

JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE
SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE
(Constituent Member of the American Council of Learned Societies)

EDITOR

MORTON S. ENSLIN
1010 Arch Street, 7th floor
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

BREVARD S. CHILDS, Yale University — Old Testament Book Reviews
JOHN REUMANN, Lutheran Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) — New Testament Book Reviews
ROBERT A. KRAFT, University of Pennsylvania — Monograph Series

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Term expires 1968: SHERMAN E. JOHNSON, Church Divinity School of the Pacific
JAMES MULLENBURG, San Francisco Theological Seminary
MARVIN POPP, Yale University
MORTON SMITH, Columbia University
FREDERICK V. WINNETT, University of Toronto

Term expires 1969: ERNEST CADMAN COLWELL, School of Theology at Claremont
FRANK M. CROSS, JR., Harvard University
ROBERT C. DENTAN, General Theological Seminary
ALLEN WIGGREN, University of Chicago
FRANKLIN W. YOUNG, Princeton University

Term expires 1970: SHELDON H. BLANK, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
BRUCE M. METZGER, Princeton Theological Seminary
OTTO A. PIPER, Princeton Theological Seminary, emeritus
R. B. Y. SCOTT, Princeton University
WILLIAM F. STINESPRING, Duke University

Manuscripts, communications, and books for review should be addressed to the Editor. The editors do not guarantee to review or return unsolicited books. Articles appearing in this *Journal* are regularly listed in the *International Index of Periodicals*. Changes of address should be sent to the office of the *Journal*, 1010 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107. Membership dues, which include subscription to the *Journal*, are \$9 per year; single copy price to members is \$2.50. Second Class Postage Paid at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY FOR 1968

President: JAMES MULLENBURG, San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, California
Vice-President: FRANK W. BEARE, University College, University of Toronto
Executive Secretary: ROBERT W. FUNK, Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, Tennessee
Treasurer: VIRGIL M. ROGERS, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey
Editor: MORTON S. ENSLIN, Dropsie College, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Associates in Council

Term expires 1968: M. JACK SUGGS, Brite College, Texas Christian University; WILLIAM S. MCCULLOUGH, University College, University of Toronto; HELMUT H. KOESTER, Harvard University
Term expires 1969: JACOB NEUSNER, Brown University; PAUL L. GARBER, Agnes Scott College; WILLIAM BROWNLEE, Claremont Graduate School
Term expires 1970: BREVARD S. CHILDS, Yale University; ALBERT C. SUNDBERG, Garrett Theological Seminary; BRUCE VAWTER, Kenrick Seminary
Delegate to the American Council of Learned Societies: KRISTER STENDAHL, Harvard University; *Alternate:* HERBERT G. MAY, Vanderbilt University
Representative on the Board of Trustees of the American Schools of Oriental Research: WILLIAM L. REED, Lexington Theological Seminary

Officers of the Mid-West Section

President: BASTIAAN VAN ELDEREN, Calvin Theological Seminary
Vice-President: MENAHEM MANSOOR, University of Wisconsin
Secretary: RICHARD A. HENSHAW, Kenyon College

Officers of the Canadian Section

Honorary President: R. B. Y. SCOTT, Princeton University
President: ERNEST G. CLARKE, University of Toronto
Vice-President: GEORGE TAYLOR, University of Winnipeg
Secretary-Treasurer: NORMAN E. WAGNER, Waterloo Lutheran University

Officers of the Pacific Coast Section

President: LOREN R. FISHER, School of Theology at Claremont
Vice-President: JONAS GREENFIELD, University of California
Secretary: VICTOR R. GOLD, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary-Graduate Theological Union

Officers of the Southern Section

President: JOHN M. BULLARD, Wofford College
Vice-President: J. L. CRENSHAW, Mercer University
Secretary: KWAI SING CHANG, Agnes Scott College

Officers of the New England Section

President: HELMUT H. KOESTER, Harvard University
Secretary-Treasurer: HARVEY H. GUTHRIE, JR., Episcopal Theological School

Officers of the Southwestern Section

President: M. JACK SUGGS, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University
Vice-President: JOHN H. HAYES, Trinity University
Secretary: GEORGE W. COATS, JR., McMurry College

Officers of the Middle Atlantic Section

THE DEATH OF JOSIAH: A CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE¹

STANLEY BRICE FROST

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

AMONG the many memorable sayings of Sherlock Holmes there is the very characteristic one about the dog. In reply to Inspector Gregory's query, Holmes remarks, "I would call your attention to the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." To this the inspector, properly mystified, retorts, "The dog did nothing in the night-time." "That," replies Sherlock, "was the curious incident."

