

# Chapter 12

## The Deuteronomists

(632 – 609 BCE)



The seal reads  
**‘Belonging to Berechiah son of Neriah, the Scribe’**  
Berechiah is the long form of Baruch.  
The seal can be found in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Those who were responsible for governing Judah whilst Josiah was still a boy were perhaps fortunate that they had no major international event to deal with. By 632 Josiah would have been about 16 years old, and no doubt feeling anxious to assume direct control of the reigns of power; Ashurbanipal was a shadow of his former self – indeed little was heard of him after 631, when it is possible that he may have abdicated and divided control of his empire between his two sons.

### Early Zephaniah

The superscription at the start of the book of Zephaniah claims that he preached ‘*in the days of King Josiah, son of Amon of Judah*’. He was a fourth-generation descendant of a man called Hezekiah, who may have been the king of that name. Zephaniah could have been the father of Josiah’s contemporary Jeremiah<sup>1</sup>. There is a scroll seal dating from the early 6<sup>th</sup> century and found in Lachish which reads “belonging to Jeremiah son of Zephaniah of the prophets”. We can only speculate on the influence that this prophet may have had on an impressionable young king.

His short book contains all the elements of the classical prophetic scroll – oracles of disaster, oracles of redemption, oracles against foreign nations and oracles against Judah. He followed in the tradition of the great 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets Isaiah, Micah and Amos and re-cycled some of their material. He shared with Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Second Isaiah an apocalyptic vision of the day of Yahweh, the day of wrath.

He condemned those who followed foreign fashions, those who worshipped foreign gods, and those who profited by violence or fraud. He complained that Judah’s officials were roaring lions, her rulers devouring wolves, her prophets reckless and faithless, and her priests sacrilegious. He may have been describing Jerusalem prior to the reforms of Josiah.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John M Berridge; *Zephaniah (person)*; ABD

<sup>2</sup> Zephaniah 1:4-12 & 3:3-4 See also John S Kselman’s article on the Book of Zephaniah in ABD – especially for the connections with Micah, Amos and Isaiah.

Ashurbanipal died in 627, four years after his abdication. Thus Josiah, now coming of age, could have dreamt of a future unconstrained by Assyrian power; he initiated a religious reform that would have dramatic consequences for the faith and future of Judah.

### **Josiah and Jeremiah**

Following the death of Ashurbannipal, Josiah, then aged 21, began purging the temple of all the foreign symbols and icons that it had acquired.<sup>3</sup> According to the (possibly archival) list in Kings<sup>4</sup>, he began by instructing the High Priest to bring out all the vessels made for Baal, those made for Asherah and those made for all the astral gods. The last group would have included Assyrian gods. The potential instability in Assyria following the death of the old Emperor may have let Josiah believe that such an act of rebellion would be relatively risk free. And so it proved. No punitive measures were taken against Judah either then or later when Josiah carried out his purges well outside his capital city.

At around the same time, Jeremiah, a boy of 13 years, felt called to be a prophet of Yahweh:

*Now the word of Yahweh came to me saying:*

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
and before you were born I consecrated you.  
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”*

*Then I said, “Lord Yahweh! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.”  
But Yahweh said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’.  
For you must go to whoever I send you to,  
and speak whatever I command you to.  
Do not be afraid of them,  
for I am with you and will look after you.”<sup>5</sup>*

The death of Ashurbanipal plunged Assyria into a civil strife. Babylon revolted against Assyrian rule again; the Medes moved out from their base in the Zagros Mountains of Persia; and Psammetichos further strengthened his hold over the Phoenician and Philistine states, establishing them as vassals of Egypt once more. There is evidence that a line of forts was built from Ashdod to Arad in the Negev – forts that were partly manned by Greek mercenaries under Egyptian control. The documents found at Arad indicating that there were both Judean and Greek troops present, also show that it was the Judeans who paid for the Greeks’ rations. This evidence suggests some sort of working agreement between Judah and Egypt - even if Judah had not become a dependency of Egypt - as had all the coastal states to her west.<sup>6</sup>

Assyria’s problems enabled Josiah to extend his influence northwards. There is a Hebrew inscription dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century found at Yavneh-yam which tends to confirm Judean control of the North<sup>7</sup>. According to the chronicler, Josiah travelled north to Gilead, Samaria and Galilee closing down all the local altars where people worshipped Yahweh alongside other gods, rather than Yahweh alone.<sup>8</sup> He is said to have had substantial opposition from the towns of the former Israel which by this time had been the Assyrian province of Samaria for a century. He took extreme measures against them, allegedly

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<sup>3</sup> The book of Kings omits this and jumps to the eighteenth years of Josiah’s reign, but there is little reason to doubt the Chroniclers account of the events in Josiah’s eighth and twelfth years. Kings contains two accounts of Josiah’s reforms. One account is by the Deuteronomic historian (2 Kings 22 & 23:1-3 & 21-25) which seems to suggest (but does not actually state) that all Josiah’s actions were in accordance with the book that was discovered in 622, and the other account (2 Kings 4-20) which comprises an almost archival list of Josiah’s religious purges. By placing this undated archival account in the middle of the Deuteronomists account, the redactor who merged the two accounts created the impression that the religious purges followed the discovery of the book. But the chronicler gives logical dates for the progression of the religious purges – which have must have taken a number of years to accomplish. (see Moshe Weinfeld (1991); *Deuteronomy 1-11*; p 70-74)

<sup>4</sup> 2 Kings 23:4-20.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 1:4-8

<sup>6</sup> Redford (1992) p 444.

<sup>7</sup> JM Myers; 2 Chronicles, AB. P 206

<sup>8</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:5-6

slaughtering their priests and contaminating their altars with burnt human bones.<sup>9</sup>

By 623 the Babylonian revolt against Assyria had succeeded and a Chaldean king sat on the Assyrian throne. Josiah may have taken advantage of the situation by completing the annexation of the Assyrian province of Samaria, thereby securing much of the old Israelite territory once more under Jerusalem's control and finally imposing his cultic reforms on that former province of Assyria. By 622, however he was back in Jerusalem having purged both the country and the temple of mixed worship. Then it was, according to the Chronicler, that he turned to finding the money to repair the temple, a project that he initiated in the eighteenth year of his reign.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the closure of the mixed sanctuaries, he would have caused more worship and sacrifice to take place in the Jerusalem temple with a consequent increase in temple, and thus state, revenues. He would also have deprived many rural priests of their livelihoods. That may have been the time when the law code was modified to include the provision that any priest might move at any time from wherever in Israel he happened to be living and might come to *'the place where Yahweh will choose'*, and minister there, sharing in the benefits of so doing.<sup>11</sup>

Jeremiah probably approved. He said: -

*Return, faithless children, says Yahweh,  
for I am your master;  
I will take you, one from a city and two from a family,  
and I will bring you to Zion.*<sup>12</sup>

### **The Discovery of the Book**

622 was a remarkable year. Babylon was asserting itself having thrown off the Assyrian yoke; Josiah's reforms were under way in Judah; Samaria's domination by the Assyrians had weakened and the old kingdoms of Judah and Israel were, if not formally united, at least both within Jerusalem's sphere of influence. And a lost book was found in the temple.

Josiah had initiated a substantial temple restoration project. Money for this had been collected from Manasseh, Ephraim, from the 'remnant of Israel', from Judah and Benjamin and from the people of Jerusalem. A substantial team had been put together to organise and manage the project and to purchase the quarried stones and the timber with the money raised. It was during the course of this restoration work, that the law book was discovered by the priest Hilkiah. He gave it to secretary Shaphan who read it (or extracts from it) to King Josiah.<sup>13</sup>

Books were very rare and extraordinarily expensive in 7<sup>th</sup> Century Judah, so the discovery of a hidden book would have been a highly significant event. A book containing a covenant with the deity was especially so. It would command obedience. In a less dramatic situation, the Hittite King Muwatalli wrote "Whatever I... find from written records, this I shall carry out."

So too, this book had a powerful impact on its discoverers. Although it is not known precisely what the book contained, it is generally accepted that it formed the basis of what is now Deuteronomy. The general tenor of the content can perhaps be judged from the reactions of those that read it.

When the book was read to him, it was said that King Josiah rent his cloak in anguish. The King was shocked by the contents of the book and horrified by the consequences for himself and his country. He believed that the terrible sets of curses that were found in the Book would be visited upon himself and his kingdom. In the previous chapter it was hypothesised that the Book that was found was the 'Treaty with God'. That Treaty stated that Judah should worship Yahweh alone, and that the consequence of not doing so would be, amongst other things, that: -

*Yahweh will send upon you disaster, panic, frustration in everything you attempt until you are destroyed...  
Yahweh will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind; you shall grope about at noon as blind people grope in darkness...*

Josiah knew that throughout Manasseh's reign, Assyrian and other gods had been in the

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Kings 23:19-20

<sup>10</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:8

<sup>11</sup> Deuteronomy 18:6-8

<sup>12</sup> Jeremiah 3:14

<sup>13</sup> 2 Chronicles 34. The account in Kings is somewhat different and has been interpreted (wrongly) as suggesting that the discovery of the book preceded the reforms. See footnote 1 above.

temple courtyards. King Josiah naturally feared that Yahweh would carry out his promised threats *'because our ancestors did not obey the command of Yahweh to act in accordance with all that is written in this book'*<sup>14</sup>

Were the reforms of Josiah sufficient to compensate for the sins of his ancestors? The author of 2 Kings 23 wrote that Josiah asked Hilkiah, Shaphan and his other counsellors to discern Yahweh's intentions concerning the threats within the book. Hilkiah, Shaphan and the others went to the prophetess Huldah. The answer she gave to Josiah was that the curses would indeed fall upon his people, but that because of his personal penitence, *"you will be gathered to your grave in peace and will not see all the disaster."*<sup>15</sup>

According to the biblical histories<sup>16</sup>, the King gathered the people together in the temple and had the book read to them. Then he and they made a covenant with Yahweh, as instructed in the Book, and promised to carry out the words of Yahweh that they had heard. Josiah organised a national celebration of the Passover – the first, they said, since the time of the Judges<sup>17</sup>.

We may also speculate that the Book may have encouraged Josiah to reconquer all the Land which he believed Yahweh had sworn to his ancestors to give his people; and Huldah's response may have encouraged a belief in his own invincibility in that endeavour. This may account for his interception of an Egyptian army in 609 – an interception that would have tragic consequences.

It was not only on the king that the book had a profound impact. Later in his life the prophet Jeremiah would recall *"Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart"*<sup>18</sup>. If the book contained the words of Shema, as is hypothesized here, then the words would indeed have been a joy and a delight to his heart.

At about the same time as the book was discovered, Jeremiah, then aged 18, began to preach. He proclaimed: -

*Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel:*

*"Cursed be anyone who does not heed the words of this treaty, which I settled on your ancestors when I brought them out from the land of Egypt – from the iron furnace, ...So that you should be my people, and I would be your God, that I might perform the oath that I swore to your ancestors, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is at this day...*

*"Conspiracy exists among the people ... They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors ...; they have gone after other gods; Therefore... I am going to bring disaster upon them ...The cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they make offerings, but these gods will never save them ...For your gods have become as many as your towns, Judah; and the altars to shame that you have set up are as many as the streets of Jerusalem."*<sup>19</sup>

For Jeremiah, obedience to the treaty required the leading of a moral life. The appropriate sacrifice would not compensate for a dishonest heart. He was distressed that he could not find the honesty he prayed for anywhere in Jerusalem. He heard Yahweh say:

*Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,  
look around and take note! Search its squares!  
See if you can find one person who acts justly and seeks truth—  
So that I may pardon Jerusalem."*<sup>20</sup>

He was angry that proper public sacrifice seemed for some to be the sole essence of the religious life:

*How dare you say;  
"We are wise, and the law of Yahweh is with us?"  
When in fact the false pen of the scribe has made it into a lie."*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:21

<sup>15</sup> 2 Kings 22:11-20

<sup>16</sup> 2 Kings 23:1-3 & 2 Chronicles 34:29-32

<sup>17</sup> 2 Chronicles is inconsistent here, since it also contains, in chapter 30, a description of a Passover organised by Hezekiah!

<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah 15:16

<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah 11: 1-13

<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah 5:1

This may have been an attack on the Priestly Epic, with its seven full chapters of rules and sacrifices. P had written that the laws of the burnt offerings and sacrifices, was the law that Yahweh commanded R/Moses on Mount Sinai<sup>22</sup>, but Jeremiah claimed that Yahweh said “*in the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices*”<sup>23</sup>

In his opposition to sacrifice, Jeremiah stood in the great prophetic tradition – from Hoshea to Isaiah. In his early preaching, he called the people to repent and return to the ‘*ancient paths, where the good way is*’<sup>24</sup>.

### Reflections on the Book

Today’s Deuteronomy contains reflections in chapters 4, 10 and 30 that seem rather to have been inspired by the Book rather than to have been a part of it. Some of them are clearly exilic since they do not just threaten exile, they assume it. These at least cannot have been part of the Book that was found in 622. All these reflections, both the early ones and the exilic ones, have a distinctive language and are introduced with the calling “*And now, Israel, listen*”.

The reflection now found in chapter 4 included the striking sentence “*he brought you out from the iron furnace, from Egypt*” an image that was also used in Jeremiah<sup>25</sup>. Later in the same reflection the writer, having warned that an unrepentant people will be exiled, wrote “*but if you seek Yahweh your god, then you will find him – if you search for him with all your heart and all your soul*”. This idea and phraseology was again used in Jeremiah where the prophet said that Yahweh had promised that “*If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me*”. Both may have been inspired by the words found in the book encouraging Israel to “*Love Yahweh your god with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength*”.

This connection with Jeremiah, together with others like it, suggests that the person responsible for this reflection was either Jeremiah himself or, more likely, his friend and amanuensis the scribe Baruch, who is credited with much of the writing in the book of Jeremiah (some at Jeremiah’s dictation), but also some material of his own.

### The Shema

The words now known as the Shema which included the key command to “*Love Yahweh your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.*” seem to have had a profound impact on the author of the reflections for the phrase ‘*with all your heart and with all your soul*’ became a characteristic phrase of his. It occurs six more times in Deuteronomy but only in the reflections.<sup>26</sup> (It also occurs five times outside Deuteronomy in the Deuteronomic History and once in Jeremiah - all passages that could have been written by the author of these reflections)<sup>27</sup>

The people were enjoined to keep the words of the Shema in their hearts, to recite them to their children, to talk about them when at home and when away, when they rise up and when they lie down, to bind them as a sign on their hands and on their foreheads and to write them on their doorposts. And they did. The custom of writing the words on parchment and binding them in leather pouches has been archeologically confirmed in the Qumran excavations and elsewhere. The practice of inscribing the commandments on doorposts has been confirmed in Samaria, where archaeologists have

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<sup>21</sup> Jeremiah 8:8

<sup>22</sup> Leviticus 7:37

<sup>23</sup> Jeremiah 7:22

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah 2:1-4:4

<sup>25</sup> Jeremiah 11:4

<sup>26</sup> It also occurs five times outside Deuteronomy in the Deuteronomic History and once in Jeremiah - all passages that could have been written by Baruch.

<sup>27</sup> Passages in Deuteronomy are 6:6, 10:12, 11:13, 26:16, 30:2&6&10. The DH passages are Joshua 22:5, 1 Kings 2:4, 8:48, 23:3, 23:25 and corresponding passages in Chronicles. In Jeremiah’s Letter of Comfort to the exiles, Yahweh promises to bring his people back and to rejoice in doing them good, “with all my heart and all my soul” (32:41). A possible exception occurs in the law concerning false prophets (Deuteronomy 13:3), where – within the second law - there is a shortened version omitting the second ‘*with all*’. But this issue is of special concern to Jeremiah and may have been a late editorial addition. Another short version (‘*with all their heart and soul*’) occurs in Solomon’s Deuteronomic Prayer of Dedication (1 Kings 8:48).

found several doorposts with the commandments carved upon them.

By the second temple period the recitation of the Shema had become an established part of the daily liturgy. It may have been recited antiphonally:

Priest: Hear O Israel: Yahweh is our God.

People: Yahweh is one.

In that ceremony, the recitation was immediately followed by an attestation of loyalty:

“It is true, firm and established... this commandment laid upon us...  
It is true, he is the god of the universe...our king... his kingdom endures forever...  
Upon us, upon our children, our generations and for all coming generations...  
(You are) our king...our redeemer... there is no god beside you.

### Poems

There are poems included in today’s Deuteronomy that were neither written in the style of the reflections nor in that of the rest of the Book. Two take the form of addenda added later but those in chapters 6 and 8 may have been early additions.<sup>28</sup> They were written in the elaborate chiasmic style reminiscent of the Holiness Code. They dealt with the issue of prosperity and so were likely to have been composed during a period of continued material and political success such as existed at the time the Book was found. Some people no doubt attributed this increased wealth and power to their own efforts rather than the benevolence of a god who had been, for some, just one amongst many. They are so similar in content and phraseology that it is possible to see one as an expansion of the other. Both poems encourage the hearer to ‘*watch himself*’ and to ‘*be watchful*’ in doing the commandments. Both refer to the land of Egypt as ‘*a house of slaves*’.<sup>29</sup>

The version in today’s chapter 6 is bookended by the ‘Covenant with the Fathers’, and reflects on the great wealth of the land. This poem matches the ‘*good gifts*’ of Yahweh in the form of the land with the requirement on the people to ‘*do good*’ in obeying Yahweh’s commandments.

*Yahweh your god will bring you to the land that Yahweh swore to your fathers...*

*To give you all good things, houses filled with that you did not fill, cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olives that you did not plant...You will eat and be satisfied.*

*Watch yourselves lest you forget Yahweh, who brought you out of the land of Egypt – a house of slaves.*

*Fear Yahweh your god. It is he you will serve. It is in his name you will swear.*

*You shall not go after other gods...*

*Because Yahweh your god is a jealous god*

*Lest the anger of Yahweh your god will flare at you*

*And he will destroy you from the face of the earth*

*You shall not test Yahweh your god, as you did at Massa*

*Watch<sup>30</sup> the commandments of Yahweh your god.*

*Do what is good and right in Yahweh’s eyes*

*Come and take possession of the land from which Yahweh swore to your fathers to push your enemies from.*

The more complex reflection in today’s chapter 8 employs matched themes. As in the simpler poem above, the whole piece is bookended with the ‘Covenant with the Fathers’ but here the teaching is drawn from the stories of the wilderness years. The theme of the richness of the land (Yahweh’s gift) is matched with the richness of the people (resulting from their exploitation of that gift). ‘*Watch yourself*’, which had been part of the supporting structure in the simpler text above now becomes the

<sup>28</sup> Deuteronomy 6:10-19 and 8:1-18

<sup>29</sup> Whilst chiasmic structures are a favourite device of the priestly author of the Holiness code, the ‘house of slaves’ is the favoured description of Egypt amongst the Deuteronomic writings. The author or authors of these poems seem to have been influenced by both.

<sup>30</sup> The usual translation reads ‘Observe the commandments...’, but in Hebrew the same verb is used here as is used for ‘Watch yourselves...’ in the parallel part of the chiasm.

core command: -

The covenant with the fathers (v 1).

*“Every command that I am giving you today you shall be watchful to do, so that you may live and multiply and come and possess the land the Yahweh swore to your fathers.”*

Lessons from the wilderness years (v 2-6).

The privations of the wilderness years were intended to teach that *“you shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh”*. Yahweh made you hunger, but gave you manna. He ensured that that your clothes did not wear out, nor your feet swell in those forty years.

The richness of the land (v 7-10).

*“Yahweh your god is bringing you to a good land full of streams of water, springs and deeps coming out in valleys and hills, a land of wheat, barley, fig, pomegranate, olive, oil and honey ... a land in which you will eat your fill and will bless Yahweh your god for the good land he has given you.”*

The core command (v 11)

*“Watch yourself in case you forget Yahweh your god, failing to observe his laws... that I command you this day...”*

The richness of the people (v 12-14).

*“...in case you eat and become full and build fine houses and settle down; when your flocks and herds multiply and your silver and gold increases and all you have multiplies, and your heart becomes proud and you forget Yahweh your god who brought you out from the land of Egypt – from a house of slaves –”*

Lessons from the wilderness years (v 15-17).

*“– He who led you through the big and fearful wilderness where there is no water, and brought water for you from the rock, who fed you manna in the wilderness, which your fathers had not known, in order to test you so that it might go well with you in your future –”*

The covenant with the fathers (v 18).

*You may say in your heart, “My power and my strength made this wealth for me” Then you should remember Yahweh your god because he is the one who gave you the power to make wealth so as to uphold his covenant that he swore to your fathers – as it is to this day.”<sup>31</sup>*

### The Deuteronomists

The Book became a critical component of the reform movement. It may not have triggered it, but it certainly strengthened it. Those who supported the reform can be described as Deuteronomists after the Book that they would build around the text that was found in the temple. The reform involved a new understanding of the relationship between man and God, a reassessment of the significance and practice of animal sacrifice, a redefinition of the role of the priest and a new interpretation of the history of the nation. Those involved - Jeremiah, Baruch, Ezekiel, Shaphan, Gedaliah and others - would guide Judah through a tumultuous period and create a substantial body of scripture including history, prophecy and codes for living and the law.

The language that is found in the reflections within Deuteronomy and in parts of Jeremiah is also found in the key framework elements of the Deuteronomic contributions to the histories from Joshua to Kings<sup>32</sup>. In these passages, the reader is urged to ‘*really listen*’ to Yahweh’s voice, to

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<sup>31</sup> The last two verses of this chapter may be a post-exilic addition warning that if the people do go after other gods, then they will be destroyed.

<sup>32</sup> Passages in Deuteronomy are 6:6, 10:12, 11:13, 26:16, 30:2&6&10. The DH passages are Joshua 22:5, 1 Kings 2:4, 8:48, 23:3, 23:25 and corresponding passages in Chronicles. In Jeremiah’s Letter of Comfort to the exiles, Yahweh promises to bring his people back and to rejoice in doing them good, “with all my heart and all my soul” (32:41). A possible exception occurs in the law concerning false

*'circumcise the foreskins of your heart', and not to be led astray by 'all the host of heaven', but to worship Yahweh 'with all your heart and with all your soul', 'turning neither to the right nor the left' but remembering that Yahweh 'brought you out of Egypt', 'from the iron furnace'. The reader was told to 'be strong and courageous', and 'be careful' to keep 'the book of the law' always in mind, observing the 'commandments and statutes' that 'Yahweh your god' has commanded.*

The connection with Jeremiah suggests that the person responsible for these writings was either Jeremiah himself or his friend the scribe Baruch. Baruch wrote for Jeremiah and about him. Baruch had good contacts at court since he was the brother of Seraiah, a high-ranking official (possibly treasurer) under Zedekiah who reigned 12 years after Josiah's death. Jeremiah was himself a non-Aaronite priest. He had a turbulent relationship with the Aaronite priesthood, being put into the stocks by them on one occasion and banned from the temple precincts on another. But he also had sympathisers amongst them. Later a letter from Jeremiah would be carried by Gemariah, the son of Hilkiah, to the Babylonian exiles. Hilkiah was the high priest who found the Book in the temple and his grandson would be the one who first read Jeremiah's most controversial scroll. The other person carrying Jeremiah's letter was Elash, son of Shaphan, the royal secretary who read the Book to the King and whose family protected Jeremiah, and indeed Baruch, through various crises.

Jeremiah and Baruch therefore had, despite everything that would happen, good connections to two generations of Judean leadership. Baruch would have had access to state archives. Although well connected to senior civil servants, he himself never took high office and would therefore have had the time to prepare two editions of Deuteronomy, add the reflections, write a biography of Jeremiah, make written copies of Jeremiah's key sermons and to take a leading part in the preparation of the Deuteronomic History.

### **The Incorporation of the Law Code**

The precise content of the Book that was discovered in 622 can probably never be known – unless archaeology can miraculously unearth a copy. Some scholars hypothesise that the original Book included the complex set of laws that occupy Deuteronomy 12-26. In 1805 W.M.L. De Wette wrote a dissertation which sought to show that Deuteronomy was composed later than the rest of the Pentateuch because it contained the idea of the single central sanctuary whereas elsewhere in the Pentateuch sacrifice had been performed at several different sites. Later he went on to comment that Deuteronomy was a 'pious fraud' written immediately before it was found in order to persuade Josiah to eliminate the rural cult sites.<sup>33</sup> This assumes that the book was found before the cult sites were eliminated, rather than as a result of the project for refurbishing the temple which occurred after the campaign against the cult-sites was largely completed. The latter position is stated clearly in Chronicles and not contradicted in Kings when that text is read carefully with due allowance being made for the arrangement of the differing sources<sup>34</sup>. If we accept that the evidence is not strong enough to support the claim that the Book was a 622 fraud, but was genuinely a more ancient text, then it follows that Deuteronomy 12-26 in its entirety was probably not part of the ancient book that was found – since its opening lines contain the laws on local slaughter that were unlikely to predate to the substantial expansion of Judah's dominion that occurred around the death of Ashurbanipal.

