

## Exile as the Staging Ground for a Comeback

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There are migrations and there are migrations.<sup>1</sup> In the ancient Near East, and within the biblical reports as well, there are migrations of groups for the improvement of living conditions, for example, in times of drought. Think of the Hebrew patriarchs and matriarchs in Egypt in the book of Genesis and Elimelech and Naomi in Moab in the book of Ruth. Nomads and semi-nomads seek better pastures and better ground for raising their grains seasonally every year.<sup>2</sup> We also encounter forced migration, exile and deportation, sometimes of individuals but more often of groups.<sup>3</sup> The plot of the book of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. recently Felix Wiedemann, *Am Anfang war Migration: Wanderungsnarrative in den Wissenschaften vom Alten Orient im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020). The basis of this essay is a lecture I presented at a conference “Migration and the Bible,” held at Princeton University, March 2019. I thank Leora Batnitzky and Ilana Pardes for inviting me to that symposium and for prompting the direction of this study. However, the germ of my research into the larger subject of the fugitive hero narrative pattern in the ancient Near East and the Bible dates back to the mid-1970’s, when my teacher and friend, David Marcus, invited me to collaborate with him in a fresh study of the pseudo-autobiography of Idrimi, King of Alalakh; see Edward L. Greenstein and David Marcus, “The Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” *JANES* 8 (1976): 59-96. That collaboration was the single most enjoyable scholarly effort of my academic career. I owe David much more than I could ever say, and I offer this essay, a small offshoot of my decades-long project on the fugitive hero narrative pattern, as a token of my appreciation and esteem. My work on the larger project received generous support from the Israel Science Foundation, grant no. 129/12, during which I was assisted by Noga Ayali-Darshan and Yitzhaq Feder.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Clinton Bailey, *Bedouin Culture in the Bible* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2018), 6-7, 22-26, et passim. Cf. Allan S. Gilbert, “Modern Nomads and Prehistoric Pastoralists: The Limits of Analogy,” *JANES* 7 (1975): 53-71, esp. 63-66.

<sup>3</sup> The best-known examples in relation to the present essay are, of course, the deportations of Israelians by Assyria in the late eighth century BCE and of Judeans by Babylonia in the early sixth century BCE. The literature on these topics is too vast to cite here, but I will mention Bustenay Oded, *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979); idem, *The Early History of the Babylonian Exile (8<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C.E.)* (Haifa: Pardes, 2010) [Hebrew]; John J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations: A Sociological, Literary, and Theological Approach on the Displacement and Resettlement of the Southern Kingdom of Judah* (BZAW 417; Berlin-New York: de Gruyter, 2011). A basic anthology of pertinent Mesopotamian source material is Mordechai Cogan, *Bound for Exile: Israelites and Judeans under Imperial Yoke—Documents from Assyria and Babylonia* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2013). For a number of pertinent discussions, see Brad E. Kelle, Frank Ritche Ames, and Jacob L. Wright (eds.), *Interpreting Exile: Displacement and Deportation in Biblical and Modern Contexts* (SBL AIL 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

Genesis entails banishment after banishment, exile after exile, such that one may think of the book's theme to revolve around the contingency of home and the perennial threat of losing home as a consequence of divine disfavor.<sup>4</sup> Centuries ago Baruch Spinoza discerned the thrust of biblical narrative as a retrospective account of the diaspora created by the Babylonian assault on Jerusalem and the concomitant deportations of Judeans in the early sixth century BCE.<sup>5</sup>

Here I shall focus on one particular type of forced migration—the flight or exile of an individual who takes advantage of his situation, whether by forethought or not, in order to make a comeback in triumph. For these individuals, exile is a staging ground for a return to power and/or position at home. Many if not most biblical stories of personal exile, and certainly the most extensive ones, belong to a very specific narrative pattern I have been studying for a long time, what I call the fugitive hero narrative pattern.<sup>6</sup> Stories of removal from home and triumphant return are known from many cultures. One thinks, for example, of Homer's *Odyssey* and the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*, each of which has some elements in common with the prominent biblical pattern. The biblical scheme, however, is of a piece with a widespread pattern known from virtually every area of the ancient Near East. The particular

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Edward L. Greenstein, "The Torah as She Is Read," *Essays on Biblical Method and Translation* (BJS 92; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 45-47; Arnold M. Eisen, *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflections on Homelessness and Homecoming* (Bloomington-Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), 14-18; Yair Zakovitch, "And You Shall Tell Your Son...": *The Concept of the Exodus in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991), 46-98; Nadav Na'aman, "The Jacob Story and the Formation of Biblical Israel," *TA* 41 (2014): 95-125, esp. 109-10; Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme and Ingrid Hjelm (eds), *Myths of Exile: History and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (London-New York: Routledge, 2015) 1-2 et passim; Yitzhak (Itzik) Peleg, *Going Up and Going Down: A Key to Interpreting Jacob's Dream (Genesis 28: 10-22)* (trans. Betty Rozen; LHBOTS 609; London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), esp. 245-47; Yairah Amit, "The Place of Exile in the Ancestors' Narratives and in Their Framework," in *The Politics of the Ancestors: Exegetical and Historical Perspectives on Genesis 12-36*, ed. Mark G. Brett and Jakob Wöhrle (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 131-48.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* (New York: Dover, 1951), 126.

