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Review of J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*

Michael Carasik
University of Pennsylvania, mcarasik@sas.upenn.edu

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J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (2nd ed.; Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006). Pp. xxii + 562. Paper, US\$39.95. ISBN 0-664-22358-3.

Twenty years after the publication of the first edition, Miller & Hayes' well-regarded *History of Ancient Israel and Judah* has been given a thorough, welcome updating. The book maintains a moderate position between the two extremes that have been labeled "maximalism" and "minimalism." They expected their earlier volume to draw fire from both sides of the debate, and "[t]his turned out to be the case" (p. xvii). The new edition perhaps takes a slight step further toward the minimalist side, but (as the authors note) "the center of gravity of the discussion" (p. xvii) has moved even farther in that direction. My tack in this review will be to discuss the general nature of the changes, and particularly those pointed to by the authors themselves, and then to look at two specific sections more closely to see how they have changed.

The book follows the same outline as in the first edition, but has been significantly expanded, with more pages, more charts, maps, and pictures, and more references. The maps, even those that are essentially the same as in the first edition, have been redrawn (perhaps for technical reasons?). Instead of a chapter-by-chapter bibliography at the end of the book, there are now footnotes, plus a "General Bibliography" at the end of every chapter. The most noticeable expansions are two: The first edition's chapter 2, "The Question of Origins," is now split into two, with "The Biblical Evidence" left in a chapter on its own, preceded by a greatly expanded chapter on "Epigraphy and Archaeology." Next, most of "Separate Kingdoms," Chapter 7 in the first edition, has been renamed after one of its sections, "Four Decades of Hostilities," and a new "Separate Kingdoms" chapter examines "the strengths and limitations of our sources of information" pertaining to that period. A further step away from the influence of the Bible is felt in slight adjustments of the names of the first few historical chapters of the book: "Before Any King Ruled in Israel," "The Early Israelite Monarchy," "David, King of Jerusalem," and "The Reign of Solomon" have become "Earliest Israel," "Eli, Samuel, and Saul," "David," and "Solomon." As you can see, the historical discussion still begins in the period Bible readers think of as that of the "Judges."

The book ends with the same two paragraphs as did the first edition, beginning with the remark, "[w]e know practically nothing about the history of the Jewish community between Ezra-Nehemiah and the conquest of Alexander the Great" (p. 538). (My perhaps mistaken impression is that we *do* know somewhat more about this period now than we did twenty years ago.) But the preceding subsection, "Ezra's Attempted Reform," can demonstrate the nature of the revision and the stance taken by Miller and Hayes. It, too, is essentially the same as in the first edition, but with the addition of two paragraphs discussing the suggestion that the Torah was produced "through the influence or at the bequest [behest? request?] of Persian imperial authority" (p. 537). "Such a theory would help to explain" both the "compromise" nature of the work as well as how it became sacred scripture for the Jews both in Samaria and in Judah. But there is "no direct evidence" for this theory, and the Torah is "much more than a collection of laws." At this point, the new edition returns to the first edition at the paragraph beginning with "Ezra learned that intermarriage with foreign women was widespread" (p. 473, 1st ed.)—but with a slight revision: "Ezra, we are told, learned that intermarriage with foreign women was

widespread in the community.” The following biblical quotation differs as well; Miller and Hayes now use the NRSV, rather than the RSV, as their base text for the Bible.

Compare, similarly, the treatment of Hezekiah. It retains the same structure as in the earlier edition. But the subsection “Sargon and Hezekiah” has a much expanded discussion. Where the first edition ended the Hezekiah section with two quotations from the book of Isaiah, the second omits them in favor of a new half-page's worth of historical summary. One of the quotations from Isaiah simply disappears; the other is relegated to a single sentence 13 pages earlier.

The book concludes, as did the first edition, with a Scripture Index and a Name Index, though the Scripture Index now comes first. (It continues to follow the order of the books in the Christian Bible, appropriately since a few references to the Apocrypha and the New Testament are included.) Some of the translations of ancient texts have been updated: “Ramesses III's War against the Sea Peoples” still comes from ANET, but the Amarna letter of Abdi-Hepa is now taken from Moran's 1992 translation, and the Merneptah Stele excerpt comes from an article by Rainey in *IEJ*.

No doubt those who take a more extreme position on how Israelite history should be written will continue to snipe at this book from either side. For those who are looking for a sober and scholarly attempt to understand that history, Miller and Hayes' new edition can be highly recommended. The major issues that have arisen in the last 20 years are dealt with here (e.g., Finkelstein's lowering of the date of the “Solomonic” gates of Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor to the 9th century), but they are treated with a solid dose of “on the one hand this ...on the other hand that.” Personally I find that Miller and Hayes seem to base their judgment on a quite careful evaluation of the facts that we have. If their delicate balancing act often leaves a reader wondering about what “actually happened,” this is the inevitable result of any honest examination of the past.

Michael Carasik, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania