

ASSYRIOLOGY AND BIBLICAL STUDIES:
A CENTURY AND A HALF OF TENSION

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What is the reason for these efforts in remote, inhospitable, and dangerous lands? What is the reason for this expensive rooting through rubble many thousands of years old, all the way down to the water table, where no gold and no silver is to be found? What is the reason for the competition among nations to secure excavation rights to these deserted mounds, and the more the better? Moreover, what is the source of the ever-increasing, self-sacrificing interest, on both sides of the Atlantic, allotted to the excavations in Babylonia and Assyria?

To these questions there is one answer, even if not the whole answer which points to what for the most part is the motive and the goal, namely, the Bible (Delitzsch 1906: 1).

So began F. Delitzsch's famous inaugural lecture for the German Oriental Society entitled, 'Babel und Bibel', 13 January 1902, in Berlin. However, those who believed that the excavations in Mesopotamia had the primary purpose of illuminating the Bible and verifying its historicity were to be disappointed with the remainder of Delitzsch's first and succeeding lectures, as he spoke from the standpoint of an Assyriologist who attempted to show the primacy and superiority of Babel (Mesopotamia) over the Bible. The tension between the two disciplines of Assyriology and biblical studies in the past century and a half has often been acute and has never adequately been defined. In fact, any comparative study of issues concerning the two has often been considered a hazardous affair.¹ Assyriology, of course, is by definition a new discipline, and has often been considered an intruder by biblicists (Kraus 1969: 69-73). On the other hand, the Assyriologist has often had to work under the shadow of the biblicists, who have for the most part considered Assyriology an auxiliary to biblical studies. They often have had to connect their work for relevance to biblical

1. See the discussion by van der Toorn 1985: 1-8.

studies. Of course, many Assyriologists in the early period maintained a traditional doctrinal orthodoxy. Assyriology remains a subject for specialists; there never has been an Assyriological equivalent to Egyptomania, except for the Amorite hypothesis. The Assyriologist must admit that ironically it was the Bible that helped illuminate the newly found cuneiform documents in the nineteenth century, as it provided transcriptions of five of the names of the Assyrian kings.² For some biblical scholars, the impact of Assyriology upon biblical studies has been minimal, an untenable position for those of us who attempt to bridge both fields.³ When one scrapes away the superficial similarities, however, the two disciplines have thus developed almost wholly independent of each other. In some respects, scholars of the two disciplines are not always properly trained or well suited to do comparative studies.⁴ Too often scholars have taken 'inventorial' approach to comparisons, listing various parallel phenomena without making clear their significance (Malul 1990: 32). Although it is certainly legitimate to look for parallels (Veenhof 1995), the methodological criteria for studying Mesopotamia and the Bible have not been adequately articulated. There needs to be a systematic manner in the approach to the comparative method.⁵ Most would agree that the biblical scholar must examine the immediate and wider biblical context before resorting to searching for external evidences from Mesopotamia, and the general context of those external sources also. One must also ask whether or not the phenomenon in question existed outside the stream of the ancient Near Eastern tradition, of which both the biblical and Mesopotamian cultures were a part (Malul 1990: 93-97).

On the whole, the biblical scholars have made but superficial use of Assyriological research, mainly because of the high degree of specialization needed to work with its data (Millard 1989: 24). Furthermore, a great number of Assyriologists neither have an interest in biblical studies, nor do they see many obvious and direct connections to the Old Testament, while Old Testament scholars are often too concerned with theological matters to become interested in immersing themselves in technical

2. Also, see the discussion by Tadmor 1985: 262.

3. Notice the lack of attention to ancient Near Eastern matters in some of the major works devoted to the history of Old Testament scholarship; Kraeling 1955; Hahn 1956; Kraus 1956; Greenslade 1963.

4. See the discussion of this issue in regards to biblical scholars studying Ugaritic religion; see Hillers 1985.

5. This is one of the themes of Barr 1987.

matters (in fact, some biblical scholars were drawn to Assyriology because of its comparative lack of theological controversies; this has certainly been the case in Great Britain and North America). The cuneiform material accessible to the biblical scholar is limited to the relatively few fully edited and annotated texts. At any rate, it is not surprising to see a tension between the two disciplines. In spite of this, it is strongly urged that the two disciplines continue to interact, as long as they retain their own methodology and autonomy (see Tadmor 1985: 266).

In this introduction, I will attempt to trace some of the major developments of the relationship between the two fields since the discovery and subsequent decipherment of 'Babylonian' cuneiform in the mid-nineteenth century.

The two disciplines are very different. Assyriology studies a dead civilization. When Xenophon, the Greek general and historian, traversed the boundaries of Assyria at the beginning of the fourth century BCE, he traveled past both Nimrud and Nineveh. Although he noticed both of these cities, he called them by their Greek names, and assumed that the region was part of Media, and that the two cities were destroyed by the Persians. Thus, he was unaware that they were two of the great Assyrian capitals, which had become abandoned mounds in the preceding two centuries.⁶ The Bible and various Greek sources became powerful factors in keeping alive the memory of Mesopotamian civilization. Yet it was not simply the interest in biblical studies that drove the Europeans to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley in the early nineteenth century. France and Great Britain were looking for land routes to India and took great efforts to exert their influence on these areas. Archeology was thus an unconscious extension of European imperialism.

Because of the spiritual connections with the Old Testament, those in the West are the remote descendants of the Mesopotamians.⁷ Assyriology's importance to world history is only now being discussed by Assyriologists.⁸ However, Assyriologists have rarely been able to synthesize their massive data base for the public. Furthermore, biblical scholars have been much

6. Xenophon, *Anabasis* I.4.6-12. Other classical period authors, including Herodotus and Ptolemy were better versed about this area. I thank Michael C. Astour for the preceding observation.

7. See Bottéro (1992: 15-25) who argues that Assyriology should be at the center of the social sciences, since it contains our cultural 'family documents'.

8. See, for example, Hallo 1996.

more prone to search for comparative data than have Assyriologists.⁹ The two civilizations of Mesopotamia and Israel must be studied independently of each other, while recognizing the intimate relationship of the two (Saggs 1978: 5). Comparisons between the two were often done early on in regards to polemic.¹⁰ The two traditions should be seen as two contemporary systems in the ancient Near East, and not necessarily exclusively in context with each other. Searching for direct comparisons can be methodologically unsound, causing one to omit great amounts of relevant data. Clearly, Mesopotamia and Israel (including Syria) were part of a greater cultural continuum (van der Toorn 1996: 4).

The study of Syro-Mesopotamian civilization has advanced greatly in the past 25 years. Of special import is the renewed interest in Eastern or 'Mesopotamian' Syria, where new archeological finds have radically altered our understanding of not only the ancient Near East, but of the Bible as well. Although there have recently been some brief descriptions of Mesopotamian connections and the Bible,¹¹ there has been no detailed synthesis in English of the Tigris-Euphrates region in regards to the Bible in many years.¹²

From the beginning, scholars were intrigued by the possibilities of studying the two disciplines, and either emphasized the similarities or stressed differences.¹³ At the outset of the nineteenth century the Anglican Church retained a supremacy over biblical studies that was not seen in either Germany or France. Thus, when German and French historical and literary criticism of the Bible began to filter into Great Britain there was a sharp reaction. These 'Germanisms' as they were called (the propensity to view many Old Testament stories as mythical and to de-emphasize the importance of the Old Testament) were considered a threat to the understanding of the divine inspiration of Scripture (Chadwick 1966: 628). There was a fear that the Bible would be 'polluted' by being too close to a

9. Sjöberg (1984: 217) found it necessary to state that he comes to the Old Testament with 'the eyes of an Assyriologist'.

