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Chronicles as Revisionist Religious History

Abstract

Chronicles takes history and reconstructs it to make it more acceptable in terms of its time and place. The Chronicler writes a form of revisionist religious history, to revitalize, reinvigorate, and renew Judaism for the returning exiles from Babylon and their descendants. Chronicles is selective history. The Chronicler understands that Moses created the nation of Israel from a group of slaves, and that David created a dynastic monarchic system of government. By the time Chronicles is written, that system was gone and what replaces it is a religion based on the Temple, the cultus and the attendant Levitical personnel.

Keywords: Chronicles, revisionist history, Temple/cultus, Levites, covenant

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Introduction

This article is about the purposes of the biblical book of Chronicles as a revisionist religious history of Israel. It highlights some of the Chronicler's major religious/cultic concerns: the Jerusalem Temple, the cultus itself, and the attending Levitical personnel. It also suggests the Chronicler's promotion of something akin to a Jerusalem-based Levitical Covenant.

Chronicles is a work that presents a *version* of history. It takes the Israelite past and reconstructs it to make it more acceptable in terms of the concerns of its own time and place. Chronicles reflects a revisionist religious account of times gone by. It is purposeful history: to revitalize, reinvigorate, and renew Judaism for its audience, namely the returning exiles from Babylon and their descendants now living in Judah in the 5th/4th centuries BCE.¹ That community has reasons to be despondent. There is neither a Davidic dynasty ruling, nor a fully independent state. Some years earlier, Second Isaiah had spoken of a glorious future, but his words do not match the reality of the world before them. Isaiah had prophesied:

“For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring. They shall spring up like a green tamarisk, like willows by flowing streams” (Isa. 44:3-4).

“Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame” (Isa. 49:23).

“For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song” (Isa. 51:3).

Yet in their present day reality life is a continuing struggle. The community in Judah needs a new focus, a new way to understand its Covenant with God.

Overview of Chronicles

As shall be noted, the author of Chronicles comprehends that Moses created the nation of Israel from a group of slaves (the Sinai Covenant, see below). Chronicles also understands that David created a dynastic monarchic system of government (the Zion Covenant, see below). The post-exilic community had been led by Zerubbabel, a descendant of David (1 Chr. 3:19; Hag. 1:1). Yet, the Davidic house as a political force has ceased to be; it is unlikely to be reinstated. This contradicts the words of Haggai (2:20 ff.) and Zechariah (4:6 ff.). Zechariah spoke of God designating a successor for

the Davidic line (presumably Zerubbabel), terming this person, “My servant the Branch” (Zech. 3:8), someone who would rebuild the Temple (Zech. 6:12 ff.). Haggai’s promises and prophecies have come to naught. “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.” (Hag. 2:9) Where is this latter splendor, the people wonder?

Chronicles therefore provides a new way of understanding the Covenant between God and Israel. Instead of the political heyday of the Davidic dynasty, the Covenant will be a religious system based on the Jerusalem Temple, the cultus, and the attending Levitical personnel.² Chronicles is a complex book with different themes and concerns. This kind of a Levitical-based Covenant is not the soul and substance of Chronicles, but it is a major issue in the book.³

Central for the thinking of the Chronicler is that God’s rule is ever present, it is constant and direct. God governs the people with a measure of strict justice. “In several respects, the Chronicler’s view of divine justice seems to develop from that of Ezekiel. The most important point of difference, however, lies in its perspective: the Lord’s absolute just rule of his people is not a wish or a promise for the future (cf. Jer. 31.29-30; Ezek. 3.17-21; 18.1-32), but an established fact, proven by historical experience . . . The human side of this mutual relationship is expressed by worship, and the Chronicler advances the religious life of Israel as a major topic of his historical account.”⁴

The author of Chronicles has many materials in his sources. Primary among those texts are the Torah (Pentateuch), and the Deuteronomic Histories (Deuteronomy through Kings, although the Chronicler tends to ignore the book of Judges); these latter documents being set down during the Exilic and early Persian periods. Chronicles takes much of this material directly. A fair amount of Chronicles reads as a verbatim, or near-verbatim account of the earlier works. Chronicles’ sources are a matter of scholarly debate. Gary Knoppers argues cogently that the Chronicler may well have had additional material from which to create his history. Some of these other works were not only different, but they may have been older sources than those that eventually became the received Masoretic Text.⁵ Consequently, in terms of its focus on the southern kingdom, and more specifically the special (and compared to Samuel-Kings, censored) role of David, as well as the Jerusalem cultus, Chronicles features new material that is not reflected in those other documents.

As a revisionist religious history of and for the people of Israel, the Chronicler consciously was judicious in the inclusion of his material. Even though much of Chronicles is drawn from Samuel-Kings, the northern kingdom is largely ignored. The northern kingdom not only seceded from the united kingdom, but worse yet, its rulers had set up an apostate alternative sanctuary to rival Jerusalem. The northern kingdom “is considered politically and religiously illegitimate by the Chronicler, [yet] the residents of that territory

are considered part of Israel . . . When the northern tribes broke away from the south, they did not give up their position as children of Israel.”⁶ While the major focus is on the southern kingdom, there is an “open attitude to the North in Chronicles . . . Those willing to return to the Lord and come to his sanctuary are to be welcomed.”⁷ The Chronicler regards the twelve tribes as the ideal number, and probably hopes that at some point a reunited Israel would be possible. In the meantime, however, while the northern kingdom is not completely absent in this book references to that entity are viewed from the perspective of Judah. Here again, the Chronicler makes choices and presents a selective, purposeful history.

