

Glossary

Note that words in **boldface** are cross-references to other words in the glossary.

‘am-ha’arets: Hebrew for “people of the land.”

According to Kessler, this is an economically powerful upper class who were “landed aristocracy” or aristocrats whose socioeconomic power base lies in their extensive landholdings.

‘ele-ha’arets: Hebrew for “the elite of the land.”

The leading figures of the **‘am-ha’arets**.

Agnatic descent: In genealogy, descent and relationship through the father’s line.

Amphictyony: An association of ancient Greek tribes that were together maintained and defended a central cultic shrine. The German Hebrew Bible scholar Martin Noth adopted this idea to understand pre-state Israel’s political organization. In Noth’s understanding, pre-state Israel was an amphictyony in that Israel’s tribes were united in their devotion to YHWH and periodically gathered at Shechem to renew their covenant with YHWH. Modern scholarship has discredited Noth’s hypothesis.

Ancient class society: A class-based society that develops from the chronic indebtedness of one group to another.

anwe-ha’arets: Hebrew for “the poor of the land.”

This was the lower class in ancient Israel, the “poorest of the poor,” who were frequently exploited by the upper class, the **‘am-ha’arets**.

Archaeological reconstruction (also just “reconstruction”): Once excavated, scholars must interpret the nature and use of artifacts and structures. Is a building a barn or is it a house? Or is it perhaps both? Is a small statue

purely figurative or is it an image of a deity used for ritual purposes?

Biblical antiquities: The investigation of both the results of archaeological excavations of biblically related sites and ancient culture as reflected in the biblical text in order to elucidate the meaning of the biblical text. Synonymous with “biblical archaeology.”

Biblical archaeology: A late nineteenth-, early twentieth-century synonym for biblical antiquities.

Bulla (pl. bullae): A seal impression in clay. Interpretation of the text and pictures on the seal impression provide important data in reconstructing an ancient society.

Canaan: Depending upon context, this word can mean either the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River or all of Palestine. In either definition, it includes Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, plus adjoining coastal lands and parts of Lebanon and Syria.

Clan: The unit of social organization just below **tribe** in ancient Israel. Each clan consisted of a number of families, each of whom considered themselves related to the other families in the clan.

Confederation: According to German sociologist Max Weber, the farmers and semi-nomads of pre-state Israel developed “a community of interests,” a similar group of socioeconomic concerns. These two groups, united in their community of interests, united with each other in a covenant of military cooperation “under and with YHWH as the war god of the covenant.” This unification of the farmers and semi-nomads, Weber called a “confederation”

and understood it as having no enduring political institutions. Therefore the confederation was only a religiously united ad hoc military organization.

Conquest narrative: The narrative in Joshua that describes the Israelite's conquest of the Land after their exile from Egypt. Depending upon which scholar one reads this narrative extends from Joshua 2–9, 2–10, or 2–12 (and perhaps other variations as well).

Book of the Covenant (also called the Covenant Code): the material in Exod 20:19—23:33

Criterion of datability: One of the two criteria (see also **criterion of temporal proximity**) that define a **primary source**. This criterion requires a relatively precise date for the historical source as based on archaeological data.

Criterion of temporal proximity: One of the two criteria (see also **criterion of datability**) that define a **primary source**. This criterion requires that the historical source developed during or after the events it reports.

Deutero-Isaiah (also called Second Isaiah): Isaiah 40–55 (some scholars think that Deutero-Isaiah also includes Isaiah 56–66). According to the most commonly accepted theory about Isaiah's development, Isaiah consists of three collections of materials: First Isaiah related directly to the historical prophet Isaiah, Second Isaiah from the exilic period, and Third Isaiah (also called Trito-Isaiah) from the post-exilic period.

Deuteronomistic/deuteronomistic texts: Referring to exilic-age material compiled by a redactor known as the Deuteronomist.

Diachronic development: The development of something—be it a culture, concept, book, or what have you—through time.

