it is entirely legitimate and hardly uncommon to doubt that there ever were independent texts such as J, E, D and P (Brodie 2001: 495-501).

The parallels with Plato's *Laws,* listed above, do not support the alleged distinction between P and D material in the Pentateuch. There are indeed more parallels with Deuteronomy 12-26. However, there are a number of significant parallels with every legislative book of the Pentateuch. Through a *reductio ad absurdum*, we might argue that if the documentary hypothesis, regarding biblical texts, were true, that theory would have to account for the redaction of Plato's *Laws*. In other words, one would need to imagine that Plato's text was composed much as had been the Pentateuch according to the documentary hypothesis; that is, from distinct "sources" in "strata", and had been edited by several redactors, who are to be separated from each other by centuries. It happens, however, that classical scholars are well able to trace how Plato conceived his ideal state. Primarily, Plato seems to have used the Athenian law code from the fourth century BCE (as seen in texts from Demosthenes) as well as Dorian customs, which are well attested in other sources (such as Xenophon, who was also a disciple of Socrates; see Morrow 1960). Classical scholars are unanimous on the fact that Plato wrote the *Laws* himself. Yet, modern philosophers often disregard this "late" dialogue on the argument that it contains poor philosophy, except for the tenth book, which speaks about the

existence of the soul. This rejection of a legislative text of Plato by modern philosophers interestingly resonates with the "supersessionism" that biblical scholarship has used to date biblical laws of D and P as "late" and representing a priestly-governed Israel, remote from the allegedly more "authentic" J and E sources. (On supersessionist issues implicitly at stake in biblical scholarship, see Römer 2004; Lemche 2005). Plato, who is revered as the forefather of Western philosophy, wrote his plan for an ideal state, which looks exactly like the blueprint one might use to create the story of biblical Israel. Plato wrote laws without stories, yet he specifically suggested that one support this vision of an ideal state in the form of narrative and myth, which he referred to as the "truest tragedy" (*Laws*, 817a). According to Occam's Razor, which Brodie has invoked in comparing the *Odyssey* and Genesis, complex theories should give way to simpler ones. It is, therefore, possible to maintain that, during the Hellenistic era, a group of Hellenized Judean scholars chose to emulate Plato's plan by using his *Laws* as a source for several secular laws. These authors also used Greek myths and narratives, borrowed from various classical authors, and transcribed them into Hebrew and a Near-Eastern setting, creating the story we read in Genesis-Kings.

Plato's *Republic* and *Critias* as sources for Genesis-Kings

It is likely that other Platonic dialogues have been used by the author(s) of Genesis-Kings. As observed by Łukasz Niesiołowski-Spanò (2007), myths about creation and primitive humanity in Genesis 1-11 could derive from Platonic myths, as found in such dialogues as *Timaeus* (the creation of the world), *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo* (discussing the soul or spirit). One might also consider Plato's *Statesman*, which tells of the first humans living in nature without working and discussing with animals (Wajdenbaum 2011: 92-9). Plato's famous *Allegory of the Cave*, in book VII of the *Republic* (514b-17b), shares a similar framework with the Exodus narrative. In the cave allegory, a man is freed from a cave, where his comrades and he had been held. The shadows they saw on a wall appeared to them as deities. Once freed from the cave, the man realizes that the shadows had been mere projections of objects, passing in front of a source of light. Realizing this, he understands that the light of the sun was the ultimate source of light. In this well-known allegory, the shadows on the wall are a metaphor for the traditional Greek gods and the light of the sun is, itself, a metaphor of the single god who created the world, much as described in Plato's *Timaeus*. The man freed from the cave, which Plato compares to a philosopher, is then compelled to go back into the cave to free his comrades that he might bring them to a higher spiritual horizon. However, he might also try to refuse this difficult task for fear that he would not be heard by his former comrades. This allegory originally speaks of the