Holmes is, of course, as usual quite right. When a watchdog, trained to make a great noise at the approach of an intruder, makes no sound while such a one comes and goes, the very absence of activity constitutes a most curious incident. The OT itself takes the same view. A passage in Trito-Isaiah² ironically invites Israel's enemies to attack her with impunity, since, it complains, her watchmen are blind and unaware, and further denigrates them by saying:

they are all dumb dogs,
they cannot bark;
dreaming, lying down,
loving to slumber.

This is presumably a reference to the prophets of Israel, and indeed it would be an indication of something very seriously wrong if great events were to occur and there was no comment from Israel's traditional interpreters. It was the business of the prophets to have insight into, and to interpret to their followers, the great events of their time. As Amos boasted:

Surely the Lord Yahweh does nothing
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.³

It is therefore significant that an event of climactic importance, both for the contemporary situation and also for the long-term developments of Hebrew history, should have occurred during the full tide of the pro-

¹ A paper read to the Society for Old Testament Study, London, January 1968.

² Isa 56 10.

³ Amos 3 7.

phetic movement, and that there should be, as far as has been recorded, no attempt by any prophet to interpret this event, nor indeed any mention of it in all the prophetic literature, apart from one very oblique reference, the character of which, as we shall see, only serves to underline the abnormality of the situation.

The event to which I refer is the death of Josiah in the year 609. The general historical circumstances are well established though there are some matters of fairly large detail on which we are left remarkably ill-informed. The period was that of the decline and eventual collapse of the Assyrian empire. For some two-and-a-half centuries, Judah had lived in fear of Assyria, but during the reign of King Josiah, that is, from 639 onwards, it had become increasingly obvious that this threat was passing away. As the weight of Assyrian domination lifted, so the tide of Judean nationalism and the hope of freedom and independence rose. Religiously, this rising tide expressed itself in the deuteronomic reformation; politically, it took the form of an attempt by Josiah to spread his influence northwards, and to take into his dominions some at least of the old Israelitish territory which had been ruled by his ancestors, but which had been lost to the House of David at the time of Jeroboam's revolt. His action in destroying the shrines at Bethel and in the other Samaritan cities is to be interpreted as an assertion of the reunion of the land of Israel with the land of Judah, so that the temple at Jerusalem should be the one shrine for all of newly restored Israel. Politics and religion go, of course, hand in hand, in the OT, and action in the one sphere is very significant for the other; so in attempting to re-establish the old Hebrew kingdom of his father David, Josiah was not, according to OT patterns of thought, and no doubt according to his own sincere understanding of the matter, simply indulging in personal aggrandisement. The theme of the Hebrew interpretation of history is summed up in the words "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." That had been the promise to Abraham; it had been renewed to Moses; it had been fulfilled in David.⁴ The belief that the House of David would continue by divine providence always to reign over Judah and Israel was certainly no innovation in the postexilic period. Robert Pfeiffer can poke gentle fun at the Jews for their capacity to believe in the eternity of that which had manifestly passed away for ever,⁵ but the thought was not one newly born after the overthrow of the dynasty. The idea of a divine covenant with the House of David, as a codicil, as it were, to the major covenant of Yahweh with the people of Israel, probably goes back to the Davidic period if not to David himself. Cer-

⁴ Gen 17 7; Exod 19 5-6; II Sam 7 21-24.

⁵ "Belief in the eternity of something that has ceased to exist is characteristic of Judaism in its early stages, and furnishes one of the secrets of its extraordinary vitality" (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 371).

tainly, the notion was current well before Josiah's own times, and in seeking to establish his control over the northern kingdom he doubtless conceived himself to be implementing the old dream of the united kingdom under God. Thus in Ezekiel, the oracle of the two sticks puts into words thoughts which, even though the expression of them may come from postexilic times, must have been long current in the royal court of Judah, and especially among the court-prophets of Jerusalem:

Behold, I will take the people from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all sides, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms . . . and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd.⁶

That was the kind of oracle which no doubt encouraged Josiah as he set out on the expedition to bring Bethel and Samaria under the control of Jerusalem once more, or indeed as he set out to do battle, as he later decided to do, with Egypt at the pass of Megiddo.

For the Hebrew revival was not left to develop for very long without interference from outside. The Chaldeans and the Medes together brought down the Assyrian power; Asshur fell in 614, Nineveh in 612, and the last stronghold, Harran, survived only a year or two longer. Egypt played the rôle of Assyria's ally in her last years, but delayed her major effort until almost the end. Pharaoh Necho marched north, in the year 609 B.C., towards the Euphrates, ostensibly to help Assyria in her troubles, but no doubt also to protect and indeed to further his own interests. Josiah very rightly saw in the Egyptian move a threat to Judah's new-found independence and hurried to occupy the strong point of Megiddo which had been left vacant by the departure of the Assyrians. Here in the narrow pass, if anywhere, the Egyptian advance northwards might be stopped, and the new threat to Judah's independence might be decisively rejected. It was a gallant but foolhardy thing to do and merely resulted in the king himself losing his life.