<sup>6</sup> See Edward L. Greenstein, "The Fugitive Hero Narrative Pattern in Mesopotamia," in *Worship, Women, and War: Essays in Honor of Susan Niditch*, ed. John J. Collins, T. M. Lemos, and Saul M. Olyan (BJS 357; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2015), 17-25; idem, "Moses and the Fugitive Hero Pattern," *TheTorah.com* (Dec. 2018; on-line).

configuration and common result of the ancient Near Eastern and biblical pattern serve to distinguish it from story patterns known from elsewhere.<sup>7</sup>

1. The hero is a younger or youngest brother;
2. There occurs a political and/or personal crisis;
3. The hero flees or is exiled;
4. The hero enjoys the support of a female protector (sometimes a goddess);
5. The hero marries the daughter of his host in exile;
6. The hero assumes a position of responsibility in the host's household;
7. The hero has a divine encounter (often divination or revelation);
8. The hero is joined by kin.
9. There is a seven-year period (usually of exile);
10. The hero repels an attack (or attacks);
11. The hero takes spoil or plunders;
12. The hero returns home;
13. The hero is restored to a position of leadership and/or honor;
14. The hero establishes or renews a cult (often appointing an immediate relative as priest).

A somewhat comparable narrative arc is outlined by Slochower in his *Mythopoesis*, a study of story trajectories in western culture.<sup>8</sup> He builds his model principally on classical literature. The hero departs from a harmonious society and, being something of a rebel, embarks on a quest in the course of which he poses a challenge to that society. The hero's reintegration produces a new harmony, but the residue of conflict is—tragically—never dissolved. Slochower does not apply his scheme to any of the ancient Near Eastern or biblical figures whom I would classify as fugitive or exiled heroes, although Schlossman, inspired by Slochower, finds an example in Joseph.<sup>9</sup> There is some affinity between Slochower's paradigm and Koestler's "night journey," an

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<sup>7</sup> The following list of features appears in Greenstein, "The Fugitive Hero Pattern in Mesopotamia," 23. For a similar comparison of the same texts, with less detail and a different emphasis (family reconciliation), see J. Robin King, "The Joseph Story and Divine Politics: A Comparative Study of a Biographical Formula from the Ancient Near East," *JBL* 106 (1987): 577-94. King does well to highlight the divine support the heroes enjoy.

<sup>8</sup> Harry Slochower, *Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970).

<sup>9</sup> Howard H. Schlossman, "God the Father and His Sons," *American Imago* 29 (1972): 35-52.

incursion into the unconscious and rebirth of sorts.<sup>10</sup> However the comparison only sharpens the difference between the questing hero of epic lore and the fugitive hero of the ancient Near East: the former is typically motivated by a new concept or insight, and the latter by a desire for power and position—although he tends to establish or renew a religious cult as well. Indeed, in all the major exemplars of the fugitive hero pattern in the ancient Near East and the Bible, and in some of the minor ones, the protagonist seeks to found, or at least ends up founding, a new cult or ritual. This, at least in part, justifies the divine guidance and support that the hero enjoys in making his career.

Another essentially formal difference between the ancient Near Eastern and biblical narratives of fugitive heroes and their seeming counterparts from elsewhere is that none of the ancient Near Eastern and biblical stories is known in epic form. (I am using “epic” in the narrow sense of a long narrative poem about a hero, either divine or human—or, as in the case of, say, Gilgamesh, both.) And a typical formal difference between the five ancient Near Eastern narratives of a fugitive hero and those of the Bible is that the former are seemingly related by the hero himself whereas those in the Bible are related, as in virtually all biblical narrative, in the third person.

The major narratives belonging to the fugitive hero pattern are—from the ancient Near East outside the Bible: the story of Sinuhe from Egypt (early second millennium); the story of Idrimi, King of Alalakh from North Syria (mid-fifteenth century); the story of Hattushili III, King of Hatti (early thirteenth century); the story of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (early seventh century); and the story of Nabonidus, King of Babylon (mid-sixth century);<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Arthur Koestler, “The Belly of the Whale: The Night Journey,” *The Act of Creation* (London: Arkana, 1989), 358-65.

