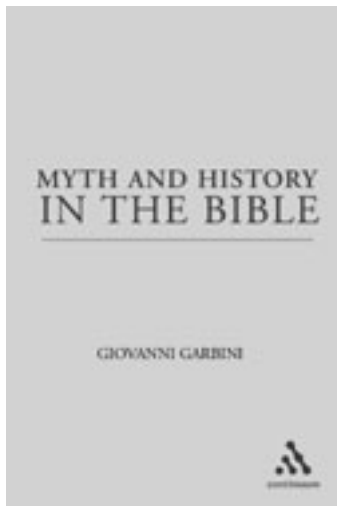


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**Garbini, Giovanni**

***Myth and History in the Bible***

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The book under review—actually a compendium of discrete studies united by a basic theme—starts with a short foreword (vii–viii) that serves as a sort of introduction to the book, followed by a short list of abbreviations (ix), and ends with a short bibliographical list (140–43), an index of references (Old Testament, Apocrypha, New Testament, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Jewish and rabbinic writings, other ancient sources [late Greek and Roman], and other sources [a few inscriptions and Ugaritic texts] [144–49]), and an index of authors (150). In between lie ten chapters about various topics, originally published elsewhere, with some having been public lectures—all collected here and made to reflect the author’s views regarding the Old Testament, its composition, and the ideologies reflected therein, and especially the author’s (in my view) unique methodology and philological approach to the MT (see his statement on this issue in the foreword as well as a few remarks below).

In chapter 1, “The Myths of the Origins of Israel” (1–9), the author suggests seeing behind the origins of Israel as reported in the Bible reflections of a small, politically weak, and insecure people that was yearning for some glorious political and religious future, far different from the miserable situation at present. He locates the latter in the postexilic period, in hierocratic Jerusalem under the Achaemenid rule that was dreaming of a better future: “all origin myths have their immediate presupposition in the delusions of hierocratic Jerusalem in post-exilic times” (7). This is the background against which the author interprets the stories about the patriarchs; the allegedly unique Israelite

invention, Yahwism—an autochthonic religion established by the prophets as a reaction to the Canaanite religious ideology; the laws, especially the ritual religious law—all written by priests and for priests who rather than a king ruled the people; the motif of exodus, a central symbol of Judaism—actually a creation of late Hellenistic times when a fierce ideological and theological struggle transpired between the Jerusalemite priesthood and the Hellenistic Egyptian priesthood and Judaism, and so forth. Even the theme of conquest reflects, in Garbini’s view, late aspirations, from a time when the people “was confined to a small part of the territory, without any political or military power, but with a strong desire for dominations” (7).

In chapter 2, titled “Cain’s Impunity” (10–21), the author discusses what seems to be a grave moral contradiction between the basic law of the sanctity of humans (Gen 9:5–6) and the impunity granted to Cain, the first murderer in human history (Gen 4:15). Comparing Gen 4:15 with 4:24 he notices a change in the object of impunity, from Cain to his murderer, and reviewing various later authors and commentators, even up to the middle ages, who were at loss at interpreting 4:15, the author suggests that the original text of 4:15 expressed the same idea as 4:24, that is, that Cain was not granted any impunity and his killing would have been a vengeance visited upon him seven times.

The question that confronts Garbini now is to count for the inclusion of the theme of impunity in the case of fratricide in the myth of origin in the book of Genesis. By an intricate interpretation and reading of various hints and alleged facts in both our story and other passages in the Bible, Garbini reaches the conclusion that this theme of impunity was introduced quite late in the current Masoretic version by the Jerusalemite priest Joshua who had murdered the priest and prophet Zechariah the son of Berechiah during the coronation of Zerubbabel in a sort of a coup d’état and was never punished for his crime.