Nevertheless, it is quite likely that this extensive list of laws was incorporated into what has become today's Deuteronomy at some time during the reign of Josiah. The Hebrew for 'law' is *'torah'* and this is often the word by which the law code in Deuteronomy 12-26 is known. The context usually enables it to be distinguished from the Torah – the Hebrew name for the first five books of the Bible. Incorporating this law code, essentially the operative legal framework in late 7<sup>th</sup> century Judah, would have given the law great authority.

#### Reflection: "What does Yahweh require of you?"<sup>35</sup>

In Chapter 10 of today's Deuteronomy there is a reflection in Praise of Yahweh which demands a loving response from his people. It serves the purpose of summarising the 'Treaty with

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prophets (Deuteronomy 13:3), where – within the second law - there is a shortened version omitting the second *'with all'*. But this issue is of special concern to Jeremiah and may have been a late editorial addition. Another short version (*'with all their heart and soul'*) occurs in Solomon's Deuteronomic Prayer of Dedication (1 Kings 8:48).

<sup>33</sup> WML De Wette; *"Beiträger zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament"*; (1806–1807).

<sup>34</sup> Weinfeld, 1991, pp70-74.

<sup>35</sup> Deuteronomy 10:12-11:1

God' and introducing the *torah*; it begins: -

*And now, Israel, what does Yahweh your god ask of you but to fear Yahweh your god, to walk in his ways, to love him and serve Yahweh your god with all your heart and all your soul?*

The opening 'And now, Israel' and the words 'with all your heart and all your soul', are characteristic of Baruch's writings – another factor that suggests that the law code was inserted after the Book was found and was not originally a part of it. The passage may have been influenced by Micah 6:6 which read "What does Yahweh require of you but to do justice. to love kindness, and to walk patiently with your God?" Baruch continued with characteristic passion: -

*Look, heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth and everything in it belongs to Yahweh your god; yet Yahweh set his heart to love your ancestors alone and he chose you, their descendants, out of all the nations - as it is today.*

*Circumcise the fore-skins of your hearts, then – and be obstinate no longer.*<sup>36</sup>

'Circumcise the fore-skins of your hearts' is a rare and striking phrase that only occurs in Jeremiah and in this passage.<sup>37</sup> The introduction continued: -

*Yahweh your god is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty and the awesome god, who takes no bribes and will not be biased, who makes judgments on behalf of the orphan and widow and who loves the immigrant, giving him bread and clothing. So you shall love the immigrant, because you were immigrants in Egypt.*<sup>38</sup>

Already in the northern Covenant Code it had been forbidden to 'oppress the immigrant, for you were immigrants in the land of Egypt'<sup>39</sup>, but here this was strengthened to become the positive command to love the immigrant. The concern for orphans, widows and immigrants. or resident foreigners, runs throughout the law code. This reflection concluded: -

*You shall fear Yahweh your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen...  
Therefore you shall love Yahweh your god and daily keep his charges, his decrees, his ordinances and his commandments.*<sup>40</sup>

#### The 'Place Yahweh Will Choose' and the Name Theology

The *torah* of Deuteronomy 12-26 incorporated the phrase '*the place Yahweh will choose*' or its equivalent 21 times. It does not occur in 'Treaty with God' or any other part of Deuteronomy except in 31:11 where it refers back to this *torah*<sup>41</sup>. In all the occasions where an offering or sacrifice was to be made, then the place that '*Yahweh will choose*' must be somewhere where Yahweh could '*tent his name*'<sup>42</sup>. In the other instances, where the place was chosen for administrative reasons, the particular phrase about Yahweh tenting his name was omitted. Such places were locations where difficult legal issues were settled or where the law was read<sup>43</sup>. It is interesting to note that there was no mention of

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<sup>36</sup> Deuteronomy 10:15-16

<sup>37</sup> Deuteronomy 10:16 and Jeremiah 4:4; Deuteronomy 30:6, also a reflection, has a similar phrase; '*Yahweh will circumcise your hearts*'

<sup>38</sup> Deuteronomy 10:17-19

<sup>39</sup> Exodus 22:21

<sup>40</sup> Deuteronomy 10:20 -11:1

<sup>41</sup> Deuteronomy 31:11 stated that the Law Code should be read in the place that Yahweh will choose.

<sup>42</sup> The Hebrew word 'shakan' is often translated as 'he dwells', It may relate to 'mishkan' which means a 'tent' and especially the 'Tent of Meeting' (Freidman; Commentary on the Torah (2001); p605.) Frank Moore Cross is credited with pointing out this connection. Instances where the 'name' phrase is used include 12:5&11&21 and 14:22&24 and 16:2&6&11. It will be noted all these are associated with a sacrifice or offering.

<sup>43</sup> Deuteronomy 17:8 & 10 and 31:10. (Elsewhere the name clause is omitted for brevity when it is part of the continuation of a passage, or refers to a passage, which has already made clear that this is a place where Yahweh chooses for his name to dwell.)

Yahweh ‘*tenting his name*’ at the place to which a Levite might go to minister<sup>44</sup>.

The phrase “*the place where Yahweh will choose to tent his name*” reflected a belief that Yahweh did not dwell on earth. The idea that a temple was a ‘house of god’, so prevalent in the older texts and in Canaanite religion, was rejected. Now the dwelling place of God was heaven.<sup>45</sup> The theological removal of Yahweh from the temple to heaven was a factor reducing the importance of the priesthood of the Jerusalem temple - a loss of status that also arose from the new law on local slaughter, in the secularisation of the procedures confirming voluntary slavery and in the procedures for dealing with difficult legal decisions.

Although finding its full flowering amongst the Deuteronomists, the ‘Name Theology’ did not truly begin with Deuteronomy. An early form of the idea can be found in the northern Covenant Code, for when the Deuteronomist wrote that an altar should be built on Mt Ebal (Deut 27), he specified that it should be done in the manner described in that earlier code, that is without the use of iron tools at the site. According to the Covenant Code, Elohim commanded that altars were to be erected ‘*in every place where I cause my name to be remembered*’<sup>46</sup>. The Elohist was writing for the non-nomadic northern kingdom; it is not surprising therefore that the name was ‘*remembered*’ rather than ‘*tented*’. For him, there were clearly many such places.

The modern conventional interpretation of the phrase ‘*the place Yahweh will choose to tent his name*’ is that it always meant Jerusalem. But this simple interpretation may not give adequate attention to the Deuteronomist’s determination never to mention Jerusalem. That determination cannot be explained away as being a requisite part of the literary device in which Moses was addressing the people before Jerusalem was known about, for elsewhere Deuteronomy refers to named places in Israel such as the Oaks of Moreh.

Theologically the place Yahweh would choose to tent his name was a place of which Yahweh could have said that there are no other gods ‘*before my face*’<sup>47</sup>. The author would have been clear that it could not have applied to the Jerusalem temple before Josiah’s cleansing of the temple. When in the Deuteronomic History, the author condemned Manasseh, he reported Yahweh’s conditional commitment to the Temple “*In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will tent my name forever... if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them.*” But they did not listen; Manasseh was blamed for misleading them<sup>48</sup>. The Deuteronomist may have felt that it was possible that lax practices could return to the temple – as indeed they did. It would have been better therefore to specify a criterion for the place or places where Yahweh’s name could tent and not any actual geographic locations.

In the history edited by a Deuteronomist, Samuel sacrificed at several locations without being in any way criticised for so doing. It was therefore consistent with this theology that there could be several locations which Yahweh could choose and that they could change. Jeremiah points out that Yahweh once chose for his name to tent in Shiloh – but no more<sup>49</sup>. Why? Because of the abuses that occurred there. The Jeremiah reference is especially important as it occurs within the temple sermon delivered in 609 BCE. Jeremiah went on to say that unless the people reformed, Yahweh would no longer permit his name to dwell in Jerusalem. In fact, the person who revised Deuteronomy in the light of the destruction of the Temple was compelled to add: -

*Yahweh said, “As I have removed Israel, so also I will remove Judah out of my sight; and I will reject Jerusalem, this city that I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, ‘My name shall be there.’”*<sup>50</sup>

It is likely that Deuteronomic theology included the idea that a place could only be a dwelling place for Yahweh’s name provided it was place dedicated exclusively to Yahweh. If the ‘name’ theology was written into the law before the cleansing of the temple, then the Name Theology could be

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<sup>44</sup> Deuteronomy 18:6

<sup>45</sup> The prayer of dedication for Solomon’s temple made it clear that God dwelt in heaven and not in the temple for the plea ‘*hear in heaven*’ was repeated eight times. (1 Kings 8: 30-49) This prayer is full of Deuteronomic language. It was probably written by a Deuteronomist and inserted by him into the history he compiled.

<sup>46</sup> Exodus 20:21-22; E source

<sup>47</sup> Deuteronomy 5:7. The usual translation ‘before me’ is less clear than the literal Hebrew which is ‘before my face’

<sup>48</sup> 2 Kings 21:7-9

<sup>49</sup> Jeremiah 7:12.

<sup>50</sup> 2 Kings 23 25b-28

seen as a Yahwist response to the contamination of the temple with effigies of other gods. If this was what happened then the use of the phrase *'the place where Yahweh will choose to tent his name'* could have been an attempt to free true worship from the contaminated Jerusalem temple and not, as is commonly thought, an attempt to concentrate worship there.

Politically, it could be argued that by using the phrase *'the place Yahweh will choose'* the religious authorities (perhaps under state direction) acquired the authority to determine which places could be used for sacrifice and which places could be used for administrative purposes. When the territory under administration went as far north as Naphali, there would have been advantages in retaining the ability to specify more than just Jerusalem for these purposes. Of the two temple sites set up by Jeroboam, only Bethel, the one near Jerusalem, is mentioned as being closed; of the distant temple at Dan, nothing is written.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Setting of the Law Code**

Just as the Ten Words given at Horeb were placed at the centre of a 'Treaty with God' which followed the form of an Assyrian Vassal Treaty, so the 'Law Code', now to found in Deuteronomy 12-26 was also provided with a similar setting. The various elements were similar: -

The Historical Exposition (11:2-7)  
The Description of the Land (11:8-17)  
The arrangements for Teaching the Children (11:18-21)  
Introduction to the curses (11:26-32)  
The Law code itself (12:1-26:15)  
The inscription of the law (27:1-10)  
Blessings and Curses (28:1-19)  
Taking the oath (29:10-20)  
New leader introduced (31:1-8)  
Arrangements for the public reading (31:9-13)  
Arrangements for the deposition of the scroll (31:24-27)

In the Historical Exposition the author reminded the people of the wonders that accompanied their escape from Egypt and their travels in the wilderness. Yahweh's wrath in destroying the rebels Dathan and Abiram was mentioned but not Korah –with which the Dathan and Abiram story was later mixed. The Korah story was a P text whilst the Dathan and Abiram was J. Thus the author was recalling a J text into which P had not yet been merged.

The Description of the Land painted a wonderful picture of a land *'flowing with milk and honey'* and *'watered by the rain of heaven'* where Yahweh said the people would eat to their heart's content.

Just as in the 'Treaty with God', there was a passage concerning the 'Teaching of the Children'. Here the parents were instructed to: -

*Keep on teaching the children, when you are sitting at home, when you go on the road; when you are lying down and when you are standing up; you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and in your gates – so that your days and your children's days will be many on the land that Yahweh swore to your fathers to give them'.*

This command is similar to that which followed the Shema in the 'Treaty with God' where the same situations for the teaching and memorizing of the law were prescribed, but note this command began

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<sup>51</sup> There were Yahwist temples outside Jerusalem at the time that these texts were being written. Judeans were acting as mercenaries at Elephantine in Egypt as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE and they certainly had a temple there in which sacrifices were made when Cambyses invaded Egypt in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. There is archaeological evidence of a Yahwist shrine being used for sacrifice in the 7<sup>th</sup> century fort of Kadesh Barnea. In the fort at Arad, on the border with Edom, there was a temple which may have dated back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century and continued in use till the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century; an ostrakon from there at this time confirms that *'the temple endures'*. And there were the Israelite shrines at Dan and Bethel, both of which remained in use until Bethel was destroyed by Josiah. Other temples were built later – one in Samaria around 330, another at Leontopolis in Egypt by the exiled priest Oniad in 150 BCE. Some think that the Tobiad family built one in Ammon in 170 BCE.

with the emphatic form of the verb ‘to teach’; here translated as ‘keep on teaching’<sup>52</sup> The use of a different tense (and verb) is one of the things that suggest this was a later addition – hence ‘keep on teaching’

Immediately after this section there is an insertion that reads: -

*If you diligently observe all these commands that I am giving you – to love Yahweh your god, to walk in his ways and hold fast to him – then Yahweh will drive out all the nations before you, and you will drive out nations larger and stronger than you*<sup>53</sup>.

Here was an overt encouragement to use force to secure the former Israelite territories now that Assyria was weakened; and here was encouragement to consider Josiah’s kingdom as capable of challenging any regional power, including a resurgent Egypt or the emerging Mesopotamian power – Babylonia. Potentially dangerous words.

The consequences that will follow a failure to obey the law were laid out after the exposition of the law itself. But before commencing that exposition the author introduced a warning<sup>54</sup>:-

*Look. I am putting before you today a blessing and a curse – a blessing if you listen to the commandments of Yahweh...and the curse if you will not listen...You shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on mount Ebal. Are they not across the Jordan – beyond the land of the setting of the sun – in the land of the Canaanite who lives in the plain, opposite Gilgal, near the oaks of Moreh?*

It was at the oaks of Moreh, near Shechem, lying in the valley between Gerizim and Ebal, that Abraham first received a gift of land (Genesis 12:6-7 – J text).

The Law Code itself then followed. Most readers do not regard the laws as having any particular arrangement – nor would one be expected if this was a living document with material being added as occasion arose. But with considerable imaginative effort, a connection with the order of the Words of the Covenant at Sinai/Horeb has been dimly perceived by Ronald Clements in his commentary on Deuteronomy<sup>55</sup>:-

1. Rules of worship, sacrifice and common slaughter (12:1-13:18). Loosely linked to the commandment “You shall have no other gods before my face”
2. Rules concerning the holiness of Israel, especially concerning diet and death. Loosely linked to honouring the divine name (14:1-21)
3. Rules concerning time, tithes and the calendar (14:22-16:17). Loosely linked to the idea of the Sabbath
4. Rules concerning authority (16:18-18:22). Loosely linked to the honouring of parents.
5. Rules concerning capital offences, warfare, evidence, and unsolved murders (19:1-22:8). Loosely dealing with exceptions to the commandment “You shall not kill”.
6. Rules concerning boundaries, mixtures, marriage and membership of the community (22:9-23:18). It generally deals with idea of ‘adulteration’ – albeit in its non-sexual English usage.
7. Rules concerning property, charging interest, divorce, eating other’s crops and making new wives happy (23:19-24:7). Very loosely related to the commandment against stealing.
8. Rules concerning loans, perjury, leaving gleanings for the poor and punishments (24:8-25:4). Loosely related to the commandment against bearing false witness.
9. Rules concerning the marriage of a woman to the brother of her dead husband. Loosely connected to not coveting your neighbour’s wife (25:5-12).
10. Rules concerning decency in fights, fair weights and measures and the revenge upon the wicked Amelakites (25:13-26:15). Very loosely related to not being unreasonably covetous.

It is quite possible that such a division was never in the mind of the author and the arrangement of the scroll reflected nothing more than the timing of the various additions to a set of rules that evolved over time.

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<sup>52</sup> The use of a different verb and tense indicates that this was a later addition – hence ‘keep on teaching’.

<sup>53</sup> Deuteronomy 11:22-25

<sup>54</sup> Deuteronomy 11:26-32

<sup>55</sup> Clements (2001) p 52 ff. Having set this out as a heading however, he does not stick to his own proposed divisions in the subsequent discussion.

Following the exposition of the law, the text provided instruction for its inscription<sup>56</sup>. The Israelites were commanded to set up stones on Mt Ebal, cover them with plaster and write on them ‘*all the words of this instruction*’. They were to build an altar and make offerings on it to Yahweh their god – and, the author has Moses declare, ‘*you shall make well-being sacrifices and eat them there rejoicing in front of Yahweh your god*’ This was exactly what the people were expected to do in the place where Yahweh ‘*will choose to tent his name*’ in the opening verses of this law code.<sup>57</sup>

In the warning that immediately preceded the law code, the tribes had been divided into two groups, half on Mt Gerizim and half on Mt Ebal. There they were to recite the blessings and the curses.<sup>58</sup> The early scholar Ibn Ezra recognised that the blessings and curses that were foreshadowed in the introduction to the law code were those recorded after the exposition of the law code – even though the code itself occupied fourteen chapters.

First the blessings:

*You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the field  
The fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land...will be blessed.  
Your basket and your bowl will be blessed*

...  
*If you listen to the commandments of Yahweh your god*

Then the curses followed on (verses 15-19) mirroring the blessings and thus beginning “*You will be cursed in the city...*”<sup>59</sup>

The invitation to Taking the Oath<sup>60</sup> was introduced by the command “*You shall observe the words of this covenant and carry them out so that you will be wise in all that you do*”. The word used here for *being wise* (Hebrew ‘*sakal*’) was also the one used in Genesis 3 where Eve saw that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad was desirable in order ‘to make one wise’. ‘*Sakal*’ is a rare word only occurring twice more in the first five books of the Bible<sup>61</sup>. Is it possible that a deliberate link was being made suggesting that the gift of the law enabled the people to make good use of the knowledge of good and bad that had been acquired by eating the forbidden fruit? The invitation continued: -

*You are standing today, all of you, before Yahweh your god – your heads, your tribes, your elders, your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your women, and the foreigners who are in your camp, from those who cut your wood to those who draw your water, to enter into the covenant of Yahweh your god, sworn by an oath, which Yahweh your god is making with you today so that he may establish you as his people, and that he may be your god, as he said to you and as he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you who stand here with us today before Yahweh our god, but also with those who are not here with us today.*

Already in the introduction to the Law Code, and in the Code itself, there were references to a covenant renewal ceremony and to the blessings and curses involved. Here there followed a warning against merely going through the ritual. No-one should hear the words of the covenant and say “*I am OK - even though I go on doing whatever I want*” for then “*every curse that is written in this scroll would lie on him*”. In his Temple Sermon, Jeremiah asked if anyone can dare break the terms of the Ten Words and yet come to Yahweh’s temple and say “*‘We are OK!’ – only to go on doing these evil things*”<sup>62</sup> The invitation concluded with an appeal which exhibits the style and passion of Baruch: -

*Surely, this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, so that you could say, “Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and do it?” Neither is it beyond the sea, so that you could say,*

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<sup>56</sup> Deuteronomy 27:1-11

<sup>57</sup> Deuteronomy 12:11

<sup>58</sup> Deuteronomy 28:1-19

<sup>59</sup> At some stage an editor decided to group together the curses associated with the ‘Treaty with God’ and those associated with the *torah*, thus creating a measure of confusion in today’s text.

<sup>60</sup> Deuteronomy 29:10-20

<sup>61</sup> The only occurrences in the first five books of the bible (the Torah) are Genesis 3:6 & 48:14 and Deuteronomy 29:9 & 32:29

<sup>62</sup> Jeremiah 7:10

*“Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and do it?” No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to do.*

The key purpose of the Assyrian Vassal Treaties was to secure the loyalty of the vassal to the chosen successor when the existing leader died. In this respect this second example of the treaty form fits that purpose well, for this ‘treaty’ concludes with the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua<sup>63</sup>:

*Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel:  
“Be strong and bold,  
For you are the one who will go with this people into the land that Yahweh has sworn to their ancestors to give them; and you will put them in possession of it.  
It is Yahweh who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.  
Do not fear or be dismayed.”*

With the new leader publicly established, it just remained to set out the requirements for regular public readings and for the deposition of the of the text. Regular public readings were to occur every seven years<sup>64</sup>: -

*‘When all Israel comes to appear before Yahweh your god, in the place that he will choose. You shall read this torah before all Israel in their ears.’*

The reference to the *torah* implies that a version of the ‘Law code’ was intended to be read. It was not the whole of the first five books of the bible, as these only became known as the Torah much later. The place ‘*that Yahweh will choose*’ respected the Deuteronomic convention of never mentioning a geographic place. The addition ‘*for his name to tent*’ was not included so the place was such as was needed to satisfy an administrative purpose and need not have been the Jerusalem temple; Mount Ebal or Shechem would have been acceptable

Finally, the Instructions for the Deposition of the scroll were incorporated a few verses later.<sup>65</sup>

*“Take this scroll and set it at the side of the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your god. Let it remain there as a witness against you.”*

And thus the expanded scroll was replaced in the Holy of Holies where the Book of 622 had been found.

### **Reflection: Remember Horeb <sup>66</sup>**

It has already been noted that the voice of Baruch can be heard in the reflection now to be found in Deuteronomy 4. Its content and position suggests it might originally have been intended as a reflective introduction to the ‘Ten Words’ given at Horeb/Sinai in the way that the second half of Deuteronomy 10 is a reflective introduction to the law code. The added references to the Statutes and Judgements means, however, that in its present form it embraced both the Ten Words and the Law code. This passage, although still nominally in Moses’ voice, was clearly written after Israel was established in the Land. The author points this out when he says: -

*Yahweh brought you out of Egypt by his presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it still is today<sup>67</sup>.*

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<sup>63</sup> Deuteronomy 31:1-8

<sup>64</sup> Deuteronomy 31:9-13

<sup>65</sup> Deuteronomy 31:24-27

<sup>66</sup> Deuteronomy 4:1-24 & 32-40. The intervening verses (25-31) are exilic. This might suggest that the whole passage is exilic, but it does not require that. The general consensus is that the exilic material was added later to adjust earlier texts that were no longer appropriate, rather than supposing that the existence of exilic material within a text demonstrated that the whole text was exilic. This hypothesis works best if it is assumed that the pre-exilic material and the exilic material were both written by the same person.

<sup>67</sup> Deuteronomy 4:37-38

This reflection called the people to obedience in observing Yahweh's commandments - particularly as expressed in the Ten Words given to the people at Horeb/Sinai. Baruch reminded the people of the events at Horeb as if they had actually been there. 'Remember', he urged, 'how you once stood before Yahweh' and 'how you heard the words but saw no form'.<sup>68</sup> But he began: -

*And now, Israel, hear the statutes and judgements that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that Yahweh, the god of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it,*<sup>69</sup>

The opening phrase 'and now' often marks a departure from the main text to a comment or reflection based upon it.<sup>70</sup> In this reflection Baruch emphasized the excellence of the law given to the people and especially the importance of not making 'an idol for yourselves in the form of any figure - male or female - since you saw no form when Yahweh spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire.'

He reminded them that out of the fire, Yahweh had charged the people to observe the 'Ten Words - and he wrote them on two stone tablets. And he added 'and Yahweh charged me at that time to teach you the statutes and judgements' that they should observe in the Land that Yahweh was giving them.<sup>71</sup> Here a distinction is made between the 'Ten Words' given at Horeb and the 'Statutes and Judgements' of the Law code. By adding the words 'and Yahweh charged me at that time' Baruch linked the two together. If the phrase was a later editorial addition, then it confirms the sequence of incorporation - with the 'Ten Words' being part of the original scroll and the 'Statutes and Judgements' being added later. Apart from this almost incidental reference and the 'Statutes' of very last verse, this entire reflection is based around the Ten Words given at Horeb.

