Agamemnon and the Hebrew Bible

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I have always been a comparatist. I believe that placing a narrative in context with other relevant texts is one of the more certain ways to obtain understanding and meaning. As it became increasingly obvious in the twentieth century, as unexpected discoveries greatly expanded our vistas, it dawned on some that Near Eastern narratives provide invaluable contexts for the study of Homeric epic. However, including the Hebrew Bible among the *comparanda* has greatly lagged behind, until fairly recently. When I began studying correspondences between Homeric epic and the Bible fifteen years ago, I assumed the parallels were best understood as depending on earlier Near Eastern narratives, with which both Greek and Israelite culture had come in contact. But now I have changed my view. When one takes into account how widespread the respective languages were, Greek and Hebrew, which language has earlier documentation, which people enter the historical record first, which culture was a significant maritime power for over a millennium, and which established an empire including the other, if some form of diffusion, direct or indirect, accounts for the correspondences, the odds are far greater that the direction is from Greek to Israelite culture. I count myself, then, among those who regard the Hebrew Bible, in part, as a response to Greek culture.

Mycenaean Culture and Hittite Texts

Let me start with a brief overview of the historical record of contacts between the Near East and Greek culture. So many revelations came with the early-twentieth century discovery of Hittite texts. Several names recorded in the treaties and royal letters are place names and proper names associated with Greek culture of the Mycenaean period.[1] From the fourteenth century are two references to Ahhiya, and from the thirteenth are

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[1] All discussion of Hittite proper names is based on Gary M. Beckman, Trevor R. Bryce and Eric H. Cline, eds., *The Ahhiyawa Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

many mentions of the Ahhiyawa. We now have a strong consensus that these are Hittite equivalents of terms common in Homeric epic, Achaia and Achaian, the latter being Homeric epic's term for the Greeks. Wilusa, a place name, is now regarded as Homeric Ilios/Ilium, and a phrase, "steep Wilusa," as Calvert Watkins argued,[2] is a seeming correspondent to "steep Ilios" (Ἴλιον αἰπεινήν), which occurs six times in the *Iliad*.

Moving to the names of individuals, a treaty of the Hittite king, Mu-watalli II, records a god named Apaliunas, "Storm-god of the Army," which name is agreed to correspond to Apeilon, an earlier spelling of *Apollo*. There is Tawagalawa, brother of a King of Ahhiyawa, an exact equation of Eteocles,[3] who, in Greek myth as we have it, is part of the Theban cycle of myths, not the Trojan War. Perhaps most intriguing of all is the name of a king of Wilusa (again, our *Ilium*) Alaksandu, clearly a Hittite rendering of the Greek name Alexandros.[4] Closer to my topic, the "Indictment of Maduwatta"[5] features a king of Ahhiya by the name of *Attarissiya*. More than a few scholars accept the equation of Attarissiya and *Atreus*.[6] In Homer, Atreus is the father of Agamemnon and Menelaus. Elsewhere, a *Great King of Ahhiyawa* is mentioned, but not named. Gu-terbock, considering the larger society that the Hittite references to Ah-hiyawa suggest, notes, "I have argued that the Great King of Ahhiyawa, equal in rank to the king of Hatti and, by implication, to those of Egypt and Babylonia, can only be a ruler of the rank of an Agamemnon."[7]

These attestations establish that the phase of Greek culture that we call Mycenaean was historically so prominent in the region in which the *Iliad* is set, that the Hittites, the other great power exercising control over the area, had extensive relations with them. We call this phase of Greek culture Mycenaean, because both the archaeological record and the *Iliad* agree that Mycenae was its most important and wealthiest city. In Greek myth, Agamemnon is king of Mycenae, wealthiest and most powerful of

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[2] Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 148–49.
[3] Beckman, Bryce and Cline, *The Ahhiyawa Texts*, 119–20.
[4] Beckman, Bryce and Cline, *The Ahhiyawa Texts*, 2.
[5] Beckman, Bryce and Cline, *The Ahhiyawa Texts*, 71, 99.
[6] Martin L. West, "Atreus and Attarasiyas," *Glotta* 77 (2001): 262–66.
[7] Hans G. Guterbock, "Troy in Hittite Texts? Wilusa, Ahhiyawa, and Hittite History," in *Troy and the Trojan War: A Symposium Held at Bryn Mawr College*, ed. John Lawrence Angel and Machteld Johanna Mellink (Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 1986), 33–44 (quotation on p. 43).

the many Mycenaean kings, an embodiment of its military might and widespread power. A few Ahhiyawa passages record Greek doings at Cyprus and Miletus, taking us considerably closer to the world of the Hebrew Bible.

Aegean and Philistine Exchanges

We now consider the *Philistines*, both the archaeological record, and passages in the Hebrew Bible. Egyptian commemorative stelae from the reigns of Rameses II and III record unsuccessful invasions of Egypt by a coalition of "Sea Peoples," including the Philistines, and other peoples, a few of which correspond to those featured in the *Iliad* as allies of the Greeks and Trojans. As early as 1899, F. B. Welch suggested that fragments of Philistine pottery were linked in some way to those of the Mycenaean Greeks.[8] We now have a strong consensus that such is the case. The archaeologist Stager regards the correspondences as definitive (1991), "Throwing caution to the wind, I am willing to … state flatly that the Sea Peoples, including the Philistines, were Mycenaean *Greeks*."[9] Archaeologists have convincingly filled out other links between Philistine and Mycenaean Greek culture.

