An Archaeology of Ancient Thought: On the Hebrew Bible and the History of Ancient Israel*

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> The history of knowledge can only be written . . . in terms of conditions and a priori established in time.[1]

Abstract

The question of how to approach the Hebrew Bible as a source for the histories we write of ancient Israel continues to divide scholars. This study responds to such concerns by pursuing an approach informed by a historicized view of knowledge, or a framework in which the claims we make are understood to be reflective of the eras in which they are realized. What this line of research encourages, I argue, are historical investigations into the underlying modes of knowing that would have contributed to the stories told in the biblical writings. Since knowledge about the past is itself historical, this study contends that it is necessary to situate such claims in time, examining the normative assumptions of an era that establish the parameters by which this knowledge is organized and granted credibility. The epistemic conditions that gave rise to the stories recounted in the Hebrew Bible are as much an object of historical interest, on this view, as the stories themselves for assessments of what evidence they might offer.

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[1] Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966) 221.

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Introduction

How to approach the Hebrew Bible as a source for the histories we write of ancient Israel is a question that continues to divide scholars.[2] For some, the biblical writings should be mostly circumvented for such pursuits, the largely "tendentious" character of these texts entailing that we attend instead to other forms of evidence that are deemed more reliable.[3] For others, these ancient documents are of historical value predominantly for the periods in which they were textualized, their claims about the past disclosing important information about those who wrote and revised them but less about the earlier eras in which their stories are set.[4] Among still others, the pasts recounted in the Hebrew Bible are those of an "invented" variety, fundamentally set apart from how historians would reconstruct these periods in time and of only limited significance for their efforts.[5] And even for those who are more open to drawing on the referential claims of these texts for their own historical studies, one

[2] So Fleming remarks at the outset of his study, "The Bible would make a fascinating source, if only we could figure out how to use it as such" (Daniel Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012] 3). More recently, Tobolowsky writes, "Therefore, it is the case now as it was twenty years ago that the major vectors of inquiry into ancient Israelite history are how much or how little to believe biblical texts, and how to privilege biblical or extrabiblical evidence respectively" (Andrew Tobolowsky, "Israelite and Judahite History in Contemporary Theoretical Approaches," *CurBR* 17 [2018] 33–58, at 34).

[3] See, for example, Dever's recent attempt to move "beyond the texts" for the history of ancient Israel and Judah because of these writings' "tendentious" and "propagandistic" character (William Dever, *Beyond the Texts: An Archaeological Portrait of Ancient Israel and Judah* [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017] 5, 18). But others express similar sentiments. Finkelstein's recent history of the northern kingdom, for example, is written so as to avoid the "poorly told" and "ideologically twisted" stories found in the biblical writings (Israel Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel* [ANEM 5; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013] 5, 159), and, from a different angle, Faust expresses a desire to develop his history by way of an "agenda uninfluenced by the written sources" (Avraham Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion, and Resistance* [Approaches to Anthropological Archaeology; London: Equinox, 2006] 5).

[4] For a fine overview of this orientation among historians, see Ian D. Wilson, "History and the Hebrew Bible: Culture, Narrative, and Memory," *Brill Research Perspectives in Biblical Interpretation* 3.2 (2018) 1–69, at 38–48.

[5] Mario Liverani**,** *Israel's History and the History of Israel* (trans. Chira Peri and Philip Davies; London: Equinox, 2003) 250–362**.** Cf. E. A. Knauf and Philippe Guillaume, *A History of Biblical Israel: The Fate of the Tribes and Kingdoms from Merenptah to Bar Kochba* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2016). In some sense, this distinction can be traced to P. Davies's separation of a "literary" Israel fashioned by the biblical writers from a "historical" Israel recovered by modern historians, with the latter being motivated by "discovering how, and then how far, one might set about recovering history from the literature." Philip Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel"* (JSOTSup 148; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 17, 25.

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encounters frequent attempts to extract some form of a historical core or kernels from texts that are otherwise of diminishing value.[6]

But what if the biblical writers conceived of the past differently than we do today? Before positing that the Hebrew Bible is a poor or profitable source for the histories we write, what would necessitate some consideration are the conditions of thought that enabled these stories to be told. This line of research would be informed by a historicized view of knowledge, accordingly, where the insights attained by an individual or group are understood to be reflective of the eras in which they are realized, contingent on the shared inferences and convictions that grant credibility to these conceptions during the time in which they are achieved.[7]

From this vantage point, our historical appraisals of the biblical writings would benefit from inquiring into the underlying modes of knowing that gave rise to the narratives they relate. This approach would be sensitive to how knowledge about the past is itself historical, determined by the normative assumptions of a period that facilitate and limit what can be known about former times. The claims we make about the past are recognized within this framework as being historically situated, the result of certain premises and commitments that, like other ways of knowing, adopt distinct expressions across time and between cultures. The provisions that made possible the pasts represented in the Hebrew Bible are as much an object of historical study, on this view, as what is expressed through these writings for determinations of what evidence they might offer.

The intent of what follows is to draw out some implications of this interest in the history of knowledge for those who might turn to the biblical writings for historical studies of ancient Israel. To begin, we take as our point of departure historical research on the Hebrew Bible focused predominantly on matters of genre and poetics. Though offering important insights into the literary features of biblical storytelling, such investigations, it is argued, are unable to account for the differences in how past knowledge has been constituted over time. In response to this predicament, we turn to a collection of scholars who advocate instead for approaches that are attentive to the epistemological challenges we encounter when reading ancient texts, mindful of how the various pasts represented in the Hebrew Bible may be informed by beliefs and practices that are foreign to our own historical commitments. This investigation then concludes by offering a case study of how

[6] On the pursuit of historical cores and kernels, see, for example, J. Maxwell Miller and John Hays, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Louisville: Westminster, 1986) 127, 129, 161; Nadav Na'aman, "Prophetic Stories as Sources for the Histories of Jehoshaphat and the Omrides," *Biblica* 78 (1997) 153–73; Amihai Mazar, "The Spade and the Text: The Interaction between Archaeology and Israelite History Relating to the Tenth–Ninth Centuries BCE," in *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel* (ed. H. G. M. Williamson; Proceedings of the British Academy 143; Oxford: British Academy, 2007) 143–71.

[7] Though heirs to earlier thinkers, the seminal works of Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (4th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), and Foucault's *Order of Things* remain touchstones for contemporary discussions surrounding the history of knowledge.

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such considerations impinge on our use of the biblical writings for contemporary historical research.

The Biblical Past: From Continuity to Discontinuity

Among biblical scholars, studies of the pasts represented in the Hebrew Bible have been far more focused on literary considerations than epistemological ones. In an article published in the 1970s, Manfred Weippert, for example, could look back on previous decades of historical scholarship and comment that "in most cases" these studies had been dominated by a "literary perspective," including methods of "literary criticism, transmission history [*Überlieferungsgeschichte*], stylistics, or theology (modern: kerygma)."[8] Weippert's own study notwithstanding,[9] a strong preference for historical research into the literary development and features of biblical storytelling continued unabated after its publication, perhaps most prominently in John Van Seters's incisive book-length investigation, *In Search of History*.[10] Already in the second sentence of this volume we read that to "define the concept of history it is not necessary to discuss the philosophical question of how one can have knowledge of a past,"[11] and throughout his work Van Seters takes great care to eschew epistemological interests in an effort to restrict his historical analysis to questions of genre alone.[12] What knowledge about the past is communicated through the biblical historiography identified by Van Seters in this work, consequently, is not a concern pursued, as the writing of history is first and foremost a "literary tradition" that "is not primarily" concerned with "the accurate reporting of past events."[13]

More certain for Van Seters is that in ancient Israel a genre of historiography developed in fully realized form, produced "when the nation itself took precedence over the king"[14] and written so as "to communicate through this story of the people's past a sense of their identity—and that is the *sine qua non* of history writing."[15] For Van Seters, then, the birth of this genre was wed not to a kingdom or a culture but to the genius of an ancient individual who, much like Herodotus but somewhat before him, culled together various oral and written sources in order to compose a

[8] Manfred Weippert, "Fragen des israelitischen Geschichtsbewusstseins," *VT* 23 (1973) 415–42, at 417–18.

[9] Weippert's essay seeks to understand the "premises, motivation, and methods" behind how the biblical scribes developed their stories about the past, or insights into what Weippert terms the Hebrew Bible's "Geschichtsbewusstsein" (Weippert, "Fragen," 416, 418). The conclusions of this study depart substantially from Weippert's, but a historical interest in how the biblical writers conceptualized the past is indebted to Weippert's work, among others.