He flattered his audience by writing that when other nations heard of the commandments adopted by the people of Yahweh they would recognize Judeans as being 'wise and discerning'. But he cautioned:

*Watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children— how you once stood before Yahweh ... and heard the sound of his words ... (as) he declared his covenant.*<sup>72</sup>

And: -

*When you look up to the heavens and see the sun and the stars - all the host of heaven - do not be led astray into ... worshipping the things that Yahweh your god has allocated to all the nations under heaven. But as for you, Yahweh took you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be his very own people, as you now are.*<sup>73</sup>

The phrases 'the host of heaven' and 'brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt' occur here and in Jeremiah's book of 604 - as does the phrase 'with all your heart and with all your soul' just a few verses later.<sup>74</sup>

He emphasised how special his audience was: -

*Ask now about former ages, long before your own.... Has a people heard god's voice speaking*

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<sup>68</sup> Baruch is writing in the late seventh century but using the device of employing the voice of Moses addressing a people who were about to enter the land given to them by Yahweh. It is intrinsic to the story that none of the people who were actually present at Horeb would enter the land, with the sole exception of Joshua who will become the new leader. Baruch's treatment of his audience as if they were actually present before their god delivers a passionate immediacy to his writing.

<sup>69</sup> Deuteronomy 4:1-2

<sup>70</sup> Weinfeld; p 199

<sup>71</sup> Deuteronomy 4:12-14

<sup>72</sup> Deuteronomy 4: 9-10

<sup>73</sup> Deuteronomy 4:19-20

<sup>74</sup> The specific references are: - The 'host of heaven' occurs in Deuteronomy 4:19 & 17:3 and Jeremiah 8:2 and 19:13. The 'iron furnace' occurs in Deuteronomy 4:20 and Jeremiah 11:4. 'With all your heart and with all your soul' occurs in Deuteronomy 4:29, 10:1, 11:13 & 13:4 etc. and Jeremiah 32:41 (book of comfort)

*from within a fire and lived? Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as Yahweh your god did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that Yahweh is god; there is no other besides him. From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, while you heard his words coming out of the fire.<sup>75</sup>*

And he ended: -

*So acknowledge today and take to heart that Yahweh is god in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the Yahweh your god is giving you.*

### **Putting the First Edition Together**

The most obvious feature of today's Deuteronomy is that it is written as a report of the final speech of Moses to 'all Israel'<sup>76</sup> just before his death. The reporter described Moses as being on the 'other side' of the Jordan, and since we know that Moses never crossed the Jordan, it is clear that the reporter's base was west of Jordan and that the reporter was not Moses himself. The author created this scenario from the perspective of someone who is living and writing in Judah. Despite this many modern introductions to Deuteronomy state that Moses was the actual author, so it is worth mentioning that the earliest critics, including Ibn Ezra, recognised that Moses' apparent authorship was a literary device. Amongst the reasons they have sighted for this are the facts that: -

- The final book included an account of Moses' death
- There are references to situations that continue 'to this day' that relate to matters that happened after Israel was established in the land.<sup>77</sup>
- The material in the *torah*, the law code, included material that depended on texts such as the Covenant Code and the Holiness Code which were created after the death of Moses
- The material in the *torah* included laws concerning rural slaughter which would only be appropriate for 7<sup>th</sup> century Judah
- The material in the *torah* included the King's Law. There would be no King in Israel or Judah until many generations had elapsed following the death of Moses.
- The Hebrew of Deuteronomy is that of the 8<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century BCE
- The style and vocabulary of significant parts of Deuteronomy is the same as that used in Baruch's contributions to Jeremiah.

Nevertheless, since the book was written as if it was a collection of speeches by Moses recorded by a listener, it came to acquire the title of the 'Book of the Moses', or the 'Book of the Law of Moses' as well as, more accurately, the 'Book of the Law' – '*sepher ha torah*'.

The genre of the imagined final testimony of a great leader was common in the Ancient Near East. It was used, in Egypt and elsewhere, as a means of passing on the wisdom of the leader – or at least what the author regarded as the wisdom of the leader. Egyptian wisdom instructions were often dressed up as the testaments of pharaohs and viziers to their successors. Judean scribes of the seventh century were familiar with Egyptian wisdom literature as is evidenced by the influence of that literature on the content of Proverbs and the Law code.<sup>78</sup> The technique of using the imagined speech of a dying leader as a means of transmitting instruction or important information was also used in the histories (Joshua to Kings) which were compiled by the Deuteronomists; it can be seen in the final speeches of Joshua (concluding the conquest) and of Samuel (concluding the period of the Judges) and in David's

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<sup>75</sup> Deuteronomy 4:34-36

<sup>76</sup> *All Israel* is a common way for the Judean authors to refer to the population of their extended territories in the time of Josiah. They were not just Judeans.

<sup>77</sup> For example Deuteronomy 4:37-8 reads '*he brought you out of Egypt by his presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today.*'

<sup>78</sup> See the section on 'the influence of wisdom tradition' within the 'Evolution of the Law Code' in the previous chapter.

deathbed instructions to Solomon.<sup>79</sup> Greek historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides also employed the device. Indeed, Thucydides confessed that he often chose to make his historical leaders say what he thought they should have said!<sup>80</sup>

The northern background of the Deuteronomists has already been noted, and Moses was the leader to whom they traced their ancestry. It would be natural, therefore, for them to choose Moses as the great leader whose voice they used.

The Book that was found in 622 attracted additions and acquired an extensive editorial history. For example, it is likely that the section on the organisation of the Judiciary (1:9-18) – clearly a stand-alone passage – was a late addition. There are other passages in Deuteronomy 1-3 that are thought to have been added later - most marked by the introductory phrase ‘*At that time...*’, a phrase that occurs seven times in chapters 2 and 3. At various points throughout the book there can be found introductions to different parts of the book, whose lack of consistency one with another suggests the presence of different hands. Whilst there is evidence that Baruch - either directly or at Jeremiah’s dictation – was one of these contributors, the others remain unknown.

It is generally recognised that there were two editions of Deuteronomy. The first edition of Deuteronomy was a compilation created at some time after the discovery of the Book and before the disasters that fell upon Judah after the death of Josiah in 609. The second edition adjusted the text in the light of those disasters.

In the version we have today there are three passages that seem to serve as introductions by stating that all Israel was listening to these speeches whilst in the lands of Og and Sihon, two kings of the Amorites. These references occur in the introduction to the Book as a whole, in the introduction to the Ten Words and in the introduction to the oath ceremony following the exposition of the Law Code.<sup>81</sup> There is a scholarly view that the first edition ran from Deuteronomy 4:44 to the end of chapter 28, thus incorporating just the middle reference to Og and Sihon as its introduction, with the more extended historical introduction (introduced by the first reference) and the oath ceremony and subsequent material (introduced by the last reference) being added later. Here, however, it is argued that the first edition could have been a slightly larger document so as to include some of the material in the extended historical review of the disposition of the land and all the Treaty material including the transmission of the leadership to Joshua. If this more extended scope for the first edition is correct, then the material to be added subsequently would be the exilic amendments to the reflections, and the appendices (the Song of Moses and all that follows). Clearly there can be no certain way of knowing exactly what was included in the first edition, except to say that the exilic material must have been added later.

One of the consequences of envisaging the text as speeches made by Moses on the far side of the Jordan, is that it resets the laws of the author’s time back to the time of Moses. This would enable someone, possibly the same person, to create a history which used these speeches of Moses as its starting point and describes the history of Israel and Judah from then until his own time. The document he produced is now known as the Deuteronomic History.

### **The Deuteronomic (or Interpretive) History**

The German scholar Martin Noth argued in 1943 that the reforms of Josiah were accompanied by the writing of a substantial work which interpreted events from the accepted traditions of the history of the Hebrew kingdoms in the light of Deuteronomic Theology. With slight variations this remains the general consensus. The new interpretation of the history of the nation involved bringing existing material together with new writing into a framework that reflected the theology of the Deuteronomists. The resultant work comprises the majority of the texts of the today’s six books from Joshua to Kings. There is evidence that this work, like most of the reflections incorporated into Deuteronomy, emerged from the circle influenced by Jeremiah and Baruch.

#### The Date

The first edition of the Interpretative History contained in the books from Joshua to Kings was composed before the exile. The text frequently referred to things that were still true ‘*to this day*’, some of which ceased with the destruction of the temple in 587/6. In Joshua 9:27, for example, it is said that the Gibeonites are servants at the altar of Yahweh *to this day*, and in I Kings 8:8 it is explained that the

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<sup>79</sup> Joshua 23, 1 Samuel 12 and 2 Kings 2.

<sup>80</sup> Weinfeld (1991) p 4

<sup>81</sup> Deuteronomy 1:4, 4:47 and 29:7

poles which carried the ark could be seen from the inner sanctuary of the temple and that they were there *to this day*. There is also a unit of weight, the *pim*, mentioned casually in the description of the battle of Michmash, which has been found by archaeologists in pre-exilic layers, but not post-exilic ones.

The first edition of this piece of writing almost certainly ended with the very favourable judgement on king Josiah:

*He established the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiah had found in the house of Yahweh. Before him there was no king like him, who turned to Yahweh with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses*<sup>82</sup>.

This reads as a final judgement upon the reign of Josiah, and yet at the point where this was written there had been no report of his death. Scholars therefore conclude these were the last words of an edition of the History written whilst Josiah was still alive. The direct reference to the implementation of ‘the law of Moses’ establishes the book that was found in the temple as the document upon whose precepts the history was based and further marks this passage out as a concluding statement. Josiah was the only king to receive this wholehearted endorsement. The phrase ‘*there was none like him*’ is used only of Moses and of Josiah, and whilst Moses was given the words ‘*You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*’, it was only Josiah who is acknowledged to have done this. The work therefore was written in Josiah’s time by a supporter of his reforms.

The section dealing with the kings – from Jeroboam to Josiah – was bracketed with references to prophecy. When king Jeroboam was offering incense, a man of God from Judah cried out to the altar at Bethel in words that Jeremiah could well have used:

*Altar, altar! Thus says Yahweh:  
A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David.  
On you he will sacrifice the priests of the raised sanctuaries who now make offerings here;  
and human bones will be burned on you.*<sup>83</sup>

Then when Josiah’s reform was described the author added:

*He even demolished the altar at Bethel, the raised sanctuary made by Jeroboam ... and when he saw tombs on the hillside, he had the bones removed from them and burnt on the altar to defile it in accordance with Yahweh’s word proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things*<sup>84</sup>

Nowhere else in the Hebrew bible is a prophecy so closely tied to its fulfilment.

The text sets the histories of Judah and Israel against the opening instruction of the Law code – that Yahweh’s people should destroy all the places where the indigenous people served their gods – *on the high mountains, the hills and under every leafy tree*. It follows that the writing of this history probably followed the incorporation of the Law code<sup>85</sup> - an event that took place no earlier than 622. The climax of the first edition of the work took place in the lifetime of Josiah and therefore must have been completed between 622 and 609.

### Authorship

Martin Noth suggested that all the text from Joshua to the end of Kings was compiled by an author in the Deuteronomistic tradition, the so-called Deuteronomistic Historian, who was therefore assigned the letters DH. More recently the American scholar Frank Moore Cross proposed that the original work was composed to support the reforms of Josiah, but considered that it was subsequently edited in exile where the last chapters were added (2 Kings 23:25b –25:30). He therefore proposed two

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<sup>82</sup> 2 Kings 24-25a

<sup>83</sup> 1 Kings 13:2. The repeated vocative is a feature of Jeremiah

<sup>84</sup> 2 Kings 23:15

<sup>85</sup> If the Book of 622 was a forgery, then the inclusion of the Second Law was part of that forgery. If it was not a forgery, then the opening law concerning local slaughter indicates that the Second law was incorporated shortly afterwards – since that law was applicable to the expanded Judah of Josiah’s reign.

Deuteronomic authors, who he called Dtr1 and Dtr2. Other scholars have identified yet more complex editorial histories. Friedman has drawn attention to the apparent compositional unity of some of the material in Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings with the acknowledged Yahwist material in the first five books of the bible. It does not follow that Friedman's and Cross's hypotheses are in conflict. Dtr1 is acknowledged to have made great use of diverse sources and he could have incorporated the Yahwist material into his work where it proved appropriate. The present text of Joshua, Judges and Samuel is generally acknowledged to be confused and to contain a degree of repetition. It may be that some of this confusion and repetition is due to the subsequent splicing together of Yahwist writings, Deuteronomic texts and material from the local traditions of individual tribes.

There is source material originating in folklore: most of the stories of the judges, Saul's search for his father's donkeys and some of the stories of Elisha and Elijah in Kings are examples of material with this characteristic. There are stories emanating from the royal courts or the priesthood: the 'ark cycle', the stories of David's 'rise to power' and the 'succession struggle' in Samuel all seem to be examples of stories created with a political purpose - to provide an acceptable explanation for an awkward fact. These stories may have been imported into the history via an intermediate source such as the Yahwist's epic. Some scholars also recognise a source with a special interest in the prophets, sometimes known as DtrP, whose author may have put together a kind of 'Tales of the Prophets'.

Friedman argues that Dtr1 and Dtr2 were in fact the same man writing at different times - and this is indeed both possible and consistent with the virtually identical style and phraseology of the two texts. After that there was probably at least one more layer as further related material was incorporated into the text. Finally the work needed to be divided into the six scrolls that form the books from Joshua through to 2 Kings today; this process may have involved inserting appropriate sentences or sections so that each of these books would be able to stand on their own as well as being part of the larger work.

DH had a distinctive faith; he believed that the people, chosen by Yahweh, will prosper provided they remain faithful to Yahweh and do not go after other gods. If they do, and do not repent, then Yahweh's anger will be kindled against them; but if they do repent then Yahweh will forgive them and restore the covenant. This idea was by no means obvious and was not really accepted by the people 'with all their hearts' as Jeremiah found when he preached it. After all, the reforms of Hezekiah had been accompanied by the loss of much of Judah, the destruction of Lachish and the siege of Jerusalem, whereas in Manasseh's time the tolerance of foreign gods had been accompanied by years of peace and prosperity and the recovery of territory. Therefore it was necessary to demonstrate the Deuteronomic hypothesis by selecting and retelling those stories from the commonly accepted history that best illustrated the Deuteronomic teaching.

DH claimed to have had access to the court and court documents. He was not a priest but he had a high level of religious commitment. He was in favour of the reforms of Josiah, even though these involved the closure of the rural sanctuaries which provided non-Aaronite Levites with their living. He asked the people to care for these Levites as well as other landless people. But he had little sympathy with priests who had mixed the worship of Yahweh with other gods in the places where they officiated.

The Talmud ascribes the authorship of Kings - whose text is a major part of the Deuteronomic History - to the prophet Jeremiah. Friedman suggests it was not Jeremiah himself, but, once again, his scribe Baruch<sup>86</sup>. As we have seen, Baruch had access to court records, was part of the group that included Jeremiah, Hilkiah and Shaphan, and was a highly skilled scribe. Although related to families whose members achieved high office, he himself did not. Therefore he had the time to create this substantive work. The history concluded with the phrase "with all his heart and with all his soul" a phrase that occurs frequently in the material that can be identified as coming from the hand of Baruch.<sup>87</sup> As noted earlier, the key framework passages, the reflections in Deuteronomy and certain passages in Jeremiah all enjoy a particular identifiable passion and fluency in the writing and all contain particular Baruch's characteristic phrases.

In addition there is stylistic evidence in the device of vocative repetition; it occurs in the key prophecy that began 'O Altar, altar' quoted above, in the opening phrase of Jeremiah's Temple Sermon 'This is Yahweh's temple, Yahweh's temple' and as 'O land, land, land' was included in Jeremiah's condemnation of Coniah.<sup>88</sup> However it seems sensible to recognise that not all of DH's writing has the passion and eloquence that the acknowledged material from the Jeremiah/Baruch

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<sup>86</sup> Friedman (1987) *Who wrote the bible*; p 146 - 149

<sup>87</sup> The histories from Joshua to Kings are thought to have been largely compiled by a Deuteronomist - although in today's bible these are merged with other material.

<sup>88</sup> 1 Kings 13:2. 'O Altar, altar'; Jeremiah 7:4 "this is Yahweh's temple, Yahweh's temple, Yahweh's temple"; Jeremiah 22:29 "O land, land, land". Also Jeremiah 4:19 'my anguish, my anguish'.

partnership possesses and also that such a massive task probably involved more than one scribe. Therefore let DH stand for all those Deuteronomists involved whilst acknowledging that the project was probably directed, overseen and inspired by the partnership of Jeremiah and Baruch.

### **The First Edition**

The author compiled the work by establishing a framework of key texts that provided the argument for the work. Between these framework texts, DH assembled stories that illustrated his argument. The framework texts thus guided the reader's interpretation of the stories. To create his framework, DH inserted major speeches at key moments in the history – in Yahweh's instruction to Joshua to cross the Jordan, in Joshua's last speech before his death, in Yahweh's speech to the people in the light of their failure to complete the conquest, in Samuel's last speech, in David's deathbed advice to Solomon and in Solomon's dedication of the temple. DH added other pieces to the history in his own hand, notably the covenant renewal ceremonies, and concluded the work with chapters and comments on Josiah and his reforms.

The argument can be traced through the framework passages: -

1. **The Promise and the Warning.**  
In the first framework passage (Joshua 1:1-9), Yahweh told Joshua that no-one will be able to stand against him all the days of his life and that all the land he trod would be given to him: but he was warned to be careful to observe all the terms of the 'Book of the Law', which the reader should have known contained the requirement to completely eliminate the indigenous inhabitants. (The subsequent content told of their failure to do this.)
2. **The Limits to the Conquest**  
In Joshua's final speech (Joshua 23) he commented on the progress made but acknowledged that there were still remnants of the indigenous nations around. He warned his followers that if they joined with these survivors then they should know for certain that Yahweh would not drive them out, and these outsiders would become a trap for the Israelites, who might then perish in the land that they had been given. (But the reader might have already known from the oral tradition that they had made an alliance with the Gibeonites, and were not going to drive them out.)
3. **Yahweh Abandons the Conquest**  
After the death of Joshua, DH introduced an angel of Yahweh who reprimanded the Israelites for making covenants with the outsider tribes<sup>89</sup> and stated that Yahweh will now no longer work with the people in driving them out. (Judges 2). Then followed a comment by DH who stated that a cycle will commence in which the Israelites would worship foreign gods, Yahweh would send an oppressor to punish them, the Israelites would cry out to Yahweh who would then take pity and send them a 'judge' to free them from their oppressor, after which they would revert to worshipping foreign gods and the cycle would repeat. (The subsequent content then detailed seven instances of this.)
4. **A Warning about Kings**  
By the time of Samuel's farewell speech (I Samuel 12), the people had chosen a king despite Samuel's advice not to. In his farewell speech, Samuel told them that, even though they had sinned, if both they and their king listened to the voice of Yahweh and obeyed him, then all would be well: but if they did not, they would be swept away. (The subsequent content contrasted the kingship of David, who listened to Yahweh and obeyed him, with the disobedient kingship of Saul who did not)
5. **The Promise to David**  
In a key dialogue (2 Samuel 7), David was rewarded with a statement from Yahweh that his offspring would have the throne forever.

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<sup>89</sup> 'Outsider tribes' is preferred to the bible's 'nations' as a descriptor of the indigenous people amongst whom the Israelites were living. These people did not have any of the characteristics nowadays associated with the concept of 'nationhood'. Nor can they be described as foreigners since in most cases there is no evidence that they exhibited loyalty to established foreign powers.

6. Clarification of the Promise  
By means of David's farewell speech to Solomon (I Kings 2), DH clarified his promise to David. In this he said that provided his heirs took care to follow Yahweh's ways then there would always be a descendant on the throne. (The subsequent content then demonstrated that Solomon did not follow Yahweh's way)
7. The Failures of Kings  
Just before Solomon's death, Yahweh appeared to Solomon and told him that because of his disobedience, Yahweh would give most of the kingdom to a servant (I Kings 11). And this happened. (The subsequent content then detailed the continued failure of other kings of both Israel and Judah to remain loyal to Yahweh and his commandments)
8. The Loss of Israel  
In a direct comment in II Kings 17, DH explained that Israel was destroyed because the people worshipped other gods, adopted the customs of the other tribes who should have been driven out, and followed practices introduced by the rulers of these tribes. (The subsequent content dealt with the alleged horrors of Manasseh's reign in Judah and the reforms of Josiah)
9. The Rewards of Repentance  
DH finally ended on a note of hope. Josiah put into practice all the words written in the Book of the Law that was found in the temple (II Kings 23). It was hoped, at the time of the first edition, that this might be sufficient to persuade Yahweh to hold back from further punishment of Judah. And this seemed to be the case. Judah expanded its territory once more. The Passover was celebrated as it had not been since the days of the Judges.

The evidence DH provided came from well-known stories from the traditions of Judah and Israel. As source material he explicitly mentioned the Annals of the Kings of Judah and of Israel, the Book of Jashar and the Book of the Acts of Solomon. In addition to these he appears to have used stories that were already written down in the Yahwist text, material from the hypothetical 'Tales of the Prophets', parts of the Ancient Narratives circulating in the Judean court concerning David's rise to power, some common Folk Tales, and archival material available to the Judean administration.

For the most part his quotations are flagged by comments in Deuteronomistic language. This is fairly clear in the material he used that related to events that occurred in the time of the Judges and in the time of the Kings from Solomon onwards. However, the material that related to Saul and David is relatively free from Deuteronomistic comment. In some cases this may be due to the poor state of preservation of the text itself: during the process of transmission down the ages, it appears that the condition of at least one scroll became so poor that bits of the text became indecipherable. As a result, there are sentences with missing words (such as Saul's age when he came to power) and stories with missing sentences or with sentences put together again but in the wrong order (such as the story of the battle of Michmash pass).<sup>90</sup> The discovery of the Samuel scrolls in Qumran has enabled some of these missing pieces and erroneous restorations to be repaired, but problems still remain. The evidence from the places where the text is well preserved suggests that DH felt he did not need to make many editorial comments on this particular material, because – with some exceptions – it could be left to speak for itself.

The main portion of the history is now incorporated in six books of today's bible – Joshua, Judges, the two books of Samuel and the two books of Kings. Over time, editors added other material to these books, but the Deuteronomistic history remains their principle content.

As the author seems to have placed the 'Book of the Law' at the head of his work, Deuteronomy has come to be seen as not only as the culmination of the Torah, but also as the opening of this History – known in Hebrew Bibles as the 'Former Prophets'.

## **The Text**

### *The introduction: theology and the covenant*

The work may have started with the core parts of Deuteronomy including the Law code, the

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<sup>90</sup> It is also possible that sloppy copying caused the problem. See 1 Samuel; McCarter; AB; p5 for more information.

covenant with Moses and the succession treaty that passed the leadership to Joshua. This formed the basic theological underpinning of the whole work. It laid out the basis on which Judah and Israel were to live, the covenant that they should keep and the consequences for not doing so. The history that followed was to show that the events that happened to Israel and Judah were a consequence of their responses to the covenant. The “Book of the Law” would be referred to eleven times.

DH probably began his history with an epitaph to Moses and the commissioning of Joshua. In today’s bible the text spans the last verses of Deuteronomy and the first of Joshua:

*After him, no prophet rose up in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that Yahweh sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land, and for the mighty hand and all the great terror that Moses performed before the eyes of all Israel. After the death of Moses the servant of Yahweh, Yahweh said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ assistant. “My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all these people. Go into the land that I am giving to them, to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot treads I have given to you – as I said to Moses.”<sup>91</sup>*

As we have seen, this epitaph would be mirrored by a similar encomium to Josiah at the end of the history.

#### Command and Warning (Joshua 1:1 - )

In today’s bible, the division of the text into books created a break after the first paragraph above, so that the natural flow from the end of Deuteronomy straight into the beginning of Joshua is less obvious. The author (or an editor) then provided an extraordinarily ambitious definition of the gifted Land which included much of today’s Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Gaza and Palestine<sup>92</sup>. In the seventh century most of this territory was under the control of Assyria or Babylonia with Egypt and the Phoenician city states occupying much of the coast. Did officials in Judah really believe that they could overcome the regional superpowers? Many clearly did not; but it is possible that King Josiah believed that an attempt to conquer all this territory had Yahweh’s support.

*Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not leave your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you will take care to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall prosper, and then you shall be successful.”<sup>93</sup>*

The instruction that this ‘Book of the Law’ shall be the constant study of the leader is also a requirement of the King’s Law from Deuteronomy. The requirement to be ‘strong and courageous’ occurs ten times in Deuteronomy and in texts attributed to DH but nowhere else<sup>94</sup>.

