HISTORY OF ISRAEL

General – problems of historiography

1622 MARIO LIVERANI, La Bible et l’invention de l’histoire

Noted Assyriologist and historian (b. 1939), Liverani offers here a learned account of the history of ancient Israel. Liverani first offers a straightforward (at times minimalist) account, in order then to describe how in the exilic and postexilic periods, Israel ‘invented’ the key traditions of the well-known panoramic biblical story: the patriarchs, the conquest, the period of the judges, the united monarchy under David and Solomon, the Solomonic temple, and, finally, the invention of the Mosaic law (pp. 339–496). The text does not include learned notes, but a classified bibliography. – This is an outstanding presentation of the course of Israel’s history, well written and argued. The chapters that discuss the ‘invention’ of Israel’s sacred traditions will certainly provoke much discussion, but have the potential of being regarded a ‘classic’.  

1623 GIOVANNI GARBINI, Scrivere la storia d’Israele. Vicende e memorie ebraiche

This sketch of the history of biblical Israel – from the “Benjaminites” (referred to in Babylonian sources) via the conquest all the way to Hellenistic and Roman times – is by a noted “minimalist”, i.e. by an author very critical of the historical reliability of the biblical text itself. In an appendix, the author discusses and presents (in Italian translation) the fragments of the Jewish History of Eupolemos, written ca. 158 BCE (pp. 310–333; most of the 22 fragments can be found in Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, and in Eusebius, Preparation of the Gospel).  
Biblioteca di storia e storiografia dei tempi biblici 15; Paideia Editrice, Brescia (2008) 1–357

1624 KENNETH A. KITCHEN, Das Alte Testament und der Vordere Orient. Zur historischen Zuverlässigkeit biblischer Geschichte

This is the German translation of a major work on the historicity of the Old Testament, written by the Nestor of British Egyptology and first published in 2003, see IRBS 50:1905. See also Kitchen’s recent debate with biblical ‘minimalists’ (IRBS 51:1383). Interestingly, this work’s actual precursor was published only in German: Alter Orient und Altes Testament, Wuppertal 1965. It is to be hoped that Kitchen’s promise to write more about the subject, and specifically on the chronology of the Hebrew monarchy (p. 38, n.), will materialize before long.  
Brunnen Verlag, Giessen (2008) XIII/1–732 (BL)

1625 MANFRED CLAUS, Geschichte des alten Israel

Three chapters offer: (1) a narrative account of the history of Israel from the beginnings to the end of the monarchy (587 BCE), with a chapter on the political and social structures; (2) a long section that discusses issues and trends of present-day research; (3) a long bibliography that is thematically structured. The author is an ancient historian rather than a biblical scholar; accordingly, this work will be perceived as that of an outsider to the discipline.  
Oldenbourg Grundriss der Geschichte; R. Oldenbourg Verlag, München (2009) X/1–259

1626 CHRISTIAN FREVEL, Grundriss der Geschichte Israels

This is a well-structured, concise survey of the history of Israel, appended to a manual of Old Testament introduction. The author, who steers a middle course between maximalists
Philip R. Davies, Memories of Ancient Israel: An Introduction to Biblical History – Ancient and Modern

L’histoire d’Israël ancien est devenue le sujet d’un débat prolongé entre l’école ‘minima liste’ et l’école conservatrice voire ‘maximaliste’. Davies, un des ‘minimalistes’, explique de quoi il s’agit et montre l’incertitude des arguments maximalistes qui se basent sur le texte biblique (qui assez souvent reflète une idéologie plutôt que des événements historiques), l’archéologie, et les inscriptions. Même des inscriptions dont la date paraît bien établie pourraient être d’une valeur problématique, et Davies repète ses réserves bien connues concernant la date de l’inscription de Siloe (pour laquelle il préfère une date hellénistique). Un chapitre commente sur les contributions récentes de K.A. Kitchen, J.B. Kofoed et I. Provan qui cherchent à défendre la position dite maximaliste. – C’est un livre intelligent et de grande érudition, argumenté avec précision et conviction.


Niels Peter Lemche, The History of Israel or the History of Palestine?

The author sketches a history of Palestine from the Stone Age to modern times, constructed without recourse to the Old Testament. To which he adds: ‘The Old Testament has a different history to relate. It has little to do with what really happened in Palestine in ancient times – although at the same time it shows that history is not limited to the long perspective. In its case the decision to narrate a history that never happened became more important than anything that really happened even in the long perspective. It is the final proof that the decision made by a group of people to tell their story has more significance than all the other factors, such as geography, climate, and economy’ (p. 453).


Hubert Irsigler (ed.), Die Identität Israels. Entwicklungen und Kontroversen in alttestamentlicher Zeit

The following papers are included in this collective volume on the ‘identity of ancient Israel: developments and controversies’: Th. Seidl, Konflikt und Konfliktlösung [Genesis]; R. Albertz, Israel in der offiziellen Religion der Königszeit; H. Irsigler, Der Streit um die Identität in der vorexilischen Prophetie [Hos 12]; W. Dietrich, Israel in der Perspektive des deuteronomisch-deuteronomistischen Literaturkreises; J.W. Rogerson, Die Neubesinnung auf die Identität Israels in der exilischen Epoche; R. Rothenbusch, Die Auseinandersetzung um die Identität Israels im Esra- und Nehemiaubuch; H.-P. Mathys, Israel und die Völker in der Achämenidenzeit; E. Bons, Das Gesetz als Maßstab für Israel und seine Bedeutung für die Völker bei Flavius Josephus. – Three phases in the development of Israel’s identity can be recognized: (1) the people-centered theology of the northern kingdom during the period of the monarchy (with concomitant absence of a focus on the people in the theology of Jerusalem; Albertz); (2) the introduction of this people-centered theology in Jerusalem after the demise of the northern kingdom in 722 BCE (Albertz); (3) the notion of Israel as a community gathered around the Torah (Rothenbusch, Mathys).

Herders Biblische Studien 56; Verlag Herder, Freiburg (2009) XI/1–175 (BL)

Paul Lawrence, Der große Atlas zur Welt der Bibel. Länder – Völker – Kulturen

Collections of maps illustrating biblical history have a long tradition. Most recently published books of this genre, including the present German version of The Lion Atlas