

ANDREW TOBOLOWSKY

The Sons of Jacob
and the Sons of Herakles

*Forschungen
zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe*

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Mohr Siebeck

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The Sons of Jacob and the Sons of Herakles

The History of the Tribal System
and the Organization of Biblical Identity

Mohr Siebeck

ANDREW TOBOLOWSKY, born 1985; 2015 PhD in Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean; since 2016 Visiting Assistant Professor at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

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Dedication

Many people are to thank for this book, and no one to blame but me. Saul Olyan, Stanley Stowers, and Pura Nieto Hernandez were tremendously helpful in the formation of the ideas found here, and I thank them, particularly and profusely, for their open minds and their dedication to making this project legible. It would also hardly exist without the help of many of my colleagues, whose daily warmth and humor I could not do without, but Kerry Sonia, Zackary Wainer, Daniel Picus, and Willis Monroe deserve special mention. My parents, Paul and Judy, deserve a great deal of thanks always, least because of this book. I have never once doubted your pride in me, and your care is evident every day. My brother and sister, Mark and Deborah, deserve a lot of credit for both listening and understanding over the last many years. Finally, and most, to my wife Robyn: you deserve everything. This book has been part of our lives in many ways for a number of years now; it's wonderful to me that you (and our little dog Pancake) have been, too. You are brilliant, funny, and beautiful, and you make my life brighter and better every day. Thank you for sharing this moment with me, the many leading up to it, and – with grateful anticipation – all the ones to come.

Providence, RI, 2017

Andrew Tobolowsky

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Introduction

Genealogical Myth and Biblical History

How should we understand biblical descriptions of the tribes of Israel, and what relationship do these descriptions have to a historical tribal system? Forty years ago, the answers to these questions seemed obvious. At that time, scholarly orientations to what biblical traditions about early Israel literally *were*, and what they were thought to *represent* created a very favorable environment for confident, positivist reconstructions of a tribal era. In short, according to the Traditional Documentary Hypothesis, the interwoven sources of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers were usually supposed to *be* (primarily) three distinct reflections – or, sometimes, two reflections and one editorial arrangement – of a single, early narrative: the defining epic of early Israel. And, this epic was typically supposed to *represent* coded memories, however distorted, of even earlier periods. The lives of the patriarchs were thought to have some correlation with an earlier, migratory past, for example, and the account of the exodus with some form of actual escape from Egypt, gradual or otherwise. And so on.

The biblical account of the tribes of Israel was not only viewed in the same light but actually had a rather special status. For many traditional documentarians, the tribal era was presumed to be the setting in which the narrative informing the sources first coalesced. Indeed, the oral version of that epic was often imagined, in a sense, to be both product and producer of this age: it came out of the combination of regional, tribal myths, and when completed, served as the charter myth for a hypothetical tribal league. As a result, it was not only the case that the basic historicity of what tribal discourse described seemed clear, but that the assumption of that historicity played a foundational role in how scholars thought about the history of biblical traditions and the composition of biblical literature quite generally.

We no longer live in the scholarly world that produced these confident reconstructions, but instead in one of pronounced uncertainty and – in my opinion – quite justified skepticism.¹ We still acknowledge that some traditions about early Israel may contain what are usually referred to as “kernels of truth,” but we are also considerably more aware of the limits of this acknowledgement. We are those who, in Daniel Pioske’s words, “must decide whether certain

¹ For an excellent account of how approaches to the Bible as history have changed over the last forty years, see Moore and Kelle 2011.

biblical references, if connected to the discourse of memory, merit historical consideration for those periods to which these texts refer.”² For that role, the admission that biblical authors *could* create traditions about early Israel that were in no way based on history that look, in every other respect, like those that are is more important than is sometimes realized because it fundamentally calls into question the ability of scholars to tell the difference. Meanwhile, the recognition that those who inherit traditions are often primarily concerned with repurposing them to contemporary ends, rather than preserving them, forces us to ask how well the realities of earlier periods are represented even in texts that originated from them. If later Judahite authors and editors had more freedom to choose what Israelite traditions to include than is sometimes supposed, a given Israelite narrative might be early without describing a normative Israelite experience.

Indeed, as we will see, contemporary scholarship has already undermined many of the reasons to accept the supposition that tribal discourse is primarily defined by its relationship with a historical tribal period. And yet, both this assumption and another equally crucial one – that all authors of biblical tribal discourse understood the tribes in essentially the same way – persist even in a great many otherwise skeptical treatments. The first half of this study will primarily be aimed at calling into question what are, even today, often treated as two bedrock assumptions about tribal discourse: first, that the tribes were understood to number twelve from very early periods, and second, that the authors of most tribal lists understood the tribes to have descended from eponymous ancestors who were the biological sons of Jacob. That these assumptions have persisted even as many of the reasons to accept them have faded owes to the lens through which tribal discourse as a whole has generally been viewed.

A. Biblical Genealogies, Oral Genealogies, Greek Genealogies

For all intents and purposes, the creation of this lens was the work of Robert Wilson although it naturally emerged from decades of previous scholarship. Actually, as Wilson notes, scholars had begun to doubt the utility of tribal lists and genealogies as historical data in the late nineteenth century, but the “amazing accuracy with which some Arab groups memorize and transmit oral material,” observed by William Foxwell Albright, seemed to offer a way back in, particularly given the scholarly orientation to the relationship between the Pentateuch and oral traditions at the time.³ Wilson’s extremely influential 1977 monograph on biblical genealogy, as well as two other articles published in the same period, drew heavily on anthropological studies of African and Arab oral

² Pioske 2015, 297.