There are not many events which can be properly described as catastrophic, but this surely was one. Just as the move to occupy Samaria had been both politically and religiously significant, so the fiasco at Megiddo was a disaster for both politics and religion, for it is inconceivable that Josiah went up to Megiddo trusting in the very modest military strength of Judah alone. The story of Ahab seeking a reassuring oracle before he went up to Ramoth-gilead tells us how Hebrew kings set out upon a campaign.⁷ In the twentieth psalm we have a little liturgy for a king going forth to battle. Verses 1-5 are the cultic oracle of the priest, promising the king divine aid, and vss. 6-8 are his reply:

⁶ Ezek 37 15-28, esp. vss. 21-24.

⁷ I Kings 22 1 f.; cf. II Sam 5 17-21.

Now I know Yahweh will help his anointed;
 he will answer him from his holy heaven
 with mighty victories by his right hand.
 Some boast of chariots and some of horses;
 but we boast of the name of Yahweh our God.
 They will collapse and fall;
 but we shall rise and stand upright.⁸

Such a liturgy might very well have been written for the occasion of Josiah's expedition against Pharaoh Necho. Certainly we may be quite sure that Josiah would not have dared to do battle with the overwhelmingly superior forces of Egypt, unless he had received specific assurances from the prophets and the priests that divine aid would be afforded him in this task. That help, however, did not materialize. As a result, Josiah died ignominiously, and with him died Israel's freedom and Israel's hope. It was indeed a catastrophic event, and it is by no means surprising that the watchdogs did not bark. In the circumstances, it is very understandable that there should have been a deeply embarrassed, a deeply perplexed, silence.

What made matters all the worse was the fact that the prophetic movement, through their spokesman the prophetess Huldah, had given Josiah a personal assurance. At the time of the appearance of the scroll, presumed to be Deuteronomy, from the temple, the somewhat grudging prophetic verdict had been that while obedience to the new pattern for living could hardly be expected to preserve the nation for ever from the punishment it so richly deserved, at least a period of grace would be gained and the blow would not fall in Josiah's time: "I also have heard you, says Yahweh. Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon the place."⁹ We are reminded of the similar oracle to Hezekiah, only in his case the prophetic promise was fulfilled.¹⁰ In the case of Josiah, it very obviously and very conspicuously was not.

The embarrassment caused by the death of Josiah first shows itself in the very nature of the account of his death, given in II Kings. The RSV translation is:

In his days, Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria, to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him; and Pharaoh Necho slew him at

⁸ Ps 20. M. B. Rowton's suggestion (*JNES*, 10 [1952], pp. 128-30) that Josiah wanted to delay Necho long enough to ensure the defeat of Assur-uballit II, the last Assyrian king, and was successful in doing so, but lost his life in accomplishing his aim, and indeed went to Megiddo prepared to sacrifice himself and his army to do this, is purely conjectural and does not seem to me very plausible. It is a NT not an OT style of thinking.

⁹ II Kings 22 18-20.

¹⁰ II Kings 20 5-6.

Megiddo, when he saw him. And his servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo (II Kings 23 29 f.).

For "went to meet him" (לִקְרָאתוֹ) ERV reads "King Josiah went against him," and for "Pharaoh Necho slew him at Megiddo when he saw him," the Jerusalem Bible reads "but Neco killed him at Megiddo at the first encounter." The first translation is thus a little interpretive, but the second is reprehensibly so. It is the very terseness of the original wording which tempts translators into paraphrasing. The phrase כָּרְאָתוֹ אֹתוֹ may point to some minor textual disturbance, but the general impression remains of an account which, in trying to convey its content as shortly as possible, had ended up by being obscure. Did Josiah go up to Megiddo to do battle with Pharaoh, or was he, as some have contended, merely summoned there to a court-martial? It is a point to which we shall have to return.

The same embarrassment further shows itself in the almost complete absence of any other comment. True the Chronicler refers us to the lamentations of Jeremiah over the deceased king, but if what he has in mind is our Book of Lamentations, popularly ascribed to Jeremiah, then the most likely verse is in the fourth of the five laments which go to make up that little book:

The breath of our nostrils, Yahweh's anointed,
 was taken in their pits,
 he of whom we said "Under his shadow
 we shall live among the nations."¹¹

But the picture of a quarry pursued on the mountains and taken alive in trapping pits is not easily applied to what we know of Josiah's death and is much more appropriate as a reference to the unhappy end of Zedekiah, the last of the Judean kings. It is not obvious, in fact, that there is any reference to Josiah's death in the Book of Lamentations. When, however, we turn to the Book of Jeremiah itself, we have only two references to Josiah. One of these is directed to Jehoiakim, points him to his father's administration of justice, and cites Josiah's behavior as an example of a truly kingly way of life. In John Bright's lively translation we read:

Your father — didn't he live well enough,
 And enjoy himself,
 And yet do justice and right?
 He espoused the cause of the poor and the needy;
 Wasn't this what it means to know me?¹²

¹¹ Lam 4 20.