fate of Plato's master, Socrates, who was condemned to death by the Athenians on the accusations of denying the existence of the Greek gods. In the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, however, Plato showed that Socrates never did deny their existence, but rather made them the creatures of a single and eternal entity. The cave allegory might also represent a canvas for the story of Moses. Moses is freed from the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt (comparable to Plato's cave), first by being raised at the court and, later, by fleeing to Midian. Moses meets Yahweh (comparable to Plato's idea of the good, a metaphor of the single god) on Mount Horeb. Yahweh reveals his name to him, and grants him the task of going back to Egypt to liberate the people of Israel and bring them to the Promised Land. The plan of this Promised Land is, in fact, very similar to the twelve-tribe law-governed state, conceived by Plato in the *Laws*. Moses, like Plato's character from the cave allegory, is tempted to refuse this difficult mission, because he fears that the Israelites will not listen to him (Exod. 4:1-13; see further how the Israelites wish they had stayed in Egypt, Exod. 14:11-12; and Moses fears that they will stone him, Exod. 17:2-4).

In *Critias* or *Atlantis*, Plato told the tale of an ideal state that came to its demise, destroyed by the divine wrath of Zeus, because the successive generations of kings had neglected the divine laws, which their ancestors had sworn to respect forever. The ceremony for the oath sworn by the first kings of Atlantis is very similar to the narrative of Israel receiving God's laws in the wilderness. In both stories, oxen or bulls are sacrificed, and their blood dashed on the participants (compare Exod. 24:1-11 and Plato, *Critias* 119d-20c). The narrative pattern of Plato's *Critias* shows similarities to Judges, 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings. In these narratives, Israel and Judah are eventually destroyed by the divine wrath because of the faults of their kings, starting from Saul's disobedience (1 Sam. 15), David's assassination of Uriah (2 Sam. 11) and Solomon's idolatrous worship of his many concubines' foreign gods (1 Kings 11). Atlantis' riches and temple (Plato, *Critias* 115b-17a) show similarities with Solomon's in 1 Kings 4-10. The books from Genesis to Joshua tell of the foundation of an ideal state, which is very similar to that of Plato's in the *Laws*. However, this biblical state is condemned and destroyed, because of the successive generations of royal neglect of the divinely given laws, which the ancestors had sworn to respect forever, much as the cause of the destruction of Plato's Atlantis.

In its course, Genesis-Kings finely crafts a continuous epic from several central Platonic notions and narratives, beginning with the story of the creation of the world and primitive humanity (Gen. 1-5). A succession of narratives follows. The story of the great flood is followed by the construct of a patriarchal era, the founding of the first cities (Plato, *Laws* 677a-82e //

Gen. 6-11), the liberation of prisoners (Exod. 1-15), the foundation of a twelve-tribe state (several laws of the Pentateuch, the conquest narrative and the division of the land in Joshua). An eventual downfall is caused by the faults of its successive kings (from Judges to Kings). Although some of these themes might seem "general" or "universal" in ancient literature, the considerable core of comparable laws in the two *corpora* forces us to consider the possibility of literary dependence. Ultimately, Genesis-Kings can be read as a story of a single figure, Israel, who, in Genesis, is a man with twelve sons, Jacob. In the following books, Israel becomes a nation of twelve tribes. This progressive dialectic conforms to Plato's concept of the state as a reflection of the soul on a grand scale (*Rep.* 368e-69a).

