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HIS OWN HISTORICAL CONTEXT:  
A CLOSER EXAMINATION**

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## PLACING THE CHRONICLER IN HIS OWN HISTORICAL CONTEXT: A CLOSER EXAMINATION\*

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*For Professor Peter Machinist,  
with appreciation*

### I. INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this article is to express, expand, and sharpen views concerning history, historiography, historical evaluation and reliability, and the central literary nature—the genre—of the book of Chronicles *as a whole* in its own historical context.<sup>1</sup> Studying these matters does not merely satisfy the intellectual curiosity of the modern reader concerning Chronicles, one of the largest and, until the last few decades, one of the most neglected books of the Hebrew Bible. These are vital issues that have direct implications for understanding the book, its contents, its purpose, and its credibility as a source for the history of Israel particularly in the monarchic period and for the development of Judaism in the Second Temple era. In order to accomplish this task, some common features of the writing of the Chronicler<sup>2</sup> and related ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman historical texts will be provided. Furthermore, the presumed Chronicler's lines of thought and his evaluations of sources will be scrutinized and examples will be provided, and the historical trustworthiness of some details, which appear only in Chronicles, will be closely examined in order to demonstrate that the book contains some potentially reliable historical data.

### II. HISTORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND HISTORICAL RELIABILITY

In order to understand any literary composition and fully appreciate its value, the reader must know its precise nature and the author's intention. Was it *in essence* intended to be

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Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem (2007–2008).

<sup>1</sup> My *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 46 (Assen, 2005) focuses in detail on these fundamental issues and contains detailed references to various opinions and tendencies in the scholarship.

<sup>2</sup> I do not think that whatever one can learn about the implied author directly applies to the actual author. Somehow, however, one must refer to the composition's writer. Since in fact we do not know anything about the actual author (see my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 19–20) and since I am of the opinion that most of the book of Chronicles—if not almost all of it—was written by a single author (that is, the book is largely free of later additions), I have chosen to call that anonymous author “the Chronicler,” as is customary in biblical scholarship.

fiction or history, literary narrative or historical novel, commentary or theological text? Prior to studying the composition itself, one should also know as much as possible about its author—his/her personality, place, and exact time (or at least the period) in history. In other words, it is important to read the book within its sociocultural environment and its religious and historical setting.

Unfortunately, this is not possible in the case of this late biblical composition, the book of Chronicles. As with many other biblical writers, the Chronicler did not directly volunteer any information about himself, his time, place, and the purpose(s) and methods of his work—except insofar as he refers to some supposed earlier writings. Like many earlier and later biblical writers, he began with the theme of his work and preferred to remain completely anonymous. He did not even provide a basic preface, such as the one at the beginning of Nehemiah's memoir: "The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah, and it came to pass in the month Kislev, in the twentieth year,<sup>3</sup> while I was in Shushan the capital . . ." (Neh. 1:1),<sup>4</sup> or as some of the Greek historians did, for instance, Thucydides: "Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war waged by the Peloponnesians and the Athenians against one another" (*The History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.1).<sup>5</sup> Thus the modern scholar has to examine the book carefully and comprehensively and, on the basis of this examination, form some necessary conclusions about the writer, his time, place, and historical setting as well as about the main nature of his work and its purpose(s).

Yet if the Chronicler and his work were neglected in the past, since they received relatively marginal attention,<sup>6</sup> it has been even tougher for them in modern times. Indeed, a society that is in awe of scientific scholarship (*Wissenschaft*), including history as one of the sciences, accepts the Chronicler and his composition as everything but a "real" history. Does this attitude actually reflect what we have in the book of Chronicles? Is the Chronicler really no more than a copyist/plagiarist/fantasis/midrashist/exegete/just another "biblical" theologian? Or is he, primarily, a historian with his own logic and legitimate goals who lives within his historical context as well as within an ancient and "biblical" world?

My volume, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, along with my other studies on the book of Chronicles, attempts to provide justice to this captivating composition and its author. It concludes that the main literary nature of Chronicles is neither Midrash, nor commentary, nor theology. None of these definitions comprehends the full picture of the book. Therefore, the Chronicler cannot be considered just a midrashist, or an exegete, or a theologian. Indeed, a person could be labeled with many titles and could be all of these at the same time. My characterization of the Chronicler as a historian, however, is based on the only text of his we have—the book of Chronicles. In my view, the definition that fully gets to the heart of the issue, the central literary nature of the book as a whole, is, in one word,

<sup>3</sup> Most probably it was actually in the 19th year of Artaxerxes I; see Neh. 2:1.

<sup>4</sup> Such an introduction is common at the beginning of the biblical prophetic books (see, for example, Isa. 1:1; Jer. 1:1–3; Ezek. 1:1–3) or even in some of the poetic and wisdom literature (Song of Songs 1:1; Prov. 1:1; Qoh. 1:1) but, with the exception of Nehemiah, it is completely lacking at the beginning of the historical books.

<sup>5</sup> C. F. Smith, *Thucydides*, Loeb Classical Library

(London and Cambridge, Mass., 1969), vol. 1, p. 3. See also Herodotus *Historia* 1.1 (A. D. Godley, *Herodotus*, Loeb Classical Library [London and Cambridge, Mass., 1960], vol. 1, p. 3). For additional references, see my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, p. 19, n. 1. It is also worth mentioning that in contrast to Matthew, Mark and John, the Gospel according to Luke introduces the purpose of the composition (Luke 1:1–4).

<sup>6</sup> See my *Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition: A Historical Journey* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 2009).

