

חברת המחקר

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Israel Eph'al

Chaldaean chieftains on the border of Elam enjoyed the support of the Assyrian authorities for their loyalty.

We should also examine the extent of the contribution of the vassal states to the imperial security systems. They maintained the administration and the current security within their boundaries with local manpower. (Vassal kings and their armies also participated in campaigns of the imperial armies in their neighborhood.⁴⁶)

All these political arrangements enabled the mobility of the relatively small Assyrian army to be maintained and ensured that it could be assigned for substantial fighting.

IV. The study of warfare and military control, only some aspects of which have been demonstrated here, demands, then, a comprehensive view of the subject, beyond the individual events with which research has contented itself so far. Recognition of the existence of constants whose significance for military history has not changed through the ages – such as topographical and climatic conditions and, to a certain degree, also logistic data, as long as they were not affected by technological innovations – enables us to use analogy as a means for sharpening the definition of various aspects of military reality. Thus, for example, the detailed figures about water supply for Napoleon's army on its march through Sinai (1799) and for the Turkish expedition to the Suez canal (late 1915) help us to establish the problems faced by Esarhaddon and Cambyses in their preparations for their campaigns against Egypt.⁴⁷ Analogy, thus, helps us to understand the basic factors; but it is doubtful whether we can adopt it for the reconstruction of a particular battle. In most cases we lack precise geographical, and particularly topographical data; data on the course of the battle are too general; and, above all, we are limited because of the considerable dependence of warfare on a huge variety of unpredictable human, technical and other factors which cannot be assessed.

In conclusion, this outline demonstrates what should and can be done in order to gain a better understanding of military reality and its applications for the ancient Near Eastern empires. A systematic and comprehensive study will not only improve our familiarity with the basic factors of war which, according to Braudel, "never ceased to trouble the lives of men", but may promote the acquaintance with the nature of the ancient empires, of which our concepts are but too vague.

46. Cf., e.g., *KU* 215:12 ff. campaign of Tiplath-pileser III; *IB* VII 8 (Rm. i 68-74): 138-140 (Cyl. C i 23-51), campaign of Ashurbanipal.
47. See I. Eph'al, *The Ancient Arabs*, Jerusalem-Leiden, 1982, pp. 137-142.

BIBLICAL HISTORICISM

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This paper tries to answer the old, plain but confusing question: what kind of history writing – if any – do we have in the Old Testament? The problem¹ touches many interesting subjects, and requires some detailed investigations and discussion of various scholarly positions; all these are tempting sidelines which cannot be accommodated in the space of a single paper. I have found myself forced to cut off many branches to keep my argument down to a manageable shape and size; I hope that the remaining scars won't bother the reader too much.

An Illustration

The account of Saul's elevation to kingship is, to the critically minded, rather unconvincing as a statement of fact. Literary analysis reveals that it is a tangle of textual elements. Yet I do find it rather impressive as a suggested solution to a typical historian's problem. Greek historians (e.g. Herodotus, or Plutarchus) frequently quote several accounts of a single event, remarking in between that 'others tell the following story'. A modern historian presents his own view of 'what must have actually happened', giving his divergent sources in footnotes. In the Book of Samuel we find three stories telling how Saul was made king.²

1. The circumstance which made me think about the subject in earnest was the symposium held in 1979 by the Old Testament and Near East group at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. I have also made full use of the opportunity to discuss my ideas about the subject with my colleagues at the Institute, during the academic year 1978-79; I thank them all very much for their patience.
2. The suggestion that 'much in OT historiography might be explained by the absence of footnotes' (which make the accommodation of divergent bits of information easier) is Yair Hofmann's (in various conversations).

with some ideological discourses presented in speeches (1 Sam. 8-12). The stories are combined in a single narrative, on the assumption that they need not be really contradictory. First Samuel anointed Saul at Ramah in secret (1 Sam. 10:1-10, 16), since the presence of the Philistines (10:5) made caution necessary. Then, after a period of careful preparation, the Lord's choice was made public at Mizpah (10:17-25). General recognition came only after the new king's victory over Ammon was ratified by a 'renewal of the kingship' at Gilgal (11, 14-15). The speeches conveying the significance of these events are neatly placed as a prologue (ch. 8) and epilogue (ch. 12). The whole pericope thus combines several sources about a single event into a plausible reconstruction of a political process. Its author, however, did not impose his reconstruction on his material, spelling out his views directly, taking care to underpin the weak points and radically rewriting his sources. He evidently used them more or less as he found them, suggesting his solution by the narrative itself, and leaving plenty of contradictions and loose ends in the story. The reader is thus shown the evidence in the hope that he will agree with the author's interpretation. This gentlemanly procedure has made the author look like a fool to his less civilized critics. They are happily busy in tearing his edifice apart, and trying to rearrange the pieces, caring nothing for the author's historical reconstruction.