10. E.g. in terms of religion, see Vriezen 1968.

11. E.g. Hoerth, Mattingly and Yamauchi 1994.

12. E.g. Larue 1967; Parrot 1955; 1958. A number of Assyriologists have worked on comparative themes of Mesopotamia and the Bible late in their career; see now von Soden 1985 (this is not in fact a synthesis but a collection of some of von Soden's previously published works on biblical and assyriological themes) and Bottéro 1986-92; 1993a; and 1994.

13. Talmon 1978a: 332; for a critique of finding comparisons as a modern variation of the long history of the effort to deny Israel any innovation, see Greenspahn 1991.

pagan tradition (i.e. Mesopotamia). Ironically, the British and French Enlightenment which had been imported to Germany had now returned in an altered form to a country which had previously been cool to biblical criticism. However, the fact that historical criticism was presently being done in Homeric studies made it easier for scholars to be open to the 'Germanisms' (Kraeling 1955: 89-97). However, the first impressions of the cuneiform tablets had little impact on nineteenth-century biblical criticism.

The first major excavations were done by the French, under P.E. Botta, who had knowingly begun working at Nineveh in 1842.¹⁴ Of course, the ancient name of the mound was Ninua, a fact which was known by the Medieval Arab geographers and Jewish travelers (e.g. Benjamin of Tudela in the twelfth century AD), but not to the European travelers or, for the most part, the European adventurers (Grayson 1997: 106). Though Botta soon left Nineveh, he directed his attentions to Khorsabad, where he found the palace of the Assyrian king Sargon II. Ironically, he mistakenly thought he had discovered Nineveh (see Budge 1925: 67). Botta's discoveries at Khorsabad, though, created an immense interest in Mesopotamian antiquities in Europe. Although the French government sponsored work on drawing the reliefs that had been brought to Paris, Botta never received the public recognition afforded many other adventurers to the Middle East. Nonetheless, the French government subsidized the magnificent volumes produced by Botta, although they were only accessible to a small number of persons (not including Layard!) (McCall 1998: 198). At any rate, A. de Longpérier was able to read the name Sargon, King of Assyria on one of the monuments, identifying him with the same mentioned in Isa. 20.1, the first name of a Mesopotamian king to be read by a modern scholar from outside the biblical text.¹⁵ Furthermore, V. Place succeeded Botta at Khorsabad and found more of the layout of the city of Sargon II (Place 1867-70).

Soon thereafter the Englishman, A.H. Layard, began work at Nimrud in 1845.¹⁶ Like Botta, he also thought he had found Nineveh, and his famous work, *Nineveh and its Remains* is in fact primarily a discussion of material

14. Botta and Flandin 1849-50; Botta 1843-44. For a recent discussion of the French involvement in the mid-nineteenth century, see Fontan (ed.) 1994.

15. Moorey 1991: 8. For French interest in Mesopotamian and biblical connections, see Vigouroux 1877.

16. Layard 1849; 1849-53; 1853. A compendium of Layard's (and Botta's) work was done by Bonomi 1852.

from Nimrud. Layard found at Nimrud the first dramatic sculptural link to the Old Testament, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III and the citation concerning Jehu of Israel. This, of course, was not proven until the obelisk was deciphered years later. At this early date there was a general understanding that the Assyrians and Babylonians led away the Israelites and Judahites captive (Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar were household names to the European public).¹⁷ Layard's finds were quickly disseminated and became topics for newspapers and popular journals. They impressed British and American societies who were still immersed in Old Testament piety. They not only hoped that Layard's investigations would help provide the correct understanding of Scripture, they were convinced that the Bible had been vindicated by his finds, especially since they believed that it confirmed the destruction of the Assyrian cities as foretold by the biblical prophets. Thus, Layard had to step very carefully as he came to conclusions about the finds and their relevance to the Old Testament, knowing that controversies were brewing back home. But, as long as the texts could not be read with any certainty, nothing could be firmly established.¹⁸ Others, however, were more cynical and supposed that if Layard attached biblical importance to his discoveries, he would become more famous and receive the backing of the religious public.¹⁹ Thus, Layard created a sensation with his books, both in Europe and America.²⁰ Many of the responses by theologians about the finds were premature and often irresponsible, as they tried to appeal to religious sensibilities (Kildahl 1959: 2-20). However, much of the hoopla about theological fears of the budding discipline of Assyriology was soon displaced with Darwin's revolutionary ideas.

Although both Botta and Layard knew their Bible as well as their classics, neither appeared to be interested in trying to prove the historical

17. Hincks in 1849 had deciphered the names of Esarhaddon and Sennacherib in the Layard's reliefs (1851b: 977); and Grotefend read Shalmaneser (Moorey 1991: 10). See Hincks 1851b; 1852; and H.C. Rawlinson found the names of the Israelite and Judahite kings of Jehu and Menahem in the Assyrian annals, e.g., see Rawlinson 1850. Also see Hincks 1853; 1850.

18. See the discussion in Larsen 1996: 155-64.

19. See Saggs 1984: 306; and Barnett 1960. Layard did not hesitate to make biblical correlations, e.g., 1849 I: 75-76. Unfortunately, many of his preliminary ideas were preached from British pulpits, giving rise to widespread 'logorrhoea', according to Kildahl 1959: 55-59, 147-49.

20. Others quickly followed with works of the same ilk; see Vaux 1855; Bonomi 1869. For Layard's influence in Britain and the US, see Kildahl 1959.

veracity of either traditions in regards to Mesopotamia. Of course, the public was interested in the elucidation of the Old Testament, while academics saw in their work an interesting specimen for understanding the evolution of the arts through sculpture and the like (Larsen 1996: 68). But the academic world was somewhat slow in incorporating the material uncovered by them.

In 1852, now ten years after the first excavations in the Tigris-Euphrates region, J.C. Hoefler published *Chaldée, Assyrie, Médie, Babylonie, Mésopotamie, Phénicie, Palmyrène*,²¹ where he collected all of the biblical and classical references to Mesopotamia, as well as descriptions of the area by travelers from medieval times to his present. Little, however, was discussed about the new finds. In the same year, E. Hincks and H.C. Rawlinson were able to partially decipher Sennacherib's account of the invasion of Judah, which appears to be remarkably similar to the biblical account in 2 Kgs 18.13-16.²² At last, many thought there was now convincing proof of the connections of Assyria and Israel, and that the Assyrian texts really did contain information that would help explain Old Testament passages. Although there was initial enthusiasm from the religious community, theologians were not able to explain the discrepancies in the two accounts. Ten years later Rawlinson published a provisional chronology of Assyrian history that provided a datum point for comparing it with biblical history. He also was able to figure out an account of Shalmaneser III's war with Jehu of Israel, which provoked great interest in Great Britain.²³ However, even Rawlinson's brother George, an Anglican clergyman, felt that the investigation of the Assyrian palaces had to be stopped because they came 'uncomfortably close to the holy text'.²⁴ Henry saw this as 'downright rot'.²⁵ At any rate, the decipherment of Assyrian cuneiform caused Assyriology to be acknowledged as a legitimate discipline.²⁶ Although there were apparent contradictions in the Assyrian and

21. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1852.