The Old Testament hides this episode with a curtain of silence, but the facts were well-known to the people. . . . The bloody *coup d’état* was organized by Joshua, another priest . . . who started a hierocratic regime in Jerusalem. . . . A hierocratic regime which came to power by means of the murder of a high priest in the temple could simply avoid talking about its origins in its own writings; but it looked for a theological justification projecting the right to impunity in a origin myth. (21)

In chapter 3, “Abraham and Damascus” (22–35), the author tackles the question why the *Damascus Document* from Qumran mentions the place name of Damascus as the place where the people of Qumran claim to have lived and made a new covenant, when it is

clear that they lived in the Judean desert. He avers that by now the current opinion is that the name Damascus is not to be taken literally but rather metaphorically.

Since the *Damascus Document* refers often to the covenant with the patriarchs, particularly the covenant made by God with Abraham, Garbini looks for his hint in the stories and traditions about this covenant in the Bible, as well as into the scattered mentions of the name Damascus in the patriarchal narratives. Reading one of the central phrases underlying the covenant with Abraham, that of the promised land that stretches “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Gen 15:18), Garbini states that “The words pronounced by Yahweh in Gen. 15.18 find a meaning only if God was speaking in a place not far from Damascus” (26). With regard to the mention of the name Damascus in the patriarchal narratives Garbini finds its occurrence in Gen 15:2, generally thought to be enigmatic, to be of significance in his attempt to solve the riddle of the *Damascus Document*: here he finds a hidden tradition about a close relationship between Abraham and his house with Damascus. Support for this assumption he finds, again, in late Judeo-Hellenistic and classical writings, which in his view reflect sometimes more ancient traditions than those that were finally worked into the MT (27–28), as well as in various allusions in the prophetic books of the Bible (Amos 3:12; Isa 17:1–6; Zech 9:1; Amos 5:26–27; 1:5). In all these he finds allusions, some clearer than others, that Israel’s origins were in Damascus in Syria, the Aramaic origins already reflected in the patriarchal narrative and elsewhere in the Bible.

Thus, when the members of the community behind the *Damascus Document* refer to Damascus as the place of the old and new covenant (Jer 31:31–34) as well as the place they have chosen for their sojourn, they seem to follow the words of Amos about exiling the “sons of Jacob” back to their place of origin—Damascus (Amos 5:26–27); and since exiling a people to its place of origin (Amos 9:7) would mean erasing all of its history, the Qumran community, by exiling itself to Damascus, wanted to cancel all the history and start everything anew. According to the interpretation of Amos 5:26–27 in the *Damascus Document*, “Damascus is a very special ‘exile’, because God also came to dwell there” (33).

The main theme of chapter 4, titled “Reuben’s Incest and the Contested Primogeniture” (36–54), is Reuben’s loss of his right or status of primogeniture and Judah’s rise instead to the prominent, even messianic, position among the brothers. In Garbini’s view, assigning the prime position to Judah entailed important changes in the traditions aimed at relegating Reuben to the backyard. Garbini sets out to test and support this hypothesis of an ideological reelaboration of the traditions with a political connotation by closely analyzing the few passages in the Bible that mention Reuben. In these he finds, again by relying for their interpretation heavily on late, Judeo-Hellenistic and even later sources,

traces of changes that reflect hostility toward Reuben. For example, on pages 40–41 Garbini discusses the possibility that Reuben’s real name, as reflected in some late versions, is actually *Rūbīl* (*Roubēlos*), which reflects an Arabic root (*rabala*) meaning “to be rich in men.” This is exactly the Greek translation of Deut 33:6: “May Reuben live and not die, and may he be rich in number.” The MT, on the other hand, talks about “a few men,” which in Garbini’s view reflects an intentional attempt on the part of the late transmitter of the MT to inflict additional damage on the character of Reuben.