<sup>11</sup> For references to the sources and reliable translations, see Greenstein, “The Fugitive Hero in Mesopotamia,” 22-23. For Nabonidus, one may now add: Frauke Weierhäuser and Jamie Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Amēl-Marduk (561-560 BC), Neriglissar (559-556 BC), and Nabonidus (555-539 BC), Kings of Babylon* (RINBE 2; University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 187-92. For convenient transliterations and translations of Hattushili, Esarhaddon, and Nabonidus, see Andrew Knapp, *Royal Apologies in the Ancient Near East* (SBL WAW Sup; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).

and from the Hebrew Bible: Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and the story of Israel's beginnings (from Canaan to Egypt and the return to Canaan), as well as a number of smaller stories that conform to several features of the pattern.<sup>12</sup>

Returning to my theme, fugitive heroes make use of their exile and/or homelessness in order to devise a triumphant return.<sup>13</sup> One of the most interesting variables among the pertinent stories is the degree to which the hero had planned to return all along and the degree to which the notion of restoration percolated for a time before a decision to return was taken. Idrimi from northern Syria claims to have had a plan for a comeback in mind from the moment he fled:

In the city of Aleppo, the house of my father, there was an evil (event—a foreign takeover), and we fled to the people of the city of Emar (in east central Syria), relatives of my mother, and we stayed in the city of Emar. My brothers who were older than I stayed with me, and the things I was thinking no one was thinking. Said I: “One who [seeks?] the house of his father is the foremost, great son, and one who [stays] among the sons of the city of Emar is a servant.”<sup>14</sup>

From there Idrimi fled southwest into the land of Canaan and among fellow expatriates planned his return. Together with the private army he raised in exile, Idrimi led a successful amphibious invasion of northern Syria and, with the apparent consent of the Mitanni overlord, took the throne of Alalakh, a city lying between his native Aleppo to the east and the Mediterranean to the west.

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<sup>12</sup> Hagar (Genesis 16), Gideon (Judges 6-8), Jephthah (Judges 11), Absalom (2 Samuel 13-15), Jeroboam ben Nebat (1 Kings 11-12), Hadad the Edomite (1 Kgs 11:14ff.), and Joash (2 Kings 11).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Garrett Gavin, *Egypt as a Place of Refuge* (FAT 2/51; Göttingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). Concerning Idrimi, see esp. 24-27. For flights and exiles to the Transjordan—by Jephthah, David, and others—see Jeremy M. Hutton, *The Transjordanian Palimpsest: The Overwritten Texts of Personal Exile and Transformation in the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW 396; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> The translation is from Edward L. Greenstein, “Autobiographies in Ancient Western Asia,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (4 vols.; New York: Scribner's, 1995), 4.2426. For the text and philological commentary, see Greenstein and Marcus, “Idrimi.” I collated the inscription at the British Museum in December 1987.

Esarhaddon of Assyria went into hiding to prevent his older brothers from killing him and seizing the throne to which he claims to have been assigned by his father Sennacherib.<sup>15</sup> He, like Idrimi, shares his thinking with regard to his restoration: “By the command of the great gods, my lords, they (the gods) settled me in a secret place away from the evil deeds, stretched out their pleasant protection over me, and kept me safe for (exercising) kingship.”<sup>16</sup> His plan all along was to wait out the internecine slaughter among his older brothers and then to return at a propitious time. The royal son appeals to the gods, who send him favorable omens, and, in an act of bravado, he initiates his return to Assyria—alone. “I did not hesitate one day (or) two days. I did not wait for my army.”<sup>17</sup> He attributes his victories en route to his opponents’ “fear of the great gods”; “the goddess Ishtar, the lady of war and battle,...stood at [his] side.”<sup>18</sup> But, he asserts, the people were won over to his side and marched behind him. By the time he reached Assur, he was backed by an army of loyalists and deserters from the enemy camp.<sup>19</sup>

The Egyptian Sinuhe gives a different impression. His somewhat cowardly flight from an attempted military coup at home took him to what is Lebanon today. There he continually felt alien; but on account of his skills and prowess in combat, he enjoyed a long and prosperous tenure in exile. He may never have thought he could return to Egypt. But his increasing longing for home, growing stronger toward the end of his life, led him to appeal to the gods to ordain his return: “Whichever god decreed this flight, have mercy, bring me home! Surely you will let me see the place in which my heart dwells! What is more important than that my corpse be buried in the land in which I

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<sup>15</sup> For the text and translation, see Erle Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680-669 BC)* (RINAP 4; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), 9-26. For discussion of Esarhaddon as a fugitive hero, see Greenstein, “The Fugitive Hero Narrative Pattern in Mesopotamia,” 26-29.