Historiography

Such reconstructions are rather common in biblical historiography, and often enough noticed by scholars. I have chosen this rather transparent example because it shows clearly the problem-solving aspect of the ancient historians' work.³ Reconstructing history means to narrate it, therefore I might have argued simply that the richness of biblical narrative about the past is by itself sufficient proof of genuine historical activity. This, however, might be taken for an overstatement of my case, because of the deceptive plainness of the narration. This is why I prefer to point out the problem-solving aspect; it shows that the historians of ancient Israel did what all historians are basically doing: finding out as much as possible about past events and showing how they make sense. Their occasional failures and awkward faithfulness to their

3. H. Piene, "What are Historians Trying to Do?", in H. Meyerhoff (ed.), *Philosophy of History in our Time, an Anthology*, New York, 1959, p. 94.

sources show that the job was not as easy and 'primitive' as it seems. It was indeed quite an achievement to impose a more or less coherent single line of narrative on such a lot of events, beginning with the Creation and ending with the renewal of hope under Nehemiah. The solutions inherent in the job still determine much of our thinking,⁴ though we are doing our best to replace them.

In the cultural context of the ancient Near East Israel was, as far as we know, the only local branch to produce a historiography. What is usually called ancient Mesopotamian historiography consists mainly, though not exclusively, of records of recent events,⁵ and does not contain any extensive narratives about the actual (not mythical) but distant past.⁶ Yet it seems that the intellectuals of ancient Mesopotamia were fully aware of their past, and quite knowledgeable about it, too.⁷ They had all the equipment necessary for a historiography, but evidently felt no need for it. Seen in this light Old Testament historiography becomes more significant than a mere achievement, or than an art at which our ancestors excelled. It betrays a peculiar attitude to life.

Historicism

It is demonstrably true that my existence is largely determined by whatever has happened to my people in the past, but I need not be aware of this truth. As an individual, I might start any day with a feverish search for 'roots'; I might also blissfully ignore the past and find myself another cure for my existential discomfort. Similarly, communities develop preoccupations with their past, to legitimate political claims or for other reasons, but they need not do so. Human existence is rather confusing, and seeing how one thing led to another is only one – possibly not the best – way of dealing with the confusion.

A somewhat unorthodox use of the term historicism might be conveniently introduced at this point: Let it denote the existential attitude

4. E.g. "the period of Judges".
5. Such as royal inscriptions, annals, preambles to treaties. For a survey and evaluation of this material see A.L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 1964, pp. 144-150. For a survey of the Hittite material see Güterbock's contribution to this volume on Hittite historiography.
6. The point is made authoritatively by W.G. Lambert, ("Destiny and Divine Intervention in Babylon and Israel," *OJS* 17 [1971], pp. 65-72) who also considers possible exceptions.
7. See Oppenheim, (above, n. 5), pp. 150-151.

just described, which seeks answers in the actual (not mythical) past. Or, in other words, it is an intellectual habit of finding the past interesting and significant. By this definition, there are many historicisms: the belief in progress, e.g., is a historicism, but whatever makes a modern historian tick is usually another historicism. I obviously cannot afford to list them all, still less to describe them, but I hope that my meaning is clear enough. So should be my point that Biblical Judaism is a historicism.