³ R. R. Wilson 1975, 170–71.

cultures and on what he considered to be evidence – at the time, recently discovered – of an apparent “Amorite custom of using genealogies for political and social purposes.”⁴ This latter discussion was particularly based on the 1954 publication of two Assyrian king lists by Ignace J. Gelb and the 1966 publication of a royal genealogy of the Hammurappi dynasty by J. J. Finkelstein.⁵ Wilson argued specifically that “the patriarchal genealogies in the Pentateuch” were “manifestations” of this Amorite custom, providing support for their use as history, at least of a sort.⁶

The combination of these observations led Wilson to his conclusion: since biblical tribal lists were supposed to be literary lists that relied on oral lore, their reliability seemed assured by both comparisons. As he put it:

Although we have seen no anthropological evidence indicating that genealogies are created for the purpose of making a historical record, genealogies may nevertheless be considered historically accurate in the sense that they frequently express actual domestic, political relationships.⁷

Of course, not all of those who assume that tribal discourse is to be treated first and foremost as expressive of the tribal age, literally or otherwise, have Wilson’s reasoning explicitly in their minds – although Claus Westermann, whose Genesis commentaries have proven so influential, certainly did.⁸ Nevertheless, most attempts to connect biblical tribal lists to a historical tribal age even today make similar arguments from similar comparative data. The problem is, as John Van Seters noted already in 1992, that it is precisely the comparisons that are flawed.⁹

The most obvious issue is structural: by far the majority of Near Eastern and Levantine genealogies are what are called “linear” genealogies, that is, lists of descent from father to son. As Wilson noted:

Most of the genealogies in Mesopotamian texts are found in royal inscriptions. As early as 2500 B.C.E., some of the Sumerian kings gave their genealogies along with their royal titles, and this practice was continued, particularly by the Assyrian kings, until the Persian period

⁴ R. R. Wilson 1975, 1977, 197. For the discussion of this Amorite custom, see R. R. Wilson 1975, 174–75.

⁵ See Gelb 1954; J. J. Finkelstein 1966. Wilson also mentions the earlier study of Marshall D. Johnson who emphasized the various sociological purposes biblical genealogies may serve (Johnson 1969).

⁶ R. R. Wilson 1975, 175.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁸ For example, Westermann 1986, 158–59). See generally Westermann 1984, 1985, 1986.

⁹ Van Seters expressly criticized Wilson, and those who have followed Wilson, for this issue of comparative data in his study of the book of Genesis as a “prologue to history” (Van Seters 1992, 199–206).

(538–331 B.C.E.). The inscriptional genealogies are all linear and usually contain no more than three names, although they occasionally record as many as eight generations.¹⁰

He also notes that Phoenician genealogies with a “depth” – number of generations – greater than three only appear after the Persian period; that Aramaic genealogies are generally linear with little depth; and that Near Eastern genealogies “do not seem to have been created specifically for the purpose of writing history” but instead are aimed at legitimating the claimants of hereditary monarchies and priesthoods – which seems to be the primary purpose of linear genealogies.¹¹

By contrast, the story of the sons of Jacob and other genealogies in Genesis and in the books of Chronicles, the two epicenters of descriptions of the tribes as genealogical entities, represent what are called “segmented” genealogies, that is, genealogies that follow multiple lines of descent, forming a kind of textual family tree. As Van Seters points out specifically about Wilson’s treatment:

On the one hand his Near Eastern linear genealogies, which derive from highly structured literate societies, bear very little resemblance to the segmented genealogies found in the book of Genesis. On the other hand, his discussion of the segmented genealogies and their comparison with Genesis is based upon anthropological studies of oral traditions in illiterate societies and this has created an artificial social and form-critical dichotomy.¹²

Abraham Malamat, who generally embraces Wilson’s formulation, nevertheless adds:

Biblical genealogies represent a unique historical genre within the literature of the ancient Near East. I have here in mind not the so-called vertical lines of individuals such as the royal or priestly pedigree, which are common anywhere, but rather the ethnographical tables contained in the Book of Genesis... even more so... the ramified and wide-spread genealogies of the various Israelite tribes, assembled in the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles. All these have no equal anywhere else in the ancient Near East.¹³

As a result, as Van Seters pointed out and others have since confirmed, the better comparison with biblical genealogical discourse, especially as it is found in the book of Genesis, is neither the traditions of preliterate cultures nor linear king lists but the complex, literary genealogies that were particularly popular in the world of Greek myth.¹⁴ As Gary Knoppers has more recently put it, referring to the long tribal genealogy that begins the books of Chronicles, “the ancient Near Eastern parallels adduced to the lineages in Chronicles are not directly germane, because these comprise individual lists (or genealogies) and

¹⁰ R. R. Wilson 1979, 13.

¹¹ R. R. Wilson 1977, 114–24, 132.

¹² Van Seters 1992, 197–98.

¹³ Malamat 2001, 42.

¹⁴ See also Knoppers 2003, 2004, Darshan 2013, 2014a, 2014b.

do not represent large collections of multilinear and linear genealogies.”¹⁵ Instead, the “closest counterparts” to both what I will call the “Chronicles genealogy” and the bulk of tribal discourse in the book of Genesis “may be found in the works of the Greek genealogists.”¹⁶

There will be much more to say about biblical genealogical myth and Greek genealogical myth throughout this study, but it is my aim to plumb the utility of this comparison to a larger extent than has previously been done. Since it is also my aim to argue that not all tribal lists are animated by the same imagination of the tribes, and in fact what I will call tribal-genealogical lists – lists that make explicit an understanding of the genealogical relationship between the eponymous tribal ancestors and Jacob – are in the significant minority, this comparison will have its greatest efficacy for only a handful of tribal lists. In that sense, the new history of tribal Israel I will propose and the description of the contents and utility of what I will call the “tribal-genealogical layer” are really two separate investigations, united by what the latter has done to the perception of the former. Fundamentally, though, what we are interested in here is the ability of the tribal-genealogical concept to do in biblical literature what complex genealogical narratives demonstrably did in Greek myth, that is, organize diverse traditions into a semblance of coherency and into an internally consistent ethnic narrative. To that end, what is most important is that the utility of the comparison with Greek genealogical myth goes well beyond form, and resides primarily in what it says about the paradigm we should use in understanding biblical tribal discourse generally.

In short, while Babylonian king lists and oral genealogies suggest the capacity of lists to preserve data, the history of Greek myth genealogies suggests the opposite: the continued interest of literary actors, well after the periods genealogies describe, in manipulating them to serve contemporary ends and describe contemporary situations. In this light, biblical descriptions of the tribes may primarily reveal what was *wanted* from the tribal past at the time it was repeated much more so than the history of the period it seems to encode. Indeed, this is suggested by the pattern of appearances of tribal lists in biblical literature generally which are much more common in material attributed to the Priestly author or to the author or authors of Chronicles than in material considered to be early. It can at once be the case that there was an early Israelite tribal system and that references to it in biblical literature occur primarily for its use in furthering the political and social intentions of later historians. Indeed, I will argue that this is precisely what happened.

