

DIVERGENT DIVINE MEMORIES:  
DIVINE NATIONAL POWER, CULTURAL MEMORY, AND THE  
DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY OF 1&2 KINGS

BY

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## Abbreviations

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| <i>IEJ</i>    | Israel Exploration Journal                                       |
| <i>JBL</i>    | Journal of Biblical Literature                                   |
| <i>JISMOR</i> | Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions |
| <i>JSOT</i>   | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament                       |
| JSOTSup       | Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series     |
| OTL           | Old Testament Library Series                                     |
| <i>PEQ</i>    | Palestine Exploration Quarterly                                  |
| <i>SJOT</i>   | Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament                        |
| <i>RA</i>     | Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale                  |
| <i>VT</i>     | Vetus Testamentum  |
| <i>ZAW</i>    | Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft               |

## **Abstract**

The following thesis seeks to read the history as presented by the biblical text as the cultural memory of ancient Israel. Scholars widely regard the historical books (Joshua-2 Kings) as having been influenced by the ideology of Deuteronomy and therefore find a significant compositional level(s) to the text which they call the Deuteronomistic History. The Deuteronomistic History read as cultural memory separates the modernist link between historical referent and its narrative representation and as such highlights the particular social, political, and religious contexts and motivations of those composing this history. The thesis raises the question: does this memory preserve a singular understanding of divine national power? Through an exegetical examination of 1 Kings 18, 2 Kings 5, and 2 Kings 3, the contention is argued that at the earliest iterations of these texts there are divergent understandings of divine national power (monotheistic, monolatrous, and polytheistic), but later phrases of the Deuteronomistic History alongside of changing cultural dynamics in ancient Israel resulted in a re-remembering of these conceptions that eventually became universally monotheistic.

## Introduction

### I. Setting the Stage

In a special issue of the February 2006 *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions*, Peter Machinist opens his piece on monotheism in the Hebrew Bible with a juxtaposition of the concept of monotheism and linear, goal-orientated history as the two principal contributions of the biblical text on human culture and history. Machinist notes that the daunting enterprise of defining biblical monotheism led scholars of the mid twentieth century to look at the text's view of history as something unique, but further contends that continued research into Ancient Near Eastern historiography yielded similar views of history while opening up other legitimate understandings at the same time. Thus we have seen a reversal in trends; Machinist writes,

The strength of this twin challenge has led to a marked decline in proposals about history as biblical Israel's distinctive contribution to humanity, and, in turn, helped to pave the way for a return to monotheism as a leading issue in biblical culture. Indeed, that return has become increasingly prominent in biblical scholarship in the last thirty years...<sup>1</sup>

He goes on to observe that over the past two centuries four terms have seemingly provided a structural framework for the discussion of biblical divine conception: polytheism, monotheism, monolatry, and henotheism. While each term has suffered severe definitional debate, particularly in the context of Ancient Israel, the following descriptions are summarized from Machinist's classifications. Polytheism is a view that holds the universe to be populated by a plurality of gods who are a part of a dynamic (dependent on socio-historical location) system or set of interlocked systems that places

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Machinist, "Once More: Monotheism in Biblical Israel," *JISMOR 1 Special Issue* (2006): 26.

the gods represented into a hierarchy or hierarchies of authority, and who can be worshiped in a plurality of ways. Monotheism, in a very strict sense, is the recognition that there is only a single deity in the universe who alone can be worshipped. Monolatry and henotheism fall in between these two scales of conception. To quote Machinist, “Monolatry describes the situation in which a particular community accepts and worships only one god for itself, although it may acknowledge that other communities have their own deities, which may, in turn, be recognized as the equivalent of, or inferior, even subordinate to, their own god.”<sup>2</sup> Henotheism is possibly the most problematic, often used synonymously with monolatry, but may best understood in a formulation still focused on singularity: a view that holds that the deity is one who has absorbed or embodied within itself other deities with their respective power, authority, and function in a process that has not fully erased all traces, or worship, of these others. More simply, henotheism is the notion of the many in the one. To this list could be added, Mark S. Smith’s recent contribution of the notion of “summodeism.” Smith defines,

the term “summodeism” may be used to convey the notion of one deity as the sum and summit of the reality of other deities. Understood in this way, “summodeism” conveys a theism in which the deities are regarded as aspects or functions of a chief god, with political power often key to its expression.<sup>3</sup>

The history of scholarship in this arena has, at the risk of significant understatement, a long and involved narrative which has seen numerous formulations, debates, theories, and controversies. Machinist is cautious to move forward at this point,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 169. One might clearly question the distinction between summodeism and henotheism by this definition. Drawing the usage of henotheism back to Fredrick Max Müller, who “used the word to capture the idea of belief in single gods considered supreme in some sense without denying the existence of other deities,” Smith highlights the intellectual baggage associated with the term, and makes the distinction between summodeism and henotheism along these lines, “It (henotheism) involves the sum or totality of divinity, but not its summit,” 168. That summit of a political hierarchy among the divine is for Smith the notion of summodeism.

but finds that four major trends typify this narrative. The first holds that monotheism, as defined above, is a late phenomenon in the history of Israel as presented by the biblical text; possibly as late as the sixth century BCE and the Babylonian Exile. However, the point here is not so much the issue of lateness, but the developmental character of monotheism as the end result of a long cultural process of divine conceptualization.<sup>4</sup> The second trend advocates the exact opposite thesis, as that presented in the first, maintaining that monotheism was not late in the history of Israel but evident at the beginning of the national community of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Here it is arguable that the history of the biblical text as presented is taken to be reliable at face value. Machinist notes that besides these poles there has been a third trend in the discussion which has sought to find a middle ground between these positions. “For this understanding, monotheism, that is to

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<sup>4</sup> Machinist highlights that this developmental perspective should be traced back to its prominence in the nineteenth century as part of the larger European academic movement which saw all biblical literature, religion, and history on an evolutionary trajectory, and exemplified by Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), 27. Additionally and more recently, much of Mark S. Smith’s early work would fall under this trend, particularly *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1990, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2002) and *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (2001), but it should be noted that Smith does not acknowledge an evolutionary scheme, in the loaded sense of developmental advantage, but rather seeks to highlight the long socio-political process of external and internal differentiation.

<sup>5</sup> For this contention, Machinist holds the work of the Israeli Scholar Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889-1963), especially his multivolume *History of Israelite Religion* (1937-1956), introduced to English audiences through Moshe Greenburg’s condensed translation *The Religion of Israel* (1960), to be representative, 27-28. Also Jan Assmann’s *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (2008) could be placed in this trajectory. Working from Kaufmann’s interpretations, Assmann bases his understanding of Israelite monotheism on the much earlier memory of what he calls the “Mosaic distinction.” For Assmann this “Mosaic Distinction” between Israel and the rest of the Ancient Near Eastern falls in his understanding of the translatability of divinity across cultures through what he calls the *ecumene* of international and intercultural “god-talk.” Texts of the Ancient Near East tend to show recognition that the deities of other cultures function in ways like its own deities, and in some cases cultures relate the deities of other cultures to their own deities. However, Israel’s “Mosaic Distinction” suggests a fundamentally different situation; so describing: “We may call this new type of religion “counter-religion” because it rejects and repudiates everything that went before and what it outside itself as “paganism”...Whereas polytheism, or rather “cosmotheism,” rendered different cultures mutually transparent or compatible, the new counter-religion blocked intercultural translatability. False gods cannot be translated, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3. It should be conceded though, that while Assmann still refers to Kaufmann, he provides a slightly more nuanced understanding of Israelite divine conception in his *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization* (2011) that would place him more comfortably in the third trend.

say, the belief that there is one central power in the universe,” writes Machinist, “a single god like no other, exists already early in Israel, but in an inchoate, incomplete, and not fully articulate form.”<sup>6</sup> What one could classify this position as incipient monotheism.<sup>7</sup> The fourth and final trend in the study of biblical monotheism is actually a common thread to each of the preceding three, and highlights the geopolitical cultural complexes surrounding Israel; namely Mesopotamia, Egypt, and various peoples of the coastal regions, the Trans-Jordan, and the indigenous Canaanites who were direct neighbors of the Israelites; particularly begging the questions of possible precedents or analogies to the monotheistic conceptions discussed previously.<sup>8</sup>

The succinct overview presented above of the present state of the field of biblical divine conception is meant to provide necessary background and act as a springboard in a twofold manner. First, the synopsis highlights the diversity of definitional attributes given to Israelite divine conception. Second, one ought to recognize that preconceived perspectives on biblical history and Israelite cultural situatedness directly dictate the scholastic production of Israelite religious history. This is principally true in regards to

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<sup>6</sup> Machinist, “Once More,” 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> Baruch Halpern had advocated this idea.

<sup>8</sup> In this case, Machinist makes note of Sigmund Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* which made a controversial link between Moses and the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaton who uplifted Aton, the divine sun disk, as the only god in the universe. Under this purview, he also draws attention to two types of non-biblical ancient Near Eastern religious texts. While evidenced in multiple Near Eastern cultures, the Mesopotamian context “offers particularly rich documentation,” argues Machinist. The phrases “Oh god X, god of the Moon, you are the only god for me,” and “You are the greatest of gods,” single out the god in several groups of hymns of praise. Alternatively, in a special kind of Mesopotamian god-list, contemporaneous with Akhenaton, one finds the text, “arranged in the following way: god X has within him god Y and Z in terms of his arms or legs, or in his capacity to be a warrior,” 29-30. As mentioned earlier, Smith’s most recent work, *God in Translation* would equally fit into this trend as he examines divine translatability in the West Semitic world in five major time periods: Late Bronze Age, Early Iron Age, Pre-exilic/Exilic (Assyrian/Babylonian) period, Post-exilic (Persian) period, and the Greco-Roman period. Divine translatability is understood by Smith to involve “specific equation or identifications of deities across cultures and the larger recognition of deities of other cultures in connection to one’s own deities,” of which Israel is a clear participant with the rest of Ancient Near Eastern world, and so largely attempts to refute Assmann’s “Mosaic distinction,” 6.

the story told from textual presentation, material representation, and cultural comparison. Thus the question should be raised: is there a way to account for this diversity of interpretation? This author would like to answer affirmatively, but finds that the argument in support of said affirmation is undoubtedly complex. That being said, the crux of the following argument seeks to demonstrate that this multiplicity of explanation is a direct consequence of the plurality of perspectives to be found within the biblical text itself.

## II. Overview and Argument

To claim that the tension in scholarly discourse is an outgrowth from the multivalence in the text itself is, however, glaringly broad, and therefore calls for further nuance. This nuance shall take the form of implementing a different theoretical framework for understanding culture history, integrating the prevailing academic purview on the majority of biblical history into that framework, and finally testing that framework in thorough exegesis of the text. The following overview will help to paint the picture of the trajectory of this project. Alon Confino, in his article “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” opens with the general contention that the concept of “culture” has become a compass for historians guiding questions of interpretation, explanation, and method, but now “memory” has replaced “culture” as a leading term, or perhaps is *the* leading term in cultural history. He remarks, “Used with various degrees of sophistication, the notion of memory, more practiced than theorized, has been used to denote very different things, which nonetheless share a topical common denominator: the ways in which people construct a sense of the past.”<sup>9</sup> While Confino is

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<sup>9</sup> Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *American Historical Review* 102:5 (1997): 1386.

correct to note the variegated use of memory currently in the literature, as having been adopted by both the sciences and the humanities across numerous individual disciplines, more important is that common denominator: the construction and representation of the past. A growing trend in cultural historical studies has found this notion of historical construction and representation to be encapsulated in the concept of “collective memory.”

While some scholars have noted that “collective memory,” as a theoretical concept, was first coined by Hugo von Hofmannsthal in 1902; it is, however, an early twentieth century French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs, who crowds the introductions/methodological foundations of the current literature on the topic.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, Halbwachs provides the theoretical starting point this project; specifically his ideas articulated in his 1925 work *The Social Frameworks of Memory (Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire)*.<sup>11</sup> Following in the footsteps of his teacher, Emile Durkheim and in reaction to Bergsonian individualism, Halbwachs proposes a sociological framework for memory and a redefinition of what history is for a specific group. As such, a specific cultural complex, a society, or a group continually reproduces and preserves its memories of the past in order to perpetuate a solid sense of identity. Collective memory as an understanding of the representation of the past used to create and maintain group/cultural identity better nuances the ways in which ancient literate cultures understood their history. This argument has been taken up on the theoretical/methodological level by Jan Assmann in his *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*. Assmann is concerned with the

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<sup>10</sup> For the note on Hofmannsthal see, Kerwin Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering (Winter, 2000): 127-150.

<sup>11</sup> While there is no full translation of Halbwachs’ *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* in English, Lewis A. Coser has provided the most complete edition of Halbwachs’ work in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited, translated, and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

complex connection between memory, as a referent to the past; identity, which he understands as political imagination; and cultural continuity, conceived as the formation of tradition. Focused on how societies remember, and how they visualize themselves over the course of their remembrances, he finds his, “object is to reconstruct cultural connections or, to be more precise, to establish the links among (collective) memory, written culture, and ethnogenesis as a contribution to a general theory of culture.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore his model, built directly off the work of Halbwachs, and some of his implications examined in the context of Israel, provide the second theoretical leg for this thesis.

Numerous aspects of Halbwachs’ work on collective memory have been taken in more sophisticated directions as well as come under close scrutiny in more recent usages.<sup>13</sup> Despite the critiques, biblical scholarship has taken up the notion as a window into Ancient Israel’s portrayal of its past; most of which return to Halbwach himself as a starting point. In the last decades a few books and several articles have begun to explore this complexity in more detail. Marc Brettler has argued that,

We must not approach the Hebrew Bible, which is pre-modern religious history, as contemporary secular history...the proper appreciation of memory within the creation of biblical historical texts puts the Bible in its proper genre...national history, precisely the type of history which...is most easily influenced by memory in all of its permutations, with all of its problems and benefits.<sup>14</sup>

Building off similar ideas, Philip Davies, in his *Memories of Ancient Israel*, has emphasized that cultural memory provides a better conceptual tool for classifying biblical

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<sup>12</sup> Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, “Collective Memory – What is it?” *History and Memory* 8:1 (1996): 30, conclude that collective memory is only a fabricated understanding of individual memory adjusting to a suitable social environment, and that the very concept is a misleading new name for the old historical conception of “myth.” For them, “collective memory *is but a myth.*” (Emphasis mine)

<sup>14</sup> Marc Brettler, “Memory in Ancient Israel,” in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism* (Norte Dame: University of Norte Dame Press, 2001), 10-11.

narratives about the past because it reflects the ways in which the past was understood and utilized in ancient societies. “In particular, accepting that cultural memory – like personal memory – not only recalls the past but also forgets and invents it severs that notion of a necessary link between historical event and narrative account,” argues Davies, and thus, “*focusing on the purpose for which the past is recalled, forgotten, or created rather than on its historical reliability provides a means whereby these memories can be treated as an important part of the cultural history of ancient Israel and Judah.*”<sup>15</sup> Mark S. Smith has explicitly taken this framework towards reading the history of Israelite divine conception in his work *The Memoirs of God*.<sup>16</sup> These two works: by Davies and Smith as well as some shorter studies using memory readings of the Hebrew Bible will further contextualize this study in the current academic discourse.

From here it is necessary to consider with greater sophistication towards the topic to be investigated. Therefore this thesis will propose to read the history as given in 1&2 Kings as cultural/collective memory with an overriding question being asked of this memory: is there a single divine conception that runs throughout the materials presented in this history? Of course, one cannot attempt to discuss the books of Kings without recognizing the prevailing academic understanding of these materials from a source-critical perspective. Thus the project moves from the purely theoretical purview of collective/cultural memory to integrating this framework within the so-called Deuteronomistic History. Since 1943 and Martin Noth’s seminal work on the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings) in relation to Deuteronomy, scholars

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<sup>15</sup> Philip R. Davies, *Memories of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Biblical History – Ancient and Modern* (Louisville: Westminster Knox Press, 2008), 122. My emphasis in italics.

<sup>16</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004).

have concluded that the books of Kings belong to an extended historical composition: known as the Deuteronomistic History (abbreviated DtrH).<sup>17</sup> While this point is nearly universally agreed on, scholars continue to debate the various layers of redaction within the DtrH as a whole and in its constituent parts as well as the status and date of insertion of non-DtrH materials. Moving the Deuteronomistic History into the framework of memory circumvents much of this debate by taking the text as presented on a synchronic level, yet still being able to account for diachronic dynamics.

Finally having outlined the theory, then integrating the theoretical perspective into the prevailing conception of the DtrH, the project will move to explore three pericopes of the biblical text. The test cases for examination will include 1 Kings 18, Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal; 2 Kings 5, Elisha's healing of the Aramean, Naaman; and 2 Kings 3, the Moabite Conflict during the reigns of Jehoram of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah. Each of which appear to present a memory of three differing divine conceptions; specifically in regards to the ability of the divine to act on behalf of his nation as well as obligating nationals to ritual practice. 1 Kings 18 provides the hardline DtrH conception of Yahweh and obligations to him, understanding Yahweh as the only (monotheistic) national god of power. 2 Kings 5 suggests a multilayered complex of divine conception in regards to divine national power; seeing Naaman proclaim a monotheistic understanding of Yahweh while at the same time demanding a monolatrous obligation towards his own national deity: Rimmon. Lastly, 2 Kings 3 remarkably holds in tension Yahweh's power as a national god with a (polytheistic?) recognition of the power of Chemosh, the Moabite national deity. If it is the case that 1

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<sup>17</sup> Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield, Eng: JSOT Press, 1981). Translated from the original German *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (1943).

Kings 18, 2 Kings 5, and 2 Kings 3 are offering divergent conceptions of divine national power then one must ask how they came to be inserted into the greater memory of the DtrH. Thus it is the argument of this thesis that the overarching theo-political identity perpetuated in the memory of the DtrH of Kings, as the motivating factor for which the history has been represented, allowed room for the varying pictures of divine national power given in the Elijah and Elisha texts. Therefore, the recent discourse on divine conception in the Hebrew Bible finds the plurality of its scholastic contentions to be grounded in the variety of expressions in the historical memory of the text itself.

## Chapter One: Theoretical Foundations in the Memory Discourse

Echoing Alon Confino, noted in the introduction, the notion of memory has begun to supplant culture in “cultural historical” discourses as a window framing historical inquiries; a phenomenon arising from the memory boom of past three decades or so. The so-called “memory boom” and the new “memory studies” begins in the late 1970s arising out of both a perceived cultural reality and scholastic analyses of the phenomena that went hand in hand.<sup>18</sup> However, a full delineation of this narrative would amount to a dissertation length project, to say nothing of a thesis, and so only those most relevant theorists and commentators to the project at hand will be discussed. Yet it should be noted that the memory boom over the last three decades is a *resurgence* of much earlier theoretical purviews and arguably of universal human concerns evident since the beginnings of written documentation. The following provides a theoretical underpinning from which the push to read the history of the ancient Israelites as represented in the biblical text as memory will proceed. Beginning with the recognized seminal figure in collective memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs, the foundation is laid for a sociological framework for understanding memory. From there, Halbwachs’ foundation is expanded in the work of Jan Assmann who brings collective memory into culture theory in order to

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<sup>18</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, *The Collective Memory Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), find that, “the story goes something like this: following the decline of postwar modernist narratives of progressive improvement through an ever-expanding welfare state, nation-states turned to the past as a basis for shoring up their legitimacy. The decline of utopian visions supposedly redirected our gaze to collective pasts, which served as a repository of inspiration for repressed identities and unfulfilled claims... The memory boom thus unleashed a culture of trauma and regret, and states are allegedly now judged on how well they atone for their past misdeeds rather than on how well they meet their fiscal obligations and inspire future projects... these transformations in political legitimization were supposedly matched by a commodification of nostalgia, a popularization of history, and an interest in “memory,” both individual and collective. Both of the latter – individual memory and collective memory – are seen to be at risk, the former by neurological decay and sensory overload, the latter by dying generations and official denial,” 3-4. They go on to comment that on the analytical side, the memory boom give a hand to the rise of a variety of inquiries: from the hard sciences to memoir writing to curatorial work to a plethora of use in the various sub-disciplines in humanities. See also Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse.”

more specifically nuance the ways that ancient literate societies conveyed and perpetuated their pasts. Finally, the current literature in Hebrew Bible studies using collective/cultural memory will be highlighted in order to contextualize this study in the prevailing academic discourse.

### **I. Maurice Halbwachs and Collective Memory**

Our starting point follows that of the vast majority of contemporary usages of “collective memory,” which has been traced most fundamentally to the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and his seminal work the *Social Frameworks of Memory* (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*) published in 1925. Following in the footsteps of his teacher, Emile Durkheim and in reaction to Bergsonian individualism, Halbwachs proposed a sociological framework for memory and a redefinition of what the past is for a specific group of people. He held that, individual memory, and therefore that person’s past, is bounded by that individual’s social context. “It is in society that people normally acquire their memories,” wrote Halbwachs, “It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.”<sup>19</sup> Halbwachs argued that it is fruitless to seek the preservation of memory in one’s brain “or some nook of my mind to which I alone have access: for they (memories) are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them.”<sup>20</sup> In other words—social classes,

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<sup>19</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited, translated, and with an introduction by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38. Jeffery K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From “Collective Memory” to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998) comment that “For Halbwachs... studying memory was not a matter of reflecting philosophically on inherent properties of the subjective mind; memory is a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are not simply mediated but are structured by social arrangements,” 109. Unsurprisingly, similar comments are found in Olick et al, *The Collective Memory Reader*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 38. Olick et al, *The Collective Memory Reader*, remark, “All individual remembering, that is, take place with social materials, within social contexts, and in response to social cues. Even when we do it alone, we do so as social beings with reference to our social

families, corporations, religious communities, etc. — are corporate systems that have distinctive memories which their members have constructed, often over long periods of time, and are therefore, conceived of as a collective past. Halbwachs summarizes his position:

Collective frameworks of memory are not constructed after the fact by the combination of individual recollections; nor are they empty forms where recollections coming from elsewhere would insert themselves. *Collective frameworks are, to the contrary, precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society.*<sup>21</sup>

As such, a specific cultural complex, a society, or a group continually reproduces and preserves its memories of the past in order to perpetuate a solid sense of identity in a given present moment. Notably, Halbwachs recognized as much, claiming, “We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated.”<sup>22</sup>

As a result, memory formation in an individual develops through a communicative process. “Individual memory is nevertheless a part or an aspect of group memory...to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the

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identities, and with languages and symbols that we may use in creative ways but certainly did not invent,” 19.