22. See the discussion by Hincks and Rawlinson in Layard 1853: 118-24.

23. His magnum opus was H. Rawlinson 1860-84.

24. Although he came to see the usefulness of Mesopotamian studies on shedding light upon the Old Testament world; see G. Rawlinson 1862: vi; 1859; 1871.

25. British Library 38977, 219-24, 31 March 1847 (as listed in Larsen 1996: 366); but see G. Rawlinson 1885. At any rate, Hincks was more open to stating biblical connections than was Rawlinson: see Hincks 1862a; 1862b.

26. The decipherment became official when Rawlinson, Talbot, Hincks and Oppert (1857) independently translated an inscription of Tiglath Pileser I.

biblical records, the two disciplines were intertwined, and continued to retain close ties, at least for the time being. By this time, over 50 personal and place names from the Bible had been identified in the Assyrian records (Layard 1849: 626-28). In fact, the natural link between the two disciplines was recognized by the founding of the Society of Biblical Archaeology in London in 1870. The Society's goal was to investigate the archeology and history of Assyria, as well as other biblical lands.

Arguably, the most sensational find of the early periods was made by George Smith, who had been enthralled with the Bible since he was a youth, and was almost obsessed with knowing more about the historical books of the Old Testament (Smith 1875: 9). On 3 December 1872, Smith addressed the Society of Biblical Archaeology and revealed a Babylonian account of the flood story, causing an ecclesiastical and scientific sensation in both Britain and France, even greater than that of Layard's time. Public interest in Mesopotamia was renewed. The flood texts were viewed by the public at the British Museum with great interest. Assyriology was now viewed as a sword to pierce the emerging German school of 'Higher Criticism', which was seen to be undermining the authority of the Old Testament.²⁷ Smith was offered funding to find the missing portion of the tablet back in northern Iraq. Although the Bible had had priority as having the oldest records of humanity, this new-found deluge text clearly delineated a problem.²⁸ How was there an earlier version of the Holy Text? Did it no longer have chronological priority? Smith refrained from providing his own interpretation. Was this just a later perverted version from a different religious system, or the origin of all flood stories? In retrospect, these issues ultimately caused the public to be wary of the Assyriology, a discipline which was not regarded as being encumbered with the authority of Scripture. It is at this point that the two disciplines began to drift further apart (Tadmor 1985: 265). Hebrew scholars began to suspect many of the Assyriologist's translations of texts. Based upon the cumulative effect of Assyriological discoveries and finds in other fields, the British resistance to biblical criticism was weakened (Kraeling 1955: 92).

27. Wiseman 1962: 11; Saggs 1999: 78. Many of these scholars, such as J. Wellhausen and R. Smith, were Semiticists who were drawn to biblical comparisons with Arabic studies, rather than Assyriology.

28. Smith 1876. B. Denys, in a review of Smith's work (*The Chaldean Account of Genesis* [London: Thomas Scott, 1877]), was one of the few who appreciated the seriousness of the issue.

Smith's successors in the British Museum continued in his tradition of looking for biblical parallels. W. Boscawen caused a public excitement by claiming that many of the difficulties in the book of Daniel, including the identity of Darius the Mede, had been cleared up.²⁹ Another Assyriologist interested in biblical connections was A.H. Sayce, an Anglican priest who was a prolific writer who periodically attempted to prove historical details of the Old Testament from Assyrian and Babylonian sources.³⁰ Sayce identified Nimrod with Gilgamesh, and while others identified from cuneiform sources the kings who fought with Abraham in Genesis 14. Others who were influenced by Smith were T. Pinches (1902), and indirectly S.R. Driver (1904), C.H.W. Johns (who became interested in Assyriology as a boy by reading the works of G. Smith [see Johns 1914]), A.T. Clay (1915; 1922), and L.W. King.³¹ We are even told by Wallis Budge that one wealthy banker paid an Assyriologist a retaining fee to look for biblical parallels (Budge 1925: 271). Many imaginary parallels concerning creation (see Delano 1985), paradise,³² the fall of man, Cain and Abel, and the Tower of Babel were reputedly found.³³ At any rate, by the end of the nineteenth century, Sayce was confident to say that the 'wave of historical skepticism' was ending before its spirit and principles had influenced popular thought (Sayce 1894b).

American involvement (which was slow in manifesting itself)³⁴ in the Near East stemmed profoundly from its interest in the historical veracity of the Bible and its interest in Semitic studies (see Brown 1888–89; 1909). In fact, the American Oriental Society was formed in 1842, just about the

29. Boscawen's best known work was Boscawen 1903.

30. E.g. see Sayce 1885; 1888; 1891; 1894a; 1895; 1907.

31. King 1918. For a study of King's impact on biblical and Assyriological studies, see Smith 1968.

32. E.g. see Neuman 1876: 66–67. Neuman, an American doctor of divinity, was convinced that 'disentombing' the dead past would go far to strengthen the faith of the weak and to dissipate the doubts of others (see Larsen 1992).

33. Observe the full title of Smith's work; *The Chaldean Account of Genesis containing the Description of the Creation, Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Tower of Babel, the Times of the Patriarchs, and Nimrod; Babylonian Fables, and Legends of the Gods; from the Cuneiform Inscriptions* (Smith 1876).

34. Kildahl (1959: 194–212) argues that the Americans were too preoccupied with domestic concerns until after the Civil War. There were only a handful of works describing the relationship of the new finds to the Bible; e.g. Davis 1852; Kidder 1851; Ward 1870; Tufton 1874; Merrill 1885. For an recent overview of American involvement in the Near East, see Kuklick 1996.

same time as Botta's excavations. A large number of relics were sent to the US by American missionaries who lived in the Near East. Many of these items ended up in religious institutions, which provided a religious context for their interpretation.³⁵ Nathaniel Schmidt, a professor at Colgate Divinity School, was actually put on trial for heresy and dismissed, as many of his translations and interpretations of cuneiform texts were considered contrary to Scripture.³⁶

Many Americans went to Germany to study Assyriology with F. Delitzsch, since there was no chair of Assyriology in either America or Great Britain. These included Hilprecht (1903),³⁷ F. Brown (the first to teach Akkadian in America),³⁸ G. Barton,³⁹ and M. Jastrow (1914), while W.F. Albright⁴⁰ and R.W. Rogers (1908) studied with the German P. Haupt in the US⁴¹; all wrote of the connections of the two fields. Brown, along with Driver, took issue with Sayce's uncritical view that Scripture had been confirmed by the findings of archeology (Brown 1896: 67;

35. E.g. Andover Theological Seminary, Episcopal Seminary (Alexandria, VA), and Auburn Theological Seminary; see Merrill 1885. Other religious schools which taught Akkadian included Baptist Theological Seminary (Newton Centre, MA), Protestant Episcopal Seminary (Philadelphia, PA), and the Summer School of Hebrew (Chicago, IL); see Adler 1887.

36. Schmidt left Colgate for Cornell in 1896, where he was able to flourish under markedly different circumstances; see Bishop 1962: 327. Later on during his tenure at Cornell, Schmidt suffered persecution, not because of 'heretical' Assyriological views, but because he refused to buy Liberty bonds during World War I (p. 429).