“historiography,” or, if you wish to be more exact, a form of “sacred-didactic” historical writing. That is, its “philosophy of history” is mainly theological, and its purpose is didactic in nature. Accordingly, the author is, first and foremost, a “historian.” In any case, the book as a whole should not be labeled as “historical fiction” or “fantasy literature,” as some scholars in modern times have asserted, without investing any genuine intellectual effort in understanding it.<sup>7</sup>

To be sure, this does not mean that there are no fictional elements in Chronicles. Thus, for instance, the tremendous amount of gold that David collected for the building of the Temple (1 Chron. 22:14; 29:1–9),<sup>8</sup> the fantastic numbers of Israelite and Judahite soldiers (2 Chron. 13:2), and the number of the Judahites’ captives (2 Chron. 28:8–15) are indeed unrealistic. This sort of numerical exaggeration, however, can easily be found throughout the Hebrew Bible, in the early biblical historical books, and in various ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean documents. There are many examples of this phenomenon. One group of such exaggerations can be found in the written Semitic sources. These include:

1. The large number of Israelites at the time of Exodus and their wandering in the wilderness (Exod. 12:37–38; Num. 11:21; 26:51).
2. The huge number of Israelite and Judahite soldiers found in 2 Sam. 24:9.
3. The enormous riches of Solomon as related in 1 Kings 9–10.
4. The unreasonably large number of enemy losses reported in the Assyrian inscriptions, for instance, that of King Shalmanesser III (858–824 B.C.E.) concerning the losses of the anti-Assyrian coalition in Qarqar (853 B.C.E.). According to the Kurkh Monolith-Inscription (lines 96–102), the total lost in the anti-Assyrian coalition in Qarqar was 14,000 soldiers—a large number, in any case. And this number increases in the reports of the same battle that follow later: in the Black Obelisk (lines 54–66) the number is 20,500 men; according to the Bull-Inscription from Calah (Nimrud), 25,000; and on the statute of Shalmanesser III (828 B.C.E.), 29,000 men.<sup>9</sup> It seems that each time that a scribe rewrote the number lost in the anti-Assyrian coalition in Qarqar, he created a new number, a greater “achievement” of the king, which had never been heard before.

This phenomenon of exaggeration can also be found in non-Semitic, that is, in Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman historical texts, for example:

1. In Herodotus’s account (*Historia* 7.186)<sup>10</sup> of the Battle of Thermopylae (central Greece, 480 B.C.E.), the Persian king, Xerxes the Great (Xerxes I, or Ahasuerus, 486–465 B.C.E.), campaigned with 5,283,220 soldiers against the coalition forces of the Greek city-states

<sup>7</sup> For detailed arguments and bibliographical references, see my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 35–36.

<sup>8</sup> “The amounts are impossible and out of all proportion to the actual cost of the Temple. The intrinsic value of this gold and silver is very nearly equal to five billion dollars in our money and its purchasing value was still more”; see E. L. Curtis and A. A. Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, 1910), p. 258.

<sup>9</sup> See J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d. ed. with Supplement (Princeton, 1969), pp. 279a and 279b (hereafter *ANET*); W. W. Hallo et al., eds., *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 2, *Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World* (Leiden and New York, 2002), pp. 261–64, esp. 264.

<sup>10</sup> Godley, *Herodotus*, vol. 3, p. 505.

with ca. 7,000 men (including 300 Spartan hoplites; *Historia* 7.224),<sup>11</sup> led by the Spartan king, Leonidas. The size of the Persian land force in Thermopylae, however, is estimated by several modern historians to have been far smaller. They assume it was in the range of 60,000 to 300,000 men on the basis of information known about the Persian military, their logistical capacities, and supplies available alongside the army's route, and so on.<sup>12</sup>

2. Xenophon (*Anabasis* 1.7)<sup>13</sup> informs us that in the battle of Cunaxa (Babylonia, on the eastern side of the Euphrates, in 401 B.C.E.) the main royal army of the king of Persia, Artaxerxes II (404–359 B.C.E.), was counted at 1,200,000 men, while that of his brother and opponent, Cyrus the Younger, was made up of *inter alia* 100,000 "barbarians." Most probably, however, the royal army of Artaxerxes II had 400,000 men and that of Cyrus the Younger only about 13,000 "barbarians," as related by the Greek writer Plutarch (see Artaxerxes II in *Vitae* 13.6) and the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliothēke* 14.19).<sup>14</sup>
3. According to the Greek historian Polybius (*The Histories* 11.3), the loss of Hannibal's army (led by his brother Hasdrubal) at the Battle of Metaurus (207 B.C.E.) was about 10,000 men.<sup>15</sup> Later, however, the Roman historian Titus Livius (Livy) (*Ab urbe condita libri* 27.49)<sup>16</sup> exaggerated the losses of Hannibal's army in that battle at 56,000 men.

The exaggerations were probably intended to enhance and glorify the king, making the victory more spectacular. In most, if not all, of the cases described above, it is the numerical exaggerations presented by the ancient historians/writers that lead one to question their ability to judge reality, not the fact of the main event being described. The feature of exaggeration does not affect the literary nature of Chronicles as well as the other Semitic and non-Semitic historical writings cited above.

There are also some imaginary prayers and speeches that the Chronicler ascribed to various kings and prophets, which did not take place in reality (at least not with the content and in the form in which they were presented in the book); for example, the speeches and prayer of King David (1 Chron. 21:7–16; 28:2–10; 29:1–5, 10–19), the speeches of Abijah (2 Chron. 13:4–12), Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:5–12), and Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:5–11; 30:6–9). To this category one should also add the letters (מכתב/איגרת) that the Chronicler composed and ascribed to Hiram (2 Chron. 2:10); the Prophet Elijah (2 Chron. 21:12–15); and King Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30:6–9). All these texts appear in nonparallel parts of Chronicles ("additions").<sup>17</sup> These types of "fictional" elements, however, can easily be found in the earlier historical books such as Samuel and Kings; see, for example, the prayer of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1–10), the final speech of Samuel (1 Sam. 12:1–25), the so-called Testament of

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 541.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, T. Kelly, "Persian Propaganda—A Neglected Factor in Xerxes' Invasion of Greece and Herodotus," *Iranica Antiqua* 38 (2003): 173–219, esp. 198–99, and the survey of various opinions on the issue under review and the bibliographical references.

<sup>13</sup> C. L. Brownson, *Xenophon in Seven Volumes: Anabasis, Books I–VII*, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1968), vol. 3, p. 65.

<sup>14</sup> C. H. Oldfather, *Diodorus of Sicily*, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1954),

vol. 6, pp. 62–65.

<sup>15</sup> W. R. Paton, *Polybius: The Histories*, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1968), vol. 4, p. 235.

<sup>16</sup> See F. G. Moore, *Livy*, Loeb Classical Library (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1963), vol. 7, p. 235.