<sup>21</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40. My emphasis. Patrick H. Hutton, *History As an Art of Memory*, (Hanover: University of Vermont, 1993) expands this idea. According to Hutton, the key to decoding Halbwachs’ understanding of collective memory rests on the issue of localization. He writes, “In remembering, we locate, or localize, images of the past in specific places. In and of themselves, the images of memory are always fragmentary and provisional. They have no whole or coherent meaning until we project them into concrete setting...Remembering, therefore, might be characterized as a process of imaginative reconstruction, in which we integrate specific images formulated in the present into particular contexts identified with the past...Collective memory is an elaborate network of social mores, values, and ideals that marks out the dimensions of our imaginations according to the attitudes of the social groups to which we relate. It is through the interconnections among these shared images that the social frameworks (*cadres sociaux*) of our collective memory are formed, and it is within such settings that individual memories must be situated if they are to survive,” 78.

<sup>22</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 47.

social milieu,” explains Halbwachs. One cannot in fact think about the events of one’s past without discoursing upon them.

But to discourse upon something means to connect within a single system of ideas our opinions as well as those of our circle. It means to perceive in what happens to us a particular application of facts concerning social thought reminds us at every moment of the meaning and impact these facts have for it. In this way, the framework of collective memory confines and binds our most intimate remembrances to each other.<sup>23</sup>

One can only remember what has been communicated and what has been located in the various frames of collective memory participated in, and as such, memory thrives and survives through continued communication, which if broken off or if the referential frames participated in disappears or changes, then consequently one forgets.

Reliant on these frameworks of collective memory for recall, Halbwachs contends that the various groups that compose a given society have within their social thought the capability to reconstruct their past at any moment. However due to the necessity of reconstruction, the past as articulated by a given group is frequently distorted.<sup>24</sup> At this point, the plausible continuation of the argument would be to move the reconstruction of the past from memory into modes of historiography or least the specifics of memory transmission; yet this is not what Halbwachs does. Rather he finds that history is dead memory, only beginning once memory can no longer be sustained in a lived reality, and this position has come to be perceived as a hole in his theory.<sup>25</sup> It would only be much

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 182. Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, elaborates, “The past itself cannot be preserved by it, and thus it is continually subject to processes of reorganization according to the changes taking place in the frame of reference of each successive present...Society does not adopt new ideas and replace the past with them; instead it assumes the past of groups other than those that have hitherto been dominant...Thus collective memory operates simultaneously in two directions: backward and forward. It not only reconstructs the past, but it also organizes the experience of the present and the future,” 27-28.

<sup>25</sup> Marc Bloch recognized this gap in Halbwachs’ thought immediately, writing in his review of *Social Frameworks of Memory*, “How are memories passed down from generation to generation within a

later in life, with promptings from his professional relationships to Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre (the founders of the so-called Annales School); in his posthumously published *La Mémoire collective* (*The Collective Memory*, 1950) would Halbwachs turn towards the problem of memory from a historical perspective. Summarized in Assmann's *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, "For Halbwachs, then history is not memory, because there is no such thing as universal memory – only a collective, group, specific, fixed-identity memory," and he quotes Halbwachs,

Every collective memory has a group as its carrier which is bound by time and space. The totality of past events can only be brought together in a single tableau on condition that these can be separated from the memory of the groups that have kept their recollections of them, that the bonds with which they were attached to the psychological life of the social milieu where they took place are cut, and that only their chronological and spatial schema is maintained.<sup>26</sup>

Fortunately, this ahistorical stance on history and memory has not been carried through the recent critiques and formulations of collective memory.<sup>27</sup> From Patrick Hutton's perspective,

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group? The answer obviously varies according to the group, but the question is too important to leave unanswered. Halbwachs, it seems to me, scarcely addresses this question, most often limiting himself to explanations of a certain finality, and, if I may be so bold, to a slightly vague anthropomorphism," taken from "Marc Bloch (1886-1944): From "Mémoire collective, tradition et coutume: À propos d'un livre récent,"" in Jeffrey K. Olick et al, *The Collective Memory Reader*, 152. Hutton, *History As an Art of Memory*, contextually situates Halbwachs stating, "...one should keep in mind that he was caught up in the promise of positivist science for early-twentieth-century scholarship...He wrote at time when the boundaries around history as a field of scholarly inquiry were still sharply drawn, and he clung to the positivist conception of the historian as an authenticator of documented facts," 76. Therefore Halbwachs attempted to demonstrate, as a historian, how unreliable memory is as a guide to the realities of the past, and because he thought that history begins where living memory ends, he never sufficiently reflected on the interconnections between the two. Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," have drawn the connection between Halbwachs' position here and memory's relation to historiography as the most contested boundary in social memory studies. They write, "On the surface, this understanding of the distinction negates the self-image of historiography as the more important or appropriate attitude toward the past: History's epistemological claim is devalued in favor of memory's meaningfulness. At a deeper level, however, the distinction is the same that traditional historians would draw between history and memory: Only the former is engaged in a search for truth," 110.

<sup>26</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 29-30, quoting from the German translation *Das kollektive Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985), 73.

<sup>27</sup> Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," observe as historiography has broadened its focus from the official to the social and cultural, memory has become a central form of "evidence." "Theorists

Halbwachs provided modern historiography with a model for the history of tradition as it is revealed in its representations along the way. In his interest in the changing patterns of the imagery of collective memory over time, he identified a new way of looking at historical evidence. For him, the history of memory bore testimony of memory's unreliability. But for today's historians, it illuminates a number of problems in the historians scrutiny; the archaeological character of the history of memory; tradition as an index to the power of political or social groups; the long periods of time that must be scanned in order to grasp the otherwise imperceptible process by which traditions are modified; the broad range of evidentiary sources, once considered beyond the historian's ken, that can be brought together to illuminate an historical problem: among them, iconography, architecture, geography, archaeological artifacts, eyewitness accounts, and historiographical traditions.<sup>28</sup>

This recognition alongside the postmodern critiques of the modern positivist conceptualizations of history and particularly historiography have, more than anything, helped to create and sustain the recent memory boom.<sup>29</sup>

## II. Jan Assmann and Cultural Memory

In an expansion of Halbwachs' work and a wedding of it with Aby Warburg's work in art history through which he saw in iconography memory mediating social

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now recognize," they state, "moreover, that memory frequently employs history in its service: Professional historians have often provided political legitimation for nationalism and other more reconstructive identity struggles;" therefore raising questions of the notion of objectivity. Postmodernists have challenged the truth claims of professional historiography through the questioning of the discrepancy between knowledge and interpretation, and so derivatively between history and memory, 110. Hutton, *History As an Art of Memory*, argues that Halbwachs failed to recognize the full implications of his own discoveries about the history/memory relationship. He writes, "History in the older, conventional definition searched for certainties about substantive realities. But the new history of mentalities, inspired by *Annales* historiography and reconceived to encompass the analysis of collective memories, considers human hopes and dreams, that realm of the human imagination that deals in possibilities as well. To make cognizance of the rhetorical and iconographic forms in which humans had couched their visions of the world – their conceptions of the past and their expectations for the future – permits the historian to entertain a far wider range of considerations," 77.

<sup>28</sup> Hutton, *History As an Art of Memory*, 88.

<sup>29</sup> Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," has noted likewise stating, "In its most popular (if simplistic) understandings, theory talk variously figured through high "structuralism," "poststructuralism," "postmodernism," "deconstruction," "*posthistoire*," and a host of other often confused labels was imagined as a devastating critique of the totalizing aspects of historical discourse. And yet by the end of the eighties, we were awash in new historicisms that took memory as a key word. These seemingly antithetical trends, the discourse of memory and the antihistoricist vocabularies of postmodernity, converged in the "new cultural history" as historians began borrowing from semiotics and scholars in traditionally formalist fields of literature, art, and anthropology began venturing into historicism," 128.

realities, Jan Assmann merges memory, cultural continuity, and identity construction into his theoretical construction of “cultural memory.”<sup>30</sup> In his work *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*; Assmann seeks to create a general theory of culture with the confluence of three significant anthropological themes: memory (as a reference to the past), identity (understood as political imagination), and cultural continuity (i.e. the formation of tradition).<sup>31</sup> The foundation of Assmann’s theory hinges on his understanding of “cultural memory” which for him is the very mode by which meaning is handed down through time combining “mimetic memory” (behavior through imitation), “memory of things” (material reflections of ourselves), and “communicative memory” (the formation of consciousness and memory through the reciprocal feedback of social interaction). Assmann explains

This is an area (cultural memory) in which the other three aspects merge almost seamlessly. When mimetic routines take on the status of rituals, for example, when they assume a meaning and significance that go beyond their practical function, the borders of mimetic action memory are transcended. Rituals are part of cultural memory because they are the form through which cultural meaning is both handed down and brought to present life. The same applies to things once they point to a meaning that goes beyond their practical purpose: symbols; icons; representations such as monuments, tombs, temples, idols; and so forth, all transcend the borders of object-memory because they make the implicit index of

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<sup>30</sup> Warburg saw memory mediating certain social realities through iconography. See Olick et al, *The Collective Memory Reader*, 12, 19; idem. “From Aby Warburg: *An Intellectual Biography*,” 104-109.

<sup>31</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 2. Elaborating more fully, Assmann contends that cultures invent connective structures that have a binding effect on two levels: the social and the temporal. “It binds people together by providing a “symbolic universe”...a common area of experience, expectation, and action whose connecting force provides them with trust and with orientation,” he argues, “However, it also links yesterday with today by giving form and presence to influential experiences and memories, incorporating image and tales from another time into the background of the onward moving present, and bringing with it hope and continuity. This connective structure is the aspect of culture that underlies myths and histories,” 2-3. Thus Assmann is focused on the variations in the changes and characteristics that mark these connective structures as well as processes leading to the establishment, consolidation, loosening, and dissolution of these structures. “Societies conceive images of themselves, and they maintain their identity through the generations by fashioning a culture out of memory,” he writes, “They do it – and this is a crucial point for this book – in completely different ways. I investigate *how* societies remember and how they visualize themselves in the course of their remembering...my object is...to establish the links among (collective) memory, written culture, and ethnogenesis as a contribution to a general theory of culture,” 4-5.

time and identity explicit. This aspect is the central point of Aby Warburg's "social memory." The degree to which the same can be said of our third area, language and communication and the role played by writing, is the real subject matter of this book.<sup>32</sup>

To outline a little more fully, we've already noted his observation that collective memory operates simultaneously in two directions: backward and forward by not only reconstructing the past as remembered but by also organizing the experience of the present and the future. Therefore, memory, for Assmann, becomes a "social construction whose nature arises out of the needs and frames of reference of each particular present," and the past is not an objectively natural outgrowth of circumstance but cultural creation.<sup>33</sup> Following Warburg's definition of identity: "Deliberately creating distance between oneself and the outside world can be called the basic act of human civilization," Assmann highlights that culture institutionalizes that distance by producing familiarity and confidence – in oneself, in the world, in society, and how through the process of ethnogenesis cultures differentiate themselves from others and within themselves.<sup>34</sup> This process of integrative formation, with its power to hold society together internally, equally tends to exert an extraordinary outward power of assimilation. Assmann concludes that,

In order to develop such powers, a culture has to move out of its own habitual self-evidence, and make itself prominently visible by exposing, explaining, and stylizing itself. Once it has revealed its inner strength, only then it can become the target of conscious identification and the symbol of a collective cultural identity.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 21-33.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 118-125. Quote taken from Assmann. In regards to ethnogenesis explicitly, Assmann notes that, "as society becomes more complex, the primary alliance between ethnic, cultural, and political formations begins to disintegrate and to create problems that may be divided into two categories: those of integration and those of distinction," 125.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 131.

On the other end, the processes of cultural distinctive formations, Assmann follows W.E. Mühlmann who outlines ‘limitic’ structures which demarcate one’s own culture not as *one* of living – as opposed to others that might also be called cultures – but as *the* way, as the true cosmos against which others are viewed as subhuman, and these processes are inextricably bound up with a particular consciousness of belonging and of togetherness.<sup>36</sup> Political imagination, from Assmann’s standpoint, is exemplified by canonization. He writes,

Canonization means that everything regarded as alien or irrelevant is excluded, whereas everything significant (in the sense of formative and normative) is sacralized, that is, given the status of binding obligation and unchangeability. These admittedly extreme examples show that ethnic identity and durability depend on cultural memory and the form of its organization. The disappearance of ethnic groups...is not a matter of physical annihilation but of collective and cultural forgetting.<sup>37</sup>

Assmann emphasizes that ancient cultures tend towards validating their own self conceptions through ethnic resistance movements via the sacralization of identity. Accordingly, this movement is manifested in the Israelite context through the canonization of their cultural memory; however, for Assmann, “the most effective means of giving permanence to an ethnic identity is religion.”<sup>38</sup> While lacking nuance, there is little debate that the Hebrew Bible provides a portrait of a people self-identified by an adherence to religious ideas, developed over a complicated history that holds a privileged understanding of their relationship to their divine. This privileged conception of that relationship colors the narrative representation of their history, their place in the world in relation to other cultures, and the formation of their cultural traditions. We will have recourse to return some of these ideas later on, and more specifically some Assmann’s

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 132-137. Mühlmann’s conceptions have been summarized from Assmann.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 141.

examinations of his formulation of cultural memory in the context of Israel; still maintaining a cautious distance from the whole of his postulations in that case study.

### III. Memory and Biblical Studies

In a grossly unexamined trend, biblical studies and biblical (or better Levantine) archaeology are seemingly the last frontiers for the latest scholastic theoretical perspectives. That being said, in the last decade and half, a few academics situating their research in the study of Ancient Israel have slowly begun to take up collective memory. Beginning from a quote by Harold Pinter, who said: “The past is what you remember, imagine you remember, convince yourself you remember, or pretend to remember,” Marc Brettler sees this “range of accurate memory to be fiction masquerading as memory” as exemplifying the biblical corpus.<sup>39</sup> From this standpoint, ancient Israel is no different from its Ancient Near Eastern neighbors, the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians. Brettler argues that,

This attitude toward the Hebrew Bible properly deprivileges the biblical text – it shows how the Hebrew Bible shares much with pre-modern history and even modern national history, but does not reflect in some unmediated fashion the events of the past...the proper appreciation of memory within the creation of biblical historical texts puts the Bible in its proper genre – it is no longer historical literature...Rather, it is national history, precisely the type of history which even in modern times has been most open to being rewritten or created and is most easily influenced by memory in all of its permutations, with all of its problems and benefits.”<sup>40</sup>

Ronald Hendel contends that, “The biblical writings may be fairly described as operating on various points of a continuum involving myth, memory, and history.”<sup>41</sup> Hendel is open

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<sup>39</sup> Marc Brettler, “Memory in Ancient Israel,” in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism* (Norte Dame: University of Norte Dame Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>41</sup> Ronald Hendel, “Culture, Memory, and History: Reflections on Method in Biblical Studies,” in *Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future: The New Pragmatism* (Oakville: Equinox Publishing, Ltd., 2010), 259.

to the possibility that if history-like writings of biblical text present a relatively disenchanting account of the era of tribes and kings then the texts before and outside of this world of prose situate them in sacred time. Therefore he argues that,

These are the narratives most rooted in cultural memory, which includes and transforms history without being bound to it. Their meanings are perhaps more durable than history, since they do not depend upon on the mere successiveness of events. They have their own reasons and meanings, a dense and deceptive simplicity, to which the writing of history – in its various modalities – can only aspire.<sup>42</sup>

To mention all the related articles in the literature would be a waste of space and unhelpful; however, two book length pieces need to be explicated further as they have influenced this project on a more theoretical level as well as in application to Israelite divine conception.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid. Hendel has further explored the Exodus event through collective memory in two articles: “Exodus: A Book of Memories,” *Bible Review* 18:4 (2002): 38-45, 52-53 and “The Exodus in Biblical Memory,” *JBL* 120:4 (2001): 601-622. With implications for the discussion at large, at the end of the latter, he holds that, “The memory of the exodus is not just a memory of historical events, but a conflation of history and memory that suits the conditions of different qualities of time. To view the exodus with an eye to only one of these – whether to historical events, social functions, or enduring themes – is to misjudge the complexity and multiplicity of the whole. The mnemohistory of the exodus is a story of various pasts as they converge in the intersecting times of ancient lives, a particular people, and humanity writ large,” 622. In his *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), Hendel explores the intersection of culture, memory, and history in order to highlight the past as biblically represented and correlated with the academic reconstruction of that past showing how Israel differentiated itself from its neighbors by constructing and maintaining various cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries; boundaries subject to negotiation, critique, and revision throughout Israel’s history.

<sup>43</sup> The following is a sample of further reading: Edward Greenstein, “Mixing Memory and Design: Reading Psalm 78,” *Prooftexts* 10:2 (1990): 197-218; Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel,” *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 27:3 (1997): 76-82; Daniel Fleming, “Mari and the Possibilities of Biblical Memory,” *RA* 92:1 (1998): 41-78; Adriane B. Leveen, “Variations on a Theme: Differing Conceptions of Memory in the Book of Numbers,” *SJOT* 27:2 (2002): 201-221; Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, “Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I: Archaeology Preserves What is Remembered and What is Forgotten in Israel’s History,” *JBL* 122:3 (2003): 401-425; Azzan Yadin, “Goliath’s Armor and Israelite Collective Memory,” *VT* 54:3 (2004): 373-395; Anto Popović, “The Bible as a Book of Memory,” *Antonianum* 79 (2004): 411-443; Hendrik Bosman, “Remembering Moses as a Model of Israelite and Early Jewish Identity,” *Scriptura* 96 (2007): 326-333; Jens B. Kofoed, “Saul and Cultural Memory,” *SJOT* 25:1 (2011): 124-150; Thomas L. Thompson, “Memories of Esau and Narrative Reiteration: Themes of Conflict and Reconciliation,” *SJOT* 25:2 (2011): 174-200. Note the unsurprising number of continental European scholars in this group given the theoretical origins of the discourse.

Philip R. Davies, in his book *Memories of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Biblical History – Ancient and Modern*, finds that, “Cultural memory provides a better conceptual tool than history, myth, or tradition for classifying the biblical narratives about the past because it better reflects the ways in which the past was understood and utilized in ancient societies.”<sup>44</sup> Davies also highlights the fact that cultural memory is only just being introduced into biblical scholarship, and he credits Assmann’s *Moses the Egyptian* for the impetus. He goes on to only make mention of Mark Smith’s work in the *Memoirs of God* and Brettler’s *The Creation of History in Israel*; opposing himself from Smith’s view while embracing Brettler’s. From Davies’ perspective the true purpose of cultural memory is neither true recollection nor is that intrinsic to its mechanism, but equally important are inventing and forgetting. Further nuancing the popular modernist contention that myth is “untrue” while history is “true,” Davies argues,

Rather, “history” means the simple facts, things that really happened, while “myth” means a narrative that creates an understanding of the world as it is experienced, including politics, human nature, and ethics. *The notion of cultural memory lies precisely between the two.* It is myth in the sense just defined, but in the form of history as just defined. It is a category that explodes the distinction – which is a modern distinction anyway and inappropriate for text from the first millennium.<sup>45</sup>

Here one can see allusions to Davies’ minimalist leanings, and even more so in the mode through which he sees the transmission of the cultural memory in Ancient Israel.

Following Assmann’s emphasis on the introduction of writing as endowing cultural memory with greater power, Davies contends that the stories of the biblical text should not be equated with the folk memories of Israel or Judah. As a production of a scribal class, since literacy is a professional skill and a part of the national apparatus of the state

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<sup>44</sup> Philip R. Davies, *Memories of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Biblical History – Ancient and Modern* (Louisville: Westminster Knox Press, 2008), 122.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 112. My emphasis.

administration, economically and ideologically, “if not exactly working for Orwell’s famous Ministry of Truth, they served just the same function in what was a totalitarian polity.”<sup>46</sup> However necessary such a comparison is appears debatable, but Davies is right to point out that cultural memory is prompted by social, political, and religious agencies, and as such is often not coherent or monolithic. “Within the extended biblical narratives of the past we can find clear traces of distinct and contradictory memories, especially about the origins of the nation,” Davies writes,

There are stories from Israel and from Judah, from various sanctuaries and tribal areas, and even from different scribal schools. These stories reflect different identities, including different Israels: the combined narrative creates an overarching Israelite identity from these, but without obscuring them.<sup>47</sup>

This observation will be particularly important as we attempt to integrate the Deuteronomistic History into a cultural memory framework. Ultimately, for the purposes here, it is worthy to note Davies’ concluding remarks regarding reading the history accounted in the biblical text as memory. “Accepting that cultural memory – like personal memory,” argues Davies,

not only recalls the past but also forgets and invents it severs the notion of a necessary link between historical event and narrative account. Finally, focusing on the purpose for which the past is recalled, forgotten, or created rather than on its historical reliability provides a means whereby these memories can be treated as an important part of the cultural history of ancient Israel and Judah.<sup>48</sup>

The second major work in biblical history and cultural memory needing address, especially for its particular application, is Mark S. Smith’s *The Memoirs of God*, who introduces collective memory into his perspective on the Israel’s historical memory of

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 122.

divinity. Smith finds a double role for the use of collective memory in forming Israelite monotheism. Smith writes,

Collective memory first helped to shape biblical monotheism, and then it influenced Israel's understanding of its own polytheistic past. Collective memory – or the lack of it (in other words, collective amnesia) – helped Israel to forget about its own polytheistic past, and in turn it served to induce a collective amnesia about the other gods, namely, that many of these had been Israel's in the first place.<sup>49</sup>

In *The Memoirs of God*, Smith provides four different sketches of the development of Israel through history. First, he examines the biblical representation of Israel's past. Next, he moves to trace the history of challenges to Israel; namely under imperial oppression, and how Israel addressed this crises; where monotheism becomes a major dimension of those responses. Then, Smith goes back to the beginnings of Israel's religious history in order to delineate Israel's understanding of divinity; which Smith defines from regional antecedent polytheism through Israel's early polytheism into the monotheism of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. Finally, he provides a final sweep of Israelite culture expounding on some of the ways this religious history is remembered, but especially how the late monotheism of the seventh-sixth centuries altered Israel's remembrance of its own earlier divine conception. This last section of Smith's work is most applicable for the later part of this project.