#### The Conquest (Joshua 5:13 – )

DH used the well-known stories of the conquest to illustrate the extent to which Joshua and the people lived up to the instructions given. The first city that Yahweh arranged to be given to the Israelites was to be Jericho. But first some intelligence was needed to establish its strengths and weaknesses. The story of the spies was taken from a Yahwist account but when DH incorporated it he added some characteristically Deuteronomistic material. He inserted a speech by Rahab, the friendly prostitute, in which she gave the following affirmation of DH’s message.

*“I know that Yahweh has given you the land, and that dread of you has fallen on us (as stated in Deuteronomy 11:25), and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. For we have heard how Yahweh dried up the water of the Reed Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites beyond the Jordan*

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<sup>91</sup> Deuteronomy 34:10 – Joshua 1:3

<sup>92</sup> *From the wilderness (of Zin?) to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Prat (Euphrates) -all the Hittite country - to the Great Sea in the west (the Mediterranean). The Hittite country does not refer to the Anatolia of the Hittite empire, but rather the land of the sons of Heth – a Canaanite group.*

<sup>93</sup> Joshua 1:7-9

<sup>94</sup> Two of the ten occasions occur in Chronicles where the chronicler’s source is DH.

– to Sihon and Og whom you utterly destroyed (as described in Deuteronomy 2:24-3:22). As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted (a phrase from Deuteronomy 1:28), and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. Yahweh your god is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below (a phrase repeated from Deuteronomy 4:39).<sup>95</sup>

The spies were fortunate indeed to find a prostitute who so accurately anticipated Deuteronomic theology! The spies did a deal with Rahab, and promised that her life and that of her family would be spared. This was the first of a number of deals done by the Israelite invaders in which they disobeyed Yahweh's rules of warfare as recorded in Deuteronomy 20; rules which required them to annihilate all the inhabitants of the Land.

DH may have used J's account of the crossing of the Jordan or it may have been a more ancient account. In this account the river bed dried up in a repetition of the sea bed becoming dry in the crossing of the Reed Sea. The account may recall very ancient traditions associated with the beginnings of the Yahwist faith and may even have originated in a story of a crossing of a mountain ridge rather than a river<sup>96</sup>. It is filled with liturgical material.

The setting up of the memorial stones at Gilgal has clearer Deuteronomic references. Even so the event is confused by being described twice, perhaps because an ancient etiological account has been inserted alongside an account which some scholars consider to have been based on a liturgical re-enactment of the events. The Deuteronomic tradition was a teaching tradition and so here he inserted some instruction:

*When your children ask you in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground. For Yahweh your god dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you crossed over, as Yahweh your god did to the Reed Sea, ...so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of Yahweh is mighty, and so that you may fear Yahweh your god forever.'<sup>97</sup>*

This insertion occurs twice, once after each account. The two begin more or less identically, though the second occasion (quoted above) is more extensive and more characteristic of Deuteronomic theology. The instruction closely followed the form laid down in Deuteronomy 6

Liturgical influences continued to be important. Now that the people were in the Land, they circumcised themselves and celebrated the Passover. Towards the end of this history DH would write that Josiah instructed the people to 'Keep the Passover to Yahweh your God as prescribed in this book of the treaty.'<sup>98</sup> Thus DH opened and closed his work with the Passover ceremony. (The account of the Passover in the time of Hezekiah, as given in Chronicles, is omitted from the Deuteronic History and the books of Kings)

DH returned to the question of the occupation of the Land, probably using Yahwist material as his source once more. The destruction of Jericho contrasted with the attempt to capture Ai. Both stories had etiological origins, since both Jericho and Ai (which simply means 'the ruin') were unoccupied mounds in the author's time. The stories provided an explanation of how that came about. The destruction of Jericho went perfectly to plan because Yahweh was in charge. It was left empty since it was the first fruit of the conquest and therefore dedicated to Yahweh. The attempted capture of Ai was a disaster because Yahweh was not consulted and not involved, and because one man had taken from Jericho some booty that had been dedicated to Yahweh. But once that matter had been dealt with, Yahweh became involved in a capture that was so total that the place remained a ruin to the author's day.<sup>99</sup>

#### Treaty renewal (Joshua 8:30 - )

*Then Joshua built an altar to Yahweh, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal just as Moses the servant of Yahweh had commanded the Israelites – as it is written in the book of the Law of Moses, "an altar of unhewn stones, on which no iron tool has been used". And they offered on it burnt offerings to Yahweh, and sacrificed offerings of well-being.<sup>100</sup>*

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<sup>95</sup> Joshua 2:9-11

<sup>96</sup> Salibi (1985)

<sup>97</sup> Joshua 4:6 & 22-23

<sup>98</sup> 2 Kings 23:21

<sup>99</sup> Joshua 6 – 8:29

<sup>100</sup> Part of Joshua 8:30-35.

The explicit reference is to Deuteronomy 27:4 “*And you shall build an altar there to Yahweh your God, an altar of stones on which you have not used an iron tool*”. Archaeological excavations have confirmed the existence of an altar on mount Ebal.

*And there, in the presence of the Israelites, Joshua wrote on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which he had written. All Israel, outsiders as well as citizens, with their elders and officers and their judges<sup>101</sup>, stood on opposite sides of the ark...*

*And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and curses, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel and the women, the little ones, and the outsiders who resided among them. And the leaders of the community swore an oath to them.<sup>102</sup>*

Deuteronomy contained an instruction that this public reading and renewal should be done regularly. DH established that the people were fully aware of the terms of the covenant before they set out to conquer and occupy the land. Of specific relevance were the Laws of Warfare (Deuteronomy 20) that can be summarised as:

1. Priests to address troops first
2. Officials to allow certain categories of men exemption from service
3. Vassal status to be offered to any distant town if it surrenders; all the people in it to become slaves. If it does not surrender, all the males to be executed when the town is defeated and the rest of the population to be treated as booty.
4. Everything that breathes to be annihilated from the non-Israelite towns, so that they do not seduce the people into following false gods.
5. Fruit bearing trees to be preserved.

With the liturgical and symbolic parts of the occupation completed, DH was able to incorporate something that was perhaps slightly more historical. The Israelites made a treaty with a group of indigenous people, the Gibeonites. According to the Laws of Warfare they were not supposed to do this; everything that breathed in the land prior to their arrival was supposed to be annihilated. But they were permitted to make vassal treaties with distant towns, for Deuteronomy 20:7 says “*if it surrenders to you, then all the people in it shall serve you*”. The Gibeonites exploited this clause and, appearing as if coming from a long journey, appealed to the Israelites for a treaty. Like Rahab, they showed an incredible knowledge of Israelite culture and Deuteronomic theology. The author gives them a Rahab-like speech – again referring to Egypt, Sihon and Og. They were granted their treaty.

*Now their towns were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the community had sworn to them by Yahweh, the God of Israel. All the community murmured against the leaders, but they answered, “... We will let them live, so that retribution does not fall upon us for breaking the oath we swore to them.” ... And on that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water-carriers for the community and for the altar of Yahweh in the place that he should choose, and so they are to this day,<sup>103</sup>*

The four towns mentioned were all located a few miles north of Jerusalem, in what became the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. An entertaining story that purports to account for the oath not to attack these towns is contained within the Yahwist texts (now Joshua 9), but the lack of any attack, on these or any other towns, is consistent with the modern historical understanding of the way the Israelites came to live in the land. The phrase ‘*the place that he should choose*’ in the quotation above is recognisably Deuteronomic; in this context it may mean Gilgal or more probably Gibeon itself, the shrine at which Solomon would be said to worship before building the temple. The tasks the Gibeonites were given appear to have been hereditary; the author commented that descendants of the original servants were

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<sup>101</sup> ‘All Israel’ is characteristic DH vocabulary. “Outsiders (or foreigners) and citizens” is anachronistic in this context - another indication this text was written was after the creation of the states of Judah and Israel. Whether translated as ‘Foreigners’ or ‘Outsiders’ the Hebrew would of course include the indigenous people; the use of the term by DH is indicative of the attitude he shared towards the non-Israelite tribes.

<sup>102</sup> Joshua 8:33-36

<sup>103</sup> Joshua 9: 17 - end, but omitting 22-26a.

still working at their tasks in his time.

According to a Yahwist story, the people of Gibeon soon had cause to call upon Joshua to further honour his treaty by protecting them against an attack by a confederation of five kings. This was the story in which Joshua called upon Yahweh to make the sun stand still, and in which Yahweh battered the enemy with hailstones.

DH was developing a clear theme. Yahweh fought for Israel against the Egyptians; Yahweh took Jericho for them; they could not take Ai without Yahweh; and it was Yahweh who defeated the five kings with hailstones.

Israel took the territories of those kings - and further towns. After each one an editor, probably DH, added something like *'and they took it that day, and struck it with the edge of the sword; and Joshua utterly destroyed every person in it, as he had done to (the previous city). And Joshua moved on,'* until finally...

*Joshua took all these kings and their land at the same time, because Yahweh, the god of Israel, fought for Israel.*<sup>104</sup>

The tradition (possibly J) went on to state that an even larger coalition was then formed to oppose Israel – a coalition of eastern and western Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Hivites – in numbers *'like the sand on the seashore'*. But this coalition of clans was defeated and their towns completely destroyed. And after this an author, possibly a Deuteronomist specialising in this part of the history, summarised the material he had assembled by writing:

*As Yahweh had commanded Moses, his servant, so Moses commanded Joshua and so Joshua did.... And Joshua took all this land: the hill country and all of Negev...  
So Joshua took the whole land, according to everything that Yahweh had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it to Israel as an inheritance according to their tribal allotments.  
And the land had rest from war.*<sup>105</sup>

None of this brutality is in accordance with the archaeological evidence – nor, for that matter, was it consistent with much of the rest of the historical books of the bible for the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Hivites keep on cropping up in subsequent stories. It was however consistent with the Deuteronomic rules of warfare which specifically required that *"You shall annihilate them—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—just as Yahweh your god has commanded, so that they cannot teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and thus you sin against Yahweh your god."*

The phrase *"And the land had rest from war"* and variations on it seems to have been used by DH as a motif to unify a number of passages. The idea that Yahweh will give a *'rest from war'* to his land and his people was used during the allocation of territory to Caleb; in Joshua's farewell speech; in the comments on the achievements of the judges Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Gideon; when king David was settled in the land; before Solomon commenced building the temple and in Solomon's blessing after the dedication of the temple<sup>106</sup>.

The section that is now Joshua Chapter 12 simply contained lists of conquered kings – or at least town-bosses. It was not a summary of Joshua 1-11 since some of the towns in these lists appeared here for the first time. It was therefore probably an insertion; or a working paper of some sort. Joshua 13 introduced the concept of the geographically ideal territory for Yahweh's people – whether they actually controlled it or not. It therefore reconciled what had happened with the instruction given by Yahweh in Deuteronomy 1:7. This passage emphasised that the division of the land was in accordance with Yahweh's command to Moses; it listed the land allocated by Moses (East of the Jordan) and by Joshua (West of the Jordan). The territory west of the Jordan was broadly equivalent to the province of Canaan under the Egyptian Empire. The repeated explanation of why there was no territory allocated to the Levites depended on Deuteronomy 18:1; it was because they received the *"offerings made to Yahweh"*. Caleb's inheritance was, however, a special case. Deuteronomy 1:35-36 recorded a promise made uniquely to Caleb. As the one spy who had brought back a favourable report of the opportunities in the land, he was the only one from that *'evil generation'* that would see the land and would receive *"the land on which he set foot, because of his complete faithfulness to Yahweh."* This was fulfilled in

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<sup>104</sup> Joshua 10: 42

<sup>105</sup> Joshua 11: 15-23

<sup>106</sup> The full list is Joshua 11:23, 14:15, 21:44, 22:4,23:1; Judges 3:11, 3:30, 5:31, 8:28; 2 Samuel 7:1; 1 Kings 5:4, 8:56

Joshua 14:6-15 wherein he was allocated Hebron – the place where David’s kingship would begin. The allocation ended with the catch-phrase “*then the land had rest from war*”.

The material that followed, now Joshua 15-19, dealt with land allotments by tribes, possibly sourced from archival material. It looks as if the Caleb story became a hook to which further texts concerning land allocation were attached by a later editor – and these included a further Caleb story in which he went on, with the help of Othniel, to capture Debir.

In what is now Joshua 20 and 21, two key institutions were dealt with - the Cities of Refuge and the Cities allocated to the Levites from each tribal territory. There was no general territory for the Levites, whose place in the twelve-tribe scheme had been usurped by splitting Joseph into Ephraim and Manasseh. The six Cities of Refuge, which were also Levitical Cities, served to prevent private vengeance from taking place. The concept was covered both in Deuteronomy and in the Priestly Epic. Since the theology here is somewhat closer to the Priestly concept – in that the accidental killer must remain in the cities of refuge until the death of the High Priest – then this text was probably not incorporated by DH but rather by a different editor.<sup>107</sup>

*Thus Yahweh gave to Israel all the land that he had sworn to their ancestors that he would give; and having taken possession of it, they settled there.  
And Yahweh gave them rest on every side.*<sup>108</sup>

In Joshua 22 there is a return to DH language and Deuteronomic themes. Joshua summoned the Eastern tribes to Shiloh, and thanked them for the support they have given to their Western brothers.

*And now that Yahweh your god has given your brothers rest as he said, return to your tents in the land that Moses the servant of Yahweh gave you on the other side of the Jordan. Take good care to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of Yahweh commanded you, to love Yahweh your god, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commandments, to hold fast to him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.*<sup>109</sup>

This was part of a framework passage written by DH. It related to Deuteronomy 10:12 – 13 from the introduction to the Law code. “*What does Yahweh require of you, but to walk in all his ways, to love him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul and to keep the commandments of Yahweh your god...*”

Unfortunately, once back in the East, the Trans-Jordanian tribes allegedly built a huge altar, which the Cis-Jordanian tribes suspected of being intended for sacrifices to gods other than Yahweh. They therefore prepared to make war on their Eastern brethren. Battle was averted when the Trans-Jordanian tribes explained to a western delegation that what they had made was merely a ‘*copy of the altar of Yahweh, which our ancestors made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you.*’<sup>110</sup> This satisfied the Western tribes. (Note that in Trans-Jordan, altars were permitted for worship but not sacrifice. A neat teaching point from an advocate of Josiah’s reforms?).

#### Limits to the Conquest (Joshua 23:5 - )

After including stories that showed the extent to which Yahweh’s instructions had not been carried out, DH wrote a major framework passage in the form of Joshua’s final speech. The speech dealt with the way the people should relate to the members of the nations who had not been driven out of their land: -

*‘be very steadfast; observe and do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning from it neither to the right nor to the left. Do not associate with the nations remaining here among you; do not invoke the names of their gods, swear by them, serve them or bow down to them. Hold fast to Yahweh your god, as you have done to this day. For*

<sup>107</sup> See Deuteronomy 19:1-13 (part of the torah) & Deuteronomy 4:41-43 (part of a reflection) for a Deuteronomic view. The Priestly approach to the cities of refuge can be found in Numbers 35:9-15.

<sup>108</sup> Joshua 21:43-44a

<sup>109</sup> Part of Joshua 22:4-6 – a framework passage

<sup>110</sup> Joshua 22:28b

*Yahweh has driven out before you great and mighty nations; and as for you, no one has been able to withstand you to this day. One of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is Yahweh your god who fights for you - as he said. Be very careful, therefore, to love Yahweh your god. For if you turn back, and join the survivors of these nations that remain here amongst you, and intermarry with them, so that you marry their women and they yours, then know for certain that Yahweh your god will not continue to drive out these nations before you.<sup>111</sup>*

The phrases about *turning neither to the right nor left* and *being very careful* are characteristically Deuteronomic; the latter phrase occurring 5 times in Deuteronomy itself and a further 6 times in Joshua and Kings – all parts of DH's text. The statement that Yahweh has driven out great and powerful nations is a reference to the conditional offer made in Deuteronomy that if the people love Yahweh their god and walk in his ways then *"Yahweh will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves"*<sup>112</sup>

As the story moved into the next phase of the Deuteronomic History with the people resident in the land of the Amorites, DH inserted a liturgy for a covenant renewal ceremony (Joshua 24). The setting was Shechem. The ceremony began with Joshua, on behalf of Yahweh, reciting a history of the community: -

*'Long ago, your ancestors lived beyond the river and served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the river and led him through all the land of Canaan and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac...*

Assuming that the river referred to is the Euphrates, this statement is confirmed by modern research on the ethnic, geographic and religious origin of Abram and his family. It means that many of the people described as foreigners in the Deuteronomic texts came from the same ethnic background. DH continued with his summary history, concluding: -

*'I gave you a land on which you had not worked, and towns you had not built, and you live in them; and you consume the produce from vineyards and olive groves you did not plant'  
'Now therefore honour Yahweh and serve him with sincerity and faithfulness; put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh.  
Now, if you are unwilling to serve Yahweh, choose this day whom you will serve. Whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve Yahweh.'*<sup>113</sup>

There was recognition here that for some of the people the author was addressing may not have recognised Yahweh as the god of their ancestors. But the text said that people answered:

*Far be it from us that we should forsake Yahweh to serve other gods; for it is Yahweh our god who brought us and our ancestors up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs before our eyes. He protected us along all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed...*

This echoed several passages in Deuteronomy; see for example Deuteronomy 8:13 or most significantly, Deuteronomy 5:6, the first commandment, which stated, *"I am Yahweh your god, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods"*. Then:

Joshua: *You cannot serve Yahweh, for he is a holy god. He is a jealous god; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake Yahweh and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm, and consume you, after having done you good.*

People: *No, we will serve Yahweh!*

Joshua: *You yourselves are witnesses that you have chosen to serve Yahweh.*

People: *We are witnesses.*

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<sup>111</sup> Joshua 23:6-13

<sup>112</sup> Deuteronomy 11:23. From the introduction to the Second Law - probably the work of Baruch or an associate.

<sup>113</sup> Joshua 24:13-15. The Amorites and the Canaanites were the same people. The names can be used interchangeably. The author perceives his people to be immigrants in the land. He recognises their Hurrian origin and that they once worshipped Hurrian gods.

Joshua: *Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to Yahweh, the God of Israel.*

People: *We will serve and obey Yahweh our God.*

*So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of Elohim<sup>114</sup>; and he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of Yahweh.*

This second renewal ceremony took basically the same form as the first in that it followed Deuteronomy 27 where Yahweh instructed the people to write the laws on a large stone. After the ceremony, DH recorded that Joshua died and was buried in the ground allocated to him in the hill country of Ephraim, having lived for 110 years. The priest Eleazar, Aaron's son, also died and was buried in Gibeah.

The text that is now the first chapter of Judges was little more than a selective recapitulation of matters already dealt with in Joshua<sup>115</sup> – especially in the archival material dealing with the allocation of territories. It included an almost word for word repeat of the story of the capture of Debir by Othniel, who thereby won Caleb's daughter as a wife. There are some confusing name variations but despite this, scholars seem satisfied that it really is a recapitulation<sup>116</sup>. The original text resumed in what is now Judges chapter 2 with the description of the events at Bochim, which some identify with Bethel.

#### *Yahweh Abandons the Conquest (Judges 2:1 - )*

DH placed the next framework speech into the mouth of an angel: -

*Now the angel of Yahweh went up from Gilgal to Bochim (aka Bethel?), and said, "I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land that I had sworn to your ancestors. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you. For your part, do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land. Tear down their altars! But you have not obeyed my command. See what you have done! So now I say, I will not drive them out before you! But they shall become adversaries to you, and their gods shall be a snare to you."*  
*When the angel of Yahweh spoke these words to all the children of Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept. So they named that place Bochim (which means 'weeping'), and there they sacrificed to Yahweh.<sup>117</sup>*

The editor responsible for the recapitulation in Judges 1 then inserted a reprise of the account of Joshua's death and burial – again word for word the same as in Joshua, albeit with a reordering of the sentences to suit what followed. This recapitulated material was possibly introduced when editorial additions required the separation of Joshua and Judges into two scrolls, thereby making it sensible to place this review at the start of Judges so that the scroll could be read on a stand-alone basis.

In what is now Judges 3, DH described a situation entirely consistent with the results of modern archaeological research. There was no conquest. The Israelites were living alongside Philistines, Canaanites, Hivites and the people of Sidon – some in neighbouring territory, some in neighbouring villages; some probably even more intimately than that. Furthermore, DH stated that this

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<sup>114</sup> Joshua 24:26. Note that the reference is to '*the book of the law of Elohim*' - not the '*book of the law of Moses*'. This may be a different name for the same book, suggesting that a different scribe was working here, or it may have been a different book.

<sup>115</sup> There is an interesting relationship between the question that opens the chapter, "Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" and the similar question that had been asked in the J text (now to found in Judges 20). But in the J text it was the 'Benjamites' who were to be attacked. The answer in both cases was 'Judah!' Was this editor re-writing a J story of a civil war as a war against the Canaanites? Or is there a hint here that the Benjamites were thought to be Canaanites who had not gone down to Egypt?

<sup>116</sup> See Robert Boling's article on Judges in ABD. The name changes include the Joshua's Ummah being called Acco in Judges; the interchange between Zephath and Hormah; and between Luz and Bethel.

<sup>117</sup> Judges 2:1-5

situation would continue as Yahweh ‘*will not drive them out.*’ A later editor clearly felt this needed some explanation so he added the parenthetical comment that “*it was only so that successive generations of Israelites might know war – to teach those who had no previous experience of it!*”

The reader was left to do his or her best to reconcile the reports of what, according to Deuteronomy, should have happened – substantially the tale as told in Joshua – with what DH was now reporting actually had happened. DH probably did his best to incorporate the different traditions available to him. He knew the Joshua tradition was one in which Joshua exterminated the opposition. He also knew that, in his day, the other nations were still around. But DH was not teaching history; he was teaching political theology. It was because the people had not fulfilled their treaty obligations that the people were in the mess they were – and a close reading of the Joshua stories shows that right from the beginning they had made deals with the tribes around them.

*“You have not obeyed my command! See what you have done!”<sup>118</sup>*

#### *Sins and Repentances under the Judges (Judges 2:11 - )*

In DH’s view of history, he had now reached a time when the people had moved into the land, had lived alongside others in their allotted tribal territories and had confirmed that they would serve Yahweh and Yahweh alone. They had promised to abide by the covenant despite Joshua’s warning that this would be difficult. The people had been warned that if they did not completely remove the other peoples from the land, they would be seduced by their gods, and Yahweh, being a jealous god would abandon them. But they had failed to remove the other peoples from the land: so now they must try to be true to Yahweh despite living amongst people who did worship other gods.

DH was able to compare what the people had promised to do with what they had done. He began the next section of his work by laying out in general terms the theme that he would use as a repeated refrain.

*Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh; they worshiped the Baals. They abandoned Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They followed other gods from amongst the gods of the peoples who were around them, and they bowed down to them.*

*Thus they provoked Yahweh’s anger... and Yahweh gave them over to raiders who plundered them, and he sold them to enemies all around, whom they could no longer resist. Until they were in great distress.*

*Then Yahweh raised up judges, who saved them from the power of those who plundered them.... Whenever Yahweh raised up a judge for them, Yahweh was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of that judge...*

*But whenever the judge died, they would relapse and behave worse than their fathers – following other gods, worshipping them and bowing down to them. They would not give up any of their evil practices or their stubborn ways<sup>119</sup>.*

This theme was detailed in a number of specific instances and Israel was duly saved first by Othniel (who sorted out a ruler who had a fortress in the hill country, *Armon-harim*), then by Ehud (who killed the king of Moab on the roof of his own palace and then escaped after hiding the body in the king’s toilet), then by Shamgar (who killed 600 Philistines with an ox-goad), and then by Deborah.

Deborah, whose name means “Honey-bee” was married to Lappidoth (“Lightning”). She summoned Barak (“Flashes”) and jointly they took the army out to meet Sisera who led a heavy cavalry troop on behalf of the king of Hazor. ‘Flashes’ was a little scared and only agreed to go when ‘Honey-bee’ promised to go with him. She taunted him with the comment that the glory will go a woman! Thus motivated, ‘Flashes’ led a charge down mount Tabor that panicked Sisera’s men. In the confusion, Sisera escaped on foot and rested in the tent of Jael, a woman of a tribe he thought was friendly. But having fed her guest and laid him down to sleep, Jael drove a tent peg through his head. So ‘Flashes’ missed out on the final capture and the glory went to a woman after all.

Nevertheless ‘Flashes’ got back in time for the celebrations. The ancient song of Deborah, the basis of the story, was then quoted as being composed and sung by ‘Honey-bee’ and ‘Flashes’ at the victory party.

