ABOUT "MARI AND THE BIBLE"

BY

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In this presentation, I want to follow a threefold program: first, to ask what is at stake when people make comparison between a Mari and a biblical document; second, to comment on how some proposals of comparison have fared, and third to place for discussion potentially fruitful avenues for comparisons.

BIBLE CENTRISM

When used in literary contexts, "to relate," "to compare," and "to parallel" are terms used to highlight similarities, connections, and associations among two or more documents or cultural traits. Why is it useful to highlight similarities? What kind of correspondences are at stake? How do we decide when connections are reasonable? How broadly should we cast for comparative evidence? These and more are perennial issues in comparative methodology. Moreover, when people relate, compare, or parallel what they believe to be shared literary or cultural phenomena, they act as mediators between the observed contexts. This triangulation of purpose has its consequences. Because few are the scholars who can master both the source and the target of a comparison between "Mari and the Bible," relatively few conclusions by biblicists about Mari strike Mariologists as well-informed; and vice versa for that matter. Furthermore because it relies on mediators, the shaping of comparisons will always be a subjective enterprise, and its goals will always seem apologetic.[1] More so than most other variables, therefore, mediators and

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1. In the sense that ultimately they champion, support, or vindicate particularistic perspectives or opinions, whether they originate in academic, sectarian, or politicized circles.

the convictions they hold when proposing or rejecting a specific comparison, are at the root of most disagreements about Mari and the Bible.[2]

For any single comparison, what matters most is the audience that is receiving it. Mariologists can offer outlandish linkage between Mari and the Bible at a *Rencontre assyriologique internationale*, and they are likely to provoke very few of their peers. But suggest to a *Society for Biblical Literature* audience that Yahweh may have made his debut at Mari (as has been proposed) and the revelation will rouse passions galore; perhaps even earn a front page story in the *New York Times*. For while the Bible may be a curiosity or even a relic in post-Marseillaise France, in America it is a cultural icon and the locus of an enormous emotional investment, in Israel it anchors history, and in Britain it is the seed for its most profound literature. The Bible, too, can be an albatross for feminists, a shackle for Marxists, and an obstacle for humanists. Accordingly, few scholars are objective about what it says or how to read it. It should not be surprising, therefore, that "Mari and the Bible" had its most sustained conjunctions two generations ago, when biblical scholars with broad knowledge but also dominant convictions (such as Albright and de Vaux) were spreading their gospel.

HOMOLOGIES AND ANALOGIES

In commenting on how we are faring with such conjunctions, I find it useful to recall that comparisons among words, stories, rituals, institutions, or artifacts can be homologous or analogous.[3] They can be drawn analogously in the absence of a generic or genealogical linkage between two objects of comparison, for example blood sacrifice in Greece and Israel or divinatory techniques in Mesopotamia, Etruria, China and Meso-America. Here, the goal is not to establish exact chronology and channels of transmissions for the parallels; rather it is to expand our knowledge of one through a better grasp of the other. The resources for this exploration are normally derived from anthropology, literary analysis, and psychology. Most comparisons that refer to "radiation," "dependence," or "archetypes," are in fact analogic.

Old Babylonian Mari and Israel, however, share a physical region and a family of languages. The end of OB Mari culture, it is generally agreed, was separated from the beginning of Israel's by few centuries: anywhere between a handful and a dozen centuries.

2. Very stimulating is Jonathan Z. Smith's, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianity and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1990), with chapters on « On the Origins of Origins », « On Comparison », « On Comparing Words », « On Comparing Stories », and « On Comparing Setting ».

3. The vocabulary is drawn from biology. What follows has profited from remarks in the second chapter, « On Comparison », of Smith's *Drudgery Divine*. Smith gives the following illustration on how it operates, "the human hand and the whale's flipper are homologous; the whale's flipper and the fish's fin are analogous" (p. 47, n. 12).

This proximity in space, language, and time encourages a homologous treatment to explain how the phenomena under comparison were transmitted ("borrowed") from Mari to Israel. As a result, there is an enormous investment in describing the Amorite bridge between the two cultures, depending on documents from Ugarit, Tell el-Amarna, and Emar.[4] Because homologous comparisons involve issues of precedence, priority, and pedigree, sooner or later most comparative discussions end up inspecting the archives of Mari for traces of Israel's formations, even if just to deny that such traces exist. This is why as careful a scholar as Abraham Malamat could label his recent book *Mari and the Early Israelite Experience*, even when he acknowledges that the patriarchal traditions are an artificial construct based on the dimmest memory of Amorite movement into Syro-Palestine and when he draws on all periods of Hebrew literary history in comparison with Mari words and practices.[5]

BIBLE AND HISTORY

But this drive to treat parallels from Mari and Israel homologously has risks, for it draws us into expounding on Israel's nebulous origins, an undertaking that jeopardizes the value of many comparative insights. Israel has captured our attention by crafting a complex narrative about itself and the god who wants to pilot its destiny.[6] It is a terrific story—for the ancient Near East perhaps even a unique story—of an enduring but troubled relationship that must constantly be restarted and refocused: after the Flood, with Shem but without Ham and Yaphet, with Abraham but without Nahor and Lot, with Isaac but without Ishmael, with Jacob but without Esau; with the Exodus, the (re)conquest, a string of Judges, Monarchy, the Exile, and the Restoration. And this saga is but one version of the tale that has variations in the Septuagint, in the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha and, some say, also in the New Testament. It is the conceit of Near East specialists that they feel called upon to verify scriptural veracity, by intersecting at one or another moment of this rich narrative. Egyptologists get fixated on Joseph, the Exodus, Sheshonk, and Necho; but cuneiformists do not have it as easy. Not long ago, Ebla gave promise to a few scholars in America of testing biblical verities somewhere around

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4. See Johannes C. De Moor, Ugarit and Israelite Origins, *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 61 (1995), 205-38. De Moor states that "The many remarkable parallels between Mari and Israel are best explained by assuming a common background of the two cultures" (p. 235) and concludes that "the evidence adduced seem to warrant the conclusion that Ugarit and early Israel belonged to the same continuum of Amorite culture" (p. 236).

5. *The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1984* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989 [hereafter Malamat *MEIE*]), see p. 30.

6. See the comments of W. G. Lambert, History and the Gods: A Review Article, *Orientalia* 39 (1970), 13.

Genesis 11, just when Terah was bidding farewell to his son Abraham.[7] It is the fate of Mariologists and other second millennium specialists that, because they have larger stretches of the biblical text to probe, they have more leads to pursue, but also more occasions to falter.[8]

MARI AND THE BIBLE

Yet, we need not be drawn into the authentication business.[9] For the Mari archives are so rich in all but literary genres and there is in them such a density of actions and actors that we can approximate the "thick descriptions" medieval historians have achieved recently in the study of medieval cultures. With such a portrait from which to draw comparisons and contrasts, the process of illuminating facets of ancient Israelite institutions could become more focused, thorough, and disciplined. Instead of potshot insights gleaned from scattered archives, we could now draw on an intimate acquaintance with one great culture of the region.

Generally speaking, comparisons between Mari and the Bible are usually brought out over four areas: onomastic, lexical, stylistic/idiomatic, and ethnic. I make comments on these matters under two headings: Language issues and Culture issues.

Language issues

Mari's were by no means the first archives to release a large number of names that for convenience have come to be labelled "Amorite."[10] But these archives did indeed give them in a more copious and concentrated fashion than heretofore. Unlike the previous batches of Amorite names culled from as early as the Ur III periods, those found at Mari soon fleshed out into personalities playing distinct roles in regional history. Given that the majority of names associated with the patriarchal families do not reoccur in other biblical books, there was enormous temptation to make them intersect each other.[11] There is a

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7. D. N. Freedman, The Real Story of the Ebla Tablets: Ebla and the Cities of the Plain, *The Biblical Archaeologist* 41 (1978), 143-64.

8. It does not get any easier, by the way, for first millennium specialists, for Hebrew narratives are guided by the same sort of inspiration throughout biblical writing, so that Achaemenidicists are just as puzzled about Ezra and Nehemiah as Mariologists are about Abraham and Jacob.

9. See A. Malamat, "This chronological gap of some six to seven hundred years [between the Mari documents and the earliest recording of the patriarchal narratives] demands that in the comparative study of Mari and the Bible a more typological approach be used instead of the frequently applied genetic approach, even if an historical relationship must not be ruled out *a priori*" (p. 131, in Aspects of Tribal Societies in Mari and Israel, J.-R. Kupper (ed.), *La civilisation de Mari* (Liège, Université de Liège, 1967 [hereafter *RAI* 15]). For similar counsel, which is not always followed, see his *MEIE*, pp. 27-8.

10. The term "Amorite" makes a modest appearance in the Mari (and related) archives, whether written syllabically or as ideogram. See Appendix, use of Amurrû(m) in Mari documents.

11. N. Sarna's count is 27 out of 38, see his Abraham in History, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 3 (1977), 9.

charming comment by Parrot about Abraham and Terah making a stop at Mari on their way from Haran.[12]

Onomastics. Luckily, responsible study of Amorite onomastica has largely outgrown its initial fixation with establishing parallels with the Hebrew ancestors.[13] This is not to say that vocabulary drawn from Hebrew and Amorite onomastica are no longer compared; but rather that, except in a distinct segment of scholarship, the comparison rarely carries with it historicizing implication, first because many of the names are not limited to a specific historical period and thus cannot tighten the window from which to view the patriarchs.[14] Second, because it is increasingly recognized that Amorite names present us with a linguistic, hence also an ethnic, problem rather than a historical one and that their greatest impact is on resolving the affiliation of a number of Semitic languages. Through these names, we can recognize features in Amorite that are paralleled best in Ugaritic (for example, genitive case inflection), best in Aramaic (for example, preservation of diphthong *aw before consonant and occasional plural in -in[15]), or best in Hebrew (for example, no Š-causative).[16] But there are features that Amorite shares with Old Akkadian and with Eblaite (for example predicative -a, as in Ammi-ṣaduqa]).[17]

12. André Parrot, *La vie d'un chef d'état au IIe millénaire* (Institut de France; Séance publique annuelle [mardi 25 octobre 1966], 26; Paris, Typographie de Firmin Didot & Cie, 1966), p. 8. See also the bibliography *in* A. Lemaire, Mari, la bible et le monde nord-ouest sémitique, *MARI* 4 (1985), p. 554, n. 52.

13. See H. Cazelles, Mari et l'ancien testament, in Kupper, *RAI* 15, pp. 73-90 (especially 79-86). Mendenhall has this to say in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (D. N. Freedman (ed.) [New York, Doubleday, 1992; hereafter *AB Dictionary*], I, 202 (sub Amorites):

> Probably the single most important Amorite contribution to the biblical tradition was the Abraham narrative in Genesis, which was in all probability a specifically Palestinian epic tradition. . . In spite of the fact that it has been thoroughly reworked to fit the political concerns of a much later period. . ., the basic structure of the narrative fits entirely the nature of the historical process of Amorite migrations attested in the Bronze Age sources: from infiltration to political control legitimized through a divine gift of the land (though the latter stage is, of course, presented in the biblical narrative as realized only with King David). Finally, it should be noted that some of the most important concepts in the theological vocabulary of the Hebrew Bible are either demonstrably or probably of Amorite origin. Foremost is the concept of divine deliverance that became the concept of salvation expressed in various forms of the root $yš^r$. At least sixteen gods and divine epithets appear as subjects of the verb "to save" in the Amorite personal names. Other key theological terms that are probably Amorite are ṣdq, "righteous" nqm, "vindication"; yšr, "upright". . .; špṭ, "to judge"; ḥsd, "faithful," and perhaps zkr, "remember."