<sup>16</sup> Leichty, *Esarhaddon*, 12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

was born!"<sup>20</sup> Sinuhe maintains that he did nothing but seek divine favor in order to return to Egypt. The gods heard his prayer and somehow led the current king of Egypt to invite him back. Sinuhe, who claims to be feeble and waxes nostalgic, poses no threat and requires no army—only the good graces of the gods and the queen, whom he had served back then, before his flight.<sup>21</sup>

The Hittite Hattushili would have us believe he would never have thought to leave the northeastern provinces of Anatolia for kingship in the capital were it not for the increasing restrictions and insults that his nephew the king was imposing on him.<sup>22</sup> His assignment to the north is a form of exile, keeping this ambitious military leader at arm's length from the capital and probably hoping he was doomed to failure.<sup>23</sup> Hattushili would have us believe that his seizure of the throne was never in his plans, until push came to shove, and he had no other way of saving his prestige and career. Hattushili, with constant divine support, integrated his foes in northern Anatolia, the Kashkeans, into his army of Hattushans, and with them began his successful campaign to seize the throne in the capital, Hattusha.<sup>24</sup>

It is interesting to consider whether the Hebrew Bible's fugitive exiles had always intended to return or whether the idea of restoration emerged in the course of their experiences. Hadad the Edomite, who fled to Egypt when Edom was embattled by David (1 Kgs 11:14-22), married into the family of the

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<sup>20</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol. 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1975), 228.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>22</sup> The apologetic aspect of all the fugitive hero narratives, and Hattushili's high among them, is widely acknowledged. For some discussion and references to some of the literature, see Greenstein, "Fugitive Hero Narrative Pattern," 25-26. See also J. Randall Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David* (HThS 63; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Knapp, *Royal Apologies*, who treats the apology of Hattushili on pp. 119-55.

<sup>23</sup> So, e.g., Billie Jean Collins, *The Hittites and Their World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 146.

<sup>24</sup> Th. P. J. van den Hout, "Apology of Ḫattušili III," in *The Context of Scripture, Vol. 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Leiden-New York-Köln: Brill, 1997), 203-4. For literature and additional sources, see Mauro Giorgieri and Clila Mora, "Kingship in Hatti during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century: Forms of Rule and Struggles for Power before the Fall of the Empire," in *Pax Hethitica: Studies on the Hittites and Their Neighbours in Honour of Itamar Singer*, ed. Yoram Cohen, Amir Gilan, and Jared L. Miller (Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten 51; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 136-57.

Pharaoh and decided to return to Edom only after he heard that David had died.<sup>25</sup> His story is a torso, completed in the ancient Greek version but perhaps left in truncated form in the MT.<sup>26</sup> Jeroboam of Ephraim,<sup>27</sup> who also fled to Egypt when Solomon sought to execute him as a rebel, waited out Solomon's reign and returned to Israel after Solomon's death (1 Kgs 11:26-40). In Jeroboam's case, one may assume he had every intention of returning home from his Egyptian refuge and taking his place at the head of his people.<sup>28</sup> The details of his return are confusing<sup>29</sup> and perhaps omitted in the MT version.<sup>30</sup> But according to the narrative (1 Kgs 12:20), once the news of his return is disseminated, he is acclaimed king by "all Israel" over "all Israel"—with the exception of the tribe of Judah.

The narrative of Jacob's flight to Aram reiterates the providential plan for his return to Canaan.<sup>31</sup> There are two different motives for Jacob's flight.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For discussion of the Hadad episode, see Gavin, *Egypt as a Place of Refuge*, 82-90.

<sup>26</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings* (AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 334-35, citing the work of Zipora Talshir.

<sup>27</sup> For the ambiguity of אפרתי in 1 Kgs 11:26, see Keith Bodner, *Jeroboam's Royal Drama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 42-43.

<sup>28</sup> Cogan (*I Kings*, 342) cites the suggestion of Kenneth Kitchen that Jeroboam organized a government in exile prior to his return to Israel. For discussion of the Jeroboam narrative in this context, see Gavin, *Egypt as a Place of Refuge*, 92-101.

<sup>29</sup> Jeroboam's return is made explicit in a better reading of 1 Kgs 12:2 found in 2 Chron 10:2: "Jeroboam returned from Egypt" (וישב ממצרים); see, e.g., Cogan, *I Kings*, 345-46. Otherwise, Jeroboam would seem to have been mysteriously brought back from Egypt by the Israelites. Cf., e.g., Jerome T. Walsh, *I Kings* (Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 161, 166.