¹² Jer 22 15-16. The Hebrew text is somewhat confused, but Bright follows many predecessors in reading לוֹ וְשׂוֹב after וְשָׁחָה as suggested by LXX (*Jeremiah*, p. 137); cf. Kittel, *Bibl H*, in loc.

There is here no reference to any lamenting, though there may be a faint suggestion that while Josiah occupied himself with real king's business, that is, the administration of justice, all went well with him; it was only when he indulged in political pretensions that things went wrong. If so, it is only a very faint suggestion, but we note it for further reference. The only other allusion to Josiah among the recorded utterances of Jeremiah is his comment on the deportation of Shallum, and here the prophet simply alludes to Josiah in order to achieve emphasis by comparison; if you weep for Josiah, how much more ought you to weep for Shallum:

Weep not for the dead, nor bemoan him;
weep rather for him who departs.
For he'll never come back again,
Or see his native land.¹³

In fact, the silence of Jeremiah on the whole subject of Josiah speaks so loudly that Philip Hyatt proposed that Jeremiah could not have begun prophesying until after the distressing event of his death had taken place.¹⁴ Few scholars, however, have been prepared to follow Hyatt in the drastic reconstruction of the life of Jeremiah, which then becomes necessary. We are, therefore, left with the strange fact that even Jeremiah does not comment directly on this tragic event occurring in his own times. Probably he too did not wish to recall in later years the things he had earlier said about Josiah.

There are, however, two other passages which are sometimes said to break this general silence. The first is in a reference to the mourning ceremonies which took place at Megiddo. Thus the generally excellent article by Van Beek on Megiddo:¹⁵

The last biblical reference to Megiddo (Zech. 12:11) probably belongs to this period¹⁶ or slightly later. Here mourning in Jerusalem is compared to mourning in the plain of Megiddo. This may refer specifically to mourning for Josiah, or in a more general sense to mourning for all who had lost their lives in the historic battles that were fought near the city.

This remark is revealing, in that it shows how much modern writers feel that the death of Josiah must have set off large repercussions in the religious circles of its own day, and that the reverberations must have continued long after; they therefore tend to find evidences of those echoes where in fact they manifestly do not exist. For when we turn to Zech 12 11 we read: "On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as

¹³ Jer 22 10 (Bright's translation, *op. cit.*).

¹⁴ *IntB*, 5, p. 779.

¹⁵ *IntDB*, 3, p. 341.

¹⁶ I. e., that of Stratum I, ca. 6-4th cent. B.C.

the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo." Hadad-rimmon is a combination of the Syrian deity Rimmon and the Amorite storm-god Hadad assimilated to the general Baal-Tammuz-Adonis vegetation-god cult, in which an annual mourning for the deceased deity was a regular part of the ritual. The mourning at Megiddo was then a cult mourning and had no reference to Josiah whatsoever.

The other attempt to discover a reference to the tragedy of Megiddo starts from the interpretation of a text in the Book of Revelation.¹⁷ The writer is at this point referring to the assembling of the armies of the world for the last great battle against the power of God, and says: "And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon." Where, then, is Armageddon? The answer which has been traditional is that Greek ἀρμαγεδών is a transliteration of Hebrew הַר מְגִדּוֹ ("the mount of Megiddo"), and that this place was chosen not only because it was here that Deborah and Barak overcame Sisera but more especially because it was here that Josiah died and the hope of the kingdom of God was overthrown. How fitting then (the exegesis runs) that it should be here that the last battle should be fought, which should re-establish that same kingdom for ever. That this identification is very old is shown by the fact that a number of early Greek copyists make the matter clearer by inserting a second delta into the word, spelling it ἀρμαγεδδών. C. C. Torrey remarks that after General Allenby's victory over the Turks at Megiddo in World War I he was often referred to as "Allenby of Armageddon," a reminder that that war was advocated as "the war to end all wars," and by many people sincerely accepted as such. But as Torrey points out,¹⁸ the final assault of the forces of evil upon the power of God was unanimously located by the apocalyptic writers at Jerusalem, and he adds:

In view of all this, it would be very surprising if the writer of the Book of Revelation should represent the overthrow of the hosts of wickedness as taking place anywhere else than in the immediate neighborhood of Jerusalem.¹⁹

His own preference for the interpretation of the reference ἀρμαγεδών is הַר מוֹעֵד ("mount of assembly").²⁰ At any rate, whatever was the original significance of Armageddon in Rev 16 16, it was certainly not a reference to Megiddo, and even more certainly not a comment upon the death of Josiah.