Additionally, in furthering the particular goals of this study, comparisons with Greek myth are useful because they seem to offer direct analogues to the

¹⁵ Knoppers 2003, 632–33.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

activity I am claiming occurred in the history of tribal traditions. The possibility, for example, that a figure like Jacob only became the tribal ancestor at a rather late date, despite the existence of early traditions about him in other contexts, gains plausibility from the fact that just this seems to have happened in the development of Greek myth. Hellen, the *Urvater* of the Greek *ethnos*, both clearly exists in early Greek myth and *appears* in later narrative to be the direct ancestor of several important sub-ethnic groups including the Aioliens, Dorians, Ionians, and Akhaians.¹⁷ However, as Jonathan M. Hall notes:

In making the eponymous Aiolos, Doros, Ion, and Akhaios sons and grandsons of the Hellenic *Urvater*, Hellen, the “Hellenic Genealogy” sought to project the view that a single, undifferentiated population of Hellenes had existed prior to a series of subdivisions that resulted in the principal ethnic groups of the historical period. In reality... the opposite was the case... the Dorians, Ionians, Aioliens and Akhaians are actually attested prior to any unitary subscription to a common Hellenic consciousness.¹⁸

Just so, Jacob appears in the book of Hosea (Hosea 10:11, 12:3, 12:13) and other early material, but in most cases – with the dramatic potential exception of Genesis 49, dealt with in the first chapter – with no reason to suppose that he was already understood as the father of the tribes or even to have had a particular connection with them at that time.

Indeed, one of the striking features of the analysis below is likely to be the fact that the new history of the tribal system I will offer relies primarily on widely acknowledged and highly visible textual realities. While the “Blessing of Jacob” in Genesis 49 and the tribal birth narratives in Genesis 29–30 and 35 have often been understood as early descriptions of tribal Israel in “tribal-genealogical” terms, two of the three tribal lists often supposed to be the earliest, Judges 5 and Deuteronomy 33, contain fewer than twelve tribes and do not describe Jacob as the tribal ancestor. As noted above, most tribal lists are already understood to have appeared relatively late in the history of biblical traditions and as Wilson himself observed with some surprise, only a very few tribal lists or narrative descriptions are actually what he called “explicitly genealogical,” that is, tribal-genealogical, describing Jacob as the tribal ancestor and the tribes as Jacob’s sons.¹⁹ Indeed, for Wilson, this happened only three times in the Primary History and once in the books of Chronicles: in the tribal birth narratives spanning Genesis 29:31–30:24 and 35:16–20; in two lists in Genesis 35:22–26 and Genesis 46:8–27 respectively; and in 1 Chronicles 2:1–2.²⁰ He dismissed the importance of this observation because of his assumption

¹⁷ Hall 1997, 48.

¹⁸ Hall 2002, 56.

¹⁹ “In view of the important role that the twelve-tribe ideal played in Israelite tradition, it is striking that the twelve tribes are related in explicitly genealogical terms in only four passages” (R. R. Wilson 1977, 183–84).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

of the crucial role “the twelve-tribe ideal played in Israelite tradition.”²¹ Since I am arguing explicitly that the twelve tribe ideal played no such role, the paucity he identified clearly lends itself to the thesis offered below. I will add a few additional references to Wilson’s list, but it will still amount to a rather insignificant discourse in terms of textual extent.

Indeed, this possibility as well – that understandings of the origins of tribal entities might change over time – seems to be evidenced in Greek mythological literature. As Jeremy McInerney notes, the nature of the relationships between tribes in tribal systems in Greek myth were often redefined in just this way, undergoing “Protean changes before our eyes, appearing one minute as descent-based tribes and another as a regional federation, or *koinon*,” and are “rarely as neatly bound as was once imagined.”²² In other words, if biblical tribal lists differ from each other in terms of number and type it may well be because different authors *imagined* them differently. And if very few texts clearly describe the tribes as the sons of Jacob in a clear, biological sense it may be precisely because very few authors understood them this way.

What I will argue for explicitly is the existence of a two-phase process of literary development. In the first, a discarded northern relic – a potentially historical tribal system that included fewer than twelve tribes and did not include Jacob, *a la* Judges 5 – was adopted by Priestly authors in the late Pre-Exilic period (at the earliest) and was transformed, at that point, into a twelve tribe list for the first time. In the second phase, which did not take place until the late Persian period, the tribes were “genealogized,” that is, reconceptualized as eponymous ancestors and given an explicit genealogical relationship with the patriarch Jacob. Because I will describe both the twelve-tribe system and the even later tribal-genealogical concept as southern innovations after the fall of Israel, it is inevitable that we will come into contact with a set of questions relating to how well biblical literature preserves, or does not preserve, the heritage of Israel as *opposed* to Judah, a historically separate kingdom since at least the beginning of the 10th century B.C.E, and the place where most phases of biblical construction are acknowledged to have occurred.

Towards that end, I will also take advantage of an increasingly considerable amount of scholarly attention paid to the possibility that Judahites in fact never imagined themselves to be ethnically Israelite prior to the fall of the north in 722 B.C.E – which would, for example, explain why Judges 5 fails to mention Judah, Simeon, or Levi. In this light, the invention of a twelve tribe system would be just one of many efforts to develop mechanisms for incorporating Israelite traditions with Judahite ones after Israel no longer existed. And, it would be the case, as in the Greek examples above, that in doing so biblical

²¹ Ibid.

²² McInerney 2001, 55.

authors would have been trying to retroject the appearance of a “single, undifferentiated population” of Israelites possessed of a “unitary subscription to a common... (ethnic) consciousness” onto a period in which Israel and Judah actually existed as separate entities both politically and ethnically.²³

The major object of this study is therefore to understand the development of the “tribal-genealogical layer” in terms of three different histories. First, we must understand it as part of the historical development of tribal concepts; second, in the history of Israelite and Judahite ethnic concepts more generally; and finally, in terms of the effect its imposition had on the ultimate creation of what is sometimes called the Primary History, the largely continuous account of the history of Israel from Adam to the fall of Jerusalem – and a little beyond – spanning Genesis-2 Kings. I will argue that this layer includes the “explicitly genealogical” texts Wilson noted in his study – Genesis 29:31–30:24, 35:16–20; Genesis 35:22–26; Genesis 46:8–27 – as well as a handful of others: the blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49; additional lists in Exodus 1:1–6, Exodus 6:14–27, and Numbers 26:5–62; and a redactional reference to “Reuben, the first-born of Jacob” in Numbers 1:20. I will also argue that this layer then served as the inspiration for just a few even later texts, notably the Joseph Novella in Genesis 37–45; a reference to the tribal-genealogical idea in an episode in which Elijah builds an altar of twelve stones in 1 Kings 18:31; and potentially a third reference in Joshua 24. These, however, constitute the entirety of tribal-genealogical discourse in biblical literature and it remains the case that the vast majority of tribal lists – of which I will argue that there are twenty-six – lie outside this collection.