<sup>30</sup> The Greek version completes and irons out this aspect of the narrative; see, e.g., Cogan, *I Kings*, 355-56. See further Jan Joosten, "What Part Did Jeroboam Play in the Schism (1 Kgs 12)? Textual Criticism and Its Ramifications in the Post-Qumran Era," in *La Bible en face: Études textuelles et littéraires offertes en hommage à Adrian Schenker*, ed. Innocent Himbaza et Clemens Locher, Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 95 (Leuven-Paris-Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2020), 79-94.

<sup>31</sup> Cf., e.g., Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 61.

<sup>32</sup> It is generally understood that the alternative motives for Jacob's flight derive from different sources or traditions; see, e.g., Jochen Nentel, *Die Jakobserzählungen: Ein literar- und redaktionskritischer Vergleich der Theorien zur Entstehung des Pentateuch* (Munich: EVM, 2009), esp. 345-76. I do not dispute the commonly held view. For a synchronic exegesis of the conflicting motives, see, e.g., Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, 48-49. In any event, taken as a whole the trajectory of the Jacob story conforms to the plot outline of the typical fugitive hero narrative; cf. Erhard Blum, "The Jacob Tradition," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel L. Lohr, and David L. Petersen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 181-212. Accordingly, theories of the textual development that separate the story into originally disparate traditions are undermined by the story's conformity with the fugitive

After he had stolen the blessing his father Isaac had intended for the firstborn Esau, causing Esau to hate him, their mother Rebekah ordered Jacob to flee to her brother Laban in Harran: “You will stay with him several years, until your brother’s rage recedes” (lit., returns—עד אשר-תשוב חמת אחיך; Gen 27:43-44). The expectation is that he will return to his homeland and take charge of the family and its holdings as soon as his life is no longer threatened. The second motive is that which Rebekah shares with Isaac: it would distress her to no end if Jacob were to marry a local woman; accordingly she persuades Isaac to enjoin Jacob to leave for Paddan Aram in order to begin a family with a cousin from the clan (Gen 27:46-28:6). In his parting blessing, and in the divine blessings that accompany Jacob on his journey, Jacob is specifically told he will inherit the land of his ancestors, the land he is leaving. As it turns out, Jacob remains in Aram for twenty years, for the purposes of marriage and for building both family and wealth. He will leave the House of Laban only when he has had enough of Laban’s ill will and resentment of his success.

The case of Moses is textually more complex. As related in Exodus 2, he runs away from Egypt because slaying an Egyptian official has turned him into

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hero pattern. That is, following the flight to Aram, it is expected that Jacob will marry the daughter of his host. On his way back to his homeland, together with his household, it is expected he will encounter an adversary and be met by family. In most studies of the historical development of the Jacob narrative, the Jacob-Esau conflict and the Jacob-Laban conflict/marriage into Laban’s household belong to discrete traditions; e.g., Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Cont; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 407-9; Ze’ev Weisman, *From Jacob to Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986), 41-48 [Hebrew]; Benedikt Hensel, “The History of the Jacob Cycle in Recent Research: An Introduction to the Volume,” in *The History of the Jacob Cycle (Genesis 25-35): Recent Research on the Compilation, the Redaction, and the Reception of the Biblical Narrative and Its Historical and Cultural Contexts*, ed. idem (Archaeology and Bible 4; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), esp. 2-3; Konrad Schmid, “Shifting Political Theologies in the Literary Development of the Jacob Cycle,” in *The History of the Jacob Cycle*, ed. Hensel, 11-34; cf. Albert de Pury, “The Jacob Story and the Beginning of the Formation of the Pentateuch,” in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 51-72. Moreover, in spite of some arguments to the contrary, the overall trajectory of the Jacob narrative is expressed in Hosea 12; contrast, e.g., the references in Schmid, “Shifting Political Theologies,” 13 n. 14. I have presented my position on this at the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (May 2013), at a conference at Bar-Ilan University (June 2014), and at the Columbia University Hebrew Bible Seminar (November 2014). I am indebted to Yitzhaq Feder for some assistance in researching this matter.

a wanted man. Like Sinuhe in Retenu, Lebanon of today, Moses reaches Midian, outside the borders of Egypt, and marries into a chieftain's clan. There he sires a family and is placed in charge of his father-in-law's flocks. We learn that Moses was eager to return to Egypt and rejoin the Hebrews. But in the canonical text of the Torah, Moses is first instructed by the God of the Hebrews to return to Egypt and lead them out of Egyptian servitude. Reading the text as received, Moses has no apparent aspirations to power and position among his people, in spite of his royal upbringing in the house of Pharaoh. He only wants to see if his kinspeople are still alive. After already acceding to the Deity's demand that he go back to Egypt and redeem the Hebrews, Moses asks leave of his father-in-law: "Please let me go and return to my brothers who are in Egypt, that I may find out if they are still living" (Exod 4:18). In the text as received, Moses' personal interest takes a back seat to the overriding providential interest in extracting the Hebrews from Egypt and resettling them in the land of Canaan, in the land of Israel.

