STEPHEN GERMANY

Kingmakers and Kingbreakers

Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
64

Mohr Siebeck

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Ägypten, Israel, Alter Orient

Oriental Religions in Antiquity

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(ORA)

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Stephen Germany

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Philistines, Arameans, and Historical Patterning in Samuel–Kings

Research on Israel and Aram in Biblical Times IX

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

The present study is a revised version of my *Habilitationsschrift* submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of Basel in November 2022. The underlying research was conducted as part of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) research project "Transforming Memories of Collective Violence in the Hebrew Bible" (2019–2024) led by Prof. Sonja Ammann (Basel). I owe a special debt of gratitude to Sonja Ammann for the opportunity to be part of this research project, and for her exceptional leadership of the project and mentoring of its members.

In its diachronic analyses of portions of the books of Samuel and Kings, this study reflects a certain degree of methodological continuity with my monograph *The Exodus-Conquest Narrative: The Composition of the Non-Priestly Narratives in Exodus–Joshua* (Mohr Siebeck, 2017), yet it also broadens its scope by combining three distinct levels of analysis: an interpretation of the macrostructure of the received narrative of Samuel–Kings, an analysis of the compositional history of select parts of this narrative, and an inquiry into the historical contexts underlying its different stages of composition.

This book, as well as the other publications resulting from my research as part of the SNSF research project in Basel, benefited immensely from the intellectual stimulation of the other project members. I am especially grateful to Helge Bezold for his constant interest in my work and his unfailing friendship over the years, including during the trying times of the Covid pandemic, as well as to Julia Rhyder, Jenna Kemp, and Anita Dirnberger for numerous enriching exchanges. My thanks also go to Benedikt Hensel (Oldenburg) for his collaboration as a conference co-organizer and co-editor of a collective volume on the books of Samuel (recently published in the present series).

I wish to thank the evaluators of my *Habilitationsschrift* – Sonja Ammann, Angelika Berlejung (Leipzig), and Reinhard Müller (Göttingen) – for their valuable comments on the earlier version of this study submitted to the University of Basel, as well as the editors of *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike* and the anonymous reviewers for their additional comments and suggestions for revision. Special thanks are due to Leslie Flores (Göttingen) for proofreading the manuscript and to Nikita Catzeflis (Lausanne) for preparing the indices, as well as to the production team at Mohr Siebeck for their guidance and support throughout the publication process. Any shortcomings in the text remain, of course, my own.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents Carol and Omer, Ruth, and Chuck and Violet.

Lausanne, July 2025 Stephen Germany

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List of Abbreviations

General Abbreviations:

ET	English Translation
EV	English verse numbering (in English Bible translations)
LXX^A	Septuagint, Codex Alexandrinus
LXX^B	Septuagint, Codex Vaticanus
LXX^L	Septuagint, Antiochene text (Lucianic recension)
r.	reign

Journals and Series:

ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
AB	Anchor Bible
ABIG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte
ABS	Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AcT	*Acta Theologica*
AeL	Ägypten und Levante
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
AS	*Aramaic Studies*
ASHLL	Acta Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies
BAH	Bibliothèque archéologique et historique
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BAR.I	British Archaeological Reports International Series
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BIOSCS	*Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BN	*Biblische Notizen*

BO	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTS	Beiruter Texte und Studien
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue biblique
CAT	Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
ConBOT	Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
COS	*The Context of Scripture* (3 vols., ed. W. W. Hallo, Leiden: Brill, 2000)
CRAI	Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
DBAT	*Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament*
EBib	*Etudes bibliques*
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EHS	Europäische Hochschulschriften
ErIsr	*Eretz-Israel*
EstBib	*Estudios bíblicos*
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
ETR	Etudes théologiques et religieuses
ETS	Erfurter theologische Studien
EVO	Egitto e vicino oriente
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
HBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBS	History of Biblical Studies
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
Hen	*Henoch*
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTAT	M. Weippert, *Historisches Textbuch zum Alten Testament* (Göttingen 2010)
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBS	*Irish Biblical Studies*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IECOT	International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
INR	*Israel Numismatic Research*
Int	*Interpretation*
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*

JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBTh	*Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie*
JHebS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSem	*Journal for Semitics*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KAI	*Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (Wiesbaden 2002).
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KEH	Kurzgefaßtes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
MDAI	*Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts*
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NEA	*Near Eastern Archaeology*
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land.* Ed. Ephraim Stern. 4 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1993.
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica
OJA	*Oxford Journal of Archaeology*
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
Or	*Orientalia*
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
OTWSA	Oud Testamentiese Werkgemeenschap in Suid-Afrika
PaVi	*Parole di vita*
PBA	Proceedings of the British Academy
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
PJb	*Palästina-Jahrbuch*
PWCJS	*Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*
RA	*Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RIMA	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RPP	*Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion.* Ed. Hans Dieter Betz et al. 14 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2007–2013.
RRBS	Recent Research in Biblical Studies
RSF	*Rivista di Studi Fenici*
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAK	Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBAB	Stuttgarter biblische Aufsatzbände
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLStBL	Society of Biblical Literature Studies in Biblical Literature

SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBR	Studies of the Bible and Its Reception
Sem	*Semitica*
SESJ	Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran julkaisuja
SHANE	Studies in the History (and Culture) of the Ancient Near East
Shofar	*Shofar*
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
SThT	Studia theologica Teresianum
Syr.	*Syria*
TA	*Tel Aviv*
Text	*Textus*
ThLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
ThR	*Theologische Rundschau*
ThSt	Theologische Studien
TQ	*Theologische Quartalschrift*
Transeu	*Transeuphratène*
TThSt	*Trierer theologische Studien*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TZ	*Theologische Zeitschrift*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VF	*Verkündigung und Forschung*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WAWSup	Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series
WBC	*World Biblical Commentary*
WD	*Wort und Dienst*
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO	*Die Welt des Orients*
ZABR	*Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtgeschichte*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZBK.AT	Zürcher Bibelkommentare Altes Testament
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

Chapter 1

Introduction

Narrative representations of the past are, quite often, intimately tied up with the present. In the Hebrew Bible, this is no different: Most of the narratives of Israel's past in the books of Genesis through Kings serve a paradigmatic function, projecting the worldview, concerns, and historical experiences of later biblical authors onto the past in order to shape the actions and perceptions of their contemporary audiences.

A common way in which people make meaning of the past for the purposes of the present is to highlight repetitions in history. This notion that "history repeats itself"[1] is well attested in the literature of the ancient Near East and ancient Mediterranean during the second half of the first millennium BCE, such as in Egyptian Demotic literature,[2] Greek historiography,[3] and the Hebrew Bible.[4] Rabbinic tradition recognizes that, in the Bible, "the acts of the ancestors are a sign for their descendants" (מעשה אבות סימן לבנים, drawing on language from Genesis Rabbah and Nachmanides). A classic case is Abram's journey to and return from Egypt in Gen 12 as an anticipation of Jacob's later journey to Egypt and the exodus of his descendants from there. Another example is the incident of the golden calf at Sinai in Exod 32, which reverberates literarily with Jeroboam's making of golden calves for the cult sites at Dan and Bethel in 1 Kgs 12.

When it comes to the Bible's account of the monarchic period in the books of Samuel and Kings, however, this paradigmatic function of the past has often been overlooked. The reason for this lies in the persistent assumption that the biblical account of the monarchic period is more "historical" and thus less susceptible to creative shaping by the Bible's authors.[5] As this study will argue in detail, this assumption has led many interpreters to miss the thoroughly paradigmatic function of the representation of the past in the books of Samuel and Kings.

This book investigates a particular case of "history repeating itself" within the biblical narrative of the monarchic period, namely, the structural parallels that appear in the stories of conflicts between Israel and two of its regional neighbors: the Philistines and the Arameans. The thesis that I put forward in this study is that the biblical narratives

[1] For further discussion of the notion that "history repeats itself" in historiography and cultural memory, see Stanford 1998: 81 and Zerubavel 2003: 23–25, respectively.

[2] See Honigman 2020: 168–169 and the discussion below.

[3] See, e.g., Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book I, 22, who asserts that the events of the past "will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future."

[4] See Newsom 2006; Gilmour 2011: 116.

[5] See the similar observation in Gilmour 2016: 40. Recent studies that continue to regard the narratives about the early monarchy as providing historically reliable information about that period include Halpern 2001; Hutton 2009; Baden 2013; Knapp 2015; Wylie 2018.

of Israel's conflicts with the Philistines and Arameans in the books of Samuel and Kings are above all literary constructs that serve to structure the Bible's account of the monarchic period.