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

[11] Van Seters, *In Search*, 1.

[12] Ibid., 1–7, 354.

[13] Ibid., 4–5.

[14] Ibid., 355.

[15] Ibid., 359.

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"literary work of superb accomplishment."[16] With its "uniform style and outlook,"[17] the author of this history, named the "Deuteronomistic Historian" in conjunction with Martin Noth's earlier work, was, Van Seters concludes, "the first Israelite historian, *and the first known historian in Western civilization* to truly deserve this designation."[18]

The boldness of Van Seters's conclusions are somewhat less daring when set alongside previous works that came to similar conclusions. Significant among these is Eduard Meyer's monumental *Geschichte des Altertums*, written in the early decades of the twentieth century, which also maintained that "a genuine historiography" (*eine wirkliche Geschichtsschreibung*) first arose in the region of ancient Israel.[19] A type of history first arose in the region of ancient Israel with the new "orderly state"[20] that had emerged with the Davidides. What contributed to the authenticity of these historical writings was a peculiar narrative style and perspective, one fixed, in Meyer's estimation, on the profane dealings of leading individuals and the trajectory of their actions over time. Impressive to Meyer, then, was how the biblical past could be communicated in such a way as to be removed from both the "religious coloring" and the "political or apologetic bias" he found among other literary traditions in the ancient world.[21] Instead, what Meyer apprehends in the Hebrew Bible is the historian's voice, unmoved by any consideration other than the trappings of what had once actually taken place in former times: "with cool objectivity, indeed with superior irony, the narrator looks down on events which he is able to report with unmatched clarity . . . in full dispassion as they appear to the onlooker."[22] This "most surprising product" of the Israelite kingdom was a history that "no other culture of the ancient Orient bequeathed," and was one matched by the Greeks, Meyer comments, "only at the height of their development in the 5th century BCE."[23]

A genuine historiography distinguished as such by its subject matter and literary style would also find expression within Erich Auerbach's acclaimed study of representation in Western literature, published not long after Meyer's contribution.[24] In the famous essay on Odysseus's scar that begins this work, Auerbach moves to dissociate the legendary material of Homer from those writings of the Hebrew Bible

[16] Ibid., 359.

[17] Ibid., 359.

[18] Ibid., 362 (italics added).

[19] Eduard Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums* ([5] vols.; 4th ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965) 2.2:284.

[20] Meyer, *Geschichte*, 281.

[21] Ibid., 284. So Meyer observes the "grotesque manner" in which these "durch und durch profanen Texte dem Judentum und dem Christentum als heilige Schriften gelten" ["thoroughgoing secular texts were considered as sacred scripture in Judaism and Christianity"] (285).

[22] Ibid., 283.

[23] Ibid., 284.

[24] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (trans. Willard Trask; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953; repr., 2003).

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that "come closer and closer to history as the narrative proceeds."[25] How to separate the legendary from the historical is a matter of style, Auerbach argues, involving one's capacity to discern a literary form that is "easily perceived by a reasonably experienced reader."[26] In contrast to how legend "runs far too smoothly,"[27] for example, a historical account "runs much more variously, contradictorily, and confusedly . . . how often we ask ourselves if the data before us have not led us to a far too simple classification of the original events!"[28] Thus, when Auerbach turns to the story of Absalom's rebellion or to the images of David's last days in the Books of Samuel and Kings (2 Sam 13–1 Kgs 2), it is precisely the style of its narration, its "contradictions and crossing of motives both in individuals and in the general action," that makes it "impossible to doubt" the historical character of the information conveyed.[29]

Provided that such foundational studies would find in the Hebrew Bible a type of historiography set apart by its narrative perspective and literary qualities, it is not surprising that similar assessments can be found among biblical scholars who were contemporaries of Meyer and Auerbach. Such a viewpoint received considerable support in the early, influential studies of Hermann Gunkel and Hugo Gressmann,[30] for example, both of whom also accented the dispassionate style of biblical historiography and its attention to the political,[31] finding in the narratives surrounding David and his successors some of the preeminent instances of history writing in the ancient world.[32] The soil was thus prepared for Gerhard von Rad's classic article a generation later on the "Beginnings of History Writing in Ancient Israel"[33] that would come to a very similar assessment of biblical storytelling, including the manner in which its "portrayal of personalities and events breathes an atmosphere which must silence any doubts as to the reliability" of what it records.[34] In accordance with Meyer's earlier judgments, von Rad would also conclude that

[25] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 19.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 20.

[30] Hermann Gunkel, "Geschichtsschreibung im A.T.," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, (ed. Hermann Gunkel; 5 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1909–13) 2:1348–54; Hugo Gressmann, "The Oldest History Writing in Israel," in *Narrative and Novella in Samuel: Studies by Hugo Gressmann and Other Scholars 1906–1923* (trans. David Orton; ed. David Gunn; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 9–58.

[31] Gunkel ("Geschichtsschreibung," 1351) marvels at the "amazingly objective" character of biblical storytelling and its "impartiality." Gressmann, for his part, contends that history writing is defined principally by the political subject matter it pursues: "the eye rests above all on political figures and events, and on the experiences of individuals connected with them." Gressmann, "Oldest History Writing," 14.

[32] Gunkel, "Geschichtsschreibung," 1350, 1352; Gressmann, "Oldest History Writing," 15.

[33] Gerhard von Rad, "The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken; London: SCM, 1964 [1944]) 166–204.

[34] Ibid., 195.

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the origins of this historiography was "undoubtedly in the age of Solomon"[35] and, following Meyer further, that "there are only two peoples in antiquity who really wrote history—the Greeks and, long before them, the Israelites."[36]

In stepping back from these important studies, it can be seen that what unites them is their almost exclusive preoccupation with the literary features that constitute the historiography they identify. Even the "reevaluation" proposed by Van Seters of Gunkel and von Rad's earlier work is one directed at when and how biblical historiography came to be, but not the question of what knowledge about the past this material might convey. Throughout these works, what distinguishes the history writing embedded in the Hebrew Bible is fundamentally its literary "style and outlook," its "objectivity" and the manner in which it "breathes an atmosphere" that can only be understood as historical "by the experienced reader." Such matters of style and focus thus separate this "learned genre," as Gunkel describes biblical historiography,[37] from the more primitive forms of legend or folklore that preceded it and from which it emerged. That the biblical narrative, with its references to a particular people and the rise and fall of the kingdoms they are said to have established, could draw so near to some of the defining themes pursued among the great national histories of a Macaulay, Michelet, or even von Ranke, only furthered a connection between these ancient works and modern historical studies.[38] History for these scholars was above all political history, and in the proliferation of histories devoted to the kingdoms of ancient Israel and Judah at this time, one can see how seamlessly, in fact, the ancient stories of the Hebrew Bible could be reframed as historical writings that provided historical information about specific kingdoms and peoples and the politics that embroiled them.[39]

Significant works devoted to biblical historiography have continued to appear since Van Seters's investigation, from Baruch Halpern and Marc Brettler's monographs[40] to the comparative efforts of David Damrosch[41] to still more recent studies that connect parts or broad swaths of the Hebrew Bible with an understanding of history.[42] The value of such research is without question, detailing how, as

[35] Ibid., 203.

[36] Ibid., 167.

[37] Gunkel, "Geschichtsschreibung," 1348.

[38] Thomas Macaulay, *The History of England* (1848–61; repr., New York: Penguin, 1979); Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France* (19 vols.; Paris: Chamerot, 1835–67); Leopold von Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation* (6 vols.; Leipzig: Duncker und Humbolt, 1842–69).

[39] On the rise of histories devoted to ancient Israel in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Jean-Louis Ska, "The 'History of Israel': Its Emergence as an Independent Discipline," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament III/I: The Nineteenth Century—a Century of Modernism and Historicism* (ed. Magne Saebø; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013) 307–45.

[40] Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Marc Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[41] David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

[42] The bibliography is too substantial to cite here, but for representative studies see Diana

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Van Seters's work did before them, biblical storytelling was both connected to a broader ancient Near Eastern literary milieu and also set apart from it. What has been amassed from this line of research are a host of insights into the poetics of biblical narrative, including those conventions and devices of narration that were harnessed by the biblical writers in the service of what stories they tell. Why the biblical past, for example, is frequently recounted through lengthy works of narrative prose instead of being textualized through epic verse (i.e., the Odyssey, the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Epic of Aqhat),[43] how a preterite verbal form came to be developed apart from the perfect to recount a past,[44] the penchant for the third-person voice in biblical narrative rather than first-person narration,[45] or the distinct methods of characterization found within these texts are,[46] among others, all questions worthy of the rigorous studies applied to them.

