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Le temps
de la Bible

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As historians, both Bordreuil and Briquel-Chatonnet work at the Institute of Semitic Studies, College of France, as directors of research at the CNRS. As a result, this comprehensive study engages in much of recent finds, from history, archaeology, and the inscriptions. In a broad-ranging treatment whose sources cover an expansive time period (the Bronze Age through the Persian period) of the geographical regions known as Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Africa, and the Levant, Bordreuil and Briquel-Chatonnet rely on the sociological and historical works of Garelli et al., *Le Proche-Orient asiatique* (3rd ed.; 2 vols.; 1996–97), Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East* (2 vols.; 1985), Rendtorff, *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament* (1989; German original, 1983), Soggin, *A History of Israel* (1985), and de Vaux, *Les institutions de l'Ancien Testament* (English trans., *Ancient Israel*; 2 vols.; 1961). They include conflicting historical theories of historical reconstruction by Dever (*Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research*, 1990; “‘Will the Real Israel Please Stand Up?’ Archaeology and Israelite Historiography,” *BASOR* 297 [1990]: 61–80; “What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?” in *Hesed ve-Emet, Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs* [1998], 241–57) and Thompson (*The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past* [1999]). The authors translate most ancient texts from Hallo’s English edition, *The*

Context of Scripture (then 2 vols.; 1997–2000), from the *Ras Shamra* collection, and from *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*. Other notable sources include Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (5 vols.; 1906), Briend and Seux, *Textes du Proche-Orient ancien et histoire d'Israël* (1977), Caquot, trans., *Textes ougaritiques* (with Sznycer and Herdner, vol. 1: *Mythes et légendes* [1974]; with de Tarragon, vol. 2: *Textes religieux et rituels* [1989]), Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions* (1991), Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartin, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (1995), Durand, *Les documents épistolaires du palais de Mari* (2 vols.; 1997–98), Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* (vol. 2: *Aramaic Inscriptions* [1975]; vol. 3: *Phoenician Inscriptions* [1982]), Glassner, trans., *Chroniques mésopotamiennes* (1993), Grelot, *Documents araméens d'Égypte* (1972), Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (1926–58), volume 1 of Lemaire, *Les Inscriptions hébraïques* (1977), Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (2 vols. [1926–27]), Moran, trans., *El-Amarna* (1987), and Seux, *Hymnes et prières aux dieux de Babylonie et d'Assyrie* (1976). I could not find any reference to Bottéro, *Initiation à l'Orient ancien* (1992), although Bordreuil and Briquel-Chatonnet reconstructed quotidian matters as found in Bottéro. As well, Roth's *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* could have better informed the authors' analysis of the relation between biblical and cuneiform law (see also Levinson, ed., *Theory and Method in Biblical and Cuneiform Law* [1994]).

While the present review can neither detail all contributions nor signal every point of departure from contemporary studies on similar topics, I will nonetheless note some particularly helpful aspects of the present volume. As well, I will suggest a few sources that I think Bordreuil and Briquel-Chatonnet would have done well to include, indicating in context how I think these inclusions would further advance the discussion. In the selectivity of the following critique, I hope that appreciation for the depth of coverage and value of contribution that Bordreuil and Briquel-Chatonnet have made to the French-speaking and scholarly world will not be lost on the reader.

In “Le peuple se donne un dieu” (The People Give Themselves a God), Bordreuil and Briquel-Chatonnet directly address matters related to Seir (92, 111) as well as, elsewhere (33, 279, 306, 337), to Edom. However, they fail to integrate what Edelman and others have already contributed to the discussion (*You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother: Edom and Seir in History and Tradition* [1995]). Nothing is said of the identity of Edom with Seir (Edom's eastern Negev highlands) and Teman (the northern portion of Edom's plateau); of distinctions between Edom as a territory in some contexts and as a state in others; and how such understandings play key hermeneutical roles.

“À l'ombre de Babylone” (In the Shadow of Babylon) addresses the mystery of the battle of Jerusalem that never took place because of an unexplainable retreat by Sennacherib's

Assyrian army. According to the annals of Sennacherib (col. II.37–III.49), successful campaigns against Egyptian military outposts in Phoenicia, Philistia, and cities in Judah, also indicated by “le maladie d’Ézékias” (2 Kgs 18:13–20, 19; Isa 36–39; 2 Chr 32:1–26), paved the way to conquest of Jerusalem, which never occurred. Scholars have until recently debated textual explanations for their hasty and costly retreat. Did an “angel of the Lord” cause some eighty thousand Assyrian soldiers to perish (2 Kgs 19:35)? Did thousands of field mice swarm over a sleeping Assyrian army, eating their quivers, bowstrings, and the leather handles of their shields (Herodotus, *History* 2.141)? It is a misfortune of the timing of the two publications that prevented Bordreuil and Briquel-Chatonnet’s reconstruction of a significant part of the history of the Hebrew people from including Aubin’s subsequent thesis (*The Rescue of Jerusalem* [2002]), which postulates an alliance between Hebrews and Africans in 701 B.C.E. that led to a Kushite/Nubian intervention, which in turn repelled Sennacherib. On Kush, the authors address the confusion of terms that have confused the Kushites/Nubians with Mesopotamia’s Kassites (134, 143).

The Hittites are not treated directly, and their name does not appear in the indexes of places or names of people, perhaps signaling the authors’ judgment that their existence offers little insight into the limited focus of the theme, “Le temps de la Bible.” One could imagine that the Hittites would find relevance in the discussion, for example, of ancient diplomatic texts (Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* [1996]).

Bordreuil and Briquel-Chatonnet draw on ancient archival and royal inscriptions in substantiating their historical reconstructions. One such example is that of Moab and the Mesha inscription (34, 81, 163, 172, 208, 248, 273, 275, 280, 288, 298, 305, 325, 342). While even in this case their work is intended to be that of an introduction, it provides the reader with a foundation of knowledge that will serve as an effective segue to detailed studies (see Dearman, ed., *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab* [1989]).