Given this paradigmatic use of the Philistines and Arameans in the biblical narrative, the question of how the stories of conflicts between Israel and the Philistines and Arameans might be connected to historical reality must be approached critically. Extrabiblical evidence attests to the presence of the Philistines and Arameans in the Levant during the late second and first millennium BCE, indicating that these groups are not merely figments of the biblical authors' imagination. Yet this in itself says little about the historicity of the conflicts with the Philistines and Arameans described in the biblical narrative or about the time in which these stories were written.[6] In order to begin sorting out "history as (we think) it actually happened" from the biblical depiction of conflicts with the Philistines and Arameans, we first have to understand the literary function of the narratives. Thus, a narrative analysis of the role of the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings is an essential starting point for the compositional and historical analysis of the texts under investigation here.

The present study will unfold in several distinct steps. In Chapter 2, I will make the case that, in the received form of the biblical narrative, both the Philistines and the Arameans serve the double function of "kingmakers" and "kingbreakers" and are closely bound up with a discourse on the relationship between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. In Chapter 3, I will lay out a general theory for the formation of the books of Samuel and Kings that will underlie the more detailed compositional analyses in the subsequent chapters. Chapters 4 and 5 will then focus on the portrayal of the Philistines in the book of Samuel, first from the perspective of an internal diachronic analysis of the relevant texts (Ch. 4), which will then be compared with the archaeological and extrabiblical textual evidence for the Philistines during the first millennium BCE (Ch. 5). I follow this same methodological order of operations in Chapters 6 and 7, which deal with the portrayal of the Arameans in the book of Kings: I first conduct an internal diachronic analysis of the annalistic notices and longer narratives in Kings featuring the Arameans (Ch. 6) and then bring the reconstructed literary development of the Aramean theme into dialogue with the archaeological and extrabiblical textual evidence for the Arameans (Ch. 7). In the conclusion in Chapter 8, I summarize the results of the preceding chapters and reflect on how, on a more general level, the narratives of conflicts with the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings shed light on the historiographic and theological function of collective violence within the Hebrew Bible's construction of the past.

[6] This does not mean that the narratives in question have *no* historical context; it simply means that the historical contexts in which they were written are not necessarily those that are described on the surface level of the text. Thus, the texts can still be used profitably for understanding how the past was constructed at the time of the texts' authors (for this approach, see also Gilmour 2016: 64; Wilson 2018: 34; Wilson 2021: 67).

1.1. Methodology and Structure of this Study

The different parts of this study ask different questions of the biblical text and thus call for several distinct interpretive methods. Chapter 2 will take a synchronic approach, focusing on the function of the Philistines and Arameans as literary "characters" in the books of Samuel–Kings as a whole. The first two sections of Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the texts concerning the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings and the role of conflicts with these groups in the Bible's portrayal of the history of kingship in Israel and Judah. In these sections, I will give particular attention to larger structural patterns that influence how particular episodes involving the Philistines and Arameans can be understood.[7]

This approach is not a structuralist reading in the strict sense of the term,[8] but is instead interested in identifying and interpreting, in John Barton's words, "the internal structures which authors implant in their works"[9] and is thus much closer to traditional literary analysis.[10] Put somewhat differently, much of the concern in Chapter 2 will be to work out the significance of the Philistines and Arameans not only on the level of *figuration* (i.e., what is said about the Philistines and Arameans using explicit, ordinary language) but also at a *thematic* level (which reflects the implicit values of the texts' authors).[11]

As biblical critics with a literary interest have long recognized, there is often a semantic interplay between individual narrative episodes and the larger thematic structures in which they are embedded.[12] Meir Sternberg has highlighted the broader implications of such repetitions within the biblical narrative as a whole:

> Such ... coupling may recur often enough to signal a divine law or logic that governs the march of history. [...] As the chain of analogy unfolds along the sequence, ... the cumulative lessons of induction solidify into a general rule or historical paradigm, which grows in predictive determinacy and ideological force with each new application.[13]

This phenomenon of biblical narratives that repeat themselves in one way or another has been given various labels, such as "narrative analogy," "narrative duplication,"

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[7] In this respect, this part of the study takes a similar approach to that found in Wilson 2017, who gives close attention to larger structural patterns in the Primary History, Chronicles, and the prophetic literature with respect to the theme of kingship.