Looking philologically in detail into the episode of the incest and into the blessing of Reuben and Judah in Gen 49, the author notices a few elements: the terse mention of Reuben’s presence in the episode, the attempt to conceal the place where the episode actually took place (somewhere in Jerusalem, Migdal Eder being a synonym of Mount Zion, according to Mic 4: 8), the impetuous temperament of Judah, as well as some other textual interventions—which lead him to the conclusion that it was Judah who committed the incest with Jacob’s wife, not Reuben. Furthermore, Garbini even goes so far as to suggest that the incest committed by Judah was with his own mother, Leah. Traces of this tradition the author finds in Deut 33:7, which he interprets as reflecting Judah’s incest (*yad* here in a sexual sense) with his mother, for which he was “cut off from his people” (Deut 23:1–2) and which leads Moses to pray to God to bring him back to his people.

The author of Genesis thus deliberately introduced some changes first to conceal Judah’s grave sin and misconduct and second to put the blame on Reuben, although a mitigating circumstance was introduced here by making him commit incest with Jacob’s concubine rather than with his mother.

The subject of the next chapter, chapter 5, “Moses and the Law” (55–71), is to discover how and when Moses was linked with the Torah and when the latter assumed its normative aspect known in the Christian era. Is it possible to find evidence that would confirm the widely accepted view as regards the possible influence of Moses on the books of the Torah?

Based on evidence gleaned from the books of the Maccabees and Ben Sira, the author fixes a date around 150 B.C.E. as the *terminus ante quem* for the normative status of the Pentateuch. Turning to the MT, the author looks into Hezekiah’s Yahwistic reform (2 Kgs 18:4) and takes Hezekiah’s destruction of the bronze snake made by Moses as a hint to the fact that Moses was then “far from having the assumed authority and charisma he has in later texts” (57). Also, Moses was then remembered by his connection to some religious relic rather than by his legislative work, against which Hezekiah’s reform would have been considered inconceivable. Garbini reaches the same conclusion by examining Hos 12:14, in which in the Syriac and some of the Greek manuscripts the word “prophet”

occurs in the plural, and Hos 12:10; 13:4, where the Sinai theophany seems to be ignored. Moses in the eighth century B.C.E., then, does not seem to have the authority accorded to him by the current MT, and he did not have any relationship to the revelation of the name of God on Mount Sinai and to the related religious legislation. The ancient tradition then saw Moses with a snake in his hand, and Hos 12:14 also reflects an ancient tradition about Moses' migration from Egypt with accompanying miraculous events, one of which was the bronze snake that was later kept in the temple in Jerusalem. Garbini thus fixes the *terminus post quem* for pentateuchal Moses at about 700 B.C.E. and suggests looking for Moses the legislator somewhere between this date and 150 B.C.E.

Reviewing late Greek sources, Garbini finds support for his former conclusion regarding the figure of Moses as a “prophetthaumaturge who led Israel out of Egypt into Palestine, defending his people with a bronze talisman. . . . he had put the talisman in Jerusalem temple built by himself; the Sinai theophany was not yet known” (62). The same sources lead him to conclude that the pentateuchal Moses as we have him in the MT was a late creation, particularly since “The centrality of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel in all the ‘law of Moses’ is the most certain proof of its postexilic origin” (66), for the theme of a “covenant between God and the people of Israel without a royal intermediary could be conceived only in a prophetic milieu . . . hostile to the monarchy, adopted by the priestly class” of late Jerusalem. The “law of Moses,” “subsequent to Hezekiah and before the fourth century BCE,” being “known by the deuteronomistic historian, by the Chronicler and by the sources of Hecataeus” [of Abdera, toward the end of the fourth century B.C.E.] (63), is to be located at about 500 B.C.E.

In chapter 6, studying the “Davidic Traditions” (72–90), the author starts by pointing out the outstanding position held by David in terms of the space devoted to him in the Bible compared to other important persons such as Moses or Solomon. Looking at the book of Ben Sira we notice an opposite picture: here other persons—such as Solomon, Elijah, Aaron, and particularly Simeon the high priest—overrate David. This points to the prominence held by the priesthood at a time of “major Davidic expectations.” Thus a “quantitative comparison of space dedicated in ancient Hebrew literature to the major characters of the past can contribute to forming an historical judgment,” for this may reflect the fact that the biblical tradition was not necessarily “the only Jewish tradition, and not even the prevailing one” (72).