As I have written elsewhere,<sup>33</sup> a close critical reading of Exodus 3 and 4 reveals an earlier narrative stratum. Moses, like other fugitive heroes, has a strong desire to return home and perhaps to regain a leadership position as well. The only reason he remains in Midian is that it is unsafe for him to re-enter Egypt. And so, like other fugitive heroes, he seeks an omen or message from a god in order to know if the time is right for a return. When David, on the run from King Saul, wants to weigh the prudence of his next military move, he seeks an oracle—through a priest, a prophet, or some unidentified practitioner.<sup>34</sup> Moses drives his herds deep into the wilderness ( וינהג את-הצאן ) (אחר המדבר) and seeks an oracle at a sacred mountain (הר האלהים; Exod 3:1).<sup>35</sup> What Moses asked the oracle can be deduced from what the Lord (YHWH) tells him later, in what seems an entirely redundant command, given to Moses after

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<sup>33</sup> See Greenstein, "Moses and the Fugitive Hero Pattern."

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., 1 Sam 22:5, 9, 20-23; 23:2-12; et al. Cf., e.g., Galvin, *Egypt as a Place of Refuge*, 50. For a cynical view of David's reliance on the deity, see, e.g., Short, *Surprising Election*, 80-82.

<sup>35</sup> Cf., e.g., Ze'ev Weisman, "The Mountain of God," *Tarbiz* 47 (1978): 107-19 [Hebrew].

he has already agreed to return to Egypt and after he has taken leave of his father-in-law: “Go, return to Egypt, for they have died—all the people who are asking for your life” (Exod 4:19).<sup>36</sup> In view of the evident association of Moses’s narrative with those of other fugitive heroes, it should be clear that Moses is receiving here an answer to his question of the oracle: Have all those who wanted me dead died? Is the time propitious to return to Egypt?

Moses does not seem to engage much in the way of preparations for his return from exile and his reclaim of position, especially if we attend to the private story of Moses and his desire to go home and exclude the lengthy efforts of the Deity to convince him to return. In the present, expanded narrative (Exodus 3-4), however, Moses is armed with divinely endowed powers, which he will employ in order to overcome Egyptian resistance and liberate his kinfolk. This is all in keeping with the holy war theology that Moses articulates at the crossing of the Reed Sea: “The Lord (YHWH) will do battle for you, and you, you will remain still” (Exod 14:14).<sup>37</sup>

In several other fugitive hero narratives, however, in order to execute his comeback, the hero musters a private army, or, as in the cases of Hattushili, Esarhaddon, and Nabonidus, makes use of one that is already at his disposal. Sinuhe, as we saw, goes it alone. Idrimi, however, homes in on a place of exile in which he has compatriots—other expatriots from Aleppo who recognize him as their legitimate leader. In addition, he appears to have hired an army of mercenaries, of the *‘Apiru*, a class of landless Canaanites who are known to have worked as soldiers for hire for various city-states in Canaan in the following century.<sup>38</sup> He says that he constructed ships and, with his army on

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<sup>36</sup> Conventional source criticism assigns Exod 3:1 to E and Exod 4:18 to J; see the discussion in Jaeyoung Jeon, *The Call of Moses and the Exodus Story* (FAT 60; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 138-39. Cf. also Yisca Zimran, “Multiple Facets of God: Divine-Human Relations in Exodus 3:1-4:17,” *JANES* 34 (2020): 224-45. In the the present analysis, the verses clearly belong to the same narrative tradition.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Thomas B. Dozeman, *God at War: Power in the Exodus Tradition* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., Anson F. Rainey, “Unruly Elements in Late Bronze Canaanite Society,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and*

board, made an amphibious landing on the Mediterranean coast of northern Syria. For Idrimi, exile was a secure base for mounting a comeback.