At several major Philistine sites, deep changes are apparent, against the previous patterns of Canaanite culture, that evidence Aegean migration in the twelfth century against the background of thirteenth-century Canaanite culture, and reveal its interaction with the Aegean world.[10] For instance, the "Ashdoda" figurines are a local version of Mycenaean Mother Goddess figurines.[11] Sites in Philistia have Aegean-style hearths, complete Aegean wine-drinking sets, with mixing bowls, spouted or strainer jugs and deep bowls not found in any significant use in Canaan prior to the Philistine migration. Aegean textile practices are now evident, "Aegean-style imperforated loom weights show that domestic textile production was practiced according to an Aegean tradition."[12] Those taking part in the Aegean migration "kept their Aegean tradition of the domestic cult of

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[8] Assaf Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.
[9] Lawrence E. Stager, "When Canaanites and Philistines Ruled Ashkelon," *BAR* 17.2 (1991): 24–43.
[10] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 8.
[11] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 306.
[12] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 343.

an Aegean goddess, which seems to appear everywhere in Philistia."[13] At Miletus, where Hittite texts document the presence of Ahhiyawa, we have "the remains of a Korridorhaus of the type common in the Aegean world": it imitates palatial architecture of mainland Greece.[14] Yasur-Landau further adds, "The rulers used Aegean symbols of rulership, mainly the central hearth, to consolidate their power by ritual feasting and drinking in the Aegean manner."[15]

As Yasur-Landau further notes, "The Cilician, Ugaritic, and Cypriot data show that in a relatively short time, within the first quarter of the twelfth century BCE, evidence for Aegean behavioral patterns appeared in vast areas of the eastern Mediterranean, sometimes but not in all cases following violent destructions."[16] He summarizes the significant changes in architecture:

> A deep change in the plan of a house and its interior arrangements reflects a conscious effort to replicate, in some cases, Aegean house forms and indicates a change in the cultural notion of what a house should look like … every aspect of everyday domestic life at the site mirrors behavioral patterns of Aegean origin previously unattested to in the Late Bronze Age Local, Canaanite tradition … the appearance of Aegean-style cooking and weaving, indicates that the most basic practices were carried out in a non-local manner … the deep change in the behavioral patterns in Philistia can be interpreted only by the arrival of people within the sphere of the expanding Aegean and Aegeanized world of the twelfth century.[17]

Furthermore, the introduction of Mycenaean culture starts to exert influence on the non-Aegean peoples: "Houses, whether built with or without Aegean-style installations, contain assemblages indicative of activities carried out in both the Canaanite and the Aegean manner, which hints at the birth of a multicultural society."[18]

There is considerable continuity in Philistia as well. A seventh-century temple/palace complex at Tel Miqne/Ekron evidences worship of an Aegean earth goddess, in an inscription in Phoenician,[19] detailing that

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[13] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 343.
[14] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 64.
[15] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 331.
[16] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 189.
[17] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 280.
[18] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 281.
[19] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 306.

Achish, with a lengthy list of his ancestors, built the temple for the goddess Ptgyh. The goddess's name is non-Semitic, and is thought to equate with the earth goddess at Ashdoda. Thus the cult of the Aegean great mother-goddess Gaia seems to have been preserved in Philistia from the time of the Aegean migration in the twelfth century up to the seventh century. The name of the temple's builder, Achish, requires further comment. The ruler of Ekron, his name is also attested in an Assyrian inscription.[20] The Hebrew Bible has two Achishes. Twice (1 Sam 21:11–15; 27:1–6) David associates with Achish, king of Gath. 1 Kings 2:39–46 mentions another Achish during Solomon's reign, also king of Gath, perhaps grandson to the former. The name is non-Semitic, and derives from *Ἀχαιϝός or *Ἀχαιός – meaning "the Achaean."[21] As Yasur-Landau notes, the name, "Achish … can be traced back to the fifteenth century BCE."[22]

This brings us full circle with the Hittite documents and Homeric epic, Ahhiyawa, Homeric Ἀχαιος, and Biblical Achish. The one attested in the inscription at Ekron is perhaps a century later than Homer, still worshipping a goddess of Aegean descent. While with Achish, David performs acts that help the Philistines. He should perhaps be understood as acquiring aspects of Philistine culture during his lengthy sojourn among them. We return to him below.

Some archaeologists argue that proto-Israelite culture began to identify itself in opposition to Philistine culture.[23] Some of the most definitive markers of Israelite culture, including the taboo against eating pork, arose, they argue, so that the emerging Israelite sense of identity could define itself against, in distinction to, the dynamic Philistine presence.

Greek Culture in the Hebrew Bible

Let us now note passages in the Hebrew Bible that openly reference Greek culture. Javan, a grandson of Noah in Genesis 10, is the same eponym as

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[20] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 306.
[21] J. Naveh, "Achish-Ikausu in the Light of the Ekron Dedication," *BASOR* 310 (1998): 35–37.
[22] Yasur-Landau, *The Philistines*, 332.
[23] Schlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "Canaanite Resistane: The Philistines and Beth-Shemesh – A Case Study from Iron Age I," *BASOR* (2011) 37–51; Schlomo Bunimovitz and Zvi Lederman, "A Border Case: Beth-Shemesh and the Rise of Ancient Israel," in *Israel in Transition: From Late Bronze II to Iron IIa (c. 1250–850 B.C.E.), Vol. 1. The Archaeology*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2008), 21–31.

Greek *Ion* (from *'Ιαϝων). The name has widespread, international circulation from very early times. Chantrainne cites a Mycenaean form, "*iawone.*"[24] It occurs in the *Iliad* as Ἰάονες (13.685), and was also current in ancient India, appearing some fifty times in the *Mahabhârata*, as Yavanas.

In Greek culture Ion is patriarch and eponymous ancestor of the eastern-most branch of the Greek people, the Ionians. According to Euripides, and larger Greek traditions, Ion has four sons, as Athena explains at the end of Euripides' play, "For, from him four sons, born from one root, will bequeath their names to the land, and the people by tribe" (*Ion* 1575–1578).[25] Occurring first in the Bible in the Table of Nations (Gen 10:2, 4), Javan functions as Mr. Greece, if you will, progenitor of the people. As the Greek Ion, Javan has four sons (Gen 10:4): Elishash, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim. Genesis continues (10:5), "From these the peoples of the coasts and islands separated into their own countries."[26] Speiser explains that Elishash corresponds to Alashiya, a name for Cyprus; Kittim corresponds to Kition, a Greek city also on Cyprus, while Rodanim is clearly the inhabitants of Rhodes.[27] In additional passages in 1 Chron 1:5, 7; Isa 66:19; Ezek 27:13; and Zech 9:13, "Javan" can be the entire country personified, but in Genesis and 1 Chronicles it signifies the Ionian Greeks of Asia minor, and, perhaps, of Cyprus in particular.