37. Hilprecht taught Old Testament theology at the University of Erlangen in Germany and came to Philadelphia in 1886 to become the editor of the *Sunday School Times* (see the discussion in Meade 1974: 35-37).

38. At Union Theological Seminary at New York, beginning in 1880. For his work on bridging the two disciplines, see Brown (1891), where he warned theologians not to discount the factual discoveries made by Assyriology nor to cause these facts to be fit into the corresponding biblical model. Brown, like W.F. Albright later, eventually devoted more time to Hebrew studies.

39. Barton 1916 was immensely popular and was reprinted many times.

40. It will be remembered that the great orientalist Albright began his career in Assyriology, and was somewhat skeptical of the historicity of the biblical traditions; see Long 1993. His unpublished doctoral dissertation was on the Assyrian flood account (1916a). Many of his early articles were Assyriological in nature; e.g. 1915; 1916b.

41. See Meade 1974. Haupt was editor of *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1893-1904), where he assembled scholars to do critical editions of Old Testament books.

Driver 1909; Sayce 1894a). Brown, however, was a positivist when it came to the historicity of Scripture in its relationship with the Assyrian texts:

When an Assyrian statement can be equally well explained in two different ways, we have the right, and are bound, as we should be in all historical study, to take that explanation which harmonizes with a corresponding Biblical statement (Brown 1891: 23).

With the impetus of de Sarzec's spectacular finds at Tello in the 1880s, the American Oriental Society, Archeological Institute of America, and the Society of Biblical Literature all began lobbying for an American expedition to Babylonia. A number of scholars (acting on their own, and not as representatives of any of the societies) came together to organize an expedition that would find material that supported contemporary interpretations of the Old Testament (Ward 1886: 5). A team was assembled to dig at Nippur in southern Mesopotamia, headed by the Reverend J. Peters and the German trained Assyriologist H. V. Hilprecht. Though the two did not always see eye to eye, the expeditions (1889–1900) collected thousands of texts which continue to be housed at the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania and studied by Assyriologists.⁴² The French finds at Susa of the Code of Hammurabi about this time also spurred interest in biblical parallels (see Cook 1904). Assyriology was also beginning to flourish in the late nineteenth century in Italy, Scandinavia, and Holland (Budge 1925: 241-44).

The Germans also showed an interest in making biblical connections with the Near East by at least 1880.⁴³ E. Schrader published *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament* (1885–88), a model of thorough scholarship that helped lead to the founding of the Deutsche Orient Gesellschaft (German Oriental Society) in 1898,⁴⁴ which led to the German excavations in Babylon and Assur. We are told that 'every student of Hebrew or of Assyrian consulted it, every Old Testament commentator quoted from it or made reference to it' (see Rogers 1912: xvii). Thus, it led many to be interested in biblical comparisons. In particular, H. Gunkel attacked the recent arguments of J. Wellhausen for the late dating of

42. See Hilprecht 1908; and Peters 1899. See the recent evaluation of the controversy in Kuklick 1996: 123-40.

43. For German (esp. in Berlin) work in the Near East, see Renger 1979. Schrader published a volume on Israelite prehistory as early as 1863. Also see Delitzsch 1881.

44. One of its purposes was to elucidate the world of the Bible; see Larsen 1987: 102.

Genesis 1 by showing close parallels with it and Babylonian mythology,⁴⁵ while F. Hommel (1897) studied comparative traditions of Israel and Babylonia.⁴⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century Old Testament scholars still ignored much of the textual material that might have put Babylonian civilization in a good light. They naively argued for the great superiority of Hebrew monotheism. But the Assyriologists fought back and defended the ethical and spiritual system of Babylonia, and even its ethical superiority. F. Delitzsch⁴⁷ argued against the high-handed manner with which his subject was viewed by Old Testament scholars.⁴⁸ Some argued that many Hebrew ideas actually originated in Mesopotamia and were borrowed by Israel. Much of this is understandable, if one realizes that before this, Assyriology had been seen as less than an auxiliary science of Old Testament and classical antiquity studies (see Zimmern 1889). The idea of Babylonian primacy was perfected by Delitzsch in 1902–1903.⁴⁹ In his lectures, he argued that Israel could only be studied in light of Babylonia, and in fact Israelite civilization was derived from Babylonia. Thus, comparative analysis was ultimately not productive, since Babylonia was the source of Hebrew civilization. He then argued that many Babylonian features were still clung to by the Judeo-Christian religious tradition (by way of the Old Testament). Thus, in a series of lectures, Assyriology went from an innocent scholarly pursuit to a discipline that had direct relevance to modern religion. Delitzsch also claimed that the divine name Yahweh was found in the Hammurabi code.⁵⁰ In the second lecture, Delitzsch argued against the divine inspiration of Scripture, went so far as to say that the Old Testament had dubious relevance for Christianity, and claimed

45. Gunkel 1885. Gunkel took issue with Wellhausen's isolationist view, as he refused to recognize the influence of Egypt and Mesopotamia upon Israelite literature.

46. Also done by the Dutch; e.g. Eerdmans 1891.

47. Budge (1925: 289) tells us that Delitzsch 'had heard a supernatural voice which assured him that he was to be George Smith's successor'. One can only assume that it was Enki, the friend of humankind.

48. He also had an antipathy for the Old Testament; see the discussion by Finkelstein 1958: 432.

49. Delitzsch 1902. There have been numerous discussions by Assyriologists and others of Delitzsch's famous lectures. In the early years, see e.g., Kittel 1903; Hommel 1902; Jensen 1902; and D. Gunkel 1903. For more recent reviews, see e.g., Finkelstein 1958; Reventlow 1983; Ebach 1986: 26-44; Huffmon 1987; Johanning 1988; Lehmann 1994; and Larsen 1995.

50. Since disproved, see Huffmon 1971.

that Jesus was a Galilean and not even a Semite.⁵¹ He also countered that the Old Testament was intellectually inferior to the Babylonian tradition. Predictably, the religious communities in Germany, Great Britain, and the US reacted negatively to his lectures. H. Gunkel (1904) complained about his naivety in knowledge of biblical interpretation and the history of religion. However, biblical scholars could not argue with him concerning Assyriological matters. Others vehemently argued against the idea of the ethical inferiority of the Old Testament, but primarily from doctrinal rather than strictly academic grounds.⁵² The third lecture bordered on anti-Semitism, as Delitzsch emphasized the non-Semitic roots of Mesopotamian civilization. Delitzsch went so far as to say that, since the Old Testament was entirely superfluous to the Christian church, one should rather read German cultural folk epics. He even advocated replacing the Old Testament with W. Schwaner's *Germanen-Bibel aus heiligen Schriften germanischer Völker*, which was a compilation of German folk traditions and theological ideas (Schwaner 1910). In fact, the Israelite Scriptures should no longer be considered as stemming from divine revelation, since they did not stand up to the scrutiny of science and scholarship. Those who continued to believe in the Scriptures were steeped in ignorance and apathy. Moreover, he was explicit in his defense of German nationalism, and the fact that those Germans who studied the tablets and excavated on the mounds of Mesopotamia did it for 'Germany's honor'. Most scholars, however, did not argue with his thesis directly. Delitzsch did show that the Babylonians had reached a high level of ethical and spiritual thought. Although many of his arguments can easily be refuted today (e.g. the Babylonian connections with the Hebrew Sabbath), they could not be so at the turn of the century because of an imprecise knowledge of Akkadian. The biblical scholars refused to appreciate Babylonian religion on its own terms and merits (see Finkelstein 1958: 438). The famous German New Testament scholar A. Harnack (1903) said that Delitzsch had said nothing new, although the general public was now part of the debate.