Scholars have often observed that Jephthah the “judge” or chieftain (Judg 11:3), and David (1 Sam 22:1-4), the eventual usurper of the Israelite throne, like Idrimi assembled private armies of landless mercenaries—latter-day *‘apiru*.<sup>39</sup>

In light of these parallels, another look at the narrative of Jacob is in order. Jacob, the namesake of Israel, shares with Sinuhe, Moses, and David an episode in which he exhibits his prowess in fighting *mano a mano* with an extraordinary adversary.<sup>40</sup> However, Jacob also prepares for his return to Canaan and an expected encounter with his brother Esau by organizing his family and his servants as an army.<sup>41</sup> Jacob is reported to “flee” his temporary Aramean home with his sons, his wives, and all his cattle and other possessions. We are not told how large an ensemble this is, but in the subsequent treaty at Gilead that Jacob makes with Laban, he mentions a group of kin (אֶחָיו; Gen 31:37) that gives the impression of including more than just a

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*Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 481-96.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., P. Kyle McCarter, “The Historical David,” *Int* 40 (1986): 122-23; Baruch Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, MI-Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2001), 20; Jacob L. Wright, *David, King of Israel, and Caleb in Biblical Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 38-39; Knapp, *Royal Apologetic*, 222-23. For the general phenomenon, see Nadav Na’aman, “Ḫabiru-like Bands in the Assyrian Empire and Bands in Biblical Historiography,” in *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction; Collected Essays, Vol. 1* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 298-304; cf. Gregory Mobley, *The Empty Men: The Heroic Tradition of Ancient Israel* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2005), 31-38.

<sup>40</sup> Sinuhe combats a local strongman in Retenu; cf., e.g., Harry A. Hoffner, “A Hittite Analogue to the David and Goliath Contest of Champions?” *CBQ* 30 (1968): 220-25, who suggests a parallel in the Apology of Hattushili III as well; Serge Frolov and Allen Wright, “Homeric and Ancient Near Eastern Intertextuality in 1 Samuel 17,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 451-71. Moses, with the aid of his wife Zipporah, wards off an attack by YHWH (Exod 4:24-26). David topples Goliath (1 Samuel 17). Jacob wrestles a divine personality (Gen 32:23-32). On the parallel between Jacob’s and Moses’ encounters, see Susan Lee Shearman and John Briggs Curtis, “Divine-Human Conflicts in the Old Testament,” *JNES* 28 (1969): 231-42 (although I do not accept their contention that the divine combatant is a netherworld god). For an exemplary study of Jacob’s struggle and the attack on Moses in conjunction, see Stephen A. Geller, *Sacred Enigmas: Literary Religion in the Hebrew Bible* (London-New York: Routledge, 1996), 9-29.

<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, Jacob is accused by Laban of keeping his wives “captive by the sword” (Gen 31:26); cf. Jan P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Assen-Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1975), 167.

nuclear family. The narrator refers to these same kin later (31:46), as Jacob has them gather stones for erecting the monument that will memorialize the treaty. A household of servants may be implied. Hints of an armed camp begin to appear. Jacob's entourage is met by a group of angels (מלאכי אלהים; 32:2) which Jacob calls "a camp" (מחנה; 32:3), naming the locus of the meeting Mahanaim, "two camps" or "place of camps."<sup>42</sup> As he moves ahead, Jacob divides his party into "two camps" (שני מחנות; 32:8, 11) in anticipation of the encounter with Esau, whom we later learn is advancing toward him with "400 men" (33:1).<sup>43</sup>

Strategizing his encounter with Esau, Jacob takes the defensive measure of dividing his entourage into two camps, as said, but also takes the proactive measure of using his greatest asset to put Esau off. This asset is his considerable wealth, which he divides into a series of gifts of appeasement, which both he and the narrator refer to in an obvious wordplay on מחנה ("camp") as מנחה (32:14, 21, 22; 33:10)—"tribute."<sup>44</sup> (On the significance of the other term for the gifts, ברכה, playing on the term בכורה, "birthright," I shall pass for now as it would take us into another area of the narrative.)<sup>45</sup> In any event, once Jacob begins delivering his tribute to his brother, the narrator finally mentions Jacob's "servants" (32:17): ויתן ביד-עבדיו עדר עדר לבדו, ויאמר אל עבדיו: "He gave in his servants' hands each solitary herd, and he said to his servants: 'Pass in front of me and put some space between this herd and that herd.'" Gradually a picture is formed of Jacob's return to Canaan, which extends well beyond the group of Jacob and his

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<sup>42</sup> The suffix *-ayim* can indicate locality; see Jacob Barth, *Die Nominalbildung in den semitischen Sprachen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1894; repr.: Hildesheim: Ohms, 1967), 319-20, n. 5; cf. Aaron Demsky, "Hebrew Names in the Dual Form and the Toponym Yerushalayim," in *These Are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics*, vol. 3, ed. idem (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 11-20. Thanks to Aaron Demsky for directing me to these references.