After Deborah, “*the land had rest for 40 years*”, as it had after every judge save Ehud, who

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<sup>118</sup> Judges 2:2

<sup>119</sup> Extracted from Judges 2:11-23

secured 80 years of peace. And then came the Midianites, seasonal camel-riding raiders. These were possibly a wave of immigrants from Anatolia –not the people who had provided Moses with his wife<sup>120</sup>.

Gideon (meaning “Hacker”) was called to ‘judge’ Israel. DH gave over 3 chapters to Hacker’s story. It was introduced by a prophet who repeated the Deuteronomic affirmation of Yahweh’s relationship with his chosen people (“*I led you up from Egypt, out of the land of slavery*”), reminded the people that they were not to worship other gods and concluded “*but you have not listened to my voice!*”<sup>121</sup> Then Hacker was met by an envoy of Yahweh under the oak at Ophrah. There, after a great deal of reluctance, he was persuaded to take up the calling. ‘Hacker’ built an Altar, which was still present in the author’s time. Yahweh commanded him to destroy the local Baalist altar, to ‘hack’ down the Asherah pole, and to use the wood to sacrifice a bull: ‘Hacker’ chose to do this by night since he was afraid of how the local people might respond – for to them Asherah was a treasured goddess. The people were furious when they found out and determined to kill ‘Hacker’, but his father talked them out of it by saying, “*if Baal is truly a god, let him deal with the matter himself*”. Thus ‘Hacker’ got his second nickname of ‘Jerubbaal’ or ‘Let-Baal-prosecute’.

The famous battle with the Midianites ensued in which Yahweh reduced Hacker’s troops from the initial 22,000 by stages to 300 of the most incompetent. Yahweh then won the battle for Hacker by having the Midianites fight themselves in the middle of the night after having been woken by Hacker’s remaining troops blowing trumpets and waving flares.

‘Hacker’ pursued the Midianites across the Jordan and secured a victory and much booty – this time apparently without Yahweh’s help. The people offered ‘Hacker’ the kingship, but he declined saying, “*I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; Yahweh will rule over you.*” Nevertheless he accepted 1700 shekels of gold from the booty taken by his troops, and this booty, converted into a golden Ephod, became a snare to ‘Hacker’ and his family, for “*all Israel prostituted themselves to it*”. Even so, “*the land had rest for 40 years*”.

All of these stories, from the crossing of the Jordan in Joshua 22 to Hacker’s exploits in Judges 8 were basically DH material<sup>122</sup>, either original or incorporated, but the next story in today’s bible, concerning Abimelech, may have been added later and may not have been included in the original DH compilation. There are no signs of Deuteronomic editing, although the story, which illustrated the negative aspects of kingship, would have been consistent with their views – views that would become clear when DH related the Samuel stories.

The sequence of the stories of the Judges used by DH continued in Judges 10 with two minor Judges, Tola (the ‘worm’) and Jair. Jair had so many sons that the thirty villages in which they lived were still known as the ‘Villages of Jair’ right up to the author’s time. But the people worshiped the gods of the outsider tribes, a list of which DH provided. This list was the same as the list of unconquered tribes at the start of Judges except that it had grown by one, the latest oppressor, the tribe of the Ammonites.

Under combined Philistine and Ammonite oppression, the people once more appealed to Yahweh, and once more he reminded them of their tendency to worship other gods and said that this time he would not help them, telling them instead to go and cry to the gods they had chosen.

*But the Israelites said to Yahweh, “We have sinned; do to us whatever seems good to you; but deliver us this day!” So they put away the other gods from among them and worshiped Yahweh; and he could no longer bear to see Israel suffer.*<sup>123</sup>

So once more Yahweh relented and intervened to rescue his people. The person through whom the intervention was accomplished this time was Jephthah. DH dealt with this by incorporating the Yahwist stories of Jephthah and his daughter. He followed these with a story of an East-West civil war between the Trans-Jordanian men of Gilead led by Jephthah and the Cis-Jordanian men from Ephraim. The Ephraimites had invaded Gilead apparently out of pique from having been excluded from Jephthah’s campaign against the Ammonites. But Jephthah defeated them in the field and guarded the Jordan fords to prevent their escape<sup>124</sup>.

*Whenever one of the fugitives of Ephraim said, “Let me go over,” the men of Gilead would*

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<sup>120</sup> See Robert Boling’s article on Judges from the ABD

<sup>121</sup> Judges 6:8-10

<sup>122</sup> Except possibly some editorial comments about Gideon’s age and the number of his sons in Judges 8:30-32.

<sup>123</sup> Judges 10:13

<sup>124</sup> The Jephthah stories can be found in Judges 11 and 12.

*say to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" When he said, "No," they said to him, "Then say Shibboleth," and if he said, "Sibboleth," because he could not pronounce it correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan*<sup>125</sup>.

Then followed three minor judges. Until the Israelites again *did what was evil in the sight of the Yahweh*.

This was the seventh time the formula was used in Judges. Yahweh gave the people into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. This time Yahweh raised up Samson ("little son") to be Israel's saviour. Samson's stories probably came via the J source. There seem to be two sets of stories here, for the formulaic phrase "*and he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines for twenty years*" occurs twice, once after smashing a whole contingent of Philistines with a donkey jaw bone, and once after the ending of his affair with Delilah ("Flirt").

This section of DH's work (Judges 2 to 15) emphasised and re-emphasised the cycle of 'worshipping foreign gods, punishment, repentance, deliverance, and relapse into worshipping foreign gods again.' The stories he incorporated are all highly entertaining, funny, heroic and miraculous. Whether incorporated from the pen of the Yahwist or directly from oral tradition or some other source, they have the characteristics of folktales honed by much retelling. But it is not through the content of these stories that DH made his point, but rather from the interpretative envelope with which he surrounded each one. It was predicted that, having failed to remove the other peoples from their Land, they would be seduced into worshipping the foreign gods. And this repeated relapse was shown to be the root cause of Israel's suffering. They were only saved because Yahweh, in his love for his people, gave them successive heroes.

DH had shown that, by the end of the period of the judges, the tribes were no further forward in their occupation of the land than they had been at the start. DH may have been content to allow his readers to infer that a tribal confederacy run by judges was not the best way forward. What was required was the strong central direction of a king - like Josiah, perhaps. Or are kings of that calibre too rare for a monarchy to be a success? DH moved on to the time of Samuel, the last judge, and Saul, the first king, where he addressed these questions.

DH's text probably incorporated a story of the birth and calling of Samuel. The boy Samuel was serving Yahweh under Eli's tutelage when his calling occurred. The story of Yahweh's displeasure with Eli's family due to the irreverence of his sons would have been well known. It would lead ultimately to the destruction of the sanctuary at Shiloh, the key shrine for the particular family of priests of which Jeremiah was a descendant. But initially it would lead to the priesthood being transferred from Eli's family to Samuel. In his calling the boy Samuel heard Yahweh to say: -

*"See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both the ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. On that day I will do to Eli all that I have spoken of concerning his house, from beginning to end. For I have told him that I am about to pass judgement on his house forever, for he knew his sons were making themselves despicable, and yet he did not restrain them... As Samuel grew up, Yahweh was with him and let none of his words slip. And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a true prophet of Yahweh. Yahweh continued to appear at Shiloh.*<sup>126</sup>

The phrase about '*making both ears tinkle*' occurs again in II Kings 21:12 and in Jeremiah 19:3 and in no other passages in the bible<sup>127</sup>. This is further evidence that the two passages had a common author, and therefore, since Baruch is explicitly associated with Jeremiah, that Baruch was involved in the production of the Deuteronomistic History.

The word against the family of Eli that Yahweh was about to fulfil had been recorded in the previous chapter where a 'man of god' had revealed to Eli an oracle of Yahweh which began with the characteristic Deuteronomistic reminder that the people had once been '*in Egypt, slaves to the house of Pharaoh*'. The oracle said that he would lose both his sons on the same day and that Yahweh would cut off all his descendants save one - a reference to Saul's massacre of the priests of Nob from whom only one, Abiathar, would be permitted to '*wear out his eyes and use up his strength*' at Yahweh's altar. It spoke too, in the last lines, of raising up a faithful priest who will do '*what is in my heart and in my*

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<sup>125</sup> Judges 12:6

<sup>126</sup> 1 Samuel 3:11-14 & 19-20

<sup>127</sup> The references are to the coming end of Judah; in Kings it will be caused by the evil deeds of Manasseh; in Jeremiah it comes as part of the parable of the potter and is caused by the wickedness of the people in offering child sacrifices.

*mind*' and to whom the 'remains' of Eli's house will come grovelling to ask for some priestly office, so that they might 'have a crust of bread to eat'. The faithful priest may have been intended as a reference to Zadok, and the remains of Eli's house were thus the non-Zadokite priests who, in those times when sacrifice was concentrated at the Jerusalem temple, needed to beg their brethren for jobs in the temple.

The ancient story of the battle of Ebenezer and the loss and recovery of the ark probably originated amongst the Shiloh priesthood. It would have been very familiar therefore to Jeremiah, a descendant of that priesthood, and to the Deuteronomic reformers that supported him. The story here no doubt contained that ancient narrative, but has been enlarged with details in the style of the Yahwist. The death of Eli, which occurs following the loss of the ark, was recorded with the usual Deuteronomic comment "He had judged Israel 20 years".

The battle of Ebenezer resulted in the destruction of the shrine at Shiloh, the place where once Yahweh had caused his name to tent.<sup>128</sup>

#### Spiritual renewal (1 Samuel 7:3 - )

The ark returned and in the course of time, there was a revival in the worship of Yahweh.

*Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to Yahweh with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Astartes from amongst you. Direct your heart to Yahweh, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." So Israel put away the Baals and the Astartes, and they served only Yahweh.*<sup>129</sup>

Samuel visited several shrines – at Gilgal, Bethel, Mizpah and at Ramah, where he built an altar. This ancient tradition contains no suggestion that there should have been only one worship site. The ark was at Kiriath-Jearim, a place also known as Baalah because it contained a shrine to Astarte, a wife of Baal. The ark remained there until taken up to Jerusalem by David. The Tent of the Meeting had been at Shiloh, but Shiloh has not been mentioned since the battle of Ebenezer. There is no suggestion in these texts that sacrifices should only be made in front of the ark or the tent – a key idea in the Priestly theology contained in the Holiness Code, but not in that of Deuteronomy.

#### The first king(1 Samuel 8 - )

When Samuel became old, he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. But his sons took bribes and perverted justice.

*Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "You are old and your sons do not follow in your ways; appoint for us, then, a king to govern us, like other nations."*

*But Samuel was not pleased when they said, "Give us a king to govern us."*

*Samuel prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. They are doing to you as they have done to me from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day - forsaking me and serving other gods. Now then, listen to their voice; but solemnly warn them, and show them the ways of the king who will reign over them."*<sup>130</sup>

This Samuel did, warning the people about conscription and taxation and saying that they will become the king's slaves. And he warned them that "You will cry out because of the king you have chosen for yourselves, but Yahweh will not answer you."

*But the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel. They said, "No! We are determined to have a king over us, so that we may be like other nations, and so that our king may govern us and go out before us and fight our battles." When Samuel had heard all the words of the*

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<sup>128</sup> The violent destruction of Shiloh by fire can be dated archeologically to the early to middle 11<sup>th</sup> Century BCE,

<sup>129</sup> 1 Samuel 7:3-4. Astarte and the Astartes were worshipped in Canaan in the first millennium BCE. There is Ugaritic text from Ugarit that equates Astarte with the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar. She is the goddess of fertility and war; sometimes worshipped as the morning or evening stars.

<sup>130</sup> 1 Samuel 8:1-9. Once more it is the reference to Egypt that points to Deuteronomic editing in this passage.

*people, he repeated them in the ears of Yahweh. Yahweh said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and set a king over them." Then Samuel said to the people of Israel, "Go, each of you, to your own home."<sup>131</sup>*

The man the people would choose as their first King was Saul. Saul made his first appearance in the history by means of a piece of folklore in which a poor but handsome youth went out looking for some donkeys but found a kingdom. This story did not come from the Yahwist's account of Saul's selection, but rather from an alternative tradition. At the start of the story Saul was sent with a boy to look for his father's stray donkeys. Finding themselves miles from home they decided to visit a man of god who lived nearby. On going to the man's house they met some girls who redirected them to a village gathering, which was waiting for the man of god to come and bless the meat of the sacrifice. Meanwhile Samuel had had a vision in which Yahweh instructed him to anoint a prince over the Israelites in order to rescue them from the grip of the Philistines, for "*I have seen the affliction of my people, and their cry has come to me*" (This is very similar language to Yahweh's response to the suffering of his people under the Egyptian in Exodus 3:9; E text.) Back at the gathering, Saul joined in the meal, and stayed the night. In the morning the man of God, now declared to be Samuel, secretly anointed him, saying, "*Yahweh has anointed you as ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over Yahweh's people and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies.*" Samuel told him he would meet a band of prophets in an ecstatic trance, and that then he should do whatever '*seemed right to him*'. What seemed right, when he met the prophets, was to fall into a frenzy himself – and the spirit of Elohim possessed him. He returned home, but he told no-one that he had been anointed as king-elect.<sup>132</sup>

The folk-story has been overlaid by an account of the prophetic activity of Samuel – an account that introduced the idea that kings were chosen by Yahweh acting through his prophets.

Samuel reconvened the people and introduced Saul as their new king (I Samuel 10:17–19 & 24–25) and DH then moved on to Samuel's final speech as a Judge of Israel – a framework passage. The story of Saul being chosen by lot (1 Samuel 10:20-23) would not have met with DH's approval, so would have been omitted in preference to story in which he was anointed by Samuel. That story and the following one in which Saul proved himself by defeating the Ammonites (10:26-11:15) come from the Yahwists pen and were probably inserted by a later editor<sup>133</sup>.

*Samuels Farewell Speech and a warning about Kings (1 Samuel 12:1 - )*

Samuel said to the people:

*See, here is the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; see, Yahweh has set a king over you.*

*If you fear Yahweh and serve him and listen to his voice and do not rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow Yahweh your god, it will be well; but if you do not heed the voice of Yahweh, but rebel against the commandment of Yahweh, then the hand of Yahweh will be against you and your king. ...*

*Only fear Yahweh, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you. But if you still act wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king<sup>134</sup>*

The next sentence should have introduced Saul as the King. DH would use a standard

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<sup>131</sup> 1 Samuel 8:19-22

<sup>132</sup> 1 Samuel 9 & 10:1-7 & 9 – 16. Verse 8, about going to Gilgal, may be an insertion from another story.

<sup>133</sup> The story of Saul's selection by lot at Mizpah is an alternative story to Samuel's secret anointing of Saul. Samuel had earlier organised a convocation at Mizpah at which the people confessed their sins and fasted whilst Samuel prayed for them in a ceremony that seems to be without parallels elsewhere in the bible. As Mizpah became an important cult site after the destruction of the temple, these traditions may have a later origin than the story based around the ancient folk tale.

The story of Saul's response to the oppression of the Ammonites is a story in the tradition of the Judges – a tradition that DH had no further use for once he had started to address the question of the Kingship. The Ammonites had been oppressing the trans-Jordanian tribes and gouging out their right eyes to make them useless fighters but useful servants.

<sup>134</sup> 1 Samuel 12:7-15 & 24-25.

sentence for the introduction of a new king, a sentence that will be repeated over and over again for each subsequent king from Ishbaal, Saul's son, to Josiah. But here the Hebrew text is defective and what remains is, "Saul was .... years old when he began to reign, and he reigned ....and two years over Israel", leaving us to guess at the missing numbers.

In today's bible this is followed by a rather confusing account of a battle against the Philistines at Michmash pass. The confusion may be due to further defects in the text as received. It can be removed if verses 13:2-7a are deferred to just before 13:16 and replaced with 10:8 which seems to have been incorrectly copied into the earlier story. The original story probably read: -

*[Samuel said to Saul,]*

*"You shall go down to Gilgal ahead of me; then I will come down to you to present burnt offerings and offer sacrifices of well-being. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do."*

*Saul waited at Gilgal, with all the people that followed him trembling with fear: he waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel had not come to Gilgal and the people began to slip away from Saul. So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the offerings of well-being." And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, Samuel arrived; and Saul went out to meet him and salute him.*

*Samuel said, "What have you done?"*

*Saul replied, "When I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines were mustering at Michmash, I thought 'Now the Philistines will come down upon me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favour of Yahweh; so I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.'"*

*But Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Yahweh your god.... Yahweh would have established your kingdom over Israel forever, but now your kingdom will not continue; Yahweh will seek out a man after his own heart; and Yahweh has appointed him as ruler-designate over his people, because you have not kept to what Yahweh commanded."<sup>135</sup>*

### Saul's Battles

Then Samuel went away and Saul took the remnant of the men with him up to Gibeah. Now (reading 13:2-7a) we learn of the preparations for the battle. Saul divided the army; he placed two contingents under his command at Michmash Pass and another under his son Jonathan nearby at Geba.<sup>136</sup> Jonathan killed the Philistine prefect and the Philistines responded by martialling a substantial force. Saul's men dug in – establishing a defensive position against superior forces. Then (reading 13:16 – 14:46) the author provided further background and a description of the battle and its aftermath. The Philistines had a superior iron technology, so iron swords and spears were rare in the Israelite camp – only Saul and Jonathan had them. With Israel dug in and the ground not conducive to the use of Philistine chariots, the initial stage of the battle was a stand-off. But Jonathan and his armour bearer broke the impasse by an irregular direct challenge to a Philistine outpost that cost the Philistine side twenty men and induced alarm in their camp. The Philistines panicked and, in the confusion, started fighting each other. Some Israelites who had deserted to the Philistine side now switched back causing further confusion. At this point Saul marched into battle with his contingents and the Philistines fled.

The account of the preparations for the battle included an anachronistic note about the charges the Philistines made in exploiting their unique iron technology. The author said it cost a *pim* (two thirds of a shekel) to sharpen up ploughshares and mattocks even though this unit of currency was only in use from the 8<sup>th</sup> century up to the exile of 586.<sup>137</sup> This reference is the only time a *pim* is mentioned in the bible, though archaeologists have found a number of *pim* weights with the word engraved on them. This casual aside, whether part of the main text or an editorial insertion, can therefore be dated to the late monarchy; it is definitely pre-exilic. Archaeology thus confirms that this history was put together before the exile, and not, as some have considered, somewhat later.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> 1 Samuel 10:8 and 13:7b-14

<sup>136</sup> Many translations talk of 'thousands' rather than 'contingents', but *eleph* in these contexts usually refers to a military unit; not an exact number of men. In most cases it is considerably less than a thousand.

<sup>137</sup> 1 Samuel 13:21

<sup>138</sup> Dever (2001); 'What did the biblical writers know...': p 227. Dever provides an extensive discussion of the Israelite system of weights and their significance for dating biblical texts.

The story continued with the Israelite forces pursuing the fleeing Philistines through the hill country of Ephraim (the future Israel). In the heat of the moment, Saul made a blunder: he swore an oath saying no-one must eat until he was avenged on the Philistines. But Jonathan ate some honey and when criticised complained that his father had weakened the troops by his foolish oath; the troops, when they do eat, are so famished that they fall upon the meat - even consuming the blood and thus sinning against Yahweh. A night attack was planned, but when Yahweh was consulted he did not reply. So Saul concluded that Yahweh was angered because of a sin that someone had committed. They drew lots to determine who it was, and the lot fell on Jonathan. But the troops would not permit the hero of the battle to be killed.<sup>139</sup>

In a text that now forms the end of I Samuel 14, DH summarised Saul's other battles. He incorporated Yahwist (or possibly prophetic) material in 15:1 – 16:13. In this, Saul destroyed the Amalekites, but spared their King despite having been told by Samuel to destroy all the Amalekites. As a result of this disobedience Samuel told Saul that the kingdom would be "*torn from you and given to one of your in-laws*". The passage included the poem that asked, in the prophetic tradition "*Is Yahweh as pleased with burnt offerings and sacrifices, as with listening to the voice of Yahweh?*" There is evidence of two versions of this story being woven together here. In one Saul confessed and pleaded with Samuel to return with him so that they may pray to Yahweh that Saul might be forgiven, but Samuel refused (15:24 - 26); but in the other account Samuel agreed to pray with Saul (15: 30-31).

*'Samuel did not come to see Saul again until the day of his death'*. (But he would see him then!) Samuel grieved over the way things had turned out with Saul, but Yahweh told Samuel to anoint another king from amongst the sons of Jesse. So Samuel went to Bethlehem, secretly anointed David as king-elect and returned home to Ramah. This material was important to an author determined to show the dependency of the king upon the word of Yahweh as mediated through the prophets.

DH has now led his readers into the story of David, who will be the king against whom all others would be compared.

### David

The first story included was the familiar story of David and Goliath. There were clearly originally two separate versions of the story – versions which were eventually merged together by a later editor. In one version David was already Saul's armour bearer and a member of the court before the fight with Goliath: in the other version he was a shepherd boy whom Saul had never met. (Both versions were probably inventions developed from a more historical story about Goliath in which the Philistine is killed not by David at all, but by one of David's men - a story retained in 2 Samuel 21:15–22). The 'shepherd boy' version opened with the classic DH introductory line "*Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse from Bethlehem in Judah*" and is therefore likely to have been the text used by DH.<sup>140</sup> When the two versions were first merged together some extra lines were added to blend them together and the result eventually became the Masoretic Text, used as the basis for most English translations. But it appears that another editor, probably working in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE attempted to remove the apparent contradictions in the story by substantially eliminating the 'shepherd boy' version. This modified Hebrew text was the one used to produce the Septuagint.<sup>141</sup>

In DH's text, David went to the war zone with food for his brothers, and struck up a conversation with a soldier who told him that the man who kills Goliath would be rewarded with great wealth and the king's daughter in marriage. When his brothers rebuke him for chattering, he said:

*"What have I done now? It was only talk."*

*And he turned away toward another and spoke in the same way; and people answered again - just as before.*

*The Philistine, with his shield-bearer in front of him, came on and drew near David; David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet the Philistine; taking hold of sling and stone he struck down*

<sup>139</sup> In the absence of the re-alignment of the text as proposed, there is a significant problem of timing. The battle starts with a mature Jonathan and his full grown son controlling troops at Michmash; then suddenly we are back at Gilgal waiting for Samson to turn up just 7 days after Saul, then a young man looking for his father's donkeys, had first met the prophet. Then we are immediately back to Michmash and the daring attack of Jonathan, Saul's son.

<sup>140</sup> But see McCarter; 1 Samuel; AB. p298 for the opposite view.

<sup>141</sup> The view that the Old Greek text is a result of the editorial shortening of the combined text was proposed by Wellhausen and has been followed by most critics since (P. Kyle McCarter Jr: 1 Samuel; p. 306 comment).

*the Philistine and killed him – though there was no sword in David's hand.*

After this spontaneous and astonishing strike, David was sought out and brought before Saul. They spoke, presumably in the presence of Saul's son Jonathan, for:

*When David had finished speaking to Saul, Jonathan found himself bound up with David, and Jonathan loved him like himself. Saul took David at that time and would not let him return to his father's home. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him like himself. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armour, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.*

*David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; and Saul set him over the army: all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved. David had success in all his undertakings for Yahweh was with him. But when Saul saw that he had great success, he came to fear him.*

*Then Saul said to David, "Here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife; only be brave for me and fight Yahweh's battles." For Saul thought, "I will not raise a hand against him; let the Philistines deal with him."*

*David said to Saul, "Who am I and who are my kinsfolk, my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" But at the time when Saul's daughter Merab should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife<sup>142</sup>.*

Merab's younger sister Michal, like her brother Jonathan, had fallen for the shepherd lad and she wanted to marry him. The story tells us that both Saul and David saw opportunities in this: David because that would put him in line for the Kingdom should Saul's sons be unable to succeed, and Saul because he could ask a bride-price – 100 philistine foreskins – that would, he hoped, cost David his life. David, however, produced the bride price and won Michal.