¹⁷ Rev 16 16.

¹⁸ He cites earlier verses in this same chapter, vss. 2-3 and 9; also 14 1 f., Joel 4 1-14 (E. 3 1-14), Isa 29 1-7, II Esd 13 1-38 (esp. vs. 35).

¹⁹ "Armageddon," *HTR*, 31 (1938), pp. 237-48.

²⁰ Torrey says this was first suggested by Hommel in the *Neue Kirckliche Zeitschrift* in 1890. The earlier reference to Zion as "the mount of assembly" he finds in Isa 14 13. Hebrew 'ayin is regularly transliterated by Greek gamma in LXX.

We are left, then, with a general conspiracy of silence on the subject, broken only by the rather unconvincing account of a battle in the Chronicler's reworked version of the account in Kings. There have been many who were not prepared to trust the Chronicler at this point, as at many others. R. H. Kennett, A. C. Welch, and T. H. Robinson all took the view that Josiah was in fact summoned to Megiddo to face something like a court-martial. It does not seem to me, however, likely that in those circumstances the body would have been given back to his servants for honorable burial. The author of the account in Kings could hardly have invented that detail since a number of his readers would have been in the position to remember whether Josiah did or did not have a proper funeral in Jerusalem. Nor does it seem to me probable that "the people of the land" would have proceeded to nominate Jehoahaz, nor would he have felt himself at liberty to accept the throne, if Necho had already assumed such direct control of Judean affairs as a court-martial would indicate. The impression I get is of a confused situation in which Necho's authority takes time to assert itself. The Chronicler is therefore probably right when he interprets the uninformative phrases of II Kings 23:29 as referring to a battle, though there is little doubt that his own description of Josiah's death was freely copied from the account in Kings of the death of Ahab, as Welch contended.²¹ But whether it was a battle or a court-martial, the result was the same: the death of Josiah and the end of Judah's political hopes.

The events at Megiddo must, however, be recognized as something more than just a military defeat; and we may not dismiss the downfall of Josiah as simply one more illustration that the unworthy political aims of Judean kings fail, but the religious ideals of the Hebrew prophets march grandly forward.²² This easy distinction between politics and religion will not do for the OT. Rather, John Bright is correct when he sees in the chain of events which began with the death of Josiah and ended with the fall of Jerusalem a challenge to the classic theology of the OT. He writes:

²¹ ZAW, 43 (1925), pp. 255 ff. Martin Noth refers to "the remarkably brief reference to the event" in Kings, and then adds: "We may conclude from this that a battle between the two sides did not in fact take place at Megiddo, but that Necho succeeded in some way or other in seizing the person of Josiah and that the Israelite forces gave up the fight after Josiah had been killed (*History of Israel*, E. T., p. 279). That seems to me highly speculative. John Bright, however, stands by the older view that a battle did take place (*History of Israel*, p. 303).

²² Cf. H. B. MacLean (*IntDB*, 2, p. 999): "But why then did Jeremiah take so little notice of him (sc. Josiah)? His verdict is given in the sharp contrast which the prophet draws between Jehoikim and his father. . . . Josiah did 'justice and righteousness,' and 'judged the cause of the poor and needy.' But perhaps Jeremiah looked beneath the surface and saw that Josiah's real goal was the establishment of a political kingdom."

Anyone who has grasped the nature of Judah's national theology as popularly understood will see that it was totally unprepared to meet the emergency that was impending. This theology . . . centered in the affirmation of Yahweh's choice of Zion as his seat, and his immutable promises to the Davidic dynasty of an eternal rule and victory over its foes. We have seen how it was thrown into crisis by the Assyrian invasions, and how Isaiah . . . had reinterpreted it and enabled it to survive. . . . Though Josiah's reform had called the nation behind this dogma to a yet older theology, this had been, as we have seen, temporary and largely cancelled by the disillusionment of Josiah's tragic death and the unfortunate events that followed.²³

This is a pointer in the right direction but does not in my opinion go far enough. It was not only the nationalistic "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge" type of theology which was challenged by Josiah's death, but also that "yet older theology" to which Bright refers, the faith of the prophets, the faith of Deuteronomy, the faith of the Psalter, the faith of the OT as a whole. That "older theology" — and in using Bright's phrase I am not underwriting the view that this theology was in fact any older or more venerable than the nationalistic type of thought from which he seeks to differentiate it — was in fact the central conviction of the Hebrew faith. It was, in brief, the belief that if a man did what was right he would be materially blessed and temporally prospered. This conviction — "faith" would be a more appropriate word, since it was an unproven hypothesis very strongly adhered to — is to be found in all types of literature in all periods from at least the eighth century forward.