As for the effects of the imposition of this layer, it is already the case that scholars are to a certain degree aware of the role played by Jacob and the tribes in making diverse biblical traditions coherent with each other. As Robert Oden observed over thirty years ago, “*externally* Israel is the particular line descended solely from Abraham and from Isaac but *internally* the Israelites are the various descendants of the various sons of Jacob.”²⁴ However, the range of existing treatments assume either that some version of the story of Jacob and his sons is early and northern in origin, or for those few who, like Nadav Na’aman, embrace the possibility that the biblical Jacob story (and the patriarchal narratives generally) is a “Judahite exilic composition,” that the two sets of traditions were nevertheless both “integral parts” of the “original” story.²⁵

²³ Hall 2002, 56.

²⁴ Oden Jr. 1983, 101.

²⁵ Na’aman 2014b, 99, 109. He adds: “This study argues that the Jacob story-cycle was composed as part of a comprehensive work that included the three cycles of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The latter is depicted in the cycle as a chain in the lineage of the three Patriarchs – the father of the 12 tribes that became a symbol of the unity of the ‘New Israel’” (Ibid., 114). For other scholarly treatments of the central role of the Jacob narrative in the formation of biblical literature, see additionally De Pury 1991, 2006; Blum 2012.

So, for example, Michael Satlow argues that “the myth of the ‘children of Israel’ served a necessary strategic function. It created a collective imagined community... [a]t the same time, it acknowledged differences between the tribes, each of which could, under the myth, have its own distinctive customs,” but also that the narrative of Jacob and his sons originally derived from a “core narrative” developed in Israel in the ninth or eighth centuries B.C.E.²⁶ For Daniel Fleming, whose investigations will inform numerous parts of this study, the twelve tribe model of the sons of Jacob is southern in origin, but built on an at least eight tribe model of the same narrative concept inherited from the north.²⁷ Israel Finkelstein argues that the “fall of one Israel opened the way for the rise of another Israel – the children of Israel – composed of twelve tribes, encompassing the territory ruled by the two Hebrew kingdoms,” but generally focuses his analysis of the authorizing narrative of this new Israel on the traditions concerning David and Saul instead.²⁸

In this study, by describing the development of the twelve tribe concept and of the tribal-genealogical layer as separate phases in the history of biblical ideas, and by describing the latter as a late Persian period development, I am making all the effects of the concept of shared descent from Jacob across the Primary History late Persian period in origin. Among these, we have to consider how much the narrative understanding of the relationship between Moses the Levite and David the Judahite, to choose one high-profile example, depends upon not just the tribal idea but the tribal-genealogical one. In this case, the genealogization of the tribal system would have occurred, as it occurred in Greek myth, to create a framework for the organization of what still likely were, even in that late period, largely independent blocks of narrative tradition and to thereby impart to them both internal cohesiveness and an enduring ability to be rearranged to meet the needs of an evolving present.

In fact, the best evidence we have for when the arc of the narrative spanning Genesis to 2 Kings was finally complete comes from the nine-chapters-long genealogy that begins the books of Chronicles, henceforth called the Chronicles genealogy, which is also the prototypical expression of biblical history in tribal-genealogical terms. This genealogy is notable because it has essentially the same parameters as the Primary History and treats no other collection – Tetrateuch, Pentateuch, or Hexateuch – with any special reverence. What I will argue is that on the macro level of the Primary History as on the micro level of the Chronicles genealogy, the tribal-genealogical framework was intentionally developed, as Greek genealogical frameworks were often developed, in order to organize existing traditions in a new way: in a sense, as a key to the narrative map of the rest of biblical history. What its successful imposition has most

²⁶ Satlow 2014, 19–20.

²⁷ Fleming 2012, 5, 80.

²⁸ I. Finkelstein 2013, 153.

obscured is the fact that the map once depicted a very different, and considerably less well connected, narrative world.

This book is therefore intended as a contribution both to the study of tribal discourse in biblical literature and to the emerging study of what is sometimes called Panisraeliteism: the redefinition of the Judahite past in Israelite terms. This possibility, too, has an analogy in ancient Greek history in which it is increasingly clear that Panhellenism was built in a similar fashion. That is, what would eventually come to be understood as the “sub-ethnicities” mentioned above – Ionian, Dorian, and so on – indeed originated as rather more independent ethnic entities.²⁹ David Konstan, for example, has argued that full-blown “Panhellenism” is, to an extent, “undoubtedly a consequence of the [early 5th century B.C.E.] Persian invasion,”³⁰ and as Irad Malkin has recently put it:

The easy-to-grasp dichotomy between self and others, Greek and barbarian... becomes quite misleading when applied to the Archaic period. It belongs more properly to the fifth century... By contrast, in the Archaic period we will find no Greeks in the sense of self contrasted with non-Greek as absolute others.³¹

As we will see, the organization of sub-ethnic groups together within the rubric of an overarching segmented genealogy likely played a key role in the development of ethnic understandings in both regions.

Although not all scholars who have embraced the late origins of Israelite identity in Judah have used the term “Panisraeliteism,” it is of obvious utility in a comparative study of this nature. In this historical reconstruction, unlike in the Greek world, Judahites never actually shared their Panisraelite vision with the historical inhabitants of the kingdom of Israel. Israel itself was, in a sense, “Panisraelite” from the beginning, and by the time Judahites co-opted this identity, Israel was gone. Nevertheless, what I am arguing is that the tribal-genealogical understanding was not merely a product of this emerging ideology but a major mechanism through which it was – quite consciously – given its final, biblical form. So, we will see, was often the case in Greek ethnic myths as well.