The Divine in History

These considerations should be of some help in the fairly recent debate about "the Divine in History". All ancient Near Eastern deities of some standing interfere in the affairs of their peoples. Victories, defeats and much else are quite regularly explained in the literature of the region as manifestations of divine benevolence and wrath. It has been argued⁸ that this "experience of Divine in History" was simply shared by ancient Israel; so that the unique qualities of Israel's religion must be sought elsewhere. This argument is valuable as a debunking exercise and quite right as far as it goes. The only thing wrong with it is a misuse of the term 'history', or perhaps its confusion with 'destiny'. Chemosh being angry with his land⁹ is a pious explanation of a defeat, not a historical reflection. Seen as an item in a chain of *past* events, which are supposed to make some sense, the defeat and the pious comment may become historically significant; they are not, however, presented in such a light on the Moabite Stone. The same comment can be applied to practically any remark about divine action determining human events, including many pious comments in the Old Testament.¹⁰ "The only type of Old Testament statement about divine intervention which cannot be matched by some quotation from ancient Mesopotamian literature is the sort of thing which we have in Gen. 15:13-16":¹¹ i.e. contemplations of divine action through several

8. H.W. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel*, London, 1978, pp. 64-92; B. Albrektson, *History and the Gods* (Conectionea Biblica, Old Testament Series 1), Lund, 1967. For reactions to Albrektson see Lambert, "History and the Gods: A Review Article", *Orientalia* 39 (1970), pp. 170-177, and the literature quoted there.

9. King Mesha's inscription, so called Moabite Stone, line 5 (no. 181 apud Donner-Röllig, *KAT* 1, p. 33; *ANET*, p. 320). King Mesha refers to the past, but only as far as it concerns his own deeds.

10. E.g. Num. 14:22; 21:3; Josh. 11:20; 1 Sam. 7:10; 2 Kings 9:6-9; 14:26-27.

11. I am quoting what Prof. Güterbock told me, from memory.

generations. Joshua 24, and other instances of von Rad's 'historical credo'¹² might serve as better examples. It follows that Israel was unique in the ancient Near East in its true 'experience of the Divine in History', and not only in current affairs. Or, other gods react to human behaviour; so does the God of Israel, but He also pursues a deliberate long-term policy. In other words: Israel's culture is historicist, Mesopotamian culture is non-historicist.¹³

Biblical historicism is not confined to the historical books of the Old Testament. Prophets occasionally remind the people of their past (e.g. Micah 6:5); psalmists spell out the lessons of history in long reviews (Pss. 78; 105; 106) and refer to it in prayer (e.g. Ps. 44:2-4). Historicism is indeed a basic component of the OT attitude to human existence.

General Features of OT Historiography

Its foremost manifestation is, of course, the historians' work at reconstructing the past. Its general features are somewhat difficult to recognize, first because we are too familiar with them to take notice, second because we tend to overvalue either the quality of the religious thought involved, or the 'historicity' (=factual reliability) of some accounts. The third, and objective, reason for our difficulty is that no two subjects are treated in the same way. The problem-solving activity must have encountered too many variables for the development of a standard procedure. These were: the quantity and quality of the available material, the discrepancies in the sources, the elements calling for various treatments on the story-telling level, the significance of each event with the need for its particular theological interpretation. I shall nevertheless attempt a series of generalizations. They may seem banal and even cavalier, but I hope that they will reveal the basic attitudes of biblical historicism.

The large part of OT historiography dealing with events from Joshua to Nehemiah is mostly about wars for territory, political dominance or independence, personal power struggles and (less explicitly) social tensions. These are what we have become accustomed to regard as the

12. G. von Rad, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1961, pp. 11-15.

13. The point is made by Lambert, (above, n. 8). Saggs (above, n. 8, p. 91) is aware of the difference between the recording of recent events and retrospective writing about the past, but does not realise its significance.

The Hittites were apparently more interested in the past than the Babylonians and Assyrians; see Prof. Güterbock's contribution to this volume.

ordinary stuff of history. Their treatment is relatively free of mystifications and ideological distortions: it displays a grasp of geographical, social and political realities, and an ability to point them out. The historians of the OT may be less sharply analytical (or long-winded) in their appreciation of geopolitics than their Greek and modern colleagues, but they are nobody's fools. Neither miracles, nor obviously false (i.e. factually unreliable) reconstructions of events, such as Samuel's victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. 7), prevent the functioning of this feeling for geopolitics; a story may look improbable to the critically-minded, but it will make some sense geopolitically.