Thus Isaiah of Jerusalem says:

If you are willing and obedient,
you shall eat the good of the land;
but if you refuse and rebel,
you will be eaten — by the sword!²⁴

In the Psalter we have this teaching in innumerable places but we can conveniently recall "the Gentleman's Psalm":

Yahweh, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?

then follows a list of moral precepts, and the closing comment is:

He who does these things shall never be moved.²⁵

In the wisdom literature we recall such a well-known saying as the words of the teacher:

My son, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments;
for length of days and years of life
and abundant welfare will they give you.²⁶

²³ *History of Israel*, p. 311.

²⁵ Ps 15.

²⁴ Isa 1:19–20.

²⁶ Prov 3:1–2.

This teaching that goodness secured for the individual a peaceful and prosperous way of life was still more strongly upheld when applied to the life of the nation. Thus (to take only the prophet and the priest to give us their examples) we can quote from the seventh-century anthology which goes by the name of Jeremiah:

For if you truly amend your ways, and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever.²⁷

We can also point to the magnificent expression of this teaching in Leviticus 26, the passage which begins:

If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.²⁸

But nowhere did the teaching come to such fullness of expression as in the work of the deuteronomistic school:

Now this is the commandment the statutes and the ordinances which Yahweh your God commanded me to teach you . . . Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them; that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.²⁹

This teaching is not only set out explicitly and *in extenso* in the Book of Deuteronomy but is further demonstrated by the great history of Israel for which Deuteronomy served as introduction. In the speeches of Moses which the book purports to record, the sacred character of Israel's past is fully expounded: Israel is the people of the promise, whom Yahweh delivered with a strong arm out of Egypt and has now brought to the very frontier of the promised land. That same view of providential history is then carried forward through Joshua and Judges, through Samuel and Kings, the facts being so presented and the history being so interpreted that the emergent thesis is quite unmistakable: if Israel and her leaders are loyal to Yahweh, he will be loyal to Israel.

These are the generalities of OT study and we do not need to illustrate them any further. It is, however, interesting to note how the more intractable facts of the tradition were disciplined and brought into line with the thesis. Moses was pre-eminently the "man of God," the devoted עֶבֶד יְהוָה, "the Savior of Israel"; yet the tradition was firm in recording that he of all people never entered the Land of Promise. He was, accord-

²⁷ Jer 7 5-6. Whether the words are of Jeremiah or not is irrelevant to our present purpose.

²⁸ Lev 26 3-45.

²⁹ Deut 6 1-13.

ing to that tradition, taken to the top of Pisgah and allowed to see the Promised Land, but Yahweh said to him: "I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there."³⁰ In order to safeguard the theology, there must obviously be some explanation why he was thus punished. So a sin is found for Moses, at Meribah, though the exact nature of the sin is difficult to determine.³¹ Another test case was that of Saul, who started out so successfully and who then apparently forfeited the divine favor, for instead of winning battles he began to lose them. The sin to which his downfall was attributed was his desire to preserve alive his enemy Agag, king of the Amalekites, and to enter into a treaty with him, rather than to put him and all his people to the ban. Samuel arrived in time to prevent this distressing example of humanitarian feeling, and duly hewed Agag in pieces before Yahweh.³² Nevertheless Saul's faltering had cost him the divine favor. He was rejected from the kingship of Israel and the theology was preserved intact.

Two further instances may be cited from the work of the Chronicler, where the same theological motives are clearly discernible. In the first instance we have King Uzziah, who was smitten with leprosy. Clearly then, he must have been guilty of some great sin, and this the Chronicler finds in his attempt to arrogate to himself priestly privileges — something which David and Solomon certainly claimed for themselves, as no doubt did many if not all of their successors. But by the Chronicler's time this could be made to seem a great sin, and could be used to explain the fearful scourge of leprosy as a punishment for it.³³ In the second instance, the problem is Manasseh: he was the most wicked of all the kings of Judah, according to both Kings and Chronicles; yet he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem and was buried in honor and peace after a long and prosperous reign. The Chronicler brings him theologically into line by embroidering upon (if not outright inventing) an imprisonment in Babylon, and by recording during that imprisonment an act of repentance which allowed God to forgive Manasseh his sin and so make it theologically permissible for him to enjoy his long and quiet reign.³⁴

³⁰ Deut 34 4.

³¹ Num 20 1-13. Whether he struck the rock instead of just commanding it, whether he struck the rock twice instead of once, whether he asked ironically, "Shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" and was surprised by the divine action, or whether he arrogated the divine rôle to himself, rather than giving glory to God, is not clear; but the traditions all agree that he offended the Deity in some way, and thereby lost his privilege of entering the Promised Land with the people for whom he had done so much.