Without reviewing the implications Smith draws from the theorists already mentioned; his last observation, built off the work of Danièle Hervieu-Léger in her *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, is worth noting. Smith summarizes her perspective,

Hervieu-Léger discusses the destruction and restructuring of traditional memory provided with formal explanatory links, the conflictual nature of collective memory, the conflicting efforts on the part of shifting hierarchies to homogenize

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<sup>49</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 5.

collective memory, and the role of what she calls “elective fraternity” in the reappropriation of reinvented memory.<sup>50</sup>

Smith draws parallels between these features and what biblical scholars have recognized in the priestly traditions of the Torah and in Deuteronomy as well as throughout the Deuteronomistic History in regards to those accounts of Israel’s past. According to Smith the application is seen in the submergence of clan traditional religion with its local “high places” and shrines under the royal sanctuaries of the rising nation-state of the Israelite and Judean monarchies. “This traditional religion then recedes further,” Smith argues, “due to an increasing loss of traditional locus and practice of religion (here read the loss of local patrimonies and linages and nonroyal sanctuaries especially from the eighth through the sixth centuries).”<sup>51</sup> The outgrowth of new forms of elective fraternity, that is prophetic, priestly, and Deuteronomic movements gathering social force in reaction to the limitations of family and monarchic religion, correspond to this loss. Smith sees a rule of memory at work,

in inverse proportion to historical order and power of social location: the family, with its memories generated largely through oral means, is socially weaker relative to the priestly forces behind the textual formation and transmission of texts in regional shrines, and family memory is submerged further beneath the weight of priestly lines working in sanctuaries and then filtered through royal shrines, and ultimately through the royal shrine with a single priestly hierarchy in Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup>

Smith recognizes, as both Assmann and Davies have, that the change in systems producing collective memories in turn produces change in the information stored, and once written memory passes into a body of traditional texts, that tradition tends not to

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<sup>50</sup> Hervieu-Léger summarized by Smith, 137.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

throw out what it forgets, but rather rewrites what it does not remember. Smith concludes his understanding of Israel's changing memory of divinity:

To remember the divinity was to re-form, to re-member, an unwieldy series of older divine portraits of various levels and types of divinity into some sort of single coherence by accumulation of images, but also by omission, mediated and filtered by a monistic vision of divinity. The presentation of deity, read back into the biblical corpus, was a cornerstone of cultural memory in priestly tradition and in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History...For Israel's later priestly and Deuteronomic commemorators, to attribute various past acts of divine help one way or another to a single deity aided their fashioning of narratives resonant with their perceptions of divinity in time past and present.<sup>53</sup>

While, in this work, Smith is most explicitly concerned with the native divine portrait(s) in Israel, this construction of divine conception by the biblical commemorators can be expanded to help account for the affected perception of Israelite divinity in relation to other non-Israelite divine national powers.

#### IV. Summery

זָכוֹר יָמֵי עוֹלָם “Remember the days of old!” exclaims the author of Deuteronomy through the mouth of Moses (32:7), and with this exclamation one can see the native cultural imperative towards memory set within the earliest historical frameworks of the biblical text. The call to remember is, therefore, a particularly universal phenomenon, but it seems credit is due to Maurice Halbwachs for opening up a theoretical discourse that highlights the social boundedness of memory. His collective frameworks of memory as the social vehicles through which a group reconstructs their past in light of a given present epoch moves memory beyond the confines of individual recollection into a larger cultural question: how do societies remember? Of course, Halbwachs' particular socio-historical location prevented him from fully realizing his

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 157.

theory's implications for historical research. Many modern commentators of Halbwachs have recognized that the notion of "collective memory" has provided the modern study of historiography a new model for understanding the history of a particular tradition as it is manifested in its cultural representations along the way, and the ways in which cultural change force modifications to those representations of the past. Jan Assmann's expansion of Halbwachs' work, geared towards the examination of ancient cultures, provides a foundation for the confluence of memory, identity, and tradition making in the process of culture creation particularly through the means of a mnemohistory recorded from "cultural memory," and this culture creation is given greatest permanence through religion.

The memory discourse has been slowly adopted and adapted by biblical scholars. While disagreeing on the particulars, a single resonance can be heard in the work of scholars like Marc Brettler, Ronald Hendel, Phillip Davies, and Mark S. Smith: the history of Israel as presented in the biblical text is best exemplified by an understanding of that history as cultural memory and not modern positivist conceptions. As Davies points out, a cultural memory reading of the text severs any perceived link between the reality of a historical event and its narrative representation, and focusing on the specific purposes for which that history is remembered in the way that it is remembered reveals a great deal about the culture history of ancient Israel. Equally important for the purposes of this project, are Smith's contentions that conceptions of divinity are a cornerstone to the cultural memory of the Deuteronomistic History as the particular perceptions of divinity on the part of the commemorators helped in the fashioning of the narrative history. Therefore, from here we are in a position to integrate a cultural memory reading

into the long standing academic construction of the Deuteronomistic History with an eye towards the major identity claims being made through this mnemohistory.

## **Chapter Two: The Deuteronomistic History Pushed Towards Memory**

In the previous chapter, Cultural/Collective Memory was established as an alternative framework for understanding cultural history and ancient historical inquiry. Following in the wake of biblical scholars, like Smith, Davies, Hendel, and Brettler, this theoretical framework was argued as a more appropriate interpretative understanding of the history as presented in the Hebrew Bible. Moving forward, the following chapter continues to contextualize our study in current academic discourses about the Deuteronomistic History and 1&2 Kings. This is necessary (1) because cultural memory is a reconceptualization of history; we need to first understand the dominant formulation of the history represented in the Bible, and (2) since the concept of divine national power as seen in the Elijah and Elisha cycles lay at the heart of the investigation in this project. This means initially outlining the hypothesis of the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH), first formulated by Martin Noth and heavily debated and revised over the years following, in the first major portion of the chapter. Next, the book of Kings is situated a little more widely in DtrH discussions mainly highlighting the nearly essential role it plays in every reconstruction of the DtrH. From there speculation is given to the particulars of dating the prophetic material, particularly the Elijah-Elisha narratives, in the DtrH/Kings as either late additions or as part of the earliest foundation material. Finally, cultural memory will come around again as we begin to push the DtrH into that theoretical framework.

## I. Outlining the DtrH in Scholastic Discourse<sup>54</sup>

### i. Martin Noth

It is in no way an understatement to claim that all scholarship on the Deuteronomistic History is founded on and points back to the seminal work of Martin Noth in his 1943 volume *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*.<sup>55</sup> Prior to Noth, the composing of the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1&2 Samuel, and 1&2 Kings) was treated by scholars as a continuation of the compilation of the literary sources of the Pentateuch or as independent units in themselves that had passed through some level of Deuteronomistic redaction. At the most basic level, Noth posited that the Former Prophets, with Deuteronomy as the actual beginning, were originally a unified history of Israel written by a single, exilic author/compiler whom Noth named the Deuteronomist (Dtr). Steven McKenzie summarizes,

Besides the similarity of language throughout the Former Prophets, Noth pointed to the common chronology and ideology of these books as evidence of an individual hand...Dtr's primary structuring device involved the use of programmatic, reflective summaries in common Deuteronomistic style which he inserted at key junctures in the History, mostly in the form of speeches attributed to major characters.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See Thomas Römer and Albert de Pury, "Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues," in *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, JSOTSup 306, eds., Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 24-141, for the most recent and comprehensive overview of the long history of academic investigation into the DtrH as well as the numerous debates and issues at stake in the major and minor discussions. The following will only highlight the most significant discussions in the wider debate of the reconstruction of a DtrH as well as address only those debates that are directly relevant to the study at hand.

<sup>55</sup> Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

<sup>56</sup> Steven L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1991), 1-2. Note whereas I have adopted DtrH for the Deuteronomistic History, McKenzie uses DH. Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), argues that Noth's main interest, "was not to delineate precisely which texts in the historical books should be considered as 'Deuteronomistic' and which not...what was new in his approach was the way he

Noth found his evidence in what he called “chapters of reflection.” He observed that,

at all the important points in the course of history, Dtr. brings forward the leading personages with a speech, which looks forward and backward in an attempt to interpret the courses of events...Elsewhere the summarizing reflections upon history are presented by Dtr. himself...because there were no suitable historical figures to make the speeches.<sup>57</sup>

These so-called ‘chapters of reflection’ occur in Josh. 1:1-9; 12:1-6; 23:1-16; Judg. 2:11-3:6; 1 Sam. 12:1-15; 1 Kgs 8:14-53; 2 Kgs 17:7-23. According to Thomas Römer,

they divide the Deuteronomistic presentation of Israel’s history into the following periods: the conquest under Joshua (Josh. 1; 12 and 23), the time of the Judges (from Judg. 2:11 to 1 Sam. 12), the instauration of the monarchy (from 1 Sam. 12 to 1 Kgs 8), the history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel until the fall of Samaria (from 1 Kgs 8 to 2 Kgs 17), the last days of Judah.<sup>58</sup>

Of course, it is important to point out that this delimitation does not form to the present separations between the books as now found in the Former Prophets.

“Starting from Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History relates the story of Israel, from the Mosaic foundations in the wilderness down to the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile,” Noth summarizes the content of his DtrH, “With this carefully composed piece, Dtr. sought to contribute to an understanding of the situation in his own time.”<sup>59</sup> Dating the DtrH to the middle of sixth century, he proposed that the History’s purpose was to show that the Babylonian exiles’ suffering was due to the decline in Israel’s loyalty to its God, Yahweh.<sup>60</sup> Noth summarizes his conception of the compositional model for Dtr,

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investigated the possibility that the Deuteronomistic texts belonged to a coherent and unified redaction, due to one redactor, the Deuteronomist,” 23.

<sup>57</sup> Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 18-19.

<sup>58</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 122.

<sup>60</sup> Römer. *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, explicates further, “[Noth] wanted to show that the end of the kingdom of Judah was caused by the incapacity of the people and their leaders to respect the prescriptions of the Deuteronomic law. Contrary to what was probably a common assumption among the Judeans, the catastrophe of 597/587 did not mean that the national god Yahweh had been defeated by

Dtr was not merely an editor but the author of a history which brought together material from highly varied traditions and arranged it according to a carefully conceived plan. In general Dtr. simply reproduced the literary sources available to him and merely provided a connecting narrative for isolated passages. We can prove, however, that in places he made a deliberate selection from the material at his disposal. As far as facts were concerned, the elements were arranged as given in tradition – e.g. the whole of the history of the kings, or the insertion of the period of the “judges” between the occupation of the land and the period of the monarchy. At times the order is determined by the older tradition, as in the incidents prior to the conquest. Elsewhere, though, Dtr. apparently arranged the material according to his own judgment, as in the details of the history of the “judges”. Thus Dtr.’s method of composition is very lucid. The closest parallels are those Hellenistic and Roman historians who use older accounts, mostly unacknowledged, to write a history not of their own time but of the more or less distant past.<sup>61</sup>

On the basis of Noth’s arguments, most biblical scholars now accept the books of Deuteronomy through Kings in the Hebrew Bible to be an original unit, but scholarship has moved away from the notion that the DtrH was the composition of a single individual. Related issues of date, authorship, and purpose have been vigorously debated since Noth’s time, with “the arena where the opinions on these matters have jostled has usually been the book of Kings,” McKenzie notes,

Noth’s own date for the DH and his view of its purpose were in fact based on his interpretation of Kings. The book ended with the elevation of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 25:27-30), so Noth dated it shortly after 562 B.C.E. Since it offered no explicit expectation of the end of the exile Noth concluded that its purpose was to show that Israel and Judah had been justly punished for centuries of decline in their loyalty to Yahweh.<sup>62</sup>

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the Babylonian deities. Jerusalem’s capture must rather be understood as a sanction of Yahweh against his own people,” 24.

<sup>61</sup> Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, 10-11.

<sup>62</sup> McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 3. Two early reactions both anticipated and influenced the direction of scholarly inquiry on these issues since Noth. Alfred Jepsen’s 1953 volume on the sources of Kings (*Die Quellen des Königsbuches*) challenged the idea of a single author with his contention that a complex redactional development can be discerned behind Kings. In 1947, von Rad published an important article on the Deuteronomistic theology of the history of the book of Kings (“Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den Königsbüchern”), in which he highlighted the importance of the prophecy-fulfillment motif in Kings and throughout the DtrH as a whole, and with the demonstration of the importance of the Davidic promise, he called into question Noth’s negative understanding of the DtrH’s purpose. Summarized from McKenzie, 3-4.

We will return to issues related to Kings later on, but first need to outline the various changes in the discourse on Noth's DtrH in the literature.

## ii. Redactional Theories

E.W. Nicholson (*Deuteronomy and Tradition* 1967) and Moshe Weinfeld (*Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* 1972) focused their studies on Deuteronomy and contended that the DH was the production of a circle of tradents, a so-called Deuteronomistic School.<sup>63</sup> McKenzie notes that this idea is echoed frequently and uncritically in the literature, "but it has never been clearly defined and remains too vague to be helpful. It is essentially an *ad hoc* attempt to account for the overall similarity of the DH as well as its inner tensions and inconsistencies."<sup>64</sup>

One of the most influential updates, particularly in American scholastic traditions, to Noth's hypothesis has been seen in the work of Frank Moore Cross and what some have classified as the Crossian School. While affirming the validity of some the older literary arguments for separate redactions of King, Cross further adduced a theological argument for this position based off of two themes he traced throughout 1&2 Kings.<sup>65</sup> The sin of Jeroboam and the wickedness of the North constituted the first theme climaxing in the peroration on the destruction of Samaria in 2 Kings 17. The second theme, contrasting with the first, Cross found in the faithfulness of David and the promise to David of an enduring dynasty. The climax of this second theme was realized in the

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<sup>63</sup> See Ernest W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967) and Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

<sup>64</sup> McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings.*, 6. Lacking a presentation of evidence for the different production stages in these studies and an awareness of the conflict between the differences ideologically between the editorial hand of Kings and a reflection of the views of a single "school," McKenzie is right to argue that the notion of "Deuteronomistic School" demands to be characterized literarily, historically, socially, and ideologically before it can be seen as a serious explanatory scheme for the origin of the DtrH.

<sup>65</sup> Frank Moore Cross, "The Themes of the Book of Kings and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-289.

reign of Josiah, the only king of Israel or Judah to escape criticism by the Deuteronomist. Cross deduced a pre-exilic original edition of the DtrH from the persistence of these two themes and their climaxes, and this edition was later glossed by a redactor during the exilic period.<sup>66</sup> It should be noted that Cross's model completely reverses Noth's understanding of the DtrH's purpose. A Josianic DtrH implies a totally different ideology from the one Noth had assigned, and so becoming in Cross a propaganda work of the Josianic reformation.<sup>67</sup>

Another or perhaps better *the* other, major redactional model has held sway in much of the biblical scholarship in Germany and on the European continent. Rudolf Smend, in an article from 1971, laid the foundation for a major redactional theory of the DtrH and the so-called Göttingen School.<sup>68</sup> Starting from the observation that some Deuteronomistic texts were clearly composite in nature, Smend examined five passages from Joshua (1:7-9; 13:1b-6; 23) and Judges (1:1-2:9; 2:17, 20-21; 23). He concluded,

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<sup>66</sup> Cross calls his primary editor Dtr<sup>1</sup> who wrote to promote Josiah as the new David and give legitimacy to his reforms. The second redactor (Dtr<sup>2</sup>) updated the work during the exile adding 2 Kgs 23:25b-25:30 in order to blame the exile on Manasseh. Cross suggests that several passages in Kings and earlier in the DtrH were glosses of Dtr<sup>2</sup> due to the fact these passages conditionalized the promise to David, the exile is presupposed or directly addresses the exiles calling for their repentance (these include: Deut. 4:27-31; 28:36-37, 63-68; 29:27; 30:1-10; Joshua 23:11-13, 15-16; 1 Sam. 12:25; 1 Kgs 2:4; 6:11-12; 1 Kgs 8:25b, 46-53; 9:4-9; 2 Kgs 17:19; 20:17-18; 21:2-15; 22:15-20 with Deut. 30:11-20 and 1 Kgs 3:14 being suspect), 278-288.

<sup>67</sup> Cross, "The Themes of the Book of Kings," 289. On the positive side of this theory, McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, finds that the thematic argument supports literary critical indications of more than one level of composition, the theory ties these themes into a concrete historical and political *Sitz im Leben* (Settings in Life), and the propagandistic function for the material in Kings appears to particularly appropriate. However, McKenzie argues that questions remain about the status of the Northern prophetic materials, which Cross does not account for. Therefore, it remains unclear how they fit in a work promoting a Judahite king, he leaves open the number and extent of texts to be assigned to his Dtr<sup>2</sup>, and finally assumes that the evidence for a Josianic edition in Kings applies to the entire DtrH, but the possibility still holds that a Josianic work pertained only to Kings or Samuel and Kings and not the whole of the DtrH, 6-7.

<sup>68</sup> Rudolf Smend, "The Law and the Nations: A Contribution to Deuteronomistic Tradition History," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, eds., Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 95-110. Translated and Reprinted from "Das Gesetz und die Völker: Ein Beitrag zur deuteronomistischen Redaktionsgeschichte," in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Festschrift Gerhard von Rad*, ed. H.W. Wolff (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 494-509.

on the basis of literary considerations, that they had to be secondary additions to the original DtrH or what he called DtrG (for *Grundschrift* or Basic Writing). Smend saw that these five passages shared the view, in contrast to DtrG, that the conquest of the land was contingent on obedience to the law; therefore, he postulated they were from the same redactor which he designated as the DtrN (for nomistic). Walter Dietrich, in his 1972 *Prophetie und Geschichte*, extended Smend's theories by arguing for a middle redactional level between DtrG and DtrN in Kings which he designated as DtrP (for prophetic). Analyzing a series of prophetic speeches and fulfillment notices, Dietrich concluded that these passages came from a common redactor based on similarities in form and content. The differences in language and theology indicated for Dietrich that this redactor had to be distinguished from DtrN and especially from DtrG. DtrP added prophetic accounts to his DtrG *Vorlage* (model, original) and was primarily responsible for the structure of the DtrH, and DtrN added the pro-Davidic references but otherwise remained the most nebulous of the redactors in Dietrich's presentation.<sup>69</sup> In positing an inflation of Deuteronomistic layers, the Göttingen School gives up the idea of a single author-redactor, seemingly contradicting an idea of a unified, coherent DtrH, and only retains the exilic date for the various Deuteronomistic strata from Noth.

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<sup>69</sup> Walter Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972) summarized from McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 8-9 and Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 30. McKenzie critiques the assumption of Noth's exilic date for DtrG and how the possibility for pre-exilic levels is never broached in either of these reconstructions, which is particularly problematic for Dietrich's presentation of Kings where a significant portion of the material has been argued for being pre-exilic. "Dietrich's dates for the different redactors lack the concrete historical setting so attractive for other reconstructions," McKenzie argues, "More serious is the unreliable nature of the criteria by which Dietrich assigns material to different redactors. His distinction between DtrG and DtrP in Kings is based more on the content and form of the stories than on actual literary evidence for different hands," 9.

### iii. “Neo-Nothians”

Römer identifies a third trend in recent research of DtrH which he sees as in spite of or perhaps precisely because of the various refinements to Noth’s original proposal. “Some scholars have recently expressed their disagreement regarding the different developments of the Deuteronomistic History hypothesis, advocating instead a return to Noth’s model of a single Dtr. in the exilic period.”<sup>70</sup> He finds this to be the case in particular to John Van Seters’ work, but notes that Van Seters alters Noth’s model on two important and related points: the conception of Dtr. as a ‘creative author’, and the question of later additions to Dtr.<sup>71</sup> Arguing against the notion of Dtr. as an ‘honest broker,’ Van Seters finds that,

Dtr. should rather be seen as an author who made a very free use of the documents at his disposal in order to construct his presentation of Israel’s history...for Noth the contradictions and the tensions which are found in Deuteronomy to Kings are mostly due to Dtr.’s respect for his sources...most of the ideological and theological divergences inside the Deuteronomistic History should be explained in Van Seters’ opinion, by later additions to Dtr.’s work.<sup>72</sup>

This is especially true of the so-called ‘History of David’s Succession’/‘Court History’; 2 Sam. 2-4; 9-20 and 1 Kgs 1-2. Römer also includes McKenzie under this rubric given his conclusions in his article “The Trouble of Kingship.”<sup>73</sup> As we shall see this position is somewhat at odds with his earlier contentions in *The Trouble with Kings*.

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<sup>70</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 31.

<sup>71</sup> See John Van Seters, *In Search of History: History in the Ancient World and the Origin of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

<sup>72</sup> Summarized by Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 31.

<sup>73</sup> Steven L. McKenzie, “The Trouble with Kingship,” in *Israel Constructs its History*, 286-314, argues, from a thorough examination of 1 Samuel 8-12, that this text is unified composition by a single author/editor, the Deuteronomist (Dtr) located in Mizpah shortly after 587/586 BCE, and so furnishes a good example of the Dtr’s compositional techniques throughout the entire History.

#### iv. Recent Criticisms to the Hypothesis

Two major points of contention have emerged in the wake of these numerous reevaluations of Noth's original premise: the first falls on the understanding of 'historiography', and the other on the question of the coherence of the Deuteronomistic History. Römer remarks that, "Quite frequently Noth's 'deuteronomistisches Geshichtswerk' is translated as 'Deuteronomistic Historiography', and it is no wonder that such an expression has generated strong objections."<sup>74</sup> One need only peruse the vast body of literature on the "Maximalist/Minimalist Debate with its ideological debate on the existence and academic value of a "biblical historiography." Römer goes to concede that to adopt the Greek conception of *historia* creates a significant problem for characterizing the work of the DtrH as 'historiography'. He opts to either follow Van Seters who adopts Dutch historian Huizinga's definition of "History [as] the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past," or contrarily to stress the differences between histories in the Hebrew Bible and Greek or modern historiography.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, we need to speak of 'narrative history; meaning "the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with subplots."<sup>76</sup> To circumvent the misunderstanding as a whole, it seems preferable to speak of a Deuteronomistic *History* instead of Deuteronomistic *Historiography*. Even though issues of modernist' definitions as opposed to ancient conventions still remain.

The philosophical debate of definitions aside, Römer points out, that the question the existence of such a History still remains. He notes that Claus Westermann has taken

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<sup>74</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 36.