Indeed, the centerpieces of the second half of this study will be two direct and extended comparisons with specific myth phenomena from the Greek world. The first, a comparison between the Chronicles genealogy and the most important Greek genealogical account of the ethnic past, the so-called *Catalogue of Women*, will help us to understand how genealogists build relationships between previously unrelated, or less related, narrative traditions and

²⁹ Among the many works on the construction of Greek identity which inform the present study, it is worth singling out Hall 1997, 2002, Malkin 1994, 1998, 2011; Konstan 2001; McInerney 2001; Cole 2004; Finkelberg 2005; Koiv 2003; Lyons 1997; Lopez-Ruiz 2010.

³⁰ Konstan 2001, 33.

³¹ Malkin 1998, 18.

what that is capable of doing to how audiences come to understand those traditions. The second, the titular comparison of the study, will be with the narrative complex collectively referred to as the *Return of the Herakleidai*. This account describes the conquest of the Peloponnese (and sometimes other regions) by the sons of Herakles and the apportionment of the conquered territory between them in a way reminiscent of the Joshua conquest account. Comparison with it will reveal how a framework created by the concept of shared descent operates in an ongoing fashion across like and unlike materials in diverse ways and in diverse contexts without having to significantly alter those materials internally. What this will particularly help us see is how such a seemingly limited textual discourse as the tribal-genealogical layer could have achieved as much as I will claim it has. The seeming universality of one basic imagination of tribal Israel in biblical literature, at least after Judges 5, is the result of a dedicated effort to give this impression through the strategic introduction of tribal-genealogical texts. As we will see, references to the tribal-genealogical idea are generally placed in the Primary History where they would achieve this end most effectively.

That demonstration, however, must wait for a later discussion. Since the bulk of this study will explore the history, ramifications, and uses of the tribal-genealogical concept, the remainder of this introduction will instead explore the plausibility of the Panisraelite theory of biblical ethnicity itself. First, I will present the archaeological and epigraphic reasons to suppose it may be correct, then survey existing proposals for its history, and finally present my own reconstruction of the development of Panisraelitism and the plan of this study. What the two threads of this introduction will ultimately reveal is one last aspect of the tribal-genealogical concept and its role in biblical literature. To date, most studies of the development of Panisraelite ethnic concepts have focused on its origins and the earliest narrative attempts to justify it. This early Panisraelitism, however, is no more related to the final and highly specific biblical understanding of Judah's relationship with Israel than Panhellenism is, generally, to any single Greek effort to map and describe it. Instead, as we will see, biblical Panisraelitism, which emerges from the combination of the traditions that now constitute the biblical account of history rather than any one of these alone, is in some ways primarily a product of the imposition of the tribal-genealogical framework. As a late and comprehensive effort to express the relationships between the major figures of biblical literature, the tribal-genealogical concept stamped biblical history, indelibly, with the particular understanding of the Panisraelite past that it has had ever since.

B. The State of the Evidence: Israel and Judah in Early Epigraphy and Archaeology

The “Panisraelite” question is whether the historical kingdoms of Israel and Judah ever considered themselves to be ethnically unified in the period of their historical co-existence, or whether there is reason to suppose that both derived from a pre-existing unified ethnic group. It is therefore reasonable to begin this section by observing how difficult it is, in the present circumstances, to establish the relevance of the pre-monarchical period for later ethnic articulations altogether.³² While some have continued to defend the possibility of continuity between this difficult-to-reconstruct period and later Israel and Judah, most scholars seem to have accepted the likelihood that the diverse processes clearly at work in this period and the relationship ethnic formulations seem to have with political organizations put it out of reach.³³ In the words of James C. Miller:

Any attempt to speak of ‘pre-monarchic Israel’ involves one in a host of controversial issues... Most scholars working specifically on Israelite ethnicity in the pre-monarchic period regard the biblical narratives portraying this era as late and historically unreliable... Although most of these same scholars believe these... may contain memories of genuine historical events... the historical realities that may lie behind these narratives are believed to be simply too difficult to reconstruct with any confidence.³⁴

Daniel Fleming adds that “[t]he entire discussion of ethnicity for the southern Levant before the ninth century is fraught with assumptions about identity that the evidence cannot sustain... in the early Iron Age, the region was indeed inhabited by a ‘motley crew,’ but this was not simply the raw material for eventual Israelite ethnicity.”³⁵ It has also long been clear that many of the markers once supposed to be particularly characteristic of the early Israelites, including

³² For two insightful recent surveys of issues in the study of the Bible and ethnicity, see K. L. Sparks 1998; J. C. Miller 2008. For discussions of the issues in the early archaeology of Israel and ethnicity, with differing results, see Bloch-Smith 2003; I. Finkelstein 1996; Killebrew 2005.

³³ Avraham Faust’s recent study of archaeology and ethnicity in this period is a counter-example to this trend (Faust 2006). Certain aspects of it are discussed below.

³⁴ J. C. Miller 2008, 176.

³⁵ “It is almost certain that far more names were involved than just ‘Israel’ for the twelfth to tenth centuries... and that we have no idea what these were” (Fleming 2012, 254). This point of view is echoed by Amihai Mazar, who notes that what we have here is really two separate questions: whether it is possible to assume “that the various groups who settled the hill country during the Iron Age I identified themselves as Israelites” and whether “we, as modern scholars” can identify them as Israelites (A. Mazar 2007, 91). Kenton Sparks adds: “We must remember that the problem is not limited to the nature of ‘Israel’ and how its ethnic boundaries were defined but with ‘Israelites’ (and ‘Judaicans’) and how their various definitions of ethnic identity played out on the stage of history” (K. L. Sparks 1998, 11).

the four-room house and the collared rim jar, can be found in areas not associated with the Israelites.³⁶

It should be pointed out that the Panisraelite frame exacerbates many of these evidence issues by marking the widely-acknowledged differences between developments north and south in this period with a new significance. In his 1990 survey, for example, Amihai Mazar pointed out that while at least 200 Iron I sites had been discovered in the areas conventionally referred to as Manasseh and Ephraim, only one Iron I foundation had been found in the region of Jerusalem, at Giloh, to the south.³⁷ Ofer's survey of the Judean hills suggested no more than 18 Iron I settlements in the entire region.³⁸ Israel Finkelstein paints the picture even more starkly:

Archaeological surveys have revealed that at that time [the Iron I] the hill country of Judah to the south of Jerusalem was sparsely inhabited by only a few relatively small settlements. No less important, it seems that the expansion of Judah to the territories of the Shephelah and Beersheba Valley did not take place before the second half of the ninth century B.C.E.³⁹ Indeed, this is the moment when one can detect the first signs of statehood in Judah.⁴⁰

Although this does not by itself demonstrate that the two kingdoms developed from essentially separate population groups, it is certainly what we would expect to find if that were the case.