Studying closely the various traditions about David, Garbini points out the various repetitions in them, as well as in the “Succession Narrative,” which is too far from being a homogeneous tradition but rather a composite mixture of different traditions composed somewhere in postexilic times. From his scrutiny he reaches the conclusion that, rather than “considering the stories in the books of Samuel (and all the biblical texts) as a result

of a collection of several different sources” revised by a redactor (“deuteronomistic”), it is

more reasonable . . . to conceive of a late author, coming from a priestly milieu, who is responsible not only for some sporadic additions, but also for the whole ideological scheme of the literary work we read today. He has used very freely some ancient materials, though not so many as is usually thought. If throughout the Bible scholars now feel the action of a “deuteronomistic” or, better, of a “priestly” hand, this means that all the Old Testament, with its own internal coherence, was written in more recent times. A “priestly” author wrote, in imitation of Hellenistic historiography and of the “Phoenician History” which was the source of Philo of Byblos, a history of the Jewish people, starting from the creation of the world. (76–77)

This author, we know now, lived in the second century B.C.E. With a specific look at David’s traditions, from various hints in the extant sources in the MT, Garbini concludes that there must have been several historical traditions about David before the second century B.C.E., some of which being quite different from the canonical narrative in 1 and 2 Samuel. The most important elements are the fate of Jerusalem, which seems to have been ruled already by Saul, and the temple, which, contrary to what the story tells us, was standing already in the time of David. In the rest of the chapter the author tries to answer the question as to how David, a character with plenty of defects who was deprived of the privilege of building the temple, later became the future Messiah.

In chapter 7, titled “The Calf of Bethel” (91–99), Garbini starts by examining the calf episode in Exod 32. In this narrative, which he finds very puzzling, Garbini finds reflections of “internal conflicts existing in the Hellenistic age between Levites and Priests”<sup>1</sup> . . . [and] the story reveals already the winners of the ideological struggle” (91). He suggests to look into the books of Ezra (1 Esdras and canonical Ezra)—“typical for Levitical literary production”—for clues regarding “the origin of the present form of the narrative” of the golden calf (ibid.).

More specifically, Garbini looks in detail into the expression (*‘egel massēkâ*, usually translated as “a calf of molten metal,” a translation that he finds totally unfitting contexts such as Deut 9:16 and Neh 9:18. In his view, one should apply to the word *massēkâ* another meaning, that derived from its underlying root *nsk* “to libate,” and translate it as “libation.” On the basis of a verse such as Isa 30:1, and with the aid of the covenant

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<sup>1</sup> For this struggle, see also his discussion in chapter 8 regarding the birth of Ezra and his myth, especially 106–7.

ceremony described in Jer 34:18–19, as well as with the aid of the word *mskt* in the Karatepe inscriptions, which he interprets also as meaning “libation” (“offered to the god when the king established or renewed the covenant with his dynastic god” [94]), Garbini suggests understanding the expression *‘egel massēkâ* as “the calf of the covenant.” That is, the Sinai calf and the calf of Jeroboam “were . . . representations of real calves, symbols of the covenant between a king and his dynastic god” (95).

With this caveat in mind, Garbini looks closely into the story in 1 Kgs 12:26–30, and on the basis of 12:32 he suggests that there was only one place where calves were erected, Bethel, whereas the reference to Dan was secondary, added later into the story. Bethel is known to have been an important sanctuary and a seat of the kings (Amos 7:13), that is, a place where the calf, the symbol of the covenant of the northern kings, was erected, and thus it stood as a clear rival to Jerusalem. Jeroboam’s sin, therefore, was not the sin of idolatry of erecting a calf-idol but rather his pretension of depriving “Jerusalem the role of capital of Israelite monarchy, a role that Jerusalem always claimed, but probably never had, judging from the legendary nature of the empire of David and Solomon” (95).