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In other words, we are always shown how one thing led to another, on the human level. The question why it did so is invariably answered by the assertion that it was the Lord's just and reasonable decision. The historian always finds an explanation using the terms of reward, punishment, or mercy. A general theory of theodicy has been developed in the process into a very subtle and flexible tool, which is effectively used to solve all kinds of problems. Its result is to make Divine initiative rather rare and marginal. God has sent Samuel to anoint David. The choice was entirely His own and rather surprising in human eyes (1 Sam. 16). It was, however, the outcome of the Lord's decision to reject Saul, a decision based on Saul's disobedience. It is man who sets Divine theodicy in motion by his behaviour, deserving reward or punishment, it is not God's business to push him along. So we cannot truly say that God acts in history: He reacts in most cases, though neither automatically nor arbitrarily: He takes His time, and pursues His policy. Nevertheless, if it were not for Israel's sins they would be secure in the enjoyment of their land, living in a perfect society based on the Lord's laws and commandments. Such contemplations, however, are not the ancient historians' concern. They reconstruct what has actually happened in the past, in terms of geopolitics, and they explain it by theodicy.

A different set of generalizations is necessary for the treatment of Israel's early history, from Abraham to Joshua. Only small bits in it belong to the ordinary stuff of history. The patriarchs are shown as seminomads, gradually gaining wealth and respectability. Such a group of seminomads is as geopolitically real as any other social unit, yet it does not belong to the ordinary stuff of conventional history, which does not bother with the fortunes of a single peaceful family. This is one of the several reasons for the ordinary empirical historian's difficulty to get a real grasp on the Patriarchs: they may be real enough

but they are not his sort of subject. Another, and more profound, reason is that the ancient historian shows the realities of the Patriarchs' existence only incidentally; for him they are first of all the carriers of a blessing and of a promise, though he also sees them as real persons with real problems. To speak about them in terms of geopolitics means a translation of the biblical account into another 'universe of discourse'; while no such translation is necessary for any subject later than Joshua, the translation becomes even more "violent" when applied to the Wandering in the Wilderness: for us it is a hazy remembrance of the nomadic stage of Israel's existence, for the biblical account something entirely different. I have excellent reasons to believe that the Exodus was an actual event,¹⁴ but I can not find much useful geopolitical information about it in the Bible. The initiative in the early stage of Israel's history is entirely the Lord's. He brought Abraham to Canaan from a distant place, promised him the inheritance of the Land, and then worked in wondrous ways to fulfill His promise. He decided that the time has come to redeem His people from Egypt. He brought them to Sinai and imposed on them His Covenant, He led them through the Wilderness. Theodicy is occasionally employed by the narrators,¹⁵ but only to justify God's ways in the margin of the argument. The tale as a whole is about the twin themes of the Election and the Covenant, which remain entirely unjustified, because they are due to His Sovereign Will. They are of course theological rather than historical themes, and the problem-solving activity in the Pentateuch is consequently concerned with theological precisions. We are not shown how one thing led to another, but rather how God made things happen to carry out His policy. *Don't not see*

Heilsgeschichte is a history

Now it may be argued that this juxtaposition can only serve to illustrate the trite truth that the early history in the Bible is no history at all. One can call it a legend overburdened with theological speculation, or a peculiar kind of myth,¹⁶ or, using von Rad's term,

- 14. These, however, are only considerations of a general nature, such as that it is extremely unlikely for a people to invent a story about its past servitude, which is not a thing to be proud of.
- 15. Such as the rather lame justification of God's ways in Gen. 15:13-16.
- 16. Using the term 'myth' in the sense of 'a story about the origin of things and institutions, with some god in it', or in the sense of 'something which is supposed to have happened in the past and which is very important for the present'. Even by

Heilsgeschichte.¹⁷ The last term is preferable. It characterizes the phenomenon as an expression of the religious experience of the people by the means of historical narration. This implies that it need not contain any actual history.¹⁸ The conclusion is, again, that we need not bother with it under the heading of the historical thought in the OT. I do not think so. *Heilsgeschichte* is built on very ancient material and concerned with some close meetings between God and men, so it cannot be quite ordinary history. Its events, however, are as real to the narrators as anything else, and we have no grounds to doubt the actual occurrence of these events on the human level. It provides a down-to-earth background for its sublime subject, presenting it as realistically as possible. The most important thing about it is that it tries to solve theological (or existential) problems by the methods of historical narration; this alone makes it a rather emphatic (if one may use the term) sort of history.