It is this sensitivity to the inchoate nature of the period that must be brought to the study of the earliest epigraphic find with clear relevance to early Israel, the well-known Merneptah stele. This Egyptian triumphal inscription from probably the very end of the thirteenth century B.C.E. mentions a people Israel apparently already in Canaan and has therefore been ascribed considerable importance in establishing the ethnic realities of the Pre-Monarchical period. Avraham Faust, for example, has quite recently argued that Merneptah's Israel should be identified "with some or even all of the new villagers that settled in the highlands during the thirteenth century B.C.E., and... many of the traits that were used by Israelites in later periods became meaningful at the time."⁴¹ Indeed, he suggests that this "Israel" likely was "extremely dominant" in the processes that produced historical Israel.

³⁶ Ibrahim 1975, 1978.

³⁷ A. Mazar 1990, 335–36.

³⁸ Ofer 1994, 102. The methodology of Ofer's survey has been criticized by Lehmann and Herzog and Singer-Avitz, but for suggesting too much settlement, rather than too little: both conclude that the area of Judah was quite sparsely settled in the Iron I, much less so than the north (Lehmann 2003; Herzog and Singer-Avitz 2004, 220).

³⁹ I. Finkelstein and Fantalkin 2006; Fantalkin 2008.

⁴⁰ Finkelstein 2013, 43. Fleming additionally notes, citing Finkelstein and Killebrew, that "archaeology indicates that the southern highlands remained relatively empty of settlement through the Iron Age I, while regions farther north began to grow in population (I. Finkelstein 1988, 336; Killebrew 2005, 165)" (Fleming 2012, 55).

⁴¹ Faust 2006, 168.

Yet this is precisely what is in question. Nadav Na'aman has drawn attention to instances in the Ancient Near East in which isolated references to peoples appear “which became well defined only at a much later time.”⁴² Since this is a comparative study we can note that precisely this happened to the “Graikoi” and “Hellenes,” the former of which were, in the Archaic period, “a negligible Boiotian group of hangers-on,” and the latter a small group from either Thessaly, according to Thoukydides, or from around Dodona, according to Aristotle and possibly Hesiod.⁴³ It may well be that the situation is different for this Israel than for the Greeks and Arameans described here, but it can hardly be assumed. Moreover, taking the Panisraelite frame as our starting point, it may be that this “Israel” refers to a proto-Israel *only* – and not proto-Judah. This is part and parcel with the issue of discussing ethnicity in the Pre-Monarchical period, and it is likely to prove insuperable as a problem.

It is therefore the case that the United Monarchy is the only vector for the origins of an early Panisraeliteism whose historicity and relevance might plausibly be demonstrated, and as far as the epigraphic canon is concerned, it is greatly unfortunate that there are at present no inscriptions that mention either Israel or Judah (or the House of David) during the United Monarchy itself. In fact, there are no inscriptions that mention either between the Merneptah stele and the ninth century B.C.E.⁴⁴ The next important inscription, chronologically, is the Shoshenq inscription, found at Karnak, which describes the raid of the Pharaoh Sheshonq in the tenth century B.C.E. Its importance does not come from any references it preserves but rather because it seems to corroborate some aspects of the biblical account in 1 Kings 14 and 1 Chronicles 2, which describes the invasion of a Pharaoh “Shishak” in the fifth year of Rehoboam. It is therefore, in Yigal Levin’s words, “the earliest event in biblical history for which we have a contemporaneous reference in an extrabiblical source.”⁴⁵ If the biblical account is reliable for the latter part of the tenth century, it becomes more reasonable to suppose it might be reliable for the earlier tenth century as well.

The issue in this case is that the inscription, which lists the places conquered and subdued by Pharaoh, fails to mention not only Jerusalem but the entire

⁴² “Thus the name Aram appears in various late third and second millennium sources... However, the history of the Arameans begins with the earliest ascertained reference to them in a concrete historical context, namely the annals of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076)” (Na’aman 1994b, 249).

⁴³ Malkin 1998, 144–49. As he notes, “somehow –and we shall never know how – the terms ‘Hellenes’ and ‘Hellas’ caught on” (Ibid., 149).

⁴⁴ Na’aman 2009a, 211. As Daniel Fleming puts it “a handful of nonbiblical texts present two kingdoms that are first visible in the mid-ninth century... From these texts and the findings of archaeology alone, it is not clear how the two kingdoms were related” (Fleming 2012, xii).

⁴⁵ Y. Levin 2012a.

Judean highlands.⁴⁶ The range of responses to this situation is extraordinary, with some arguing that it largely proves that there was no United Monarchy;⁴⁷ some that it proves there *was* one since the biblical account claims Rehoboam was able to successfully bribe the Pharaoh;⁴⁸ and some suggesting that it is plausible that Sheshonq's real aim was undermining Judahite expansion, not its power base.⁴⁹ Another proposal deserving of consideration appears in a monograph written by Kevin A. Wilson, one of the few studies of the inscription of such length. He surveys the topographical list genre and triumphal reliefs generally in order to argue that these were "probably not intended to provide historical information about the campaigns of the king" but instead "to depict the Pharaoh as victorious over the whole world."⁵⁰ Aspects of his study are important and compelling; however, it also has major issues. First, it does not solve the problem he acknowledges, which is that this "world" still cannot be said to have included Jerusalem or its environs.⁵¹ Second, while it may well be that his (important) observations about the historical unreliability of inscriptions like Sheshonq's leave the biblical text "the primary sources for the historical reconstructions of the expedition," this does not mean that it is itself reliable.⁵²

In my opinion, those who claim this inscription is best understood as evidence against the United Monarchy, and therefore evidence against early Panisraelitism, have the better case. The combination of the complete absence of references to the regions with which an early southern kingdom has been associated and the fact that the only evidence for the invasion itself comes from Megiddo still make it most reasonable to conclude that the biblical account is inaccurate. We can consider, as a typical example of defenses of its utility, the

⁴⁶ I. Finkelstein 2013, 43. As he notes, elsewhere: "Not a single site in the heartland of Judah – in the Shephelah or the hill country – is mentioned in the list, first and foremost not Jerusalem" (I. Finkelstein 2011, 353).