The response of the Assyriologists was to be very cautious and circumspect; in fact, most withdrew from the public scene. Delitzsch, however, was profoundly influential in the field because he trained many German, British, and American Assyriologists, including, R.F. Harper, D.G. Lyon, R.W. Rogers (1912), P. Haupt, C. Bezold, P. Jensen, and H. Zimmern.

51. For this treatment, see Davies 1975.

52. See Skinner 1910; even the Assyriologist Heidel (1946) indirectly hinted at the inferiority of Babylonian religion.

Delitzsch's lectures had an impact not only on Assyriology and biblical studies but on critical theology as well (Larsen 1995: 97). The triumphant view that Assyriology and its discoveries had vindicated the biblical record and its historicity had been permanently marred. After all, Israel was only a small part of a much larger ancient Near Eastern world that had constant interaction with each other (see Winckler 1906a: 15).

Delitzsch made public the views of many Assyriologists, who now espoused to a school of thought called 'Pan-Babylonianism', championed by H. Winckler, who argued that all world myths were reflections of Babylonian astral religion which had developed about 3000 BCE.⁵³ H. Zimmern argued that the Babylonian creation epic was an older version of the New Testament and that the story of Christ's passion was nothing but a repetition of the 'myth of Bel-Marduk of Babylon'.⁵⁴ P. Jensen argued that the Mesopotamian myths (Gilgamesh in particular) were the foundation for all world folk tales, including the Bible (Jensen 1890; 1906; 1924). Israelite history was simply a series of repetitions of the Gilgamesh story. Even the story of Jesus of Nazareth was simply a retelling of Gilgamesh. In fact, the Kaiser himself jumped on the 'Babel bandwagon' and argued that Jesus was a non-Jew who actually opposed the message of the Old Testament. Other German scholars at the turn of the century argued for all cosmology and other items coming from Babylon.⁵⁵ Delitzsch himself continued to hold to his views (Delitzsch 1920; 1921). The Pan-Babylonians, however, were considered indiscriminate in their hypotheses, and most of their extreme ideas were rejected by both biblical and Assyriological scholars.⁵⁶ Pan-Babylonism did leave its mark to some extent on biblical studies. For example, Old Testament scholars such as H. Gunkel⁵⁷ and A. Jeremias (1911) began to examine literary types in the Old Testament in the light of Mesopotamian literature. Biblical scholars now

53. Evidently first coined by Jeremias (1906) in his preface; also see 1904. Jeremias (1903) also commented on Delitzsch's famous lectures. Pan-babylonianism was spread largely through the efforts of Winckler 1901; 1905; and 1907a.

54. Zimmern 1906-18; 1901; 1910. Also see Radau 1908.

55. Winckler also discussed Pan-Babylonianism, *Babel und Bibel*, and other issues in 1906b; 1906c; 1907b.

56. E.g. Schmidt 1908 and Kugel 1910. Clay (1890) led the charge to discredit Pan-Babylonism in America.

57. Though Gunkel complained about the extreme methods of Delitzsch, he took advantage of using Mesopotamian literary themes to understand the Old Testament; see Gunkel 1904.

began to accept the fact that the Bible could be studied in the context of the ancient Near East (see Kittel 1921; Gressman 1924). Thus, the massive corpus of Assyriological literature began to be used to illuminate the entirety of ancient Near Eastern culture, not just ad hoc Old Testament literary and historical problems.⁵⁸

By the 1920s Assyriologists began to de-emphasize the theme of origins, and were now intent to stress the distinctive elements of Mesopotamian civilization.⁵⁹ Thus, they attempted to assert their autonomy,⁶⁰ calling for the study of Mesopotamia for its own sake.⁶¹ B. Landsberger argued that any culture is conceptually autonomous (like the great German thinker Johann Herder)⁶² and would be misunderstood if viewed from the concepts of another culture.⁶³ But Landsberger understood that because of the sheer amount of textual material the Assyriologist has at his/her disposal, they have rarely been afforded the time to reflect upon their discipline and determine its long-term goals. At any rate, the Assyriologist has left undefined its relationship with biblical studies, let alone its relationship to world history (Wiseman 1962).

Ur

The 1920s also saw a flurry of spectacular discoveries in Mesopotamia that appeared to have relevance to the Bible. At the site of Ur (the biblical Ur of the Chaldees), C.L. Woolley, a follower of Sayce (rather than S.R. Driver), was not only convinced he had found the city of Abraham (Woolley 1936), but also believed he had found the biblical flood, which he announced to the world in 1929. He was contrasted by the Assyriologist S. Langdon, who argued that the flood deposits found at Kish more closely resembled that mentioned in the Gilgamesh epic (Woolley 1930). These

58. See the discussion by Saggs 1969: 13.

59. Although see Hehn 1913; Stummer 1922; and Bonkamp 1939.

60. Still, some comparative studies of Israel and Mesopotamia continued: e.g. Ermoni 1910 and Castellino 1940.

61. E.g. Landsberger 1926; even Landsberger (1967) occasionally wrote on biblical comparisons; as did his colleague, Poebel 1932.

62. Even Herder had dreamt of the rediscovery of the ancient Near East for the purposes of understanding the origins of European civilization; see the discussion in Larsen 1987: 96-97.

63. Oppenheim (1977: 21-22) has echoed this concern about scholars who have attempted to connect Assyriological data with the Old Testament in some acceptable way, and others who find haphazard comparisons.

ideas have spawned many articles which have discussed the flood's historicity (or lack thereof).⁶⁴

Nuzi

The cuneiform texts discovered at the excavations at Nuzi (1925–31) have long been a mine of comparative information for the Old Testament.⁶⁵ E. Chiera, the first director of the Nuzi excavations had received a Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Theology from Crozer Theological Seminary, and was thus sensitive to these issues. Furthermore, R.H. Pfeiffer, also one of the Nuzi directors, was educated at the Theological School of Geneva and received a Bachelor of Divinity from the University of Geneva in 1915. Very soon after their discovery, there was a flurry of scholarship observing the striking putative parallels to the biblical Patriarchs in the socio-economic and legal spheres.⁶⁶ The consensus was that the two also must have shared the same chronological proximity.

However, in the past generation there has been no consensus as to the relative importance of the Nuzi material for biblical studies, especially with the impetus of the publication of other Nuzi texts.⁶⁷ There has been a re-evaluation,⁶⁸ and some have rejected any Nuzi connections to the Bible altogether.⁶⁹ However, the academic pendulum has swung back to the middle, with what B. Eichler calls a 'more sobering and responsible attitude toward the usefulness and importance of the Nuzi tablets and the Bible' (Eichler 1989: 107-19). Though the Nuzi–biblical parallels cannot solve chronological issues, they are a source of documentation for the socio-economic practices in Mesopotamia, which will help illuminate biblical law and practices (Selman 1983; Eichler 1989: 107-19). Thus, many have agreed with the rules of comparative method listed by W.M. Clark (1977: 143), although there are still many concerns about biblical

64. See Mallowan 1964; Raikes 1966. However, there are skeptics (Lenzen 1964) and those who hold to the symbolic meaning of the flood (Kilmer 1972; Carter 1977).