Diadochoi: Greek for “successors.” Used to refer to the generals who succeeded Alexander the Great after his death and divided up his kingdom.

Dyarchy: Rule by two. Used to describe Ezra's view that the high priest in Yehud, Jeshua, and Yehud's governor, Zerubbabel, always acted

together and to describe Zechariah's vision of a future Israel in which the high priest and king always act in concert.

Egalitarian society: With reference to **segmented lineage societies**, each segment (tribe, clan, family) of the society have equal rights with respect to their mutual status in terms of their relationship to a common ancestor. An egalitarian society *does not* mean that these segments possess economic equality or similar size. Neither does it indicate anything about the social equality of individuals.

Endogamy: Marriage within one's own clan, so that one is marrying a distant relative. In ancient Israel, this insured that inherited property did not fall into the hands of non-Israelites (or later non-Jews) and that the traditional Israelite (or Jewish) faith would be preserved.

Epigraphy: The scholarly study of ancient texts inscribed on stone, metal, potsherds, and similar substances.

Ereignisgeschichte: Kessler's German term for “political history” or what is here translated as “history of events.”

Ethnology: That branch of anthropology that studies the nature of human societies cross-culturally.

Ethnos: The Hellenistic Greek term for an ethnic group that had long resided in one area. Such groups possessed a certain legal status under the rule of the Greeks and the various kingdoms that succeeded Alexander the Great. The Jews in Palestine and Egypt possessed this designation.

Exegesis: A critical analysis of a text, especially a biblical text for the purposes of interpreting the text within its original cultural and historical setting.

Former Prophets (*Nevi'im Rishonim* in

Hebrew): The books Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and 1–2 Kings. In the Hebrew Bible, these books are part of the *Nebiim* (Hebrew for “prophets”). The Latter Prophets (*Nevi'im Aharonim*) consists of those books that are regarded as prophetic books in the Christian canon.

Gerousia: One of two bodies, the other being the priesthood, that represented the Jews during the Hellenistic era.

Hasidim: A poorly understood Jewish group in Seleucid era Palestine. It appears, according to Kessler, that this group professed the same devout piety as the poorer classes but are not necessarily to be identified as upper class. They may have also been a group that were “wise,” that is, they taught the deeper aspects of Jewish life and faith to other Jews.

High chronology: The dating of various excavated Israelite structures to the tenth century, in other words, an early date that allows one to see these buildings as evidence of Solomonic building. See also **low chronology**.

Historical minimalism: A school of thought in the study of Israelite history that states that only external evidence, that is, nonbiblical texts and archaeological data, can be used to reconstruct Israelite history. According to this school of thought, it is doubtful that Saul, Solomon, or David and their respective kingdoms ever existed.

History of institutions: The history of a society from the perspective of its institutions. For example, we can write the history of Israel from the perspective of the monarchy, from the perspective of its legal systems, or from the perspective of the family.

History of time periods (epochs): A history of a society written from the perspective of its constituent eras. For Israel, this would include the pre-monarchic era, the United Monarchy, the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the exilic era, the postexilic era, and the Hellenistic period.

History over the long term: The historical relationship between a given society and its physical environment. For example, ancient Levantine cultures subsisted primarily by nomadism until the advent of agriculture.

Incomplete early state: A stage in a state’s development in which there is a king who rules only over a territory occupied by his blood relations, a minimal bureaucracy consisting of the

king’s relatives, and no established income for the king except his own agricultural work.

Institution: An important organization, practice, or relationship within a culture such as marriage, kingship, initiation rituals, and similar phenomena.

Intentional tradition: The intended message of a biblical text. For example, Proverbs gives multiple examples of living wisely. See also **unintentional tradition**.

Judith: One of the books of the Apocrypha that narrates how the Jewish widow Judith single-handedly saves the Jews by killing the Assyrian general Holofernes. Judith is significant for Israelite/Jewish social history in providing an ideal portrait of widowhood in the Hellenistic era.

Kinship-based society: A society in which the family is the basic unit.