The Greek epics rewritten in Genesis-Kings

In addition to a Platonic framework, the author(s) of Genesis-Kings seem(s) to have re-written parts of the Homeric epics, the myths of Hesiod, the *Histories* of Herodotus, and many Greek myths and stories, through the filter of monotheism, and probably through Plato's advice on a decent poetry in books II and III of the *Republic*. There are many examples to support this claim, which I will only briefly summarize in this chapter. The nine books of the Primary History seem deliberately to dismantle the main Greek epics and rewrite them into a different order, yet leaving here and there traces of such rewriting; for example, by keeping a similar order in the presentation of multiple episodes or laws. Each of these books seems to have a predominant Greek source. The first part of Genesis (1-11, so-called Primeval History) displays a clear knowledge of Mesopotamian myths. However, as argued by Gmirkin (2006: 89-139; see also Lemche, in this volume), this knowledge is best accounted for in the Hellenistic era by the use of Berossus' *Babyloniaca*. These first chapters of Genesis also bear echoes of Platonic philosophy and rewritten elements of Hesiod's poems. For instance, the story of Eve and the Serpent in Gen 3 is comparable to the story of Pandora and Prometheus in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, 90-105. Evidence of Genesis' knowledge of Hesiod's *Theogony* appears in the use of the name Japheth (Gen. 10:1-2) as an ancestor of the peoples of Asia Minor, including Ionian Greeks (biblical Yavan, Gen. 10:2-5). The biblical Japheth is a homophone to Hesiod's Iapetos, who is known to be the ancestor of the Greeks through his grand-son Deucalion, the survivor of the Flood in further Greek texts (Pindar *Olympian* 9.40-56; see Wajdenbaum 2011: 75, 105, 108). The cycle of Abraham shows similarities to the epic of the Argonauts. Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac to Yahweh, but an angel stopped him at the last moment. Instead of his son, Abraham sacrificed a ram, which he found stuck in a thicket by its horns. Yahweh then renewed the promise that Abraham's descendants would inherit the land of Canaan (Gen. 22).

Quite similarly, Athamas, king of Boeotia, almost sacrificed his son Phrixus to Zeus, but a winged golden ram took Phrixus on its back and brought him safe to Colchis, and there Phrixus sacrificed it to Zeus and hung its Golden Fleece on an oak tree (see Herodotus, 7.97; Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica*, 2.1140-95; Apollodorus *Library*, 1.9.1; Hyginus *Fables*, 2). One generation later, Jason and the Argonauts set sail to Colchis to bring the Golden Fleece back to Greece. On the way back, while the Argonauts were stranded on the coast of Libya, Euphemus received the promise by the god Triton that his descendants would inherit the land of Cyrene. Generations later, Battus, a descendant of Euphemus, consulted the oracle of Delphi about his stutter. The voice of the god Apollo ordered him to take the descendants of Euphemus to the promised land of Cyrene. Although Battus first protested that he did not feel up to this task and that he stuttered, he eventually led his people to Cyrene and ruled over them for forty years (Pindar, *Pythian* 4.5-10; Herodotus 4.150-55, 179; Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica*, 4.1750-65; see Calame 2011). This story is quite strikingly similar to that of Abraham receiving the promise of a land for his descendants, and Moses fulfilling this promise by bringing the Israelites to the gates of Canaan. Like Battus, Moses, too, at first protested, arguing that he could not speak well (Exod. 4:10) and led his people for forty years in the wilderness (Deut. 1:3).

The second part of Genesis, on the other hand, seems rather modelled on Homer's *Odyssey*. The story of Abraham's servant, looking for a bride for Isaac and meeting Rebecca, displays, in almost each verse, parallels to the encounter of Odysseus and the Phaeacian princess, Nausicaa, and her family in books 6 to 13 of the *Odyssey*, as demonstrated by Y. S. Kupitz (2014; see also Brodie 2001: 458, 464-5; Louden 2011: 136-48). The story of Joseph in Genesis 37-50 shows many detailed similarities with Odysseus' return to Ithaca in books 14 to 24 of the *Odyssey* (Brodie 2001: 472-81; Louden 2011: 63-97; Wajdenbaum 2011: 136-42). Both characters are believed long dead by their relatives, and both come to them in disguise: Odysseus appears in his own palace dressed as an old beggar, whereas Joseph confronts his brothers dressed as an Egyptian minister. Odysseus relates a story, in which he claims to have spent seven years in Egypt as a friend of the king (*Od*. 14.277-87), a visit which is similar to Joseph's two sets of seven years and his role as Pharaoh's minister in Gen. 41 (cf. also, Jacob in Gen. 29-31; Brodie 2001: 472; Wajdenbaum 2011: 136). Odysseus tells how he had almost been sold as a slave by merchants who tore off his tunic (*Od*. 14.340-45), a story which is hardly distant from the story of Joseph, who was sold as a slave to merchants after his brothers had torn his tunic off (Gen. 37:23-28). Both characters put their relatives to the test, and both are prone to hiding to shed a tear. Both interpret a dream, involving animals being killed, as an