[8] For a discussion of Structuralism as an intellectual movement and its use in biblical studies, see the still useful treatment in Barton 1996: 104–139.

[9] Barton 1996: 113.

[10] Borgman 2008: 16 provides a useful review of earlier scholarship focusing on macrostructure and meaning in the book of Samuel. While Borgman is interested in larger narrative patterns in Samuel, his study does not engage in diachronic reconstruction or historical contextualization as I do here.

[11] On "figurative" and "thematic" levels of textual interpretation, see Jacobson 1992: 137.

[12] See further Berman 2004: 15.

[13] Sternberg 1985: 269. On the notion that meaning is inherent in a text's structure, see also Zerubavel, 1997: 72–76; Zerubavel 2003: 7 ("the social meaning of past events is essentially a function of the way they are structurally positioned in our minds vis-à-vis other events").

"double narratives," and "metaphor plots," among others.[14] However, most prior studies which address this phenomenon in Samuel–Kings tend to focus on smaller narrative units[15] and not on how repetitions between different episodes contribute to the macrostructure of Samuel–Kings as a whole.[16]

In terms of interpretive perspective, the work of David Jobling is perhaps the closest to the approach taken in Chapter 2 of this study. In two treatments of the Philistines in the book of Samuel[17] and in a study on the "Syrians" (i.e., the Arameans) in the book of Kings,[18] Jobling treats the Philistines and Arameans as literary figures that fulfill a particular role in the development of the narrative. He understands Israel's conflicts with the Philistines and Arameans as more than simply the events that are described on the narrative surface, but as reflecting deeper realities about Israel and its fate. Or, in Sternberg's words, "In a God-ordered world, analogical linkage reveals the shape of history past and to come."[19]

A central hermeneutical lens that guides my interpretation of the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings is my understanding of these two books as an iterative representation of the fates of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, whereby 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 24 correspond typologically to 1 Kgs 12–2 Kgs 25.[20] Within the broader narrative arc of Samuel–Kings as a whole, the relationship between Saul and David in 1 Sam 9–2 Sam 24 is thus paradigmatic of the relationship between Israel and Judah and their respective fates in the book of Kings.[21]

A further methodological principle that guides my analysis of the biblical depiction of the Philistines and Arameans is that an internal diachronic analysis of the texts in question must precede their historical-critical evaluation – that is, the attempt to situate the composition of the texts within a specific historical context, especially on the basis

[14] For "narrative analogy," see R. Gordon 1980: 42; Berman 2004: 1; Kline 2024: 9–27. For "narrative duplication," see Garsiel 1985: 28. For "double narratives," see Nahkola 2001: 169–175, who proposes four major types: (A) variants of the same "story-base," such as the golden calf stories in Exod 32 and 1 Kgs 12; (B) "symbolic or typical duplication," such as Abraham's journey to Egypt in Genesis 12 as an anticipation of Jacob's later journey in the Joseph story; (C) "type-scenes," such as stories involving a woman at a well; and (D) "same event differently reported," such as the stories of David's introduction to Saul in 1 Sam 16–18. For "metaphor plots," see Berman 2004: 6, who uses this term to refer to stories that are analogous but do not have the same subject matter (thus overlapping with Nahkola's types A and B).

[15] See, e.g., Culley 1976; Humphreys 1978 (on 1 Sam 9–31); Conroy 1978 (on 2 Sam 13–20); Fokkelman 1981–1993; as well as the studies of 1 Sam 24–26 cited in Gilmour 2011: 149.

[16] Exceptions are Klement 2000 (on Samuel); Cohn 2010 (on Kings).

[17] Jobling 1998; Jobling 2004.

[18] Jobling 2003.

[19] Sternberg 1985: 114.

[20] On typologies within the Hebrew Bible, see Fishbane 1985: 350–379. For a useful discussion of typology in ancient literature, see Kaplan 2015: 17–29, who notes that typology can be considered a subcategory of allegorical interpretation focusing on historical events (ibid., 17, 25). While some interpreters use the term "allegory" for narratives that can be correlated to events described elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Rosenberg 1986; Sperling 1998: 28), here I will use the more specific term "typology."

