

5-1-1999

An introduction to the history of Israel and Judah

Roger W. Uitti

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>

Recommended Citation

Uitti, Roger W. (1999) "An introduction to the history of Israel and Judah," *Consensus*: Vol. 25 : Iss. 1 , Article 14.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol25/iss1/14>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

of their own hearts" (78). The book concludes with a full bibliography (22 pages) and a document citation list (13 pages).

The real value of this paperback is its rich collection of texts and data pertaining to five religious figures in ancient Israel: the king, the priest, the prophet, the diviner, and the sage. Besides the potential herein for preaching a series of sermons on religious professionals (leader, mediator, critic, healer, and teacher), the pastor might find here the impetus for a five session study/discussion of the Old Testament's foundational institutional functions and the presence or absence of their equivalents in contemporary religious society.

Roger W. Utti
Lutheran Theological Seminary

An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah

J. Alberto Soggin

Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993 (2nd edition)
xxii + 474 pages, \$30.00 US Paperback

The pastor who wishes to be in the know on what is and what is not an "assured chapter" in Israel's history should find this work serviceable and informative. Personally I would not hesitate to use this book as a required textbook for a "history of Israel" course.

First, as Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature at the University of Rome and Visiting Lecturer at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, J. Alberto Soggin is eminently qualified to write this book. He is the author of a monograph on kingship in Israel (BZAW 104, 1967), two commentaries on Joshua (1972) and Judges (1981) in the *Old Testament Library* Series, and an Old Testament introduction now in its 3rd edition (1989). As an Italian scholar he brings to the subject the best and latest of European scholarship.

Second, this book is a completely rewritten update of his earlier *Introduzione alla Storia d'Israele e di Giuda* (1983). Virtually every page of the earlier text has had to be changed as a result of ten intervening years of scholarship. Ideologically, the book is more minimalist than maximalist in its approach.

Third, I like the structure, bibliographies, and appendices of this paperback. Its four parts are presented in numerical point style with clear, succinct paragraphing and titling. Part One deals with introductory problems, including methodological and historiographical questions. As to

the question where a history of Israel/Judah can legitimately begin, Soggin holds the answer to be the empire of David and Solomon, since it was only from that time onwards that reflection on the past not only began to have some significance but also became possible. It is for this reason that Part One concludes with a two-chapter presentation of both David's (44-69) and Solomon's (70-86) empires. Part Two and Three cover the matter of origins (the patriarchs, exodus, settlement, and judges) and the divided kingdom (from the Assyrian invasions until Babylonian deportations). Part Four speaks of the Persian empire, the Macedonians and Diadochi, and the Roman period down through to the last and final Jewish revolt against Rome in 132-135 CE under Simon bar Kochba. The book closes with two appendices (one an introduction to the archaeology of Syria and Palestine by D. Conrad of the University of Marburg, the other a detailed chronology of the united and divided monarchies by H. Tadmor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and helpful indices (subject, biblical reference, and modern scholars).

If I have a problem with this book, it is with the approaches taken with most recent books on Israel's history. Obviously a contemporary "history of Israel and Judah" cannot uncritically paraphrase the biblical text and supplement the same with confirmatory archaeological evidence. On the other hand, one gets the impression that whatever is said extra-biblically by some ancient Near Eastern text or excavation has from the start more credibility than what is claimed in the biblical text itself. One example might be the explicit mention of "Israel" for the first time on the stele of Pharaoh Merneptah from the end of the 13th century BCE. Here we supposedly have the first solid evidence for Israel's existence as a people. Yet is not this material just as problematical and open to authorial and contemporary interpretive biases? The stele refers primarily to a campaign by Merneptah against Libya in the west. Could not a corresponding Canaanite campaign to the east have been invented out of desire to present a more universalist conquering pharaoh, as indeed the Egyptologist J. A. Wilson holds, or even, as often happens in Old Testament texts, be material attached to an earlier text at a later stage? What is more, even if Israel's defeat by Pharaoh M. is an historic fact, the stele nevertheless says little or nothing about the character of "Israel" at the time.

For a book published in North America, it is misleading to render the idea of buying grain as "the buying of *corn*" (114): *corn* in England refers to wheat or oats in Scotland and Ireland but in North America and Australia to aboriginal *corn* or maize. If and when there is a 3rd edition of this work, it will be expedient to correct the numerous typographical ["therefore" (106), "wtih" (107), "stil" (172), "beause" (181), "Zebulon" (182), "Jerobeam" (199), necesarily" (215), "novellistic" (218), "Institue" (258), "situation"

(267), "cenrury" (306)], grammatical ["the Deuteronomistic introduction and conclusion *is* eliminated" (181)], and punctuational [the abbreviation, i.e., is consistently not followed by a comma] errors within the 2nd edition. I also remain mystified why the lion's head from the entrance to the shrine of Ishtar from Nimrud was chosen by the publisher to grace the paperback's cover. There seems to be no connection to or even mention of it in the text or index.

Roger W. Uitti
Lutheran Theological Seminary

Models For Interpretation of Scripture

John Goldingay

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and
Carlisle, United Kingdom: Paternoster Press, 1995

x + 328 pages, \$27.50 Softcover

Every Christian preacher or teacher is constantly faced with the task of interpreting the Bible. In both formal preparation (sermons, Bible studies, lectures, essays, and meditations) and in informal conversations (pastoral care settings and moments of prayer) we work to bring scripture to bear on the world(s) within and without the Church. Although we know intuitively that our interpretation of scripture must be creative, flexible, and (at times, at least) done "off the cuff", most of us find ourselves working primarily from one foundational approach. For most readers of this journal that is likely to be historical critical exegesis seasoned, perhaps, with some tools from various literary critical methods. Yet we also know, just from browsing the shelves at the bookstore and reading through denominational "helps", that several methods—old and new—have garnered scholarly and ecclesiastical attention.

John Goldingay, in his book *Models For Interpretation of Scripture*, has undertaken the task of engaging and evaluating a broad range of interpretive methods. This book is a companion volume to his earlier work, *Models for Scripture* from which he adopts his own taxonomy of biblical genres: "witnessing tradition" (narrative); "authoritative canon" (*torah*); "inspired word" (prophecy); and "experienced revelation" (wisdom, psalm, parable, epistle). In the current work, he matches those broad categories to modes of interpretation that seem most fruitful in leading to the interpreter's final task—communication of gains made in understanding and meaning. In assembling interpretive models for analysis, Goldingay casts his net wide in