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The Lord's Policy

We are thus faced with two modes of OT historiography. One, dealing with Israel's origins, is slightly deterministic and not geopolitical; the other dealing with the people's subsequent existence, is geopolitical and adeterministic. I have juxtaposed them above. The dichotomy is due to the subject matter: in the period of its origins Israel is not seen as a geopolitical entity, so it cannot be treated geopolitically; such a treatment begins as soon as the historiography passes over to a description of Israel's 'normal' existence. Israel's origins are conceived as entirely due to God's mighty deeds, so the deterministic view dominates in their description. A major theme in the story of the origins is the covenant; during their subsequent existence Israel are expected to live up to it: the

these definitions the type of subject discussed does not look quite like the kind of myth to most observers; which is why some prefer to use the term 'broken myth'. I suggest that in the context of the present discussion the term myth should be reserved for stories about the very distant past, in which most things were not as they are; their origins were caused, according to such stories, by various actions and adventures of the gods, though some men and animals also appear. This definition fits all stories normally called myths (in Greek, Mesopotamian and similar contexts); and makes a neat separation of myth and history in the OT itself possible. Myth passes into history as soon as the stories are mostly about the actions of men and things happening to them, with the world around them mostly as we know it.

17. I am not using the term quite exactly in von Rad's sense, (above, n. 12), p. 20.
18. The realization of this conclusion has caused some theological trouble to von Rad's school, though unnecessarily; see A. Soggin in *ThLZ* 89 (1964), pp. 722-736.

initiative is theirs, so the historians' treatment becomes adeterministic.

By this simplification we can focus our attention to the purpose of OT historical thought. It explains Israel's existence in the terms of Election and Covenant,¹⁹ which are conceived as historians' notions: *First* the Lord has made us His people, *then* he dealt with us accordingly, and so He does even now. Israel has developed a historiography because it was conscious of its Lord's policy throughout the ages. The policy is simple: To establish and to maintain Israel as His people.

Establishment

Heilsgeschichte can be described as a grand historians' construct, showing the process of Israel's establishment in its present status. The stages of the process are the major themes of the Pentateuch: the election of the Patriarchs, the sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus, the covenant at Sinai, the wandering in the Wilderness and the Settlement in the Land. The main texts, however, which tell us about these events, do not present them as stages of a process. Each is told by its own independent (and rather complex) bunch of stories, developing a theme different from the others. Only occasional bits of reflection or comment indicate God's policy behind the chain of events (Gen. 15:13-14; Exod. 6:8; etc.). The *process* of Israel's establishment emerges from the telling only as the whole narrative line from Abraham to Joshua evolves in its loose coherence; it is a consequence of the chain of events in general, not a *leitmotif* in the detailed telling of the events themselves.²⁰

On the other hand, one may discern a shadowy presence of the notion of an individual *act of establishment* in most major themes of Israel's early history. Bringing Abraham from his native land the Lord has established the genealogical beginnings of Israel. To realize that the Exodus conveys the notion one has to visualize the event in one's

19. I am using these terms in a very general sense, not implying any opposition between them (nor do I think that they should be opposed). Election in the strict sense is only in those places where the Lord's rule over all nations is expressly mentioned, mainly in Deuteronomy, as Prof. R. Rendtorff argued before the Seventh World Congress of Jewish Studies (1977) in Jerusalem. Here, however, I am concerned with the general idea. The Covenant notion has also several variations in the OT, which need not be considered in the present context.
20. To be more precise, one should distinguish between the grand themes about the main and decisive events (the call to Abraham, the covenant with Abraham, the Exodus and the Sinai events) on the one hand, and the developments in between (the story of the Patriarchs, the notion that Israel multiplied in Egypt, becoming quantitatively 'a people') on the other hand.

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mind: what has been only yesterday a shapeless mass of slaves, hardly conscious of their collective identity is now marching through the desert as a social body. The Sinai covenant, in its various formulations, has the quality of a constitutive act. The additional covenant in the Plains of Moab, as formulated by Deuteronomy spells out the constitutive aspect (see below). These themes convey the notion of an act of establishment in various indirect ways: I do not argue that the notion is really there as a full-fledged and properly formulated idea, but that it is a-crystallizing through various themes. Consequently there is some overlapping and even a mild competition between the ways in which the feeling that Israel came into being by an act of its Lord is finding its expression.