But for those who might turn to these writings for the histories they write of ancient Israel, the question raised by this stream of scholarship is the relationship between the literary form they highlight and the content of what these texts recount. The decision to entitle their pioneering studies as *In Search of History*, *The First Historians, History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel*, or *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* only gives further impetus to this question,[47] a question centered on what differences, if any, separate the historical writings these scholars

Edelman, "Clio's Dilemma: The Changing Face of Historiography," in *Congress Volume, 1998* (eds. André Lemaire and Magne Saebø; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 247–55; Nadav Na'aman, *The Past that Shapes the Present: The Creation of Biblical Historiography in the Late First Temple Period and After the Downfall* (Jerusalem: Arna Hess, 2002 [Hebrew]); idem, *Ancient Israel's History and Historiography: The First Temple Period* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006); Jens Kofoed, *Text and History: Historiography and the Study of the Biblical Text* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005); André Heinrich, *David und Klio: Historiographische Elemente in der Aufstiegsgeschichte Davids und im Alten Testament* (BZAW 401; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009); Simeon Chavel, *Oracular Law and Priestly Historiography in the Torah* (FAT 2/71;Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Raymond Person, "Biblical Historiography as Traditional History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative* (ed. Danna Nolan Fewell; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 73–83.

[43] Edward Greenstein, "On the Genesis of Biblical Prose Narrative," *Prooftexts* 8 (1988) 347–54; idem, "The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus," *AJS Review* 15 (1990) 165–78; Mark Smith, "Biblical Narrative Between Ugaritic and Akkadian Literature: Part I. Ugarit and the Bible," *RB* 114 (2007) 5–29; idem, "Biblical Narrative Between Ugaritic and Akkadian Literature: Part II. Mesopotamian Impact on Biblical Narrative," *RB* 114 (2007) 189–207.

[44] Robert Kawashima, *Biblical Narrative and the Death of the Rhapsode* (ISBL; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) 35–76.

[45] Peter Machinist, "The Voice of the Historian in the Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean World," *Interpretation* 57 (2003) 117–37.

[46] Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994) 23–82; Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 69–92; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (rev. ed.; New York: Basic Books, 2011) 143–62; Tod Linafelt, *The Hebrew Bible as Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 33–36.

[47] Van Seters, *In Search of History*; Halpern, *First Historians*; Tomoo Ishida, *History and Historical Writing in Ancient Israel: Studies in Biblical Historiography* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 16; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Brettler, *Creation of History*.

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identify in the Hebrew Bible from the historical studies they themselves produce.[48] Said differently, if we insist that ancient narratives in the Hebrew Bible are to be identified so decidedly as a form of history writing, then how are we to understand the claims they convey?

The difficulty with scholarship focused on the literary features of biblical storytelling is that it offers little by way of addressing such epistemological concerns. In part, this impasse stems from the fact that genres are themselves historical, incidental to the literary cultures that develop them and the specific circumstances that influence their development.[49] What is conveyed through an ancient text that is situated within a particular generic classification by scholars today may therefore depart, and considerably so, from what is imparted through other instances of this genre that are written in different eras or cultural contexts. That the *Context of Scripture*, to cite only one example, groups together such varied writings as the Egyptian Turin Canon, the Hittite "Proclamation of Anitta of Kussar," and the Babylonian Chronicles all under the rubric of historiography attests to how necessarily flexible such generic classifications can be, and this elasticity must then be stretched ever further if this designation is to somehow accommodate seminal modern works of historiography such as Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall* or Theodor Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte*. How we determine the classification of a literary form, in the end, offers few historical insights into what information its writings express. No one confuses the historiography of a Manetho with a Moses Finley.

The question of the relationship between form and content becomes more acute, further, with the recognition that considerations of literary style are also ill-equipped to respond to these epistemological concerns. The most well-known critique of this view may stem from Roland Barthes's famous essay on the "discourse of history" and the resemblance discerned between the historian's writings and "imaginary narration as we find it in the epic, the novel, the drama."[50] Much of Barthes's analysis is spent fleshing out this resemblance, underscoring throughout how the

[48] Brettler is well aware of the problem—it may, he writes, "be best to avoid the term 'history' for the Bible and, perhaps, the pre-Hellenistic ancient world." Nevertheless, Brettler opts to offer an "open-ended" definition of history as "a depiction of a past" so as to evade the constraints modern historical understandings impose on ancient literature. The difficulty with this open-endedness is that it evades the problem of the historical character of historical knowledge, thereby offering an understanding of history that is, somewhat ironically, fundamentally ahistorical. M. Brettler, "The Hebrew Bible and History," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament* (ed. S. Chapman and M. Sweeney; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 109.

[49] David Fishelov, *Metaphors of Genre: The Role of Analogies in Genre Theory* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993) 19–52; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Darwinism, Genre Theory, and City Laments," *JAOS* 120 (2000) 625–30; Carol Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report from Genology," in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (ed. Roland Boer; SemeiaSt 63; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2007) 19–30.

[50] Roland Barthes, "The Discourse of History," in *The Rustle of Language* (trans. Richard Howard; New York: Hill and Wang, 1986) 127–140, at 127. Ricoeur poses a similar question: "How does history, in its literary writing, succeed in distinguishing itself from fiction?" (Paul Ricoeur,

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reconstruction of a past within the historian's work is as imaginative as any other form of textual representation.[51] The historian's discourse, Barthes writes, appears to refer to some past reality (its "reality *effect*"), but does so only by way of the clever literary strategies it employs (its supposed impartiality, a narrative that apparently tells itself)—strategies that nevertheless collapse, as all textual references must, the past reality it claims with its means of signification.[52] What results is an illusion, a "'shame-faced' signifier,"[53] as Barthes describes it, by which the historian's imaginative, literary representation is mistakenly presumed to be a "copy" of an actual past reality to which the historian has access, but does not.[54]

Barthes's study, which reaches towards the realm of polemics, is nevertheless of value for our purposes here because of how it problematizes a connection between the literary style of a text and the type(s) of knowledge this literature might convey. What results is an undercutting of those arguments that would assert that how a past is recounted, its supposed realism or objectivity or themes or narrative structure, tells us anything about the epistemic character of what is portrayed. Paul Ricoeur, in his own reading of Barthes, comments on how the "literary modes" used by the historian "to persuade the reader of the reality, conjunctures, structures, and events become suspect of abusing the reader's confidence by abolishing the boundary between persuasion and making believe."[55] The epistemic challenges posed by the unavoidable literary features found in any past set down in writing, a "slap in the face" as Ricoeur puts it, stirs questions that can only be addressed by engaging the history of knowledge more directly.[56] Why the Book of Samuel is so often viewed as a form of historiography while the Book of Ruth is not, though both works draw on a host of common narrative traits to represent an era that is nearly coeval, strikes at the heart of the problem.

The Hebrew Bible in all its "Otherness": Von Rad and Yerushalmi

Some scholars have recognized the challenge. Even von Rad himself, decades after his study of the origins of historical writing in ancient Israel and toward the end of his career, would observe a "crisis" in biblical scholarship with regard to how "the Old Testament's own historical understanding . . . confronts our modern way of

Memory, History, Forgetting [trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004] 190).

[51] On this point, see also Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," *Clio* 3 (1974) 277–303; idem, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (2nd ed.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2014) 1–44.

[52] Barthes, "Discourse," 139.

[53] Ibid.

[54] "Hence, we arrive at that paradox which governs the entire pertinence of historical discourse (in relation to other types of discourse): fact never has any but a linguistic existence (as the term of discourse), yet everything happens as if this linguistic existence were merely a pure and simple 'copy' of *another* existence, situated in an extra-structural field, the 'real'" (ibid., 138).

[55] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 277.

[56] Ibid., 277.

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thinking about history with a different one."[57] What is significant about von Rad's discussion for our study, detailed at length in a postscript to his volumes on Old Testament theology, is that the divide identified is not one of genre or a particular literary style, but instead centers on how the past is conceptualized by the biblical writers—what von Rad describes as ancient Israel's "own intellectual *schema*"[58] that employs a "different frame of reference"[59] for how it orders and communicates past knowledge.