The bulk of the text that is now in 1 Samuel 19, probably Yahwist material, was devoted to showing that David had the support of Saul's own children. Both Jonathan and Michal helped him outmanoeuvre their father.<sup>143</sup> In 1 Samuel 20, DH dealt with Jonathan's clandestine support for David. They met secretly and exchanged promises. Jonathan promised to intercede with his father, even to the point of risking his life, and then asked this of David:

*If I am still alive, show me the faithful love of Yahweh; but if I die, never cut off your faithful love from my house, even if Yahweh were to cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May Yahweh seek out the enemies of David." Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own life.*

This would have been significant for DH; first because of Jonathan's commitment to the house of David, and secondly because of the request to David to support Jonathan's descendants – a promise that David will make good in the matter of Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, later in this history.

Now that it was clear, according to the story, that Saul was seeking to kill David, David fled into the wilderness – initially alone. He first visited Ahimelech, a priest at the shrine in Nob and a great grandson of Eli, the priest of Shiloh. The priest was deceived into providing David with gifts, possibly selected by the originator of this tale for their symbolism. For food he was given the consecrated altar bread and for a weapon, Goliath's sword. This priest's innocent actions produced terrible consequences for Saul's reprisal resulted in the massacre of all the priests save one, Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech who escaped and joined David. This priest was subsequently banished to Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown and probably a base for the dispossessed Shiloh priesthood with which DH may have had close associations.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> The full story of the shepherd boy David, Goliath, Jonathan and Merab is found in 1 Samuel 17:12-30 & 41 & 50 & 55-18:5 & 14-15 & 17-19. This omits various lines added by the editor to merge the two accounts. The translation of 17:50 and certain other phrases is due to McCarter; see 1 Samuel: AB; p.300. The parallel account in which David is a courtier is probably Yahwist and can be found in 16:14-17:11 & 32-40 & 42-49 & 51-54 & 18:6-13 & 16

<sup>143</sup> The last story in today's chapter 19, an alternative account of the origin the phrase 'is Saul, too, among the prophets?' was probably not part of DH's text since DH had already produced his account of that (1 Samuel 10).

<sup>144</sup> This is part of the Solomon myth, so its historicity has to be suspect – although it might be rescued by the principle that anything negative to the regime would not be reported unless it was too well

DH (or perhaps a later editor) inserted three notices into the Nob story - of how David fled to Philistine Gath; how he gathered together a band of those who were in distress, in debt or otherwise discontented; and how he moved his Mother and Father to Moab so that they were out of Saul's reach.

The first of these dealt with the difficult fact that David spent some time with the Philistines. Citizens of Israel could reasonably have suspected him of working for the enemy. Two stories deal with this issue and both purport to show that David avoided working for the Philistines - in one instance by feigning madness so that the king of Gath considered him unemployable, and in the other story - not used by DH - by merely pretending to work for Gath. It would be interesting to have Saul's and the Philistine's versions of David's time in Gath: DH's purpose was to establish David's innocence.

The second note provided David with a band of malcontent 'habiru'. The relevance of the 'habiru' band becomes clear in the next story where we learn that Abiathar had brought an Ephod with him when he joined David's group. With the priest and his Ephod at his side, David listened to Yahweh and was thus able to liberate the town of Keilah, even though he had no more than a bunch of malcontents at his disposal<sup>145</sup>. The contrast between David's determination to listen to Yahweh's voice as mediated by the priest and Saul's casual attitude to Yahweh's voice as mediated by Samuel was thus made clear.

The next section described a visit to David by Jonathan, who affirmed that David would be king - indeed he said that even Saul knew this!

This led to the story in which David spared Saul's life following an escapade on *Sela hammahleeqot*, "Slippery Crag"<sup>146</sup> (I Samuel 23:19 - 24:23). This story may have been a reworking by DH of a Yahwist story (I Samuel 26:1-25), albeit in a more extreme form. Both stories begin with the statement that "some Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "David is in hiding on the hill of Hachilah, near Jeshimon"<sup>147</sup>. Both stories put Saul into David's hand and in both David refused to take Saul's life saying "Yahweh forbid that I should raise my hand against Yahweh's anointed"<sup>148</sup>. In both cases David called out to Saul afterwards and in both cases Saul responded "Is this your voice, *my son David?*"<sup>149</sup>. The differences between the two stories were the level of humiliation to which Saul was exposed and the extent to which David's future kingship was recognized. In the DH story Saul came into the cave where David was hiding and squatted down to relieve himself. David crept up behind Saul and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. After Saul had left, David followed him from the cave and made a pious speech about never touching Yahweh's anointed. Then he called on Saul to abandon the chase. The speech put into Saul's mouth echoed in its last lines the request that Jonathan made of David earlier and confirmed David's right to be King, for Saul said: -

*"You are more righteous than I; for you have repaid me with good, whereas I have repaid you with bad. ...So may Yahweh reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. "Now I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Swear to me therefore by Yahweh that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not wipe out my name from my father's house. "*<sup>150</sup>

It may be significant that David did nothing to contrive the situation. The reader was perhaps expected to assume that Saul was simply put into David's power by Yahweh, and was thereby humiliated and compelled to acknowledge David's superiority. Afterwards, Saul returned to his palace and David to his stronghold. And we learn of Samuel's death. If there was once a Deuteronomic comment attached to Samuel's death, as might be expected, it has been lost during the long process of copying.

The story of Nabal's wife Abigail was probably included, copied from the Yahwist, since it gave DH another opportunity to foreshadow David's kingship. It will be recalled that Nabal, the fool, rejected David's request for help and was in danger of being killed, together with his dependants, when Nabal's wife rescued the situation by providing David's men with bounteous quantities of fine food

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known to be omitted.

<sup>145</sup> 1 Samuel 23:1-13. The MT is corrupt. Translators have attempted to restore the original text by reference to the LXX and 4Qsam<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>146</sup> See McCarter (1980) p 379

<sup>147</sup> 1 Samuel 23:19 and 26:1

<sup>148</sup> 1 Samuel 24:6 and 26:11

<sup>149</sup> 1 Samuel 24:16 and 26:17

<sup>150</sup> 1 Samuel 24: 18-22. This story is considered by McCarter to be by DH. The other story in chapter 26 is considered by Friedman to be Yahwist

and wine from her store. With her gift she made a speech, thought to be an editorial insertion by DH because of its references both forwards and backwards to key events in his history:

*“... for Yahweh will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of Yahweh; and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live. If anyone should rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life by Yahweh your God; but the lives of your enemies he shall throw out as from the pocket of a sling. When Yahweh has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken of concerning you, and has appointed you prince over Israel, my lord shall have no cause of grief, or pangs of conscience, for having shed blood without cause or for having saved himself.*

*And when Yahweh has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.”<sup>151</sup>*

The ancient narrative of ‘David’s Rise to Power’ underlies much of what follows in chapters 26, 27 and 29-31. Friedman and others consider that the Yahwist used this narrative. It is less obvious that these chapters were part of the original text put together by DH. There is no evidence of Deuteronomic editing; the Deuteronomic story of David’s sparing of Saul’s life had already been included, making its repetition in what is now 1 Samuel 26 unnecessary; similarly, a resolution of the problem created by the acknowledged fact that David spent time with the Philistines had been dealt with in chapter 21 making the revisiting of this issue in chapters 27 and 29 avoidable.

Some commentators believe that the story of David’s rescue of his family from an Amalekite raid (now in Chapter 30) originally followed immediately after Abigail had joined that family. In the account of the raid, David sought Yahweh’s advice and succeeded.<sup>152</sup>

Today’s Chapter 28, however, which interrupts this ancient narrative with the story of Saul’s despairing visit to the medium at Endor may very well have been part of DH’s text for it contains references to other DH and deuteronomic material. Samuel was dead and Saul had resumed his struggle with the Philistines. The armies were drawn up for battle and Saul was terrified. He sensed Yahweh’s abandonment, for though he sought Yahweh in prayer, in dreams and through the use of the Urim (religious dice), he found no answers. In desperation he sought out a medium with the intention of consulting the dead Samuel – an act expressly forbidden in Deuteronomy 18, and indeed by an edict of Saul himself. Earlier the reader had been told that Samuel would not see Saul again until the day of his death<sup>153</sup>. Now the spirit of Samuel emerged, and Saul prostrated himself. Saul pleaded with Samuel to tell him what he should do; but the spirit answered

*“Why do you ask me, since Yahweh has turned from you to be with your in-law? Yahweh has done to you just as he said, through me, that he would. He has torn the kingdom from your hand, and given it to your in-law, David. It is because you did not obey the voice of Yahweh, and did not execute his fierce anger against the Amalekites that Yahweh has done this to you today. Tomorrow Yahweh will give Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines; you and your sons will die.”<sup>154</sup>*

The core of this passage was a direct reference to Samuel’s words following the defeat of Amalekites (15:27). What was predicted in that DH passage was now about to happen. In the original DH text, the account of the battle probably followed immediately upon Saul’s return from his devastating séance.

*The Philistines fought with Israel, and as the men of Israel fled before them, falling wounded on mount Gilboa, the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons. ...On the following day when the Philistines came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons dead on Mount Gilboa. They stripped off his armour and had the ‘good news’ carried to Philistia, to its idols and its people. They put his armour in the temple of Astarte and nailed his corpse to the wall of Bethshan.<sup>155</sup>*

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<sup>151</sup> 1 Samuel 25:28-31. The whole story can be found in 25:2- 42

<sup>152</sup> McCarter (1980) “1 Samuel”: AB; pp 422-3.

<sup>153</sup> 1 Samuel 15:35 – based on the translation in the authorised version which retains the Hebrew reference to the ‘day of his death’

<sup>154</sup> 1 Samuel 28: 16-19. Vv17-18 quote Samuel’s comment from 15:27 “Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this very day, and has given it to an in-law of yours, who is better than you.”

<sup>155</sup> 1 Samuel 31:1 & 8-10

DH had placed David in Philistine territory during this battle. He even had him dealing with an Amalekite raid according to Yahweh's will at precisely the moment that Saul, who had disobeyed Yahweh's will in his fight against the Amalekites, was losing his kingdom on Mount Gilboa. David obeys Yahweh and succeeds and lives: Saul disobeys Yahweh and fails and dies. A few days later:

*A man came from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground and did obeisance. David said to him, "Where have you come from?" He said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel." David said to him, "How did things go? Tell me!" He answered, "The army fled from the battle, but also many of the army fell and died; and Saul and his son Jonathan also died." <sup>156</sup>*

The man then said that he was an immigrant, an Amalekite, and that he had come across the injured king, and at Saul's request had killed him – although the detailed discrepancies between his version of Saul's death and the author's earlier account may have been intended to suggest to the reader that the man was lying. Saul had failed Yahweh at the start of his kingship by pretending to kill all the Amalekites when he had not done so; now at the end an Amalekite pretends to have killed Saul, although he did not do so. The irony is completed when David takes Saul's crown from the Amalekite's hands and has the man himself executed for claiming to have killed the Lord's anointed. A great deal of the relative fortunes of Saul and David turned upon their different responses to the Amalekite threat. It is curious that no trace of the Amalekites has been found outside the pages of the bible<sup>157</sup>.

David was credited with composing a lament over the death of Saul; it was probably quoted by the Yahwist, but DH mentions that the song can be found in the book of Jashar. DH often refers to his sources in the passages most clearly attributable to him – the core material in I Kings 3 to II Kings 23.

The Israelite king was dead: the army scattered. The Philistine lords were potentially in control of the Land of Israel and David was a trusted vassal of Achish of Gath, Lord of Philistia. The possibility of a return was now open.

*David inquired of Yahweh "Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" Yahweh said to him, "Go up." David said, "To which shall I go up?" He said, "To Hebron." <sup>158</sup>*

David could have posed the same question to his boss, the Philistine Achish and got the same answer. Achish would have expected to find his trusted David a useful man to have in Hebron.

But not all of Saul's sons were dead. The start of the reign of the next king was introduced with the standard DH formula:

*Ishbaal, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. <sup>159</sup>*

There is no evidence to suggest that the stories of the battle of Gibeon, of Abner's defection to David, his subsequent murder and Ishbaal's assassination were included in DH's history<sup>160</sup>. Thus it is in today's 2 Samuel 5 that we find the next reference to David. Here DH records David's accession to the throne of Israel in characteristic language after a special but appropriate introduction.

*All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. Yahweh said to you, "It is you who shall be the shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." And they anointed David king over Israel.*

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<sup>156</sup> 1 Samuel 31:2-4

<sup>157</sup> In the bible they are identified as the descendants of Amalek, a grandson of Esau. Amalek's mother was Timna. This suggests a nomadic desert tribe. A difficulty emerges in that Genesis 14 mentions that a coalition of the eastern kings had subdued the Amalekites – and this was sometime before the birth of Esau.

<sup>158</sup> 2 Samuel 2:1.

<sup>159</sup> 2 Samuel 2:10

<sup>160</sup> Neither were these stories included in the Chronicler's 5<sup>th</sup> century account of David's reign: it may have used a version of the Deuteronomistic History amongst its source materials.

*So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before Yahweh.  
David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.*

The ancient, albeit strange, story of the capture of Jerusalem followed. This led to a note about a repulsed Philistine strike and, more importantly, to the account of the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem.

*David and all his people set out from Baale-Judah (the other name for Kiriath-Jearim), to bring up from there the ark of god, which is called "The Name"- "The Name of Yahweh of Armies who is enthroned on the Cherubim"<sup>161</sup>*

The name of the place where the ark rested indicated that the place was once dedicated to Baal. (It is often the case that when one religion supplants another that special use is deliberately made of the sacred sites of the supplanted religion.) Deuteronomic theology insisted that Yahweh had no dwelling - certainly not on earth: only his 'Name' could be given a place. It is quite possible that the ark would have been referred to popularly as "The Name".

Yahweh's covenant with David was a crucial framework text (2 Samuel 7). There is so much deuteronomic editing in this story that, although there probably was an ancient account that underlay the text (see the Jahwist Epic and its associated notes), the present material can be regarded as the work of DH. David proposed to build a house for Yahweh, and the prophet Nathan at first doubted that this was a good idea. But having slept on it and received a vision from Yahweh he revised his opinion. He reported the words of Yahweh to David; David was still not to build a 'house for Yahweh', but:

*"When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up one of your offspring to succeed you ..., and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod such as men use, with the blows of mortals.*

*I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul who was before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be secure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever."<sup>162</sup>*

This covenant was crucial to DH. A striking feature was that it appears to be unconditional. Whilst the misbehaviour of the house of David would result in some suffering for them, they would never lose the kingdom. (This is in sharp contrast to the Covenant on Sinai/Horeb with which DH started: there it was written (Deuteronomy 6:13-15) that "you shall fear Yahweh your God; you shall serve him, and by his name alone you shall swear. Do not follow other gods - the gods of the peoples who are all around you - because Yahweh your God, who is present with you, is a jealous God. The anger of Yahweh your God would ignite against you and he would destroy you from the face of the earth." David's response to the reported words of his god was to say:

*"You are great, lord Yahweh. There is no one like you, and there is no god like you, according to all that we have heard with our own ears. Who is like your people, like Israel? Is there another nation on earth whose god went to redeem it as a people, and to make a name for himself, doing great and awesome things for them by driving out nations and their gods before his people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? And you established your people Israel for yourself to be your people forever; and you Yahweh, have become their god."<sup>163</sup>*

The rhetorical questions here are reminiscent of the questions from the great reflection in Deuteronomy 4, which may well have been incorporated in the beginning of this history; questions such as this: "Has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by awesome displays of power, as Yahweh your god did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?"<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> 2 Samuel 6:2. Most translations omit the repetition of the name that exists in the Hebrew.

<sup>162</sup> 2 Samuel 7:4b-15

<sup>163</sup> 2 Samuel 7: 22-24

<sup>164</sup> Deuteronomy 4:34

The military material in 2 Samuel 8 is an insertion of a miscellany of ‘conquest’ type fragments – mainly a record of the conquests of Omri transposed to the credit of David. This was an understandable re-writing of history some two and a half centuries after the event. If incorporated by DH, its purpose may have been to suggest that David has achieved a time when the land could truly ‘rest’. In today’s bible this insertion is out of context, since David still has battles to fight and rebellions to deal with. It may therefore have been the work of a later editor – unless DH solved this problem by omitting these battles and rebellions. The record of David’s officials includes one, Shausha (often changed to Seraiah by translators), who is of Egyptian or Hurrian origin<sup>165</sup>.

DH probably included the kindness done by David to Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth – also known as Meribaal - picking up the reference to David’s earlier promise. This was probably originally the ending of the story about the execution of Saul’s other sons that is now to be found in 2 Samuel 21.<sup>166</sup> That story dealt with the consequences of an otherwise unknown attack on the Gibeonites perpetrated by Saul in breach of the oath made by Joshua to the Gibeonites. There was a plague in the land and Yahweh apparently ‘told’ David that this was due to the blood-guilt that lay upon Saul’s house due to this incident. So David handed over all Saul’s sons to the Gibeonites who impaled them, but he saved Meribaal the cripple out of respect, the author implied, for his promise to Jonathan. The story ended with David giving the bones of Saul and Jonathan a decent burial in their father’s graves.

The battles with the Ammonites and the Arameans may also have been included, for Joab encouraged his brother Abishai with words taken from Yahweh’s commissioning of Joshua; he told him to ‘*be strong and courageous*’. Despite having to fight on two fronts, David’s forces prevailed.

There is no evidence, neither from language nor content, as to whether the story of the Bathsheba affair was incorporated by DH; the chronicler omits it; Friedman considers it to be Yahwist. It would be understandable if DH omitted it – it would have detracted from his purpose. Similar comments can be made of the rape of Tamar and Absalom’s rebellion.

In 2 Samuel 22, DH quoted two ancient songs – the first beginning “*Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer*” was followed by a link passage using Deuteronomic language that led into the second. The link passage took this form:

*Yahweh has rewarded me according to my righteousness;  
He has dealt with me according to the cleanliness of my hands  
For I have kept the ways of Yahweh,  
and have not strayed wickedly from my god.  
For all his laws are before me,  
and from his statutes I have not turned aside.  
I have been blameless before him,  
and have kept myself from sin.  
Yahweh has rewarded me according to my righteousness,  
according to my cleanliness in his sight.*

The second song included the line “*for who is god except Yahweh, and who is a rock besides our Elohim?*” The combined result is also known as Psalm 18

The poem ‘David’s Last Words’ and the list of David’s mighty men, though probably old, look as if they were inserted as a kind of appendix, perhaps when the book of 2 Samuel was separated into a single scroll.

But we can be reasonably sure DH chose to mention at least one offence attributable to his hero-king. It can be found in today’s 2 Samuel 24. This was not the Bathsheba affair, but rather the taking of a census. There it was reported that towards the end of his reign, David took a census of all Israel but afterwards repented of it and prayed to Yahweh to ‘*take away the guilt of your servant; for I have acted very foolishly*’. But Yahweh sent a prophet to David and asked him to choose between three punishments. David instead threw himself on the mercy of Yahweh. So Yahweh sent a plague on Israel and 70,000 died. David cried out:

*“I alone have sinned, and I alone have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father’s house.”*

In the end, David bought a threshing floor from Araunah the Jebusite, and there offered a

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<sup>165</sup> McCarter (1984). 2 Samuel; AB; p 253-256

<sup>166</sup> The story of David’s kindness to Mephibosheth/Meribaal can be found in today’s bible in 2 Samuel chapter 9.

burnt offering. Yahweh answered his supplication and the plague was stopped. The author offered no criticism of this sacrifice. It was presumably ‘at the place that Yahweh chose’ for that purpose at that time.<sup>167</sup> The taking of a census was regarded as a very dubious act in the ancient Near East. In Exodus 30:12 (P material) there was the rule that if a census is taken a ransom must be paid for each life counted, “so that no plague shall come upon them”! In Mari as well as Israel the taking of a census required ritual purification – possibly because the census was seen as a preparation for warfare and warfare required purification. It is also possible that taking a census touched on a primitive taboo, especially when writing was rare and, for most people, magical. Allowing someone to take your name may have been seen as giving them a god-like power over you – hence the need to assuage the gods for this usurpation of their power by the offering a ransom<sup>168</sup>.

Solomon (2 Kings 1:1 - )

In what are now the first two chapters of Kings, DH incorporated the dramatic struggle for the succession as David’s reign came to an end. Adonijah, the oldest surviving son expected to be king and in that he was supported by Joab, David’s loyal general and Abiathar, the priest of Nob who had been part of David’s rise to power. But Solomon, supported by his mother, Bathsheba, the priest Zadok, the captain of the royal bodyguard Benaiah, and Nathan the prophet sought to outmanoeuvre Adonijah through manipulating a weakened David. And they succeeded. The writing has all the drama and human interest that is characteristic of the Yahwist.

It is probable that DH incorporated this Yahwist text but then inserted a few verses of his own. He did this by once more placing the teaching in the mouth of the aging ruler. His version of the advice David offered to his successor Solomon ran: -

*“Be strong, be a great man, and keep the charge of Yahweh your god, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his law, and his requirements as written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.”<sup>169</sup>*

Placed at this point in the story, and in the mouth of David, this Deuteronomic passage is a key part of the framework of DH’s history.

The quality and style of writing changes significantly at the end of the second chapter of Kings. No longer does DH have the literary writings of the Yahwist to use: from here on he had to make use of more ‘official’ material supplemented with tales from the prophetic traditions. He also felt the need to organise the material as systematically as was done in the section dealing with time of the judges. His contribution was no longer confined to the ‘framework’ passages in which important matters were dealt with by means of the speeches of key characters; from now on the author himself commented on the deeds of the kings – and he judged them.

I Kings 3 began:

*Solomon made a marriage alliance with the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt; he took Pharaoh’s daughter and brought her into the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of Yahweh and the wall around Jerusalem. The people were still sacrificing at the raised sanctuaries (Hebrew bamah), however, because no house had yet been built for the name of Yahweh<sup>170</sup>*

DH raised two of his major concerns – marriages to foreigners and the problem of the raised sanctuaries – the *bamah* or ‘high places’ as the word is usually translated. The term, however, is really descriptive of its shape rather than its altitude, being also used as a word for the back of an animal or the crest of a wave. Archaeologists have found oval platforms throughout Israel and Judah dating from ancient Canaanite times to the late monarchy: these are accepted as the remains of the *bamah*. In the bible they are sited in towns, in valleys and in city gates as well as on hilltops and under leafy trees. A characteristic of the *bamah* was that they often had Asherah poles or standing stones on them. The

<sup>167</sup> From the Chronicler we learn that the Tent of Meeting, before which according to H, all sacrifice should be done, was at that time thought to be in the high place at Gideon. The Chronicler goes on to explain that David subsequently chose this threshing floor to be the site of the temple his son would build. (2 Chronicles 21:18 ff)

<sup>168</sup> McCarter (1984): 2 Samuel: AB p 512-514

<sup>169</sup> 1 Kings 2: 3 The next verse which makes this promise conditional was probably added later.

<sup>170</sup> 1 Kings 3:1 - 2

standing stones were perhaps commemorative stelae; but they could have been representations of a male god – a ‘*god of stone*’ as frequently castigated in Deuteronomy. Sometimes *bamah* had altars built on them; sometimes they were the altar. Sacrifices took place on them. Thus they kept Canaanite religion alive, often in the same place as it had been practised for centuries. Sometimes both Yahweh and the ancient gods were worshipped at the same *bamah*. This was what the prophets attacked. Roland de Vaux argues that over time the *bamah* became a synonym for a pagan or unlawful sanctuary where false worship took place<sup>171</sup>. When Ezekiel felt he needed to define the word; he did so by describing the illegitimate cultic practices that took place on them, and then having Yahweh ask “*What is this ‘bamah’ to which you are going up?*” after which Ezekiel commented ‘*and ‘bamah’ has been their name ever since*’.<sup>172</sup> DH generally used the word in this sense of ‘illegitimate shrine’, and it is these that he wanted closed down. The movements to close them down in the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah were accompanied by attempts to reform and cleanse the temple, so a further consequence was a tendency to concentrate worship at the Jerusalem temple. But it would be wrong to see centralization as the objective of the Deuteronomist reforms - although it may well have been an objective of the Aaronite priesthood and the King. The Deuteronomist’s objective was to purify the cult.<sup>173</sup>

As for marrying foreign women, DH had already made clear that there were dangers in that. Can Solomon avoid them?

Solomon received a massive 8 chapters from DH (2 Kings 3 to 11), much more than any other king or judge except David, but a good proportion of this was taken up with a detailed description of the temple and royal palace (chapters 5 to 7). The single story of Solomon’s reign included before this great mass of architectural detail was the story of the judgment of Solomon regarding the two prostitutes who were arguing as to who was the mother of the surviving child of the two born in their house – Solomon’s trick of threatening to divide the child in two, thereby revealing the women with the greater love, was intended to illustrate his alleged wisdom and understanding of human nature.