³² I Sam 15 1-33.

³³ II Chron 26 16.

³⁴ II Chron 33 1-13. The invented penitence gave rise to the apocryphal work known as the Prayer of Manasseh; it is dated anywhere from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D.

The death of Josiah, however, proved to be the one recalcitrant fact which could not be dealt with in this manner. In this event, history had caught up with the deuteronomic compilers of Kings, and in dealing with Josiah they were recording the facts of their own time. Indeed it is to be presumed that the narrative of Josiah's reformation, like the rest of their historical works, was written while he was still on the throne and still surrounded by the powerful aura of success. The historians were thus too near to the disaster of his death, when it occurred, to treat it as anything other than the utter tragedy it was. Their sole effort to offer any theological rationalization was to preface the appendix, in which at a later date they recorded the death of Josiah and the sorry events which led inevitably to the fall of Jerusalem twenty years later, with a sentence or two reiterating Huldah's forecast that the sins of Manasseh and his generation were so great that not even the virtue of Josiah and the deuteronomic reformation could turn away the divine wrath:

Before him there was no king like him, who turned to Yahweh with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him. Still Yahweh did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him.³⁵

But this was an attempt to lose Josiah in the crowd, as it were, and to say that his personal virtue was unavailing in a time of general wickedness; but after all, he was the king, not just a private individual. He was the king, and on their own showing, the Davidic, messianic king. When you have built a figure up to the heroic proportions of the deuteronomic presentation of Josiah, he refuses to be lost in a crowd. He still stands out head and shoulders above the rest, and the question remains unanswered: "Why, if your philosophy of history is true, why was the virtue, the exemplary virtue, of this best of all kings unavailing?" In any case, later teachers saw the inadequacy of this solution of Judah's theological troubles. Jeremiah is quoted as saying:

In those days they shall no longer say: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." But everyone shall die for his own sin; each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.³⁶

Ezekiel takes the same text and builds on it a lengthy discourse which has many illustrations but only one message: the son shall not be punished for the sin of the father, nor the father for the sin of the son, for "the soul that sins it alone shall die." The deuteronomic historians' rather halfhearted attempt to deal theologically with Josiah's death just will not do, and the OT knows very well that it won't.

³⁵ II Kings 23 25-26.

³⁶ Jer 31 29 f.

The Chronicler when he came to the problem, several centuries later, tried to go back to the older method of dealing with this kind of difficulty — he sought to discover in Josiah a moral fault to which the disaster could be attributed. He not only says that Josiah fought a battle with Necho, but that before the battle Necho tried to dissuade him, claiming (as did Sennacherib to Hezekiah) that he had come at the prompting of God, and that for Josiah to attempt to oppose him was to oppose the divine plans of God. Josiah's guilt is thus shown to be his inability to recognize the word of God when he heard it: "Josiah did not listen to the words of Necho from the mouth of God."³⁷ Certainly, Josiah might be forgiven for not recognizing the word of God when it came to him from such an unlikely source as Pharaoh Necho. If God wanted to give him a word, would not Josiah naturally expect it to be given through the prophets? As I said earlier, we can be quite sure that there had been such a word, and that it had in fact encouraged Josiah to go out to meet Necho. No one either in ancient or modern times is going to take the Chronicler's solution very seriously.

We are left then with a general conspiracy of silence on the subject of the death of Josiah because, given the OT premises, no one could satisfactorily account for it theologically. The fact is that the death of Josiah proved to be the relatively small but sharp-edged rock on which the OT concept of divinely motivated history foundered. Past history can be more or less successfully manipulated and presented as *Heilsgeschichte*, but to interpret recent and contemporary events as providential history is much more demanding. The silence which followed the death of Josiah was not merely the embarrassed silence of the prophets who had previously encouraged him to go to Megiddo; after all, Israel had coped with false prophets many times before, as, for example, Micaiah ben Imlah did with those who encouraged Ahab to go up to Ramoth-gilead, where he too died in battle; no, the silence following the death of Josiah which is so profound is the silence of the historiographers. Israel had invented history writing by accepting a premise: Yahweh is at work in the events of time achieving his will. Later, that premise was amplified by saying that he worked in history through the application of moral law as the expression of his own nature. Starting from that premise, Israel had told the story of her past in such a way as to disclose the purpose of God in history: the establishment of his kingdom. But now something had happened which had contravened the premise, and that something was the tragedy of Megiddo. Nationally, the ensuing fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people were far greater events, but theologically the moment of disaster was the death of Josiah at

³⁷ II Chron 35 22. This extraordinary phrase is too much for some LXX copyists, who make it read "to the words of Jeremiah the prophet."

Megiddo. Its effect was to destroy the premise on which all Hebrew historiography had been built.