Next Garbini looks into the very difficult and corrupt passage in Hos 10:1–8 and suggests—after quite a few attempts at emending and correcting the text that look very difficult and far from convincing—that this passage too hints at Bethel, the seat of the sanctuary of the northern kings.

In chapter 8, “Ezra’s Birth” (100–110), Garbini discusses the issue of the identity and origin of Ezra and his story as known both from 1 Esdras and the canonical Ezra. Garbini suggests that the story of Ezra was a symbolic story about a symbolic character, that the events narrated in his book never happened, and that, finally, it is a myth not different from other biblical myths such as those about Abraham, Moses, and David. “[D]uring the second and first centuries BCE the figure of Nehemiah acquired the character of the sole protagonist of the postexilic restoration,” rather than Ezra (103). In the case of Ezra, Garbini is able to pinpoint the date of the birth of this myth and the historical period that serves as its background: since Ezra does not seem to have been known by Ben Sira in the second century B.C.E., nor by his translator and interpreter fifty years later, one may assume that it was written later “not before the middle of the second century BCE; . . . a much later dating remains possible” (102). “[T]he character of Ezra, created from a literary text, constitutes a fundamental dividing line for the history of Judaism, because it marked the supremacy of the teachers of the Law over the priests and became a point of reference for all Judaism from then up to now” (110).

Chapter 9 is titled “Birth and Death of the Messiah” (111–28), and in it the author proposes to draw “the profile of the particular kind of Messiah which emerges from some

texts of the Old Testament and to examine how such texts have been interpreted by a Jewish group particularly sensible to the suggestions of Messianic ideology existing at the beginning of the first century CE” (111). The passages he scrutinizes are Mic 5:1; Ps 110:3; Isa 26: 19; and Ps 22, and he uses these (quite difficult) passages to help interpret each by means of the other. By applying his usual intricate way of reading difficult biblical verses, again using late versions and sources as an aid in deciphering the real version or the original reading of the text (quite often also by relying heavily on emendation), he finds in all these passages allusions to Jesus and Mary and to what is said in Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–20. The difficulties inherent in all the analyzed passages, especially Ps 22, which impede our understanding of them, are in his view the result of programmatic and ideological changes introduced by late editors who made all efforts to remove any hint to Jesus, his birth, and his death from the MT.

Chapter 10, finally, titled “The End of Myth” (129–39), offers some summary words regarding the author’s basic thesis that found its expression in the foregoing chapters and adds some final strokes to the picture he draws of the “myth” of Yahweh “written by someone who knew Greek philosophy perfectly” (129).

This book is quite rich in detail, ideas, and insights, and any review of it, short of a detailed annotated summary, would not be faithful to its contents. In the following necessarily short remarks I wish to address briefly two basic issues: one regarding the author’s basic thesis concerning the late composition of the Bible, and the other regarding the author’s approach and methodology. It will become clear that these two issues touch on each other.

As regards the first issue, it is clear that this book falls in line within the bounds of the recent school of thought in biblical research commonly called the “minimalist” school. This school sees almost anything in the Hebrew Bible as reflecting late, indeed very late, times—a product of late Judeo-Hellenistic writers. The reader is referred to the quotations from Garbini’s book brought in various places above demonstrating this approach and its underlying arguments. For the heated debate between the “minimalists” and the “maximalists,” the reader is referred to the growing literature on the subject.<sup>2</sup> In