Obscured by the proliferation of different ethnonyms for what we call Greece, it is abundantly clear that ancient Israelite culture had sustained contact with ancient Greek culture.

The Hebrew Bible as Counter-Curriculum

Let us now consider the scribal culture that produced the Hebrew Bible, and how, in some respects, it may be seen as responding to larger paradigms in Greek culture. Since the Hebrew Bible is not the product of authors, as we think of them, but scribes, Van der Toorn envisions six ways

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[24] Pierre Chantrainne, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: Historie des mots, A–K* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck), 475.
[25] Translations of Euripides and Homer are my own.
[26] Translations of the Hebrew Bible are from M. Jack Suggs, Katharine Doob Sakenfield and James R. Mueller, eds., *The Oxford Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
[27] E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 66.

by which scribes produced written texts.[28] In five of these six, a scribe "does not invent his text but merely arranges it; the contents of a text exist first, before being laid down in writing."[29] The Hebrew Bible exhibits "successive layers of scribal interventions. The final compositions reflect the involvement of generations of scribes. To the text as they had received it, they added their interpretations, framework, and other textual expansions."[30] This continues after the Septuagint, where Jeremiah is 15 % shorter than in the eventual Hebrew text. Thus "[s]cholars have concluded that the Greek Jeremiah translates a Hebrew text earlier than that in the Hebrew Bible."[31]

As Van der Toorn and others have argued, the Hebrew Bible's most celebrated example of authorship, Moses as the reputed author of the Pentateuch, is attributed, or fictitious, designed "to legitimize a cultic reform that was carried out in 622 by King Josiah."[32] The Pentateuch itself should likely be seen as the result of the labors of Ezra, under the impetus of the Persian Empire. As Van der Toorn notes, "Ezra was a scholar who received his scribal training in Babylonia. His work on the Pentateuch compares to the editing of the *Gilgamesh Epic* by Sin-leqe-unninni and the editing of the prognostic compendium *Sakikku* by Esagil-kin-apli. The latter used disparate sources ('twisted threads') … to produce a 'new text' … Ezra did the same for the Law of Moses."[33] Positing 450 BCE as a reasonable date, he argues that, "[w]ithout the Persians, there would not have been a Pentateuch."[34]

Van der Toorn also notes how books themselves are a Hellenistic invention.[35] The Hellenistic period caused, he notes, "increasing demand for a national literature by an educated public."[36] In a further reaction, "[t]he Hellenization of the Near East led to an increased production of national- and nationalistic-historiography."[37] Thus he argues that the publication of

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[28] Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 110.
[29] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 47.
[30] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 7.
[31] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 131.
[32] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 34.
[33] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 250.
[34] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 251.
[35] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 9.
[36] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 259.
[37] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 259.

the Prophets, Psalms and the Proverbs "can be viewed as a Jewish response to the cultural impact of Hellenism."[38]

Carr considers significant ways in which, in the Hellenistic period in particular, Israelite culture is impacted by larger movements in Greek culture. He observes that only fifth- and possibly sixth-century Greece provides "depictions of people reading texts."[39] References to buying texts become common in Greece in the fifth century. The first known instances of authors, in something like the sense that we understand the term, are Greek, seventh-, sixth-, and fifth-century lyric and dramatic poets. Carr also notes a new form of cultural identity originating in Hellenistic Greek culture, "Hellenism introduced the idea of a transethnic 'Greek' identity defined by whether or not an individual had taken on Greek culture."[40]

For Jews thus surrounded by Greek models of education, texts, and even the concept of authorship, Carr argues that the Old Testament itself "is a counter-curriculum to that of Hellenistic education,"[41] that it is a hybrid form of cultural resistance. Evident in broader ways, the renewed focus on learning "Hebrew in the Hellenistic period would represent a form of hybrid cultural resistance to a textual educational system focused on gaining competence in Greek."[42] He notes as another hybrid form of cultural resistance,

> the emergence for the first time of a Jewish identity not exclusively based in ethnic affiliation. It is around the early second century that we first see stories of "conversion" to Judaism and other indicators that Jewish identity, like Hellenistic "Greek" identity, is becoming a way of life, a *politeia*, rather than national identity.[43]

Perhaps most intriguing are the hybrid conventions that evolved to produce the Hebrew Bible,

> It borrowed Greek techniques for textual standardization to protect the emergent standardization of the Hebrew text. It used Greek-like paragraph markers to mark pericopes in the Hebrew corpus. It drew boundaries

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[38] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 259.
[39] David Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 92.
[40] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 260.
[41] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 10.
[42] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 259–60.
[43] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 260.

around the text that were modeled on yet surpassed the relatively sharp contours of the Hellenistic curriculum. It often was designated in Hellenistic categories like "ancestral laws," even as those categories were modified in often radical ways to fit the emergent Judean way of life … provid[ing] the basis for a broadly aimed educational process that corresponded to the broader, non-temple focused aims of Hellenistic education … [T]his body of indigenous Hebrew texts appears to have represented a hyperversion of the Greek forms of textuality it opposed.[44]

Carr finds the best examples to support his understanding of hybridity in the Hasmonean dynasty, which he sees as embodying "an emerging form of Hellenized, and 'Hellenistic,' Torah-observing Judaism."[45] He sees a unique hybrid of "anti-Greek propaganda along with promotion and extension of a stylized non-Greek indigenous culture," but with "the use of Greek forms to advance such propaganda and culture within a monarchy adopting significant elements of Hellenistic culture … this hybrid Hellenistic/anti-Hellenism mix shaped emergent Jewish education and textuality."[46] It is in 2 Maccabees, in particular, that "contradictions between Hellenistic and anti-Hellenistic elements emerge with particular clarity."[47] Though "saturated with Greek literary genres and … written in Greek and reflect[ing] the author's thorough education in the Greek literary tradition … and [promoting] Greek educational and character values like nobility, reason, beauty, self-control, and the ability to sacrifice familial relationships," to do so it employs "Hebrew examples and constant echoes of Jewish Scriptures like the *Aqedah*."[48] 2 Maccabees thus "is a Jewish example … of Greek-language oral-written textuality."[49]

I will extend aspects of Carr's arguments to areas he does not consider, arguing that some narratives in the Hebrew Bible can also be seen as instances of a similar hybridity, the use of Greek characters and forms to express traditional Israelite culture.