There was further technical material in the lists of Solomon’s officers<sup>174</sup>. Of particular interest are the administrative arrangements for Israel, which are specifically distinguished from those for Judah. The administrative arrangements divide the future Northern country into twelve regions, unrelated to the tribal structure: each one had to make provision for Solomon and his household for one month in the year. It looks from this text that only the Northern tribes were allegedly obliged to provide provisions and labour by Solomon, Judah was not. In the next chapter, it was alleged that Solomon conscripted slave-gangs, which he sent to Lebanon as a part of the payment for the materials for the temple.

#### *Dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:1 - )*

The temple was important to David’s dynasty. Its construction demonstrated the fulfilment of Yahweh’s promise to David. In Kings, the Temple and the Ark of the Covenant concretely symbolized the covenant between the descendants of David and Yahweh. The temple symbolised Yahweh’s approval of his servant David, and all that he did; in recognition of which Yahweh was expected to preserve the Kingdom of Judah.

DH described the dedication of the temple and composed the remarkable prayer of dedication, attributed to Solomon but almost certainly written by a Deuteronomist. First there was a theological discourse establishing that, unlike other gods, Yahweh did not dwell in a temple, such as the magnificent one just completed. The temple is just the place where, in DH’s language, Yahweh ‘*caused his name to tent*’.

*Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you,  
much less this house that I have built!  
Regard your servant’s prayer and his plea, Yahweh my god,  
heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today;  
that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house,  
the place of which you said, ‘My name shall be there’.*<sup>175</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Ancient Israel – its life and institutions; Roland de Vaux; p 284-288

<sup>172</sup> Ezekiel 20:29

<sup>173</sup> Not all shrines outside Jerusalem were unacceptable to Yahweh. Solomon sacrificed at the one in Gibeon and was said to have been rewarded there with the gifts of wisdom, riches and long life - though that story was set before the story of his building of the temple.

<sup>174</sup> 1 Kings 4:1-19

<sup>175</sup> 1 Kings 8:27-29a

Then there followed a liturgical prayer, probably still in use in DH 's time in which Yahweh was asked to forgive first the sins of the individual, then the sins of the state. There were prayers for the avoidance of famine and of plague and this: -

*When a man wrongs his neighbour and is required to take an oath, and he comes and swears before your altar in this house,*

*Then hear in heaven,  
and act, and judge your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating the righteous by rewarding them according to their righteousness.*

*When your people Israel, defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, turn again to you, confessing your name, praying and pleading with you in this house,*

*Then hear in heaven,  
and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land that you gave to their ancestors.*

*When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this place, confessing your name, and turning from their sin, because you have punished them,*

*Then hear in heaven,  
and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel,*

There was an outward looking note in the liturgy:

*When a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name (for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm) when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house,*

*Then hear in heaven  
your dwelling place,  
and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you.*

Recognizing the ever-present threat of deportation, from which Israel had already suffered by the time DH was writing, there was a prayer for the exiles. The prayer shows a strikingly modern understanding of the inevitability of human guilt, and the need for repentance:

*If they sin against you, for there is no one who does not sin,  
and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy,  
so that they are carried away captive to the land of the enemy, far off or near;  
yet if they come to their senses in the land to which they have been taken captive,  
and ...if they repent with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies...  
and pray to you ...,*

*Then hear in heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their plea,  
maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you,  
and all their transgressions that they have committed against you;  
and grant them compassion ...  
for they are your people and inheritance, which you brought out of Egypt,  
from the midst of the iron furnace<sup>176</sup>*

The prayer included the characteristic Deuteronomic phrases – ‘with all their heart and soul’ and the references to ‘iron furnace of Egypt’, and concluded with a reference to the covenant with Moses, confirming the Deuteronomic connection of this text. The specific instances dealt with in the prayer – protection from enemies, from drought, from ill-health, from exile - are in large measure the subject of the curses in Deuteronomy 28. After the sermon, the intercessions and the blessing, Solomon sacrificed with the people and the people partook of the sacred meal. The festival continued for seven days and the people returned joyful for all the goodness Yahweh had shown to his servant David and to his people Israel. Then Solomon had a vision in which Yahweh said: -

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<sup>176</sup> This beautiful prayer can be found in 1 Kings 8: 31 - 53

*I have heard your prayer...and I have consecrated this house that you have built to place my name there forever, and my eyes and my heart shall be there for all the days.*

*As for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my ordinance, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom of Israel forever, as I promised your father David, saying, 'You shall never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.'"*

- recollecting the instructions from David to Solomon quoted earlier.

Immediately after this, DH stated that Solomon sold 20 cities in Galilee to Hiram of Tyre, used forced labour, conscripted foreigners as slaves (and DH comments that their descendants were still slaves in his time), and set up a joint venture with Hiram to import gold via the Red Sea. The term here for the forced labour (*missim*) was the same as the term used for the slave gangs into which the Israelites were organised by their Egyptian masters and the same as the term used just a few verses later to describe the permanently enslaved foreigners.

The famous visit of the queen of Sheba was recounted – followed by an inventory of Solomon's wealth. DH claims that the 'Book of the Acts of Solomon' was his source for this material, but what was the origin of that book? The archaeological evidence does not support the existence of a wealthy Judah in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE, so the stories would seem to have been transposed from another place and time. The Sheba story and the many Solomon stories and references in the Koran suggest a contribution from Southern Arabia. Much of Judah's wealth in the 7<sup>th</sup> century was based on trade with this part of the world – a trade which centred around gold, silver, incense, and spices; and in the story the queen of Sheba brings Solomon gold and spices. Perhaps the traders also brought a story of a once fabulous kingdom, elements of which inspired the stories of this mythical son of David.

Archaeology tells us that the cities of Megiddo, Hazor and Gezer were all built in the time of Omri. DH records no specific building works to the credit of Omri, so it is possible that these achievements were transferred to Solomon, just as Omri's conquests were transferred to David. In the summary of Ahab's reign to be found in 1 King's 2:39, DH does include a reference to the '*cities that he built*'. It was unusual for DH to include anything in his summary which he had not dealt with in the detail of the stories so it is plausible that the references Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer that should have been in the detail of the Ahab text was excised from there so that it could be inserted in the Solomon text.<sup>177</sup>

#### *Errors of Solomon (1 Kings 11:1 - )*

It was time for DH to judge Solomon:

*King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh... Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; ... But when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to Yahweh his God, as had been the heart of his father David. Solomon followed Asherah... and Milcom..., and built a cult site for Chemosh... and for Molech Therefore Yahweh said to Solomon, "Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes as I commanded you, I will tear, yes I will tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son. I will not, however, tear away the entire kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of my servant David..."<sup>178</sup>*

Thus the covenant with David was maintained, but the covenant with Moses had been broken as a result of the worship of foreign gods; therefore the Kingdom was to be broken up. DH provided a story for the end of Solomon's reign. In this story, Jeroboam (Solomon's sometime head of forced labour) came out of exile in Egypt to become the king of all the northern tribes of Israel whilst Solomon's son Rehoboam inherited just the tribe of Judah. Rehoboam made an attempt to continue to exercise his authority over Israel by sending his new head of forced labour north, but the people stoned him to death.

Jeroboam needed to set up shrines to rival Jerusalem, so he made two 'golden calves' and said

<sup>177</sup> See chapter 4, 'The Paramount Chiefs'; pp 22-31, for a discussion on the historical Judah of the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and on the possible causes underlying the development of the Solomon myth.

<sup>178</sup> 1 Kings 11:1-13

*“Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. And this thing became a sin<sup>179</sup>*

DH gave Jeroboam the very words that E, the northern source, attributed to Aaron in the incident of the heresy of the golden calf. Jeroboam in the north was sacrificing at Bethel, when DH tells us that:

*A man of God came out of Judah by the word of Yahweh to Bethel and proclaimed against the altar by the word of Yahweh, and said,  
“‘Altar, altar’, thus says Yahweh: ‘A son named Josiah shall be born to the house of David; and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the raised sanctuaries who offer incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.’<sup>180</sup>*

Of all the kings whose stories are told by DH, only Josiah is so specifically foretold – perhaps because these words were written by a great admirer of Josiah during his lifetime. It was noted earlier that the repeated vocative was a characteristic of the writings of the Jeremiah/Baruch partnership – further evidence that the Deuteronomic Historians were led by them.

Later DH wrote that Jeroboam sent his wife to the priests at Shiloh to consult them regarding their son who was sick. She received a rather more extensive judgment than she was seeking:

*Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: =  
“Because I ... made you leader over my people Israel, and tore the kingdom away from the house of David to give it to you; yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commandments and followed me with all his heart... but you have done more evil than all those who preceded you; you have gone and made for yourself other gods, cast images to anger me, ...  
Therefore, I will bring disaster upon the house of Jeroboam, and I will cut off every male....  
Therefore set out, go to your house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. ...  
Moreover Yahweh will raise up for himself a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today, even right now!”  
Yahweh will strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water; he will pluck Israel out of this good land that he gave to their ancestors, and scatter them beyond the river, because they have angered Yahweh by making their Asherah poles. He will give up Israel because of the sins of Jeroboam...*

From now on DH gives us side by side the stories of the rulers of Judah and of Israel. The regnal dates of the rulers can be derived since DH also gives the number of years between the beginnings of each reign and securely dateable events (such as the Assyrian invasion of Egypt). Even so, totalling the length of the reigns of the kings of Judah and of Israel does not produce the same result. Scholars believe they can account for this by assuming some overlapping reigns – so that a son could become king before the death of his father.

Although the content of the text moved from the time of legends towards the time of history, DH was still describing events that happened about two centuries before he lived – and probably without the aid of written records other than grave memorials.

It will be recalled that he had a formula when dealing with the time of the ‘judges’: Israel does evil, worships foreign gods – Yahweh punishes Israel – Israel cries out to Yahweh in their misery – Yahweh raises up a judge to lead Israel – stories of the judge – so the land had rest – the judge dies – and the cycle recurs. He used a similar approach with the kings: The king or queen reigns (date of accession, parentage) – summary of the good and evil done in the reign – stories from his reign – summary of death and succession – and the cycle recurs.

The relationship between the good and evil done, and the subsequent stories was left as the lesson for the reader to observe. The main criteria by which these reigns were judged remained the extent to which foreign gods were worshiped; but after the building of the temple a second criteria was added. Even kings who did well in the sight of Yahweh were criticised if they allowed worship to continue in the raised sanctuaries. Here is DH’s treatment of Asa, the fourth king of Judah:

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<sup>179</sup> 1 Kings 12:25 -end

<sup>180</sup> 1 Kings 13:1 - 2

*In the twentieth year of King Jeroboam of Israel, Asa began to reign over Judah; he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah daughter of Abishalom.*

*Asa did what was right in the sight of Yahweh, as his father David had done. He dismissed the male temple prostitutes, and removed all the idols that his ancestors had made. He also demoted his mother Maacah, because she had made an abominable image for Asherah; Asa cut down her image and burned it at the Wadi Kidron.*

*But the raised sanctuaries were not removed.*

*Nevertheless the heart of Asa was true to Yahweh all his days. He brought into the house of Yahweh the gifts of his father and his own gifts—silver, gold, and utensils.*

The story from Asa's reign describes how he dealt with Israel's attacks on his borders; he used gold from the temple treasury to pay the king of Aram/Syria to attack Israel; when this was successful he dismantled a fort the Northern kingdom had built to blockade Judah, and used the stones to build a couple of towns for his people.

*Now the rest of all the acts of Asa, all his power, all that he did, and the cities that he built, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah? .... Then Asa slept with his ancestors, and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David; his son Jehoshaphat succeeded him.*

DH asks a rhetorical question regarding the rest of the acts of Asa. 'Are they not written in the state annals?' Some historians, such as Donald Redford<sup>181</sup>, would answer 'No'! No state annals would record such things as *the sins the king committed*, as DH claimed regarding Manasseh when he wrote: -

*Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, all that he did, and the sin that he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah?<sup>182</sup>*

State annals did exist at this time in the archives of the major powers, Egypt and Assyria, but most of the entries concerned financial matters and other state dealings. Redford concluded that DH was using folktales, stories from the prophets; inscriptions on memorial stele, buildings, burial places; commemorative gifts to the temple and inscriptions on the temple walls themselves. There is nothing that he tells us that requires any other sources than these. This tends to be confirmed by the fact that DH seems to have had more information about the kings of Judah, whose temple precincts were to hand, than he had about the kings of Israel. For Judean kings he supplies most of the following pieces of information, all probably inscribed on their commemorative stele:

1. the father,
2. their age at accession,
3. the length of their reign,
4. the name of their mother and her place of birth,
5. the name of their father in law,
6. the cause of the death
7. their place of burial

But for the kings of Israel, DH often only provided the length of their reign and the name of their father. Furthermore he was silent concerning the major events of Omri's and Ahab's reign. He did not mention, for example, the battle of Qarqar in which Israel took a leading role in a coalition that halted Assyrian expansion. His prime source for this part of the history of Israel seems to have been the tales of the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

Ahab's section in the text began with the standard formula: -

*Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of Yahweh more than all who were before him. And, as if it had been a trivial matter for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel, daughter of King Ethbaal of Sidon, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him.<sup>183</sup>*

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<sup>181</sup> Redford (1992) p 319 onwards

<sup>182</sup> 2 Kings 21:17

<sup>183</sup> 1 Kings 16:30-31

The first story in Ahab's reign referred to human sacrifice, for in Ahab's days, wrote DH, "*Hiel of Bethel built Jericho; he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub*"<sup>184</sup>

Most of the stories that DH used relating to Ahab's reign were originally folk-stories about Elijah, whose name means 'Yah-is-god'. The stories included Elijah's prediction of the three-year drought, the story of the of the ever-full jar of meal, his restoration of the dead child to life, his contest with the Priests of Baal followed by the ending of the drought, his escape to Sinai/Horeb, his recruitment of Elisha and his condemnation of Ahab over the expropriation of Naboth's vineyard.<sup>185</sup> The first three stories (chapter 17) were held together by the theme of the 'word', establishing Elijah as a prophet like no other. He was a miracle worker whose 'word' could heal or harm: by his 'words' he interceded for individuals - or even whole peoples - and he passed the 'word' of Yahweh on to kings and condemned them for their faithlessness and injustices.

He was a prophet like Moses. Both prophets began with a journey to escape a king's wrath. Both lodged with a family. Both returned to face and challenge the king, and to awaken the faith among the Israelites. Both left the country again on a journey to Horeb (DH used the northern term for the holy mountain) where both experienced the power of god. Both then depart for Israel via Trans-Jordan. Like Moses and the Israelites, Elijah was fed by Yahweh. Like Moses, Elijah complained about Yahweh's mistreatment of a faithful servant. Like Moses, Elijah was able to part the waters. After Moses had established the covenant with the people in Exodus 24, he and the elders of Israel went up the holy mountain and ate a covenant meal before Yahweh. Elijah's invitation to Ahab to "*go up the mountain and eat and drink*" was an invitation to renounce Baal and return to Yahweh.

Later tradition will see in the mysterious disappearance of Elijah from this world a sign that he would have a unique role in the future victory of God. He is sometimes identified as the precursor of the Messiah. He fought social ills by his care for the poor and by the punishment of the unjust. He is identified with the "Wandering Jew" of medieval folklore, and a place is always set for him at the Passover meal. He is the protector of the newborn; the "Chair of Elijah" is a fixture at circumcisions. The Koran also recalls his mission as an opponent of the Baalism (Sura 37).

From the prophet's point of view, Ahab's problem was Jezebel. The story of Naboth's vineyard led Elijah to predict the manner of both Ahab and Jezebel's death. Naboth had refused to sell the ancestral vineyard, so Jezebel contrived to have him accused of cursing god and he was stoned to death by the crowd. As Ahab went to take possession of the vineyard, Elijah met him:

*Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?"*

*"I have found you.", he answered, "and because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of Yahweh, I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. Also, concerning Jezebel, Yahweh said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel.' Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat."*

*When Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his bare flesh; he fasted, lay in the sackcloth, and went about dejectedly. Then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster on his house."*

Ahab died in his chariot whilst on a joint campaign with Judah against Aram/Syria. He was struck by an arrow: -

*So the king died, and was brought to Samaria...They washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, according to the word of Yahweh that he had spoken.*

Elijah denounced Ahab's son Ahaziah, who had fallen through the lattice of his first-floor room and, lying injured, had sent officers to ask Baal-zebub if he would recover. Elijah intercepted the party and asked '*Is it because there is no god in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub*'. After that Ahaziah sent to Elijah, and twice Elijah caused the emissaries to die by drawing down fire

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<sup>184</sup> 1 Kings 16:34

<sup>185</sup> 1 Kings 17,18,19 and 21

from heaven. On the third occasion, when approached with the respect due to a prophet of Yahweh, Elijah consented to go to the king and give him the word of Yahweh. The word was ‘that because he had originally enquired of Baal-zebub, therefore “*you shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but you shall die, yes, die*”’. And his death was duly recorded.

When it was time for Elijah to die, he and Elisha went to a special place across the Jordan, whilst their disciples remained behind on the bank. There, as the two were walking: -

*A chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept watching and crying out, “Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.*

*He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah and struck the water, saying, “Where is Yahweh, the god of Elijah?” When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.*

Elisha performed miracles. Some seem to come straight out of folklore – the floating axe-head; improving a ghastly stew; having a bunch of irritating kids mauled by bears, blinding the troops sent to arrest him – but others seem to echo the miracles of Elijah or pre-echo those that will later be attributed to Jesus of Nazareth. He started out by turning foul water into a wholesome drink; he healed Naaman the commander of the Aramean army; he fed one hundred men with just 20 loaves of bread ‘*and they ate and had some left*’; and he raised the Shummanite’s son from the dead. Like Elijah he provided for the poor by the miracle of the never emptying jar – in this case a jar of oil.<sup>186</sup>

DH wrote that Elisha took an active role in politics. He promoted Hazael’s rise to power in Damascus, and Jehu’s coup against Ahab’s son in Israel.

When Jehu entered Jezreel, there was Jezebel, now an old but still spirited woman, leaning out of an upstairs window. She called out: -

*“Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?”*

In mockingly calling Jehu ‘Zimri’ she was referring to an earlier traitor who assassinated a monarch in a cowardly manner, but only lasted 7 days before being overwhelmed by Omri, Jezebel’s father-in-law.

*He looked up to the window and said, “Who is on my side? Who?” Two or three eunuchs looked out at him. “Throw her down,” he said. So they threw her down; some of her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses, which trampled on her.*

*Then he went in and ate and drank. “See to that cursed woman and bury her”, he said, “for she is a king’s daughter.” But when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. When they came back and told him, he said, “This is the word of Yahweh, spoken through his servant Elijah the Tishbite, ‘In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, ‘This is Jezebel.’”*

Jehu had all the descendants of Ahab slain, ‘*according to the word of Yahweh that he spoke to Elijah*’ and then gathered together all the worshippers of Baal and slew them as well.

Elisha outlived Jehu, his successor Joahaz and went on into the reign of Jehoash. As Elisha was dying he had the king strike the ground with arrows and was angry that he only struck three times, for three victories would not be enough to deal with expansionist Aram.<sup>187</sup>

Virtually every prophecy in DH’s text was pointedly linked with its fulfilment. The repeated realisation of the prophetic word emphasised the point DH strove to teach. Worshipping any god other than Yahweh would anger Yahweh. The fall and exile of Israel occurred because all the kings of Israel repeatedly worshipped other gods, and failed to take note of the warnings of the prophets.

DH moved his story on using his standard approach through a series of kings of Judah and Israel until he reached Hoshea: -

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<sup>186</sup> 2 Kings 2:19 to 6:23

<sup>187</sup> 2 Kings 13: 14 - 21

Fall of Israel (2: Kings 17:1 - )

*Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria; for three years he besieged it. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria; he carried the Israelites away to Assyria. He placed them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.*

This enabled DH to emphasise his core teaching; he explained: -

*This occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against Yahweh their god, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh King of Egypt. They had worshiped other gods and walked in the customs of the clans whom Yahweh drove out before the people of Israel, as well as in the customs that the kings of Israel introduced. .... Yet Yahweh had warned Israel and Judah by all the prophets and all the seers, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes...." But they would not listen; they were as stiff-necked as their fathers...They rejected all the commandments of Yahweh their god and made for themselves cast images of two calves; they made an Asherah pole, worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination and augury; ...So Yahweh was very angry with Israel and removed it out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah alone.<sup>188</sup>*

DH comments that *to this day*, their children and their children's children continue to do as their ancestors had done.

As the northern country, Israel, was being taken into exile, the leadership of Judah was vested in a young Hezekiah, perhaps alongside his father. Hezekiah became a centralising and reforming king who closed down the 'bamah': He got a solid alpha rating from DH – as one might expect:

*There was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. For he stuck to Yahweh and did not deviate from following him. He kept the commandments that Yahweh had commanded Moses.<sup>189</sup>*

Nevertheless DH would comment at the conclusion of his work that there was no king before Josiah who turned to Yahweh with all his heart, according to the law of Moses. Somewhat inconsistent? Perhaps the difference reflected the scope of Hezekiah's kingship; he was restricted to Judah, whereas Josiah was not; and whereas the Josiah comment has all the characteristics of Baruch, the Hezekiah comment may have been the work of a different Deuteronomist.

The Deuteronomist jumped at once to the Assyrian attack on Judah without any mention of the intervening years. First, he incorporated material here which has the feeling of being extracts from official chronicles. The text acknowledged that Lachish was besieged and that while this was still going on, Hezekiah, King of Judah, sent emissaries to Sennacharib saying, "*I have done wrong. Withdraw from me. Whatever you impose on me, I will bear.*" It was then recorded that Hezekiah gave Sennacharib 300 talents of silver and 30 of gold. Some scholars feel that the original text of this episode concluded with a verse now displaced to 19:36 which read "*so Sennacharib, King of Assyria, broke camp and departed, and he returned home and lived in Nineveh*".<sup>190</sup> This may be true; it would at least have been the logical action for Sennacharib to have taken. But both Assyrian records and Biblical accounts indicate that a siege of Jerusalem did take place – although probably not on the scale that Assyrian records claim for Lachish. It is likely therefore that whenever the negotiations were started, they were not concluded until after Jerusalem had been surrounded by the Assyrian army, trapping Hezekiah '*like a bird in a cage*'.

The next piece of writing that DH included imaginatively explored aspects of those negotiations from within the Deuteronomic prophetic tradition. The author of these stories used the appellation 'King Hezekiah' rather than the formal 'Hezekiah, King of Judah' of the earlier more official records. The first story involved exchanges between the Judean team standing on the city walls and Sennacharib's man standing '*at the end of the conduit to the upper pool, on the road to Fuller's Field*', the very same place that Isaiah had chosen for his interview with King Ahaz forty years earlier. There are Assyria records describing their use of this type of 'megaphone diplomacy' in the siege of

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<sup>188</sup> 2 Kings 17; 1-23

<sup>189</sup> 2 Kings 18: 5-6

<sup>190</sup> Thus J Lewy, quoted in Cogan (1998)

Babylon. The style, ideas and threats found in Assyrian inscriptions elsewhere are similar to those reportedly used by the Assyrian officials here<sup>191</sup>. Subsequently, DH suggested, Hezekiah sent his officials to Isaiah to seek Yahweh's help and the prophet declared Yahweh's response to be, "*Do not be afraid of the words of this King of Assyria, for I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a report and return to his own country...*"

So again the King of Assyria '*sent messengers to Hezekiah*'. The next story in today's bible was based around more normal negotiations involving the exchange of written messages. In this story Hezekiah went into the temple, laid out the message from Sennacharib before Yahweh and prayed. He admitted the power of the Assyrian but pleaded, "*Save us from his hand, Yahweh our God, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, Yahweh, are the only god.*" – a truly Deuteronomic sentiment. Isaiah sent a message to Hezekiah containing Yahweh's response in the form of a poem – a poem that employed the metaphor of Jerusalem as a virgin daughter, an idea which was also used in the poetry attached to the book of Micah, in the works of the late 7<sup>th</sup> century prophet Zephaniah and in the early exilic Lamentations. In this poem she was portrayed as one who contemptuously dismisses a suitor who disgusts her: -

*Virgin daughter Zion despises you, she scorns you:  
Daughter Jerusalem tosses her head behind your back,  
Whom have you mocked and blasphemed?  
Against whom have you raised your voice?  
You have looked down upon the Holy One of Israel!  
You have mocked Yahweh through your servants!*

But Yahweh responded: -

*I know your rising up and your sitting down,  
your going out and your coming in.  
And because you rage against me  
and your uproar has come to my ears,  
I will put my hook in your nose  
and my bit through your lip;  
And I will turn you back on the way  
by which you came.<sup>192</sup>*

Assyrian wall carvings of the time show naked prisoners held on leashes from hooks in their noses or lips. The deliberate devastation of agricultural land was another well attested Assyrian practice<sup>193</sup> and this seems to be the basis of the next insertion which anticipated the Assyrian's departure, for it promised that the survivors would eat from the aftergrowth in that year; from the product of self-sown seeds the year after; and would be able to sow and reap thereafter<sup>194</sup>.