This "way of looking at history,"[60] von Rad argues, is not determined by the rational, critical standpoint of modern historicism. Instead, biblical storytelling is intensely focused on moments of divine intervention and the meaning of this activity for the present and future, a mode of retrospection that is communal and curatorial, generational and residual. So von Rad draws attention to "the *tremendous difference* between their [biblical] view of history and the modern scientific one,"[61] a biblical perspective not "dominated, as we are, by the standpoint of authenticity," or at least one which values "authenticity in a different way from the way we do."[62] A warning is thereby announced: "We must consider whether we have not too naively combined the Old Testament's way of thinking about history with our own, either by making it endorse ours, or, what is even more serious, by interpreting it in the light of our present-day theories."[63] In a separate article written not long after this admonition, von Rad challenges future scholarship to better "appreciate Old Testament historical thought [*alttestamentliche Geschichtsdenken*] in all of its otherness [*Andersartigkeit*]."[64]

Von Rad's discussion follows a line of German scholars, both prior and subsequent to him, who have long questioned the relationship between the past represented in the Hebrew Bible and a form of history on the grounds that the former employs distinct and different conceptual presuppositions about past reality from what one associates today with historical knowledge.[65] But perhaps the most penetrating study of the divide accented by von Rad comes not from the sphere of

[57] Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D.M.G. Stalker; 2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 2:418.

[58] Ibid., 427.

[59] Ibid., 417.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 418 [italics added].

[62] Ibid., 424.

[63] Ibid., 417.

[64] Gerhard von Rad, "Offene Fragen im Umkreis einer Theologie des Alten Testaments," in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (2 vols.; München: C. Kaiser, 1973) 2:299. I am indebted to Blum's fine study for drawing this article to my attention (Erhard Blum, "Historiography or Poetry? The Nature of the Hebrew Bible Prose Tradition," in *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity* [ed. Loren Stuckenbruck et al.; WUNT 212; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007] 25–46).

[65] So already the methodological comments in W. L. M. de Wette, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (2 vols.; Halle: Schimmelpfennig, 1807) 2:3–18. Cf. Rudolf Smend, "Elemente alttestamentlichen Geschichtsdenkens," in *Die Mitte des Alten Testaments: Exegetische Aufsätze* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) 89–114; Erhard Blum, "Die Stimme des Autors in den

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biblical studies, but from the work of the historian of Jewish history and culture, Yosef Yerushalmi. In a series of lectures eventually published in a volume entitled *Zakhor*,[66] Yerushalmi writes of a paradox that had occasioned these studies, an anomaly hinted at in an article that had appeared previously[67] but which was now examined more directly through the theme of the "relation of Jews to their own past, and the place of the historian within that relationship."[68] The paradox named here was located specifically in the "place" of the historian, a role that held only a very muted significance in Jewish tradition, and often no significance at all, Yerushalmi argues, despite profound Jewish interest in the past throughout the ages.[69]

In the opening lecture Yerushalmi gives teeth to this claim by turning to the writings of the Hebrew Bible. Remarkable about these ancient texts, Yerushalmi asserts, is their manifest preoccupation with a tangible past of human affairs, rooted in historical time and centered on the interactions and fate of a specific people. Nevertheless, this particular sense of the past, so "saturated" with the historical, is found to be cultivated and maintained "not by historians, but by priests and prophets."[70] The breach identified here between how the biblical past was constituted and how the historian approaches it ("Israel is told only that it must be a kingdom of priests and a holy people; nowhere is it suggested that it become a nation of historians")[71]—is one that ripples across the various studies that comprise this book. It reaches full expression by the work's end, where Yerushalmi, in a remarkable final lecture, comments on his "ironic awareness that the very mode in which I delve into the Jewish past represents a decisive break with that past."[72]

A central concern that appears across Yerushalmi's lectures is this "very mode" by which the historian "delves into the past," something Yerushalmi contends is distinctly modern and removed from how more ancient communities reflected on times that preceded their own. What Yerushalmi points out in these remarks is a technique or discipline of historical inquiry that is rather late in its emergence, a "mode" of thinking about the past that is informed by distinct presuppositions as to what constitutes authentic historical knowledge: the refusal to appeal to divine causation to explain historical events; an awareness of a global, shared history within which all pasts are relativized and none are unique; the willingness to contest any testimony, no matter how authoritative it may seem; the necessity to

Geschichtsüberlieferungen des Alten Testaments," in *Historiographie in der Antike* (ed. Klaus-Peter Adam; BZAW 373; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008) 107–30.

[66] Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (2nd ed.; New York: Schocken, 1989).

[67] Yosef Yerushalmi, "Clio and the Jews: Reflections on Jewish Historiography in the Sixteenth Century," *PAAJR* 46/47 (1979–1980) 607–638.

[68] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 6.

[69] Ibid., xxxiv.

[70] Ibid., 12.

[71] Ibid., 10.

[72] Ibid., 81.

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make explicit why one draws on certain sources over others; the requirement to doubt every claim until it can be corroborated by further evidence.[73] Such epistemic assumptions depart "not on this or that detail," Yerushalmi remarks, but concern the "vital core"[74] of how the ancient communities that Yerushalmi studies related to and produced knowledge of former times. "To the degree that this historiography is indeed 'modern' and demands to be taken seriously," Yerushalmi observes, "it *must functionally repudiate* premises that were basic to all Jewish conceptions of history in the past."[75]

The break identified by Yerushalmi in these closing comments, much like von Rad before him, is focalized on "premises" and "conceptions," on the "mode" by which current historians produce historical knowledge and how this knowledge production departs from writers in antiquity. The contemporary historian, far removed from the ancient communities in which the biblical writings took form, "must understand the degree to which he [*sic*] is a product of rupture."[76] This sense of rupture is one quite at odds, then, with the studies of biblical historiography above that would suggest a strong sense of continuity between these writings and how we understand works of history today. "For better or worse," Yerushalmi comments in his concluding remarks, "an unprecedented experience of time and history is ours, to be reflected upon, perhaps to be channeled in new directions."[77]

Foucault and the Archaeology of Knowledge

The language of rupture and otherness found in the works of Yerushalmi and von Rad draws us near to Michel Foucault's celebrated study, *The Order of Things*, which was written just after von Rad had come to reassess his understanding of the biblical past and a decade before Yerushalmi's initial probing into the history of Jewish historiography. What is of interest in Foucault's investigation for our purposes here are two insights that did not originate with him but which were given particular vitality within his study:[78] first, that the knowledge claims we make are made possible by the conditions of knowing that are particular to the era we inhabit, or what Foucault terms variously as the "historical *a priori*" or "episteme" that guide, implicitly and often unaware, the questions we ask and the answers we provide;[79] and second, that the history of these "configurations"[80] of knowledge is

[73] Ibid., 81–103.

[74] Ibid., 89.

[75] Ibid., 89 (italics added).

[76] Ibid., 101.

[77] Ibid., xxxvii.

[78] See especially Gutting's discussion of the influence of Canguilhem and Bachelard on Foucault's thought in Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 9–54.

[79] Foucault, *Order of Things*, xxiii–xxiv, 33–35, 78–83, 413–21.

[80] Ibid., xxiv–xxv, 33–34, 396–400.

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not one of incremental progress that builds on former ways of knowing, but is one marked by cleavages that inaugurate new modes of how knowledge is conceived.[81]

"But what if," Foucault writes, "errors (and truths), the practice of old beliefs, including not only genuine discoveries, but also the most naïve notions, obeyed, at a given moment, the laws of a certain code of knowledge?"[82] This question, posed near the outset of *The Order of Things,* is directed at a collection of thinkers who occupied the "Classical" and "Modern" periods, as Foucault terms them, or a period stretching roughly from the seventeenth century CE forward in Europe, wherein Foucault argues that a transformation occurred with regard to how scholars from different fields approached their disciplines. Foucault comments:[83]

> In fact, two things in particular struck me: the suddenness and thoroughness with which certain sciences were sometimes reorganized; and the fact that at the same time similar changes occurred in apparently very different disciplines. Within a few years (around 1800), the tradition of general grammar was replaced by an essentially historical philology; natural classifications were ordered according to the analyses of comparative anatomy; and a political economy was founded whose main themes were labour and production.