The grand historical construct of Israel's establishment by a process, or a series of significant events, is derived from a number of primary historical constructs, which interpreted several ancient narrative themes as constitutive or establishing acts. OT historians knew that Israel was more or less a nation like any other, placeable in the large genealogical scheme which explained the existence of many nations and their degrees of similarity or dissimilarity (Gen. 10). As they saw it, each nation had its god,²¹ and lived in its country, though there was some wandering about with conquests and expulsions. All this was to them the given, or natural, condition of mankind. They refused²² to accept it for Israel. Neither its very existence, nor its relationship with its Lord could be taken for granted, because Israel should live by the terms of its special situation. This situation (=the election, the covenant, the obligations and hopes inherent in such notions) could not have been just there to a historicist mind. It must have been established by a decisive great act of God. Or, since such an act could be observed in several very ancient events, by a series of constitutive acts. The great historical reconstruction based on these feelings is not quite spelled out in the OT. I suggest that it is there mainly *in nuce*, in the various formulations of the themes of election

21. See 2 Kings 17:29; Jonah 1:5; Micah 4:5; etc.

22. Amos 9:7 is spoken against this refusal: the Lord directs the destinies of all nations, the fact that He has brought Israel from Egypt does not indicate a special relationship. The Chronicler seems to be opposed to the notion that Israel was established by an historical act, or series of acts, see S. Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*, Jerusalem, 1977, pp. 322-333 (Hebrew). To my mind these indications of a disagreement with the basic notion with the main school of OT historiography within the OT itself shows indirectly that the notion must have been alive.

and covenant, and in the underlying claim that Israel was established as a people unto its Lord.

Formulations of the Establishment Claim

All this is, of course, an interpreter's construct, even a rather bold one. I would not feel free to come forward with it,²³ if it were not for a single verse which puts the claim of establishment into almost explicit language. It makes Moses declare: "Listen and hear Israel, this day you have become a people unto the Lord your God" (Deut. 27:9). This is a rhetorical exaggeration, even a paradox, for Israel did not really become a people unto its Lord on the day of the covenant in the Plains of Moab, according to the general context of Deuteronomy. The exaggeration, however, betrays the orator's wish to see things as if they were so. He claims the act of establishment for the Deuteronomic covenant, perhaps for the sake of theological clarity. He would not be able to do so in an ideological vacuum. His formulation of the claim is only slightly (though decisively) more explicit than some related deuteronomic phrases;²⁴ Deuteronomy is again (on this subject) only slightly clearer in its formulations than other expressions of the establishment claim.²⁵

Biblical Historicism Defined

I can now attempt a general definition of OT historicism. It is, of course, closely linked with some major aspects of the religion of Israel,

23. In a rather longish Hebrew article on "The Establishment Claim", *Shnaton* 4 (1980). I have tried to demonstrate the phenomenon by detailed analysis of texts and phraseology. I have also compared the OT consciousness of a historical beginning (or claim that there was such a sharply marked beginning) with various cultural phenomena in imperial Rome, ancient Greece, and some other times and places. Here I give only the main points about the phenomenon itself, because I try to put it into a broader context.
24. Deut. 4:34 is true *as a claim*: as far as I could find out, no similar claim is made on behalf of any other god: it is a typical OT notion that Israel's God "took out for himself" His people from Egypt, heightened by deuteronomic rhetoric. The distinctive sign of our phenomenon is the phrase "... a people unto your God, a God unto you..." which appears in various combinations and forms in Deut. 4:20; 26:16-19; 29:13; *et al.* It denotes the relationship itself, rather than its more elaborate definition as a covenant, or an obligation, an oath, etc. The context says always that this or that was done, or is being done, so that this relationship might be established, but the date of establishment is not clearly spelled out. Only Deut. 27:9 claims clearly and unequivocally that Israel has actually become a people unto its God on 'this day'; the other formulations are softer.
25. Gen. 17:7; Exod. 6:7 (which I think is the key text); Lev. 26:45; Num. 15:41;

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but I do not think that the preoccupation with the past can be logically derived from the religion. One might say that it is the other way round, that a feeling for the significance of the past has determined the shape of Israel's religiosity. We have no way to decide which formulation is preferable: they are merely two rather artificial descriptions of a single phenomenon.