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[44] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 270.
[45] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 258.
[46] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 258.
[47] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 258.
[48] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 258.
[49] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 258.

External Influence on Biblical Narratives

Let us now turn to the influence of external narratives on the Hebrew Bible. Since the rediscovery of the Gilgamesh epic, we have known that some narratives in the Hebrew Bible originated outside of Israelite culture. Thus Mark Smith can assert, "It is commonly accepted that parts of Gen 1–11 show literary dependence, either directly or indirectly, on Mesopotamian literary tradition."[50] We know the Bible was shaped by the traditions of Israel's neighbors to the east. A brief, partial list of examples, for which scholars have found antecedents outside of Israel, includes:

- Babylonian acrostics and some Psalms;
- Mesopotamian oracle collections and the prophetic books;
- the Babylonian Adapa and some of the traditional features of Old Testament revelations; Babylonian wisdom texts in general;
- the traditional god list and hymns of praise;
- an Aramaic blessing and Psalm 20;
- the Babylonian Theodicy and Job;
- Deuteronomy's central rubric of the covenant, and Hittite and Neo-Assyrian treaty documents;
- and, as earlier noted, possible Persian impetus for formation of the Pentateuch.[51]

Biblical narratives suggest dependency external to Israelite culture in other ways as well. In Genesis 28, Jacob, on his quest east to Harran, stops for the night and dreams his remarkable dream. In the morning, he dedicates a stone to God, but does so on what scholars identify as a pre-existing Canaanite sanctuary. Israelite scribes do similar things in their narratives, I suggest. They build them on pre-existing sacred narratives, reusing the foundations, stones and pillars. The building blocks are put to new use, but the older stones and foundations remain partly visible.

Van der Toorn argues that instruction in foreign languages would have been a standard element in Israelite scribal culture, "the knowledge of foreign languages was part of their profession … The linguistic skills of the scribes would normally have included the mastery of one or more

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[50] Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 182.
[51] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 116, 170, 210, 165, 120, 134, 215, 153, respectively.

foreign languages … In addition to Aramaic, the scribal program may have taught other languages as well, such as Egyptian and, later, Greek."[52] I suggest, however, there is no need to assume a particularly late date for knowledge of Greek by Israel's scribal culture.

I thus argue that Israelite oral traditions and scribal culture were not only acquainted with, but were also influenced and shaped by ancient Greek culture and narratives.

Greek Epic and Hebrew Bible

Owing to diachronic interaction and acquaintance with Greek culture, Israel had more than a little knowledge of what we now call Greek myth. As to how this would have occurred, we need to remain open to multiple, possible scenarios, from different forms of oral performance—some of which should be assumed to go back to the period of Philistine incursion—to interactions between textual traditions. Of the many types of Greek myth that Israelite scribes found useful for their own agendas, the larger cycle of Trojan War myth proved most relevant and most attractive for Joshua through 2 Kings. The crown jewel of Trojan War myth, and most prestigious narrative in ancient Greece, the *Iliad*, offered proud heroes and highly ambivalent depictions of warrior kings involved in national causes, kings who often quarrel with their prophets, and lose the favor of their chief god. Within Greek culture the *Iliad* became an epic paradigm, and I argue that it also did for Israelite scribes, much as Gilgamesh seems to have been. If we accept Janko's dating of the *Iliad*'s text to the last quarter of the eighth century,[53] but keep in mind the likelihood of earlier circulation of oral versions, it is easily early enough to impact a Hebrew Bible undergoing rewriting, revision, and editing, for centuries after that.

Epics build on, even evolve from, earlier epics. Both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* allude to an earlier epic about Jason and the Argonauts.[54] We are still tracing the echoes of Gilgamesh in Homeric epic, though we will probably never know the nature of the contact. Did a bilingual Greek bard

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[52] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 53.
[53] Richard Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
[54] Bruce Louden, *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 135–63.

hear a live performance of a Babylonian version? Does the Homeric tradition reflect influence from a textual tradition of Gilgamesh?

Why does the Hebrew Bible lack epic? Epic is inherently polytheistic;
and the Hebrew Bible is largely a prose work, which suggests a closer
affinity with archives, as Van der Toorn notes.[55] Though lacking epic, it
nonetheless contains allusions to it, and re-workings of it. We may have
allusions to lost epics in the mentions of Shamgar (Judges) and Nimrod
(Genesis), as well as references to the Book of Yashar. On the other hand,
commentators have argued that the Hebrew Bible consciously applies epic
models of organization and characterization. Mark Smith, in his study of
correspondences between David and Jonathan, Gilgamesh and Enkidu,
and Achilles and Patroclus, suggests so, "I would sympathize with Cross's
conviction that biblical books such as Samuel were 'interpreting the later
history of Israel in Epic patterns.'"[56] But which "epic patterns"? Cross no
doubt has in mind Ugaritic or Canaanite epic, and, we can assume, additional Babylonian or Assyrian narratives. I am making the case for including ancient Greek epic as well.