⁴⁷ I. Finkelstein 2002; Thompson 1992, 306; Davies 2004, 42–73; Gelinis 1995, 230–33. See also the survey of existing scholarship in K. A. Wilson 2005, 2–13.

⁴⁸ See, generally, the discussion in Knoppers 1997 for a survey of scholars who have advanced this position. See also the earlier treatments of B. Mazar 1957, 61; Aharoni 1979; Kitchen 1986, 298; Ahlström 1993a, 15. Kitchen has suggested that Rehoboam might have submitted to Shoshonq at one of the Israelite sites mentioned in the inscription (Kitchen 1986, 298).

⁴⁹ Blakely 2002; Halpern 2001, 462.

⁵⁰ K. A. Wilson 2005, 46–47.

⁵¹ "None... explain the almost complete absence of toponyms covering the area of Judah, even though 1 Kings 14:25–28 mentions this area as the primary focus of the attack" (Ibid., 14).

⁵² "These texts suggest that the attack occurred in the fifth year of Rehoboam (c. 926 BCE) and are focused primarily on Jerusalem. Jerusalem itself does not seem to have been destroyed or even necessarily besieged, as it is likely that Rehoboam used the treasuries of the temple and palace in order to placate Shoshonq and thereby save the city" (Ibid., 97).

argument of the archaeologist Amihai Mazar who suggests that “[t]he fact that Jerusalem is not mentioned in the inscription does not mean much – if the city surrendered, perhaps there would have been no reason to mention it; or alternatively, its mention could have appeared in one of the broken parts of the inscription.”⁵³ Yet it does not seem plausible that the Pharaoh would fail to mention Jerusalem because it had surrendered and paid tribute. We can consider, in this respect, the boast of Sennacherib, to have shut Hezekiah up like a bird in a cage although he did not take the city either. The *genre* is boastful.

Moreover, it seems as if the organizational system of the inscription is largely clear, and that the portion that should have mentioned Jerusalem is intact.⁵⁴ As Mahri Leonard-Fleckman notes, in a study worth discussing at greater length very shortly, “[i]t is highly unlikely that Jerusalem is part of the damaged portion of the list, as the names clustered directly north of Jerusalem are well preserved in the second row of the first section, and there is no sign of any other Judahite name on the list.”⁵⁵ As we will see, and as Leonard-Fleckman herself argues, the inscription may well offer us a picture of the geography of the northern and southern regions at a very early period, but it is not one which *supports* a United Monarchy. Instead, if the Pharaoh were traveling in the region and did not encounter Judah, as seems to be the case, it is likely because Judah was not there. According to Leonard-Fleckman, a much smaller Judah forced Pharaoh north, above its borders.⁵⁶

For the ninth century, the major inscriptions are the well-known Tel Dan and Mesha steles.⁵⁷ Again, what these mean for Panisraeliteism is to a certain degree ambiguous. On the one hand, at least the Tel Dan stele clearly mentions both Israel and the “House of David,” and the Mesha stele might as well.⁵⁸ They also confirm the basic accuracy of some early biblical narratives, specifically the ninth-century wars with Mesha of Moab and likely Hazael of Aram-Damascus respectively (2 Kings 3, 2 Kings 8–9) if not as well as is sometimes

⁵³ A. Mazar 2007, 124.

⁵⁴ I. Finkelstein 2002, 111. See also I. Finkelstein 2013, 43. As K. A. Wilson puts it, “Scholars have rightly pointed out that even though Jerusalem is not mentioned... it may have fallen in one of the name-rings that has been damaged over time. Even so, one would expect at least some toponyms in the Judean hill country” (K. A. Wilson 2005, 14).

⁵⁵ Leonard-Fleckman 2016, 227.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁵⁷ For these inscriptions see Halpern 1994; Biran and Naveh 1993, 1995; Rendsburg 1995; Ben Zvi 1994; Emerton 2000; Na’aman 1997a; Rainey 2000, 2001; Na’aman 2007a; Lemaire 1994a, 1994b, 2007, among others.

⁵⁸ The reconstruction of “house of David” on the Mesha inscription by Andre Lemaire followed upon the discovery of the term in the Tel Dan inscription, despite the fact that the Mesha inscription was excavated much earlier (Lemaire 1994a). This translation has not been as well accepted. Given the chronological proximity of the two discoveries and the confidence with which scholars regard the reconstruction of the Tel Dan inscription, the matter is not very important for this study.

supposed.⁵⁹ And, they show that Israel and Judah were capable of acting collectively against enemies. However, it is at least the case that neither the Arameans nor Moabites seem aware that they were facing two kingdoms populated by the same ethnic group, and that an alliance is not necessarily evidence of ethnic continuity. The books of Kings also record, for example, an early and almost contemporary alliance between Asa of Judah and Ben-Hadad of Aram-Damascus itself that predates these inscriptions (1 Kings 15) as well as a later one between Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Aram-Damascus against Judah (2 Kings 16). What we seem to have, then, is two entities that were certainly in existence in the late ninth century and occasionally made common cause, but there is not much more that can be said from these inscriptions and their correlation with biblical text.

Of the numerous studies of references to Judah and Israel in Assyrian inscriptions, that of Tammi Schneider deserves special mention. As she notes, the earliest reference to Israel in Assyrian material – and the only reference to Israel *as* Israel – dates to the reign of Shalmaneser III, which began in the middle of the ninth century B.C.E., and describes Ahab of Israel as a member in a large coalition against Assyria. Assyrian inscriptions would continue to refer to Israel and Judah both by various names for the next two centuries.⁶⁰ However, as Schneider observes, the Assyrians were often quite insightful about their enemies and so it seems meaningful that they saw “no special connection between Israel and Judah.” She notes that, if Judahites considered themselves to be Israelite in this period, it is “difficult to believe that the Assyrians did not know about [it]... since they were engaged in the area for more than 130 years before the destruction of Israel” and suggests that the “more shocking but probably better explanation may be that there was no special relationship between Israel and Judah, or that the relationship recorded in the Bible is more theological and ideological than historical and was thus not discernible from the outside.”⁶¹

Leonard-Fleckman’s aforementioned proposal, which has bearing on all of these inscriptions, may serve as a useful capstone to this discussion of the United Monarchy in epigraphic sources, for various reasons. Her argument, essentially, is that the earliest southern state was not “Judah,” but rather the “House of David” – as seen in the Tel Dan and potentially Mesha steles – and that its relationship to later, dynastic Judah is not straightforward. This is in many ways a creative and insightful effort to square the literary evidence for the United Monarchy with the acknowledged archaeological difficulties that are the topic of the next section. What she proposes is that while the House of David was indeed centered around Jerusalem and Bethel, the absence of a clear

⁵⁹ See Na’aman 2007a.