No reference to eschatology, explicit or implicit, is needed to explain this phenomenon. In the OT eschatology is strictly a prophetic concern, it does not affect the historiography. The past explains the present, it does not indicate the future; God is supposed to pursue a policy (see above), He has no plan by which He guides the chain of events towards some preconceived future purpose. The notion of such a plan has been evolved from OT elements by post-biblical Jewish apocalyptic;²⁶ to postulate it for the OT itself is a wholly unwarranted telescoping of the whole Christian Bible (plus some Church-Fathers) into a single theological statement.²⁷ OT eschatology itself contains only some hazy or rudimentary ideas of a plan oriented historicism.²⁸ Occasionally, however, it relies on God's policy in the past (to establish and maintain Israel as His people) for its future hopes: since the first covenant did not achieve its purpose, it shall be

1 Sam. 12:22; *et al.*

26. Mainly conveyed by the typical apocalyptic *Gattung* of a 'preview' of history (Ten Weeks Apocalypse in 1 Enoch, ch. 93 and 91:12-17 [reconstruction of correct sequence confirmed by fragments from Qumran published by Milik]; Sheep Apocalypse 1 Enoch, chs. 85-90; the book Assumption of Moses; Apocalypse of Bright and Dark Waters in Syriac Baruch ch. 53 *et. seq.*; etc.) Charles wrote in 1899: "Determinism thus became a leading characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic; and accordingly its conception of history, as distinguished from that of prophecy, was often mechanical rather than organic" (*Eschatology*, 1969 reprint, p. 206). The historical determinism of apocalyptic has been since recognized by every writer on the subject; it reappears in a special form at Qumran. I have tried to work out Charles' point that this is a definite way of seeing history in "Time and Eschatology in Apocalyptic Literature and in Qumran", *JJS* 16 (1965), pp. 177-182. The apocalyptic view of history reappears in various secular ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries; most lucid about this is K. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 1949.
27. I did not come across this mistake in the writings of OT specialists, but it is rather common among those attempting a general 'epistemology' of history. See H. Meyerhoff, *The Philosophy of History in our Time*, 1959, p. 2; also the article "Historiography and Historical Methodology" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1974 edition) "Macropaedia" Vol. VIII, pp. 947-8. Lambert (above, n. 6) also adopts this view of OT historiography, because of the need to explain somehow the phenomenon of OT historicism. My point is that the thing does not need this sort of explanation.
28. Isa. 44:6 7; 46:8-10; 66:2.

renewed in the future, only then shall Israel truly become a people unto its Lord.²⁹

A Difficulty

We are historicists ourselves, by the definition suggested in this paper. One should, however, distinguish between the blend of historicist attitudes inherent in our culture generally and the particular scholarly historicism which determines a great part of the work in the humanities. This historicism is based on the demonstrable truth that everything becomes at least partially comprehensible when measured on the twin scales of chronology and development. It also (perhaps consequently) makes history the Queen of Humanities. Nowadays it is less dominant³⁰ and vigorous than it was at the time when the 'critical' scholarship of the OT was young. In those days 'peoples with no history' was the definition of miserable savages. An ancient and primitive *Kulturvolk* was expected (by definition) to produce a poor and rudimentary kind of history writing. Consequently there was nothing remarkable about OT historiography: both its existence and its shortcomings were taken for granted. The task of OT scholarship was to utilize the texts and their faults for a reconstruction of a true history of ancient Israel. Everything else was a necessary *Vorarbeit*. *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* was more than a title of a book; it was the program of a discipline. Reading the classic works of the period, one occasionally notices an intuitive recognition of the ancient writers' work as historians; it is, however, treated as a nuisance, to be cleared away, so that truth might become apparent. The attitude was hardly conducive to a contemplation of ancient Israel's preoccupation with its past.