Foucault's well-known thesis, developed at length over the course of his study, is that this "reorganization" of knowledge was the result of the Classical era's episteme giving way to another that replaced it. Rather than knowledge elicited according to ideas of representation and resemblance between phenomena, perhaps best exemplified in Linnaeus's detailed classificatory system of nature,[84] suddenly a "profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things" at the turn of the nineteenth century.[85] Now, everything from language to economics to biology had to be understood in terms of historical origins and historical development, a shift in thinking so pronounced that Foucault perceives a "mutation"[86] by which "History" replaces "Order" as the governing intellectual premise that guided scholarly work. Though "unknown to themselves," the basis on which knowledge was pursued in various disciplines assumed "the same rules to define the objects proper to their own study, to form their concepts, to build their theories."[87] Even a radical thinker such as Marx, Foucault comments, was "like a fish in water" in the nineteenth century, a thinker bound to his age like any other, "unable to breathe anywhere else."[88]

The perception of the embeddedness of Marx's thought in the nineteenth century offers some insight into the historical approach advanced by Foucault in this study,

[81] Ibid., 55, 121, 239. Cf. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (trans. A.M. Smith; 2nd ed.; London: Routledge, 2002) 4–6, 157–58.

[82] Foucault, *Order of Things*, x.

[83] Ibid., xii.

[84] Ibid., 136–79.

[85] Ibid., xxv.

[86] Ibid., 238.

[87] Ibid., xii.

[88] Ibid., 285.

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one termed, as the subtitle describes it, an "archaeology." This archaeological method was directed specifically at the history of knowledge, or a manner of analysis whereby the historian "excavates" distinct configurations of knowledge in an effort to view their stratifications across distinct periods in time.[89] What we find in Foucault's study is not a history of ideas or cultural *mentalités*, accordingly, but a history of how certain ideas and *mentalités* became possible during a specific historical moment and then, in time, gave way to the sedimentation of new assumptions and commitments,[90] an approach developed by Foucault himself in his early histories of madness and the clinic.[91]

What is meaningful about this approach for our purposes is Foucault's contention that how we conceptualize some object of knowledge is enabled by a complex "network" or "field" of shared inferences, values, and convictions that support and give intelligibility to these conceptions during the period in which they are achieved.[92] Far from being transcendental or innate, Foucault maintains that the knowledge claims we make are subject to the normative assumptions and practices that pertain to how knowledge is realized within one's time. Consequently, what is of historical interest for Foucault are the epistemological conditions of an era, or the "conditions of possibility"[93] that allow certain forms of knowledge to emerge, regardless of whether we engage the spheres of economics, biology, or, for the purposes of this investigation, history. As Foucault describes it, his work is "an inquiry whose aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted."[94]

Foucault's approach is not without its critics. As Michel de Certeau observes in his penetrating essay on Foucault, the historical method Foucault pursues "is often imprecise exactly where it is most incisive."[95] But one need not accept Foucault's

[89] Ibid., xxiv–xxvi. Cf. Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 7–8, 151–56.

[90] Foucault, *Order of Things,* xxiii.

[91] Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (ed. Jean Khalfa; trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa; London: Routledge, 2006); idem, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (trans. A.M. Smith; New York: Vintage Books, 1975). My interest here is in the early work of Foucault whose concerns centered more directly on matters of epistemology than in his later writings. But even in Foucault's somewhat later essay on genealogical method, for example, we find an interest in "excavating the dregs" (*fouillant les bas-fonds*) of history, of recognizing in history "its jolts, its surprises, its staggering victories and defeats so difficult to absorb"—that find continuity with his earlier remarks on an archaeological method. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire," in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite* (ed. Suzanne Bachelard et al.; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971) 145–72, at 150.

[92] Foucault, *Order of Things*, xi, xxi–xxv, 60–66; idem, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 9–18.

[93] Foucault, *Order of Things*, xiv, xxiv–xvi, 82–83, 144–45, 264–66, 299–301. Cf. idem, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 12, 129–31.

[94] Foucault, *Order of Things*, xxiii.

[95] Michel de Certeau, "The Black Sun of Language: Foucault," in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (trans. Brian Massumi; Theory and History of Literature 17; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 171–84, at 174. See also Hayden White, "Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground," *History and Theory* 12.1 (1973) 23–54.

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sweeping conclusions, or even readings of specific thinkers, to see how his historical approach could have ramifications for historians who investigate ancient texts and their claims about the past. For what Foucault provides is a historically sensitive theory of how forms of knowledge are reflective of the eras in which they appear, being bound in such a way to the reigning assumptions of their day that, as Foucault writes, "one cannot speak of anything at any time."[96] What Foucault's work foregrounds, then, are the conditions, emphatically historical, that enable knowledge to emerge in a given era, drawing our attention to the question of how the pasts conveyed in the Hebrew Bible came to be.[97]

An Archaeology of Ancient Thought: The Case of Shiloh

How do we appreciate the biblical past "in all its otherness"? Foucault's work gives further impetus to von Rad's question, pressing historians, as he does, to examine "the categories of discontinuity and difference, the notions of threshold, rupture and transformation, the description of series and limits."[98] A substantial contribution Foucault's study affords our readings of the Hebrew Bible, with these considerations in view, is how it advances the scholarship of those historians who would take care not to approximate a biblical sense of the past to our own. What is resisted through an approach attentive to the categories of "discontinuity and difference," that is, is an impulse to locate within the Hebrew Bible forms of past knowledge consistent with any modern category, historical or otherwise.[99] Though we are heirs to how the biblical authors conceived of the past, we are not their counterparts, and what Foucault's work demonstrates is that systems of thought are always dynamic, always historical, prone to transformations that separate

[96] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 49.

[97] Among historians in other disciplines, such investigations are increasingly common. For the explicit influence of Foucault on these projects, see comments in Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) xxi–xxiii; Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Idea of Provincializing Europe," and "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History," in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton Studies in Culture/History/Power; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 3–23, at 6; 27–46, at 27–42; Sheldon Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) 500–501; Zachary Schiffman, *The Birth of the Past* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011) 277. Hartog writes of how Foucault's *Order of Things* "still speaks to us, inviting us to take his work further, elsewhere, in different ways, and with different questions" (François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and the Experience of Time* [trans. Saskia Brown; European Perspectives; New York: Columbia University Press, 2015] 2).

[98] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 15.

[99] The difficulty with studies that equate biblical storytelling with literary fiction (Thomas Thompson, *Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* [New York: Basic Books, 1999] xv), political spin-doctors (William Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005] 71), or Shakespeare (Philip Davies, *In Search*, 23–24) is that they suffer from the same problem of anachronism that besets works that link the biblical past with modern understandings of history.

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more ancient ways of knowing from more recent ones. As Foucault's colleague Paul Veyne puts it, "what conforms to the program of truth in one society will be perceived as an imposture or elucubration in another. A forger is a man working in the wrong century."[100]

If we recognize that the stories of the Hebrew Bible were not underpinned by our own historical commitments,[101] then the ancient frameworks that once supported their claims warrant further historical scrutiny. The divergences in thought theorized in the work of von Rad and Yerushalmi are not subsidiary historical considerations from this vantage point, but vital ones, encouraging further historical study into how the pasts portrayed in the Hebrew Bible were enabled by their own distinct modes of knowing, devised according to the "epistemological space specific to a particular period," as Foucault describes it in the foreword to the English edition of his work.[102] What an appreciation of the discontinuities in the history of thought enjoins is a historical investigation of these differences,[103] in other words, or an "archaeology" that delves into how more ancient configurations of knowledge, now distanced from our own, may have once crystallized and taken hold. The prevailing concern of whether a particular biblical reference is historically authentic or reliable is held in abeyance on this approach, left latent in order to pursue a more fundamental historical question: how did the biblical writers come to tell these particular stories about the past, and not others?[104]

A response to such a question would be necessarily multifaceted, drawing on research related to the craft of Hebrew scribalism and the techniques of textualization that can be discerned within the written evidence that is available to us.[105] Such

[100] Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination* (trans. Paula Wissing; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 105.

[101] "Our contemporary concept of history," Koselleck writes in his seminal study, "together with its numerous zones of meaning, which in part are mutually exclusive, was first constituted toward the end of the 18th century. It is an outcome of the lengthy theoretical reflections of the Enlightenment" (Reinhard Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* [trans. Keith Tribe; New York: Columbia University Press, 2004] 194).

[102] Foucault, *Order of Things*, xi.

[103] To observe that the writings of the Hebrew Bible do not "have the understanding of history" (Niels Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israel* [2nd ed.; London: T&T Clark, 2015] 65) that arises in the modern period is necessary, then, but insufficient. What requires further reflection is what this "understanding of history" might be—its commitments, premises, practices—and how this modern understanding is distinct from what is found in the Hebrew Bible. Such necessary considerations are, however, absent in this work.