<sup>17</sup> See also 2 Chron. 36:15–21 (an "addition"). By the term "addition(s)" (*Zusätze/Sondergut*), I mean an addition that the Chronicler presumably made to earlier biblical texts, mainly to the Deuteronomistic History.

David (1 Kings 2:2–10), and the prayer of Solomon (1 Kings 8:12–53).<sup>18</sup> This method is also well known from Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman historiography, such as some of the speeches in the works of Herodotus (see, for example, *Historia* 5.106–7; 5.109; 7.220; 7.237),<sup>19</sup> Thucydides (*The History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22; 1.140–45; 2.35–46; 2.60–64; 3.37–40),<sup>20</sup> Xenophon (*Anabasis* 1.7),<sup>21</sup> Polybius (*The Histories* 11.4–6),<sup>22</sup> 1 Macc. (2:48–69), and Josephus (*Bellum Judaicum* 7.332–88). Is there any serious scholar who doubts the main literary feature of these books as historical writings?

Of course, there are also several theological elements in the book of Chronicles. For instance, the Chronicler assumes divine rule and involvement in human activity (see, for example, 1 Chron. 10:13–14; 29:11; 2 Chron. 1:7–13; 20:6; 25:9; 36:17–21).<sup>23</sup> But these sorts of elements also appear in the book of Kings (see 1 Kings 3:5–15; 8; 2 Kings 17:18–23; 23:26–27) as well as in various sources from ancient Near Eastern documents, such as the Moabite (Mesha) Inscription, Egyptian historical texts, Assyrian royal inscriptions, and Cyrus's Cylinder. The concept of divine power over human destiny also appears in the Classical works, for instance, in Herodotus (*Historia* 4.205).<sup>24</sup> No one defines the principal literary feature of these works as "theology."<sup>25</sup>

As a historian who wishes to make the sources he used in his book clear and available to his audience, the Chronicler interprets some sources that need clarification (from the canonical perspective, this phenomenon could be called "inner-biblical interpretation"). Thus he replaces an uncommon word with a common one: compare, for example, 1 Kings 9:5: **כַּאֲשֶׁר דְּבַרְתִּי** (lit. "as I *spoke/promised*") with 2 Chron. 7:18: **כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּרַמְתִּי** (lit. "as I granted by a *covenant*"); 2 Kings 21:8: **וְלֹא אֲסִיף לְהַנִּיד רֶגֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָאֲדָמָה** ("I shall not again make [the people of] Israel *outcasts* from the land") with 2 Chron. 33:8: **וְלֹא אֲסִיף לְהַסִּיר אֶת רֶגֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעַל הָאֲדָמָה** ("I will not again *displace* [the people of] Israel from the land"). He paraphrases a difficult phrase such as **וַיְהִי בְשִׁמְעֶךָ אֶת קוֹל צִעְדָה בְּרָאשֵׁי הַבְּכָאִים אִז תִּזְרַץ** ("As soon as you hear a rustling sound in the treetops, *then act at once*," 2 Sam. 5:24) and writes: **וַיְהִי כְשִׁמְעֶךָ אֶת קוֹל הַצִּעְדָה בְּרָאשֵׁי הַבְּכָאִים אִז תִּצַּא בְּמַלְחָמָה** ("As soon as you hear a rustling sound in the treetops, *then you will give battle*") (1 Chron. 14:15). Sometimes the Chronicler clarifies his sources by omitting unclear idioms and phrases in order to make them comprehensible to his audience, for instance, in the story on the capture of Jerusalem (cf., for example, 1 Chron. 11:4, 6 with 2 Sam. 5:6, 8). The Chronicler also brings other texts into harmony in order to ease the mind of his unlearned readers.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes he

<sup>18</sup> There are many other examples from the Deuteronomistic History: the greater part of the book of Deuteronomy introduced as a final speech of Moses (see, in particular, Deut. 1:1–5; 31:1–8; 32:44–47; Josh. 24:1–28; Judg. 2:1–5; and 2 Kings 17:7–23).

<sup>19</sup> Godley, *Herodotus*, vol. 3, pp. 127–33, 537, and 555.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Thucydides*, vol. 1, pp. 39 (here Thucydides discusses the speeches in his book), pp. 239–53, 319–41, 361–73; vol. 2, pp. 59–71.

<sup>21</sup> Brownson, *Xenophon*, vol. 3, pp. 61–65.

<sup>22</sup> Paton, *Polybius: The Histories*, vol. 4, pp. 237–43.

<sup>23</sup> For references to secondary literature on a range of the theological perspectives in the book of Chronicles, see my *The Books of Chronicles: A Classified Bib-*

*liography*, Simor Bible Bibliograph 1 (Jerusalem, 1990), pp. 91–105, items 575–726 and, more recently, W. Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, vol. 1, *1 Chronicles 1–2 Chronicles 9: Israel's Place among the Nations*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 253 (Sheffield, 1997), pp. 10–16; S. S. Tuell, *First and Second Chronicles*, Interpretation (Louisville, Kentucky, 2001), pp. 12–14.

<sup>24</sup> Godley, *Herodotus*, vol. 2, p. 407.

<sup>25</sup> See my detailed discussion and references to the primary and secondary sources in *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 27–29 and esp. n. 50.

<sup>26</sup> See, in detail, my *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 2005), pp. 154–56.

explains what happened and why (see 1 Chron. 10:13–14; 2 Chron. 24:24; 25:16).<sup>27</sup> Still, these historical-exegetical activities of the Chronicler are not carried out to such a degree as to make the essence of his book as a whole a “commentary.”<sup>28</sup>