omen of future events (*Od*. 19.535-65 and Gen. 41.1-7ff.). At the close of both stories, both figures reveal their identities to their loved ones, evoking scenes of embracing and weeping until, finally, both Joseph and Odysseus meet with their aged fathers. The recent studies by Kupitz, Louden and I tend to converge in confirming Brodie's hypothesis that Homer's *Odyssey* is the predominant source of Genesis, and that chapters 11 to 50 tend to follow the same order as the *Odyssey.* As Brodie writes (2001: 491):

> There is also some similarity of order. The opening and closing of the *Odyssey* (Bks. 1 and 24) are used respectively for the opening and closing of Genesis 11-50 (chaps. 11-13 and 50) and there is a general tendency, both within Genesis 11-50 as a whole, and within each block or chapter, to follow the order of the original.

The Exodus narrative, as shown above, combines elements from Plato's cave allegory (the liberation of prisoners by a man who had received a revelation) and the story of Battus of Cyrene. Many of the laws of the so-called "Covenant Code" (Exod. 20-23) are also in Plato's *Laws*. Moreover, the ritual for the oath, sworn by the Israelites, is similar to that of the kings of Plato's Atlantis. The long chapters describing the building of the Tabernacle and the Arch (Exod. 25-31 and 35-40) seem to match Plato's theory of imitation in book X of the *Republic* (595a-97e). Bezazel, the craftsman, for example, imitates a model of furniture which had been conceived by God. (Philo of Alexandria, who read the Pentateuch according to Plato's philosophy, interpreted these chapters in such manner, in *De Vita Mosis*, 2.14-15. See also the Epistle to the Hebrews 8:2, 9:1, 9:24-5.) The dramatic casting of the golden calf (Exod. 32), while Moses was with Yahweh on the mountain, finds a parallel in the story of Odysseus' men, who devour the sacred cattle of Helios (*Odyssey* 12.260-425), while Odysseus was away praying (Louden 2011: 222-43). In Exodus 32:19, Moses broke the first tablets of the law, written by the finger of God, out of anger at seeing the Israelites worshiping the Golden Calf. The tablets of the law, therefore, had to be rewritten (Exod. 34:1). Perhaps, through a "meta-fictional" process, the biblical author(s) inform(s) us of their own process of writing. However, it was Plato's *Laws* that were rewritten. Leviticus and Deuteronomy contain few narratives and mostly laws, whereas Exodus and Numbers blend narratives and laws. As seen above, many of these laws are paralleled in Plato's *Laws*. Nevertheless, most of the religious laws of the Pentateuch find no equivalent in Plato. Plato writes that in his future state, religious laws and sacrificial institutions, whether coming from Delphi, any other oracle or any other tradition, should not be changed (Plato, *Laws* 738c). This leaves room for the biblical authors to have

included Judean/Samaritan religious customs into the writing of the Pentateuch, along with the prohibition of "Canaanite" cultic practices. The conquest of the land and its division into twelve tribes in the Book of Joshua matches Plato's plan for the ideal state. However, the conquest narrative itself seems modelled on the fall of Troy. For instance, the story of Rahab, spared by Joshua's army for having protected two spies by hanging an object from her window, seems borrowed from the similar story of Antenor (compare Joshua 2:1-24 and 6:22-23 with Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, 10.27.2; see West 1997: 488-9; Louden 2011: 112; Wajdenbaum 2011: 209).