65. View the preliminary statements by S. Smith 1926.

66. E.g. S. Smith 1932; Chiera 1932–33; Ginsberg and Maisler 1933; Mendelsohn 1935; Gordon 1935a; 1935b; 1935c; 1935d; 1936; 1937; 1940; Burrows 1937; 1940; Lewy 1938; 1939; 1940; Speiser 1938; 1940; 1964; 1955; 1967; Albright 1961.

67. See the discussion in Eichler 1989: 112.

68. Beginning with de Vaux 1949; Greenberg 1962; Van Seters 1968; 1969; Mullo-Weir 1967–68; 1967; and Freedman 1970.

69. Van Seters 1975: 65-103; Thompson 1974: 196-297; 1978. Also, see Thompson's most recent work 1999.

connections (Morrison 1983). Other text collections (e.g. from Alalakh and Emar) show that the Nuzi customs may have been common throughout a wide chronological and geographic range, while others have argued that first millennium BCE customs are more relevant for the biblical sphere (or not relevant at all).⁷⁰

Ugarit

Arguably, over the past 70 years there has been more written concerning the relationship of Ugarit and the Bible than any other single Syro-Mesopotamian site. The first generation saw a flurry of activity to show numerous parallels with Ugarit and the Bible, both real and imagined, as P. Craigie has noted.⁷¹ There was the usual novelty of studying newly found materials that led to hasty conclusions (Craigie 1979a), but on the whole there was not much excess in comparative studies.⁷² There were, however, specific studies that elucidated comparisons between Psalm 29 and selections of Ugaritic poetry,⁷³ although many have seen these connections as more complicated than first supposed (Fensham 1963a; Craigie 1972; 1979b). Ginsberg (1945) also saw a comparison with Deut. 14.21 and an Ugaritic text that had a line that Virolleaud translated 'cook a kid in milk' (Virolleaud 1933), although some have argued that this connection is tenuous (Craigie 1977a). By the 1960s new developments arose. New mythical and liturgical texts from Ugarit were discovered that initially raised excitement among comparative scholars (see Gray 1978). However, some argued that the connections between the two were ambiguous at best, and problematic (see Smith 1952). M. Dahood argued that the Hebrew language had to be relearned in light of new data from Ugarit.⁷⁴ But, over the years, many have claimed that a 'Pan-Ugaritism' has

70. Again, see Van Seters 1968; 1975; and Thompson 1974.

71. Albright (1966: 6-7) was at the forefront of this.

72. See Jack 1935; de Vaux 1937; Baumgartner 1938; 1940; 1941; 1947; Dussaud 1937; de Langhe 1945; Patton 1944; Ginsberg 1945; and Coppens 1946. Later surveys include Rainey 1965; Kapelrud 1965; Jacob 1960; Pfeiffer 1962; Gray 1957; 1978; Barker 1976; Mihalic 1981; Cazelles 1985; O'Connor 1987; and Loretz 1990a.

73. Ginsberg (1938) theorized about the idea that Ps. 29 was originally a Phoenician hymn. This was substantiated by Gaster 1946-47; Cross 1950; Freedman 1972.

74. Dahood 1962; 1966-70; 1968; and numerous articles in 1972-81. For a recent critique of Dahood's comparisons, see Loretz 1972; 1987; 1990b; Talmon 1978b; Schroer 1980; Caquot 1988; Curtis 1994; and Barr 1994.

resulted,⁷⁵ primarily because of the large Claremont project directed by L. Fisher (Fisher *et al.* 1972–81) and the large amount of works by Dietrich and Loretz.⁷⁶

The past 30 years has seen a reasoned analysis of comparisons in many areas.⁷⁷ Craigie has argued that the literary comparisons of Ugarit and Israel are flawed since the two traditions used different literary forms (Fisher and Knutson 1969; Craigie 1971). Others have argued against the comparative school of Dahood (Stuart 1976). Still, comparative analysis of poetic imagery (e.g. Watson 1976; Cross 1973: 112–44; Craigie 1974; 1978), parallel word pairs (Cassuto 1971: 25–32), and poetic meter continue (Gibson 1978: 140; Loretz and Kottsieper 1987). J. Barr (1968) has urged caution for the use of Ugaritic to establish new etymologies for Hebrew. Others have argued a connection of feudalism in Ugarit and in the Bible (see Gray 1952). There have been many comparisons of Ugaritic and Hebrew religion, most of which emphasized the undeniable contrasts between the two, but later studies have shown a continuity between them.⁷⁸ Hebrew Poetry and Ugaritic connections have been studied by Albright (1944) and his students.⁷⁹ At any rate, the recent works on Ugarit and the Bible are numerous.⁸⁰

Mari

Mari is a prime example of the need of caution of the use of the comparative method, since interesting comparisons can often lead to shallow or extreme conclusions. Both W.F. Albright (1956: 256) and A. Parrot, the great excavator of Mari (the son of a Lutheran minister and devout in his own right), succumbed to making direct but ultimately unconvincing connections between the Mari population and the Patriarchs, and the tribe

75. Criticized by de Moor and van der Lugt 1974; Craigie 1977b; Donner 1967; and Held 1974.

76. *Ugarit Forschungen and Alter Orient und Altes Testament*.

77. For a comparison of the literary relationships, see Craigie 1971; and Healey 1984.

78. Kaiser 1962; Habel 1964; Clifford 1972; Schmidt 1966; Miller 1973; Albright 1968; van der Toorn 1991; L'Heureux 1974; de Moor and Sandars 1991.

79. Cross and Freedman 1948; 1950; Cross 1955; 1968; 1973; Freedman 1976; and Robertson 1972.

80. Curtis 1985; Craigie 1983; Brooke, Curtis and Healey 1994; Pope 1994; and Petersen 1998. A recent ASOR Plenary Session in Orlando, Florida (18 November 1998) featured A.R. Millard and D. Pardee speaking on the subject of 'Ugarit and the Bible'.

Benjamin, in particular.⁸¹ Parrot, however, did revitalize biblical archeology for the French-speaking public in a way not seen since Botta.

Since the commencement of the publication of Mari texts after World War II, and because of the connection of Mari being in the reputed homeland of the patriarchs (Gibson 1962; Mathews 1981; 1986), there have been numerous examples of comparative research in the field of personal names (e.g. Jean 1954), tribal organization (Malamat 1962; 1968), rituals (Speiser 1958), and other various Israelite customs (Cazelles 1967; Malamat 1973). One of the most discussed comparisons are the Mari prophetic texts.⁸² However, E. Noort has argued that the relationship between the two prophetic traditions is ambiguous at best.⁸³ But the Israelite and Mari material need to be seen as two separate corpora, even if similar (Malamat 1989: 27-29). He advocates a typological or phenomenological method. Efforts should be concentrated on examining typical phenomena, seeking out common sets of concepts and practices and institutions. One must not forget the immense chronological gap between the two corpora. When such similarities are seen in aggregate, they cannot simply be seen as representing common patterns of human nature.⁸⁴ Proper comparisons also involve the contrasting approach. The very nature of the source material is fundamentally different, as the Mari texts are first hand daily material, while the biblical text has been processed, and composed later than its events (see Malamat 1983). As with Ugarit, there are many current studies on the relationship of Mari and the Bible.⁸⁵

Alalakh

When Woolley began working at Alalakh in 1937, he was interested in finding evidence of cultural connections between Syria and the eastern Mediterranean area.⁸⁶ Though not directly related to the Bible, the Alalakh

81. Parrot 1950; 1954; 1962; 1967. Mari had been a site of major concern for biblical scholars soon after the commencement of the excavations; see Bea 1940.