14. This is the argument of T. Thompson, as cited by Malamat in *MEIE*, p. 31.

15. Debatably, also the *laqtul* imperfect, as found in later Aramaic; see Herbert Huffmon, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965 [hereafter Huffmon *Amorite PN*]), pp. 78-81.

16. On the H-causative, see Huffmon, *Amorite PN*, pp. 69-73. This is disputed by E. Lipiński who doubts its existence (§ 41.11) and prefers to find a Š-causative in such examples as in *yaskin* (for *yaškīn*, § 41.9). See his *Semitic Languages. Outline of a Comparative Grammar* (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 90; Leuven: Peeters, 1997 [hereafter *Semitic Languages*). Lipiński thinks that forms such as Yakūn/Yakīn; Yašūb/Yašīb are based on middle-weak verbs with dialectal alternation in $i/\bar{u}$, § 44.13.

17. On the above, see E. E. Knudsen, Amorite Grammar. A Comparative Statement, in A. S. Kaye (ed.), *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1991), pp. 866-85; See also Lipiński, *Semitic Languages*, §§32.11; §32.12.

The debate about how these languages are related, however, cannot have a permanent solution, not only because

Still, comparing Amorite and Hebrew words, whether extracted from personal names or found embedded in Mari documents, is always precarious because there are problems at the two poles of the comparison. From the Hebrew side, transcription of Hebrew names into first millennium BCE languages betrays the impact of Mishnaic Hebrew on Masoretic vocalization. Of more consequence, verbal forms such as the *G (qal)* passive imperfect were not recognized and were vocalized as *N (niphal)* and *G* passive perfects were vocalized as *D* passive *(pu'al)*.[18] Occasionally we have *G* and *D* stems of the same verb without much distinction in meaning.[19] Although this lack of discrimination between stems is not unknown to other Semitic languages, it can complicate comparative

undoubtedly more affiliated languages are likely to be discovered, but also because the shaping of linguistic trees is also an exercise in the anthropography of origins, hence rife with ideological implications. Additionally, how closely to pose Amorite and Hebrew in a snapshot of the Semitic languages family remains in contention. Some would have Amorite cradling its linguistic descendent, Hebrew; but others would rather sit Aramaic between them. The last used to be the opinion of many scholars, among them Martin Noth, for which he was criticized. Ran Zadok has offered a more nuanced assessement, "My working hypothesis is that certain eastern members of the Amorite dialect cluster, which were spoken in the Jezireh and on the fringe of the Syrian desert, were the ancestors of Aramaic"; On the Amorite Material from Mesopotamia, in M. Cohen, D. Snell, and D. B. Weisberg (eds), *The Tablet and the Scroll* (Bethesda, MD, CDL Press, 1993 [hereafter *Hallo Fs*]), p. 316. But note his caveats on p. 317.

Some scholars, however, would yank Amorite out of any family portrait, on the ground that as a language (but not as a culture), Amorite, much like Canaanite, was at best a cluster of languages and at worst a phantom academics conjure up to advance pet linguistic theories. J. Huehnergard offers the following opinion in an entry (« Languages, Introduction »), in the *AB Dictionary*, IV, p. 159:

> [...T]he corpus [of Amorite personal names] presents many severe practical difficulties from a linguistic point of view: it is negatively defined, simply as non-Akkadian Semitic; it spans the entire Near East and half a millennium; and it is not subject to normal linguistic tests for meaning, structure, and development, since names may lack any firm connection to the language spoken by their bearer. It is likely, therefore, that these names represent not a single language, or even necessarily a continuum of closely related dialects, but rather a diverse set of languages. It is a priori quite possibly, for example, that only some of the names reflect dialects that may be classified as Central Semitic, and only a subset of those as Northwest Semitic. (That some dialectal variations are exhibited by the names themselves has long been known.) Thus, since "Amorite" is not a linguistic unity, or even, perhaps, a linguistic entity, it is difficult to say anything meaningful about phonology, morphology, or classification that would obtain across the entire set of names.

For Buccellati the Amorites were Khabur peasants on their way to becoming nomads and their language, Amorite, "was the rural counterpart of urban Semitic (Akkadian/Eblaite) vis-à-vis which it retained more archaic features"; quoted from his article, Amorites, in E. M. Meyers (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Archeology in the Near East*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1997), I, p. 108. (A full version of his theory is in, "River Bank," "High Country," and "Pasture Land": The Growth of Nomadism on the Middle Euphrates and the Khabur, in S. Eichler *et al.* (eds), *Tall al-Hamīdīya 2. Symposion: Recent Excavations in the Upper Khabur Region, Berne, December 9-11, 1986* (Orbus Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica, 6; Freiburg, Universitätsverlag, 1990), pp. 87-117.

The proposals of Huehnergard and Buccellati seem to me in conflict with the testimony of Mari letters (cited above, under note 10) were Amorite appears to be a living language whose native speakers included a very few with command of Sumerian scholarship. There is little to recommend the notion that Amorite, like Gurkha of the Raj, was a term applied to mercenaries, N. Weeks, The Old Babylonian Amorites: Nomads or Mercenaries, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 16 (1985), 49-57.

18. For the latter, see W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, A. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1910), § 52e (p. 140).

19. For a suggestion on the difference, see Malamat *MEIE*, p. 49, n. 86.

studies, as it has in the case of the verb *nahālum*, known only in the G in Amorite, but without appreciable difference in the G and D in Hebrew.

From the Amorite side, its phonology is masked by cuneiform orthography and the cuneiform system is not fully adequate to represent a number of semitic consonants. To take a famous example cited in the literature, an Amorite name such as Yaḥqub-El may or may not share the same root as the biblical Ya'aqov, with which it is often compared. But even if they do, they may not share the same sense; for when we meet with the name Ya'aqov, a folk etymology on *'āqeb* ("footprint") had already compromised whatever the verbal root may have once meant. For this reason, scholars feel justified to search the Semitic languages for a promising etymon, most of them settling on "El helps," supposedly via an Ethiopic root. Such searches are reasonable in onomastic research, where the goal is to establish an inventory of name elements rather than to interpret meanings for them. (The technique in fact was resurrected for Amorite personal names recently by Zadok and J.-M. Durand.[20]) But it might not serve well the comparative lexicographer who establishes meaning of words by analyzing contexts. Recently published documents have permitted us, in fact, to reach more precise definitions for Amorite vocabulary, and I give selected observations on those that connect with Hebrew.

Lexicon. Nouns that refer to realia such as cardinal points *(aqdamātum; aḥarātum)*, fauna *(ḥazzum, ḥayyarum)*, and topography *(gab'um/gaba'um*[21]*, ḥimqum; madbarum*[22]*)* have a fairly high degree of equivalence when they also occur in Hebrew. They also seem common to the other West Semitic languages.[23] However, contrary to what is widely thought, Amorite words that are drawn from the world of kinship or tribal association have mixed correspondence with Hebrew words sharing their root. Until recently the Amorite vocabulary for kinship was largely reconstructed from elements of personal names; but they now occur in letters, thus permitting us better control of their meaning. What they reveal complicates our understanding. Thus, largely on the basis of Arabic, Amorite *ḥālum* and *ḥammum* were understood as terms for "uncle," one for each side of a parental couple. But *dādum* also occurs in Amorite and, although we were tempted to

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20. Ran Zadok, *Hallo Fs*; J.-M. Durand, Études sur les noms propres d'époque amorrite, I: les listes publiées par G. Dossin, *MARI* 8 (1997), 597-673. See also his L'emploi des toponymes dans l'onomastique d'époque amorrite: (I) Les noms en *Mut-*, *Studi epigrafici e linguistici* 8 (1991), 82-97.

21. See R. Zadok, NA *ga-ba-'* =West Semitic *gb'*, *NABU* 1989/47 (p. 30); J.-M. Durand, Minima emariotica, *NABU* 1989/55c (p. 34).

22. *ARM* 26 14:10. See J.-M. Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*, I/1 (Archives royales de Mari, 26; Paris, Éditions Recherche sur les civilisations [hereafter *ARM* 26/1]), p. 114.

23. Worth noting is R. Frankena's opinion that such words belong "to the 'Amorite' stratum of Mari-Accadian, in the same manner as their Hebrew counterparts belong to the 'Amorite' stratum of Hebrew" (Some remarks on a New Approach to Hebrew, in M. S. G. G. Heerma van Voss *et al.* (eds), *Travels in the World of the Old Testament. Studies Presented to Professor M. A. Beek on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* [Assen, Van Gorcum, 1974; hereafter Frankena Beek Fs], p. 43).

connect with Hebrew *dôd* ("uncle") we avoid a surfeit of uncles by deciding that *dādum* must have meant "beloved," just as it could in Hebrew.

But in recently published Mari letters persons called *dādum* and *ḫālum* through prosopography have proven to be, respectively, paternal and maternal uncles.[24] Totally unexpected, however, is the context in which Hammurabi of Babylon labelled his grandfather a *ḫammum*.[25] These revelations could lead to a mad scramble to reshuffle the "uncle" repertoire, among Amorites at least. But it may be prudent to acknowledge that kinship terms were likely fluid and tempered by regional differences.[26] How precise we should be in rendering such terms as *sūmum*, *kul(l)um*, and *dadmum* is still being discussed.

The same fluidity in vocabulary may well obtain in tribal terminology. Frequently proposed are etymological connections respectively between Amorite *nawûm*, *ga'um/gāyum*, *ummatum* and Hebrew *nāwēh*, *gôy*, and *ummâ*. Yet careful study of the Mari contexts show that function need not follow etymon. Thus, an ethnic unit Amorite *ga'um/gāyum* ("clan") seems closest not to Hebrew *gôy* but to *mišpaḥâ*. Hebrew *gôy*, which seems to refer to the largest unit of people, tribal or otherwise, finds its best paralleled in Mari's *ummatum*, as when Yahdun-Lim uses it for Benjamin and Hana tribes.[27] Amorite *nawûm* ("sheepfold") and Hebrew *nāweh* do seem to combine etymologic and semantic equivalence; but in Israel the term is no longer confined to herding practices. (Ironically enough, the word is not found in the Patriarchal narratives.) As yet not gauged is *lîmum*, the Mari references treating it as a tribal unit.[28]

Also commonly compared are Amorite *ḫibrum* and Hebrew *ḥeber*. Yet *ḫibrum* seems to refer to a nomadic unit that has not yet settled down, for in one juridical text (*ARM* 8 11) the term is contrasted with the behavior of settled folk. Until recently I thought of connecting the Amorite term not with *ḥeber*, which in Hebrew denotes a group associated by non-blood ties, but with *'br*, verbal forms of which now occurs in Mari documents.[29]

24. See J.-M. Durand, A propos des noms de parenté à Mari, *MARI* 2 (1983), 215-217; *RAI* 38, pp. 120-21. For *ḫālum* ="uncle," see his La cité-État d'Imar à l'époque des rois de Mari, *MARI* 6 (1990) [hereafter, Durand, *MARI* 6]), 48, n. 48, and La religion en Siria durante la época de los reinos amorreos según la documentación de Mari, *Mitología y Religión del Oriente Antiguo, II/1. Semitas Occidentales (Ebla, Mari)* (Colección Estudios Orientales, 8; Sabadell, Editorial AUSA [hereafter, Durand, *CEO* 8]), p. 251.