<sup>75</sup> See the quote in Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 37.

up older critics against Noth, “arguing that the different books which constitute the so-called Deuteronomistic History do not bear the marks of the same Deuteronomistic style or ideology.”<sup>77</sup> Westermann claims that each of the Former Prophets arise out of different socio-historical contexts. “Even if there were some redactors,” Römer summarizes, “they transmitted faithfully the old oral traditions; therefore the texts in the historical book should be considered as stemming almost from eye-witnesses of the related events.”<sup>78</sup> He is probably right to point out that Westermann’s idea of “oral tradition” does not conform to the understanding from anthropological and sociological research which reveals a transformation in form and content of the selected material in the transition of modes from oral to literary traditions. Ernst Knauf also has denied the existence of a possible “Deuteronomistic historiographical work” in the biblical text.<sup>79</sup>

Römer responds by highlighting that two significantly comprehensive *Leitmotivs* (Guiding Themes) run throughout the books of Deuteronomy to Kings: the worship of other gods with the requisite rejection of Yahweh; and the deportation out of the land given to Israel, i.e. the exile. Both are intricately intertwined. Deut. 28:63 and 68

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 38. See Claus Westermann, *Die Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments: Gab es ein deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk?* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1994).

<sup>78</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 38.

<sup>79</sup> Ernst Axel Knauf, “Does ‘Deuteronomistic Historiography’ (DtrH) Exist?” in *Israel Constructs its History*, 388-398. Knauf’s article presents several short disputes in favor of denying the existence of a DtrH. “As a general rule, we expect to see Dtr theologians expressing themselves in the Dtr style,” Knauf argues, but finds there some exceptions: the Dtr style of Jeremiah is quite variant from that of Kings, and in the Pentateuch, Dtr theology comes in a priestly style (Num. 25:6-18; 31:1-54), and conversely priestly theology in Dtr style (Gen 15; Deut. 9:4-6). Knauf concludes that, “Dtr style conceals a vast multiplicity of theological positions,” 389. He argues that with the rise of the Cross and Göttingen Schools, Noth’s Dtr has been abandoned by everyone. Knauf also finds the search for a Dtr author or redactor turns out to be a mistake in regard to category along the same lines as the notion of a ‘biblical history.’ He only allows for the possibility of Kings as belonging to any notion of a DtrH, and concludes by stating that, “Exegesis as an attentive reading of the text must note the differences, the singular characteristics of each text, and finally, reconstruct the theological debate of which the Old Testament is the proceedings. Exegesis should not harmonize differences, nor transform its difficulties into pious platitudes. The hypothesis of a ‘DtrH’ encourages the second set of intentions but hardly the first,” 397-398. Therefore he finds that the DtrH hypothesis must be abandoned.

proclaim: "...you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess... Yahweh will bring you back in ships to Egypt by a route that I promised you would never see again..." with the fulfillment of these threats coming at the end of 2 Kings: "So Judah was exiled out of its land... Then all the people [who had not been deported to Babylonia] set out and went to Egypt..." (2 Kgs 25:21, 26). Römer argues, "The books from Deuteronomy to Kings are thus tightly bound, to the extent that *together* they explain why Israel and Judah could not escape from the fate that was announced by Moses from the very beginning."<sup>80</sup> He also finds a form-critical argument for the unity of Deuteronomy-Kings. "As far as Deuteronomy is deliberately composed as a single and huge discourse of Moses at the end of his life, it provides the very pattern for the speeches and testaments in the remainder of the historical books (esp. Josh. 23; 1 Sam. 12; 1 Kgs 8)."<sup>81</sup>

#### **v. Compromise and Integration**

Römer's own formulation of the DtrH presents yet another (more recent) perspective that has attempted to find compromise and yet a level of integration of the models outlined above. "Considering the diversity of the models of the Deuteronomistic History which have been advocated in the last half-century and the recent rejection of the hypothesis," he laments, "a student of the Hebrew Bible might wonder how he or she should handle these conflicting conceptions."<sup>82</sup> Römer is quick to note that each of the contentions presented previously contain valuable insights that need to be recognized and accounted for. He argues,

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<sup>80</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 40-41.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

The Crossian model provides a fitting explanation for those texts which seem to presuppose a monarchical ideology, and are rather optimistic regarding the future of the state and of the land...Nevertheless, a Josianic setting for most texts of the Deuteronomistic History as advocated by Cross fails to explain satisfactorily the numerous allusions to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile which can be found in the Deuteronomistic History, allusions which cannot be simply explained by the exilic ‘updating’ of a previous document.<sup>83</sup>

The Göttingen School is right, according to Römer, to emphasize how much the disaster of the exile pervades a great portion of the Deuteronomistic History, and that the identification of three (or even more) redactional layers may point to an oversimplification in the two edition hypothesis. “At the same time, the multiplication of Deuteronomistic layers,” Römer argues, “especially in the German scholarship, is in a certain way linked to recent criticism of the Deuteronomistic History theory.”<sup>84</sup>

Following the recent work of Iain W. Provan and Norbert Lohfink, Römer finds support for the idea that the Neo-Assyrian (i.e. the seventh century BCE) should be regarded as the starting point for the production of Deuteronomistic literature.<sup>85</sup>

However, he is careful to note that, “The existence of a Deuteronomistic scribal activity in the time of Josiah does not mean yet that we can trace back to that time the elaboration of the Deuteronomistic History in its present form, extending from the Mosaic foundation

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> See Iain W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Book of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: de Gruyter, 1988) and Norbert Lohfink, “Kerygmata des Deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks,” in *Studien zum Deuteronomium und zur deuteronomistischen Literatur II* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 125-142. Provan argues that the major concern within the Deuteronomistic school concerned the abolition of the *bamot* (“high places”/open-air sanctuaries), which was realized, by biblical account, during the reign of Hezekiah. From Provan’s perspective, the Josainic edition of the DtrH ends at 2 Kgs 18-19, and this edition only included the books of Samuel and Kings. Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges were added later, during the Neo-Babylonian period. Lohfink postulates the existence of a conquest narrative, limited to the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua (Deut. 1-Josh. 22), which he designates as “DtrL” (for *Landerobering*, “conquest”). He further considers that this DtrL was used by Josiah as propaganda for the king’s expansionist policies, and so written during that time period. Summarized from Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 42-43.

(Deuteronomy) down to the fall of Judah (2 Kings).”<sup>86</sup> Römer finds it to be more likely that such a “history” would not have been conceived of prior to the exilic period, in the attempt of royal scribes to make sense of the national and theological crisis of 597/587. On top of that, he indicates that this History underwent a new redaction in the Persian period. Pulling on the common thread in Provan and Lohfink’s work: propaganda, Römer writes,

A first version of Samuel-Kings\* might thus have been composed in order to reinforce the legitimacy of Josiah, presenting him as the true successor of David, while a document written in the spirit of the Assyrian conquest accounts (Deuteronomy-Joshua\*) would have backed Josiah’s policy by legitimizing Judah’s possession of the land in the name of Yahweh himself.”<sup>87</sup>

So seeing a compromise between differing views on the composition of the DtrH as highly promising, Römer proceeds to push forward his own model in this direction. In brief, Römer finds that it possible to discern within several texts of the DtrH three main redactional layers, each of which correspond to *three successive editions* of the entire DtrH, each of which are to be located in three distinct socio-historical contexts. This has already been alluded above. To exemplify his approach, Römer summarizes his perspective in an investigation of Deuteronomy 12:

- 12:13-18 was written about 620 BCE; this text provides an ideological legitimation for the politics of centralization under Josiah and delineates its practical implications.
- 12:8-12 is the outcome of an exilic redaction, which inserts the law of centralization in the larger context of a Deuteronomistic History extending from Joshua to 2 Kings...It maintains the importance of the temple, even at a time when the latter is partially destroyed.
- Finally, 12:2-7 and 12:20-27 represent the last revision, probably from the Persian period. Verses 2-7 reveal an ideology of segregation. The main

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<sup>86</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 43.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

issue of the law of centralization has now become the prohibition and destruction of what are regarded as illegitimate cults.<sup>88</sup>

Thus the pre-exilic/Josainic edition (Deut./-Josh.\* and Sam.-Kings\*) of the DtrH was a propagandistic effort on the part of the Deuteronomists to give ideological support for the politics of centralization and the claim that the kingdom of Judah was the “real Israel.” After the fall of the Northern Kingdom, Jerusalem generated a concentration of political and economic power reflected in the ideology of cult centralization and, “in the attempt of the Josianic Deuteronomists to promote on the level of the state religion a monolatrous veneration of Yahweh.”<sup>89</sup> Römer finds that the, “chronological construction of a history from the origins to the end of the monarchy (Deuteronomy-Kings) clearly presupposes the destruction of Jerusalem and the occupation of Judah by the Babylonians.”<sup>90</sup> Using Weberian categories of “crisis literature,” Römer sees this level of the DtrH as providing Judean elites the opportunity to explore and invent a past that reconciled their present circumstances. In the last “edition” of the DtrH, Römer sees the inevitable end of a corpus to be classified as solely Deuteronomistic. The end of the first half of the Persian period (ca. 400 BCE) saw the codification of the Torah, later to become the ideological basis of Judaism, and with it the inclusion of an edited Deuteronomy brought a close to the DtrH as the remainder of the History was divided into individual books and edited from non-Deuteronomistic perspectives with an emphasis towards segregationist ideology, hope for the future, and a monotheistic perspective of Yahweh.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 163.

## II. The Book of Kings and DtrH

McKenzie's contribution to the 1993 annual SBL program entitled: 'Martin Noth Symposium: The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Publication of *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*', opens with a worthy observation. "Brain Peckham has written, 'The world of the Bible is the world [the Deuteronomistic History] created,'" he quotes, "and Richard D. Nelson has added that the deuteronomistic world's center of gravity is the books of Kings."<sup>91</sup> These two contentions should at least appear plausible given the survey above, and the almost essential place the book of Kings holds in DtrH research should be abundantly clear. Noth's original date of composition is reliant on Kings, Cross's entire theory is based off of Kings, as is Dietrich's additions to Smend's reformulations, McKenzie's work is almost exclusive to Kings, and even Knauf's rejection of a DtrH holds that if any part of biblical presentation is influenced by a Deuteronomist it's Kings; only to mention a few of the presentations above.

The authors of the Book of Kings have left us small clues as origins of their source materials making explicit mention to סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל *The Annals of the Kings of Israel*, סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה, *The Annals of the Kings of Judah*, סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי שְׁלֹמֹה *The Book of the Deeds of Solomon*, and clear undesignated sources which include prophetic tales and narrative and temple records.<sup>92</sup> Noth held that all of these

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<sup>91</sup> Steven L. McKenzie, "The Books of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History," in *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth*, JSOTSup 182, eds. Steven L. McKenzie and M. Patrick Graham (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 281 quoting Brain Peckham, *History and Prophecy: The Development of Late Judean Literary Traditions* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 518 and Richard D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 18 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 21.

<sup>92</sup> See Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible Vol. 10 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 88-95. *The Annals of the Kings of Israel* is referenced 17 times and always as closing regnal formula, *The Annals of Kings of Judah* 15 times, and the reference to the *Book of the Deeds of Solomon* is found 1 Kgs 11:41.

sources among other traditional materials were available to the Deuteronomist, and so for him the Dtr. is the real creator of the book of Kings using his sources selectively and with great freedom. It was him who structured the book giving the framework that introduces and concludes each reign. Prior to Noth, Kings was widely thought to have been stitched together from these sources just before the exile in 587/586 BCE, and then later revised during the exile.<sup>93</sup> Noth's monograph allowed him to conclude from his interpretation of Kings that the entire DtrH was composed during the exile.

In his 1991 monograph, McKenzie argued that no satisfactory explanation for the place of the Davidic covenant has yet been offered by those who assign an exilic date to the DtrH, and a pre-exilic date remains likely.<sup>94</sup> He attempts to show that there are significant differences in theme and tone between the addition of 2 Kgs 23:26-25:26 and other passages throughout Kings which Cross and others assigned to the same author (Dtr<sup>2</sup>). Thus he argues that as a result, 2 Kgs 21:8-15 (16) is the only text which can be unreservedly assigned to the writer who updated the book of Kings by adding its last two and one-half chapters. "At the most, this writer may have retouched one or two other passages toward the end of Kings (e.g. the Huldah oracle)," McKenzie writes,

This indicates that the writer of 2 Kgs 23:26-25:26, whom Cross called Dtr<sup>2</sup>, had a lighter influence in Kings than even Cross proposed. Basically, he appended to the DH the account of Judah's history from Josiah's death on and revised the account of Manasseh's reign to fit his explanation for the exile. He apparently did not systematically revise the earlier material in Kings.<sup>95</sup>

In the end, he is led to conclude that the book of Kings in the DtrH was written by a single/editor during the reign of Josiah so as recount the history of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. "Over the years the work was glossed and supplemented in a

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<sup>93</sup> McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 1.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

number of places, including an updated account of the history of Judah after Josiah's death (2 Kgs 23:26-25:26)," writes McKenzie, "But the History as a whole was not systematically edited after its initial composition."<sup>96</sup> As alluded to earlier, McKenzie has revised this position and now advocates for a very early exilic date to the entire composition of the DtrH, even more so in line with Noth; however, a full delineation of this date in line with the book of Kings remains to be seen.<sup>97</sup>

Jeffery Geoghegan has revived the over a century old work of Abraham Kuenen, who observed two distinct strata in the book of Kings one of which used the phrase "until this day" deriving from a Deuteronomistic redactor. From Kuenen's observations, he has attempted to argue that, "there are compelling reasons to assign this phrase to one redactor: the Deuteronomistic Historian (Dtr), who employed "until this day" as his own personal witness to geographical, political, and cultic realities mentioned in his sources that still existed at the time of his historical enterprise."<sup>98</sup> From his study of the phrase, Geoghegan argues for pre-exilic, particularly a Josianic edition, of the DtrH, and he goes so far as to contend that the evidence of "until this day" in every major unit of the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 150. So McKenzie's DtrH includes: 1 Kgs (1-2?); 3-10 (minus 6:11-14; 8:50b-53(?); 9:6-9); 11:1-8, 14-43 (minus glosses in vv 32, 33 [plural verbs], 34b $\alpha$ , 38b $\beta$ -39); 12:1-20 (minus vv 2-3a and Jeroboam's name in v 12), 25-32 + 13:34; 14:1-31 (minus vv 22b-24); 15:1-34; 16:1-34 (minus v 7); 21:1-16, 17-24 (minus "who is in Samaria" in v 18a and vv 19b, 23); 22:39-53; 2 Kgs 1:1, 17a $\beta$ -18; 3:1-3; 8:16-29 (minus glosses in vv 28b-29a $\beta$ ); 9-10 (minus 9:7b, 10a, 14-15a, 27b $\beta$ -28, 36b; 10:18-28); 11-12; 13:1-13, 22-25; 14-16; 17:1-7a $\alpha$ , 18a, 21-34a; 18-20 (minus 20:12-19); 21:1-7, 17-26; 22:1-20 (minus glossing of Huldah's oracle in vv 15-20); 23:1-15, 19-25a. His Post-Dtr additions include: 1 Kgs 6:11-14; 8:50b-53?; 9:6-9; glosses in 11:32, 33 [plural verbs], 34b $\alpha$ , 38b $\beta$ -39; 12:2-3a and Jeroboam's name in 12:12; 12:33; 13:1-33; 14:22b-24; 16:7; 17-19; 20; glossing of 21:1-16, 18a, 19b, 23; 22:1-38; 2 Kgs 1:2-17a $\alpha$ ; 2; 3:4-27; 4-7; 8:1-15; glossing in 8:28b-29a $\beta$ ; 9:7b, 10a, 14-15a, 27b $\beta$ -28, 36b; 10: 18-28; 13:14-21; 17:7a $\beta$ -17, 18b-20; 17:34b-41; 20:12-19; glossing in 22:15-20; 23:16-18; 23:25b-25:26; 25:27-30.

<sup>97</sup> See McKenzie, "The Trouble with Kingship," in *Israel Constructs its History*. It appears to be increasingly more difficult to fully pin down McKenzie's thoughts, while most want to put him in a "Neo-Nothian" box, his comments in a panel response to Römer's *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History* at the 2008 SBL annual meeting highlight not only this later date, but also the continued importance of a "Josianic Edition" of at least Kings if not the DtrH. See Steve L. McKenzie, "A Response to Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*," *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 9:17 (2009): 15-21.

<sup>98</sup> Jeffery C. Geoghegan, "'Until This Day' and the Preexilic Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 122:2 (2003), 202.

DtrH provides a unified literary document and as such the tension present that some scholars attribute to various levels of redaction are actually the result of the Historian's effort to incorporate his various source material. Again taking much of his observations from phenomena in Kings, Richard Nelson has argued for the double redaction of a Josainic edition of the DtrH with limited amounts of pessimistic exilic additions based largely on ideological/thematic grounds, nearly in agreement with Cross and early McKenzie.<sup>99</sup> André Lemaire has attempted to outline a redaction history of the book of Kings and identifies five pre-Deuteronomistic redactions prior to two Deuteronomistic editions.<sup>100</sup> Lemaire concludes

If the present text is indeed the edition that was revised and edited by the last important redactor – that is, the exilic deuteronomistic redactor, as M. Noth argued – the redactor did not create a continuous history of more than four centuries by pulling together material from disparate sources. Rather, the exilic deuteronomistic redaction should be seen as a final revised and corrected edition of a book that had already seen a literary history of about four centuries.<sup>101</sup>

Lemaire goes further to claim that each redactor and consequent edition of the recorded history aimed at more than just a simple recording of facts, but rather to instill in the reader a specific ideology, political and religious, corresponding to the reforms in vogue at the time of writing. Equally characterized by a royal ideology, Lemaire finds that, "The

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<sup>99</sup> Richard Nelson, "The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History: The Case is Still Compelling," *JSOT* 29:3 (2005): 319-337.

<sup>100</sup> André Lemaire, "Toward a Redactional History of the Book of Kings," in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah*, 446-461. Translated and Reprinted from "Vers l'Histoire de la Rédaction des Livres des Rois," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 98 (1986): 221-236. Lemaire's seven redactions/editions include: 1) The Abiatharite account of David, written around 970, probably at the end of David's reign and ending with the crowning of Solomon. 2) The Zadokite (or Nathanite?) edition of the same account, probably written during the first years of Solomon's reign, perhaps around 960. 3) The redaction of the history of Solomon's reign, ending with the divided kingdom, probably written around 920 during the reign of Rehoboam. 4) The redaction/edition comprising the history of the two kingdom of Judah and Israel until their reconciliation, written around 850, during the reign of Jehoshaphat. 5) The protodeuteronomistic redaction/edition of the history of both kingdoms until the fall of Samaria and Hezekiah's reform, probably written around 710-705. 6) The deuteronomistic redaction/edition linked with Josiah's reform, written around 620-609. 7) The exilic deuteronomistic redaction/edition written around 560, 458.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

royal and didactic character of the various redaction/editions of the books of Kings suggests that they were probably written for and used as a teaching instrument to inculcate in the future civil servants of the kingdom a sense of national consciousness and service to the king.”<sup>102</sup>

### **III. Elijah/Elisha Cycle and DtrH**

The last overview for our purposes needs to account for the particular pericopes to be examined in the following chapter. Unsurprisingly, the Elijah and Elisha narratives hold a problematic place in the discourse of the DtrH, but beyond the peculiarities of these texts, prophets and their acts dominate a significant portion of the recorded history in Kings. Römer highlights the fact that in the present text of Kings, almost half of the material is devoted to the appearance of prophets: Ahijah (1 Kgs 11; 14), an anonymous prophet proclaiming the destruction of Bethel (1 Kgs 13), Jehu (1Kgs 16:1-7), Elijah (1 Kgs 17-19; 21; 2 Kgs 1-2), a second anonymous prophet (1 Kgs 20), Micaiah (1 Kgs 22), Elisha (2 Kgs 2-9; 13:14-21), Jonah (2 Kgs 14:25), Isaiah (2 Kgs 19-20), and the prophetess Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14-20). He identifies within these stories two forms of prophetic activity. The first sees the prophetic pronouncement of divine oracles (mostly of punishment) and the explicit fulfillment of those oracles. Ahijah’s oracle against Jeroboam’s house is fulfilled in Baasha’s revolt (1 Kgs 15:27-29), and Jehu’s oracle against Baasha is accomplished in Zimri’s insurrection (1 Kgs 16:11-12). Elijah’s proclamations against Ahab are realized in King Jehu’s slaughter of the Omride dynasty (2 Kgs 9:25-26), and Huldah’s declaration of the fall of Judah comes to fruition in 2 Kgs 24-25 (especially 24:2-3a). According to Römer,

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 460.

These texts conform to the Deuteronomistic ideology of prophetism (see Deut. 18:18)...For the Deuteronomists, prophets have a legitimating function: their oracles, which always get fulfilled, demonstrate that Yahweh directed the whole history of Israel and Judah, and that he also provoked the disastrous end of the two states.<sup>103</sup>

The second type of prophetic activity in these stories gives a portrayal of prophets as miracle-workers, healers, magicians, and visionaries. “Those stories often interrupt unexpectedly the Deuteronomistic reports and appear sometimes in the Greek version at different places,” Römer writes, and so concludes them to be post-Deuteronomistic additions, following McKenzie.<sup>104</sup>

McKenzie concludes that the story of the young man of God from Judah and the old prophet from Israel in 1 Kgs 13:1-32a, the Elijah cycle in 1 Kgs 17-19, the story about Elijah in 2 Kgs 1:2-17aα, the battle accounts in 1 Kgs 20 and 22:1-38, and the Elisha stories in 2 Kgs 2; 3:4-8:15; 13:14-21 (+ 22-25) are all post-Dtr additions. This would include the three pericopes for examination later. McKenzie notes Van Seter’s contention that the Elijah cycle (1 Kgs 17-19, 21, 2 Kgs 1) are a part of Dtr’s history based on thematic concerns: incursion of the Canaanite cults and Dtr’s aversion to the house of Ahab.<sup>105</sup> He rebuts the finding that these stories are better described as intruding into Dtr’s framework rather being integrated into it, and so while maintaining a late post-Dtr insertion, McKenzie is careful to conclude that the Elijah cycle in itself may be quite early (possibly from before the fall of the Northern Kingdom ca. 722), but were edited and added into the DH during the exile or afterwards.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, 153.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> See Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 305.

<sup>106</sup> McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings*, 86-87.