In the relevant time period, Greek and Israelite cultures are both still
operating under a largely oral paradigm, which tends to employ generic
character types, generic type-scenes and situations. In Trojan War myth,
Israelite scribal tradition had, ready to hand, characters with developed
dynamics between them, more than a little relevant for depicting Israelite
saga, some of which reflected historical interactions with the Mycenaean
phase of Greek culture. In particular the figures of Agamemnon, the
prophet Calchas, and priest Chryseis, Achilles, Clytemnestra, Iphigenia,
and the interrelations of these characters, were received as types, seen as
appropriate vehicles to help depict several kinds of conflict. Of the six
ways Van der Toorn posits by which scribes produced written texts, two
are most relevant for my argument: "(5) adaptation of an existing text for
a new audience; and (6) integration of individual documents into a more
comprehensive composition."[57]

The larger David narrative suggests a prose epic, in several respects,
particularly if we apply Carr's model of hybrid cultural resistance. It
adopts many of Homeric epic's stylistic traits, but employs them contrary

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[55] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 16.
[56] Mark S. Smith, *Poetic Heroes: Literary Commemorations of Warriors and Warrior
Culture in the Early Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 39.
[57] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 116.

to the norms and expectations of Greek culture. All is now subsumed under a Yahwist agenda, the expected type-scenes of Trojan War myth, in which Greeks defeat Trojans, articulate Israel's conflict with Philistines for a *reverse* outcome, in which Israel will prove victorious, much as Vergil will later shift audience loyalty. David moves freely back and forth in the zones between Philistine and Israelite culture. He might be understood as personify*ing* and embodying the transmission of some aspects of Mycenaean Greek culture onto Israel. Whatever historical realities his larger narrative depicts, it has been shaped, in many particulars, by awareness of Trojan War saga: larger aspects of David's character correspond to key traits of the Homeric Achilles.[58] An even stronger case can be made for how Saul's character conforms to the Homeric Agamemnon.

The Dubious Character of Agamemnon

What of Agamemnon himself? For over two millennia, larger reception of the *Iliad* remained largely uncritical of his character. However, starting about 1960, a consensus has been building that Agamemnon is a highly flawed character. Whitman sees him as "a foil to Achilles," whom, throughout the *Iliad*, Homer undercuts by having him fail to meet audience expectations of how a king should behave.[59] As Whitman puts it, Homer uses "all his traditional eminence as a means of diminishing" him.[60] For instance, the *Iliad* has four major *aristeiai*, an episode in which a major warrior, inspired by a god, becomes virtually unstoppable, capable of inflicting massive casualties on his opponents. Agamemnon's *aristeia* uniquely achieves, as Whitman notes, "scarcely even a degree of victory."[61] Whitman concludes that Homer's aim is to depict Agamemnon, "as the opposite of Achilles – the nadir, as Achilles is the zenith, of the heroic assumption."[62] Homer's Agamemnon is "a magnificently dressed incompetence, without spirit or spiritual concern; his dignity is marred by pretension … his prowess by a savagery which is the product of a deep uncertainty and fear."[63]

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[58] Bruce Louden, *The Iliad: Structure, Myth, and Meaning* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 157, 161–66, 170–79.
[59] Cedric H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (New York: Norton, 1958), 156.
[60] Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, 156.
[61] Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, 159.
[62] Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, 162.
[63] Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*, 162.

Greenburg zeroes in on Agamemnon's outrageous treatment of Apollo's priest, Chryses, in the *Iliad*'s first episode. When he comes to him to ransom his daughter, Agamemnon's potential concubine, Agamemnon treats Chryses with contempt. As Greenburg notes, not only does Agamemnon dishonor the priest, he misjudges his influence with Apollo. Chryses' reference to Apollo "embodies a threat of sorts … Agamemnon … understands it and rejects it … He is obviously and erroneously guessing that divinity will not respond to the priest's prayer."[64] He concludes, "It would be a crowning touch if Agamemnon is portrayed as being egotistically unaware of just how offensive he is."[65]

Van Nortwick builds on Whitman's observations, arguing, "The contrast between the expectations raised by his special status and the frequent lapses in leadership and judgment he displays is the key to his characterization in the *Iliad*."[66] He sees Agamemnon as "insecure about his judgment, prone to rash and ill-advised decisions."[67] Three times in the *Iliad*, Agamemnon, out of panic or depression, advises the Greeks to give up the war and return home. When he finally issues an apology to Achilles, who does not fight for the first nineteen books of the *Iliad* because of their quarrel, he claims he "is not responsible for his mistakes because Zeus sent 'blind distraction' … upon him."[68]

When Agamemnon is wounded during his *aristeia* (for which we find a correspondence in Ahab below), in one of the most unique similes in the *Iliad*, he is compared to a woman suffering birth-pangs, taken away to deliver. The ambivalent, mysterious simile is, as Hainsworth notes, "inescapably ironic at several levels in the comparison. The great effort of the King of Men ends with his being rushed off to his surgeons like a woman to her *accouchement*."[69]

As a warrior king who leads a large, national coalition to war, Agamemnon personifies many of the problems associated with kingship. Though a capable warrior, he is often petty, selfish, paranoid and vindictive. He thematically finds himself on the wrong side of prophets and

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[64] N. A. Greenburg, "The Attitude of Agamemnon," *CW* 86 (1993): 193–205 (197).

[65] Greenburg, "The Attitude of Agamemnon,", 205.

[66] Thomas van Nortwick, "Agamemnon," in *The Homer Encyclopedia*, ed. M. Finkelberg (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 14–16 (15).

[67] Van Nortwick, "Agamemnon," 15.

[68] Van Nortwick, "Agamemnon," 15.

[69] Bryan Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary, Volume III: Books 9-12* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 254–55.

priests. Out of excessive self-concern he loses sight of the big picture, losing Zeus' favor in the process, which turns instead to Achilles. I argue that the scribal tradition thus draws on him as a type for its own depictions of Saul and Ahab.

If I am correct, however, why are the correspondences not widely known? A few factors may have hindered their due recognition. When a story rooted in a polytheistic tradition is adapted for a monotheistic tradition and audience, key alterations are necessary. Thus when Agamemnon loses Zeus' favor and support, this is far less traumatic than in monotheism. Agamemnon still retains the full support of Hera, Poseidon, and Athena. When Saul loses Yahweh's favor, however, that's it, game over, in monotheism.

There are differences in degree in some of the corresponding elements. Agamemnon's bitter and recurring quarrels with his prophet, Calchas, and Chryses, priest of Apollo, are significant aspects of his character, but for Saul and Samuel, and Ahab with Elijah and Micaiah, the corresponding quarrels are more central elements in the respective narratives, the prophets, Samuel and Elijah are the main characters, in fact.

Lastly we might note the perspective of the vast majority of the Bible's readers. Popular culture, especially in the United States, assumes that David is fully "historical," but Agamemnon entirely mythical. How could a "historical" figure be partly shaped by a fictional one?