25. Durand, *RAI* 38, p. 120, n. 174.

26. I would certainly not expect that Hebrew *'am*, "people," originally meant "uncle," as does K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Changes in the Forms of Religious Life* (Studies in the history and Culture of the Ancient Near East, 7; Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1996) [hereafter *SHCANE* 7]), p. 275.

27. G. Dossin, L'inscription de fondation de Iahdun-Lim, roi de Mari, *Syria* 32 (1955), 15, at iii:16-8; 28-30.

28. The material is collected in A. Malamat, A recently Discovered Word for "Clan" in Mari and its Hebrew Cognate, in Z. Zevit (ed.), *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots. Biblical, Epigraphic, and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield* (Winona Lake, IN, Eisenbrauns, 1995), pp. 175-9.

29. *ARM* 14 50:14, 72:18. See the comments of Malamat, *MEIE*, 34-47; M. Anbar, *Les Tribus amurrites de Mari* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, 108; Freiburg, Universitätverlag, 1991), pp. 77-9; 161-6. I do not treat here Mari *ḫaṣārum* and its alleged Hebrew parallel *ḥāṣēr*, but point to the contrasting viewpoints of Malamat, *ibid*, pp. 47-8, and Anbar, *ibid*, pp. 166-7.

However, a recently published document discourages turning to etymology when clarifying tribal behavior. For this text not only delivers new tribal terminology but reminds us also that, comparative anthropology notwithstanding, we have yet to fully grasp how the tribal system worked in Mari, let alone in Scripture where it was an institution perceived though utopian filters.

> . . . the elders of Dabish [a Benjaminite town] came here and said, "In origins, we were not *yaradum* among the Yahurra-tribe; but in the encampment *(nawûm)* we have neither a *ḫibrum* nor a *ka-di*. We are therefore *zurûḫātum* for/at the Yahrur-tribe. We want, therefore, to move into the Sim'al-tribe itself, among the people of Nikhad, and slaughter a donkey-foal.
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> When I answered (them), "I must write, to the king," they said, "Do so!" I kept them waiting a full day and after I questioned them (again), they said, "do write, to the king!" A third time I asked them and still they answered me in a similar vein. Now then, the God of my lord should declare whether because the towns of Urakh, Shakka and Puzurran slaughtered a donkey-foal, Dabish, Ilum-Muluk, and Samanum ought to do the same. And if I am to slaughter the donkey-foal of Dabish my lord should promptly convey a reply to my tablet.

The elders of Dabish were feeling a loss of status among the Yahurra, a Benjamin sub-tribe. Having lost their status as *yaradum*, they now lacked an authoritative body (the *ḫibrum*) to give them support. They consequently wanted to move out of their tribe and join the Bensim'al confederation. To do so, they needed to sacrifice a donkey, a ritual that seems confined to tribal groups from the time of Zimri-Lim. That people could shop around for a tribe to which to declare allegiance though a sacrifice is a stunning notion that plays havoc with the anthropologist in us. Still, if I were into Mari and the Bible, I would milk this text in comparison with Gen 34, where Jacob and Hamor [NB] sought to create one tribe at Shechem. But I am not; and I won't.

Words and idioms. Since the early 80s our dossier of Amorite vocabulary has thickened dramatically, in some cases yielding words that have been fruitfully brought compared with Hebrew or other West Semitic words. Most are drawn from pastoral or rural contexts, such as *ḫallatum* ("herd," also applied to human migrants [*Mari* 5 171], *ARM* 26 519:23]), *nigḫum* ("pasture"), *merḫûm* ("royal agent among nomads"), *ḫâirātum* ("sheepfold"), *sawûm* ("parched land"), possibly related to Hebrew *šāwê* ("plain," as in ʿ*emeq šāwê* of Gen 14:179; but see *AHw*, 1033*b*), and *nib'ûm* ("flow"; from *nb*ʿ?).[30] But other terms refer to urban settings, such *salḫum* ("outer city wall"),[31] *adaššum* ("lower city," behind a fortification wall), *sablum*[32] ("citizenry") *ala'itum* ("Upper country," *ARM* 26 209:12, perhaps related to the root ʿ*lh*), *ḫummudûm* ("siege towers," *ARM* 21 141:10, *ARM* 26 71:9, 318:13, likely related to Hebrew ʿ*ammud*).[33]

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30. Zadok, *Hallo F*s, p. 327.

31. Durand's "zone cultivée," e.g., at *ARM* 26/1, pp. 338-9.

32. Durand's *saplum*, at *ARM* 26/1, pp. 15-6.

33. Mari's *abu bītim*, which we render as "majordomo," has its closest Hebrew function equivalent in *'aser 'al habbayit*. Interesting, however, is Gen. 48:8 where Joseph claims that God made him a "father to pharaoh and master of his household *(wayyesimēnī le'ab lepar'ô ul'adôn lekol-bêtô)*." The word "pharaoh" does mean "big house"; but it cannot be shown that the Hebrews knew that.

A number of terms from cultic life are patently non-Akkadian: the *zukrum* was a festival, apparently of "remembrance," that when met later at Emar is eerily reminiscent of the *zikrôn teru'â* of 1 Tishri (Num 28-9).[34] *Sikkanum*, *ḫu/am(m)usum* and *ramûm*, all refer to stone *maṣṣebôt*; but only the first seems to find an etymological echo in West Semitic lexicons, and none in the Hebrew Bible.[35] Two words are drawn from social milieu: *abi'anum* and *zubultum*, referring respectively to the poor (Hebrew *'ebyôn*) and the elite (Hebrew *zebûl*).[36] But there are still too many non-Akkadian nouns awaiting elucidation, among them are *tašubātum* (*ARM* 26 225:10), possibly Hebrew *tôšāb*, *teribtum* (*ARM* 26 386:11'), and *tiqribātum* (*ARM* 26 496:14).

Some non-Akkadian verbs, such as the much studied *šapāṭum* of Mari, do not operate quite like their Hebrew congeners; but a good number do, such as *ḫabārum*, (Hebrew *'abār*, "to relocate"), *ḫakāmum* (Hebrew *ḥakām*, "to be wise"), *naḫālum* (Hebrew *naal*, "to inherit"), *naqāmum* (Hebrew *naqām*, "to avenge"), and *salāmum* (not be confused with Akkadian *šalāmum*), "to make peace." We are beginning to recognize distinct meanings for Amorite *sakānum* and its many derivatives, *sakkannum*, *sikkanum*, *maskanum*, and the like.[37] Most excitingly, the verb *qasāmum* made its debut in a

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34. D. Fleming, *The Installation of Baal's High Priestess in Emar* (HSS, 42; Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1992; [hereafter Fleming *Installation*]), p. 234. Interesting is the usage of *balṭūtum* in a travesty of the cultic. A prophet eats a sheep's flesh raw, the vocabulary *balṭussuma...(īkul)* (*ARM* 21 206:11) is reminiscent of Hebrew usage where *ḥay*, "living," is likewise said about sacrifical meat; see especially in 1 Sam 2:15.

35. On all this, see Durand, *CEO* 8, p. 297; Durand and Guichard, *FM* 3, pp. 32-3; 36-7. Durand treats *râmum* as a middle weak, allowing him to connect with a technical verb for setting up stone pillar, as in *wayyiqaḥ ya'aqō b 'āben wayye-rîmehā maṣṣēbâ* of Gen. 31:45. But spellings of the Akkadian terms indicate that we are dealing with a root *rm'*.

With regards *sikkanum*, there is by now widespread attestation for the practice of erecting such monuments in Syria, see J.-M. Durand, Le culte des bétyles en Syrie, in J.-M. Durand and J.-R. Kupper (eds), *Miscellania Babylonia. Mélanges offerts à Maurice Birot* (Paris, Éditions Recherches sur les civilisations, 1985 [hereafter *Birot Fs*]), p. 82, n. 10; Fleming *Installation*, pp. 75-9, reviews the testimony for this words in Ugarit, Emar, and Mumbaqat, and gives copious bibliography. See also the remarks of J.-M. Durand, Réalités amorrites et traditions bibliques, *RA* 92, 1998, p. 24-27. In LB texts, the spelling for the term is with one -*k*-, and this allows me to speculate that it may likewise be found in Deut. 12:5. As punctuated by the Masorites *lešiknô tidrešû* can only be an incised clause, so that the whole verse in which it occurs may mean, "You (sg) are to come only to the place where, amidst your tribes, your Lord choses to establish his name there, and you are (plur) to resort to his *šēken*." *Šēken* is unattested elsewhere, and the verb *dāraš* is a technical term for making inquiry of God. (For the philological problems, see S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* [ICC, Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1902], pp. 140-1.)

It might be noted that while such pillars, in Mari or elsewhere, are commemoratives (of treaties, victories, festivals, even individuals) and may acquire sacrality as a result, gods do not seem to reside in them. Whether the terms are preceded by a dingir-sign or not, the pillars do not undergo mouth cleansing rituals and do not operate as cult statue; see the fine remarks of J. V. Canby, The *Stelenreihen* at Assur, Tell Halaf, and *maṣṣebôt*, *Iraq* 38 (1976), 113-28.

36. For the former (used as a stative noun), see W. von Soden, Zur Herkunft von hebr. "*eBjōn*"-"arm", *MIO* 15 (1969), 322-6. For the latter *(zubultum)* see W. von Soden, Die Fürstin *(zubultum)* von Ugarit in Mari, *UF* 4 (1972), 159-60 (=princess), equivalent to Hebrew *zebûl*, for which compare the feminine personal name Zubulum occurring A . 3151:c:4'; see J.-M. Durand, Études sur les noms propres d'époque amorrite, 1. Les listes publiées par G. Dossin, *MARI* 8 (1997), 651, n. 719.

37. See Durand, *Birot Fs*; L'organisation de l'espace dans le palais de Mari: le témoignage des textes, in E. Lévy (ed.), *Le système palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 19-22 juin 1985* (Travaux du Centre de recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce antique, 9, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1987; [hereafter Durand "système palatial"]), p. 70; Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 292-300.

divinatory context (*FM* 2:71; see *NABU* 94/42), with the meaning to "divide," forecasting its evolution into Hebrew *liqsōm*, "to practice divination." In Arabic the two senses are retained.