McKenzie goes on to highlight that the Elisha stories generally share several well-known features, but is led to observe an obvious level of literary unevenness across the entire cycle.<sup>107</sup> He argues that,

One need not accept some of the complex reconstructions of the Elisha collection in order to affirm that it has been inserted into Dtr's history. Nor does this necessarily mean that the stories themselves are purely late compositions. Dtr may have known them. But the evidence that he did not include them is compelling. It is not simply that there are no signs of Dtr's retouching in the stories, although this is striking in comparison with the Jehu narrative in 2 Kings 9-10. But several of the Elisha stories also stand outside of Dtr's chronological framework indicating that he did not edit them.<sup>108</sup>

McKenzie does not give a particular date for when these narrative were added, but views them a single block of material that all came in at one time. Römer places these narratives along with 1 Kgs 20 and 22 into the Persian period additions to the corpus.

Reacting strongly against McKenzie's notion of a single block of material inserted all at once in the DtrH and somewhat conforming to Römer, Otto puts forward

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., These features include: the depiction of the prophet as a wonder worker even in death (13:20-21), reference to him as the "man of God" (4:7, 9, 16, 21, 22, 25, 27, 40, 42; 5:8, 15, 20; 6:6, 9, 10, 15; 7:2, 17, 18, 19; 8:2, 4, 7, 8, 11; 13:19), interaction with the "sons of the prophets" (2:3, 5, 7, 15-18; 4:1, 38-41, 42-44; 6:1-7), the inclusion of Gehazi, Elisha's servant (4:8-37; 5:19-27; 8:1-6), a lack of identification of the king of Israel by name (3:4, 5, 9, 10, 13; 5:5, 6, 7, 8; 6:9, 10, 11, 12, 21, 26, 30, 32; 7:2, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18; 8:4-6; 13:16, 18). In 5:8; 6:8-10, 20-23; 8:1-6; 13:14-19, Elisha's relationship with the king is cordial, but in 3:14; 6:31-33 not so. Several stories presuppose a state of war between Israel and Aram (6:8-23; 6:24-7:20; 13:14-19, 24-25), but again not always (5:1-27). 8:7-15 stands in the gap between these two poles as Elisha is consulted by the king of Aram, suggesting a period of peace, but when Elisha foresees how Hazael will distress Israel he weeps, 95.

<sup>108</sup> McKenzie continues, "The tales in 2 Kings 2 (MT) are between the closing formula for Ahaziah (1:17a $\beta$ -18) and the accession formula for Joram (3:1-3). *The account in 3:4-27 includes Jehoshaphat, whose reign has already been closed by Dtr (1 Kgs 22:45-50)*. In 8:16 Dtr reports the accession of Jehoram of Judah in the fifth year of Joram of Israel. But the Elisha stories in 2 Kings 3-8 clearly presuppose more than a five year period (cf. 8:2)," (97). He goes on to note how the insertion of 3:4-27 and 13:4-21 has led to a great deal of confusion in the MT's chronology. "The account in 3:4-27 was placed in its present position out of necessity," McKenzie argues, "Since it presumes Mesha's revolt (3:5) it had to come after the Dtr reference to that revolt after Ahab's death (2 Kgs 1:1). But it also presumes the transition from Elijah to Elisha (cf. 3:11). This dictated the order of material for the editor who inserted the Elisha stories into Dtr's work. He the story about Ahaziah in 2 Kgs 1:2-17a $\alpha$  between Ahaziah's regnal formulas (including 2 Kgs 1:1), which were in Dtr's work. He then placed the story of Elisha's succession in 2 Kings 2 and the battle account in 3:4-27 after Dtr's formula for Joram in 3:1-3, identifying the king of Israel in 3:4-27 as Joram," and he further concludes that the King of Judah originally was nameless, 97.

an argument for a four stage editorial development of the material between 1 Kgs 16:29-2Kgs 10:36. She contends that at the base of the Deuteronomistic History, composed around 562 BCE, only three of the Elijah-Elisha stories were included: the narrative about Naboth's vineyard, Ahaziah's death and the story of Jehu's coup. In the historical epoch of Ahab to Jehu, Otto finds that the Deuteronomists demonstrated the reliability of the word of Yahweh throughout history while also embodying the theme of "Baal worship-cultic reform in the history of the Northern Kingdom. The second level of additions came shortly after, the narratives of the Omride Wars (1 Kgs 20:1-43; 22:1-38; 2 Kgs 3:4-27; 6:24-7:20), and with it a another theme: the attitude of the king towards the word of the prophets determines the fate of Israel. In the early post-exilic period, a third addition brings 1 Kgs 17-18 into the collection in order to demonstrate the possibility of new life in community with Yahweh after judgment. Finally, 1 Kgs 19:1-18 and the remainder of the Elisha cycle is added in the fifth century so as give further legitimation to prophecy as a foundation in the history of Israel.<sup>109</sup>

Antony F. Campbell has argued for a pre-deuteronomistic layer of 1 Samuel-2 Kings that he identifies as the "Prophetic Record". Reacting against Dietrich's DtrP redaction, Campbell proposes a hypothesis that proposes a Northern nine-century text that both anticipates and prepares for the growth of the DtrH. Campbell contends,

Unlike the dtr and priestly writings, the Prophetic Record is not identified by characteristic language and style in the service of a distinctive theology...The text is less its authors' own writing than their composition and interpretation of traditions available to them. The identification of the text of the Prophetic Record proceeds partly by affirmation. There are the passages marked by the prophetic

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<sup>109</sup> Susanne Otto, "The Composition of the Elijah-Elisha Stories and Deuteronomistic History," *JSOT* 27:4 (2003): 487-508.

concerns and themes (e.g. anointing, designation, and rejection of the king, etc.) or by particular formulaic expressions (e.g., the speeches).<sup>110</sup>

Campbell's identification is based on three sets of texts: 1) Those associated with the anointing of Saul, David, and Jehu, 2) Those associated with the designation and/or rejection of Jeroboam, Ahab, and Jehu, and 3) Those providing interrelationships between these first two sets and their links with the wider context of the intervening narrative. In his final analysis, he includes two major expansions to his "Prophetic Record" prior to the composition of the DtrH. According to Campbell,

The Prophetic Record proclaimed a view of history in which God's will was paramount in Israel. Kings originated from Yahweh's will, manifested through the prophets. Kings were rejected, by these same prophets, for their transgressions. Toward the end of the Prophetic Record, the issue of apostasy loomed particularly large...The Northern expansion of the Prophetic Record focused on one specific factor: the transgression of Jeroboam, which affected the worshipping life of the nation, and led to its downfall...The southern document takes up this idea and applies it to the issue of worship at the high places: such a practice is asserted to have had an increasingly deleterious effect on Judah's national life.<sup>111</sup>

Through these three documents, the Deuteronomist could turn from moments in the national life of Israel and Judah to the entire history of Israel in Canaan. "From specific aspects of apostasy or religious infidelity, [the Deuteronomist] turned to the deuteronomic law, characterized above all by the law of centralization (Deuteronomy 12), as the critical element governing Israel's life," Campbell argues, "In the light of this dtr program of law, the significance of the whole of Israel's history, since the exodus, could be clearly seen...From it follows the conceptualization of the Deuteronomistic History."<sup>112</sup> The importance of Campbell's work is to provide an alternative framework that makes room for portions of the Elijah/Elisha cycles to be fairly early traditional

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<sup>110</sup> Antony F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth-Century Document (1 Samuel-2 Kings 10)* (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1986), 65.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

materials, and arguably helps to account for the particularly Northern-centric portions of Kings that have been included in a largely pro-south/Judahite document.<sup>113</sup>

#### **IV. Integrating DtrH into Cultural Memory**

What can be concluded at this point from the above overview of the DtrH?

Firstly, Noth's original hypothesis remains a contested boundary in the understanding of the relationship of the historical books in the Hebrew Bible, but admittedly forever changed the way in which academics engage the history of Israel as presented in the text. Having seen revisions in the double redaction theory of the "Crossian School", in the multiple redactional layers from the "Göttingen School," in slight alternations from a Neo-Nothian resurgence, and in attempts at holistic integration two observations appear to emerge. Nearly all these revisions hinge on the relative value of pre-exilic "Josainic" edition to the DtrH that was appended to in (a) later period(s) or whether there is a fully realized DtrH first composed in the exilic period that underwent either a single major editorial process or redacted several times throughout proceeding periods. Secondly, the book of Kings tends to take center stage in this debate with the major literary, thematic, structural, etc. arguments arising from exegetical analysis of texts in 1&2 Kings. If one single ideological and/or thematic substratum can be gleaned from the majority of the reconstructions presented, then it is that the DtrH arose through the motivations of political legitimation and national interests in explaining historical circumstances. The major question that remains is, at this point, when did this begin? Lastly, the Elijah and

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<sup>113</sup> Römer and de Pury, "Deuteronomistic Historiography," in *Israel Constructs its History*, are right to point out that Campbell's date is not in general agreement, and many works have emphasized the later character of some the prophetic accounts in Kings, which we have already seen. However, they note that if the prophetic materials are solely late additions, then "the Deuteronomistic History of the monarchy was shorter than commonly supposed and that the first Deuteronomist was interested in the prophets only insofar as they transmitted the divine word. If the prophetic cycles were only added afterwards, we should reconsider the link between prophecy and Deuteronomism," 132-133.

Elisha cycles provide a significant portion of the material given in Kings part-in-parcel with other prophetic figures that play significant roles throughout the history presented. Now the relative status of these narratives in relation to the greater DtrH remains open to debate. A debate that seems to state that the Elijah-Elisha stories are at some level either fairly representative of early traditional materials or they are late constructions added into the DtrH after full composition.

Limitations of the project at hand as well as the level of comfort with the discourse in the literature prevent an entirely new perspective on the DtrH, but that doesn't prevent an attempt to push, at least provisionally, towards an integration of the DtrH into memory studies. Gaétane-Diane Forget has already begun to explore this possibility in her article "Navigating "Deuteronomistic History" as Cultural Memory."<sup>114</sup> Forget finds that the DtrH is a "careful weaving of a nation's identity through the cultural memory built and protected by its tradents and custodians, the scribes...these custodians...wove together, as a rich tapestry, a culturally-unifying memory that came to known as biblical Israel."<sup>115</sup> This culturally unifying memory promoted an identity founded on the centralization of the cult, a convergence and differentiation of Near Eastern divine conception, and the legitimization of its leadership and administration. The DtrH, "shows the emergence and protection of an elaborate socio-religious authoritative organization," Forget writes, "What the modern reader is witness to is the end product, woven by these custodians."<sup>116</sup> Here we should begin to recall Marc Brettler's comments in the previous chapter. The DtrH is not historical literature, but

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<sup>114</sup> Gaétane-Diane Forget, "Navigating "Deuteronomistic History as Cultural Memory," *Religion and Theology* 17 (2010): 1-12.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

rather national history, “precisely the type of history which...has been open to being rewritten or created and is most easily influenced by memory in all of its permutations, with all of its problems and benefits.”<sup>117</sup> Pushing the debates surrounding the DtrH forces us to consider Philip Davies recognition that, “Within the extended biblical narratives of the past we find clear traces of distinct and contradictory memories...These stories reflect different identities, including different Israels: the combined narrative creates an overarching Israelite identity from these, but without obscuring them.”<sup>118</sup> Might the DtrH in fact hold distinct memories that sought a mnemohistory in support of Josiah and his reform program, while the crisis of 587/586 BCE forced a necessary re-remembering of that mnemohistory? Might we find in the Elijah and Elisha narratives, the memory of real historical confrontations between prophets and kings, and the emergent dominance of some forms of divine conception over others? Hopefully these questions will be further illuminated in the end of this project.

Forget’s article is limited in its scope and approach as she is mainly focused on the mnemonic discourse of divinity in the DtrH, and how the DtrH moves the memory of monolatry into exclusive monotheism. Aside from an examination of the refrain “until this day, they forsook Yahweh and served the Baals” Forget does no thorough exegetical work. The following chapter will attempt to fill that gap as we examine the various memories of divine national power represented in a selection of the narratives from the Elijah and Elisha cycle.

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<sup>117</sup> Marc Brettler, “Memory in Ancient Israel,” in *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism*, 10.

<sup>118</sup> Philip Davies, *Memories of Ancient Israel*, 114.

### Chapter Three: Divine National Power in 1 Kings 18, 2 Kings 5, and 2 Kings 3

The previous chapter ended with an attempt to reconceptualize the Deuteronomistic History, particularly the represented history evidenced in the Book of Kings, towards Israelite cultural memory, following on the short work of Gaétane-Diane Forget. Yet as noted, Forget fails to provide specific exegetical data of the complex interworking of that memory in the DtrH of Kings, and this chapter will hopefully, at least in its limited scope, partially fill this gap. At this point, it is also constructive to remind one of the overarching question carrying this project. If the DtrH of Kings can be read as memory then does that mnemohistory preserve a single divine conception throughout the historical representation of that memory? A critical exegetical reading of 1 Kings 18, 2 Kings 5, and 2 Kings 3 will show that this is not the case, and therefore given aspects of the ideology of DtrH, these differing divine conceptions need to be accounted for within the greater mnemohistory of Kings and DtrH.

Here we also have recourse to examine in more detail Mark S. Smith's work mentioned in the introduction, *God in Translation*, because much of his discussion of Israelite divine conception in the texts and socio-cultural periods examined here falls under an understanding of national theism. Smith's impetus in writing is three fold: to expand the parameters of Jan Assmann's account of divine translatability in the Ancient Near East, to reverse Assmann's claims for the absence of translatability in the Hebrew Bible, and to uncover ideas about divinity that ancients presupposed in their texts both in the Hebrew Bible and in wider Ancient Near Eastern literature.<sup>119</sup> Smith situates the

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<sup>119</sup> Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation*, 10-11. For Assmann's understanding of translatability see my introduction, note 5. To summarize his ideas, Assmann holds that because of Israel's "Mosaic Distinction" its religious discourse did not participate in an international and intercultural *ecumene* of "god-talk," which in other Ancient Near Eastern cultures saw cross-cultural recognition of divine function and a

biblical cases for Israelite translatability into the socio-historical context of the Iron Age (ca. 1200-550 BCE), where “Translatability in this period takes place on a more regional or local scale, compared with the intercultural discourse of the great international ages.”<sup>120</sup> Israel as an independent socio-political polity emerges and briefly (historically speaking) stands between two major periods of Ancient Mediterranean internationalism; developing out of the post-Late Bronze age collapse and then falling under the hegemony of Mesopotamian imperialism, first under Assyria and then Babylon, at the end of the Iron Age. Smith aptly understates the dynamics. “From a large-scale perspective on ancient Near Eastern history,” he writes,

Israel may be situated within an intermediate or transitional period marked by fragmentation of international structures. Israel emerged in a world governed more by contiguous, political relations and less by international structures. Its subsequent demise and communal history was deeply shaped by the emergence of a later international age dominated by Mesopotamian powers.<sup>121</sup>

Such contentions should be have been implicit in the discussion on the construction and content of the Deuteronomistic History; the vast majority of which attempts to remember a tribal “Israelite” community (Joshua-Judges) developing into a monarchical polity (Samuel-Kings) known as the nation of Israel through its dividing of kingdoms with only

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relating of specific deities between cultures. Smith summarizes his thesis into six major points: “(1) in keeping with its scale and relatively local relations with other polities, Israel deployed a form of local translatability during the period the monarchies, if not earlier; (2) this translatability took the form of a worldview that could recognize other national gods as valid for Israel’s neighbors just as Yahweh was for Israel; (3) Israel’s loss of translatability represented an internal development that corresponds with its experience of the initial state of the international age merging under the Assyrians and the Babylonians; (4) the conceptual shift in this period involved a sophisticated hermeneutic that retained older formulations of translatability within expressions of non-translatability and monotheism; (5) the hermeneutic of theism within ancient Israel and Yehud was an ongoing intellectual project involving various forms of textual harmonization; and (6) if Assman’s “Mosaic distinction” is to be maintained, it would be during the late biblical and post-biblical reception of the Bible than generally the Bible itself (much less ancient Israel) when it comes into focus,” 10.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 99. The “great international ages” here should be understood as the Bronze Age prior to the so-called “Late Bronze Age Collapse” and end of the Iron Age with the rise of Mesopotamian imperialism.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 102.

a small space, compared to the rest of the history, devoted to its subjection to Mesopotamian imperialism (2 Kings 15:29-25:30). Thus it is this in-between period of internationalism, that Israel participates in a regional level of translatability, according to Smith, that centers on the recognition of deities as representative of nations, able to act on behalf of a nation, and to oblige the citizens of their respective polities to ritual practice.

### **I. 1 Kings 18: Monotheistic Divine National Power**

The confrontation between Yahweh and Baal, through their attendant prophetic representatives, found in 1 Kings 18 provides one end of what may be established as a spectrum of divergent conceptions of divine national power; an end that is most aptly described as monotheistic. By way of introduction, the following overview provides a basic outline of the narrative.<sup>122</sup> The chapter opens with a time reference and a word from Yahweh to Elijah stating that he must present himself to King Ahab, and we are told that a severe famine is going on in the country (vv. 1-2). The famine proceeds from the prophecy of drought that Elijah gives as he suddenly appears in the telling of the history in 17:1, and the time reference follows on Elijah's fleeing from the political scene of Israel into a few localized miracle stories in foreign nations (17:3-7, 8-16, 17-24). However, 18:3-16 sees Elijah return to the political realms of Israel, as he meets Obadiah who has been sent out by Ahab to find grain. Elijah instructs Obadiah to return to his lord, Ahab, and inform him that Elijah has returned. After some exasperated dialogue on the part of Obadiah (vv. 7-16) he obliges Elijah's request, and Elijah presents himself before Ahab. Verses 17-18, open up the conflict about to ensue in the remainder of the bulk of the chapter. *"Is this you, disturber of Israel!"* Ahab exclaims as he sees Elijah, to which Elijah responds, *"I have not troubled Israel, however, you and your father's house*

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<sup>122</sup> For my full translation of the chapter and the following two texts see Appendix 1

*have in your forsaking Yahweh's commands because you went after the Baals.*" Elijah demands that Ahab gather an assembly of Israel, 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah at Mount Carmel (vv. 19-20). Then, in verse 21, the divine conflict to come is declared: *"How long will you limp between divided opinions? If Yahweh is the god follow after him, but if the Baal follow after him."* Verses 22-24, see the regulations described, the parties are to take a bull, prepare it for sacrifice on a pile of wood, but no fire is to be set, because "then you all (the prophets of Baal) can call on the name of your god, and I (Elijah) will call on the name of Yahweh. So he is the god who answers with fire, that one is the God." Elijah allows the prophets of Baal to petition first, and the following five verses see their increasingly frustrated efforts to provoke Baal into action whilst under the derision of Elijah, and the narrator refrains twice *there was neither a voice, nor an answerer* with the second adding *or one paying attention* (vv. 25-29). Verse 30 shifts turns now to Elijah with vv. 31-32 highlighting the rebuilding of a destroyed altar to Yahweh. Elijah prepares his sacrifice in v. 33, and then instructs that water be poured over everything three times (vv. 34-35). Verses 36-39 find the climax of the story and needs to be repeated verbatim:

*36The time of the evening offering was at hand when Elijah, the prophet, drew near and said: "Yahweh, god of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that you are god in Israel and I am your servant, and by your word I have done all of these things. 37Answer me Yahweh, answer me so that this people will know that you are Yahweh the God, and you have turned their hearts backward." 38Then the fire of Yahweh fell and consumed the offering and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39When all the people saw this, they fell upon their faces, saying: "Yahweh, he is the God; Yahweh, he is the God."*

Elijah then orders the people to seize the prophets and slay them (v. 40), and the narrative ends with the coming of rain and an end to the drought (vv. 41-46). As will be shown,

many scholars will place 1 Kings 18 into a greater literary contextual framework of chapters 17-19, but chapter 18 can stand on its own as well as the particular sub-narrative found in vv. 17-40, which is the specific focus here.

Interpretations, including the one to be put forward here, have nearly exclusively focused on the confrontation between Baal and Yahweh. Early commentators highlighted the juxtaposition of “the historical faith” of Israel in Yahweh versus the impersonal nature cult of Baal, and thus the requisite domination of nature under Yahwism.<sup>123</sup> More recent perspectives have moved in slightly different directions. This narrative could be read as a rejection of translatability, in Smith’s understanding, and has in more recent scholarship been read as expressing monotheistic claims. Mordechai Cogan reads 1 Kings 18 as “partisan literature, and so illuminates the confrontation from the perspective of the villains. “The portrayal of Jezebel as a zealot of Baal who undertook to exterminate the prophets of YHWH is a caricature,” he argues,

The intolerance that it implies is inconsistent with pagan thought. The exclusiveness of the worship of YHWH to the exclusion of other gods is a feature of monotheism, and it is misleadingly attributed to the cult of Baal (1 Kgs 18:21). Jezebel’s behavior becomes understandable when viewed as a political response

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<sup>123</sup> John Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, OTL, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1970), contends that the “ordeal reflects the reaction of Elijah and his followers to the cult of Baal...and apparently to the liberalism of local Israelites who say nothing incompatible in the Canaanite nature-cult and their traditional allegiance to Yahweh,” 385. Gray shows his dated academic context, as the crux of his understanding falls on his reading of verse 36. Following on the *Heilsgeschichte* (History of Salvation) interpretation of Old Testament theology, Gray writes, “Elijah rallies Israel as the elect and covenanted community and emphasizes the gulf between the historical faith of Israel and the impersonal nature-cult of Canaan, though the whole episode emphasized the sovereignty of the God of Israel over the forces of nature also,” 401. Gwilym H. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings Volume II: 1 Kings 17:1-2 Kings 25:30*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), overemphasizes this latter notion in Gray, writing, “The present narrative gives an unmistakable impression of unity because of it has a dominating theme namely the drought and Yahweh’s control over rain. All else, including the Carmel narrative, has been made subservient to this main theme,” 311. Jones is nearly unconcerned with the notion of divine conception in this narrative only noting that Elijah’s truants are used to display the humanity of Baal and that he is not a god thus unable to act. See also F.C. Fensham, “A Few Observations on the Polarisation Between Yahweh and Baal in I Kings 17-19,” *ZAW* 92:2 (1980): 227-236 in which he finds that the entire undercurrent of the prophetic narrative cycle related to Elijah is the opposition to Baal and the demonstration of the power of Yahweh over phenomena traditionally associated with the field of influence of Baal.

to the opposition raised by the loyal servants of YHWH to the foreign cults that had been introduced into Israel's capital upon her arrival.<sup>124</sup>

Somewhat in line with Cogan, Volkmar Fritz argues that the purpose of this passage is not only to provide undeniable proof that Yahweh is the true God of Israel, but also to didactically show (in a performative manner), that Yahweh is the one and only God. In commenting on vv. 21-25, Fritz finds that, "the whole narrative is marked by a monotheistic standpoint, that is, the worship of Yahweh as the sole God (see 1 Kgs 18:39)," with Elijah's challenge of choice between Yahweh and Baal.<sup>125</sup> Marvin Sweeney should probably be placed somewhere in between these older contentions and those of Cogan and Fritz, providing a carefully nuanced interpretation. He takes 1 Kgs 18:1-19:21 as a composite whole that "builds upon the previously expressed concerns with the drought and the questions of life and death in an effort to demonstrate YHWH's roles as the G-d of Israel and the natural world of creation."<sup>126</sup> Accordingly the narrative focuses on Elijah's demonstration of Yahweh's power over against the Phoenician deities, Baal and Asherah, as well as Yahweh's revelation to Elijah at Mount Horeb, and so has larger

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<sup>124</sup> Cogan, *1 Kings*, 447. Cogan follows Kaufmann in this understanding of the historical progression of the religion of Israel, see my introduction note 5 for the issues with Kaufmann's perspective.