The Book of Judges contains many stories, which are paralleled in Herodotus' *Histories*. For instance, Gideon's three hundred elite warriors, who defeated the coalition of the Eastern armies (Judges 6-7), remind us of the Spartan king Leonidas and his three hundred soldiers who held firm against Xerxes' immense army, until they were eventually defeated (Herodotus 7.205-20). Samson, as noted by many scholars, is reminiscent of Heracles. Several episodes of Heracles' ancestry and youth are also paralleled in the story of Jacob (Gen. 25-28), whereas the rest of Heracles' adult life echoes the life of Samson; as if there had been a conscious and deliberate dismantling of Heracles' story between Genesis and Judges (Wajdenbaum 2011: 223-9). Philippe Guillaume (2014) has shown how the period of the Judges seems to match Hesiod's Age of Heroes in *Works and Days*. The story closing the book of Judges, the civil war against the tribe of Benjamin is reminiscent of the Roman foundation myth of the abduction of the Sabine women, as has been noticed by many scholars (Gudme 2014).

The Book of Samuel bears many accurate echoes of Homer's *Iliad*, most specifically in battle scenes. David's famous fight against Goliath uses several typical motifs from the *Iliad*. David's cousin, Asahel who has swift feet (2 Sam. 2:18), seems modelled on Homer's "swift-footed Achilles" (Wajdenbaum 2011: 252-3). The dramatic story of David's assassination of his loyal soldier, Uriah (2 Sam. 11), and the subsequent revolt of his own son, Absalom (2 Sam 13-18), find accurate parallels in the *Iliad*. For example, the motif of the sealed letter, containing orders to kill its bearer, is found in *Il.* 6.150-60 (the story of Bellerophon), and the episode of the son raping a father's concubine(s), in an act of rebellion, is found in *Il.* 9.440-80 in the story of Phoenix.

Finally, the Book of Kings presents its narrative as relying on accounts of events of the past and are referred to by its author as dependent on the *Annals of Solomon* and the *Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (on the use of such cited references in the Hebrew Bible and Apocrypha, see Stott, 2008). Yet, the author(s) of Kings seem(s) to have also borrowed elements of such data from Herodotus' *Histories* (Wesselius 2002: 94-6; Wajdenbaum 2011:

283-8). Solomon's ostentatious wealth, in clear conflict with Deuteronomy 17 (Thompson, 1999: 65), seems modelled on the wealth of Croesus of Lydia (Wajdenbaum 2011: 270-74). The kingdoms of Israel and Judah were ultimately destroyed, according to the author(s) of Kings, because the Israelites and Judeans worshiped Canaanite gods, since most of their kings had allowed these cults. This framework, as already mentioned above, is also found in Plato's myth of Atlantis, where the first kings had sworn to respect the divine laws forever, engaging their offspring. However, as generations passed, they neglected these laws until Zeus decided to destroy Atlantis. To sum up this short overview, it seems that Plato's political writings were used as a blueprint for the structure of the continuous narrative of Genesis-Kings, whereas Greek myths, especially the cycles of the Argonauts, Heracles, and the Trojan War, as well as Herodotus' *Histories*, were used as direct sources for stories. These Greek myths and stories seem to have been rewritten in the Bible in accordance with Plato's advice on poetry. We may observe that the first part of Genesis-Kings (the Pentateuch) seems to use the *Odyssey* as its predominant source for narratives of travels away from home and back (the Greek *nostos*), whereas the second part (from Joshua to Kings) seems to use the *Iliad* as its predominant source in its narratives centring on conquest and warfare. This structure interestingly corresponds to Virgil's use of the *Odyssey* in books I-VI of the *Aeneid* and of the *Iliad* in books VII-XII. (On Virgil's use of Homer, see Knauer 1964. On the analogy between Virgil's use of Homer and the Primary History's use of Herodotus, see Wesselius, 2002: 66. On the analogy between the Greek *nostos*, Virgil and the biblical narrative, see Lemche 1998a: 119).