In Mari documents we find some Akkadian verbs that do not behave as such. For example, the verb *tebûm* is commonly an auxiliary, often as a finite verbal form at the beginning of a clause, behaving much as *qûm* does in Hebrew.[38] There is also widespread usage of *alākum* in hendiadys, again reminiscent of such usage in Hebrew. *elûm* is a good candidate for comparative inspection, as in some cases it carries meanings that are not quite in synch with normal Akkadian: in the *G*, for example, it may parallel Hebrew *'ālâ* when describing movement that is not necessarily directional (e.g., *ARM* 26 328:32); in the *Š*, however, it may refer to crowning a king.[39]

We also have Amorite verbs that behave as if Akkadian. Thus, the verb in the Amorite idiom *ḫayaram qaṭālum*, "slaying a donkey foal," so conforms to Akkadian rules that its causative mimics the *šafel* (not even the **safel*), rather than the *hiph'il*, expected from such contrasts as *yakūn/yakîn* in personal names.[40] A calque was introduced into Akkadian as *imēram maḫāṣum*.

Much more common, however, are examples of Amoritized Akkadian, especially in expressions and idioms that betray a tendency to emulate Amorite. Some of them have equivalents in Hebrew. They include *salīmam epēšum*, "to make peace," nicely duplicated in Hebrew *la'aśot šalom*; *ana sūnim nadānum*, "to place (a woman) in someone's bosom" (said to Yasmaḫ-Addu about a princess from Qatna), nicely duplicating Hebrew *lattet beḥêq*, said about concubines[41]//, and *qaran ṣubatim eli*+[someone] *nadûm*, implying taking a woman under someone protection (not necessarily in marriage), paralleling *liprōs kānāp 'al*+[42]. There is also *eli... ṣābim bēlam šurkubum*, when people speak of leading their king in triumph, recalling the Hebrew *leharkîb....lerō'š* (Ps. 66:12). A king with a reputation is hailed with *šum šarrim lū epiš* (*ARM* 26 404:29-30), reminding us of *la'aśôt šēm*. Occasionally, kings are flattered by reference to their *ilūtum*, "divinity," an adulation that may

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38. It should therefore not be treated as "alluding to prophetic stimulation in the temple" when found in prophetic contexts, Malamat, *MEIE*, p. 92.

39. *(ana bēlim) šūlûm*, A .2417:26; see J.-M. Durand, Les anciens de Talḫayûm, *Revue d'Assyriologie* 82 (1988), 100; See also A .2442, excerpted *in* N. Ziegler, Deux esclaves en fuite à Mari, *FM* 2 [1995], p. 16, n. 18, "When my lord sets me up as king Ašnakkum, he could take away the whole palace, down to straw and splinter, leaving me but bricks. I shall once more give 10 pounds of pure silver as 'inducement' to my lord. *(inūma bēlī ana Ašnakkim ušellenni ekal ašnakkim kalašu adi ḫāmim u ḫuṣabim bēlī lilqe u ayyāšim libnātim līzibam atārma 10 mana ṣarpam nēbeḫ bēlīya anaddin)*."

40. But see above regarding Lipiński's opinion regarding the Š-causative in Amorite. That the idiom has had quite a run before we see it is indicated by the use of "donkey foal" metonymically for the ritual as well as for its political consequence (e.g., in *ARM* 26 404). I speculate that, if it originated among administrators, this phenomenon (Akkadianized Amorite) would imply that the elite had a long exposure to Akkadian, possibly within a bilingual world. If it was the product of scribal training, however, it could also have evolved over a briefer time span.

41. J.-M. Durand, Documents pour l'histoire du royaume de Haute-Mésopotamie II, *MARI* 6 (1990), 282.

42. See S. Lafont, *AEM* I/1 251: "poser la pan de son vêtement," *NABU* 1989/45, p. 29.

be attenuated by citing a number of instances where Hebrew *'elōhîm* is applied to exalted leaders.[43] To suggest the outbreak of hostility there is *nukurtam našûm* that has Hebrew *nāśâ šalôm* as its polar opposite (Ps 72:3).[44]

There are puns that depend on bilingual gamesmanship. A diviner writes the king sarcastically about troops that are rebellious, *kīma ṣābūšunu ma-ar-du atta tīdē*, "you know that their soldiers rebelled," playing on the West Semitic root *marād*, "to rebel," as well as on a phonetic spelling of mar.du, "Amorite." A military officer puns on the verb *šābûm*, fully exploiting its West Semitic capacity to mean "to be sated" as well as "to be under oath."[45]

Narrative prose. Some interesting associations between the Bible and Mari materials can be made on the narrative level. As we all know, the Mari archives are rich in documents the king received from administrators and from diplomats posted from dozens of capitals to which they were sent on missions. Some of these letters can be fairly long and incredibly garrulous, reporting dialogues, dispensing anecdotes, even spreading juicy gossip about the courts they are visiting. Naturally, some correspondent were better at the task than others. During Zimri-Lim's reign Bannum, Ibal-pi-El, Yamṣum, and Yasim-El were particularly gifted in that regard; but many others also have their moments. It would not be prudent to credit their Amorite background for this gift of gab and for their urge to crowd their tablets with observations and details. But truth be told, these letters are rarely matched in the *Altbabylonische Briefe* series or, for that matter, in Akkadian literature. Narrative prose that tells a story, but does not report on a campaign or the like, is not particularly well-represented in Akkadian. The genre is (debatedly) restricted to pseudo-autobiography (such as those of Idrimi and Adad-Gupi) and to

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43. For Hebrew, See F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927 [hereafter *BDB*]), p. 43, sub meaning 1. For Mari, see *ARM* 26 402:33-4. Yasim-El writes that the king should "act according to his royal and divine prerogatives *(belī ša šarrūtišu u ilūtišu līpuš)*." In assigning the king potentials that normally belonged to gods, Yasim-El had found a way to flatter the king who can elevate and lower individuals as well as give and remove their privileges. We should therefore not follow Durand and Joannès in treating *ilūtum* as *elūtum (ARM* 26/1, p. 379, n. 19). Rather, with Charpin *(ARM* 26/2, p. 223, n. r), we should keep *ilūtum* full force especially since a spelling *ša* dingir-*ti-šu* is also found in the archives.

44. A.2417, Durand *RA* 82 (1988), p. 99, line 41. I list here a few expressions that are yet not fully assessed:

Bannum, from Mari?	*ARM* 26 5:7	*unqatim wašābum (wašābum* + noun in the accusative, often implying a cultic act, may be a West Semitic calque; compare Hebrew *yōšēb hakkerūbîm*.)
?	*ARM* 26 154:31-2	*appam mahāṣum* ("strike the nose")
Yasim-Dagan+, f.]	*ARM* 26 251:16-8	*PN qaran ṣubatī+ eli+ nadûm* (=to protect; not necessarily to marry], see *NABU* 1989/45,]
[Yamṣûm, from Ilanṣura]	*ARM* 26 325:14	*la nakrum la ahum* ("neither enemy nor kin")
[ditto]	*ARM* 26 308:27	*ina muttāt libbim* ("half-heartedly")
[ditto]	*ARM* 26 325:25	*awātam ana pānī+ turrum* ("I set his straight")
[ditto]	*ARM* 26 326:3'	*ištu pê ana* [sic] *hurāṣim* ("from straw to gold")
[ditto]	*ARM* 26 326:5'	*ana awātim... našakanni* (very strange)

45. See also Frankena's article *(Beek Fs)* for additional examples.

humorous tales (such as "The Poor man of Nippur"). It is practically unrepresented in "Canaanite" lore (Ugaritic, Phoenician), but it is known in Aramaic (also pseudo-autobiography, e.g. the first part of Ahiqar).

Consider this example, selected here for its relative brevity (A.2995+ Ghouti, 1992 [*FM* 1]:61*f*). Ibal-pi-El, *merḫûm* among the Bensim'al, sent it to Zimri-Lim, half-a-dozen years or so after his enthronement. In this story Hamman is a *suqāqum* at Dēr, a staging area for Ibal-pi-El; unnamed is the *suqāqum* of Arduwan; Baṣṣum, is an official in the same region, possibly a diviner; Bunuma-Addu, is king of Nihriya and a Benjamin leader in the Balih region.

Tell my lord, thus (says) Ibal-pi-El. The *suqāqum* of Arduwan in Zalmaqum came here to Dēr and this is what he told Hamman,

> A man who normally does Baṣṣum's business with Bunuma-Addu—well, once, when he conveyed a garb and a jacket to Bunuma-Addu, the latter said, "Truly, look how Baṣṣum is in full accord with me!" This is what this man told Hamman.

The next day, to reaffirm his declaration, Hamman stood 3 men behind wooden double-doors: Dada, Yašub-Lim, and Yaptuna-El. He summoned this man from Ardawan and began to question him as follows, "Go back over the words you spoke yesterday." But this man moved to tell Hamman, "If you reveal this conversation to anyone, I can no longer live but die!" Hamman right away took an oath for his sake, thus, "I swear not to reveal your words to anyone."

Because he took an oath for his sake, [the man from Ardawan] went over the words he spoke the previous day, saying "For 2 years now, Baṣṣum has been continually beholden to Bunuma-Addu." Dada, the resident-agent, Yašub-Lim, and Yaptuna-El of Dēr, could each hear these words from behind wooden double-doors.

As for me, having come to Dēr, Hamman set the following matters before me, "(From) there, he cannot [protect] nor preserve the city." My lord should pay careful attention to these matters and answer me one way or another. Either I should send Baṣṣum to my lord like [a *criminal*?] or would it be better for me to grab him here? For me to carry out my lord's order, my lord should answer me one way or another.

Even when shorn from its final paragraph, the story of Ibal-pi-El contains all elements of a good yarn: an initial situation in which betrayal is hinted, a sequence that leads to confirmation of the situation, and a denouement which in fact hints at yet another betrayal—no doubt the subject of a future letter. The characters themselves seem stock: an incredibly dense Arduwanian *suqāqum*, a dark-hearted courtier (Baṣṣum), a scheming enemy (Bunuma-Addu). Ibal-pi-El himself, throughout, is omniscient, capable of penetrating the state of mind of our dense Arduwanian. (In some letters, writers can even cite the thoughts of others.) He is compassionate, however, for he protects him by keeping him nameless. And he is not without irony, for even as his tale is evidently dependent on Hamman's version of events, his distaste for him is barely concealed.

This tale is complete by itself even if there are other letters that carry its protagonists to more skirmishes.[46] It is well written, relying on a fine assortment of verbal forms

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46. See, in particular A.427+M.8341 (D. Charpin, "Lies natürlich...": à propos des erreurs de scribes dans les lettres de Mari, in M. Dietrich and D. Loretz (eds), *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament. Festschrift für Wolfram Freiherrn von Soden zum 85. Geburtstag am 19. Juni 1993* [AOAT, 240; Neukirchen-Vluyn, Verlag Butzon & Bercker Kevelaer, 1995], pp. 43-7. See also my study of this letter in "The Burden of Scribes" [forthcoming]).

and even, according to Ghouti who edited it, including some clever plays on words. There is apt phrasing, lively pacing, good timing, and a good sense of structure. The miracle is that, like almost all other examples in the archives, it was drafted under short notice.