[104] That other ways were possible but not for those who wrote these ancient stories is an argument that lies at the center of Foucault's work. No more than a Marx or Linnaeus, that is, could the biblical writers transcend the limits imposed on their thinking by the period in which they wrote. On this, see Foucault, *Order of Things*, xvi, 33–35, 172–77, 235–71; idem, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 6–19, 34–78, 196–215. The notion of epistemological "limits" can of course be traced to Kant's emphasis on them (Immanuel Kant, "Preface to the Second Edition," in *Critique of Pure Reason* [trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998] 106–24). But with Foucault we come across the impulse to historicize what Kant regarded as transcendental.

[105] E.g., Emmanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in Texts Found in the Judean*

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investigations would also need to inquire more broadly into how such texts arose and functioned in a society that was dominantly oral/aural in its dissemination of knowledge, the biblical narratives being developed in conjunction with oral storytelling and the embodied, performative features attached to it.[106] And if the scribes who wrote these texts remain nameless and the specific contexts in which their documents came to light somewhat obscure, the awareness these writings evince of an Iron Age landscape and lifeways suggests that these ancient writers were intimately familiar with the terrain of the southern Levant, compelling us to examine how their stories were developed amid the natural and built environments to which they often refer.[107]

But for a study attentive to the ancient "configurations" of thought that would have enabled the claims made in biblical storytelling, it is the stories themselves that are of the most consequence. For within the biblical writings we encounter an assortment of references to past phenomena, whether of individuals, events, practices, places, or objects, that can be situated within a wider constellation of evidence from antiquity that coincides with the eras in which these stories are set. The aim of such arrangements is not to determine the historicity of these textual allusions according to the tenets of our contemporary epistemological commitments. Rather, the intent is to embed their claims among an assemblage of traces from antiquity so as to gain deeper insights into the ancient mechanisms and limits of knowing that informed them.[108]

As an example of how this approach might unfold, we turn to the biblical references to Shiloh. What is significant about this location for our purposes are

Desert (Leiden: Brill, 2004); David Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); idem, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Seth Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Sara Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision Through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016); William Schniedewind, *The Finger of the Scribe: How Scribes Learned to Write the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[106] Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); Frank Polak, "The Oral and the Written: Syntax, Stylistics, and the Development of Biblical Prose Narrative," *JANES* 26 (1998) 59–105; idem, "Book, Scribe, and Bard: Oral Discourse and Written Text in Recent Biblical Scholarship," *Prooftexts* 31 (2011) 118–40; Raymond Person, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral World* (AIL 6; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2010); Robert Miller, *Oral Tradition in Ancient Israel* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011); F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 233–325.

[107] Jeffrey Geoghegan, "'Until This Day' and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 122 (2003) 201–27; Erasmus Gaß, *Die Ortsnamen des Richterbuchs in historischer und redaktioneller Perspektive* (ADPV 35; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005); Stephen Russell, *The King and the Land: A Geography of Royal Power in the Biblical World* (New York: Oxford, 2016).

[108] On this method of assemblage and its theoretical underpinnings, see Daniel Pioske, "The 'High Court' of Ancient Israel's Past: Archaeology, Texts, and the Question of Priority," *JHS* 19 (2019) 1–25.

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the diverse biblical writings that refer to it, including material in Joshua (Josh 18:1, 8–10; 19:51; 21:2; 22:9), allusions to its standing in Judges (Judg 18:31; 21:12–21), its prominence in the early narratives of Samuel (1 Sam 1–4), and mention of it in the later texts of Jeremiah (Jer 7:12; 26:6, 9).[109] Perhaps the most common way of reflecting on the biblical claims made about this site is to pursue them by way of literary critical means, a method that looks to separate the different textual strands of these composite works into distinct sources in an effort to locate them historically. In terms of passages in which Shiloh is named, there is even some (modest) agreement on the redactional layers discerned: within Joshua, stories connected to Shiloh are commonly linked to the influence of the Priestly tradition,[110] and a similar Priestly influence is also found in the brief allusions to the location in Judges;[111] in the Book of Samuel, references to Shiloh are generally considered to be among texts that developed independently, whether those concerning Samuel's origins (1 Sam 1–3) or the loss of the ark (1 Sam 4–6), and which were eventually woven into the larger narrative structure of the book;[112] and among the writings of Jeremiah the passages on the ruins of Shiloh are located among the "prose speeches" of this book, likely composed and further developed in the period after Jeremiah's life.[113]

[109] Other references to the location include those in connection with Abiathar (1 Kgs 2:27) and Jeroboam I (1 Kgs 14:2–4) in the Book of Kings, and Psalm 78 (78:60).

[110] Wellhausen's influential conclusions attributed passages from Joshua (e.g., 18:1, 11–25; 20; 21; 22:9–34) to P (Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* [2nd ed.; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1899] 119–33). More recent scholarship has often followed suit (see, for example, Menahem Haran, "Shiloh and Jerusalem: The Origin of the Priestly Tradition in the Pentateuch," *JBL* 81 [1962] 4–24; Reinhard Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* [trans. John Bowden; London: T&T Clark, 2005] 193–96). Dozeman, too, discerns "P-styled" language throughout these chapters (Thomas Dozeman, *Joshua 1–12* [AB 6B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015] 26–27). For an overview of the history of scholarship on this P tradition in Joshua, see the summary in Donald Schley, *Shiloh: A Biblical City in Tradition and History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) 101–26 and Ann-Kathrin Knittel, *Das erinnerte Heiligtum: Tradition und Geschichte der Kultstätte in Schilo* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019) 13–26.

[111] Schley, *Shiloh*, 132–34; Kratz, *Composition*, 196; Uwe Becker, *Richterzeit und Königtum* (BZAW 192; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990) 257–99.

[112] P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *1 Samuel* (AB 8; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) 18–23; Campbell sees 1 Sam 1–3 as an early component of the "Prophetic Record" that recounts the origins of Samuel (Antony Campbell, *1 Samuel* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003] 327–31); Kratz finds much of 1 Sam 1–7 to be "late (Priestly) expansions . . . of the Deuteronomistic revisions," including those references to the House of Eli, Samuel's youth, and the loss of the ark (*Composition*, 174); and though Dietrich, too, finds the "spirit and language" of the Deuteronomist to be concentrated among texts in 1 Sam 2–3 (esp. 2:1–11), he nevertheless sees the early stories of Samuel in 1 Sam 1–3 and traditions related to the ark in 1 Sam 4–6 as part of the "Vorgeschichte" that preceded Deuteronomistic reworkings. Walter Dietrich, *Samuel: Teilband 1; 1 Sam 1–12* (BKAT 8/1; Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 2011) 42, 51–56.

[113] Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907) xvi–xx; Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiana: Jacob Dybwad, 1914) 17–45; Robert Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1986) 38–50. Though for some, such as Bright and Weippert, these prose speeches may reach back to Jeremiah himself (John Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," *JBL* 70 [1951] 15–35; Helga Weippert, *Die Prosareden des*

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Such insights are of lasting value for how we understand the compositional history of these works, detailing how a collection of scribal hands with distinct interests wrote and revised these texts over the course of a number of generations. But from an epistemological vantage point, such redactional and source-critical methods can only be pressed so far. In the end, even if we were to somehow retrace these stories to an original form or date certain passages with precision, a sense of the underlying modes of knowing that informs these references would still be out of reach. The history of a text's formation offers few historical insights into what information was drawn on for its claims.

Rather than the compositional history of this literature, then, what we are after instead is a deeper historical appreciation of the knowledge that enabled these stories to be told. This pursuit cannot be decided by attending to the biblical texts alone but necessitates that we frame their claims with other material that pertains to the periods in which they are set, examining what features of these stories are refracted or obscured when set alongside additional evidence from antiquity. For Shiloh, the most important of these traces are the archaeological remains that have been recovered from the site.[114] What excavations carried out at Shiloh (Khirbet Seilun) have revealed is that the location flourished during the Middle Bronze Age IIC period (ca. 1650–1550 BCE) when an impressive wall was constructed around it. This settlement was then destroyed, being mostly abandoned throughout the centuries of the Late Bronze Age except, perhaps, for a small cultic site that received some visitors in the LBA I period.[115] Shiloh was then rebuilt sometime in the late twelfth/early eleventh century BCE.[116] Most of the buildings unearthed, however, were not private dwellings, according to the excavators, but were more likely auxiliary structures that housed goods for what appears to have been a larger complex located near the summit of the site, possibly a sanctuary of some type.[117] This Iron I location and its public buildings were nevertheless also short-lived, coming to a violent end around 1050–1000 BCE when the location was set ablaze.[118] In the period after, Shiloh was abandoned once more, with some building activity developing at the site three centuries later (ca. late eighth–seventh centuries BCE), though these remains suggest only a "tiny, insignificant settlement" at the time.[119]

Jeremiabuches [BZAW 132; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973] 1–21).