[21] For a detailed case for such a reading, see Germany 2023c.

of comparison with extrabiblical evidence. The alternative order of operations – namely, beginning with the archaeological and extrabiblical textual evidence and then turning to the analysis of the biblical texts – is methodologically problematic, as it runs the risk of pursuing an analysis of the biblical narratives only up to the point at which they produce a "fit" with the extrabiblical evidence.[22]

An example of the risks involved in the "archaeology-first" approach is found in several recent articles by Omer Sergi on the relationship between the Saul-David traditions and the social and political circumstances of the early Iron Age.[23] In these studies, Sergi begins with a presentation of the archaeological evidence for state formation in the southern Levantine highlands before turning to a discussion of select narrative traditions about Saul and David.[24] The problem, however, is that Sergi has determined where to look in the archaeological record (the early Iron Age) *on the basis of the biblical narratives* from the outset, such that his presentation of the evidence is, in reality, hardly more independent than if one were to start with the biblical text. And once he comes to the conclusion that "both the early Saul traditions and the stories about David's rise are well embedded in the social and political circumstances of early Iron Age southern Canaan,"[25] he sees no reason to consider the narratives in light of the extrabiblical evidence from later periods and simply asserts in general terms that the narratives in the book of Samuel featuring the Philistines reflect hardly anything of the geographic, political, or religious circumstances in the late eighth and seventh centuries BCE.[26]

Given these pitfalls of an "archaeology-first" approach, I will discuss the potential historical context(s) of the biblical narratives on the Philistines and Arameans in light of archaeological evidence and extrabiblical textual sources (Chapters 5 and 7) only after conducting a detailed literary analysis of the texts in question.[27]

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[22] An equally problematic approach is simply to mix the biblical and extrabiblical materials in a single analytical step. In a recent article dealing with the kingdom of Damascus and the kingdom of Israel, Lemaire 2019: 246 rightly notes that inscriptions, material evidence, and the biblical text must each "be dealt with critically, using the methodology appropriate to each, before confronting them," yet in practice he treats the biblical text rather uncritically throughout the same article, selecting passages that are useful for his reconstruction without first analyzing how they function within their broader narrative context.

[23] See Sergi 2019; Sergi 2020; Sergi 2021.

[24] See, e.g., Sergi 2019: 22–30 (archaeology), 30–38 (biblical text); Sergi 2021: 37–42 (archaeology), 42–52 (biblical text).

[25] Sergi 2019: 20: "sowohl die frühen Saul-Überlieferungen als auch die Geschichten über den Aufstieg Davids [sind] gut in die sozialen und politischen Gegebenheiten des südlichen Kanaan der frühen Eisenzeit eingebettet []."

[26] Sergi 2019: 33 n. 44. This claim flies in the face of the currently available evidence, which I will lay out in Chapter 5.

[27] For a similar approach to the one taken here, see also Hasegawa 2014: 75–76; Wylie 2018: 7.

1.2. Key Concepts

1.2.1. Cultural Memory

In order to describe how the books of Samuel and Kings represent the past, I will refer to the concept of cultural memory, which deals with different aspects of how individuals conceive of a past that is larger than their own personal experiences. As Jan Assmann has emphasized, memory – both on an individual and a collective level – always involves reconstruction, and thus one's conception of the past is "continually subject to processes of reorganization according to the changes taking place in the frame of reference of each successive present."[28] In other words, as Maurice Halbwachs had already observed, the way one remembers the past is shaped by one's social context.[29]

In this study, I understand cultural memory as the *process of transmitting images of the past through cultural artifacts*, particularly (but not exclusively) through the medium of text.[30] Within this understanding of cultural memory as a process, Jeffrey Olick's emphasis on the "path-dependence" of cultural memories is particularly relevant to the study of images of the past in the Hebrew Bible. For Olick, path-dependence "means not only that the event being remembered shapes a particular representation of the past, but that all the intervening representations of the event shape it as well."[31] With regard to the biblical representation of conflicts with the Philistines and Arameans, which developed over an extended period of time through gradual literary supplementation, this means that later authors did not draw directly on "old" memories that had been preserved in some pristine form, but were interacting with images of the past that had already been reframed multiple times in earlier cultural artifacts (namely, earlier versions of Samuel and Kings). In this respect, the text of Samuel–Kings can be used to reconstruct part of ancient Israel's and Judah's *mnemohistory*, that is, the various ways in which Israelite and Judahite scribes "imaged" the past at different points in time.[32]