My contention here is that despite their genre, the Mari letters can open up a window into the art of story-telling among West Semites and it is not surprising to me that fictional letters begin to crop up from this time on.[47] A number of them will yield information on how a story is sequenced and plotted (Fr.: récit), on its architecture (Fr.: histoire), its timing and phrasing (Fr.: narration), its semantic components (such as similes and metaphors), its techniques (such as chiasms, brackets, repetitions, reinforcements, radical shift of topics, euphonics), and these may prove enriching when compared to what we find in the Bible.[48] Of course, given the genre, Mari examples will rarely delve into the past for more than one or two generations. They thus rob us from finding in them the pulse of time that is so stunningly caught by the Hebrew narratives. But if we can establish some overlap in techniques between their contents and what we find in Hebrew prose, then one conclusion may already come to mind: since even the most elaborate letter found in Mari was crafted over a relatively brief interval span, often under very trying circumstance, by personalities that (we presume) had little instruction in the literary arts, then biblical (hi)story-tellers, too, need not have come from especially learned circles. Furthermore, some of our favorite biblical scenes could have been molded with minimal lapse of time. Later editors needed just to string them

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47. Amorite predilection for artistically couched reports is not restricted to "Mari" documents. In a brief letter from Tell Leilan, Šepallu writes to his ally Mutiya of Šehna with panache about a military sortie against an unnamed enemy (L87-651, given in J. Eidem, The Tell Leilan Archives 1987, RA 85[1991], 131):

> The enemy has been in Zannanum for the past three days. Yesterday, it let the flock (salhum) go toward the heartland. Riding a horse and with 60 men, I went ahead of the flock, just by (the town of) Sabum. I cast out 60 corpses and captured 50 prisoners. Having chased the enemy right up to the entrance of his camp I shooed its leader away. My brother should be pleased. Take command of the troops and come to me. Do not delay.

The Akkadian in this letter is fairly close to being literary. The numbers cited seem conventional and the regression (60 to 50) they follow seems to me literary in inspiration. Yet the craft of the letter in no way distorts Šepallu's main point.

48. In reading ARM 26, I noticed a tendency to prefer the number seven, mostly in contexts that suggest allusion to a round number. Notice that the seven-day period may be equivalent to the "week," a unit that calendrically came in vogue only among the Hebrews.

Bannum	ARM 26 5:7	7 days in temple
"Addu"	ARM 26 192:8	7 nets to cast on Elamites
"Dagan"	ARM 26 209:11	7 conspirators
extispicy query	ARM 26 216:11	7 days outside of city wall
Uṣur-awassu	ARM 26 292:3	7 reed (!) stone slab
Yamṣum	ARM 26 302:18	7 Numha slaves wrongly taken
	ARM 26 324:4′	7 pack donkeys requested
Yasim-El	ARM 26 404:15	7 kings behind Atamrum
	ARM 26 405:3	7 days period

Other examples are readily available in the remaining archives, most notably as above when citing a confederacy of opponents.

into the thickly textured weave of characterization, typology, and type-scenes for them to acquire the protean recall of the past and the multiple causality that is so essential ingredient of biblical historiography.

Cultural issues

For many scholars, removing the issue of Hebraic origins from comparative treatment of Mari and the Bible may take the pleasure, if not the zeal, out of the enterprise. Yet, students of comparative law are constantly drawing analogies between legal provisions in the Code of Hammurabi and the Pentateuch without needing to link Hammurabi and Moses in any but the most general ways. They might, for example, show that our documents credit the gods for initiating the propagation of law and that the legal formulation were embedded in historicizing frameworks.[49] Moreover, comparative law can be instructive even if Babylon and Israel held distinct notions about the pertinence law (In Israel it also controlled cultic architecture, priestly activity, and personal habits) and followed separate paths in transmitting it.

Similarly, although we recognize the radically different nature of our sources for Mari and Israel—archival and occasional (Mari) vs. theologically and redacted (Israel)—, we must also concede that using the Mari materials (mostly letters) for cultural comparisons is not without its own problems. Undeniably, the people that are mentioned in the letters were once flesh and blood whereas we still harbor doubts about the historicity of Moses and Abraham (not to speak of Cain and Adam). Yet what the Mari letters report is often attributed to rumor and hearsay, and may have had no basis in reality. But even when actually witnessed, such reports are shaped to please the king, to cajole a superior bureaucrat, or to advance the writer's cause, so that when they reach us they have already been interpreted to reflect a particular point-of-view or ideology. Moreover, occasionally we meet with baroque ways of stating the historical truth. For example, when Hammurabi claimed to have conquered Rapiqum (date-year #11), who would have guessed that Šamši-Addu handed it to him? Or when Šamši-Addu wrote of setting up his victory stela in the Lebanon, who would have known that it was done by proxy?

More consequential, too, is the fact that creating a coherent narrative of the Mari archives remains a personal burden. Given that Mari rulers rarely introspected about what made them conquer a city, break a treaty, or forge an alliance—except to implicate the gods—, crafting a fuller course of events out of our documents is a subjective undertaking. These observations are meant neither to halt historical syntheses of the Old

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49. Could one resist citing Albright's judgment that the Mari documents seem to prove "that the ancestral Hebrews founded the First Dynasty of Babylon"?; *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1968), pp. 69-71. (Quoted from Malamat, *MEIE*, p. 28, n. 4.)

Babylonian period nor to blur the significant distinction among biblical and Mari sources. But they could make our task here less that of the comparison of incongruous formulations (Mari history vs biblical historiography) and more that of the comparison of cultural realies as embedded in incongruous documentations.

Scholars continue to tap the vast written resources from Mari,[50] making comparisons out of such institutions as the *kispum* and its components (e.g., the *pagra'um* banquets,[51] the ban,[52] and the *ḥerem*[53]); such topoi as expeditions to the Mediterranean[54]; such symbolic acts as marriage by veiling brides,[55] divorce by cutting the hem (*ARM* 26 323[56]; such sacral acts as as anointing,[57] drinking potions in oaths[58]; minding ritual impurity.[59] As if we don't have enough to keep us busy, citations of documents not yet fully published prove that there are many more comparisons to be made: more material about erecting stelas (*sikkanum, ḫumūsum, râmum* [differing in purpose, in what is represented on them, or on the time of consecration)[60]; Sorties of the gods in and out of their shrines during peace and war ([61]—compare with the movement of the ark); different forms of sacrifices (bloodied at the altar or portions of previously killed animals)[62]; dedication of women to the gods (*qadištam quddušum/ana munus qadištim našûm*)[63]; vows and the high cost of not fulfilling them[64]; burial of precious metal belonging to the gods (intriguing connection

50. For convenience, on these topics, see Malamat, *MEIE* and Lemaire, in *MARI* 4 (1985).

51. On the *kispum* and its components, see now Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 278-89; J.-M. Durand and M. Griechard, Les rituels de Mari, *Florilegium marianum* 3, 63-70.

52. Durand's reedition of *ARM* 5 72 (*CEO* 8, 496-7) gives us the closest parallel to Achan's sin as narrated in Joshua 7. In that chapter, a man accused of stealing tabooed objects, and thus liable to die, nevertheless has enough *chutzpa* to shop around for a lesser penalty. In *ARM* 26 280 when the three sons of one man died on a single occasion, rumors explained that their father had absconded with treasures belonging to the god.

53. Charpin, *ARM* 26/2, p. 146; Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 472-5; M. Griechard, Les aspects religieux de la guerre à Mari, in this issue.

54. Malamat, *MEIE*, pp. 107-12. Some of his observations remain valid even if Yahdun-Lim and Šamši-Addu may not personally have reached the Mediterranean, despite what their inscriptions imply.

55. See now C. Michel, Un témoignage paléo-assyrien en faveur du port du voile par la femme marié, *NABU* 1997/40, p. 38.

56. See van der Toorn *SHCANE* 7, pp. 45-7. The symbolism is used in a political-covenantal setting in *ARM* 26 313:8-13.

57. See Durand's hypothesis about the anointing of kings, *CEO* 8, pp. 288-9.

58. See now D. Charpin, Manger un serment, in S. Lafont, *Jurer et maudire: pratiques politiques et usages juridiques du serment dans le Proche-Orient ancient* (*Méditerranées*, Revue de l'association Méditerranées, 10-11; Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997 [hereafter *Méd* 10-11]), pp. 85-96.

59. See Durand's comments to *ARM* 26 13 and his remarks in *CEO* 8, pp. 493-6.

60. On these, see for now Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 292-300; see above, note 35.

61. Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 305-7.

62. Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 290-1.

63. Cited from Durand, *CEO* 8, p. 454.

64. Text from Tell Leilan (L87-1317), cited by Eidem in *RA* 85(1991): 125 and in D. Matthews and J., Tell Brak and Nagar, *Iraq* 55 (1993), 201-7. I have studied this text in The Vow of Mutiya, King of Shekhna, in G. D. Young, G. M. W. Chavalas, and R. E. Averbeck (eds), *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons. Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on his 80th Birthday* (Bethesda, MD, CDL Press, 1997), pp. 475-90.

with Gen 35:4)[65]; sorcery and black magic[66]; divination by means of the statues of such deified ancestors as Itur-Mer and Aštabi-El, in manners reminiscent of how teraphim were used in the Bible.[67]

Most of the comparisons mentioned rely on scattered allusions in the Mari texts; but some of them gain plausibility when depended on whole dossiers. I mention below three areas of potential contact.

Sacred images. There is a whole thesis to be written on the divine image, its creation, and consacralization, one that will not depend wholly on gathering information from

65. M. 7817, cited by Durand, *CEO* 8, p. 501.

66. See *ARM* 26 314, in which Šimatum, queen of Ilanṣura, is said to have sent bewitched herbs to her father, Zimri-Lim (also *ARM* 26 312). See also A. 673, cited by M. Guichard, Violation du serment et casuistique à Mari, *in* S. Lafont, *Méd* 10-11, pp. 79-80.

67. Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 337-8, and Itûr-Mêr, dieu des serments, in S. Lafont, *Méd* 10-11, pp. 65-6. In *ARM* 26 458, the statue of Itur-Mer serves to uncover a crime. Writes Abi-mekim to the king:

> Mari City, the palace, the temples and the workshops are all in good order.
>
> Another matter; since the sacrifices to Diritum, five oxens were missing in Mari. The god Itur-mer was taken around in the city itself. On the fourth day of the god being taken around, one bull belonging to Sin-naṣir, son of Yadratum, and one bull belonging to Ili-gamil, son of Zikri-Addu, were found in Sumu-khadim's house. Of these two bulls, I seize the meat and their skins.

In A. 1890 (Durand, *CEO* 8, p. 337), (the statue) of Itur-Mer is made to lie down by a city gate so as to detect a slave [nb, with no markings!] escaping by hiding among Babylonian messengers. In A. 747 (p. 338), Aštabi-El is made to lie on a bed and, via a third party, answers the queries that are posed to him. Durand thinks that an incubation is at stake. See my Ancestors Divine? [forthcoming] I am not sure this is the case. Here is my rendering of the two documents, now available only in Spanish translations:

[A. 1890 *CEO* 8, pp. 337-8; letter of a governor to the king]

> The merchant Ur-Šulpa'e'a a while ago went to meet my lord and told him, "A slave is now with messengers from Babylon."
>
> This is what this slave told my lord and my lord gave him the following instructions, "When the Babylonian messengers leave, Itur-Mer should be reclining at the main gate where they will exit. As for you, state your claims (Durand: '¡haz tu reclamación!') then." This is what my lord told this man.
>
> In accordance with the instruction of my lord, Itur-Mer reclined at the main gate and this man began to state all his claims with regard a slave of his; but Puzur-Marduk and [...]-tillati, the Babylonian messengers, had not taken him.