82. Among the more recent are: Schult 1966; Huffmon 1968; Buss 1969; Moran 1969; Ross 1970; Craghan 1975; Ellermeier 1977; Schmitt 1982; Sasson 1983; Malamat 1987; Parker 1993; and Barstad 1993.

83. Noort 1977; and the review by Sasson 1980.

84. On the comparative approach, see Gelb 1980; Millard 1983; and Lemaire 1985.

85. See the 'Table ronde sur Mari et la Bible', in *RA* 92.1-2 (1998) and 93.1 (1999); and Malamat 1998.

86. The excavations were from 1937-39 and 1946-49; see Woolley 1955, and a more popular account, Woolley 1953.

material has been considered to shed light on the greater Syro-Palestinian context of the Bible (see Tsevat 1958). The ubiquitous Habiru have also been found there, but are viewed as an important mercenary class in the Alalakh texts. This term, of course, has been compared to the biblical term Hebrew on many occasions.⁸⁷ Moreover, some Assyriologists have argued that the biographical inscription of Idrimi appears to anticipate the biographical stories of Joseph and David (Oppenheim 1955; Buccellati 1962), and has even been compared to the Jephthah story in Judges 11.⁸⁸ At any rate, the Alalakh material has been considered a valuable source of comparative (and contrastive) material (see Wiseman 1967). Like Nuzi, the customs (e.g. marriage contracts) at Alalakh have been compared to the Patriarchal periods, although it is admitted that the parallels from Alalakh are less clear (Hess 1994: 204). Certainly the connection of Alalakh *hupsu* ('poor') with Hebrew *hopsi* ('poor') is vague at best (Hess 1994: 208-209). As with Nuzi, J. Van Seters has rejected the Alalakh comparisons with the Patriarchal narratives (Van Seters 1975: 100-103). R. Hess in this volume argues that the cumulative weight of comparisons with the Bible shows a common cultural milieu for both. He argues that we need to view Alalakh comparisons on a case by case basis (Hess 1994: 199-215).

Ebla

No Syro-Mesopotamian site in recent memory has appealed to the religious sensibilities of those interested in biblical studies more than Tell Mardikh/Ebla.⁸⁹ The Italians under, P. Matthiae, labored there for over 12 years before they uncovered a large cache of cuneiform tablets in the room of a palace (1974-76).⁹⁰ The epigrapher G. Pettinato (1980) called the script used there 'proto-Canaanite', a potential ancestor to biblical Hebrew. For the next five years many exceptional and unsubstantiated claims were made about the significance of the Ebla texts and their relationship to the Bible, many of which came from those who had never seen the texts, or were not familiar with cuneiform. Nonetheless, there was also much

87. There are numerous studies concerning the Habiru; Bottéro 1954; Greenberg 1955; Loretz 1984a; and Na'aman 1986.

88. Greenstein and Marcus 1976: 76-77. At any rate, the Alalakh material has been considered a valuable source of comparative (and contrastive) material.

89. For an overview of the controversies of Ebla and the Bible to 1979, see Bermant and Weitzman 1979.

90. General works on Ebla include, Matthiae 1981; and Pettinato 1981.

speculation among the scholarly world (Pettinato 1976; 1980; Freedman 1978). D.N. Freedman made his conclusions about the earlier historical context for the biblical patriarchs based upon unpublished Ebla tablets, which were preliminarily read by M. Dahood and Pettinato.⁹¹ Dahood made many preliminary statements concerning the connection between Ugaritic forms and Eblaite (e.g. the fact that Ebla sheds light on the Minor Prophets).⁹² The present consensus is that Ebla has no bearing on the Minor Prophets, the historical accuracy of the biblical Patriarchs, Yahweh worship, or Sodom and Gomorrah (see Merrill 1983). Many of these preliminary analyses came into the popular press as truth, and thus great amounts of misinformation leaked to the public.⁹³

The second epigrapher, A. Archi spent some effort in refuting many of the premises of Dahood and Pettinato, ignoring most of the sensationalism, primarily from the American press (Archi 1979; 1981). He argued that the supposed evidence for Yahweh at Ebla was questionable and ambiguous, and that the kings of Ebla were not anointed like the kings of Israel (contra Pettinato 1977), the function of Eblaite judges does not appear to be like that of Israel, there is no Genesis creation story (Pettinato 1977: 231-32), and Ebla place names do not easily correspond to the Bible names or the 'cities of the plain'.⁹⁴ The Eblaite connections with the Hebrew language are unclear.⁹⁵

The excitement concerning the Ebla material has somewhat died down. In Pettinato's more recent works there is still a discussion concerning biblical connections, primarily in the field of geography (Pettinato 1991: 179-80; Hallo 1992). The trend has been to exhibit the fact that Ebla has an importance all of its own as an incipient Old Syrian civilization at the advent of urbanism. Thus, in the past 15 years, only a miniscule amount of effort has been put to comparisons of Ebla and the Bible, compared to the large amount of work on the civilization of Ebla itself. This is preferable.⁹⁶

91. Dahood and Pettinato 1982 (a large bibliography of newspaper and popular articles was compiled by M. O'Connor: 331-35); Dahood 1978; 1979; 1981a; 1982; 1984; and 1987.

92. Dahood 1983a; and Shea 1983. Greenfield (1988) argues that a little restraint would have stopped some of these extraordinary theories.

93. With the help of H. Shanks, editor of *BAR*ev.

94. Echoed by Biggs 1980.

95. Dahood 1978: 81-112. For a reasoned view of Ebla in its Palestinian context, see Vigano and Pardee 1984.

96. See for language, Dahood 1982; 1984; Müller 1984; Baldacci 1987; Althann 1983. For religion, see Dahood 1981b; 1983b; Müller 1981; and Loretz 1984b.