In the same breath one can say that without a doubt there are some midrashic elements in the book of Chronicles. For instance, there are several explanations of the origin of various names in the book that are based on the similarity of the sound of name and a Hebrew root/word (pun), for example, שלם—שלמה (*Shlomo-Shalem* [= complete], 1 Chron. 28:9; 29:19) and שלום שלמה (*Shlomo-Shalom* [= peace], 1 Chron. 22:9).<sup>29</sup> All in all, however, it is a mistake to classify the entire book of Chronicles as Midrash.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, comparable features also appear in the earlier biblical historical books (see, for instance 1 Kings 5:26) and in the writings of Herodotus, for instance: “it was from this *Perses* that the *Persians* took their name” (*Historia* 7.61); “these (i.e., the *Medians*) were in ancient times called by all men Arians, but when the Colchian woman *Medea* came from Athens among the Arians they changed their name . . .” (*Historia* 7.62).<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, despite this, no one labels Herodotus a “Midrashist”; rather, he is called the “father of history.”<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, the Chronicler is not simply a “copyist” or “plagiarist,” as he is called by some scholars: one who worked using the method of “cutting and pasting.” These definitions are, indeed, unjust. He is, rather, a creative artist, “a skilled professional historian with sophisticated writing methods at his disposal. He was a writer who not only selected material from the earlier books suitable to his aims but also rewrote, expressing the words in a fresh style and formulating them with a new literary mode.”<sup>33</sup>

My definition of the work as “historiography” and its author as “historian,” certainly *does not* depend on the questions of the historicity of Chronicles.<sup>34</sup> It also does not depend only on the self-perception of the narrator/author as a storyteller of past events. Rather, it depends on essential, additional criteria as they clearly reflect on the book itself. The Chronicler selects material from earlier “biblical” writings and evaluates them.<sup>35</sup> He reorganizes and edits the material in the order, context, and form he finds appropriate. He makes connections between the texts he collects, and he stylizes, reshapes, and interprets some of them as he finds appropriate. The Chronicler also attempts to express his “philosophy of history” (or, if you wish, his “theology”; see 2 Chron. 13) via the composition of speeches, prayers, letters; he occasionally explains what happened and so creates a literary work that fits well within late biblical historical writing.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Compare this method with that of Herodotus *Historia* 1.1 (Godley, *Herodotus*, vol. 1, p. 3), where he defines as one of his goals to ask “the reason why they warred against each other”; here “they” refers to Greeks and other foreigners.

<sup>28</sup> See, in detail, my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 23–27 and the references to the scholarly literature.

<sup>29</sup> See 1 Chron. 2:7; 10:13; 2 Chron. 19:5–8; 20:12; 32:2–7; and my chapter “Utilization of Pun/Paronomasia in the Chronistic Writing,” in *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 67–81, esp. 77–81, and the bibliography and detailed discussion.

<sup>30</sup> See my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 20–23 and further references there.

<sup>31</sup> Godley, *Herodotus*, vol. 3, p. 377.

<sup>32</sup> Noteworthy are the similarities (numerical exaggeration, ascribing of speeches, etc.) between Herodotus and the ancient Israelite historians. Nonetheless, on the

one hand, the early Israelite historical writings (for example, the J, E, and JE codices) and the Deuteronomistic History were completed long before Herodotus (such as Kings, ca. mid-sixth century B.C.E.; see also n. 63 below); on the other hand, Chronicles was composed after Herodotus (ca. 400–375 B.C.E.). It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the Chronicler adopted the methods of the earlier Hebrew (“biblical”) compositions rather than being influenced by the Greeks.

<sup>33</sup> See my *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 18–403 and the conclusion on pp. 407–9 (the citation is on p. 407).

<sup>34</sup> On this issue, see pp. 185–87 below.

<sup>35</sup> For more details on this issue, see pp. 187–89 below.

<sup>36</sup> I discuss all these criteria in detail in my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 29–39.



Now, all these features do not automatically make the book of Chronicles a reliable historical composition overall (that is, “history” in the sense of what actually happened) or its author a “scientific historian.” In order to illustrate my argument, I would say that the quality of the Chronicler as historian is not like that of the author(s) of the book of Kings, on the one hand, or like that of Thucydides (ca. 460–396 B.C.E.) and the Greek historian of Rome, Polybius (ca. 208–118 B.C.E.), on the other. The *main purpose* of the Chronicler—like that of many Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman historians in different times and places such as Herodotus (ca. 484–425 B.C.E.) and Titus Livius (59 B.C.E.–17 C.E.)—was not precise analysis of the “documents” and accurate description of the past events.

In the introduction to his *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535*, Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) states: “One has given the writing of history the task of judging the past, of teaching the contemporary world for its own benefit. The present endeavor does not have such high aims; it simply wishes to tell *how it actually happened* (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*).<sup>37</sup> The Chronicler’s aim was not just to describe the past, “how it actually happened,” without judging it and teaching it for the benefit of his contemporaries. These kinds of criteria or other, similar, standards of historical writing that dominated the concepts of some historians in the past (such as Thucydides and Polybius), and particularly historians in modern times, were not a priority for the Chronicler, and it is wrong to judge him according to those standards. Rather, the Chronicler uses the early texts/sources to advance his practical, social, political, moral, and religious agenda. He guides his audience by providing “historical” descriptions of national personalities who carefully observed (such as David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah), or did not observe (Saul, Jehoram, Joash in the second part of his reign, and Ahaz), the Pentateuchal commandments. As such, these personalities may be setting an example for the Chronicler’s contemporary audience and for future times as well. So *historia est magistra vitae*,<sup>38</sup> and the Chronicler does take up the task later neglected by Leopold von Ranke and his followers in modern times.<sup>39</sup> That is, he judges the past and attempts to teach it for the benefit of his contemporaries. These kinds of concerns from the Chronicler are not just due to his “theological” concerns and doctrines. He probably makes use of them to teach his society how to behave (that is, to obey God and his commandments) in order for the small community surrounded by troublesome neighbors to survive. At the same time, the Chronicler updates the language and style of the earlier texts and alters some of their informative contents, shapes their religious messages, and explains why events happened as they did.

The plausibility of the book of Chronicles as a historical source for the preexilic period is an issue entirely separate from its literary nature. The reliability problem of Chronicles should not overshadow the evaluation of the work’s central literary nature as historiography. Even if one considers the book as “poor history” (that is, as presenting inaccurate information), it is still historiographical in its intent and literary nature. As mentioned, no

<sup>37</sup> “Man hat der Historie das Amt, die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zu belehren, beygemessen: so hoher Aemter unterwindet sich gegenwärtiger Versuch nicht: er will bloß sagen, *wie es eigentlich gewesen*” (English translation and emphasis mine). See L. Ranke, *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1535* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1824), pp. v–vi (Leopold Ranke became Leopold von Ranke when he was knighted in 1865).