<sup>125</sup> Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings: A Continental Commentary*, Anselm Hagedorn, trans. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 191. He goes on to state that, "There can only be one God. Only the God who will, after an invocation, send fire on the sacrifice is the true God, because he alone is a living god." On verses 36-38, Fritz makes the following observations, "The narrative of the trial by ordeal on Mount Carmel does not contain a historical kernel transformed into a saga; rather it is a didactic narrative that expresses in an ideal scene the faith in Yahweh as the only God; next to him Baal (and all other gods) are rendered void...the narrative was created from within the horizon of Deuteronomistic theology to demonstrate the singularity of Yahweh," and in concluding his interpretation from the statements in vv. 39-40, he argues, "Yahweh is addressed from a monotheistic point of view as the only God in the formula, 'Yahweh indeed is God.' Here monotheism means the worship of Yahweh as the only God, excluding the existence of any other gods," 193.

<sup>126</sup> Marvin Sweeney, *1 & II Kings: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 220.

concerns with the overthrow of the house of Omri and Ben Hadad of Aram through the efforts of the prophet.<sup>127</sup>

Scholarship tends to come full circle given enough time, as seen in Ap-Thomas' article that leads directly into Smith's contentions on this chapter. Ap-Thomas contends,

If we take the term monotheism in its narrower sense – more accurately described as monolatry or henotheism – a good case can be made out for regarding the trial on Mt. Carmel as the starting point on a national scale for the assertion in Palestine of the exclusive right of Yahweh to be regarded as the national god of Israel.<sup>128</sup>

Smith argues that the passage does not contain a specifically monotheistic expression, rather presents a conflict between religious personnel as representatives of their two gods. “More specifically,” Smith writes, “the story explores the issue of the proper place of Baal in Israelite religion.”<sup>129</sup> He sees the critique of Baal indicating, while simultaneously rejecting, a cross-cultural acceptance of Phoenician Baal along with Yahweh as well as an inner-cultural acceptance of Baal on the part of some Israelites. Smith goes on to explore the possibility of a geographical or localized power confrontation between Yahweh and Baal with the playing field being the highlands between the coast and the Transjordan.<sup>130</sup> He admits that the particular focus of translatability between Yahweh and

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<sup>127</sup> Sweeney reads the subunit of vv. 17-46, as demonstrating YHWH's efficacy as master of creation and Israel over that of the Phoenician deities Baal and Asherah, and so “the passage is an example of the prophetic confrontation story in which a prophet or other figure identified with YHWH is pitted against false prophets or opponents in an effort to demonstrate the credibility of the prophet and his message (cf. Amos 7:10-17; Jer 27-28; Isa 36-37/2 Kgs 18-19),” 226. He is careful though to never engage the possible battle of divine conception depicted here; never making any claims of monotheism, but only that, “The miraculous response to Elijah's prayer, in which fire consumes the bull, the altar, the water, and everything associated with the altar, provides stunning confirmation that YHWH is G-d,” 229.

<sup>128</sup> D.R. Ap-Thomas, “Elijah on Mount Carmel,” *PEQ* (1960): 149. The main thrust of the article is to identify “Baal” in this story with either a localized Baal of Carmel or the specifically Tyrian manifestations Baal Melkart or Baal Shamem.

<sup>129</sup> Smith, *God in Translation*, 123. He goes to ask two significant questions: “Is Baal simply an outsider, as Elijah would maintain (verse 18), or does he represent a god acceptable to Israelites, as they are represented (verse 21)?”

<sup>130</sup> Smith highlights the fact that much of the Elijah's prophetic activity is placed on the eastern side of the highlands and in the Transjordan, and notes that Elijah's home (Gilead) is in the Transjordan.

Baal in this context is unclear, yet possible, and so concludes, “In sum, although the narrative was readily amenable to later monotheistic reception within Israel, it is hardly monotheistic, but reflects the conflict between two national gods.”<sup>131</sup>

Yet do the particular literary devices at play here push the reader more towards a monotheistic conception? Moving beyond socio-anthropological readings, Jerome Walsh’s interpretation, from a strict narratological standpoint, provides some valuable insights in regards to the divine conception at play here. Walsh highlights the juxtaposition of exclusive and inclusive worship practices in the opening section of the Carmel conflict (vv. 21-24). “Ancient paganisms were not generally exclusivistic. A belief in many deities, each with his or her own proper sphere of influence, entails an openness to worshipping whichever god is appropriate in a given situation,” he writes,

For a Baalist, then, there would be no need to choose between Yahweh and Baal; a person could reverence both deities as long as they did not become rivals for the same sphere of influence. Hidden, then, behind the choice Elijah offers the people is a prior choice: exclusive or inclusive worship. Since Yahweh is on the side of exclusivism and Baal is not, even a willingness to consider choosing moves one toward Yahweh.<sup>132</sup>

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On the other hand, Baal seems to receive particular devotion in the coastal regions as a storm-god. Thus Smith concludes, “The dialogue in 2 Kings 1 and the competition in 1 Kings 18 may represent a larger competition for the zone lying in-between, namely the highland between the coast and Transjordan. To be sure, the highlands by this time were thought to belong to Yahweh... Yet this need not preclude devotion also to Baal, who may also have become traditional to the highlands. In short, Elijah’s position represents a minority voice (verse 22); the majority is seen as supporting Baal and Yahweh,” 123-124.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>132</sup> Jerome Walsh, *1 Kings*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 245-246. Walsh’s intention with his commentary is to provide a literary reading of 1 Kings. While recognizing historical questions when they arise, he attempts to approach the text as a “*story*, irrespective of its referential function as historical record or interpretation,” xiii. In Elijah’s delineation of the rules for the contest, Walsh notes that since the contest will be decided by divine response there is an underlying assumption that only one god will answer, “like the issue of choice itself, is a Yahwist presupposition... Their [the people’s] approval of the proposed contest implies a willingness to consider choosing between gods. They begin, without realizing it, to adopt a Yahwistic point of view,” 246. In his overall interpretation of the scene, he finds “three interwoven strands of dramatic development: the contest of the gods, the rivalry of the prophets, and the conversion of the people,” 254. Walsh sees the first as the most evident plot line with the key word “answer” being particularly important. “Elijah originally proposes the contest in terms of a god answering (v. 24),” he explicates, “When Baal’s prophets pleas with him to answer them (v. 26), there is “no answerer” (vv. 26, 29). When Elijah calls upon Yahweh to answer (v. 37), Yahweh’s response demonstrates his power beyond dispute,” 254. In the third plot line, Walsh

Walsh places the Yahweh-Baal confrontation as the theological backdrop for the entire narrative of the drought (17:1-18:45), and so implies a certain divine conception with his conclusion.

Behind Yahweh's partisans stands Elijah, as surrogate for Yahweh himself... There is no counterpart to Elijah standing behind Baal's partisans in Baal's place; the god has no surrogate, because *the god has no substance*: "There is no voice. There is no answerer. There is no attention" (18:29).<sup>133</sup>

Thus on a literary level the juxtaposition of inclusive and exclusive worship practices seems telling as well as the complete rejection of any notion that Baal may have some translatable level of power when compared with Yahweh. Smith is right to hold that the competition represents an inner-cultural Israelite religious conflict ensconced in the theological tensions between Phoenicia and the Northern Kingdom via the union of Ahab and Jezebel. However, the narrative goes at length to portray Yahweh as the only deity to have the ability to act on the behalf of his representative prophet, and so is the only national divine power given recognition; recognition that is strongly monotheistic is outlook.

## II. 2 Kings 5: Mediations between Monotheism and Monolatry

The next pericope holds a middle ground between the stringent ends of the previous text and the final one to follow in its representations of divine national power that can be read concurrently as monotheistic and monolatrous. 2 Kings 5 opens by introducing Naaman, General of the armies of Aram, and two things are particular about this character; first, his victories for Aram have been given through Yahweh, and second,

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expounds upon the gradual change in the disposition of the gathered people towards exclusive Yahwism, but he doesn't qualify what that exclusivism actually looks like: monotheism, intolerant monolatry, henotheism, summodeism?

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 263. My emphasis in italics. Walsh's translation of verse 29.

he is a leper. After incursions into Israel, a young girl is captured and sent to serve Naaman's wife who tells her mistress of a prophet in Samaria who could heal Naaman. Naaman takes this information to his king who sends him to Israel along with a letter to the King of Israel. The King of Israel senses deceit on the part of the King of Aram, but Elisha hears of Naaman's plight, and declares, "*Allow him to come to me and know that there is a prophet in Israel*" (v 7). Naaman travels to see Elisha who sends out a servant to order Naaman to bathe in the Jordan River in order to heal his leprosy. After some placating from his attendants, Naaman does as Elisha commands and is healed of his leprosy. It is the following exchange that is of major import here. Beginning in verse 15 through 19:

*Then he returned to the Man of God with all his company and came and stood before him saying: "Please behold, I know that there is no other god in all the land, but in Israel. Now please accept a gift from your servant." 16So he said: "As Yahweh lives before whom I stand, I will take nothing." Then he pressed upon him to accept, but he refused. 17Naaman said: "If not, then allow your servant to be given two mules' load of earth for your servant will not offer burnt offerings nor make sacrifice to other gods except to Yahweh. 18Yet for this thing may Yahweh forgive your servant: when my lord goes into the House of Rimmon to bow down there and he leans on my hand and I bow down in the House of Rimmon – when I bow down in the House of Rimmon may Yahweh please forgive your servant in this thing." 19So he said to him: "Go in peace." So he departed from him for some distance.*

The story ends with an afterword of sorts that details Elisha's servant, Gehazi, attempt to take for himself the gifts Naaman brought for Elisha. Gehazi's sins, in the eyes of Elisha, are punished through the transference of Naaman's leprosy onto Gehazi.

The entire interaction between Naaman and Elisha is a remarkable piece of literature in the biblical text, and both Naaman's exclamation and requests coupled with Elisha's response are puzzling to say the least. Most commentators lump this particular narrative together with Elisha's other miracle stories without ever addressing the

particulars of vv. 15-19, and those few who do tend towards a reading that highlights the monotheistic character of Naaman's "confession." On v. 15, Gray reads a striking confession of monotheism, but is "yet naïvely inconsistent with this request for two mules' burdens of earth so that he might worship Yahweh in Damascus. His reason consented to monotheism but convention bound him practically to monolatry."<sup>134</sup> Jones reads the statement "I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel" as a clear expression of monotheistic faith.<sup>135</sup> Fritz finds that Naaman's reaction to his healing with his requisite proclamation,

amounts to a statement of consequent monotheism such as developed only in the exilic and postexilic period. Monotheism is here understood as the worship of Yahweh as the only God to the extent of denying the existence of other gods...Given its theological assumptions, the passage relating Naaman's response has then to be dated to the postexilic period."<sup>136</sup>

Robert Cohn concludes that Naaman's monotheistic confession implicitly acknowledges what the narrator affirms at the outset of v. 1, that Naaman's victories were Yahweh's acts.<sup>137</sup> Sweeney sees in this text that, "The concern to demonstrate Yahweh's role in

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<sup>134</sup> Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 507. He fails to address in any further detail the peculiarity of neither Naaman's requests nor Elisha's enigmatic response to those requests.

<sup>135</sup> Jones, *1 and 2 Kings Volume II: 1 Kings 17:1-2 Kings 25:30*, 418, and he continues to qualify this conception, "Because of distinct tendencies towards monotheism in the Syrian cult of Baal-shamaim, Naaman's monotheistic confession need cause no difficult." One has to wonder if there is stretching here with the reference to Baal-shamaim, since Naaman never mentions this deity only the national god Rimmon. Jones takes Naaman's request as the attempt of pagans to promote the worship of Yahweh in their everyday life, and goes on to make the following anachronistic statement, "Although Naaman is presented in this section and in v. 15 as monotheist and the first proselyte to Jewish religion, he is allowed a special dispensation...he professed monotheism, but was in practice bound to monolatry," 419. Jones does address Elisha's statement and finds that the response amounts to consent.

<sup>136</sup> Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings: A Continental Commentary*, 260. Verses 17-18 then subsequently thematize the problem that Naaman now has to face: "how can he stay true to his confession and still fulfill his duty as a state official?" 260. "Naaman asks forgiveness for his conduct, which is neither granted nor precluded by Elisha's response," Fritz writes and finds that Elisha's answer "go in peace" leave the question ultimately undecided, 260. He goes on to read the taking of two mule-loads of dirt as relating to Naaman's future worship of Yahweh. "The problem arising from sacrifice in a different country is solved," he argues, "if a certain quantity of earth from the land of Israel is present when the cult is practiced in some other place, in order to represent Israel," 260-261.

<sup>137</sup> Robert Cohn, *2 Kings*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 39. On commenting on v. 17, he finds that Naaman's subsequent

relation to creation provides a basis for the claim that YHWH must be recognized as G-d throughout the entire world, although such a claim is necessarily limited to Aram in the present narrative context.”<sup>138</sup> Thus he puts forward a universalist interpretation to the divine conception at play here.

Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor also take up the notion of a universalist monotheism here. They find that 2 Kings 5 is more than just another miracle story in which Elisha is credited with a saving act, in fact the role of the prophet is quite minimized, but the story’s crux appear centered on a near “universal” sovereignty of YHWH, even though worship of him is restricted to the land of Israel proper. “YHWH is inaccessible for fugitives and exiles (cf. 1 Sam 26:19; Ps 137:4), for unlike the land Israel, foreign lands, polluted as they were by idolatry (cf. Josh 22:19; Hos 9:3-5; Amos 7:17), are not suited for cultic worship of YHWH,” they argue,

Naaman’s startling request for a load of earth conforms with this notion of the cultic sanctity of the land...The story of Naaman’s conversion is...an expression of “ancient Israelite universalism,” an idea which surfaces frequently in the Elijah-Elisha cycles of stories. Through His prophets, YHWH works abroad and is recognized as the sole God (cf. e.g. 1 Kgs 17:14; 19:15; 2 Kgs 5:1; 8:13). This faith is still landbound and nonmissionizing, signs of a stage which preceded classical prophecy.<sup>139</sup>

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requests move from confessional proclamations to complications of worship. He argues that the second request is a corollary of the first: “Naaman asks advance pardon for appearing to acknowledge the Aramean god, Rimmon, when, in service to the king, he accompanies him to the temple. Ever the loyal servant before his (v. 1), Naaman appears as a marrano of sorts, forced to feign reverence to Rimmon...while inwardly remaining faithful to YHWH.” In regard to Elisha’s response, Cohn admits that Elisha’s “Go in peace” fails to indicate whether or not he grants the requests. “Instead the two conditions of YHWH worship outside of the land of Israel are allowed to stand without comment,” he concludes, 39.

<sup>138</sup> Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 296. Sweeney not only fails to account for the problematic theo-political interplay in Naaman’s request and Elisha’s response, he stretches the way in which this narrative functions in his compositional framework relying on the expanded literary context to justify his interpretation, which we shall see is the same as that in 2 Kings 3.

<sup>139</sup> Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible, Vol. 11 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 67. They go on to find that Naaman’s newly found commitment to Yahwism contrasts with the faithlessness of the Israelite King and Gehazi. According to Cogan and Tadmor, “The king does not consult Elisha even though it was to him that Naaman was recommended; the king, too, must be taught “that there is a prophet in Israel” (v. 8),” 67. Cogan and Tadmor note the phrase “the House of Rimmon” in verse 18. “The god Rimmon

Yet Stuart Lasine has problematized this entire line of interpretation. Lasine's study investigates the enigmatic response of Elisha's to Naaman's requests, "Go in peace," and asks the question: to what extent are readers' understandings of Elisha's reply influenced by their own notion of what constitutes appropriate behavior on the part of those who profess belief in the biblical God?"<sup>140</sup> Lasine reads Elisha's involvement in the "Yahweh-alone" movement throughout his cycle as minimal at best, and moves to question Naaman's "monotheistic" statement, concluding that something more akin to "tolerant monolatry" should be ascribed to the statement. In the end, Lasine is somewhat ambivalent as to taking a particular side on the interpretation of Elisha's response preferring to find the range to hold affirmation, insult, or indifference; however, given his reading to Elisha's attitude to exclusive Yahwism he finds that the last is probably suitable. Smith finds that invocation of Yahwah and Rimmon are statements to be associated with conceptions of national deities, and argues, "In fact, there is no statement of monotheism; it seems to be a pledge to Israel's national god, without addressing the question of lesser deities."<sup>141</sup> He goes on to conclude that Elisha's response makes room for the special situation Naaman finds himself in, notably a special occasion when he is obliged to give reverence to Rimmon. "This is hardly the "monotheism" of later biblical tradition (although one can understand how later interpreters would come to this view of this passage)," Smith concludes, "Instead, we see an exchange of one national god for

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appears in Akkadian transcriptions as □ *Raaman* and in the name of the Aramaean dynast Tabrimmon in 1 Kgs 15:18. It is an appellative of Hadad, the god of storm and thunder, and derives from the root *\*rmm*, "to thunder"; cf. the identification in Zech 12:15. The present verse is the single instance of in which the cult of Rimmon is referred to," 65. See the survey in J.C. Greenfield, "The Aramaean God Rammān/Rimmōn," *IEJ* 26 (1976): 195-198.

<sup>140</sup> Stuart Lasine, "'Go in Peace' or 'Go to Hell'? Elisha, Naaman, and the Meaning of Monotheism in 2 Kings 5," *SJOT* 25:1 (2011): 4.

<sup>141</sup> Smith, *God in Translation*, 124.

another, with exceptions permitted as necessity would require of Naaman.”<sup>142</sup> The interpretations that hold to a universalist conception of monotheism at the heart this narrative seem too unaware of the theo-political obligations Naaman would face or at least fail to acknowledge the fact that Elisha appears to permit Naaman’s ritual practice towards Rimmon. Lansine is also right to point out that wrapped up in these interpretations are preconceptions towards Israelite religion. However, the contention that Naaman is only exchanging one national god for another fails to acknowledge the exclusivity in Naaman’s claim in verse 15. At the same time, Elisha does indeed appear to make room for the ritual obligations toward Rimmon that Naaman faces upon returning to Aram, and therefore concedes that Rimmon has the power to require his citizens to religious adherence. The narrative appears to hold both monotheistic and monolatrous divine conception in exquisite tension.

### **III. 2 Kings 3: Polytheistic Divine National Power**

The last text to be examined presents the opposite end of the continuum from 1 Kings 18’s monotheism with a conception that appears to push towards more polytheistic understandings of divine national powers. 2 Kings 3 records Jehoram, King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and his campaign against King Mesha of Moab. Mesha is remembered as having paid tribute to the King of Israel, and after the death of Ahab proceeds to commit outright rebellion against Israel (vv. 4-5). Jehoram calls on Jehoshaphat, King of Judah to form a coalition with him, and they proceed into Moab through Edom, including an unnamed King of Edom in their alliance as well. The armies become lost, circling about over and over again, and the King of Israel laments, “*Alas, for Yahweh has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab,*” (v. 10). So

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

Jehoshaphat calls for a prophet of Yahweh in order to inquire of the deity. The three kings go down to see Elisha who makes an antagonistic statement to the King of Israel: “What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother,” (v. 13a). The King of Israel repeats his lament, and Elisha proceeds to prophesy, but only on account of Jehoshaphat’s presence, that Yahweh will deliver all of Moab into their hands (vv. 14-20). Israel routes the Moabites all the way up to Kir-Hareseth. In the end, the narrative takes a surprising twist:

*26When the King of Moab saw that the battle was too much for him, he took with him 700 swordsmen with him to break through to the King of Edom, but they failed. 27Then he took his eldest son who was to rule after him, and offered him as a sacrifice upon the wall. There was a great wrath against Israel; so they pulled out from upon it and returned to the land.*

Surprisingly, the earliest commentators probably provide the soundest interpretations for the last two verses of this confounding narrative. On v. 27, Gray sees, “The supreme sacrifice of the crown prince was doubtless to the national god Chemosh, to whose anger Mesha attributes the subjection of his people in the time of Omri and Ahab.”<sup>143</sup> In regards to the human sacrifice, he contends that, “In the present instance, as in the Mesha inscription, the attribution of the disasters of Moab to the displeasure of the god is significant, and the sacrifice of Mesha’s son on the wall aimed at the transference of the anger of the god to the enemies outside.”<sup>144</sup> On the ambiguous notation of “there

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<sup>143</sup> Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 490.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings Volume II: 1 Kings 17:1-2 Kings 25:30*, agrees. He reads the human sacrifice in v. 27 as intended to pacify the anger of Chemosh, and with the phrase ‘there came a great wrath upon Israel,’ “it seems that the implication here is that the wrath of Chemosh drove out the Israelites. It was Chemosh that had control over the land of Moab, and the supposition behind the extreme act of sacrifice was that he could be roused to action. Although it is not explicitly stated, v. 27b contains the immediate result of the action taken in v. 27a; in other words Chemosh caused the panic among the Israelites,” 400. More recently, John B. Burns, “Why Did the Besieging Army Withdraw? (II Reg 3,27),” *ZAW* 102:2 (1990): 187-194, has argued much the same as well. Burns concludes that, “Mesha was not concerned to influence the besiegers, but to offer a sacrifice to Chemosh, god of Moab, pleading for his intervention at this critical juncture. It was not an act of calculated altruism or psychological insight...Mesha’s action was

was great wrath upon Israel”, Gray infers the anger of God or the anger of Chemosh due to the apparent panic reaction and sudden withdrawal of the allied forces.