Emar

Although it has not had the publicity of either Ebla, Mari, or for that matter Ugarit, the texts of Emar may shed more light on biblical customs than do the other textual corpora. Emar is physically closer to Israel than any of the others. Emar was fated to be in the background of the Ebla controversies of the late 1970s and 1980s. The construction of the Tabqa Dam in Syria caused the Middle Euphrates site of Emar to be regarded as a salvage project, commenced by a French team in 1972 (see Margueron 1995). Six seasons of work were sandwiched into five years (1972–76; see Pitard 1996: 14). Nearly 2000 texts were found, most of which were published a decade later by D. Arnaud (1985–86). Thus, the excitement surrounding the other textual corpora has been slow in coming with Emar. The research concerning Emar and biblical studies has thus far been reasoned and tentative (see, e.g., Arnaud 1979; 1981; Tsukimoto 1989; Fleming 1995). This, however, in light of past experience, is likely to change. Emar was evidently not ever a great kingdom in its own right. The site of Emar was mentioned in both the Ebla and Mari archives, and later became a Hittite protectorate in the Late Bronze Age. The relationship of Emar to biblical studies is, as D. Fleming says in this volume, most striking in the religious sphere. The concept of anointing is found at Emar, as the *NIN.DINGER* priestess is anointed on the first day of the festival (Fleming 1992). The Emar festivals have various requirements that may be compared to the Levitical regulations (Fleming 1995: 144), and the elements of the biblical festival system have some correspondence to the *zukurru* calendar (Fleming 1995: 144; and his essay in this volume, see below). Emar also has the prophetic office of *nabu*, already well known at Mari (Fleming 1995: 145). Others have argued that the Emar inheritance texts bear a resemblance to the Nuzi material, and thus to Genesis 31 (see Huehnergard 1985), while still others claim that Emar ‘provides an empirical model for the Mesopotamian textual tradition, exemplifying the possibilities of transmission to Iron Age Israel’ (Hoskisson 1991: 21–32). B. Schmidt has recognized connections concerning the care of the dead at Emar and Israel (Schmidt 1992). Fleming concludes that Emar’s mixed urban and small-town Syrian communal life offers a closer social comparison for Israel than even Ugarit (Fleming 1995: 147). At any rate, Emar’s indigenous ritual texts represent a unique source of understanding ancient Syrian religions, with texts that are distinct from the Ugaritic corpus.

Synthesis

The tendency in the last 30 years has been to overemphasize the importance of new discoveries to the Old Testament, and then when the flaws become obvious, approach comparative data from the standpoint of skepticism, causing many to completely ignore comparative material altogether (Roberts 1985: 96). Scholars have had difficulty between 'parellelomania' and isolating the culture in question. The comparative method has been attacked as a form of 'pseudorthodoxy'.⁹⁷ One scholar who has attempted the middle ground between the comparative and contrastive methods is W.W. Hallo, who espouses a contextual method, which emphasizes both similarities (comparative) and differences (contrastive), also looking for diachronic and synchronic variations.⁹⁸ Hallo's goal, 'is not to find the key to every biblical phenomenon in some ancient Near Eastern precedent, but rather to silhouette the biblical text against its wider literary and cultural environment' (Hallo 1991: 24). Thus, we must not succumb either to 'parallelomania'⁹⁹ or to 'parallellophobia'.¹⁰⁰

Since World War II there has been an explosion of comparative studies of Israel and Mesopotamia from scholars of both fields. There have been a number of collections of primary source materials from the ancient Near East and their relationships to the Bible.¹⁰¹ The primary English volumes were compiled by J. Pritchard and others.¹⁰² Other works include general studies (Müller 1991), literature,¹⁰³ pictorial studies (Keel 1974; 1977;

97. M. Smith 1969 and even advocating a 'contrasting' method; Hallo 1977 but see the caveat by Roberts 1976.

98. Apparently first coined by Parker (1979–80) who emphasizes both similarities (comparative) and differences (contrastive), also looking for diachronic and synchronic variations (Hallo 1980). Hallo has led four National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminars which have had this as its primary theme: *SIC* 1; *SIC* 2; *SIC* 3; *SIC* 4. See the review of *SIC* 1 by Pardee 1985; also see van der Toorn 1985.

99. Sandmel (1962) describes it as 'that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction', p. 1.

100. See the discussion of Ratner and Zuckerman 1986.

101. Since the publication of Winckler 1892; Gressman 1909; and Galling 1950.

102. Since 1945, see, *DOTT*; *ANET*; Beyerlin 1978; *COS*; and Matthews and Benjamin 1997.

103. Lambert 1954; Kramer 1959; Lowenstam 1980; Soll 1988; Walton 1989; and Gordon and Rendsberg 1997.

1978), women (Frymer-Kensky 1989; 1992; van der Toorn 1994), sacrifice (Hallo 1987), religion,¹⁰⁴ prophecy (H. Weippert 1985; Millard 1985), cosmology (Heidel 1946; 1951; Lambert 1965; Saggs 1978), law,¹⁰⁵ treaties,¹⁰⁶ hymns and psalms,¹⁰⁷ wisdom,¹⁰⁸ death and the afterlife (Lewis 1989; Tropper 1989; 1994), genealogies (Malamat 1968; Wilson 1977), and historical literature (Speiser 1957; Albrektson 1967; Younger 1990; and various contributions in *FTH*).

Many have viewed the past century and a half of relations of Mesopotamia and the Bible to be cyclical in nature.¹⁰⁹ Typically, there was a furor because of the announcement of a rumor that a large archive was found that had the potential of verifying the biblical text. Often, unverified statements were made by conservative Old Testament scholars who were concerned about the historicity of the text (which is not to say that the subject of historicity has no place in biblical studies). Of course, the publication of a selected portion of an archive causes excitement because of the supposed biblical parallels. However, the publication of a larger corpus permits the more precise contexts for many of these parallels, but the Assyriologist then shows the uniqueness of the area in question. The philologist begins to show that the linguistic parallels are superficial. It often takes time for the biblical scholar interested in parallels to appreciate the Assyriologist's contributions. J. Sasson has promoted some goals that should be set forth before making biblical connections; what are the

104. de Fraine 1954; Draffkorn 1957; de Jonge 1959; Moran 1965; Gamper 1966; Weippert 1972; McKay 1973; Cogan 1974; Wright 1987; Gammie and Perdue 1990; Dietrich and Loretz 1992; Bottéro 1993b; and van der Toorn 1997.

105. Szlechter 1954; Mendenhall 1954; Greenberg 1960; Yaron 1970; Paul 1970; Lambert 1972; Boecker 1980; van der Toorn 1985; Westbrook 1985; and Epstein 1986.

106. Other than Mendenhall (1955), most biblical scholars have either ignored or paid scant attention to Wiseman's publication of the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon (Wiseman 1958). Mendenhall wrote before their discovery. This is in spite of the fact that Assyriologists have shown stark similarities between the treaties and Deut. 28 (Borger 1961; and Frankena 1965). See Fensham 1962; 1963b; Hillers 1964; 1969; Weinfeld 1970; 1973; and McCarthy 1978.

107. A few works were devoted to this before World War II, e.g., Driver 1926; and Widengren 1936. More recent works include Dalglish 1962; Hallo 1968; Gerstenberger 1971; and Ferris 1992.

108. Noth and Winton Thomas 1955; Gray 1970; Cooper 1971; Sasson 1973; Waltke 1979; and Weinfeld 1988.

109. Sasson 1980: 128-30. Much of the remainder of the paragraph comes from Sasson, and Greenspahn 1991: 6.

differences in contexts? Are the texts in question the same literary genre? Is etymological kinship always useful in helping to make comparisons (Sasson 1980: 129)?

I end this survey with an admonition from a prominent Assyriologist:

We shall always have with us the third- and fourth-hand popularizers who will pound and mash significant additions to the fund of knowledge into an amorphous and misleading pabulum for the consumption of the semi-literate. The field of biblical history and archeology has had more than its fair share of treatment. But it is quite another thing for reputed scholars in the field to lend their own prestige and authority to similar endeavors... I believe that the first responsibility of such scholars after the requirements of their own researches is to inform the truly literate portion of the general public...of the very substantial gains made in recent decades toward our understanding of the Bible, and the world of which it was a part. And this must be done in a way that can inspire the confidence of the educated lay public in the methods and critical standards of biblical scholarship (Finkelstein 1958: 349).

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