Thereafter no one wrote history in Israel for centuries, not until the Chronicler gave an ecclesiastically embroidered version of events now safely sacralized in a far distant past.³⁸ When the Jewish people did resume contemporary historiography in the time of the Maccabees, it was written, not on the Hebrew pattern but on the Greek. It is still moralistic history, it is still in that sense providential history; but the story now told concerns events *in* history rather than the events *of* history. No longer is the writer of history a son of the prophets. He makes no implicit claim that Yahweh does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the historiographers of the *Heilsgeschichte*. Rather, he tells his story as a small part of a larger sweep of history, the interpretation of which he leaves to the apocalyptists. Indeed, I believe it is true to say that Jewry has never resumed the Hebrew style of historiography. A case could be made out, perhaps, that it was resumed by Eusebius and the Christian history writers, right through to Bossuet in the eighteenth century. They, however, in their turn faltered in the glare of the Enlightenment and the dawn of the Scientific Age. A further case could be made out, possibly, that in our own day the task has been resumed by Arnold Toynbee; part of the evidence would have to be that professional historians like Pieter Geyl indignantly repudiate him as an historian and insist that he is in fact a prophet.³⁹ Perhaps the significance of Toynbee is that he is pointing men who have faith in God to a re-writing of history on the old Hebrew premise, and is suggesting that now for the first time we have sufficient materials from world history, ancient history and prehistory, from evolution and cosmology and religion, to be able to get the perspectives right. If, however, anyone should be bold enough to attempt such a task, he will still, I suggest, have to account, at least *en passant*, for the death of Josiah at Megiddo in the year 609 B.C.

³⁸ Professor P. R. Ackroyd has kindly drawn my attention to his paper "History and Theology in the Writings of the Chronicler," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 38, 8 (Sept. 1967), pp. 501-15. He says of the Chronicler, "he is less concerned with the presentation and interpretation of history and more concerned with the theologizing of past and present" (p. 509), and again, "The Chronicler . . . is not making an unrealistic attempt at providing a new historical presentation, a new updating of *Heilsgeschichte*; he offers a further and more far-reaching dehistoricizing of what he sees as the essential elements in the community's previous history." That seems to me very fair and perceptive — but why should the Chronicler want to "dehistoricize" history, unless the OT concept of history had proven unworkable?

³⁹ Pieter Geyl, *Debates With Historians*, "Toynbee the Prophet," pp. 181-202.

PROTEKTORAT DER MIDIANITER ÜBER IHRE NACHBARN IM LETZTEN VIERTEL DES 2. JAHRTAUSENDS V. CHR.

OTTO EISSFELDT

MARTIN-LUTHER-UNIVERSITÄT HALLE-WITTENBERG

MIT BEITRÄGEN VON

WILLIAM F. ALBRIGHT

WÄHREND uns für die Geschichte der Nabatäer,¹ die vom 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr. ab bis in den Anfang des 2. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. die — das palästinische Südland und die Sinai-Halbinsel einschließende — syrisch-arabische Steppe beherrscht haben, außer den von ihnen selbst herrührenden Inschriften und Monumenten wie Tempel und Skulpturen, Nachrichten griechischer und römischer Autoren zur Verfügung stehen, sind wir für die Midianiter, die im letzten Viertel des 2. Jahrtausends das ein Jahrtausend später von den Nabatäern besetzte Gebiet innegehabt haben, im wesentlichen auf die spärlichen Angaben des Alten Testaments über sie angewiesen. Immerhin sind diese gehaltvoller, als man meistens annimmt, und lassen neue und wichtige Einzelheiten der midianitischen Geschichte erkennen. Worum es da geht, soll im folgenden versuchsweise dargelegt werden.

1.

Aus Gen 25 1-6, wo sechs dem Abraham von seiner Nebenfrau Ketura geborene Söhne, darunter Midian, genannt werden und von ihnen gesagt wird, daß Abraham sie aus Rücksicht auf das — den Anspruch auf das Gelobte Land bedeutende — Erbrecht des ihm von seiner Hauptfrau Sara geborenen Sohnes Isaak "nach Osten, in das Land des Ostens" geschickt habe, ist nur das zu entnehmen, daß Midian hier als Sohn Abrahams, also als mit Israel nahe verwandt, erscheint, und daß die syrisch-arabische Wüste als sein Wohnsitz gilt. Von politischen Beziehungen Midians zu Israel und zu anderen Nachbarn, etwa zu Edom oder Moab, ist hier

¹ Zu einigen neuerdings zu Tage gekommenen nabatäischen Inschriften vgl. O. Eißfeldt, „Neue Belege für nabatäische Kultgenossenschaften“ (*Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, 15 [1969]), wo viel die Nabatäer überhaupt angehende Literatur genannt wird.