[114] Marie-Louise Buhl and Svend Holm-Nielsen, *Shiloh: The Danish Excavations at Tall Sailun, Palestine, in 1926, 1929, 1932, and 1963; The Pre-Hellenistic Remains* (Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark, 1969); Israel Finkelstein, Shlomo Bunimovitz, and Zvi Lederman, *Shiloh: The Archaeology of a Biblical Site* (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 1993). See also discussion of these remains in Knittel, *Heiligtum,* 31–54.

[115] Finkelstein et al., *Shiloh*, 382.

[116] Ibid., *Shiloh*, 383–84. Cf. Finkelstein, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 24–25.

[117] Ibid., 384–85.

[118] Israel Finkelstein and Eliazer Piasetzky, "The Iron I–IIA in the Highlands and Beyond: 14C Anchors, Pottery Phases, and the Shoshenq I Campaign," *Levant* 38 (2006) 45–61, at 46–47.

[119] Finkelstein et al., *Shiloh*, 389; Finkelstein, *Forgotten Kingdom*, 24.

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The location will not be fully reoccupied until the late Hellenistic period some five centuries later, nearly a millennium after the Iron I site had been destroyed.[120]

When we return to the biblical references to Shiloh, certain associations emerge between these ancient accounts and the settlement's archaeological remains. For the stories of Shiloh's past in the Book of Joshua, the claims made about its status as an early site for the tabernacle and seat of some authority for the Israelite tribes in Canaan (Josh 18–22) rest uneasily with the material culture recovered from the location. During the era in which a putative Joshua would have been active (ca. fourteenth–thirteenth centuries BCE), that is, Shiloh appears to have been largely abandoned.[121] But within the Book of Samuel, different relationships emerge between these writings and the site's material culture. References to Shiloh's significance during the career of Samuel and its subsequent eclipse after battles with Philistine forces (1 Sam 4) point to a past that has some affinities, in other words, with what can be discerned about the rise and fall of the Iron I settlement at this time. The references to the ruins of Shiloh four centuries later in the writings of Jeremiah, furthermore, and allusions to it abandonment in Ps 78, each attest, in turn, to the fate of the location after its demise in the Iron I era.

How to account for these assorted claims about Shiloh is the question that strikes at the heart of this approach. What is required is a framework supple enough to accommodate references that find some semblance with the past attested through the location's archaeological remains and others that exhibit greater discord, a storytelling whose pasts both draw near to and resist what we can ascertain about the location's Late Bronze and early Iron Age history from other traces left behind from antiquity. The challenge in determining what conditions enabled these stories to be told, consequently, is that they appear affixed to modes of retrospection that are akin to but still distinct from how we conceive of a historical past today.

Of the possibilities by which to respond, it is considerations wed to memory that prove most promising.[122] If we are to pursue the more fundamental basis on which past knowledge was made possible for the biblical writers, the "episteme" that enabled and circumscribed what could be known of former times, it is an epistemology rooted in remembrance that helps clarify and explain how such biblical references were once constituted. To be sure, fatigue with studies oriented toward memory is a concern in light of the recent proliferation of publications devoted to this topic by biblical scholars. The pitfall of such a propagation, as others have observed,[123] is that memory can become a catchword of sorts, garbing older methods in more fashionable terminology whose results are, nevertheless, much the same.

[120] Finkelstein et al., *Shiloh*, 389.

[121] Ibid., 382–83.

[122] For a monograph-length study of this approach, see now Daniel Pioske, *Memory in a Time of Prose: Studies in Epistemology, Hebrew Scribalism, and the Biblical Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[123] Already two decades ago Confino could warn of memory becoming a catchword among historians, one in which "the benefit" of its use as an analytical tool "cannot overcome a sense that

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But for a study that is resolutely epistemological in its historical interests, the advantage of anchoring these biblical stories within the domain of memory is that doing so anticipates the polysemous and multiplex accounts we find of particular referents such as Shiloh in these writings. When situating the biblical allusions to Shiloh within an assemblage of remains from Khirbet Seilun, this is to say, we come across claims that can exhibit some resonance with the past intimated through these archaeological traces and, in other instances, considerable dissonance. Albright's dating of Shiloh's Iron I destruction was unusually precise, for example, because the biblical allusions to the eclipse of Shiloh's importance (1 Sam 4) that Albright relied on happened to be consistent with the archaeological evidence of the settlement's downfall.[124] But such associations are lacking for those allusions to Shiloh's standing in Joshua and Judges, or the brief references to it in Kings (1 Kgs 11:29; 14:2–4), where there is greater variance between these references and the material record. However we understand the knowledge that informs these biblical accounts, then, we have to countenance its dynamics, its drifts and oscillations and rootedness that elicited a spectrum of affiliations with other forms of evidence from the eras in which these stories are set.

But a past represented through the exercise of memory is reflective of these dynamics.[125] The knowledge recalled through the frameworks of memory, that is, is often found to be malleable, susceptible to the influences and interests of the periods in which a past is recalled.[126] That stories about Shiloh could be infused with Priestly concerns that arose later in time would conform to a commonplace feature of what is remembered, where every present introduces new alterations, supplements, and erasures to what is recalled, creating a past that is alloyed to the perspectives of the present generation that remembers it.[127] A remembered past often becomes entangled with more recent landscapes, figures, and events, blurring what lines may separate past and contemporary experiences.[128]

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the term 'memory' is depreciated by surplus use, while memory studies lack a clear focus and have become somewhat predictable" (Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *AHR* 102 [1997] 1386–1403, at 1387). On this problem, see also Jay Winter, "The Memory Boom in Contemporary Historical Studies," *Raritan* 21 (2001) 52–66.

[124] That is, to ca. 1050 BCE, which conforms well to radiocarbon dating of the site. W. F. Albright, "New Israelite and Pre-Israelite Sites: The Spring Trip of 1929," *BASOR* 35 (1929) 1–14, at 4.

[125] On the "exercise of memory," see Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 56–92.

[126] Maurice Halbwachs, *La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte: Étude de mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941) esp. 149–65; Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 56–92, 443–56; Astrid Erll and Anne Rigney, "Introduction: Cultural Memory and its Dynamics," in *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Media and Cultural Memory 10; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009) 1–14; Astrid Erll, "Traveling Memory," *Parallax* 17.4 (2011) 4–18.

[127] So especially Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (ed. Lewis Coser; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 213–14.

[128] Gregor Feindt et al., "Entangled Memory: Toward a Third Wave in Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 53 (2014) 24–44.

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Nevertheless, memory is not altogether mutable. The stubborn persistence of certain recollections to endure over time, particularly those connected to tangible features of the landscape, is also a significant feature of the dynamics of remembering.[129] If the memories of Joshua at Shiloh, for example, draw nearer to the revisionary character of remembrance, the memories of Shiloh's import in Samuel and Jeremiah—references that would have made little sense after the eleventh century BCE when the location lay in ruins—likely draw closer, in certain instances, to memory's resilience. One of the more promising ways to account for Shiloh's prominence within texts written well after its downfall is that certain memories of the location endured within Iron Age highland communities. Theorists of memory have often argued, in fact, that our memories are contingent on the places we find meaningful, being localized and affixed to their material remains because of how places persist over long stretches of time.[130] That Shiloh was in ruins for centuries, its great wall and buildings in a state of disrepair over the course of many generations, was likely a key factor, consequently, for why it was remembered as it was in such a variety of biblical texts.

The example of Shiloh thus offers a brief window into the dynamics of what can be termed an episteme of memory. When we situate these biblical references within a wider assemblage of archaeological evidence from the Iron Age period, what comes to light, that is, is a past informed by conditions of thought that have strong affiliations with remembering, where certain claims about Shiloh's past appear to have persisted over time, others revamped, and still others that were likely lost to us as certain memories of the location were forgotten after its early destruction. But what is also significant about this turn to memory is that it draws us near to how the biblical writers themselves describe the knowledge that is drawn on for their stories about the past. The discourse of biblical storytelling is suffused with references to memory (זכר), in fact, from divine commands (Ex 20:8; Deut 5:15; Is 44:21), to descriptions of commemorative practices (Num 15:39; Deut 6:6–9; Josh 4:7), to other, more indirect indications of memory's import for how information about the past was solicited and conserved in the societies in which the biblical scribes were active (Deut 5:3; 25:17–19; 26:5–10; Josh 24).