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<sup>2</sup> For a sample of writings concerning this debate, see S. Ahituv and E. D. Oren, eds., *The Origin of Early Israel—Current Debate: Biblical, Historical, and Archaeological Perspectives* (Beer Sheva, 1997); W. G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, 2001); L. I. Levine and A. Mazar, eds., *The Controversy over the Historicity of the Bible* (Jerusalem, 2001); and cf. also the following exchange on the Internet: G. A. Rendsburg, “Down with History, Up with Reading: The Current State of Biblical Studies” (<http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/programs/jewish/30yrs/rendersburg/>); and the following response from one of the primary proponents of the “minimalist school”: N. P. Lemche, “Conservative Scholarship—Critical



reading Garbini's book a saying by the famous American psychologist Abraham Maslow kept creeping into my mind: "When the only tool you own is a hammer, every problem begins to resemble a nail." When the only sources brought into the picture are very late, Greek and Roman, and even much later Christian sources, every verse in the Old Testament may easily be made to look like a product of late periods. Although the author is quite aware of the ancient strands and elements woven into the MT—and thus, unlike some minimalists, who even seem to propagate a somewhat nihilist view, Garbini is not altogether oblivious to the ancient past<sup>3</sup>—in general he falls captive to the minimalist views. On page 27 he writes: "The importance of these extra-biblical Jewish [and very late, M.M.] sources for the *reconstruction of the historical tradition of Israel* has been unjustly neglected by scholars who are often too much inclined to consider only the biblical data" (italics added). Well, it seems that the author himself has fallen into the same trap not only by playing down the biblical data for later sources but also by almost totally ignoring external data from the ancient Near East from early periods, such data that could at times give much credence to some biblical "myths." One example will suffice to demonstrate the danger inherent in limiting one's view to only one set of data. It will be recalled that in his search for Moses the legislator (ch. 5) Garbini reaches the conclusion that the "centrality of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel in all the 'law of Moses' is the most certain proof of its postexilic origin" (66), for the theme of a "covenant between God and the people of Israel without a royal intermediary" must be late. See also his statement on page 65: "For all Near Eastern peoples a 'covenant' between a god and his people simply made no sense." It is now common knowledge that the central biblical theme of covenant clearly reflects the ancient Near Eastern widespread institution of political treaties attested already from quite ancient times. Furthermore, even the allegedly unique feature of the biblical covenant as a pact between a deity and a group of people is not unique any longer, for it finds its clear parallel in a similar institution attested in the North Syrian city of Emar of the middle of the second millennium B.C.E.<sup>4</sup> The "myth" of biblical covenant, then, could definitely reflect ancient traditions, and it does not necessarily have to be a late, postexilic, mythical invention.

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Scholarship: Or How Did We Get Caught by this Bogus Discussion", [http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Conservative\\_Scholarship.htm](http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Conservative_Scholarship.htm).

<sup>3</sup> E.g., on p. 86 n. 14 he even seems to accept David's historicity, suggesting that he himself might have built the temple. On p. 57 he seems to accept the existence of external epigraphic evidence from the seventh century B.C.E. to the Yahwistic reform of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:4). Finally, see the following statement on p. 106: "In the history of the Hebrew civilization it is easy to isolate an archaic phase, which we largely ignore, corresponding to the period of the kingdoms and ending with the beginning of the fifth century BCE with the death of Zerubbabel."

<sup>4</sup> For this theme, see recently D. E. Fleming, "Emar: On the Road from Harran to Hebron," in *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations* (ed. M. W. Chavalas and K. L. Younger; Grand Rapids, 2002), 222–50.