<sup>38</sup> See my *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 140–58, 310–11, and 339–40.

<sup>39</sup> Leopold von Ranke, with his 54 volumes on a variety of histories (world history, German history, etc.), was considered, already in his lifetime, the greatest historian in Europe. His influence as compared to that of other historians was profound. To cite the British historian G. P. Gooch, he was “the Goethe of historians and we all are his students.”

one denies that Herodotus presents numerous unreliable numerical data, speeches, and stories in his *Historia*, but neither does anyone deny that his book is historical, nor that its author should be considered a historian. Indeed, Herodotus himself stresses: “My obligation is to record what people say, but I am by no means bound to believe it—and that may be taken to apply to this book as a whole” (*Historia* 7.152; cf. 2.123).<sup>40</sup>

It is inaccurate to assert that “the Chronicler, as a historian, is thoroughly untrustworthy.”<sup>41</sup> It is inappropriate to deny the historical credibility of Chronicles as a whole by labeling it as Midrash,<sup>42</sup> commentary, theology, fantasy literature, etc. and thus automatically by definition to negate the entire historical credibility of the book. My definition of Chronicles, however, though *not* classifying the book automatically as a reliable historical composition, leaves ample space for a case-by-case examination in order to conclude whether any reliable information can be found there.<sup>43</sup> Each of the cases in Chronicles should be examined and evaluated very carefully from different viewpoints (textual, literary, philological, theological, and historical). The examination must be on its own merit and within its appropriate context, based on the best knowledge and deep analyses of related biblical and extrabiblical (epigraphic as well as archaeological) materials. Indeed, there are a number of reliable historical data on the preexilic and postexilic periods, in the lists and descriptive parts of the book, for example:

1. 1 Chron. 3:17–18 (“addition”) lists the *seven* sons of the exiled king, Jeconiah (= Jehoiachin/Coniah). Evidence that Jeconiah had children, at least five, emerges also from a Babylonian administrative document from the 13th year of Nebuchadnezzar/Nebuchadrezzar II (592 or 591 B.C.E.), which reports that food was supplied to the exiled and imprisoned Jeconiah and his *five* sons.<sup>44</sup>
2. The name “Anani,” the last in the list of Davidic decadents in 1 Chron. 3.24, is not an imagined name but a historical one, and most probably it is identical with the figure mentioned in the Elephantine papyri from the 14th year of Darius II, king of Persia (407 B.C.E.). According to the latter, the Jewish mercenaries sent a letter to Bagohi, the Persian governor of Yehud, to the high priest, Jehochanan (II), and to “Ostan the brother of Anani.”<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For a different English translation, see Godley, *Herodotus*, vol. 3, p. 463.

<sup>41</sup> So C. C. Torrey, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah*, BZAW 2 (Gießen, 1896), p. 52.

<sup>42</sup> For complete arguments on *why* Julius Wellhausen was misguided in his characterization of Chronicles and its author, see my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 20–23. Briefly, Wellhausen’s intention was, first and foremost, to date the Priestly Codex (P) in the postexilic era, while situating the Deuteronomistic Codex (D) in the monarchic era. Consequently, the books of Samuel and Kings have earlier sources that are woven together and edited by the Deuteronomist according to theological lines and in the spirit of Deuteronomy. The Chronicler, who lived hundreds of years later, used the books of Samuel and Kings as his raw material, worked on them in a midrashic mode according to the dictates of the Priestly Code. While Chronicles

represents Judaism and Jews in general who moved in a midrashic sphere, Samuel and Kings represent, in every sense, the ancient Israelite and their “real/true” continuation, that is, Christianity and Christians. For more on Wellhausen’s having followed Ranke’s historicist methodology, see my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, p. 22, n. 17.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

<sup>44</sup> See E. F. Weidner, “Jojachin, König von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten,” *Mélanges syriens offerts à M. René Dussaud* (Paris, 1939), vol. 2, pp. 923–35; Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 308b. For an explanation of the differences between the book of Chronicles and the Babylonian document regarding the number of sons, see my *Retelling of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition*, chap. 13, example 2.

<sup>45</sup> For full discussion of this issue, see my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 59–61.

3. The Chronicler mentions—in texts that have no parallel in any other place in the Hebrew Bible—a tribal entity named “Meʿunites.” The passages are within the context of the eighth century B.C.E., during the time of the Judean kings Uzziah (783–742 B.C.E.; 2 Chron. 26:7) and Hezekiah (716/15–687/86 B.C.E.; 1 Chron. 4:41).<sup>46</sup> The “Meʿunites,” who were located in the North Sinai–West Negev, are not an invention of the Chronicler; rather, they are a historical nomadic tribe as attested in the Calah Summary Inscription (Nimrud 400, lines 22–23) of Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria (744–727 B.C.E.).<sup>47</sup>
4. The report in 2 Chron. 32:30 (an “addition”; cf. 2 Kings 20:20) that King Hezekiah “closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and channeled them straight down on the west side of the city of David” (cf. 2 Chron. 32:2–4, “addition”), is evidence from the tunnel and inscription found in Siloam, both dating back to the period shortly before the Assyrian king Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah in 701 B.C.E.<sup>48</sup>
5. Most archaeologists accept that King Menasseh of Judah built a fortification wall in Jerusalem, as mentioned in 2 Chron. 33:14 (“addition”).<sup>49</sup>

### III. THE EVALUATION OF SOURCES

As a historian, the Chronicler evaluates his sources. The following examples illustrate this aspect of the Chronicist History:

1. As the Chronicler read his source, 1 Sam. 31, he probably asked himself why Saul was removed from the Israelite kingship after a brief period and why he and his sons were killed in the battle with the Philistines. Thus he evaluated the acts of Saul, on the one hand, and his removal and tragic death, on the other. Based on his understanding of the texts in Samuel and in accordance with his worldview (or “philosophy of history,” which was surely *theological* in nature—immediate reward [for good deeds] and punishment [for bad deeds] criteria), he added a short conclusion to his source: “So Saul died for his betrayal; he betrayed the Lord by not carrying out His word and also by inquiring of a ghost and seeking its guidance. While *not seeking guidance from the Lord*; therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom over to David, the son of Jesse” (1 Chron. 10:13–14, an “addition” to 1 Sam. 31).<sup>50</sup> Regardless of the statement “Saul *inquired of*

<sup>46</sup> Meʿunites mentioned probably also in 2 Chron. 20:1 (read as LXX: εκ των Μ[ε]ῦναιων [= Meʿunites], instead of MT: מְעֻנִיִּים [= Ammonites]) and in 26:8 (read as LXX: οἱ Μῦναιον, in place of MT: מְעֻנִיִּים).