Lectura popular: Published Bible studies undertaken by groups of poor Latin American laypeople, which were done precisely in light of their poverty and their Christian faith.

Letter of Aristeas: A noncanonical text written by a Hellenistic Jew in the mid-second century BCE that fictionally describes how the **Septuagint** was written.

Letter of Jeremiah: Jer 29:1-23. A letter from the prophet Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon offering them hope in their grim situation.

Levant: The area demarcated by modern Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

Liberation theology: A branch of theology, Roman Catholic in origin, that emphasizes the Christian church’s role in acting on behalf of society’s poor and oppressed. Influenced by Marxist ideas that society reflects economic class conflict, by philosophical notions about the need for philosophy to not just think about the nature of the world but to actively change it, and by biblical texts (especially the exodus from Egypt, the prophets, and the Gospels) that emphasize the need to care for the poor and oppressed.

Low chronology: The dating of various excavated Israelite structures to the eighth century, in other words, a late date that causes one to see these buildings as projects undertaken by the Northern Kingdom's monarchy. See also **high chronology**.

Maccabees: The name of the Jewish family that revolted against Seleucid rule in 167 BCE and ultimately founded a dynasty that lasted until 63 BCE.

Marxist biblical criticism: A form of academic biblical study that uses Marxist concepts to understand biblical texts. The major result of this approach is an emphasis on understanding economic class struggles that are either implied by the text or directly addressed by the text.

Minimalism: See **historical minimalism**

Narrated time: The supposed time that the text is set in. Anachronisms in Genesis 24 indicate that the author of the text lived in a much later time than the time the story is supposed to take place.

Norm (in legal texts): The legal text's author ideal picture of what society should be and how it should behave. See also **reality (in legal texts)**.

Oniades: One of the great families, see also **Tobiads**, who had great influence in Jewish affairs during the Ptolemaic and Seleucid eras.

Palestine: That portion of the Mediterranean coast bounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the Jordan River, the Negev desert, and the Lake of Galilee.

Pariah people: German sociologist Max Weber's understanding of the Jews as a people isolated from surrounding society in a "self-chosen ghetto existence."

Participatory monarchy: With respect to ancient Judah, this was a monarchy in which the civil service aristocracy and the landed aristocracy both had the ability to limit the king's power. However, the king remained the final authority in all matters.

Patriarchal family: A family in which the husband is head of the household, represents the

family in public, and in which the wife's role is restricted strictly to the domestic sphere.

Polis (pl. poleis): The Greek word for "city."

However, this word also implied that the city's government ruled over the immediately surrounding countryside.

Pre-state period: That period of time in ancient Israel before the monarchy developed.

Primary sources: Historical sources whose relatively precise date has been determined using archaeological data and that originated during or shortly after the reported events. See also **criterion of datability** and **criterion of temporal proximity**. Such sources include artifacts and inscriptions.

Primary state-construction: When central government appears for the first time without a surrounding influence from other states in the surrounding environment.

Prostasia: The official representative of the Palestinian Jews before the Ptolemaic government, who also served as chief tax collector.

Provincial society: A society ruled by a governor who acts under the orders of a distant governmental authority.

Ptolemaic kleruchy: A group of soldiers in the Ptolemaic kingdom who served in return for a grant of land.

Realia: The physical objects (pottery, houses, altars, inscriptions, and similar items), places, and social institutions used by scholars to study a given society.

Reality (in legal texts): The real social situation that the legal text addresses. See also **norm (in legal texts)**.

Religious sociology: Synonym for **sociology of religion**.

Royal ideology: An idealized view of kingship in the ancient Near East in which the king protected the interests of the poor and needy.

Samaria: The name for the area that was originally the northern kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel. It had a history separate from Judah from the time of the northern kingdom's downfall in 722 BCE eventually culminating in the construction of a separate temple on

Mount Gerazim in Samaria and the development of a religious tradition separate from, but closely related to, Judaism.