Much has changed since the old days. We know more than our teachers' teachers, and are less simple-minded; a whole range of subjects has become respectable. It is mainly the theological dimension of

29. Jer. 31:30-33; Ezek. 20:34-38; Hos. 2:25.

30. The ancient Art of Poetics has become *Literaturgeschichte*. Theology became secularized as *Religionsgeschichte*, and Grammar was made scientific by the comparative study of languages in their development (dealing mainly with *Lautverschiebungen* and reconstructions of *Urindogermanisch* and *Ursemitisch*). Since the middle of the twentieth century these are being replaced by Comparative Literature, Study of Religion, and various modern trends in Linguistics. All these recognize the 'historical' or 'diachronic' aspect of things, but put the emphasis elsewhere. The movement has not made much headway in OT and Near Eastern studies, which are as strictly historicist in outlook as ever.

the OT historiography which has gained scholarly appreciation. The intellectual dimension of the thing remains largely unnoticed. We know that the great work of OT history writing was an unusual achievement, we occasionally let on that we are rather proud of it, but we do not know what to do about it, for it is almost impossible to discuss something which one cannot quite identify. The difficulty lies in the circumstance that the ancient writers were as curious about the past as we are. Noting down a list of the kings of Edom (Gen. 36:31-43) just for the record, without any other apparent reason, is rather strange behaviour by any logical standard; to us it is obviously a part of the historian's job. One does not describe court politics in detail, in most cultures, unless one needs the matter for some special pleading, or moralizing. To us and to the ancient narrators the events at David's and Solomon's court are fascinating in themselves, the lessons to be drawn should be indicated briefly and discreetly. Such examples show that the two historicisms overlap, with the result that most modern scholars are as unable to see the basic preoccupation with the past (which is a characteristic of the text) as the nose in their faces. The thing becomes noticeable only when there is something wrong with it, e.g. a contradiction in detail. There are, however, cases in which the two historicisms produce radically different results; in such cases it is difficult for the modern scholar to identify a basic historian's posture beneath the ancient writer's elaboration of legends and pursuit of religious themes. He is actually reconstructing the origins of Israel, or the introduction of kingship, or some other typical historian's subject, by his own methods; but it is difficult for us to recognize his endeavour, because we need (for our satisfaction) quite different solutions of the same problems.

The barrier to understanding has become deeper and subtler than it was in the old days, but it is still there, because OT scholarship and neighbouring disciplines are even nowadays strongly historicist. Another kind of historicism is bewildering to us: we should be able to see how it works in details, but we cannot, the thing itself is too elusive for us. All that I can suggest at present is to point it out; to call it a name which might help to exorcise it in the future.

DIVINE INTERVENTION IN WAR IN ANCIENT ISRAEL, AND IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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Scholars have recently begun to realize that the image of the fighting god who hastens to the aid of his people was widespread in the Ancient Near East and is not necessarily unique to Israel.¹ The descriptions of the god, riding on a cherub and on the wings of the winds, thundering and scattering lightning and sending his arrows against the enemy, like those which we find in Ps. 18:11-18 and others similar to it, are rooted in the tradition of the storm god (Adad/Hadad), lord of thunder, lightning and rain.² The same applies to the accounts of the changes of nature which follow the appearance of the Storm god, known not only from Mesopotamian tradition³ but also from Canaanite, Egyptian, and even Greek tradition (see below). It is important to observe that the language in which the change of nature is formulated is identical in all these sources: *the voice (=thunder) of the god shakes heaven and earth.*

So for example in Akkadian: (a) "which at the sound of his voice the

1. See in particular M. Weippert, "Heiliger Krieg in Israel und Assyrien," *ZAW* 84 (1972), pp. 460 ff. However, his discussion, as shown by the title of the article, is limited to Israel and Assyria only.
2. See M. Weinfeld, *The Gaster Festschrift* (= *JANES* 5, [1973], pp. 421 ff.), and also in *Beth Mikra* 57 (1974), pp. 145-146 (Hebrew). On the deity riding on "the wings of the wind" in battle compare the hymn to Inanna: 'lady mounted on a beast . . . you are lent wings by the storm . . . you fly about in the nation . . . in the van of battle everything is struck down by you . . . with a roaring storm you roar,' W.W. Hallo and J.J.A. van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna* (*Yale Near Eastern Researches* 3), 1968, p. 16, ll. 14ff.
3. On the Mesopotamian motif and its parallels in the Bible see S.E. Loewenstamm, 'The Quaking of the Earth at the Appearance of the Lord,' *Oz P'David* (D. Ben-Gurion Anniversary Volume), 1964, pp. 508-520 (Hebrew); J. Jeremias, *Theophanie, Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung*, 1965.