<sup>47</sup> See H. Tadmor, “The Meʿunites in the Book of Chronicles in the Light of an Assyrian Document,” in B. Uffenheimer, ed., *Bible and Jewish History: Studies in Bible and Jewish History Dedicated to the Memory of Jacob Liver* (Tel Aviv, 1972), pp. 222–30 (Hebrew); R. Borger and H. Tadmor, “Zwei Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft aufgrund der Inschriften Tiglatpilesers III,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 94 (1982): 244–51, esp. 250–51; I. Ephʿal, *The Ancient Arabs: Nomads on the Borders of the Fertile Crescent 9th–5th Centuries B.C.* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 65–71; and H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria: Critical*

*Edition, with Introduction, Translations and Commentary* (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 178–79.

<sup>48</sup> For the Siloam Inscription, see Pritchard, *ANET*, p. 321b; F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp et al., *Hebrew Inscriptions: Texts from the Biblical Period of the Monarchy with Concordance* (New Haven and London, 2005), pp. 499–506.

<sup>49</sup> See in detail, I. Himbaza, “Le mur de Manassé (2 Chr xxxiii 14) entre archéologues et théologiens,” *Vetus Testamentum* 57 (2007): 283–94. It is worthwhile mentioning that large parts of 1 Chron. 12:1–41 were most likely based on an existing list(s?) available to the Chronicler.

<sup>50</sup> On these verses in Chronicles, see my *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 139–40, 209–10, and 339.

- the Lord, but the Lord did not reply to him . . ." (1 Sam. 28:6; see also v. 15), the Chronicler writes that Saul *did not seek* "guidance from the Lord." For him, if the Lord did not answer Saul, it means, in fact, that Saul did not in truth inquire of the Lord, since "the Lord is near to all who call on Him, *to all who call on him in truth*" (Ps. 145:18).<sup>51</sup>
2. The Chronicler read his source about the war between David and the Philistines, "and they (i.e., the Philistines) left their images there, and David and his men bore them away" (2 Sam. 5:21). For the Chronicler, it is impossible (or, if you wish, historically incorrect) that David, God's chosen king (2 Sam. 5,2//1 Chron. 11:2; 28:4, "addition") and the father and founder of the Israelite kingdom, did not know the Torah's law: "Burn the graven images of their gods with fire; do not covet silver and gold that is on them or take it for yourself" (Deut. 7:25 [see also 7:5]; 12:3). For the Chronicler it is also impossible that David knew the law and preferred to ignore it because of his greed for booty. Thus the Chronicler altered his source according to his historical assessment of the great Israelite personality and wrote how David acted: "and they left their gods there; and David commanded: 'let them be burned with fire'" (1 Chron. 14:12). In other words, David knew the law and acted accordingly.<sup>52</sup>
  3. The Chronicler read his source concerning the towns that King Solomon gave to Hiram, the king of Tyre, in exchange for the goods that the latter had supplied him with for the building of the Temple and the palace (1 Kings 9:10–13). He asked himself whether it was probable that Solomon, the richest Israelite king ever,<sup>53</sup> the one who was promised by the Lord "I have also given you that which you have not asked, *both riches, and honor; so that there shall not be any among the kings like you all your days*" (1 Kings 3:13)<sup>54</sup> was indeed unable to pay for goods that he purchased from Hiram. Is it possible that the Lord's chosen king, Solomon (1 Chron. 28:5–6; 29:1, "additions"),<sup>55</sup> transferred part of the Promised Land to a foreign ruler for goods and woods? For the Chronicler the answer to these questions was definitely negative. For him, the possibility that the Lord did not fulfill his promise to Solomon, or at least not fully, was unlikely. Thus he questioned the likelihood of such information in Kings and rejected it absolutely. Accordingly, the Chronicler turned the whole story upside down and wrote: "And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, during which Solomon had built the house of the Lord, and his own house. That *the towns which Hiram had gave to Solomon, Solomon built them, and made the people of Israel live there*" (2 Chron. 8:1–2).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See also Ezra 8:22b: "*the might of our God would ensure a successful outcome for all those who looked to him*; but His fierce anger is on all who forsake Him" (cf. v. 31). For this concept of the Chronicler, see 1 Chron. 28:9; 2 Chron. 15:2; and the detailed discussion in my *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 327–29.

<sup>52</sup> See, in detail, *ibid.*, pp. 154–56.

<sup>53</sup> See 2 Chron. 8:17–18//1 Kings 9:26–28; 2 Chron. 9:9–11 and 17–21//1 Kings 10:10–12 and 18–22.

<sup>54</sup> In the parallel text, the Chronicler intensifies this divine promise even more by altering and adding to the earlier text: "I will give you riches, wealth, and honor, such as *none of the kings have had that have been before you, neither shall any after you have the like*" (2 Chron. 1:12). See my *Reshaping of Ancient*

*Israelite History in Chronicles*, pp. 40–42, 223, and 312–13.

<sup>55</sup> 1 Chron. 28:6 alludes to the Nathan Prophecy in 1 Chron. 17:11–13//2 Sam. 7:12–14. In these places the Chronicler probably based his statement on 1 Kings 2:15b: "I (= Adonijah) should reign; but the kingdom is turned about, and has become my brother's (= Solomon's); *for it was his from the Lord.*" Since King Solomon was chosen by the Lord to succeed his father and to build the Temple, it excludes the probability of the opposing story in 1 Kings 1–2. Who would oppose someone chosen by the Lord himself? Thus the Chronicler omits that story altogether.

<sup>56</sup> On this issue, see more in my *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 40–42.