Within cultural memory studies, it is possible to speak of a sort of continuum between an approach to cultural memory that focuses on how the past is used by actors in the present – especially the state – to achieve their own aims and an approach that sees actors in the present as having a more limited ability to shape the past to serve their own interests. Barbara Misztal has called the former approach the "invention of tradition perspective,"[33] while she calls the latter the "dynamics of memory" approach.[34] Somewhat differently, Olick calls the former a "presentist" model and the latter a "traditionalist" model, and he emphasizes that the act of remembering lies somewhere

[28] Assmann 2011: 27.

[29] Halbwachs 1925.

[30] See also Olick 2016: 43, who defines "collective memory" as "a wide variety of mnemonic products and practices." Thus, unlike scholars who treat "history" and "memory" as standing in opposition to each other (see, e.g., Megill 2007: 17–26), I treat cultural memory as an overarching category to which "history" (in the sense of a critical reconstruction of the past) also belongs.

[31] Olick 2016: 60.

[32] For further discussion of mnemohistory, see Assmann 1997: 8–9.

[33] Misztal 2003: 56–61, with reference to Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983.

[34] Misztal 2003: 67–74, with reference to Schudson 1997 as a good example.

between these two poles, as it is "always a fluid negotiation between the desires of the present and the legacies of the past."[35] This study will suggest that the representations of conflicts between Israel and the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings tend strongly towards a "presentist" mode through the creation of new narratives about past epochs. However, these texts are also constrained by a relatively small set of memories relating to specific figures and events that were initially transmitted in the form of terse annals.

1.2.2. Historical Patterning

Given the focus of this study on historical patterning in Samuel–Kings, it is useful here to flesh out this phenomenon in more theoretical terms. One approach to interpreting the past and present in light of each other is E. Goffman's concept of "keying," whereby events in one period of the past are used to make meaning of events in another period.[36] When applied to narrative constructions of the past, the concept of keying can also be connected to James Wertsch's concept of *schematic narrative templates*. According to this concept, multiple moments in a group's past are depicted as following the same sequence of events.[37] In my view, a particular schematic narrative template can be found in Samuel–Kings that relates to (1) the religious failings of northern Israelite kings, (2) the defeat of Israel by an outside aggressor and the end of the dynasty in question, and (3) Judah's emergence unscathed from the defeat. This template is repeated at least three times, with the outside aggressors consisting, in turn, of the Philistines, Arameans, and Assyrians, who serve as "kingbreakers" for the kingdom of Israel and, indirectly, as "kingmakers" for the kingdom of Judah.

Starting from the assumption that societies do not write history for its own sake but in order to fulfill some social function, Assmann has inquired into this function in some of the earliest examples of "historiography" in the ancient Near East, such as in Hittite and Babylonian texts. In Assmann's view, Hittite historiography does not primarily serve historical interests; rather, it serves legal and theological interests through its interpretation of past events in terms of guilt vis-à-vis a deity. In Assmann's reading of Hittite representations of the past, events in the past are connected to experiences in the present through the notion of "the retributive will of an angry god who, with every event, delivers a new and even more terrible sign of his wrath. When and how did it all begin? How could it have led to such catastrophe? Which god has been offended? How can we mollify him?"[38] Remembering the past serves the needs of the present, explaining why a disastrous event has occurred. Assmann shows how this same principle is operative in the neo-Babylonian Weidner Chronicle, which explains major political shifts in Babylonian history (such as the succession of dynasties) as a function of a ruler's attitude

[35] Olick 2016: 45.

[36] Goffmann 1974; for further discussion, see also Misztal 2003: 96. For a discussion of this phenomenon in another work of ancient historiography – Herodotus' *History* – see Lateiner 1989: 196.

[37] Wertsch 2002: 93 provides an example that he labels the "triumph-over-alien-forces" template, which involves four basic plot items: (1) an initial situation of peace, (2) the initiation of aggression by an outside force, (3) a time of crisis and suffering, and (4) the heroic triumph over the outside force.