[A. 747, Durand, *CEO* 8, p. 338; letter of a governor to the king; Durand, Prophéties des textes de Marie, in *Oracles et Prophéties dans l'antiquité* (J.-G. Heintz [ed]; Paris, de Boccard, 1997), 129-131.

> My lord had given me the following instructions, "the god Aštabi-El should lie down on his couch and be interrogated so that his 'seer' *(ḫa-ia-sú)* could speak." Take account of it to keep me informed.
>
> With Warad-Sin as their *rābiṣum (ra-b[is-is]sú-nu)*, the god Ashtabi-El stretched himself out on his bed *(ir-bi-iṣ* [Durand "se acostó en su lecho"). Subsequent to Ashtabi's determination, the matter turned out false. The slanderers will be spared, in accordance with the god's determination. However, in my own case, so that sooner or later there will not be a false matter, I have rebuke him/them before the elders of the land.
>
> On the biblical teraphim, Theodore Lewis, Teraphim *[trpym]*, in K. van der Toorn et al. (eds), *Dictionary of Deities and demons in the Bible (DDD)* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1995), pp. 1588-601. For their use in divination, see Zechariah 10:2 (teraphim are made to speak falsity) and Ezekiel 21:26 (the king of Babylon finds answers through teraphim, *šā'al batterapîm*; in Hebrew though good kings get rid of such corrupting objects). Scholars have connected the teraphim to dead ancestors by comparing such texts as 2 Kings 23:24 and Deuteronomy 18:11, where "teraphim" seem replaced by "the dead."

diverse eras and sites.[68] I feel certain that such a study will have its impact on a debate that periodically surfaces in biblical scholarship: Did Israel, despite the condemnations of Deut 5:8 and 4:16, worship its god through a cultic image? Mari documents tell us also about the fabrication of cultic figurines. (Not to be confused with fabrication of protective spirits or votive representations of rulers.) The manufacture of a potential host for the god was carried out under the most deliberate steps. We are told of oracular measures taken "Regarding the god Lagamal, whether to give him a human face or to set a tiara of 8 horns topped by golden disk."[69]

Above all, no figurine could serve as an object of worship if it were not first consecrated. This process required time-consuming rituals, such as those to opening or washing the mouth of the potential god (*ARM* 26 294).[70] Once these rituals were executed, the statue loses all association with the components that came into its production, so that it becomes a visible manifestation of the unknowable and unfathomable deity. The ritual that removes the terrestial from the worshiped statue makes the mockery of Hebrew prophets particularly irrelevant. The material from Mari (supplemented by other comparative material) could sharpen our recognition that the place of cultic figurines in Israel's worship is not likely settled just by archeological discoveries of statues or emblems (even when recovered from sacred precincts), but by written evidence on consecrative ceremonies.[71]

Nuptials. The understanding we have already achieved on how women fared at royal courts in the Mari region has had its impact not just on second millennium gender studies, but also on the reassessments of the place of women in Israel.[72] As a result of documents Dossin published in *ARM* 10 regarding the daughters of Zimri-Lim and those that Durand edited and interpreted in *ARM* 26/1 and *MARI* 6 regarding the marriages of Beltum of Qatna (to Yasmah-Addu) and Šiptu of Yamhad (to Zimri-Lim), we have gained interesting insights into how diplomatic marriages were arranged. But because we also know something about the afterlife of these arrangements and about the changes

68. See B. Lafont, Textes nᵒˢ 91 à 245, pp. 246-427, *in* G. Bardet *et al.* (eds), *Archives royales de Mari, 23* (Archives administratives de Mari, 1. Paris, Éditions Recherches sur les civilisations, 1984); Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 272-7, 301-12.

69. This fragment is extracted from M.7515 and cited by D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, Notes de lecture: *Texte aus dem Sinkāšid Palast, MARI* 7 (1993), 372; see also Durand, *CEO* 8, p. 274. See the query cited above (n. 10) on positioning the statues of Amurrum and of the king (A.975).

70. Conjectured reading; so far certain attestations for this rituals involve accouterments (rather than statues) of deities, see the citations in *ARMT* 21, p. 442 n. 8 and p. 447 n. 10.

In non-Mari documents, there are formal disavowals that human hands were responsible for creating divine statues; see Thorkild Jacobsen's, The Graven Image, in P. D. Miller *et al.* (eds), *Ancient Israelite Religion. Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia, Fortress press, 1987), pp. 15-32.

71. See my comments to the symposium, « Texts, Artifact, and Images. Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion » (forthcoming).

72. In particular in the works of Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986) and C. Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1988).

forced on those involved, we can mount narratives that compete well with literary evoca-
tions of such events.[73] On the premise that on occasions art does imitate life, we might
assess how closely the Hebrews hewed to recognizable reality (but not historicity) when
regaling their audiences with ancestor stories on such themes as betrothal, betrayal,
jealousy, fear of childlessness, and dread of neglect. Well-known in both documentations
are the stories of two sisters (Šimatum and Kirum; Leah and Rachel) locked in conflict for
the attention of one husband (Haya-Sumu of Ilanṣura; Jacob). But an excellent entry
would be to compare the betrothal of Rebecca (Gen 24) with that of Šiptu, occurring in
the first months of ZL1'. (We may supplement our information with details from a royal
marriage involving a Qatna princess.) The Mari version contains little trace of divine
interference in identifying the destined bride, itself such a powerful feature of the Hebrew
version; and the Hebrew version has none of the (to us) comic touches delivered by the
inopportune death of Šiptu's grandmother; but the two share practically everything else,
including the anxious *schadchan*, the long trip and arrival to destination, the multiple and
rich gifts, the veiling of the bride, the anxiety of the bride's family, the trek back, and the
preparation of a chamber for the new mistress of the house.

Some thoughts about prophecy. Mari's contribution to unlocking the history of
prophecy is one of the more certain achievements in comparative research.[74] Until the
early 80s and before Durand's team took over the brunt of publishing the Mari
documents, most studies on Mari prophecy focused on the divine message and on those
delivering them. The latest overview on Mari prophecy, Lemaire's study published in the
inaugural issue of *Amurru* I, is a fine one, and it gains by making allusions to like
phenomena from Israel. Here I place two speculations for discussion.

Prophets and diviners in Royal courts. Ever since we recovered the chronology of
Zimri-Lim, it has been possible to inspect the material from new angles. In his
1988 edition and expansion of the prophetic corpus, Durand has sought to recover the
contexts of the revelatory material (I use the term in its widest sense), and he was
followed by Lafont and Charpin in separate studies.[75] Charpin, moreover, was the first to
observe how singularly linked to Zimri-Lim's court were the communications from the
gods. During his time, the variety of paths by which the opinion of the gods was coaxed
multiplied dramatically, and some exceptionally creative methods were launched in

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73. For a good read about palatial intrigues, see the fourth chapter of Durand's *CEO* 8.

74. The latest contributions on this topic are those of Durand, *CEO* 8, chapter 3 (based on his reedition and
expansion of the corpus in *ARM* 26/1), and of A. Lemaire, Les textes prophétiques de Mari dans leurs relations avec l'Ouest,
Amurru 1(1996), 427-38.

75. B. Lafont, Le roi de Mari et les prophètes du dieu Adad, *RA* 78 (1984), 7-18; D. Charpin, Le contexte historique
et géographique des prophéties dans les textes de Mari, *Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 23 (1992),
21-31; J.-M. Durand (1993), Le mythologème du combat entre le dieu de l'Orage et la Mer en Mésopotamie, *MARI* 7 (1993),
41-61.

Zimri-Lim's own household. As a result of Charpin's insight, it became possible to imagine that when kings were predisposed for it, gods readily dispensed advice in channels other than extispicy. (Something similar occurred, for example, in the court of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal of Assyria and probably also in the court of Zakkur of Hamath.) If so, then prophecy need not originate in a single area or period and need not follow a linear development, but it could burst spontaneously and periodically, whenever rulers had doubts about the stability of their rule and whenever courtiers and administrators felt encouraged to comment on them. Not linearity, but opportunity.

In a paper for the Birot memorial volume [*FM 2*], I explored the interplay between a divine message and those who were asked to communicate it to Zimri-Lim: in the palace, in the province, and beyond Mari's border. When they are transmitted from the palace, mostly through his wife, his sister, and his aunt (perhaps his mother), there is a tendency to also comment on them, frequently betraying a heightened sense of imminent danger that must be deflected by the king. This sort of fervor seems to dissipate as we move to the provinces, where bureaucrats dutifully (and mostly lackadaisically for that matter) transmitted divine messages to the king.

Yet we have no reason to believe that Zimri-Lim, despite his drive to know the will of god from as many sources as possible, ever felt obligated to follow the god's directives as channeled by prophets, visionary and dreamers. In fact, there is no evidence that he received their messages directly, but seemed content to ask people in diverse regional centers to keep their ears open (*ARM* 26 196), or to dispatch a trusted *āpilum* to investigate for him (via extispicy) oracles by Dagan of Terqa (*ARM* 26 199:8-9). But when Zimri-Lim really needed to learn what god wanted of him at any particular moment, he turned to his resident-scholars, the *bārū*-diviners.[76] And here is where I need to take a detour.

Durand's pages in 26/1 on Mari divination are rich in documents as in comments.[77] When diviners inspected the innards of a sheep for signs, what they saw was no longer a cluster of bloodied organs, but a tapestry of divine signs. Their perspective, therefore, was closest to that of astrologers of later times who drew insights from the shifting correspondences of heavenly orbs. Yet because extispicy could be staged whenever information was needed—while orbs could not—extispicy proved to be the ultimate arbitrator of truth throughout Mesopotamian history. It is clear too, that the Mari diviner was not attached to a temple, but rather earned his living by depending on the administration, to whom he pledged loyalty and confidentiality. I would not be surprised if, like other employees of the king (such as governors, *suqāqū*, priests), he had

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76. It is interesting that in downtown Babylon, when a prophet began to lob attacks against Hammurabi and against his guest Išme-Dagan (*ARM* 26 371), he was simply given the silent treatment.

77. See also his summary in *CEO* 8, pp. 373-430, 458-64.

to purchase his entry into his metier.[78] In turn, the diviner had to earn the trust of the king, his biggest employer.[79] Diviners were consulted on all undertakings, military or not, and were asked to affirm the reliability, pertinence, or validity of prophecies, dreams, visions that reached the king through third parties. Diviners, unlike prophets or the like, stood close to the king's body; but not to exaggerate their privileged positions it should be added that once diviners found better entry to the centers of power, they stopped bloodying their hands.[80] Diviners, therefore, were courtiers on a climb to higher responsibility within the kingdom. It is possible to imagine that people like Asqudum (Ekallatum/Mari) and Haqba-Hammu (Karana/Qaṭṭara) apprenticed to mature diviners, practiced their trade first in the provinces, and moved to the royal court only when they matured and have proved their mettle. As they got closer to the king, their advice was sought on other matters. For the most ambitious diviners the goal was to penetrate the king's closest circles, to become members of his cabinet, and so be in a position to give up their trade. This hypothesis explains the curious situation in which some of Zimri-Lim's most trusted governors, military leaders, and diplomats, among which are people like Ibal-pi-El, Ilušu-naṣir, Išhi-Addu, Itur-asdu, Nur-Addu and the like, have the same names as certified diviners. They probably were the same people, at different stages of their careers.