As regards the author's philological approach and methodology, quite often I stood puzzled in front of some biblical verse or passage that the author interpreted (sometimes with much conviction and ingenuity) as reflecting such late periods and ideas, but hard as I tried (reading the passage over and over again) I just could not find in it those enlightening elements found by the author. I think the author's discussion in chapter 9 is an exemplary case in point, both in demonstrating the author's basic thesis as well as in demonstrating his unique philological method—he himself is duly aware that his method is unacceptable to possibly the majority of biblical scholars (see his remark on this in the foreword [viii]). Here the author starts by studying a very difficult verse (Mic 5:1) from which he deduces the place of birth of the Messiah: Bethlehem, of course. Also, “The Birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem will take place through a woman (‘until the time that she who labours has brought forth’), but this birth will not be a normal one, following a human conception, because the Messiah's origins are ‘from the Orient, from everlasting’ ” (111). I fail to see how all these details emerge from this passage. To aid in interpreting this admittedly difficult passage, the author turns to Ps 110:3 which, in his view, “also talks about the origin of the Messiah.” But this passage too is quite difficult, and it is not clear to me how it talks about the origin of the Messiah. So the author turns to other, also not so clear, biblical passages to clarify the difficulties in the previous passage. One of them is Isa 14:4–21 about the death of the king of Babylon, where the expression “Hêlel the son of dawn” will help one understand the occurrence of the word “dawn” in Ps 110:3. Regarding Isa 14 the author states, “From this text it is clear that the Messiah was compared to an existing mythological character, generated by the dawn,”<sup>5</sup> and to support this firm statement he turns back to Mic 5: 1, the very verse he is trying to interpret by the latter passages. What we have here is a chain of difficult passages made to interpret one difficult passage by another, sometimes even more difficult passage. Also, note the tautological reasoning evident above.

The author demonstrates much ingenuity and originality in his reading of the biblical text, which at times entails much emendation of difficult words and passages, based, of course, on the authority of the late sources and versions. Again, quite often I found it hard to follow the value and contribution of such emendations for the clarification of the MT. Note the following: MT *amm<sup>e</sup>ka n<sup>e</sup>dābôt* (Ps 110:3) is emended to *amk ndbym* “with you are the nobles.” The word *r<sup>2</sup>š* “head” in 110:6 is emended to *š<sup>c</sup>r* “gate.” On pages 45–46 the phrase *mīttērep b<sup>e</sup>nī ‘ālītā* “from the prey, my son, you have gone up” (Gen 49: 9) is read *mītrp* (a participle of *pi<sup>c</sup>el* or *hiph<sup>c</sup>il* meaning “which tears”) *b<sup>e</sup>nē* (sons of) *’ayyālôt* (hinds). The MT *wayyītrop lā<sup>c</sup>ad ’appo* of Amos 1:11 is emended to *wytrp b<sup>c</sup>dh smth* “and he tore her cloth during her menstruation,” referring to Judah's incest with his

<sup>5</sup> Another Messiah “generated by the dawn” is “the true ‘son of the dawn’, limping Messiah”, i.e., Jacob in Gen 32:24–32 (see 136).

mother Leah (48). On pages 134–35 he suggests seeing in the verb *ʿābaq* in Gen 32:25 a reflection of the verb *ʿāqab* (Gen 25:26. [Why not better see in *ʿābaq* an allusion to the word *yabbôq* where the encounter between Jacob and the angel took place?]). As regards Ps 2:4–9 the author states with much conviction that “It is clear that the scene here depicted is a mythological one, with some ironical features, which reveal the late date of the composition” (117). On page 60, on the basis of 1 Sam 12:8, he concludes that Moses entered the land of Israel. The list goes on.

Quite prevalent is the author’s habit of presenting as firm, established facts what at best are only assumptions. Many a time the author starts with an assumption, which a few sentences later becomes an established fact, which then serves as a basis for the next assumption. Sometimes I read certain chapters and passages two or three times just to make sure that I totally understood what he says and that I did not miss some fact in the biblical text that was so clear to him.

Again, the author’s statement in the foreword regarding the ancient elements and strands in the Bible that were organized into a “myth” in late times could be a good guide in trying to understand the biblical data and the biblical message if only one could look at all sets of data—ancient and late—and weigh them objectively. Reading the last paragraph on page 58 it is clear that the author is all too aware of the existence of a variety of evidences—old and late—but somehow he finds the late evidence to be more convincing in drawing the final conclusion regarding the “mythical” character of the Old Testament.