I suggest the figure of Agamemnon proved irresistibly paradigmatic for Israelite scribes to articulate specific issues about kingship within their own culture.[70] In different contexts the scribes select and emphasize different aspects of his character and relations with others. Saul and Ahab both share Agamemnon's serial confrontations with prophets; both lose God's favor and support, and both can be understood as embodying projected anxieties and concerns about monarchy itself. But it is only Saul, in his interactions with David, who plays out a version of Agamemnon's dynamic with Achilles.[71] It is only Saul who does so within the larger context of confrontation with the Philistines. Ahab, on the other hand,

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[70] In addition to the two contexts I discuss here, I argue that the figure of Agamemnon looms behind six additional episodes (Judges 4–5, Judges 11, Judges 19; 2 Samuel 11; Genesis 27, Genesis 34), which I will discuss in a future publication.

[71] For larger discussion of this see Louden, *The Iliad*, 161–66.

offers the most exact correspondences in friction between king and prophet, and has a wife unexpectedly correspondent to Agamemnon's Clytemnestra.

Agamemnon and Saul

We turn, then to Saul. Like Agamemnon in so many ways, Saul is also a foil. The most powerful man in Israel, he spends much of his time nervously observing David's increasing popularity and rise, as Agamemnon does Achilles. Samuel is not only his almost constant antagonist, but, behind the scenes, exercises greater influence and authority. We thus have a set of three analogous characters, Saul and Agamemnon, David and Achilles, and Samuel and Calchas. The entire saga plays out against confrontation with the Philistines (1 Sam 14:52), indirect affirmation of its links with Homeric epic, if we accept that the scribal tradition is aware of the identity of Philistine and Greek culture (though modern audiences are not).

Both Saul and Agamemnon are qualified warriors, capable of epic achievements on the battlefield. Agamemnon has his *aristeia* in *Iliad* 11; 1 Samuel 11:6 presents us with an equivalent scenario for Saul, "the Spirit of God suddenly seized him." However, while the motif normally initiates epic acts, as with Jephthah and Samson, here Saul proceeds to cut two oxen in pieces (perhaps borrowed from Judges 19, the last pre-king narrative), which recapitulates Agamemnon summoning the Greeks to reclaim Helen (recounted in Apollodorus E.3.6). After defeating the Amalekites, Saul erects a memorial to himself (1 Sam 15:12), like an Iliadic hero, and his overriding concern with *kleos*, fame.

In his interactions with Samuel, and subsequent loss of Yahweh's favor, Saul moves into even closer correspondence with Agamemnon. After anointing Saul as king, Samuel places the destruction of the Amalekites under the ban. When Saul fails to carry this out completely, his relation with Samuel immediately disintegrates. Saul violates the ban not only by sparing King Agag, but by keeping some of the Amalekites' choicest possessions for himself. In so doing he instantiates one of the *Iliad*'s central concerns, one of Agamemnon's central characteristics, and the main cause for Agamemnon's quarrel with Achilles: he distributes war winnings in a selfish, arbitrary manner. When Saul proceeds to set up a monument to

himself, he furthers our impression of excessive self-involvement. The biggest difference with the *Iliad* in these relations is Samuel's more dominant role than Agamemnon's prophets.

A whole book, I suggest, could be written on David and Achilles.[72] When, for instance, he defeats the Philistine Goliath, the Philistine's preliminary arming scene has long been recognized as conforming in almost every respect to the *Iliad*'s arming scenes,[73] and should be understood as referencing all three of its heroic duels, two of which, like that between David and Goliath, are to determine the entire battle between the opposing armies. The *Iliad*'s first duel between Paris and Menelaus employs a parodic arming scene. In 1 Samuel 17, the about-to-be-defeated Goliath's arming scene is also parodic: for all his armor and weaponry he is easily slain. Of the three duels, that between Hector and Aias in *Iliad* 7 is far the closest to the preliminaries in 1 Samuel 17. The climax of the poem, however, is Achilles' duel with Hector, which implicitly seals the Fall of Troy.

Additional tensions between Achilles and Agamemnon suggest they serve as a rubric for Saul and David's interactions. After Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon erupts at the beginning of Book 1, Zeus supports him, not Agamemnon, for the remainder of the epic. In 1 Samuel, the audience knows David has already been anointed as king, and has Yahweh's favor, near the beginning of his saga. After the quarrel, for the next three fourths of the epic, Achilles does not fight for the Greek army, and in so doing, indirectly renders significant aid to the *Trojan* cause. David, after Saul threatens him repeatedly, goes over to the Philistines, twice entering into relationships with King Achish, the Achaian (1 Sam 21:10–15). During the second occasion (1 Sam 27:1–6), having earned the Philistine king's trust, David is ordered by Achish to take the field against the Israelites (1 Sam 28). Robert Alter sees the unusual circumstance, an Israelite king working with the enemy, as supporting the episode's historicity—why else include such an ambivalent sequence?[74] This may be, yet I suggest it can be understood as Israelite scribes fashioning David's character to

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[72] For a sketch, see Louden, *The Iliad*, 161–66, 170–79.

[73] Azzan Yadin, "Goliath's Armor and Israelite Collective Memory," *VT* 54 (2004): 373–95; Louden, *The Iliad*, 172–79.

[74] Robert Alter, *Ancient Israel: The Former Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings* (New York: Norton, 2013), 400.

conform to a motif prominent in Achilles' interactions with Agamemnon, the harm he causes his fellow Greeks, which Zeus supports, and which is even more prominent in the *Iliad*.

Both Achilles and David are depicted in connection with performances of epic poetry; both shown playing the lyre. Both do so as part of their larger frictions with Agamemnon and Saul. Midway through Agamemnon's quarrel with Achilles, he sends an embassy to him, attempting reconciliation. When they reach Achilles' tent, the embassy finds him (*Iliad* 9.186–189) playing the lyre, singing epic songs, an instance of Homeric epic's well-known self-referentiality, or meta-poetics: the subject of his own epic is singing about other epic heroes. David is also referenced as the subject of something like epics in the recurring refrain, "Saul struck down thousands, but David tens of thousands" (1 Sam 18:6–8; 29:5). As Achilles plays to Agamemnon's embassy, while the deluded leader attempts reconciliation with him, so David in his lyre-playing performs before a troubled, anxious Saul. This motif is much more at home in Homeric epic: both Homeric protagonists, Achilles and Odysseus, are so depicted.