[129] Edward Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 181–215; Yannis Hamilakis and Jo Labanyi, "Introduction: Time, Materiality, and the Work of Memory," *History & Memory* 20.2 (2008) 1–17; Jay Winter, "Sites of Memory," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* (eds. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz; New York: Fordham University Press, 2010) 312–24.

[130] See, for example, Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (2nd ed.; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968) 130–67; Casey, *Remembering*, 181–215; Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 36–44; Gérôme Truc, "Memory of Places and Places of Memory: For a Halbwachsian Socio-Ethnography of Collective Memory," *International Social Sciences Journal* 62 (2011) 147–159; Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012).

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Following Yerushalmi,[131] it is of some consequence, then, that when Moses addresses the Israelites about their collective past he does not tell them to historicize it but to remember it (Exod 13:3; Deut 8:2; 24:9), and that when the psalmist is summoned to sing about an earlier age it is not some notion of historical accuracy that is sought but a performance that details the "riddles of old . . . that our ancestors recounted to us" (Ps 78:2–3). Rather than Thucydides's quest for "exactness" (ἀκριβεία) in his method (Thuc. 1.22) or Spinoza's plea for a more "thorough historical study" (*sinceram historiam*) of the biblical past,[132] what is often foregrounded instead in the biblical writings is a concern with remembrance (cf. Josh 1:13; Judg 8:34; Ps 77). This concern is exemplified, for example, in the story of Absalom's monument (2 Sam 18:18), though Absalom's desire to be remembered came not to be fulfilled by a putative building project now lost to us, but was rather realized, as recognized elsewhere in the biblical corpus (Exod 17:14; Job 19:23–24), through the writing down of stories connected to him, texts that functioned as an essential *aide-mémoire* by which to remember a past that spanned many centuries in time. What biblical storytelling often participates in, therefore, both implicitly and, at moments, self-consciously, is a discourse animated by a remembered past:[133] "Remember the days of old, consider the years long past; ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you" (Deut 32:7).

For scribes working in a society in which older narrative texts were limited and oral storytelling more familiar,[134] such allusions to memory are suggestive.[135] What these references to remembrance provide are further indications, in other words, of the indigenous frameworks that would have once undergirded the stories told about the past in ancient Israel, including those of Shiloh, where, in Ps 78, the "riddles of old . . . that our ancestors told us" (Ps 78:2–3) are connected explicitly to Shiloh's

[131] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 10–14.

[132] Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy; ed. Jonathan Israel; trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 118.

[133] On this point, see Ronald Hendel, "The Exodus in Biblical Memory," *JBL* 120 (2001) 601–22; idem, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Daniel Pioske, "Retracing a Remembered Past: Methodological Remarks on Memory, History, and the Hebrew Bible," *BibInt* 23 (2015) 291–315; Ian D. Wilson, *Kingship and Memory in Ancient Judah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 21–42.

[134] Yet even when written texts were available, Momigliano observes, archives of older writings did not hold great significance as a locus of past information for those in the pre-Hellenistic period. Arnaldo Momigliano, "Historiography on Written Tradition and Historiography on Oral Tradition," in *Studies in Historiography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966) 211–20, at 216–17. The frequent biblical directive to consult written sources deemed unimportant for the stories the biblical scribes tell (1 Kgs 14:19, 29; 15:7, 23, etc.) is in keeping with this general sensibility.

[135] The literature on the relationship between orality and memory is vast, but see, for example, Matthew Innes, "Orality, Memory, and Literacy in Early Medieval Society," *Past & Present* 158 (1998) 3–36; David Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: A Cognitive Psychology of Epics, Ballads, and Counting-Out Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Haun Saussy, *The Ethnography of Rhythm: Orality and Its Technologies* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016) 63–85.

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downfall (Ps 78:60). An approach that draws on extra-biblical and archaeological evidence to inquire into the conditions of thought that made possible the stories the biblical scribes told finds additional support, then, in an ancient discourse that also emphasizes modes of remembrance for the pasts it represents.

What is afforded through this manner of study, to conclude, is a different vantage point by which to consider the Hebrew Bible as a source for the histories we compose, one pitched between the positions of those who hold to the fundamental historical character of these writings and those who impugn it. Instead, a framework attentive to the history of knowledge resists either of these standards, standards that have more to do with our assumptions about what constitutes past knowledge than those premises once operative in antiquity. Situating the biblical claims within an episteme of remembrance is therefore one attempt, among other possibilities, to be sensitive to ancient configurations of knowledge beyond or other than our sense of the historical.[136]

If we are to draw on these biblical stories for the histories we write today, a method that historicizes the epistemic conditions that made them possible would thus underscore the risks involved. Our historical representations, on this view, would be complicated by claims informed by ancient modes of retrospection that depart from the motivations and techniques of modern historical inquiries, conveying knowledge from antiquity that cannot be seamlessly woven into the historical narratives we tell. "But it is no longer the season of the miracles of the Nekuia," Marc Bloch observes of the ancient authors he reads and the manifest differences that distance their understanding of the past from his own.[137] Nor is the biblical past ours, separated as we are from the beliefs and practices that gave rise to its claims by a "chasm" still difficult to fathom.[138]

But neither can such risks be avoided. Removed as we now are from the positivistic and foundationalist sensibilities of generations before,[139] it is apparent that our historical research cannot evade the vulnerabilities inherent to representing a past that can only be filtered through our perspective and the perspectives of

[136] On the epistemic division between the retrospective modes of memory and history, see Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, esp. 493–506; Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy; ed. Daniel Breazeale; trans. R. J. Hollingdale; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 59–67; Allan Megill, *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error: A Contemporary Guide to Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) 17–62.

[137] Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (trans. Peter Putnam; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) 57.

[138] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 101.

[139] Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Ideas in Context; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (trans. John and Anne Tedeschi; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013) 87–113; Gabrielle Spiegel, "The Future of the Past: History, Memory, and the Ethical Imperatives of Writing History," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 8 (2014) 149–79.

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others.[140] “Between absolute knowledge and hermeneutics,” Ricoeur comments, “it is necessary to choose.”[141] Rather than circumventing the claims made within the biblical writings in an ill-fated quest for knowledge untainted by the concerns and motivations of others, our historical studies are better served by taking their portrayals seriously, embedding these references within an assemblage of other evidence that pertains to the periods in time to which they refer. The dialectical give and pull of this confluence of traces, then, draws our attention to certain clusters or constellations of relationships that appear, as well as to their absences.[142] If the biblical past is impressed by ancient modes of thought other than those we hold to today, the information conveyed through it can still be drawn into our historical frameworks, to be dismissed or incorporated within our historical reconstructions depending on the associations that appear. As in the case of Shiloh, such arrangements are likely to be of a varied sort, necessitating a hermeneutic guided by what Ricoeur terms the “logic of the probable.”[143]

The Hebrew Bible is the richest source we possess about ancient Israel’s history. But as a work informed by ancient modes of retrospection that depart from those we hold to today, it is also a difficult one. In response to the disagreements over how the historian approaches these writings for the histories we write, this study has advocated for investigations that examine the conditions of thought that enabled these stories to be told. What results is an encounter between distinct configurations of knowledge, those that once supported biblical storytelling and those that contribute to our own “historicist habit of mind” that has become “so much the standard common sense that we fail to see that it is itself a preconception.”[144] But this encounter cannot be otherwise, it has been argued here, since knowledge has “not only a meaning or a truth, but a history.”[145] Such an approach may not overcome the crises of von Rad and Yerushalmi,[146] but it does promise to help us better appreciate the biblical past in “all its otherness.”

[140] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson; trans. Carol Diethe; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 87; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (trans. Joel Winsheimer and Donald Marshall; New York: Continuum, 2006) 267–304.

[141] Paul Ricoeur, “Appropriation,” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (ed. J. Thompson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 182–94, at 193.

[142] Pioske, “High Court,” 19–25.

[143] Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 338.

[144] Schiffman, *Birth*, 277.

[145] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 143.

[146] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 77–104. For von Rad, this crisis reaches perhaps its clearest expression when, confronted by the divergences between the biblical depictions of the past and historical ones, it is asked “whether nowadays we must choose between them” (Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:418).

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