All in all, such evaluations by the Chronicler result either in an explanation of a historical event (such as in the first instance represented above), or they prevent a contradiction between the early source and the Torah (such as in the second instance), or they avoid an internal contradiction (such as in the third instance). Adopting the approach that is illustrated here represents the Chronicler in a very different and much more positive light. He did not falsify the events; rather, he evaluated them from a different perspective, a perspective with its own logic and set of justifications. Again, it does not mean that we modern historians must accept the methods of the Chronicler and credit them with reliability.

#### IV. COMPOSING A HISTORY: THE DIALECTIC OF THE PRESENT AND THE PAST

Writing a history—any history—does not just mean description of past events, institutions, personalities, and so on. Rather, it also means reviewing the past within the specific context of the historian's time, place, and social, religious, cultural, and political circumstances. Thus the "past" never becomes just a "past," and in fact it is never dead. Rather, it continues to be shaped and reshaped depending on a historian's place, time, and various conditions. The historian—any historian—belongs to the context of history in which he grows up, lives, and composes, no less than history belongs to the historian as the neutral tasks of study, scholarship, and writing. Thus any understanding of the historical event(s) is itself historical, since it is some sort of integration between the historical subject and the historian's subjective—*uncontrollable*—conditions and personality.

Several chapters of my volume, *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, strive to demonstrate that the Chronicler was conditioned by his time, place, and historical context. As such, and no one can ignore these, the Chronicler selects from the earlier texts and themes connected with Israel's past that are related to his own agenda and audience. He evaluates those texts and themes, relating the past from his own sociohistorical context and norms and from the viewpoint of his literary and religious standards and concerns. In other words, Chronicles primarily represents the views of its author about the past in such a manner as to make it applicable to his time and generation, rather than an accurate representation of the times and generations spoken about.

Indeed, the message of the Chronicler was definitely different from that of the earlier biblical-historical works and was directed at a different time, place, and audience. It was adjusted to contemporary, local, and new historical circumstances. Therefore, the Chronicler's work should be valued as a significant contribution to the dialectic between the historian of the Second Temple era and the preexilic period, via the retelling of the history of the Israelites, especially that of Judahites, in the time of David and the Davidic dynasty. Such a dialectic brings with it an evaluation of Israelite history from the perspective of a historian in the Second Commonwealth era. The following examples illustrate my point:

1. The Chronicler centers his writing on the tribe of Judah, the history of the Davidic dynasty, paying particular attention to Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Temple, and its services and servers. Presumably, the Chronicler's focus on these issues stems from the actual functions that these served in his own time. In other words, he attempts to enhance the holiness and superiority of his own contemporary Temple, and his own place—Jerusalem—and his own Judahite community in Yehud Medinta (in the province of Judah)

and its leaders—the Davidic descendant Anani and the High Priest. The Chronicler describes the high priest in the Kingdom of Judah as the institution was reflected in his own time in Yehud Medinta.<sup>57</sup> Since he treats the Levites in such detail and in such a positive light,<sup>58</sup> we may assume he was probably one of them.

2. The Chronicler describes Jerusalem as the place where David and his sons lived, almost uninterruptedly, from the time of the capture of the city by David until, presumably, the Chronicler's own time in the Persian period (end of the fifth to the first quarter of the fourth century B.C.E.). It seems that the Chronicler's main purpose was to depict Jerusalem as the ultimate and almost continual residential city of David's descendants. Furthermore, he uses the postexilic list of Jerusalem's inhabitants in Neh. 11 as the "climax" of his work's genealogical and ethnographical introduction (1 Chron. 1–9), though the list breaks off at the genealogy of Saul's house (1 Chron. 8:29–38, "addition") and the tragic death of Saul and his sons (1 Chron. 10//1 Sam. 31).<sup>59</sup> The picture that emerges from 1 Chron. 9 is that Jerusalem was inhabited *willingly* by all of Israel. The city was the center of the whole nation, of the northern as well as of the southern tribes. Moreover, through many changes in the text of Samuel and a unique description of the capture of the city, the Chronicler was probably attempting to enhance the reputation of his contemporary, unpopulated provincial town of Jerusalem (Neh. 11:3–19//1 Chron. 9:2–17) and to make it appealing as a desirable national center for potential inhabitants. In other words, the Chronicler was probably trying to encourage the inhabitants of Yehud Medinta as well as Jews from the Diaspora (especially the Egyptian and Babylonian *Gola*) to move to Jerusalem and live in the city continuously, while showing how important the city was and that the descendants of the only lawful chosen dynasty were and actually are (Anani, who was mentioned as the *seventh* son in 1 Chron. 3:24 and in the Elephantine papyri)<sup>60</sup> almost always its constant residents. Let us not forget that several years earlier Nehemiah had forced some provincial Jews to reside in the depopulated city of Jerusalem.<sup>61</sup>
3. Through various literary efforts, the Chronicler attempts to enhance the great sanctity of the Temple and its site, vessels, and servants, presumably in order to highlight the holiness as well as the significance of his own small, poorly built and furnished Temple. He relates the Temple site to the binding of Isaac (*Aqedah*; Gen. 22:1–19), which is not mentioned in the parallel text in the book of Kings (2 Chron. 3:1, "addition" to 1 Kings 6). The clear references to the stories of the *Aqedah*, the census, and Araunah's threshing floor (2 Sam. 24//1 Chron. 21:1–22:1) were probably intended to endow Zerubbabel's Temple with a special degree of sanctity, since it could not compare with Solomon's Temple in size, wealth, and ritual accessories.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, in all probability the texts

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 140–42 and 182–85.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, 1 Chron. 15:11–24; 23–26; 16:4 ("additions"), and cf. 2 Chron. 34:30 with the parallel text in 2 Kings 23:2.

<sup>59</sup> In order to create a literary proximity between the genealogy of the house of Saul and the story about Saul's death, the Chronicler repeats the genealogy also in 1 Chron. 9:39–44 (resumptive repetition/*Wiederaufnahme*); see my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> See also sec. II, example 2, p. 186 above.

<sup>61</sup> See my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 85–

108 and 125–41. It is noteworthy that in fact this situation in Jerusalem did not change much after the encouragement prophecies of Zechariah on the city (Zechariah 8) about a century earlier.