While Agamemnon and Saul share several other corresponding motifs, we conclude with how they are both depicted as visited by an *Evil Spirit*. In Agamemnon's case the Evil Spirit is more metaphorical. When he makes his public apology to Achilles for having begun their quarrel, he says it happened because Zeus sent the goddess, *Ate*, to delude him (below we also discuss the deceptive Dream Zeus sends him). When Saul loses his support, Yahweh repeatedly sends an evil spirit (16:23; 18:10). 1 Samuel combines this motif with the motif of David playing lyre (1 Sam 16:23), "And whenever an evil spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his lyre and play it, so that relief would come to Saul." Again, a tricky immortal figure seems more at home in the fully polytheistic *Iliad* than in the monotheistic Bible.

Agamemnon and Ahab

Perhaps even more intriguing are correspondences between Agamemnon and Ahab. The latter, though a figure more supported by the historical record than David, not involved with the Philistines, not attended by an Achilles figure, nonetheless, his interactions with prophets, his deportment on the battlefield, and his highly aggressive wife, all find virtually exact parallels in Agamemnon. Ahab's interactions with the prophets Eli-

jah and Micaiah are even closer to Agamemnon's than are Saul's with Samuel, including verbal equivalents. I thus argue that the scribal tradition had, in Agamemnon, an established character type they knew to be a vehicle suited to how they wished to depict Ahab.

In Ahab's disputes with his prophets Elijah and Micaiah, we revisit an earlier theme, but here the parallels are even closer with Agamemnon. Ahab's animosity toward Elijah is more pronounced, has undergone a longer period of gestation than Saul's for Samuel, and resembles Agamemnon's toward Calchas in *Iliad* 1. Ahab's first words to Elijah are contemptuous (18:17), "As soon as Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, 'Is it you, you troubler of Israel?'" We cannot imagine Saul addressing Samuel this way, but this is precisely Agamemnon's tone to his prophet Calchas, and to Chryses.

The most exact, most sustained, correspondences occur in 1 Kings 22, when Micaiah recounts his vision of the *Enticing Spirit* that will fool Ahab into thinking he can now capture Ramoth-gilead. Let us first set the stage by reviewing Agamemnon's parallel circumstances in book 2 of the *Iliad*. The night after Agamemnon's quarrel with Achilles begins, after a divine council, Zeus, who now supports Achilles over Agamemnon, sends a *Deceptive Dream* (2.6: οὖλος ὄνειρος) to Agamemnon. Zeus' purpose in sending the Dream, is to fool Agamemnon into thinking he can sack Troy the next day. The Dream fulfills Zeus' purpose, leaving Agamemnon, "believing in his heart things that are not going to be accomplished" (2.36).

Extensive deliberations and discussion follow over how to proceed on the basis of the Dream. Agamemnon orders the Greeks into assembly, but first convenes his executive council. Nestor, asserting no one would believe the dream if dreamt by anyone else, says it must be true since Agamemnon himself dreamt it (2.79–83). In his heated exchange with his prophet Calchas on the previous day, when Calchas had declared Agamemnon's abusive treatment of Apollo's priest had brought the god's wrath upon them, Agamemnon replied (1.106–107),

> Seer of evil: never yet have you told me a good thing. Always the evil things are dear to your heart to prophesy (μάντι κακῶν … αἰεί τοι τὰ κάκ' ἐστὶ φίλα φρεσί μαντεύεσθαι).

Agamemnon fails to take Troy on that day, and suffers a major embarrassment before his troops, most of whom now contemplate going home to Greece.

We return to Ahab's confrontation with Micaiah, with Agamemnon's Dream in mind, as Ahab and his forces, and King Jehoshaphat, contemplate attacking the city Ramoth-gilead. Agreeing to join battle, Jehoshaphat suggests Ahab first consult with Yahweh. All of Ahab's prophets prophesy that God will give him victory. When Jehoshaphat asks if there is another prophet to verify their prophecy, Ahab responds in words that closely agree with Agamemnon's rebuke of Calchas (22:8), "'There is one more … but I hate the man, because *he never prophesies good for me, never anything but evil.* His name is Micaiah son of Imlah.'" Later in the confrontation Ahab repeats (22:18), "'Did I not tell you that he never prophesies good for me, *never anything but evil*?'" Micaiah then recounts a vision (22:19–22):

> I saw the Lord seated on his throne with all the host of heaven in attendance on his right and on his left. The Lord said, 'Who will entice Ahab to go up and attack Ramoth-gilead?' One said one thing and one said another, until a spirit came forward and, standing before the Lord, said, 'I shall entice him.' 'How?' said the Lord. 'I shall go out', he answered, 'and be a lying spirit[75] in the mouths of all his prophets.' You see, then, how the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours, because he has decreed disaster for you.

Let us review the correspondences:

1. Each king contemplates trying to take a city. Each king leads a coalition of forces against another coalition.
2. Detailed deliberations and discussion precede his going into battle. Jehoshaphat serves a similar function as Agamemnon's Nestor.
3. Each king receives a report of divine will ensuring a positive outcome of the battle.
4. Each main god converses with a lesser divine being. Zeus instructs the Dream, but the Spirit volunteers for Yahweh, in corresponding terms: to fool the respective kings into thinking they will sack their respective cities that day.
5. The audience, however, knows the reports to be spurious. In the *Iliad*, typical of epic conventions, the audience is itself present at

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[75] Jack M. Sasson, *Judges 1–12: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 6D (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), has "deceiving spirit," 391.

Zeus' deliberations, observing without any doubt that Agamemnon is being deceived. 1 Kings 22 maintains the Hebrew Bible's usual conception of having the prophet as somehow present at the divine council (cf. Isaiah 6), a monotheistic variation on the more traditional polytheistic divine council. Micaiah relays the corresponding information that Homeric epic gives through the principal narrator.