<sup>43</sup> There may well be a literary-historical connection to the "circa 400 men" that joined the band of David (1 Sam 22:2; 25:13); cf., e.g., George Savran, "Did Jacob and Esau Reconcile?" *TheTorah.com* (on-line; December 2020), 1 with n. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Paul D. Vrolijk, *Jacob's Wealth: An Examination into the Nature and Role of Material Possessions in the Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19-35:29)* (VTSup 146; Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011), esp. 195.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, 51-52.

immediate family, who are the only ones described at the outset. Jacob returns to Canaan with an enormous household, numbering as many able-bodied servants as it would take to herd and maintain the vast numbers of animals Jacob miraculously raised. Jacob returned, in effect, with an army. His return, related as a spur-of-the-moment decision, would seem to have been long in coming, in conformity with the divine assurances Jacob had earlier received.

I have long maintained that the pervasiveness of the fugitive hero pattern in the Bible, what I sometimes call the DNA of biblical narrative, derives from the fact that the story of the people Israel is structured in that framework. The homology between Jacob-Israel and the people Israel is most clearly enunciated in the declaration an Israelite farmer is supposed to make when he brings an offering from his first harvest to the local priest: ארמי אבד רב, “My ancestor was a fugitive Aramean; he went down to Egypt, he resided there with few people, but he became there a nation, large, numerous, and great” (Deut 26:5). (The verb אבד has a specialized usage in this context, that of being a “fugitive,” cognate with the regular Akkadian term for “taking flight,” but in the Niph’al conjugation.)<sup>46</sup> The fugitive hero Jacob becomes the fugitive people Israel.

Although for reasons of space I cannot develop this point properly here, the story of Israel reflects the fugitive hero pattern, virtually feature for feature.<sup>47</sup> In light of the pattern, the period of Israel’s exile in Egypt takes on a

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<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., N. H. Tur-Sinai, *Peshuto shel Miqra’* (6 vols.; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1967), 1.215; Eliezer (Ed) Greenstein, “Interpreting the Bible by Way of Its Ancient Cultural Milieu,” in *Studies in Jewish Education 9: Understanding the Bible in Our Times*, ed. Marla L. Frankel and Howard Deitcher (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003), 61-73, esp. 61-64 [Hebrew]; cf. Richard C. Steiner, “The ‘Aramean’ of Deuteronomy 26:6: Peshat and Derash,” in *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*, ed. Mordechai Cogan, Barry L. Eichler, and Jeffrey H. Tigay (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 127-38.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 67. For parallels between the flight of Jacob from Aram and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, see, e.g., Yair Zakovitch, *Jacob: Unexpected Patriarch* (Or Yehuda: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2012), 89-91 [Hebrew]; Hans-Christoph Schmitt, “Parallel Narrative Patterns between Exodus 1-14\* and the Ancestral Stories in Genesis 24\* and 29-31\*,” in *Book-Seams in the Hexateuch I: The Literary Transitions between the Books of Genesis/Exodus and Joshua/Judges*, ed. Christoph Berner and Harald Samuel (FAT 120; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 171-86; Jonathan Grossman, *Jacob: The Story of a Family* (Rishon Le-Zion: Miskal-Yedioth Ahronoth/Chemed,

special significance. The diaspora experience is a period of incubation for a return to control of the homeland. At the very outset we find the Hebrews proliferating to so large a degree that Pharaoh and his people grow frightened of their size—“it could happen that if fighting would break out, it (the people of Israel) could attach itself to our enemies, fighting against us and overtaking the country” (Exod 1:10). Israel’s reported size will later frighten the Moabites as well, leading them to ally with Midian and appeal to supernatural powers in order to contain it (Num 22:2ff.). In Egypt Israel both grows to great proportions and is blessed with the particular care of its ancestral deity, whose wondrous acts for Israel become legendary. Fugitive heroes must enjoy divine protection and support in order to succeed—which makes it all the more appropriate that the stories of this pattern always lead to cultic renewal or reform.<sup>48</sup>

A final word: the exile of the Judeans in Babylonia in the sixth century BCE and their partial return to Judah, or the Persian province of Yehud, does not strictly conform to the fugitive hero pattern. But, in a way that is similar to the situation of Israel in the Torah,<sup>49</sup> the diaspora functions, at least for some, as an incubator for ethnic and religious consciousness as well as for socio-economic success. The Judeans who make their way back to the homeland have been placed in good stead, culturally and economically, by their having been exiled.<sup>50</sup>

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2019), 305-6 [Hebrew]. For a decisively diachronic observation of this parallel, see, e.g., the discussion and references in Thomas Römer, “The Exodus in the Book of Genesis,” *SEÅ* 75 (2010): 1-20.

<sup>48</sup> See above.

<sup>49</sup> Cf., e.g., David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), esp. 98; Greenstein, “The Torah as She Is Read,” 46.

<sup>50</sup> Cf., e.g., Amit, “The Place of Exile” (see n. 4 above), 140-42.