<sup>62</sup> See, in detail, my chapter "The Land/Mount Moriah, and the Site of the Jerusalem Temple in Biblical Historical Writing," in my *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy: Studies in Scriptures in the Shadow of Internal and External Controversies*, Jewish and Christian Heritage Series 2 (Assen, 2002), pp. 9–32, esp. 25–31.

and stories also contain a hidden polemic against the Samaritan sacred place on Mount Gerizim concerning the chosen and most holy ritual place.<sup>63</sup>

4. In contrast to his *Vorlage*, the Deuteronomistic History (2 Kings 24:8–17), the Chronicler stresses that Nebuchadnezzar II had removed the Temple vessels in the time of Jehoiachin (597 B.C.E.), and that they had not been damaged (2 Chron. 36:10). The rest of the Temple vessels were treated similarly later on (i.e., not damaged), when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem (587 or 586 B.C.E.; 2 Chron. 36:18, “addition”). In other words, the time when all the sacred vessels were in Babylon was seen as a time of waiting when God would give them His attention and bring them back. These things happened, indeed, at the time of Cyrus the Great, when Sheshbazzar led the returning exiles to Zion and brought with him “the vessels of the house of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:7; see also 5:13–15; 6:5). In other words, the Chronicler would like to tell us that the vessels of Zerubbabel’s Temple, that is, the Chronicler’s own Temple, are the same as those of Solomon’s Temple. This is in clear opposition with those who negate this and speak with disrespect about Zerubbabel’s poor Temple, as expressed in the book of Haggai and other Second Temple’s writings.<sup>64</sup>
5. As already noted in the scholarship, the Chronicler judges the historical personalities of the monarchic era, such as David and Solomon, and their acts as though the Deuteronomistic and the Priestly Codices existed in those past times as they existed in his own time, the Persian age.<sup>65</sup>
6. The Chronicler omits the last part of Cyrus’s edict. He chooses to close his composition with a call for immigration to the Land of Israel, יֵעַל “so let him go up.” This closing seems a practical “Zionist” encouragement of immigration from the existing Jewish communities of the *Gola* to Yehud Medinta.<sup>66</sup>

Overall, according to our knowledge of the sources, Chronicles is the first work of its kind in the mid-Second Temple period<sup>67</sup> and seems to have been greatly needed by its generation, considering the social, religious, linguistic, and literary norms that had developed especially after the composition of Samuel and Kings many generations earlier. Accordingly, Chronicles

<sup>63</sup> See my chapter “The Affiliation of Abraham and the *Aqedah* with Zion/Gerizim in Jewish and Samaritan Sources,” in my *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy*, pp. 33–58 and I. Kalimi and J. D. Purvis, “The Hiding of the Temple Vessels in Jewish and Samaritan Literature,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994): 679–85.

<sup>64</sup> The preservation of the vessels in Babylon, stressed by the Chronicler and Ezra (1–6), may be contrasted with traditions in Jewish and in Samaritan literature, which claim that some of the furnishings of the sanctuary, including the vessels, had been hidden in the earth until the eschatological time when the cultic service would be re-performed. See my chapter “The Affiliation of Abraham and the *Aqedah* with Zion/Gerizim,” in *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy*, pp. 33–58 and my chapter “The Twilight of Jerusalem: King Jehoiachin and the Temple’s Vessels in the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic History,” in *An*

*Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 115–23.

<sup>65</sup> See the examples pointed out in my *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 142–47 and 149–56.

<sup>66</sup> See my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 152–55. There are several other examples that support my perspective; see my *Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History*, pp. 140–58; 182–85; 279–80; 289–90; 312, n. 38; 314, n. 44 and my chapter “The Land/Mount Moriah,” in *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy*, pp. 25–31. See also my *An Ancient Israelite Historian*, pp. 85–157.

<sup>67</sup> I support the idea of the double redaction of the Deuteronomistic History: it was mostly written in the monarchic period (probably during Josianic times) and completed in the exilic era, ca. 550 B.C.E. For detailed references, see my chapter “The Land/Mount Moriah,” in *Early Jewish Exegesis and Theological Controversy*, pp. 23–24, n. 40.

and the Chronicler represent the principle of “each generation with its own historiography and historian.” Since *veritas filia temporis*,<sup>68</sup> Chronicles is the “right” composition, “the true one,” for its time, place, and audience.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This article attempts to present the book of Chronicles in a historical light in order to do justice to the book and its author. It concludes that the principal literary nature of *the book as a whole* is historiography (specifically, a “sacred-didactic” historical writing; that is, its “philosophy of history” is mainly theological and its purpose didactic in nature). The existence of some exaggerated numbers; fictive speeches, prayers, and letters; theological features, inner-interpretations; and midrashic elements cannot change the definition of the book as historical writing. In fact, all these elements also exist in other writings, such as in early biblical historical writing, in ancient Near Eastern documents, and in Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman historiography. These works were recognized overall as being essentially historical writing.

As a historian, the Chronicler evaluates the sources he borrowed from earlier “biblical” writings. The evaluation took place in his own specific manner and in the context of his own historical, cultural, and religious norms. The Chronicler did not intend to describe past events, institutions, and personalities as they really happened or existed in reality. Rather, he meant to review the past within the specific context of his own time, place, social, religious, cultural, and political circumstances. This article demonstrates that as one who is conditioned by his time, place, and historical context, the Chronicler selects from earlier texts and themes having to do with Israel’s past that are related to his own agenda and audience. He evaluates those texts and themes, telling us about the past from his own sociohistorical context and norms and literary and religious standards and concerns. One has to understand the book in light of the historical context in which the Chronicler approached his data.

The perspective that is presented here shows the Chronicler in a very different and much more positive light than is usually considered in scholarly works. The Chronicler evaluated the old material from a viewpoint with its own logic and set of justifications. This does not mean, however, that the modern historian must accept the writings and methods of the Chronicler and uncritically credit them with historical reliability. There is a germ of historical veracity in some of the events or in their details recounted in the books. The role of the modern historian is to evaluate very carefully this intriguing document in order to extract some potentially reliable historical data for the pre- and postexilic periods in the history of ancient Israel.

<sup>68</sup> On this dictum, see the stimulating article by B. Dooley, “*Veritas filia Temporis*: Experience and Belief in Early Modern Culture,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1999): 487–504.