⁶⁰ Schneider 2002, 9–10.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

Judahite state in that region in the tenth century B.C.E. permits an understanding of David as himself an *Israelite*, if still based at Jerusalem, upon whom later political realities have been retrojected. She is particularly interested in the narrative of Rehoboam's rejection in 1 Kings 12 which, she claims, mirrors the historical event that inaugurated the conceptually separate southern state, founded on his (historical) ouster.⁶²

This argument, which has many strong points and employs an extensive and useful comparison with other uses of the "House of X" formula in the epigraphy of the region, has likely indeed demonstrated that the connection between early southern activity (tenth and early ninth century) and a recognizable dynastic Judah should be approached with caution. However, it is difficult to see how she can separate her argument that Rehoboam founded the southern state, which is based on considerable evidence that it developed later than Israel, from her argument that David's Israelite capital was Jerusalem.⁶³ When, for example, she suggests that the Shoshenq inscription may indicate the border of Rehoboam's kingdom by "traversing a particular saddle in the hills a mere ten kilometers north of Jerusalem," potentially revealing a "centralized area of rule that began directly south of Gibeon," it is not clear why she thinks evidence of the geographical separation of Judah from Israel shortly after David would not also impact the plausibility of an Israelite kingdom ruled from the region of Judah, whether what was there should be thought of as Judah or not.⁶⁴ Her argument that there would not have to be evidence of a powerful kingdom or rule in the vicinity of Jerusalem in David's time, because even though David ruled *from* Jerusalem, he ruled Israel, seems unlikely to prove convincing. Additionally, in the next section we will discuss recent developments in the archaeology of Judah that may suggest that the earliest Judahite kingdom arose elsewhere in the south than in the Jerusalem-Hebron region. If early Judah was not centered on Jerusalem, this might also explain how the potential distinction

⁶² "I will argue for the priority of the kingdom of Israel in the David story, before the Judah additions subtly shift this priority toward Judah. I will also argue that the creation of a southern kingdom may have occurred through Israel's rejection of the line of David's right to rule, as depicted in 1 Kings 12, rather than by Israel seceding or splitting off from a fixed kingdom centered in Jerusalem" (Leonard-Fleckman 2016, 14).

⁶³ Leonard-Fleckman 2016, 227–28, 250. She acknowledges that the House of David is entirely associated with the "shifting central towns of Hebron, Jerusalem, and Mahanaim" (Ibid., 242). Elsewhere, she notes that while none of the references to the House of David in biblical literature define the House of David as the kingdom of Judah "all of them secondarily and implicitly link the dynasty to Jerusalem or Judah" (Ibid., 111).

⁶⁴ Ibid., 254, 230. She adds: "The Tel Dan inscription defines the House of David by its king or leader... By its comparison with Israel the House of David may not have been a tiny polity by this time, confined to Jerusalem. Rather, this political body may have already existed in the political landscape in the tenth century in a small geographical pocket running from Jerusalem south to Beersheba. The larger size of this polity may be reflected in the Sheshonq relief" (Ibid., 254).

between the early House of David and the later kingdom of Judah in biblical and epigraphic sources is to be understood, while making better sense of the clear evidence for the late development of the Jerusalem region itself.

Ultimately, what we have in the epigraphic canon is ambiguity, and the issue here is how best to understand and grapple with ambiguity. For some, the absence of clear evidence both here and in the archaeological record for early Panisraeliteism or a United Monarchy constitutes a reason to assert the Panisraelite case quite strongly.⁶⁵ For others, this absence of evidence is no more than a reflection of a much more general absence relating to the period in question and no reason to be unduly skeptical. Of course, this latter supposition has merit and we should always be cautious about making arguments from silence. However, it is necessary to take a stand, one way or the other, on questions such as how well the biblical account itself might serve as a source for historical information in the absence of other evidence; what scholars should assume is true that cannot be either absolutely proven or disproven; and where the burden of proof generally lies in such cases. It is worth stating at the outset of this study that when it comes to the evidence for early Israel, I think it is better to be more skeptical than less and to place the burden of proof on those who would use the biblical account as history. It is likely that the biblical account is relatively reliable in its recounting of events from at least the turn of the eighth century B.C.E. on, but the same cannot be said of material describing earlier events.

The issue as I see it is that the generally useful paradigm of scholarship building slowly on previous developments has actually placed biblical studies in a difficult position. In the rest of this study, I will frequently have occasion to discuss the tradition-historical approach to biblical traditions pioneered by Hermann Gunkel and the “Amphictyonic Model” of early Israel most associated with the work of Martin Noth, which, combined, allowed for the pre-monarchical period to be sketched in considerable detail. What needs to be recognized is the extent to which the former authorized the latter, and to which both continue to have important effects on biblical scholarship. As noted above, the supposition that traditions *generally* encode some form of memory rather than *sometimes*, and often in ways that scholars are unable to reliably distinguish from fabricated details, gave to many twentieth century scholars a great deal more evidence with which to reconstruct early Israel than it seems we currently

⁶⁵ Na’aman, for examples, argues that “today, it is widely accepted that biblical historiography – which extended the name ‘Israel’ to cover both kingdoms, collectively designating their inhabitants ‘Israelites’ – did not, in fact, appear prior to the annexation of the kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian empire... and that the extension of the name ‘Israel’ in the prophetic literature to include the Kingdom of Judah and its inhabitants dates no earlier than 720 B.C.E.” (Na’aman 2010, 1). This may be overstating how far Panisraeliteism has penetrated biblical scholarship.