Others since have tried to find some creative loop holes in order to fit these two verses into preconceived notions of Israelite religion, namely Yahweh as the only divine power that biblical authors would recognize. In commenting on vv. 26-27 and the sacrifice of the king’s firstborn son, Fritz states that,

The passage thus alleges that the practice of child sacrifice took place in Moab, a custom that was strictly banned in Israel...The description of events is governed by theological considerations. The siege is abandoned not for military reasons but out of disgust at the sacrifice by the king of Moab. The campaign yields no result, Moab retained its independence, even if it had to bear the “stigma” of human sacrifice.<sup>145</sup>

Sweeney notes the interpretations mentioned above which find the phrase “great wrath was upon Israel” as a reference to the Chemosh’s wrath that then plays a role in Israel defeat; however, he argues that

Such an interpretation requires that YHWH’s oracle concerning the defeat of Moab would remain unfulfilled and thereby raises doubts about its legitimacy...The reference to anger must be read as “upon” Israel, that is, Israel became angry at the sight of Mesha’s sacrifice of his son, and consequently withdrew from Kir Haresheth,” and thus Israel through Jehoram would be deemed responsible for the failure to achieve victory.<sup>146</sup>

Cogan and Tadmor find vv. 26-27 to stand as an epilogue to the narrative that, “stand in open contradiction to Elisha’s prophecy: “He will deliver Moab over to you” (v. 18), after which the narrative should have told of the taking of Kir-haresheth. The cryptic statement

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religious,” 190. He goes on to argue that, “It is not necessary to suggest that the Deuteronomistic author deliberately obscured the text by dropping a direct reference to *kāmôš*. His presence is implicit. The Old Testament is notoriously evasive when it comes to acknowledging the power of foreign gods. It was expedient to be reticent about the source of the anger. The text did not consider the theological issues it raised by ascribing power to the anger of Chemosh,” 193.

<sup>145</sup> Fritz, *I & 2 Kings: A Continental Commentary*, 245.

<sup>146</sup> Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 284.

“There was great wrath against the Israelites” (v. 27) further confounds the reader.”<sup>147</sup>

Thus they admit that Elisha’s prophecy is only fulfilled in part as Moab remained independent and was never reconquered by Israel; however, they find, “It is this clash between the prophetic tradition (vv. 6-25) and the historical tradition behind vv. 26-27 which the epilogue in its present form attempts to resolve.”<sup>148</sup>

Smith finds that the most remarkable aspect of this narrative is its recognition of the efficacy of child sacrifice by a non-Israelite, depicted in the setting of warfare. “The narrative does not state explicitly the names of the gods behind the success of the offerings,” he admits, but argues that,

The passage leaves it to its Israelite audience to infer the ritual practice here, namely an offering made to Chemosh, the god of the Moabites. The audience would have assumed that since Mesha made the offering, the sacrifice’s efficacy as represented would have been due to his god, not to the god of Israel, and no less, by means of a practice regarded as illegitimate, in at least some Israelite circles. It is possible that the Israelite audience might have assumed that power of Chemosh here was allowed by the god of Israel, but it is particularly interesting that the text does not speak to the issue as such and does not show an effort to resolve any perceived problem.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 51.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* Cohn, *2 Kings*, takes up a similar line of thought. He asks whose wrath? Is it YHWH’s? Chemosh’s?, or if the ending is an attempt to resolve the clash between prophetic tradition that promised total victory and the historical tradition that saw the Israelites withdraw? “Although elsewhere in the Hebrew *qesep* (“wrath”) is used to denote YHWH’s vengeance upon sinner (e.g., Num 18:5; Josh 9:20), here not Israel but King Mesha has sinned by sacrificing his son, so it would make little sense to announce YHWH’s wrath upon Israel,” Cohn argues, “On the other hand, biblical writers would not ascribe wrath to a god (Chemosh) whose power they would not acknowledge. Perhaps the writer’s animus against the house of Ahab prevented him from ascribing a total victory to the king of Israel despite Elisha’s prophecy. Or perhaps v. 27 is offered from the Moabite point of view, offering a Moabite perspective on the reason for Israel’s withdrawal,” 24. One has to wonder how adopting a Moabite perspective for the reason of Israel’s withdrawal is implicitly any different from acknowledging Chemosh’s ability to act on behalf of his nation.

<sup>149</sup> Smith, *God in Translation*, 117-118. On the issues related to the historicity of child sacrifice, its attestation in other sources, and its particularly fitting setting of warfare see the short remarks on the Phoenician and Punic materials in Frank Moore Cross, “A Phoenician Inscription from Idalion: Some Old and New Inscriptions Relating to Child Sacrifice,” in *Leaves From an Epigrapher’s Notebook: Collected Papers in Hebrew and West Semitic Palaeography and Epigraphy* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2003): 231-237, and the discussion and bibliography in Smith, *The Early History of God*, 171-181. On some of the biblical admonitions against child sacrifice see Jer. 7:31, 32:35; Ezek. 20:25-26, and related issues involving the divine refrain “which I did not command them,” see the formulations in Deut. 17:3; 18:20; Jer. 14:14, 23:32, 29:23. Smith, *God in Translation*, concludes that, “The date of these texts suggest a seventh-sixth [century] strategy used to clarify the interpretation of older texts that may (and arguably

Smith goes on to echo the sentiment of Jones and Burns, finding that the narrative attributes victory to the Moabites gained through a religious act on the part of Moabites themselves. He concludes his interpretation with the terse remark, “In short, the passage implicitly recognizes divine power apart from the Israelite national god.”<sup>150</sup> No matter how seemingly ambiguous or cryptic the phrase, “There was great wrath against Israel,” appears, an honest reading of this narrative has to admit that Mesha performs a religious ritual, in the form of sacrificing his son, that results in the withdrawal of the Israelite armies, and it seems with little doubt that the act would have been directed towards Chemosh. Thus this text betrays the recognition, on the part of an Israelite author, that gods other than Yahweh have the power to act on behalf of their nations; a conception that appears most aptly as polytheistic in regards to divine national power.

#### **IV. The Inclusion of the Elijah-Elisha Cycles in the DtrH**

If it can be conceded that 1 Kings 18, 2 Kings 5, and 2 Kings 3 each present differing conceptions of divine national power: monotheistic, monolatrous, and polytheistic respectively, and there seems adequate evidence to conclude as such, then a necessary question arises. How did these stories come to be included in the greater whole of the Elijah-Elisha cycles and furthermore into the Deuteronomistic History? A significant thread runs throughout each of the three pericopes examined, an ideological line that at least one commentator would allude to in each context; the opposition of the

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should) be read as allowing the practices mentioned. Thus the passages about child sacrifice seem to be addressing what their authors evidently thought as the wrong understanding of Exodus 22:28b or the like. It is to be noted that in proposing Levites as a substitute for first-born Israelites, Numbers 8:17-18 shows that the commandment was taken to apply to first-born humans. The passages in Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are the earliest instances that deliberately raise the problem of such laws,” note 99, page 117-118. Smith’s understandings of Israelite cultural amnesia and its associative “methods of monotheism,” from *The Memoirs of God*, 151-152, in which these dynamics are explored more fully, will be addressed in greater detail in the conclusion.

<sup>150</sup> Smith, *God in Translation*, 118.

prophet of Yahweh to the Northern King. In the greater literary context of chapters 17-19, 1 Kings 18 pits Elijah against the house of Ahab and his lapse into theological apostasy. Out of 2 Kings 5 comes the bold line from the lips of Elisha addressing the King of Israel: “Allow him [Naaman] to come to me, and know that there is a prophet in Israel.” The King in this context is made to look a fool for thinking that the King of Aram has sent Naaman in an effort to quarrel with him, and for not realizing that there is one in the land who has the power to “take life and give life.” Yahweh’s intervention via Elisha’s prophecy in 2 Kings 3 is likewise only given on behalf of Elisha’s respect for the King of Judah, and Elisha is intrepid enough to declare to the King of Israel: “What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother.”

Here we return to Campbell’s hypothesis of the “prophetic record” from chapter two. Sweeney has taken up Campbell’s hypothesis and attempted to nuance it further. He divides the hypothesis and sees a composite work that he identifies as the Jehu Dynastic History. Sweeney contends that

The Saul, David, and Solomon block clearly serves Davidic interests, with little hint of northern interests or grievances until the aftermath of Solomon’s reign. Likewise, the Jeroboam [ben Nebat], Ahab, Jehu, and Jeroboam [ben Joash] block gives clear voice to northern interests, and portrays the house of Jehu as the means to address the problems of the northern monarchy.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, 29. Sweeney’s “Jehu Dynastic History” forms one part of his overall compositional framework for 1-2 Kings/DtrH. For the historical presentation in the book of Kings, Sweeney finds that, “First and Second Kings does not simply offer a historically verifiable account of the past. First and Second Kings is designed to answer the question of why Israel and Judah were exiled by arguing that the people of Israel and Judah, particularly their monarchs, failed to observe YHWH’s Torah, and thereby called divine punishment upon themselves,” 3. Thus he finds that Kings is not simply historical work, but an exercise in theodicy as well, “insofar as it defends the notion of divine righteousness by arguing that the people and especially its kings – and not YHWH – were at fault for the destruction and exiles of Israel and Judah. In making such a presentation, 1-2 Kings also lays a foundation for the restoration of the people to the land,” 3. This foundation, based on Torah and the centralized place of worship of the temple in Jerusalem by Ezra and Nehemiah, is in Sweeney’s view, “an attempt to implement the lessons of the past learned from 1-2 Kings and the Former Prophets at large,” 3; which is an agenda evident in the Deuteronomistic History as a whole. Thus Sweeney finds a fivefold composition of the book of Kings and its place in the DtrH: a final exilic edition of the DtrH from the mid-sixth century meant to address the problems posed by the Babylonian exile by pointing to the kings of Israel and Judah as the

“Although the Davidic/Solomonic history would present Solomon as the culmination of Israel’s quest for just and secure leadership,” he writes, “the newly formed Jehu history would present the houses of Saul and David as failed milestones together with the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, Zimri, and Omri, in the quest to establish just and secure leadership in the northern Israel.”<sup>152</sup> Contra McKenzie and others, he includes the Elijah and Elisha cycles as a part of the Jehu Dynastic History, “although they appear to have an independent compositional history prior to being taken up and edited into the Jehu history.”<sup>153</sup>

Tamis H. Rentería has also proposed a socio-cultural critique of the Elijah and Elisha cycles that contextualizes these narratives into the historical legitimation of Jehu. She has found that the Jehu regime found a political imperative to preserve the accounts related to Elijah in their efforts to legitimate their overthrow of the Omrides, and the Elisha materials were preserved after the revolt for the same reasons.<sup>154</sup> “It appears...that

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source of divine punishment; a Josianic edition of the DtrH from the late seventh century “that sought to identify the sins of the northern kings of Israel as the source for divine punishment and the reign of the righteous Josiah as the means to address that issue”; a Hezekian edition of the DtrH from the late eighth century which was meant to explain the suffering of northern Israel from its inability to produce competent and righteous rules and to point to Hezekiah as an example of the leadership needed; a Jehu edition of Samuel-Kings from the early eighth century that showed the rise of Jehu as the means to ensure the security of the nation and to restore past glories of the age of Solomon; and lastly a Solomonic edition of Samuel-Kings from the late tenth century “that sought to present the house of David as the key to the well-being of the united people of Israel and Judah,” 4.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. He goes on to conclude that, “Indeed, the Elijah narrative appear to be based on earlier ninth-century traditions now extant in 1 Kgs 17-19; 21; and 2 Kgs 1-2 combined with traditions concerning anonymous prophets in 1 Kgs 20, 22, which serve as an introduction to the block of material concerning Elisha in 2 Kgs 2/3:1-8:15,” 29-30.

<sup>154</sup> Tamis Hoover Rentería, “The Elijah/Elisha Stories: A Socio-cultural Analysis of Prophets and People in Ninth-Century B.C.E. Israel,” in *Elijah and Elisha in Socioliterary Perspective*, ed. Robert B. Coote (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992): 75-126. Rentería finds the particular miracle stories of the Elijah-Elisha traditions, only one of which has been explicitly examined in this study, when placed in their socio-cultural and historical context cut through time and text to a layer of cultural experience that reveals an anti-monarchic tradition, and this resistance to the monarchy is opened up on several levels. “First, they reflect the experiences of women and peasants 9<sup>th</sup> century Israel, two groups that suffered most under the Omrid dynasty,” she writes, “Second, the stories depict these people empowering themselves through

stories were selected for inclusion in the Jehu level cycles because of their compatibility with the ideological strategies of the new regime,” Rentería argues, “The Jehu elites were trying to establish themselves as the legitimate inheritors and defenders of Yahwism.”<sup>155</sup> She finds that the prophet in these stories are depicted as Yahwistic representatives of different counter-hegemonies, and therefore at different times and in different ways critical of the monarchic state. Rentería concludes that,

The prophets provided a cultural resource to differing groups of people at various historical periods for making political claims and for demonstrating resistance to whatever dominant hegemony threatened the integrity of a particular way of life. The language of resistance that they wielded with authority – Yahwism – likewise evolved and changed in the context of hegemonic struggles.<sup>156</sup>

It seems plausible that most immediate block of material that could have included the Elijah-Elisha cycles was collected/composed in order to give legitimacy to the Jehu coup and subsequent regime change. Equally though, the Elijah/Elisha materials would also fit into later editions of the DtrH; that is with the understanding that these narratives are largely counter-hegemonic. If one can take Römer’s formulations, as least as some sort of middle ground in the wide debate, then one could see that the Josainic Deuteronomists could have seen the prophetic subversion of Northern Kingdom hegemony as fitting well into a propagandistic effort towards Jerusalem cult centralization, which saw a largely *monolatrous* veneration of Yahweh, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah as the legitimate “Israel”. In the following post-exilic edition of the DtrH, these materials would also help further the attempts of the writers to reconcile the theo-political crisis of 587 in that they

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transactions with prophets, a type of interaction that intrinsically challenged state power. Third, the stories demonstrate how prophets like Elijah and Elisha, heroes of the hillcountry, may have gained popularity as alternative power sources to the monarchy. And finally, their narrative form indicates that these stories may exemplify a genre wielded in interclan political struggles that threatened monarchic stability,” 75.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 126.

lend support to the prophetic resistance of the “sins of Jeroboam,” and at this point the religious/particular divine conceptions could be reinterpreted through more monotheistic lens. These three particular narratives clearly make room for such an (re)understanding as seen in many of the interpretations of modern commentators. At this point, the final Persian period edition would have no need to change anything in these narratives as the monotheistic reinterpretation would have already occurred. Space will be given for how this process more precisely came about through the changing socio-historical circumstances of the biblical commemorators as they formulated their mnemohistory in the concluding remarks to follow.

## **Conclusion**

### **I. Summary of Findings Thus Far**

In the last chapter, the outstanding claims for divine national power were delineated from their various representations in 1 Kings 18, 2 King 5, and 2 King 3. Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel revealed a rather strict monotheistic conception of divine national power in which Yahweh is the sole deity given narrative agency to act on behalf of his representative prophet. The healing of Naaman's leprosy leads him to make an exclusive claim about the nature of Yahweh, yet he reveals his monolatrous obligations to his Aramean native deity, Rimmon, as he asks Elisha for permission to perform rituals when in the service to his king. Elisha's reply "Go in peace" seems to acknowledge this request, and therefore the narrative holds in tension a mediation between monotheistic and monolatrous divine national power. Lastly, Israel's campaign into Moab ends in disaster as King Mesha's sacrifice of his son results in the routing of the Israelite armies. This narrative, at least implicitly, recognizes the power of the ritual act and therefore the ability of Chemosh, the Moabite national deity, to act on behalf of his people allowing for a polytheistic understanding of divine national power. If these contentions are accurate, then their place in the greater memory work of the Elijah-Elisha narratives as well as the Deuteronomistic History had to be accounted for. A socio-cultural reading of these narratives lends itself towards a counter-hegemonic function to the cycles pointing towards a pre-Deuteronomistic date and so opening up the original impetus for inclusion into the wider mnemohistory of Kings/the possible first edition of the DtrH.

The argument for the inclusion of these narratives into the DtrH proceeded from chapter two in which the history presented by the Deuteronomistic History was pushed

towards mnemohistory and a cultural memory framework. The chapter began with a brief treatment of the long standing and complex debate surrounding the DtrH and the date of the Elijah-Elisha cycles in that corpus of literature. Thomas Römer's tripartite compositional/successive edition model emerged as possibly the most integrative and compromising recent formulation. Especially given the wide debate sketched among the various redactional theories, the return to Noth's original conception, and those who outright reject the hypothesis whole cloth. Within this debate, the central place of the books of Kings was highlighted and space was made to take note of the post-Deuteronomistic insertion or pre-Deuteronomistic tradition of the Elijah-Elisha materials. Two major observations emerged at end of this overview. First, all major reformulations of the DtrH hinge on the relative interpretative value of a pre-exilic "Josainic" edition that was appended to in (a) later period(s) or whether there is a fully realized DtrH initially composed in the exilic period that underwent either a single major editorial process or redacted several times throughout proceeding periods. Second, nearly all the major debates and issues that arise within the formulation of the DtrH draw significant argumentative ground from the books of Kings from literary, thematic, structural, etc. exegetical analyses. Arguably, the DtrH arose in order to explain the circumstances of the present as motivated by political legitimation and national interests. Therefore, read as cultural memory, the mnemohistory represented by DtrH reveals the cultural weaving of a national identity predicated on the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem, convergence and divergence in Near Eastern divine conceptions, and the legitimatization of the leadership and administration of the Southern Kingdom of Judah as the true Israel.

These contentions were established on the theoretical underpinning of collective/cultural memory presented at the outset of the project. We began, in chapter one, with an overview of the theoretical notion of collective/cultural memory. In line with nearly all recent studies in memory, Maurice Halbwachs provided the foundational point of entry into the study with his understanding of the social boundedness of individual memory in larger corporate spheres. However, Halbwachs' own academic social location prevented the full realization of his theory's implications for historical inquiry, and modern commentators have recognized that the notion of "collective memory" provides a reframing of historiography in which the history of a particular tradition is manifested in its cultural representations along the way, and the ways in which cultural change force modifications to those representations of the past. Jan Assmann's recent work on memory in ancient cultures highlighted the conflation of memory, identity, and tradition making in the process of culture creation particularly through the means of a mnemohistory recorded from "cultural memory." Selectively, biblical scholars have taken up this work in memory as a more appropriate interpretative framework for the history presented in the biblical text. Running throughout the work of Smith, Davies, Hendel, and Brettler is the rather singular contention that biblical history as memory is preferred over any sort of modernist conceptions of objective history. Meaning that history as memory separates any necessary link between the historicity of an event and its narrative representation. As such, the focus turns towards the specific purposes for why the history of Israel is remembered in the way that it is remembered; thus revealing a great deal about the particular cultural representation of Israel's history.

## II. Divergent Divine Memories in DtrH's Mnemohisotrical Identity Construction

Having overviewed the major contentions throughout the project thus far, space is now available to more comprehensively weave everything together. At this point, there should be little argument that “biblical history” does not conform to the levels of objective historicity that moderns have long hailed as “real history.” No, biblical history as a cultural artifact of ancient Israel works along a continuum, as Hendel has observed, of myth, memory, and history. One need only look to the details of the narratives presented previously in which fire falls from the heavens, leprosy is healed from bathing in a river, and dry wadis are filled overnight only to mention a few. Furthermore, the national ideology of the DtrH, at all levels of its composition, operates as Brettler has argued as, “national history... open to being rewritten or created and is most easily influenced by memory in all of its permutations, with all of its problems and benefits.”<sup>157</sup> Here we are able to return to a portion of Assmann’s case study in ancient Israel via his understanding of cultural memory. Recall that Assmann’s work attempts to construct a general theory of culture which conflates memory (as a reference to the past), identity (understood as political imagination), and cultural continuity (i.e. the formation of tradition). This general theory of culture hinges on the notion of cultural memory, which for Assmann, is the very mode by which meaning is handed down through time combining “mimetic memory” (behavior through imitation), “memory of things” (material reflections of ourselves), and “communicative memory” (the formation of consciousness and memory through the reciprocal feedback of social interaction).

In chapter two, we established that Deuteronomy as the starting point and ideological foundation of the Deuteronomistic History. For Assmann, Deuteronomy was

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<sup>157</sup> Brettler, “Memory in Ancient Israel,” 11.

the basis of a form of collective mnemotechnics (material means of carrying memory) that established a specific cultural memory and identity. According to Assmann,

Deuteronomy,

created an all-embracing framework that made the comparatively natural setting of collective and cultural memory dispensable. These settings comprised kingdom, temple, and territory – the representative institutions that were normally regarded as integral and necessary stabilizations of the collective memory... With the aid of the new mnemotechnics, all these places were now transferred from the exterior to the interior and from the material to the imaginary, so that a spiritual Israel now emerged that could be situated wherever a group assembled to study the sacred texts and revive memory.<sup>158</sup>

Therefore, Deuteronomy helped to create an art of memory in Israel that separated identity from territory. In other words, Israelite identity no longer had to be contextualized in the materiality of the land to which they were tied, but the memory constructed in Deuteronomy helped to abstractivize “Israelite” as an identity extraterritorially. Assmann finds the foundational legend and primal scene for the outgrowth of this memory culture in the story of the finding of the Book of the Law and Josiah’s requisite reform program. Many have argued that this document was probably a form of the present book of Deuteronomy. 2 Kings 22:2-13 reports that during repair work on the Temple, the High Priest Hilkiah found a forgotten document, and when read to the king, he was terrified and rent his clothes. This document not only contained commandments, testimonies, and statutes of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel, but it also described detailed curses and punishments that would befall those who did not obey these adherences. “The catastrophe here, however, befell the entire nation, and it was not the cause but the consequence of forgetting,” Assmann writes, “All the hardships and disasters of the past and present were now revealed as divine punishment because the

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<sup>158</sup> Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, 191.

religious and political practices of the country had been in gross violation of what had been set out in the covenant.”<sup>159</sup> Based on the evidence of the research into the DtrH, this is the likely period when Josiah’s edition of the DtrH would have been composed in order to further legitimate his reform program. Here also, the Deuteronomistic History “can be understood as a codification of memory based on the principle of guilt. It set out to explain and to cope with the catastrophes of the present in terms of the work of Yahweh.”<sup>160</sup> Thus one sees arising out of this memory work identity concerns that fall on the monopolization of the cult in Jerusalem and the legitimization of the political authority in the Southern Kingdom. The same principle would have carried the mnemohistory through later iterations of the DtrH as well. Once the Southern Kingdom fell and the exiles were taken off the land itself, Israel could still retain its memorial identity that was founded in Deuteronomistic concerns, and also reconcile the catastrophe of 597/587 with its relationship to Yahwism.