[38] Assmann 2011: 220.

toward the temple of Marduk in Babylon (the Esagila), as well as in the Demotic Chronicle, a text written by Egyptian priests in the third century BCE that evaluates earlier Egyptian rulers on the basis of their faithfulness to the god's will and explains their failures in light of their impiety.[39]

1.2.3. Paradigmatic History

Assmann describes the concept of guilt – ultimately derived from the legal concepts of fault and debt – that links events of the past to experiences in the present as "connective justice"[40] and argues that "[t]he basic principle behind all connective structures is repetition," such that chains of events "will not branch out into infinite variations but instead will establish themselves as recognizable patterns."[41] This brings us to another key concept that is useful for understanding the representation of the past in Samuel–Kings, which I call "paradigmatic history."[42]

One of the main theses of this study is that the biblical narratives of conflicts between Israel and two of its regional neighbors, the Philistines and Arameans, typologically anticipate the subsequent depiction of the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel in 2 Kgs 17. In this respect, the narratives of Israel's encounters with the Philistines and Arameans provide the reader of Samuel–Kings with a lens for interpreting the fall of the northern kingdom not as a "one-off" event but as the logical culmination of a more general principle of historical causation, namely, that Yahweh repeatedly uses foreign powers to bring an end to (northern) Israelite dynasties as a result of the cultic transgressions of Israel' kings. In short, the books of Samuel–Kings reflect the idea that "history repeats itself."

Curiously, the patterning of historical events in the biblical narratives pertaining to the Philistines, Arameans, and Assyrians in Samuel–Kings has received almost no attention in prior research. In earlier biblical scholarship, this may have been connected with the widespread view that the Hebrew Bible represents the classic case of "linear history" as opposed to "cyclical history" – a view that was often implicitly connected to differentiating the Bible from "pagan" depictions of the past.[43] Nevertheless, in the second half of the twentieth century, several scholars pushed back against this generalization.[44] For example, John Briggs Curtis points to a number of biblical texts that reflect a cyclical conception of the past.[45] Another important study in this direction is an essay by G. W. Trompf, who avoids speaking of "cyclical history" but instead speaks of "re-enactment" and "recurrently actualized retribution." For Trompf, in the Hebrew Bible, "it is not exact recurrence that is commonly presumed but the repetition of sorts

[39] Assmann 2011: 228.

[40] Assmann 1990: 21–26.

[41] Assmann 2011: 3.

[42] This phenomenon has also been described by other scholars as "historical recurrence" (Trompf 1979a; Trompf 1979b) or "thematic history" (Honigman 2020: 168–169).

[43] For references to earlier literature that emphasizes the Hebrew Bible's "linear" portrayal of the past, see Curtis 1963: 115–117; for a more recent repetition of this view, see Stanford 1998: 75.

[44] For a brief discussion of this distinction, see further Brettler 1995: 48.

[45] Curtis 1963: 117–122 (with reference to Qoh 1:9–11; Judg 2; Isa 51:9–11; and Gen 6:1–7).

of events, or event-types, complexes and patterns."[46] In his view, "to suggest how a given figure or set of conditions recalled prior developments" was characteristic of biblical historiography, and he cites the depiction of both Joshua and Elijah as a "second Moses," the comparable successions of Moses-Joshua and David-Solomon, and the "judges scheme" in Judg 2 as cases in point.[47] He argues that the Deuteronomistic Historian

> bequeathed an account of about six centuries in which history, in a special sense, repeated itself. His picture of the repeated acts of transgression against God's commandments, and the repeated consequences of such disobedience, his characterization of recurrent 'event-shapes' – typical transgressions, typical warnings, fitting deaths and recompenses – all reflect a preoccupation with historical recurrence.[48]

Nevertheless, Trompf makes no reference to the depiction of Israel's conflicts with the Philistines and Arameans in this context.

In my view, one reason for the tendency to overlook historical patterning in the narratives pertaining to the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings is the (often unstated) assumption that, beginning with the narratives about David, readers of the Bible are "in the realm of history" and that the bulk of the narrative material in Samuel–Kings stems from close to the time of the events that are depicted. This positive stance toward the basic historicity of the narratives set in the monarchic period has led, in turn, to the assumption that deliberate historical patterning in Samuel–Kings should be sought primarily in "editorial" passages (such as by the "Deuteronomistic Historian") rather than in the longer narrative episodes in these books. Yet as will be shown in the compositional analysis in Chapters 3, 4, and 6, this assumption is questionable.