This section was summarised by a statement in Yahweh's voice that "*I will protect this city and save it for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.*" Thus this story, which began with the Sennacharib sending messengers to Hezekiah, ended with Yahweh's messenger *going out and striking the Assyrian camp – 185,000 men*. The hebrew word for messenger (*malach*) is often translated as 'angel' when associated with Yahweh, which obscures the literary device used by the author to close his story by contrasting the powers of the messengers of emperors with those of the messenger of Yahweh. The 185,000 may refer to the size of the Assyrian camp, All that is said here of the dead is that '*At day-break there were bodies all about.*' (It should in any case be noted that exaggerated numbers are characteristics both of military situations and divine punishments in the Bible – and not only there. The Assyrians claimed 200,150 prisoners were taken from Lachish.) Josephus claims that a plague decimated the Assyrian army, and certainly Assyrian records refer to plagues as issues which had the potential to disrupt a military campaign.

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2 Kings in today's bible is a story about Hezekiah's illness which has probably been displaced from its original position. The King was near to death when Isaiah

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<sup>191</sup> Cogan and Tadmor (1988) p242

<sup>192</sup> 2 Kings 19:21-28

<sup>193</sup> Cogan and Tadmor (1988) p238

<sup>194</sup> The material of 2 Kings 19:29-33 shows evidence of re-arrangement and insertions. Verse 28c ('turn you back by the way you came') reappears in verse 33 and 'he shall not enter into this city' from the same verse is repeated from 32b.

visited him to suggest that he prepare his will. Hezekiah wept and prayed to Yahweh saying “Remember how faithfully and loyally I served you and did everything that was good in your eyes” Isaiah was still middle courtyard of the palace when Yahweh sent Isaiah back with a new word.

*“I have heard your prayers; I have seen your tears. I will heal you. Within three days you will [be able to] go up to the house of Yahweh. I will add fifteen years to your life. I will save you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will protect this city, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David”*

The last line is a repetition of the line in the previous chapter which comforted Hezekiah after he had taken Sennacherib’s message to the temple and prayed to Yahweh there. Here it is linked with saving Hezekiah himself as well as the city. This only makes sense if Hezekiah’s illness occurred before the siege had ended.<sup>195</sup> Re-timing the story so that the two lines coincide creates the possibility of disease both within and without the walls. In the Deuteronomic interpretation, the disease of Hezekiah was cured through Yahweh’s prophet in response to Hezekiah’s humility; the disease of Sennacherib’s army was delivered by Yahweh’s messenger in response to Sennacherib’s arrogance.<sup>196</sup>

In the story, Isaiah alleviated the immediate symptoms with a fig poultice, but Hezekiah requested a sign to prove that Yahweh would really give him 15 extra years. The sign he asked for was proof that Yahweh would restore time. He received it when Yahweh caused the shadow of a sundial to run backwards.

*Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.*

These stories all involved Isaiah and were copied verbatim into the Book of his name – probably by an editor keen to assemble all good references to the prophet<sup>197</sup>. It should be noted that the Isaiah of these stories, constantly being consulted by the Hezekiah, was very different from the systematically ignored Isaiah of his sealed scroll.

The story of the visit of a delegation from Babylon reads as if its author was someone whose main concern was a potential invasion from that country, something that would have not have crossed the mind of a scribe writing in the heyday of Josiah’s glorious reign.

After a summary of the reign of Hezekiah, the Deuteronomic Historian came to the reign of Manasseh, King of Judah – a total contrast.

*He did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, following the abominable practices of the clans that Yahweh drove out before the people of Israel. For he rebuilt the raised sanctuaries that his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he erected altars for Baal; made an Asherah pole, as King Ahab of Israel had done; worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. He built altars in the house of Yahweh, of which Yahweh had said, “In Jerusalem I will tent my name.” He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Yahweh. He made his son pass through fire; he practised divination and augury, and dealt with mediums and wizards<sup>198</sup>.*

But is this fair and true? Archaeology has given us a list of some names used in the seventh century. They are contained in the reports (the Lachish letters) from a military garrison 30 miles south-west of Jerusalem. Of the 10 names in the letters, eight are Yahwist names whilst the other two have no theophoric element.<sup>199</sup> None have any references to Baal. This suggests that, compared to the previous century, the fashion in boy’s names had changed, possibly in response to a strengthening of the Yahwist faith in the popular mind. Seals recovered from this time tend to be free of any images.

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<sup>195</sup> Most commentators would go further and place Hezekiah’s illness before the siege had even started, but it cannot have been before it was even threatened or else there would have been no need to ‘save the city’.

<sup>196</sup> Disease both within and without the walls of besieged city would not have been unexpected since both sides had ways of getting diseased bodies into the enemys’ positions.

<sup>197</sup> The precedence of the account in Kings is recognised by most commentators. Cogan and Tadmor (1988) p 256-7 and Blenkinsopp (2000) p 459

<sup>198</sup> 2 Kings 21

<sup>199</sup> Lemche, 1998 p 48

Earlier seals often included representations of the sun, moon and stars, the ‘*host of heaven*’, which were essentially Assyrian or Babylonian images; but now they just contained the plain unadorned names. It seems that the biblical criticisms made of Manasseh are not justified by the archaeological evidence. On the contrary, the archaeology suggests that Yahwism was stronger and more pervasive during the century in which he was the dominant ruler than it had been heretofore.

*Josiah (2 Kings 22:1 - )*

DH briefly mentioned Manasseh’s short-lived son and then reached his own time – the reign of Josiah:

*Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. He did what was right in the sight of Yahweh, and walked in all the way of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.*

Josiah, DH’s hero, was the only king that receives this accolade of perfection. Used as a metaphor the phrase about not turning to the ‘*right or to the left*’ only occurs in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and here.

DH described the finding of the Law Book and the reforms of Josiah in detail. In particular, he dealt with the fulfilment of the prophecy he had recorded when describing the sin of the golden calves erected at Bethel.

*Even the altar at Bethel, the raised sanctuary erected by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin, even that altar he pulled down along with the sanctuary. He burned the sanctuary, crushing it to dust; he also burned the Asherah pole. As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs there on the hillside; and he sent and took the bones out of the tombs, and burned them on the altar, and defiled it, according to the word of Yahweh that the man of God had proclaimed when Jeroboam had stood by the altar at the festival; he turned and looked up at the tomb of the man of God who had predicted these things.*

*“What is that monument I see?”, he asked.*

*“It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah,” the towns people replied, “He predicted these things that you have done against the altar at Bethel.”*

*“Then let him rest; let no one move his bones.”*

Josiah’s writ now ran throughout the old Northern kingdom as well as in Judah. The Passover was celebrated again in Jerusalem, and spectacularly, for DH tells us that no such Passover had been celebrated since the days of the Judges. This is not an inconsistency here in DH’s writing, for DH had included no description of any Passover in Hezekiah’s time. That inconsistency would arise only in the Chronicler’s text.

DH concluded with a reference to the law in Deuteronomy – the core of which had been his starting point:

*Josiah established the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiyah had found in the house of Yahweh. Never before was a king like him, who turned to Yahweh with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses.*<sup>200</sup>

Compared to the established pattern used when reporting the lives all the other Kings, this judgement is out of place – since Josiah’s reign is not yet complete. The reason the author was forced to record this judgement before reporting Josiah’s death, can only have been that the author was concluding his work while Josiah was still alive.

Thus he finished the first edition of his history. The text which at its beginning said of Moses ‘*Never since has there arisen a prophet like him*’ ended by saying of Josiah ‘*never before was there a king like him*’.<sup>201</sup>

In later years a problem would arise when Jerusalem was destroyed and the apparent promise to David that one of his descendants would always sit on the throne of Judah was broken. This would

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<sup>200</sup> 2 Kings 23:25a

<sup>201</sup> 2 Kings 23:25a

require a revision to the history: but not yet. Some time between 622 and 609, a satisfactory first edition of the history was completed.

#### Summary: The sources and purposes of the Deuteronomic Historian

It is widely recognised that DH incorporated many sources: in many instances he did not rewrite them in his own words, but rather copied them as he found them. His contribution was the provision of a structure – sometimes obvious, at other times less so. His text incorporated material that may have begun as an oral tradition in the 10<sup>th</sup> century (for example, David's 'Rise to Power') but was not written down in the Hebrew of that time. This particular material has been mediated by another author, probably the Yahwist, because the language, style and references are consistent with the recognised work of that author. Similarly the existence of a prophetic tradition has been postulated, originating in the 8<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> centuries supported only by the evidence of language and content. Other material included folk-tales, a document known as the Acts of Solomon, the book of Jashar, Monumental inscriptions and archival material.

The text that in this reading that has been attributed to DH seems to be work done under the direction of a single scribe, even if the detailed work was accomplished with help of others. This is because:

- There is a similarity of vocabulary and phraseology in the framework that has been recognised by scholars and commentators. The characteristic DH phases occur in the separated DH text, but not in the incorporated texts.
- There is a similarity of methodology. The formulaic approach is very clear in three of the books - Judges and 1 & 2 Kings. Even in Samuel, the introduction of the new king's reign uses the same method. Compare 'Saul was . . . years old when he began to reign; and he reigned . . . and two years over Israel' with 'Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem.' The main difference is simply that the inserted stories concerning Saul and David are longer than the inserted stories for other kings. This may have reflected the importance of the issues illustrated by the imported texts or more simply by the amount of material available. The use of formulae is suggestive of an editorial strategy being implemented by assistants.
- The text that is reconstructed makes sense as continuous prose. Obvious duplications have been eliminated. It is also true that a few phrases seem to have been inserted by a later editor, but this also is a generally accepted process.
- There is consistency in the theology and the argument that repeats itself again and again throughout the text.

The Deuteronomic History would become the basis of all the books from Joshua to the second book of Kings. Over time additional material would be added where subsequent editors felt it to be appropriate. The result would become known in Hebrew Bibles as 'The Former Prophets'. That title properly reflects the work's focus on the words of the prophets and their fulfilment. It traces the words of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Nathan, Ahijah, Elijah, Elisha and Isaiah. Each had called Israel to obey the word of Yahweh and refrain from worshipping other gods. But each had complained that Israel and Judah failed to do this and had warned of the consequences. DH sought to show that Israel prospered only when she stuck to the covenant, and was allowed to suffer under other nations whenever she turned away. Nathan said that, in remembrance of his servant David, there would always be a king of the line of David. DH showed in this edition of his history that thus far this prophecy had been fulfilled. The only ruler of Judah who was not of the line of David was Queen Athaliah, and she was not assigned the standard introduction, nor the standard summary.

The book may have been written in part to reinforce King Josiah in his wish to follow the national covenant with Yahweh, turning neither to the right nor the left, and in part to persuade the people to repent and reform their ways. Jeremiah preached on the same theme. Judging by the response given to Jeremiah's preaching, the people were not convinced.

*Thus says Yahweh:  
Stand at the crossroads, and look,  
and ask for the ancient paths,  
where the good way lies; and walk in it,  
and find rest for your souls.*

*But they said, "We will not walk in it."*<sup>202</sup>

### **Late Zephaniah**

At the start of this chapter it was noted that Zephaniah preached in the days of King Josiah and could have been the father of Jeremiah. Some of his material probably predates the discovery of the hidden book, but his late material is influenced by the Deuteronomists and by Jeremiah. The likelihood is that the book was completed before the death of Josiah, since the consequences of that event do not find a marked echo in his work.

The curses in Deuteronomy hung over the people like a suspended sentence in the years following the discovery of the Book, a threat made worse if it was widely known that the prophetess Huldah had confirmed that Yahweh would execute his curses on the nation. This threat seems to have caused the now aged prophet to take up his pen once more and create a new opening to his work and additional material within.

In the opening passage of his book, as finally edited, Zephaniah saw Yahweh intent on reversing his act of creation.

*I will sweep away all from the face of the earth,  
I will sweep away both man and animals,  
I will sweep the birds from the air and the fish from the sea  
...  
And wipe out humanity (adam) from the face of the earth (adama).*<sup>203</sup>

The reference to Genesis is clear from the repetition of the *adam/adama* word play found there. The sweeping away was to be done in order to ensure the removal of *'the remnant of Baal'* and of those who, in an expression that could have come from Jeremiah or Deuteronomy, *'bow down upon the rooftops to worship the host of heaven.'*<sup>204</sup> The *'remnant of Baal'* phrase suggests that some measure of destruction of the Baalists had recently taken place such as Josiah's execution of the priests of Samaria. The worship of the *'hosts of heaven'* seems to have been particularly persistent, despite Josiah's purges, as Jeremiah continued to complained about it

Zephaniah declared that the *'Day of Yahweh'* was at hand.

*At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and I will punish the people, who rest in stupor over their dregs of wine – those who say in their hearts, 'Yahweh will do us no good, but neither will he do us harm.'  
Their wealth shall be plundered, and their houses destroyed.  
Though they build houses they shall not live in them;  
Though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink their wine*<sup>205</sup>

This was very similar to the curse incorporated in Deuteronomy 28:30 (*'You will build a house but not live in it...'*). The on-going influence of Amos is apparent with regard to both passages. he had also said that "you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine"<sup>206</sup>

Zephaniah described the day of Yahweh in words that inspired the *'Dies Irae'* – the medieval hymn used in requiem masses:

*That day shall be a day of wrath  
A day of anguish and affliction,  
A day of devastation and destruction  
A day of darkness and a day of gloom  
A day of cloud and a day of fog  
A day of the trumpet and the cry of battle*<sup>207</sup>

And Zephaniah continued with a curse which may have been inspired by the curse of

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<sup>202</sup> Jeremiah 6:16

<sup>203</sup> Zephaniah 1:3

<sup>204</sup> See Deuteronomy 4:15 and Jeremiah 8:2

<sup>205</sup> Zephaniah 1:12-13

<sup>206</sup> Amos 5:11

<sup>207</sup> Zephaniah 1: 15

Deuteronomy 28:28 which read ‘Yahweh will afflict you with blindness, madness and confusion of heart’. He wrote:

*I will bring darkness upon men so that they will walk like the blind, because they sinned against Yahweh. Their blood shall be poured out as dust and their flesh as dung*

In Jeremiah 8.2, the flesh of the disinterred who once worshipped the ‘host of heaven’ was said to be ‘like dung’.

But Zephaniah also preached the possibility of salvation for the repentant in words that resonate with Micah’s charge to ‘do justice, love kindness, walk patiently with your god’<sup>208</sup>. He said:

*Seek Yahweh all you who live humbly and do his will.  
Seek righteousness and a humble heart.  
It may be that you will find shelter in the day of Yahweh’s anger,<sup>209</sup>*

The prophecies against the nations followed a geographic pattern – East, West, South and North – Philistia, Moab, Kush and Assyria. Some see this as a poetic device indicating Yahweh’s domination of the whole world. Others see it as support for Josiah’s expansion of territory East, West, South and North.

In his later work, Zephaniah foresaw that the faith might need to be preserved by the dispersed faithful and by a remnant, and he hints at a practising group of exiles in Kush (Ethiopia):

*At that time, I will change the speech of the peoples to a purer speech, so that they may call on the name of Yahweh and serve him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Kush, my worshippers, my scattered ones shall bring me offerings<sup>210</sup>*

Ethiopians believe that the final resting place of the Ark of the Covenant is in their country at Axum. One hypothesis is that it travelled there via Elephantine, the Nile island in today’s Aswan, having been removed from the Jerusalem temple and taken to the Judean community there to preserve it from the consequences of the Babylonian onslaught. The temple at Elephantine was itself destroyed when that community was attacked in 410 BC. But it could be that, anticipating this danger, the Ark was moved to Ethiopia. Zephaniah’s belief that there was a Yahwist community in Kush as early as 7th century BCE indicates that there could have been people there who would have been concerned to protect the Ark.

After the Day of Yahweh, Zephaniah said that a faithful remnant would be preserved: -

*I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and meek  
– the remnant of Israel who find refuge in the name of Yahweh.  
They shall do no wrong and speak no lies  
No words of deceit shall pass their lips  
For they shall feed and lie down with no one to frighten them.<sup>211</sup>*

The book closes with a description of Jerusalem as a daughter shouting for joy with Yahweh in the midst of her. Some see this as exilic because of the resonances with other exilic material, but it need not be. It sits here as a description of the consequences of the Day of Yahweh.

*Sing, Daughter of Zion; shout aloud. Israel;  
Rejoice and be glad with all your heart, daughter Jerusalem!  
Yahweh has taken away your punishment,  
He has turned away your enemies  
Yahweh, the king of Israel, is in your midst  
You shall fear harm no more.<sup>212</sup>*

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<sup>208</sup> Micah 6:8

<sup>209</sup> Zephaniah 2:3

<sup>210</sup> Zephaniah 3:10

<sup>211</sup> Zephaniah 3: 9-13a.

<sup>212</sup> Zephaniah 3:14-15. Compare Isaiah 12:6 “Shout aloud and sing for you, royal Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst.”

### **The rise of Babylon (622-610)**

Assyria was trying to resist a re-invigorated Babylon, whilst under pressure from the Medes in the South and having to fight off the Scythian 'hordes' from the North. Soon, however, Jeremiah identified two new menaces, a renewed Egypt and a Babylon becoming too aggressive. The Babylonian rebellion of 627 had turned into an attack on the heartland of Assyria. By 623, Babylon was free and growing strongly. Jeremiah felt called to speak out concerning the danger from the power in the North, which he said was *'tilted, like a cauldron'*.

Psammetichos in Egypt saw the danger too, and in 616 sent an army north to help his old enemy Assyria restrain the Babylonian threat. For a season the Babylonians did not advance. But in 614, the old Assyrian capital of Ashur fell to the Medes. The Babylonian and Median kings met outside the fallen city and formed an alliance of mutual friendship and peace. The treaty was sealed by the marriage of a Median princess to the son of Nabopolassar – Nebuchadnezzar. It may have been to please his Median wife that Nebuchadnezzar built hanging gardens in Babylon.

The Levant, however, was set for a struggle of the giants and Jeremiah observed the armies marching along the coastal plain and heard the trumpet of war:

*My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain!  
Oh, the walls of my heart!  
My heart is beating wildly;  
I cannot keep silent;  
for I hear the sound of the trumpet,  
the alarm of war....  
How long must I see the standard,  
and hear the sound of the trumpet?<sup>213</sup>*

Jeremiah's warnings about the imminence of war were ignored just as his calls to repentance had been:

*I raised up sentinels for you:  
"Listen to the sound of the trumpet!"  
But they said, "We will not listen."<sup>214</sup>*

He warned about allegiances with any foreign power. Egypt was no more to be trusted than Assyria, and both may be the means by which Yahweh would chastise his people for their iniquities. Jeremiah was contemptuous of the way policy in Judah vacillated: -

*How lightly you run around, changing your ways! You shall be put to shame by Egypt just as you were put to shame by Assyria<sup>215</sup>*

### **Nineveh Falls (612)**

In 612, the Chaldean Babylonians and the Medes laid siege to Nineveh and in August the Assyrian capital fell; the emperor committed suicide by burning himself to death and the city was subjected to merciless plunder at the hands of the invading armies. Zephaniah had observed the weakness of Assyria and may have prophesied its end; now he could extend that poem by confirmation of their destruction. He had earlier written that Yahweh *"He will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert. Herds shall lie down in it - every wild animal"*. Now he could add: -

*Is this Nineveh, the exultant city that said of itself  
'I am, and there is none other'?  
What a desolation it has become, a lair for wild animals!  
Everyone who passes by hisses and shakes his fist.<sup>216</sup>*

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<sup>213</sup> Jeremiah 4:19 – 21. This quotation and many that follow here were later incorporated into the 'Book of 604', whose production will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>214</sup> Jeremiah 6:17 In *'my anguish, my anguish'* we hear once more the repeated cry that is so characteristic of Jeremiah/Baruch.

<sup>215</sup> Jeremiah 2: 34 - 36

<sup>216</sup> Zephaniah 2:13-15

Few grieved at Nineveh's demise: some rejoiced.

### **Nahum (612)**

Nahum composed a three-chapter poem rejoicing in Assyria's defeat: it is his only biblical work. A flavour of his venom can be sampled in the extract that follows: -

*I am against you, says Yahweh of armies,  
and will lift up your skirts over your face.  
I will let nations look on your nakedness  
and kingdoms on your shame.  
I will throw filth at you - treat you with contempt  
and make a spectacle of you.  
Then all who see you will shrink from you  
and say, "Nineveh is devastated; who will bemoan her?"  
Where shall I seek comforters for you?  
...  
All who hear the news about you clap their hand,  
for who has ever escaped your endless cruelty<sup>217</sup>*

### **The death of Josiah.**

Psammetichos of Egypt died in 610. He was succeeded by his son, Necho II. In the meantime the Assyrian leadership had formed a government in Exile in Haran, which was now under Babylonian attack. The last act of the old pharaoh may have been to authorise the garrison troops in Phoenicia to assist the Assyrians trapped in Haran. But it was too little and too late. The Assyrians abandoned Haran in the face of the combined Babylonian and Scythian forces. The Age of Assyria was over.

The new Pharaoh sent a strong army north to engage the Babylonians directly with the objective of re-capturing Haran, which the Babylonians had invested following their eviction of the Assyrians. As the Egyptians went north through the Carmel mountains, they were met at Megiddo by a Judean Army under Josiah. Historians can only speculate at Josiah's motives; did he believe that Chaldean Babylon was the future great power with whom it was sensible to form an alliance, or was he simply trying to exercise the national right to prevent foreign armies using his country as a highway? With a more centralized religion in Jerusalem, he, like Hezekiah before him, probably had access to the temple funds he needed to build and equip a reasonable army. Did he believe, as a king in the Davidic line who had done everything the covenant commanded, that Yahweh would protect him whatever he did? Did he truly believe what was written in the Book of the Law?

*If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow...then Yahweh will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you...Your territory will extend from the wilderness to the Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Western Sea. No one will be able to stand against you<sup>218</sup>*

Whatever the reason for his intervention, it did not succeed. Josiah may have delayed Necho, but he did not stop him. The Judean army was defeated and Josiah was killed. When Josiah's body was returned to Jerusalem a revolution broke out which placed one of Josiah's younger sons, Jehoahaz, with anti-Egyptian views, on the throne. The elder son, the pro-Egyptian Eliakim, was bypassed.

Necho pressed on North, crossed the Euphrates and laid siege to Haran. Although the siege was later abandoned, Necho reorganised the territory as far north as Carchemish into an Egyptian dependency. He re-established a substantial garrison in the area, which seems to have been an effective deterrent to the Babylonians since they made no further moves westward for a while. Necho summoned the regional rulers to meet him at his base on the Orontes, but when Jehoahaz arrived he was arrested and deported to Egypt in chains. Necho then reversed the effect of the people's rebellion in Judah, and promoted Eliakim, the older brother, giving him the throne name Jehoiakim and imposing a fine on Judah.

Remarkable changes to the theology and practice of Yahwism had taken place during Josiah's

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<sup>217</sup>Nahum 3: 5-7 & 19b

<sup>218</sup>Deuteronomy 11:22-25. Probably part of the introduction to the *torah*.

reign; local slaughter had been permitted; the Passover revived; a more humanitarian interpretation of laws had been introduced; the importance of ritual and the priest had been reduced and a more personal relationship between a man and his god had been encouraged. These changes would help the religion to survive the difficult years ahead. But the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel suggest that Josiah had not been as successful in eliminating the worship of other gods as the Deuteronomic Historian had hoped.

Once again a King who had attempted a great religious reform had led Judah into opposing a regional super-power: he left his country under the domination of that power.