Secondary sources: Later historical sources that describe or depict earlier historical events. For the purposes of this book, the major secondary source is the text of the Hebrew Bible. Also included would be documents such as Josephus's various historical works.

Secondary state-construction: When a central government appears in a society under the influence of states in the society's environment.

Segmented lineage societies: Societies in which the constituent parts are organized by descent through the male line to a common ancestor. Further each constituent part, those parts or segments (tribes, clans, families) equally related to the same ancestor, have equal rights. See also **egalitarian society**.

Sensus literalis: The "literal sense" of a biblical text, that is, its plain grammatical sense in light of its historical sociocultural setting.

Septuagint: The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. It was developed by Diaspora Jewish scholars for the sake of Greek-speaking Jews who did not know Greek and includes books, now called the Apocrypha, that did not make it into the Hebrew Bible canon.

Sitz im Leben: "Life setting." A type of biblical exegesis in which the scholar attempts to reconstruct the social setting of a particular textual genre. For example, the *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 8 is the enthronement of a new king in ancient Israel or Judah.

Social history: A history of the development of a particular aspect of a society: the evolution of the Israelite family over time, the development of the monarchy, the development of the Israelite priesthood, and so forth.

Social-historical biblical exegesis: synonym for **social-historical interpretation**.

Social-historical interpretation: The interpretation of a text using the methods of social history.

Sociology of religion: A subdivision of sociology that studies a given religion in terms of social categories (institutions, leaders, and so forth) and the relationship of that religion to the society that produced it.

Song of Deborah: A victory song recorded in Judg 5:2-31a that celebrates the triumph of Israel over a Canaanite army. This song is often thought to be the oldest text in the Hebrew Bible, possibly dating to the twelfth century BCE.

Stele: An ancient inscribed stone slab or pillar often erected for commemorative purposes.

Structural analogies: For social historical study, these are analogies between societies based on their simultaneous existence in the same environment or an ancient society and a similar society in the present. Both ancient Israel and various modern societies include some aspect(s) of nomadism in their history and/or structure. Therefore, one may draw analogies between these societies based on nomadism.

Syro-Palestine: The area bounded by modern Syria, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, Israel, and the West Bank.

Tertiary sources: For the purposes of this book, a tertiary source is a descriptive analogy or theoretical model developed by anthropologists and ethnologists that is applied to ancient Israelite society.

Time of narrating (also time of the narrative): The actual time period in which the narrator of a text lives. The narrator of Jeremiah 32, based on the correlation between data in the text and the outside world, actually lived during the events he narrates.

Tobiades: One of two great families, see also **Oniads**, who had great influence in Jewish affairs during the Ptolemaic and Seleucid eras. They were involved in banking in the Ptolemaic city of Alexandria. They held the office of high priest and usually the **protasia**.

Tobit: One of the books of the Apocrypha that narrates how the devout and generous Diaspora Jew Tobit regains his sight and gains a

sister-in-law through the adventures of his son Tobias and the angel Raphael (disguised as Azariah). The book is significant for the information it provides about family life, marital customs, almsgiving, and other aspects of Jewish life during the Hellenistic era.

Traditional authority: A phrase that Kessler adopts from German sociologist Max Weber to describe patterns of authority in pre-state Israel. In this model, “elders” are appointed to represent the various families within a city to settle common business including conflicts.

Tribe: The highest unit of social organization in ancient Israel (below the level of *Israel* itself). Each tribe consisted of a group of clans that laid claim to the same male ancestor. Thus the all the clans in the tribe of Benjamin

considered themselves to be descended from Benjamin.

Typical early state: A stage in a state’s development in which the king now rules over territory in which the population is not necessarily related to the king, the royal bureaucracy has expanded and consists of individuals other than the king’s relatives, and the king and his court no longer participate in agricultural production.

Unintentional tradition: Information unintentionally passed on in a biblical text. The book of Proverbs, in describing wise behavior, unintentionally passes along information about Israelite family life, economic activity, and other social data. See also **intentional tradition**.