Conclusions: towards a change of paradigm

The historical-critical paradigm, which has been built on the hypothesis that the earliest strata of the Pentateuch were written long before the rise of classical Greek literature excluded, *de facto*, that the latter could have influenced the former. Consequently, parallels between Greek and biblical literature have long been neglected or ignored by scholars. At best, they were understood to have had a common, ancient Near Eastern background. Since the dating of the redaction of the Hebrew Bible has now convincingly been set in the Hellenistic era by several scholars, we can now contemplate the possibility that Greek classical texts may have been used as direct sources of inspiration by the biblical authors. This most probably is to be placed in the context of the Hellenization of Judea and in the foundation of Alexandria's Great Library (see Nodet 2014; Gmirkin 2014). Although alleged common background is often claimed as a more reasonable explanation than direct borrowing for the occurrence of biblical and Greek parallels, our examination of the number and details of such parallels, as well as the order in which they

appear in respective texts, makes it increasingly plausible that the authors of Genesis-Kings did borrow directly from Greek sources. It is also likely that this applies to other books of the Hebrew Bible. In my opinion, the same reasoning that has brought a great number of scholars to recognize *Song of Songs* as a Hellenistic era book, on the basis of parallels with Alexandrian poetry (see the studies by Burton (2005), Loprieno (2005), and Hunter (2005), all in Hagedorn (ed.), 2005), can also be applied to Genesis-Kings, on the basis of numerous parallels with Greek classical texts. The present chapter offers only a few selected examples. Most of the Greek classical texts are dated rather accurately (except for the most ancient ones, such as Homer and Hesiod), whereas the dating of the main biblical texts is still a matter of debate between the holders of pre-exilic or exilic era dates, and the holders of Persian and Hellenistic era dates. In this respect, Greek texts often present us with a firm point of comparison for biblical, undated texts. Moreover, such comparison is less circular than the model of the documentary hypothesis (in all its variants and refinements, such as Noth's Deuteronomistic History). Indeed, the Greek sources are verifiable, whereas the JEDP sources have never been observed outside of the works of the scholars who discuss such alleged sources. As Brodie writes (2001: 421): "Consequently the invoking of unknown documents – such as JEDP for the Pentateuch – is, at best, a last resort, to be undertaken only if there is no connection with known documents."

Finally, the model of a Bible inspired by Greek sources bears the epistemological condition of being falsifiable, in contrast to the documentary hypothesis, which posits the existence of texts that are in essence lost to us (on the criterion of falsifiability borrowed from Karl Popper, see Lemche 2013d: 301). If manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, preceding the Hellenistic era, were found, this would falsify the present theory that Plato's writings were among the sources of Genesis-Kings. However, the Aramaic papyri of Elephantine indicate that, in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, Judeans in Elephantine did not know the Bible, its stories, characters or laws (except for the Feast of Unleavened Bread). Nevertheless, they were in contact with Jerusalem's authorities, and this could be interpreted as evidence that the Bible had not yet been written at that time (Gmirkin 2006: 28-33; Wajdenbaum 2011: 39-40). The recent theories that count Homer and Herodotus among possible direct sources for Genesis-Kings place its redaction in the Persian era, as per Brodie and Wesselius. However, if we are to consider Plato as an essential and unifying source for these books, this suggests a date in the early Hellenistic era as a *terminus a quo*. This chronology, in turn, allows us to read the prophecies of Noah about "Japheth dwelling in the tents of Shem" (Gen 9:27) and Bileam, about "fleets from Kittim subjugating Eber and Assour" (Num. 24:24), as *vaticinia ex eventu* of the invasion of the Near

East by Alexander and his Macedonian troops (see Lemche 1998a: 159-60; 2013b: 260; Wajdenbaum 2011: 77, 187; Thompson and Wajdenbaum 2014b: 1).

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