An interesting point of comparison with the historical patterning of the Philistines, Arameans, and Assyrians that I am proposing here is found in Late-Period Egyptian literature and is a phenomenon that Sylvie Honigman has called "thematic history":

> In Egypt, a well-documented technique consisted in conflating events that occurred at different periods, in order to better highlight their intrinsic thematic similarities. Underpinning this conception of history was the founding myth of the king's daily fight for ensuring the maintenance of *Ma't* (truth, justice, and order) over the constant assaults of *Isfet* (lie, wrongfulness, and chaos). In historical time, 'chaos' could take the form of a foreign invasion, a domestic rebellion, or palace intrigues. Within these categories, all the specific episodes related had the same basic meaning, and instead of individualizing each event as Greek *historia* did, the past was *thematized* for the sake of intelligibility.[49]

One aspect of late-period Egyptian "thematic history" that is of particular relevance for the literary and historical-critical analysis of the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings is the memory of the Assyrian invasion of Egypt in the seventh century BCE as transmitted in later Demotic Egyptian narratives from the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Within Demotic studies, there is an increasing body of work showing how the

[46] Trompf 1979a: 213.
[47] Trompf 1979a: 214–221.
[48] Trompf 1979a: 223.
[49] Honigman 2020: 168 (italics original).

memory of the Assyrian invasion of Egypt served as the catalyst for an imaginative body of "historical fiction" relating to that period in the so-called Inaros Cycle.[50]

The case of Demotic narrative literature has several interesting implications for approaching the depiction of conflicts between Israel and the Philistines and Arameans in Samuel–Kings. Most notably, it provides an example of how Assyria's westward expansion in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE served as the catalyst for new representations of the past in Late Period and Hellenistic-period Egypt. It also provides an example from the eastern Mediterranean during second half of the first millennium BCE of how earlier periods of a group's past could be developed into a narrative "prehistory" connected to major historical events, providing further plausibility to the late monarchic and postmonarchic background to the process of historical patterning that can be observed in Samuel–Kings.[51]

1.3. Contributions to Current Research

In this study, I aim to make contributions to research in three distinct areas of Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern studies. Firstly, on the synchronic level of interpretation, I will demonstrate that narratives of conflicts between Israel and the Philistines and Arameans are part of a larger process of historical patterning within the books of Samuel and Kings, and therefore need to be read against the background of these books' overall plotline, rather than in isolation. Secondly, on the diachronic level, I will retrace the literary development of the Philistine and Aramean themes. Since these themes are closely tied up with the formation of the books of Samuel and Kings more generally, the results of my compositional analyses will simultaneously serve as a significant step towards a new reconstruction of the literary development of Samuel–Kings as a whole.[52] Finally, on the level of historical reconstruction, the three-step methodological order of operations carried out here (see 1.1 above) will show that fewer of the materials in Samuel–Kings pertaining to the Philistines and Arameans can be taken historically at face value than is often assumed. Nevertheless, these materials remain of great value for reconstructing Israel's and Judah's *mnemohistory* of the Philistines and Arameans, which in many cases draws on new layers of cultural encounters and historical experiences during the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods.

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[50] For example, the "Battle for the Prebend of Amun," a text written in Demotic in the Persian period at the earliest, has its narrative setting in the time of Petubastis II of Tanis in the eighth or seventh century BCE. According to Agut-Labordère 2023, the Prebend likely relates to an expedition of the pharaoh Osorkon B to the region of Thebes during the ninth century BCE, an event that is known from an inscription (the "Chronicle of Prince Osorkon") from the temple in Karnak.

[51] Furthermore, the case of the Prebend provides an example of how a historical memory from a "chronistic" text was repurposed within a historical narrative set in another time period.

[52] This is something that is particularly lacking in English-language scholarship on the book of Samuel, for which the last major "standard reference work" is McCarter 1980/1984 and the most significant diachronically-oriented monograph remains Hutton 2009. For the book of Kings, McKenzie 2019 provides an important new diachronic analysis that is also accessible to a general readership.

Index of Biblical References

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