6. Each king proceeds, and fails, on the basis of the false report of divine support.

In a key difference, Ahab's Enticing Spirit account repeats the motif from Elijah's earlier confrontation with Ahab of the one true prophet defeating the many false ones. Thus, as Cogan notes, "the issues of conflicting prophetic viewpoints and the royal response to the word of YHWH dominate,"[76] whereas for Agamemnon conflicting prophetic viewpoints is a non-issue. That the 1 Kings version derives from another is suggested by its being a secondary narrative, told in a tongue-in-cheek manner, and in how it retains polytheistic touches. Several of the motifs are more at home in the *Iliad* than in 1 Kings. Zeus or Athena sending a Dream is common in Homeric epic, for instance, whereas Yahweh's use of the Deceiving Spirit is less so. So also, as Cogan points out, is, "The consultation with prophets rather than priests in preparation for the attack on Ramoth-gilead comes as a surprise."[77] The triumph of the one true prophet over the many false subsumes the narrative under a Yahwist agenda, not relevant to the *Iliad*. Cogan, on the basis of similarities between Micaiah's fortunes and the later Jeremiah, argues the episode "was written toward the end of the period of classical prophecy."[78] So far after the *Iliad*, easily allows for some form of diffusion or adaptation. Ahab's encounter with Micaiah suggests a careful synthesis of Agamemnon's missteps at the opening of the *Iliad*.

Agamemnon and Ahab both, in prominent scenes, are wounded, while fighting from their chariots, and driven from battle. Agamemnon's death, murdered by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aigisthos on his return from Troy, is alluded to several times in the *Odyssey*. We recall that his

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[76] Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 10 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 496.
[77] Cogan, *I Kings*, 497.
[78] Cogan, *I Kings*, 497.

aristeia ends abruptly when, wounded by a spear in *Iliad* 11.251–255, 265–281, he retreats from battle in his chariot. Likened in simile to a woman suffering birth pangs, the unusual comparison may look ahead to his being slain in the bath, in a sense, "unmanned," by his wife.

Though lacking anything comparable to an *aristeia*, Ahab's exit from battle is suggestive of Agamemnon's, and may also allude to two other prominent deaths in the *Iliad*. As he and Jehoshaphat march on Ramoth-gilead, Ahab is in disguise. In the *Iliad*, Patroclus, whose *aristeia* follows Agamemnon's, goes into battle in disguise, and is slain, the only Greek to die during his *aristeia*. Ahab dies in disguise, and receives his mortal wound from an arrow shot at random (1 Kgs 22:34), both compounding his un-heroic circumstances, "One man … drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel where the breastplate joins the plates of the armour." The detail may reference the most climactic wound in all of the *Iliad*, when Achilles slays Hector by aiming his spear at the space between his armor and helmet (22.324–327). Ahab remains in battle for a while, propped up in his chariot, blood flowing from his wound, until he dies.

Conclusion

As I hope I have demonstrated, archaeology, and the Hebrew Bible itself, demonstrate that Israelites had sustained, diachronic, awareness of Greeks through multiple phases of Greek culture, over more than a millennium. The interaction is visible in a number of ways, in Javan, in the individuals named Achish, but above all, in the Philistines. While placing the Hebrew Bible in context with Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Ugaritic, and other Northwest Semitic cultures, has long been a fruitful area of Biblical research, it seems shortsighted that we have not initiated broader consideration of how the Hebrew Bible reflects awareness of, and significant interaction with Greek culture. Like Gilgamesh, Homeric epic, and other Greek myth, should be reconsidered for their possible impact on the Hebrew Bible.

We can envision different ways by which Israelite scribes could have responded to Greek narratives. Of the six means Van der Toorn posits for how the scribal tradition generated the Hebrew Bible, most relevant is his fifth, adaptation, which he defines as follows, "Adaptation … is a mode of text production that requires an anterior text. The scribe will use that text

as a model for his own; instead of writing a text, he will be rewriting one."[79] He goes on to note that adaptation includes translation of an anterior narrative from a different language:

> His adaptation can take several forms. It may be a mere translation from the one language into the other; the translation may transform the text substantially by appropriating it for an audience with different religious loyalties.[80]

This strikes me as the likeliest explanation, and accounts for how some motifs seem more at home in Greek epic than in the Hebrew Bible. But also relevant is his sixth, "integration of individual documents into a more comprehensive composition."[81]Hebrew scribes could integrate archival accounts with character types and episodes coming from the *Iliad*:[82]

> [T]he scribe would put them together through juxtaposition, or more elegantly, by dissolving the two texts into their constituent elements, which he would then piece together into a new configuration … [or] to take one document as the master text and to eclectically use the second document to supplement it.

Carr's argument that the Hebrew Bible "is a countercurriculum to that of Hellenistic education,"[83] a hybrid form of cultural resistance, offers further support. According to Carr, Hebrew scribes would knowingly employ conventions of Greek culture in an agenda aimed at undermining that very culture. The most frequent goal would be validation of a Yahwist perspective, and implicit suggestion of higher morality. We should remain open as to when such adaptation or integration could have occurred. Again, as Van der Toorn notes, "There would have been cause … every forty years or so, to prepare a new master copy" of a given book.[84]

Behind the larger contours of Saul and Ahab, the former's paranoia, self-involvement, jealousy of David, dangerous wrath against him, and visitation by evil spirits, the latter's contemptuous treatment of prophets, Deceptive Spirit, unsuccessful attempt to take Ramoth-gilead, less-than-

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[79] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 133.
[80] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 133.
[81] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 110.
[82] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 139.
[83] Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart*, 10.
[84] Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 149.

heroic wounding on the battlefield, and subsequent death, behind them, the particulars of Agamemnon's character are visible. If my arguments are correct, that Agamemnon, in some degree, looms behind Saul and Ahab, this means that the Biblical scribes were far ahead of Homeric scholars in their reading and understanding of Agamemnon's character. As "outsiders" they had greater objectivity in assessing his character.