This continuity between a diviner and a courtier explains the remarkable accommodation between state interest and divine prognostication. From the Mari letters we develop a portrait of diviners who, poring over a sacrificed animal, never hesitated to tell it exactly as it was, whether or not their readings were welcome to the authority; but we also discover that they readily resorted to diverse maneuvers until they secured a more welcome report.[81] Some of the measures that led them to happier conclusions may seem a bit too clever, until we realize that shallowly embedded in the cortex of each diviner is the ambition of a bureaucrat.[82] If diviners learned their trade by experience rather than from

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78. A.12, cited Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 438-43.

79. As a major councilor to Zimri-Lim once quipped in a letter, "Beyond the secret communicated to a diviner, what other secret could there be?" (*ARM* 26 104:14-5).

80. The case of Asqudum, erstwhile diviner in Yasmah-Addu's time, who married a «daughter» of Yahdun-Lim is pretty nicely laid out in Durand's, *ARM* 26/1, chapter 1; Durand, *CEO* 8, pp. 464-7. Haqba-Hammu is another case of a diviner who came to rule a kingdom (Qaṭṭara) after marrying a king's daughter. His post-Zimri-Lim archives are published by S. Dalley, *The Old Babylonian Tablets from Tell al Rimah* (London, British School of Archeology in Iraq, 1976). See also D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand, Le nom antique de Tell Rimāḥ, *RA* 81 (1987), 125-48.

81. In *ARM* 26 178-9, we even have diviners badgering gods into delivering decisions that differ from those previously announced.

82. The strong linkage between diviners and bureaucrats invites two additional observations that time constraints do not permit me to develop. First, that most diviners cited in the Mari archives did not know how to write. Durand (*ARM* 26/1, pp. 61-2) thinks that Asqudum and perhaps Erib-Sin were literate. Still, it is unlikely that the same child was schooled in the scribal as well as the divinatory arts. Durand, *ibid.*, p. 63, n. 314, cites a text in which a child was to be

consulting compendia, the type of knowledge with which they were dealing becomes an issue. Unlike prophets or visionaries, diviners do not peddle unsolicited prognostications; they wait until a client, either personally or by proxy, comes to them with a specific query that is posed in its opposite choices. A diviner may appeal to the gods, but it would not be to urge on them a favorable answer for his client, but simply to make him see the answers clearly. Upon inspecting the signs, the diviner would allocate favorable and unfavorable responses to the choices. These signs are not manufactured for the occasions, but are there to be uncovered by any diviner with clear vision. In this whole process the role of the gods is rather circumscribed. They do not intercede in events, leaking their decision to via the innards of sacrificed animals. In fact they hardly play an active role in the matter. Rather, they are like clockmakers who can depend on their clocks to work nicely once they wind its springs. What they have to say about events has been fated since time immemorial. And it will come to be, whether a diviner poring over the signs in the belly of a bloodied sheep is skillful enough to read them correctly or not.

I have gone to this length because I want to propose that *functionally* rather than *phenomenologically*, our best parallels for the role of prophets in historical Israel (that is of the Divided Monarchy) are not its *āpilū*, *muḫḫû*, *qammātum*, or even the *nabû* of

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trained in *ṭupšarrūtum* and/or *bārûtum*, which may prove the rarity of the coincidence. At any rate, the sheer number of diviners in any OB court at a time when literacy was highly restricted makes this conclusion probable. In fact, much as other officers of the realm, diviners called on scribes to share their findings with the king. But while they did not read cuneiform, diviners certainly knew how to "read" the markings on clay models of livers.

If diviners learned their trade by experience rather than from consulting compendia, the type of knowledge with which they were dealing becomes an issue. Unlike prophets or visionaries, diviners did not peddle unsolicited prognostications; they waited until a client, either personally or by proxy (e.g., a city, via a *kirbānum*; a visionary, via hair and fringes) came to them with a specific query that was posed in its opposite choices. A diviner may have appealled to the gods, but it would not have been to urge on them a favorable answer for his client, but simply to open his sight to unambiguous answers. Upon inspecting the signs, the diviner would allocate favorable and unfavorable responses to the choices. These signs were not manufactured for the occasions, but were there to be uncovered by a sharp-sighted diviner.

In this whole process, the role of the gods was rather circumscribed. They did not intercede in events, leaking their decision to the diviner via the innards of sacrificed animals. In fact the gods hardly played an active role in the matter. Rather, they were like clockmakers who expected their products to work nicely once their springs were wound. What the gods had to say about events had been fated since time immemorial. And these events were to occur, whether a diviner, poring over the signs in the belly of a bloodied sheep, was capable to read them correctly or not.

As regards the written texts, scribes may at one point in the past have collected the readings of omens from the oral communications of diviners. But the explosion in omen texts that began with the Old Babylonian period was likely the product of scribes who expanded on the original core either by analogy or contrast, so that, in the Old Babylonian period and after, omentexts became the object of the training of scribes rather than of diviners. And it is to these scribes, keeper and inventer of traditions, that we must attribute all these omens with "historical" contents. It is worth noting that although we have liver models from Mari which equated anatomical peculiarities with historical precedents, in the letters themselves, such lessons from history were not cited by the diviners themselves. Such a disjunction between the realms of diviners and of scribes is commonly repeated in Mesopotamian culture, the best parallel being the connection between legal formulations ans legal activities.

Mari, but its *bārū*.[83] It is true that divination in Israel (such as what was regarded as permissible: Urim and Thummim, lots, ephod) was not attached to prophets but to priests; it is also true that the symbolic acts, the ecstasy, the visions, and the dreams that we find in Israel and Mari are not attached to the *bārû*. Yet, if we want to know to whom leaders of states listened before making a decision, it was not to individuals whose access to god was beyond anyone's control, and hence can be unpredictable in what they pronounce, but to those who belong to a confraternity, who accepted a hierarchy, and who knew their way to the corridors of power. It is easy not to focus on this point, because the Bible has kept a double vision about its prophets, writing about them within corporations; but, especially in portraits that were accentuated by anti-monarchist sentiments, it spoke of them as loners, charismatic individuals, begrudging God for making them deliver unpopular messages to people who did not always trust them.[84] However, in narratives about the kingdom of Israel, prophets are found in groups (2 Kings 4:38-42', 6:1), have "fathers" (2 Kings 2:12, 6:21), and were more likely found in major centers, religious or not. Kings had flocks of them at their sides (1 Kings 18:19), and some of them were close to the throne (David had Gad, Nathan, and Heman; Rehoboam had Iddo and Shemaiah; Abijah had Iddo, Jehosaphat had Jehu; Joash had Elisha, Josiah had Jeduthun, Heman, and Asaph, and so forth).

Universalism. It is when prophetic utterances are communicated by Zimri-Lim's agent posted beyond Mari's own border that we witness the most intriguing correspondence between Mari and Hebrew prophecies. In the Birot Memorial volume, I singled out the two letters of Nur-Sin, Zimri-Lim's agent in Yamhadian territory, as especially worthy of attention.[85] In one of them (A.1968), an *āpilum* quoted Addu of Halab to say,

> I had given all the land to Yahdun-Lim and by means of my weapons, he had no opponent. But when he abandoned me, the land I gave him, I gave to Šamši-Addu. Then when Šamši-Addu... I wanted to bring you back. I brought you *back to your father's throne* and I handed you the weapons with which I battled against Sea. I rubbed you with oil from my numinous glow so that no one could stand up to you. Now listen to my only wish: Whenever anyone appeals to you for judgment, saying, "I am aggrieved," be there to decide his case and to give him satisfaction. This is what I desire of you. When you go out (to war), don't do so without consulting the omens. When it is I who stands at my omens, then proceed. If otherwise, don't come out of your door.

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83. I would not make much of the fact that in *ARM* 26 216 what the lú *nabī*ᵐᵉˢ were asked to do ("I gathered the prophets of Hana and had omens taken for the welfare of my lord, asking, '...' ") was more the business of Mesopotamian *bārū* than of Hebrew prophets.

84. It is not surprising that a series of such prophets are invoked in Chronicles and nowhere else, see my compilation on the types of prophets in *Jonah. A New Translation, with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation* (AB 24B; New York, Doubleday, 1990), pp. 342-4.

85. A.1968 is published (with a long study) by Durand, Le combat entre le dieu de l'Orage et la Mer, *MARI* 7 (1993), 43-6; a new edition of A.1121+ is published by B. Lafont, Le roi de Mari et les prophètes du dieu Adad, *RA* 78 (1984), 7-18.

Nur-Sin added hair and garment fringes to his dispatch. In a letter sent sometimes later (A.1121+), Nur-Sin cited a (now lost) letter with a message from Addu, Lord of Kallassu, apparently a Mari enclave in Yamhadian territory,

Am I not Addu, Lord of Kallassu, who has raised him between my thighs and have restored him to his ancestral throne? Having restored him to his ancestral throne, I decided also to give him a dwelling place. Now since I restored him to his ancestral throne, I shall take from his household a property in perpetuity. If he does not hand (it) over, I—the lord of throne, land, and cities—, can take away what I have given. But if it is otherwise, and he does hand over what I am requesting, I shall give him throne upon throne, household upon household, land upon land, city over city; I shall give him a territory, from its eastern to its western (corners) (lines 13ff).

From these two messages, Nur-Sin created a *third oracle*, a composite that he appended to A.1121 (lines 46ff), attributing the whole to Addu of Halab. In the excerpt I give below, portions derived from the first segment of A.1121 are in italics, while those in bold are inspired by A.1968:

Am I not Addu, Lord of Halab, who has raised you in my thigh/armpit and has restored you to your ancestral throne? Ought I not request something from you? **When a wronged person, male or female, appeals to you, be there to decide their case. This is what I want from you.** *If you do what I have just written to you, paying heed to my word, I shall give you a country, from its eastern to its western (corners), as well as the land of* [. . .]."

Removing this composite from consideration, we are left with two prophecies that are quite distinct in perspective and in vision. A.1121 proves to be more "provincial" in sentiments, in that Addu of Kallassu is making demands equivalent to those originating from within Mari's dominion. Claiming responsibility for bringing Zimri-Lim to good fortune, this god demands material gratification. But A.1968, on the other hand, is exceptional. Not because in it Addu offers Zimri-Lim divine weapons—in fact, Zimri-Lim's storehouses were already well stocked with such items, witness the number of times other gods sent him such arms;[86] but because Addu of Halab is requesting higher ethical standards from those he favors. Zimri-Lim may have treated this particular prophecy in the same way he responded to most other examples communicated to him: reading and preserving it in his archives. We do not know whether his diviners tested the hair and garment fringes taken on Addu of Halab's prophet and whether he felt moved by this god's demands. But we should note that, as in Israel, the call to history and to the god's constant monitoring of events are given as justification for dictating that kings live up to a strict code of justice and morality. That the call to Zimri-Lim for morality and ethics comes from a god beyond Mari's frontiers is probably crucial here, for it suggests to me that such a rhetorical appeal (for social justice rather than for material enrichment) is in

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86. These weapons were no doubt used to arm the statues of divinities which, as we know, were constantly being fabricated at Mari. Mari, we are told in a stern letter of Šamši-Addu, was full of divinities, almost as many as there was in Assur, and Yasmah-Addu must stop making more of them, lest it deplete the supply of animals needed for sacrifice; see A.3609, cited by Durand, in *CEO* 8, pp. 273-4.

fact symptomatic of a god's powerlessness to force his will on a distant king or to affect events in lands beyond his control.