However, how are we to understand the changing cultural dynamics related to divine conception, particularly divine national power, in this greater working of the mnemohistory of the DtrH because Deuteronomy reiterates often an exclusive conception of Yahwism with a singular devotion to this deity that precedes on the strict denial of any “other gods.” Smith finds that the development of a monotheistic perspective in Ancient Israel went hand in hand with he identifies as “methods of monotheism.” Now this is a particularly internal cultural phenomenon by which “ancient Israel reconstituted the diversity of *its* deities into a single God.”<sup>161</sup> So these ideas will have to be expanded to account for the international issues at stake in two of the three texts examined in this

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Smith, *The Memoirs of God*, 151. My emphasis.

project. The first method, Smith identifies what may be called “convergence” or the assimilation of other deities’ traditions/traits to Yahweh which is not solely the one to one identification of Yahweh with another god, such as El, but this process also involves the attribution of other deities’ characteristics or mythology following the denial of other deities. The second is differentiation. “A denial of “other gods” was accompanied by the claim that older traditions formerly associated with Yahweh did not belong to Yahweh,” Smith explains. The notion is that native Israelite aspects to Yahwism, such as the worship of Asherah and the sun, moon, and stars, were later formulated and denounced as foreign practices. The third method constituted a reinterpretation of older polytheistic vestiges to Israelite religion. For Smith, these “methods of monotheism” act as collectively amnesic, “For in treating these other gods as the gods of other peoples, Israelite society was also in the process of forgetting that what they condemned in some of these gods had once been their own.”<sup>162</sup>

One illustrative example Smith provides revolves around the notion of angels and the God of the Fathers; that is “the occasional identification of the family god of the fathers with messenger divinities (angels).”<sup>163</sup> Many have noted that El was originally the patriarch of both the divine family, in West Semitic religious pantheons, and many human families in ancient Israel. “In his help to humans, he was understood in part as a family or clan god, called in texts “the god of the fathers,”” Smith argues, “With the loss of El and the melding of most of his functions with Yahweh’s, the older role of the god of the fathers as one who accompanies the family (Genesis 35:3) shifted in some texts into

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 156.

the role of angelic accompaniment.”<sup>164</sup> This process appears evident in several passages, such as 1 Kgs 19:5-9; Psalm 91:11-12; Exodus 23:20-22, but particularly outstanding in Gen. 48:15-16 in which the accompanying “god of the father” stands in grammatical apposition to the angelic messenger:

*And he blessed Joseph saying, “May the god(s) before whom my fathers,  
Abraham and Issac, went about,  
the god(s) who shepherded me from my time until this day,  
the messenger who is redeeming me from all evil  
may he bless the boys.*

Smith finds that the ambiguous use of *הָאֱלֹהִים* (*haelohim*), which may refer to “god” or “gods,” minor or major, facilitated the slippage of divine identity and permitted the “effacing of older distinctions between minor and major divinities (*elohim*), including messengers, the familial god, and Yahweh.”<sup>165</sup> According to Smith, “this shift in divine roles signals the reduction of family religion in shaping the dominant cultural memory under the force of the textually more dominant traditions represented by the priestly sections of the Torah (Pentateuch) and by Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History.”<sup>166</sup> In these changes to Israel’s cultural memory, Smith sees how divine figures in a sense become one, or at least continuous with the One, and amnesia about divinity appears to have been accomplished in part through the ambiguity of the use of *elohim*, and in part due to the changes in the conception of divinity via the changing cultural dynamics of the monarchic period, and finally through the submersion caused by the growing importance of monistic developments in the Israelite cult, particularly from the eighth century onward. Smith argues that,

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 156-157.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., Smith goes on to state that “As a collar of this shift, these traditions all criticize family religion and their religious practices, especially those pertaining to the dead in Leviticus 19:28, 31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 14:1; 18:10-11; 26:14; 1 Samuel 28; and 2 Kings 21:6.”

The Bible's later memorialists preserved some older vestiges about divinity in ancient Israelite religious life, vestiges that they themselves did not understand, and that the tradition in the interim had largely forgotten. Such vestiges survived displacement, conflation, and diminishment as long as they could be read, interpreted, or rewritten according to later norms, especially a monotheistic view of God. As a result, the Bible preserves both the dominant views of later memorialists and the vestiges of earlier memories.<sup>167</sup>

Where does this leave the three divergent conceptions of divine national power examined previously? It seems likely, while arguable, that each of these three texts in their earliest iterations juxtapose Yahweh, as one national deity, against other equally recognizable national deities, and as such each story represents memories of cultural realities that show certain anxieties in how Yahweh is to relate to other national deities. Prior to the reform programs of the Judahite Kings, it seems less than contentious to see Israel as a complex sphere of competing claims of divinity. 1 Kings 18 strives to show that Yahweh doesn't relate other national divine powers specifically, from the particular perspective of Elijah, when pitted in an inner-cultural conflict, and this monotheistic conception reveals the convergence of Baal's traditional power structures being subsumed under Yahwism. Yet the text does acknowledge that Baalism was a viable religious option in that particular socio-historical circumstance. In 2 Kings 5, the apposition of Yahweh against Rimmon is quite benign as Elisha's statement "Go in peace" makes room for Naaman's monolatrous ritual obligations in his home nation while allowing for Naaman to hold an exclusive claim to Yahweh. Finally, 2 Kings 3 implicitly reveals that Yahweh and Chemosh both have the ability to act on behalf their respective nations as Yahweh provides a miracle of water for his armies and Mesha's sacrifice results in the routing of those armies, and therefore falls towards a polytheistic conception. However, these memories are incorporated into the greater commemorative

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 157.

concerns the Deuteronomistic History. As part of the counter-hegemonic function of the larger Elijah-Elisha cycles, these stories were open to being re-remembered along the lines of divine conception. Firstly, each narrative denigrates the Northern King as either a cultic apostate or foolish for not recognizing the power of the Yahwistic prophet, and therefore fits the memory criteria of the Josainic reformation and his dueteronomistic program. Secondly, 1 Kings 18 explicitly fits into Dueteronomistic menemotechnics without reinterpretation, but 2 Kings 5 and 3 both remain polyvalent in their divine conceptions that in turn make room for later monotheistic readings. So it is little wonder that most modern commentators read them as such.

Thus we are now able to return to the original proposal and question that began this project. If read as cultural memory, does the Deuteronomistic History provides a singular understanding of divine national power? Hopefully, it has been made clear that a strict yes or no answer lacks significant nuance, and in actuality the answer depends upon what level of the Deuteronomistic History one is considering as well as the particular socio-historical memory setting that level is arising from. At their earliest possible iteration, I would argue that, no, these narratives do not present a singular understanding of divine national power, quite the opposite in fact. However, once subsumed into the greater Deuteronomistic mnemohistory, the overarching theo-political memory claims, that of the Jerusalem cult centralization and the legitimization of the Southern Kingdom's political authority, carried a requisite reinterpretation of divine conception that was already inherently allowable in the texts themselves. These reinterpretations followed a multifaceted trajectory from polytheism and monolatry in the Late Monarchy to

monotheism in the post-exilic period within of the changing cultural dynamics of ancient Israel.

Thus we can come full circle with our study and end where we began; that is with the thoughts of Peter Machinist. Machinist concludes from his study that, “perhaps the major point is that in the present form of the text of the Hebrew Bible – the so-called Masoretic text – the dominant picture is of the god Yahweh as the supreme and primary God, at least of Israel.”<sup>168</sup> Yet he readily admits that the biblical text, could we say biblical memory, preserves many traces, and in some cases more than a trace but a little discussion, of other deities. I think my study alongside his can make the claim, “Our examination has suggested that between these two views, there is a tension in the Bible, as well as a struggle to resolve that tension: to find a way to hold simultaneously the view of Yahweh’s supremacy and the acknowledgement of other deities.”<sup>169</sup> I would argue that biblical history read as memory helps to further resolve, for both them and us, as well as illustrate that tension. Machinist is right to contend, and again I believe these contentions are echoed from the previous findings, that,

The biblical authors, it appears, were constantly reconsidering the matter of who Yahweh is and in what his power consists. But they could not ask this about Yahweh without asking it also about the other deities, whose presence, as the non-biblical data from archaeology make clear, was all around them and something these authors could not ignore or...ignorantly distort and trivialize. And if, as our discussion has revealed, the biblical authors offered at different times and in different settings a variety of perspectives on Yahweh’s power and relationship to other deities, so likewise did they offer a range of perspectives about the other deities, albeit never allowing them, in their own view, to eclipse Yahweh.<sup>170</sup>

Clearly the larger mnemohistory of the biblical text wishes to remember Yahweh as the supreme deity of Israel, and depending upon the given period of memorialization this is

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<sup>168</sup> Machinist, “Once More: Monotheism in Biblical Israel,” 37.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

born out to greater or lesser degrees. Simultaneously and equally true is that biblical mnemohistory remembers vestiges of earlier, less supreme, less monotheistic, conceptions of Yahweh in relation to the deities around him. Following from the work of his colleague Jon Levenson, Machinist ends his article by highlighting that

the universe as imagined by the biblical authors, and by later theologians and others down through Jewish history to the Holocaust and beyond, is a fragile and uncertain one. Yahweh may be the supreme God, but he has constantly to reclaim his supremacy by warring against other forces. One cannot be over-confident that the battle once won will never be fought again. And in this battle, Yahweh needs us as much as we need him.<sup>171</sup>

Biblical Monotheism and the particular supremacy of Yahweh as the arbiter of the dominant modern Western conceptions of that monotheism resonate throughout our own cultural memories whether we wish to acknowledge this fact or not. As academic inquirers of ancient Israel, we must constantly be aware of the assumptions we bring to the biblical representation of history and divinity from our own particular social frameworks of memory. Least, we wage the battle for Yahweh and a monotheistic conception of him too ardently, and so supplant biblical memory, in all its complexities, with our own recollections of who Yahweh is or was and his particular place in ancient Israel/our lives today.

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 39.

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## Appendix I: Translations

### 1 Kings 18

1After a long time passed, the word of Yahweh came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, present yourself to Ahab so that I may make it rain upon the face of the land. 2And Elijah went to present himself to Ahab, and the famine was severe in Samaria. 3So Ahab called for Obadiah who was over the house. Now Obadiah was greatly afraid of Yahweh. 4When Jezebel had slaughtered the prophets the Yahweh, Obadiah took one hundred prophets and hid them, by fifty men, in a cave, and continually supported them with bread and water. 5And Ahab said to Obadiah, “Go into the land to all the springs of water to all the valleys, perhaps we will find grass and we will sustain the horses and mules and we won’t have to cut down any of the cattle. 6So they divided the land between them to travel over it; Ahab went in one direction by himself and Obadiah went in another direction by himself. 7So it was that Obadiah was on the road and behold, Elijah met him and recognized him, and he fell upon his face and said, “Is this you, my master, Elijah?” 8So he said to him, “I am, go, and say to your lord: Elijah is here!” 9Then he asked, “What sin have I committed that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab so that he may put me to death? 10Yahweh your God, live; if there is a nation or kingdom my lord has not sent somewhere there to search for you and they said: “He is not here”; then he forced that kingdom and that nation to swear that they could not find you there. 11And now, you are saying: God, say to your lord; Eljiah is here! 12and it will happen that when I, myself, depart from you that the spirit of Yahweh will carry you somewhere I do not know, and I will go to tell Ahab, but he will not find you then he will kill me; although your servant has feared Yahweh since youth. 13Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of Yahweh? For I hid a hundred prophets of Yahweh, fifty me, fifty men in a cave and I provided bread and water. 14But now you are saying: God, say to your lord; Elijah is here! Thus he will kill me.” 15Now Elijah said, “As Yahweh of hosts lives, whom I serve before him, today I will present myself to him.” 16So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and he told him; thus Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, “Is this you, disturber of Israel?” 18Then he said, “I have not troubled Israel, however, you and your father’s house have in your forsaking Yahweh’s commands because you went after the Baals. 19Now then, send an assembly to me of all Israel to Mt. Carmel and prophets of Baal, 450, and prophets of Asherah, 400, the ones who eat at the tables of Jezebel.” 20Thus Ahab sent for all the people of Israel and he gathered the prophets at Mt. Carmel. 21So Elijah drew near to all the people of Israel, and said: “How long will you limp between divided opinions? If Yahweh is the god follow after him, but if the Baal follow after him.” But the people did not answer him a word. 22So Elijah said to the people: “I alone have remained a prophet for Yahweh while the prophets of the Baal are 450 men. 23Let two bulls be given to us and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it up, and place it upon the wood, but set no fire to it, and I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood, and I will not set fire to it. 24Then you all can call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Yahweh. So he is the god who answers with fire, that one is the God.” So all the people answered and they said: “The deed is good.” 25Thus Elijah said to the prophets of Baal: “Choose for yourselves the one bull and prepare it first for you are numerous then call on

the name of your god, but do not set fire to it.” 26So they took the bull which was given to them, they prepared it, and they called on the name of Baal from the morning to noon saying: “Baal answer us!” But there was neither a voice nor an answerer, thus they danced around the altar which was made. 27By noon Elijah mocked them, and said: “Call with a loud voice. For he is a god! Maybe he is mediating or maybe he has moved away or maybe on his way; perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” 28So they called out with a loud voice and gashed themselves according to their custom with swords and spears until blood poured spilled over them. 29So as noon was passed, they raved until the time for the evening offering of sacrifice, but there was neither a voice, nor an answerer or one paying attention.

30Then Elijah said to all the people: “Draw close to me.” So all the people drew near to him, and he repaired the altar of Yahweh that had been destroyed. 31So Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of Yahweh had come saying: “Israel shall be your name.” 32Then he rebuilt the altar with the stones in the name of Yahweh and he made a trench as a receptacle of two measures of seed around about the altar. 33Then he arranged the wood and cut up the bull and placed it upon the wood. 34And he said: “Fill four jars of water and pour it out upon the offering and the wood,” and he said: “Do it a second time.” So they did it a second time, and he said: “Do it a third time.” So they did it a third time. 35Thus the water flowed around about the altar and also he filled the trench with water. 36The time of the evening offering was at hand when Elijah, the prophet, drew near and said: “Yahweh, god of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that you are god in Israel and I am your servant, and by your word I have done all of these things. 37Answer me Yahweh, answer me so that this people will know that you are Yahweh the God, and you have turned their hearts backward.” 38Then the fire of Yahweh fell and consumed the offering and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39When all the people saw this, they fell upon their faces, saying: “Yahweh, he is the God; Yahweh, he is the God.” 40Then Elijah said to them: “Seize the prophets of Baal. Do not let a man escape from them!” So they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon and slew them there.

41Elijah said to Ahab: “Go up, eat, and drink for there is the sound of the tumult of rain.” 42So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel and bent towards the earth and put his face between his knees. 43Then he said to his youth: “Go up please, look upon the way of the sea.” So he went up and considered and said: “There is nothing.” So he said: “Return seven times.” 44And it was on the seventh that he said: “Behold, a cloud small like a man’s hand is coming up from the water.” So he said: “Go up saying to Ahab, “Prepare for battle and go down so that the rain does not stop you.” 45In no time, the heavens grew dark with clouds and wind and there was great rain. So Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. 46But the hand of Yahweh was upon Elijah. So he girded his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.

## **2 Kings 3**

1Now Jehoram, son of Ahab, became King over Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year to Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, and he reigned for twelve years. 2But he did evil in the sight of Yahweh only not like his father or his mother because he removed

the pillars of Baal which his father made; 3yet he clung to the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he caused Israel to sin, he did not depart from them.

4Now Mesha, King of Moab, was a sheep-dealer and he would pay to the King of Israel 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams worth of wool. 5When Ahab died, the King of Moab rebelled against the King of Israel. 6So the King, Jehoram, went out from Samaria on that day and mustered all of Israel. 7Then he went and sent word to Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, saying: "The King of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to Moab to make battle?" And he said: "I will go up; I am as you are, my people are as your people, my horses are as your horses." 8So he said: "Which way shall we go up?" And he said: "The way of the wilderness of Edom." 9Thus the King of Israel went and the King of Judah and the King of Edom, but they circled about the road seven days, and there was no water for the army or the beasts that followed them. 10Then the King of Israel said: "Alas, for Yahweh has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab." 11Jehoshaphat said: "Isn't there a prophet for Yahweh here through whom we may inquire?" One of the servants of the King of Israel answered and said: "Here is Elisha, son of Shaphat, who poured water upon the hands of Elijah." 12Jehoshaphat said: "The word of Yahweh is with him." So the King of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the King of Edom went down to him. 13Elisha said to the King of Israel: "What have I to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother." The King of Israel said to him: "No, for Yahweh has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab." 14 Then Elisha said: "As Yahweh of host lives, whom I stand in the presence of, were it not for the presence of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah who I respect, I would not look at you nor see you. 15Now bring to me a minstrel," for when a minstrel played the hand of Yahweh came upon him. 16So he said: "Thus says Yahweh: 'This wadi shall produce pools upon pools.' 17For thus says Yahweh: 'You will not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley will be filled with water so that you can drink, you and your cattle and your beasts. 18But this thing is insignificant in the eyes of Yahweh; so will give Moab into your hand. 19You will attack and destroy every fortified city and every choice city and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water and ruin every fertile plot with stones.' 20So it happened in the morning around the time of the meal offering and behold, water came by the way of Edom so that the land was filled with the water.

21Now all Moab had heard that the Kings had come up to make war upon them and all who were able to gird themselves were called up and upwards and they stood upon the border. 22So they rose early in the morning and the sun shone on the water and Moab saw the water in front of them red as blood. 23And they said: "This is blood! The Kings are utterly destroyed. They killed each other. Now then, to the spoil, Moab!" 24When they came into the camp of Israel, Israel arose and slew Moab. So they fled from their presence and they moved forward slaughtering Moabites. 25So they destroyed the cities, threw stones onto every fertile plot, filling it up, stopped up every spring of water, and felled every good tree, leaving only the stones of Kir-Hareseth which the slingers surrounded and attacked. 26When the King of Moab saw that the battle was too much for him, he took with him 700 swordsmen with him to break through to the King of Edom, but they failed. 27Then he took his eldest son who was to rule after him, and offered him as a sacrifice upon the wall. There was a great wrath against Israel; so they pulled out from upon it and returned to the land.

## 2 Kings 5

1Now Naaman, captain of the army of the King of Aram, was a great man before his lord and highly exalted for through him Yahweh gave victory to Aram and the man, a mighty warrior, was a leper. 2Aram went out marauding and had taken captive a young girl from the land of Israel and she served Naaman's wife. 3And she said to her mistress, "Would that my lord come before the prophet who is in Samaria, then he would cure him of his leprosy." 4[Naaman] came and told his lord, saying word for word the message of the girl who was from Israel. 5So the King of Aram said: "Go now and I will send a letter to the King of Israel." Then he went and took in his hand ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothing. 6He brought the letter to the King of Israel saying: "Now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent to you, Naaman, my servant that you may cure him from his leprosy." 7When the King of Israel read the letter he rent his clothes, and said: "Am I God, to take life or to give life that this man sends to me a man to cure from his leprosy. For surely you know and can see he is seeking to quarrel with me!"

8So when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the King of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent word to the King saying: "Why have you torn your clothes? Allow him to come to me and know that there is a prophet in Israel." 9Thus Naaman came on his horse and his chariots and stood waiting at the entrance to Elisha's house. 10Then Elisha sent a messenger to him saying: "Go and bathe seven times in the Jordan so that your flesh might be restored to you and it will be clean." 11But Naaman was furious and left saying: "Behold, I thought surely, to me, he would come out and stand and call on the name of Yahweh, his god and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. 12Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not bathe in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in indignation. 13Then his servant drew near and spoke to him saying: "Sir, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more when he says to you: bathe and be clean?" 14So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times according to the word of the man of God and his flesh was restored like that of a young boy. So he was pure. 15Then he returned to the Man of God with all his company and came and stood before him saying: "Please behold, I know that there is no other god in all the land, but in Israel. Now please accept a gift from your servant." 16So he said: "As Yahweh lives before whom I stand, I will take nothing." Then he pressed upon him to accept, but he refused. 17Naaman said: "If not, then allow your servant to be given two mules' load of earth for your servant will not offer burnt offerings nor make sacrifice to other gods except to Yahweh. 18Yet for this thing may Yahweh forgive your servant: when my lord goes into the House of Rimmon to bow down there and he leans on my hand and I bow down in the House of Rimmon – when I bow down in the House of Rimmon may Yahweh please forgive your servant in this thing." 19So he said to him: "Go in peace." So he departed from him for some distance.

20But Gehazi, attendant of Elisha the Man of God, thought: "Behold, my master has spared Naaman this Aramean by not receiving from his hands what he brought. As Yahweh lives, I will run after him and take something from him. 21So Gehazi pursued after Naaman. When Naaman saw one running after him, he fell from upon the chariot to meet him, saying: "Is everything well?" 22He said: "It is well. My master sent me to say:

Behold, just now two youths from the Sons of the Prophets have come to me from the hills of Ephraim. Please give to them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.”  
23Then Naaman said: “Kindly take two talents.” And he pressed upon him and bound two talents of silver in two bags and two changes of clothes and gave them to two of his youths and they carried them before him. 24When he reached the citadel, he took them from their hands and deposited them in the house. Then he sent the men away and they went. 25So he went in and stood before his master, and Elisha said to him: “Where have you come from, Gehazi?” and Gehazi said: “Your servant has not gone anywhere.” 26So he said to him: “Did my heart not go as when the man turned upon his chariot to meet you? Is it time to take the silver and to take the clothes and olive groves and vineyard and sheep and oxen and male and female slaves? 27Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and your descendants for all time.” So he went from his presence as leprous as snow.

## **Curriculum Vitae**

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### **Education**

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