The mystery is why Addu of Halab tried to influence Zimri-Lim. But we must be glad that he did, for by doing so he left us with a potentially rich vein of speculation about another God, Yahweh, himself not particularly politically influential and a shaper of the destiny of a relatively minor power, who also chose prophecy as a vehicle by which to steer his deputies, the kings of Israel, toward that noblest of goals: the love of justice.

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APPENDIX: USE OF AMURRÛ(M) IN MARI DOCUMENTS

For our purpose, it may suffice to catalogue the following applications:

1. AS THE NAME OF THE GOD AMURRUM (see D. O. Edzard, Martu (Mardu), *RIA* 7 [1987-90]: 433-40); either as ᵈmar.tu or written out syllabically, when always preceded by dingir. Amurrum was worshiped in Mari, as witnessed by a reference to his cult statue. Writes a Mari administrator (A.975), "On a raised platform, to the left, stands the statue of the god Amurru, bearing a scimitar *(gamlum)*. Across from him stands my lord's statue in worship. Atop the statue (of Amurru?), there is a sun-disk and moon-crescent." The quotation is now featured *in* G. Colbow's, Eine Abbildung des Gottes Amurru in einem Mari-Brief, in D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand (eds), *Florilegium marianum, 3. Recueil d'études à la mémoire de Marie-Thérèse Barrelet (Mémoires de NABU*, 4; Paris, SEPOA, 1997 [hereafter *FM3*]), pp. 85-90.

In the Mari archives, Amurrum is most commonly invoked in the creation of personal names, peculiarly enough of East Semitic coinage, as first or second element of the name.

2. AS A GEOGRAPHIC DESIGNATION, referring to the "West," best exemplified in the Leilan treaty oath by ". . . god of mountain, plains ('earth'), or rivers; god of earth or sky; god of (mount) Saggar or Zara; god of Amurrum and Subarûm"; see J. Eidem, An Old Assyrian Treaty from Tell Leilan, in D. Charpin and F. Joannès (eds), *Marchands, diplomates et empereurs. Études sur la civilisation mésopotamienne offertes à Paul Garelli* (Paris, Éditions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1991), p. 195, lines 16-21. Likely to belong in this category are the following references:

a. A.2760, a letter Šamši-Addu wrote to his son (M. Bonechi, Relations amicales syro-palestiennes. Mari et Haṣor au XVIIIᵉ siècle av. J.-C., in J.-M. Durand (ed.), *Florilegium marianum. Recueil d'études en l'honneur de Michel Fleury [Mémoires de NABU*, 1; Paris, SEPOA, 1992], p. 10. Latest rendering is in J.-M. Durand, *Documents épistolaires du palais de Mari*, 1 (Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient, 16/1; Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf [hereafter Durand, *LAPO* 16/1]), no. 375, p. 574: "Now that Išar-Lim has had brought to you messengers from Hasor and messengers from four Amorite kings [4 lugal *a-mu-ur-ri-im*], assign these messengers under Yasim-Dagan, messenger of Iši-Addu of Qatna, so that he could escort them to Qatna, for Iši-Addu").

b. A.2730, still largely unpublished (see *ARM* 26/2, 33), this letter Ibal-El sent Zimri-Lim includes a passage sequencing Yamhad, Qatna, and Amurrum; G. Dossin, Kengen, pays de Canaan, *RSO* 32 (1957), 35-39 [= *Recueil Georges Dossin. Mélanges d'assyriologie (1934-1959)*, Leuven, Peters, 1983, pp. 85-9].

3. AS A SEMITIC LANGUAGE. D. Charpin cites from M.7930+ Šamši-Addu's response to his son's request for a Sumerian scribe who can speak Amorite (Les malheurs d'un scribe ou de l'inutilité du sumérien loin de Nippur, in M. de J. Ellis (ed.), *Nippur at the Centennial. Papers Read at the 35ᵉ Rencontre assyriologique internationale* [Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund, 14, Philadelphia, University Museum, 1992], pp. 24-5):

You have written me about sending you a man competent in *(ḫâtum)* Sumerian, "Take for me
[. . .] a man competent in Sumerian but speaks *(dabābum)* Amorite." Who is the person competent in

Sumerian and lives here? Please, am I to send you Šu-Ea who is competent in Sumerian? Šu-Ea and [...]; Iškur-zikalama is competent in Sumerian; but he holds an administrative post. Must he leave his post and run to you? Nanna-palil is competent in Sumerian; but I have to send him to Qabra.

⸙You have written me, "[My father] should send me a man from Rapiqum who is competent in Sumerian. There is no one here competent in Sumerian in [. . .]!"

With Charpin we note first that all these learned persons have non-Amorite names (very likely adopted after getting tenure!). But we also note that Yasmah-Addu's difficulty was in trying to find Sumerian competence *in an Amorite speaker.* He might not have had a problem locating an Akkadian speaker who knew Sumerian. It is possible that the Amorite speaking Sumerologist was to be sent to places west, such as Qatna.

Mari's elite apparently was fluent in Amorite and Akkadian. In one letter (A.109), we are told of envoys who can, in addition to fluency in Amorite and Akkadian, also knew Subarean (apparently Hurrian); J.-M. Durand, Unité et diversités au Proche-Orient à l'époque amorrite, in D. Charpin and F. Joannès (eds), *La circulation des biens, des personnes et des idées dans le Proche-Orient ancien* (Actes de la XXXVIIIᵉ Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Paris, 8-10 juillet 1991, Paris, Éditions Recherches sur les civilisations, 1992 [hereafter *RAI* 38]), p. 125.

Also likely belonging in this category is reference to Amurrum in *FM* 3 143:15. Manatan, a palace official, writes to Zimri-Lim:

A caravan from Hasor has arrived here. Reaching Mari are:

– Ibni-Addu, my lord's servant;
– Habdi-Erah, a man from Hasor, his guide, with three Amorite (male) singers (*u* 3 lú.nar mar.tu);
– With him (Ibni-Addu) and headed to my lord were Yarpa-Addu and Kibsi-Addu, two men from Qatna.

Here we must imagine that the entertainment before Zimri-Lim was to be given in the Amorite tongue.

4. AS AN ETHNIC DESIGNATION, with nuanced usage, as follows:

a. In contrast to "Akkadian" (see already IM 49341:5-6, cited by K. A. al-A'dami, Old Babylonian Letters from ed-Der, *Sumer* 23 [1967], plt 1-2, pp. 156); sharpest example occurs in the treaty stipulations Ibal-pi-El of Ešnunna imposed on Zimri-Lim of Mari (A.361, latest rendering in Durand, *LAPO* 16/1]), p. 455 (§5'; similar, §2 [p. 454]):

When the armies of Ibal-pi-El, son of Daduša, king of Eshnunna, my father, (or the troops of his ally Duḫšum, having taken the lead of the armies of Ibal-pi-El, son of Daduša, king of Ešnunna, my father) go on a campaign where needed, I shall neither instruct nor dispatch troops of Mari, Hana, or Suḫum, troops of a king or a leader, Amorite or Akkadian troops, troops of someone else or an outsider, troops supporting his enemy or his ally, troops of whatever king or leader that is in the land. I shall not give them the following instruction, "[you will not attack] the army of Ibal-pi-El, son of Daduša, king of Ešnunna, my father, on an abandoned field, a route, a road, a path, a wadi, a river, [...] a dwelling, at night, while sleeping or, ...

b. as a "frozen" expression, such as dub.sar mar.tu and gal/*rab amurrîm*/mar.tu, referring to a high military official, on which see lastly P. Abrahami, A propos des généraux (gal mar-tu) de la Mésopotamie du Nord à l'époque du règne de Zimri-Lim, *NABU* 1998/31, 35-7). The Amurrum in such formulae may have originated from the contrast mentioned above.

c. in referring to a clan, within the Yabasa/Yabisa/Yabusûm (from a root *bŚ' rather than *ybs) subtribe, occasionally contrasted with Hana (eg., at A.1251:24-30, on which see J.-M. Durand, Villes fantômes de Syrie et autres lieux, *MARI* 5 [1987], 230). Puzzling is *ARM* 235 where 4 men are accounted among the *ga'um* Yabasa, 2 among *ga'um* Amurru, then all 6 as Hani<ya> Yabasa. See P. Talon, Quelques réflexions sur les clans Hanéens, in J.-M. Durand and J. R. Kupper (eds), *Miscellania Babylonia. Mélanges offerts à Maurice Birot* (Paris, Éditions Recherches sur les civilisations, 1985), pp. 277-84. Durand, however, believes that this Amurrum clan belongs to the Bensim'al tribal confederacy, Le combat entre le dieu de l'orage et la mer, *MARI* 7 (1993), 46-7.

M.6210, a letter Durand cites in *ARM* 26/1, p. 184, speaks of a high functionary named Ašmad who originated in that clan [lú *a-mu-r[u-um]*. To be treated here are the references to Amorite in the Leilan tablets: C. Vincente, *The 1987 Tell Leilan tablets. Tablets Dated by the Limmu of abil-kinu* (Vol. I and II) (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1991), text no. 40, re: Hizzi dumu *a-mu-ur-ri*; F. Ismail, *Altbabylonische Wirtschaft-*

surkunden aus Tall Leilān (Syrien) (Ph.D. dissertation, Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Tübingen, 1991), text no. 135, re: cows in relation to lú šu.gi.meš *a-mu-ur-ra-yu ina* Šuduhi(ki). Belonging here also are two sub-categories of attestations:

i. *as a personal name*. Amurrum as a (hypocaristic) personal name is not yet clearly attested (see *ARM* 22 55:iv:7'; J.-R. Kupper, *Les nomades en Mésopotamie au temps des rois de Mari* [Paris, "Les Belles Lettres", 1957], pp. 166-7), but more commonly the feminine Amurritum (*MARI* 8, p. 657; *ARM* 23 78:1) Such names are derived from the tribal (see below) rather than the divine reference to Amurru. (These formations are not to be confused with those mentioned above, sub 1.)

ii. *as an ethnicon*, applied to animals (e.g., *ARM* 9 242:12), objects such as wool (e.g., *ARM* 21 220:8', purchase of Ubrabu and of mar.tu wool; *ARM* 25 728:9'), and persons (e.g., Hinnibu, an Amorite woman *[a-mu-ri-tum]*, under Ṣilli-Annu, a carpenter [túg.du₈], transferred to Mukannišum, 26.xi.ZL2', *ARM* 22 71:13).