History of the northern kingdom	Almost completely absent in Chronicles
Narratives about Elijah; Elisha (1-2 Kgs.)	No parallels in Chronicles

The Chronicler is addressing his own time; he seeks to find religious meaning in it. Chronicles also interprets Israel’s collective history. Chronicles recognizes and values the importance of the Exodus from Egypt, the Sinaitic revelation⁸, and Moses’ central role. Chronicles also recognizes and values the creation of the Davidic dynasty. Yet both of these events are highlights of Israel’s *past*, and the Chronicler has a different purpose for his *contemporary* community.

Of great concern for his time in the 5th/4th centuries, is the (re)establishment of the Temple, and its rituals. Consequently, the Chronicler neither focuses on the [Mosaic] Sinai Covenant nor on the [Davidic] Zion Covenant. The Sinai Covenant was a religious contract mandated between God and Israel, and mediated by Moses. Stated briefly in the words of Jon Levenson, the “focus of the Mosaic covenant sealed at Sinai is twofold: *history and morality*” (emphasis added). The Zion Covenant established between God and David also has a twofold focus: *politics and dynasty*. It is tied to the land of Israel itself. Again, quoting Levenson, the “Davidic covenant, then, is distinct in kind from the Sinaitic . . . In the case of the Davidic [Zion] covenant, history and morality are no longer the focus . . . Rather the Davidic covenant, [is] a covenant of grant . . . God’s commitment to the Davidic dynasty”⁹ and presumably, the land that they rule.

In fact, (as shall be shown below) the Chronicler downplays the role of Moses, presents an expurgated version of King David, and in addition despite their special lineage, the Chronicler often highlights the failures of these rulers of the southern kingdom for these “Davidic monarchs are conceived as human in every aspect of their being” in both relationship to the people and to God.¹⁰ The figures of David and Solomon are important. They are of special note for the Chronicler because they create and consolidate the permanent institutions that would be forever binding; the institutions however are more important than their human (and flawed) creators/consolidators.

Instead of concentrating on the Sinai or Zion Covenants, Chronicles highlights what might be termed a Jerusalem-based (unspoken but real) Levitical Covenant that also has a twofold focus, *Temple and ritual*, which serves as the connection between God and the people Israel.¹¹

A Levitical Covenant

This implicit Levitical Covenant blends aspects of both Sinai (worship of God/cultic matters) and Zion (the Temple in Jerusalem). In that sense, Chronicles is a “zealous and not too subtle apologia on behalf of the Levites, who, in [the author of Chronicles’] opinion, have yet to achieve the honor and influence that are rightfully theirs.”¹²

For example, in 1 Chronicles 23, the numbers of Levites far exceeds that which is found in the Torah. As Sara Japhet explains, it seems that the Chronicler seeks to portray these Levitical orders as broadly as possible, both in terms of their numbers and their organization.¹³ In this chapter, some of the duties of the Levites are traditional, such as guarding the priests and the Tent of Meeting against any kind of lay intrusion. Yet there are also additional duties that include responsibility for “ritual cleanliness, ‘the purity of all sacred objects’ (v. 28), and for maintaining a system of balanced measures (v. 29).” Further they are appointed over the temple gates. In addition to merely guarding “the Levites are responsible for the musical liturgy: ‘to give thanks and to praise Yhwh’ every morning and evening and during the festivals” (vv. 30-31). Such a mandate for the Levites was previously established by David vis-à-vis the Ark (16:1-38).¹⁴

Indeed, in 1 Chronicles 15 the Chronicler highlights David’s “meticulous preparation” for transporting the ark to Jerusalem. This description was “composed by the Chronicler himself without a biblical *Vorlage*.” David saw to it that “no one but the Levites should carry the ark, in conformity with pentateuchal legislation and as a correction to the procedure in the first effort to bring the ark to Jerusalem . . . David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint Levitical singers, and so this additional duty of the Levites, also in the cult of the Chronicler’s day, is given the authority of Israel’s first king.”¹⁵

Chronicles interests are “primarily ecclesiastical.”¹⁶ Chronicles desires “a rehabilitation of the national-cultic institutions,” according to King David’s directions (see Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:45). Yet for Chronicles, this is done without a specific linking of hope with a kingly figure or with the Davidic house.¹⁷

The “Chronicler nowhere explicitly advocates the reestablishment of the Davidic monarchy, let alone a rebellion against the Persian Empire. He seems relatively content with life under Persian suzerainty, provided that the worship at the temple in *Jerusalem* is able to continue without restraint” (emphasis added).¹⁸

This change of emphasis from the Temple being linked to the Davidic dynasty to the dynasty being connected to an institution of God is highlighted in the difference of wording in critical passages when comparing an account in Samuel and that in Chronicles. In the Samuel passage the emphasis is on *David's* house; in Chronicles it is on *God's* house.

Your successor “shall build a house for my name . . . *Your house* and *your kingdom* [i.e. David's house, David's kingdom] shall be made sure forever before me [MT before you] (2 Sam. 7:13, 16).

Your successor “shall build a house for me . . . I will confirm him in *my house* and *my kingdom* [i.e. God's house, God's kingdom] forever” (1 Chr. 17:12, 14).

David's history rewritten: abridged and expanded

David's biography in Samuel-Kings sent the wrong message. Chronicles disengages from the negative political aspects of the Davidic dynasty through both abridging and expanding that history. Chronicles portrays a prime purpose of David is to establish the cultus. Consequently the Chronicler chooses his materials carefully. He presents a very selective story. He also deletes the sordid details of David's personal life. Instead he crafts the David-related passages to fit Chronicles' purpose.

For his depiction of David he utilized those materials from the [Deuteronomistic History] that would enhance David's qualifications as builder of the temple or highlight his position as a victorious and powerful king. Thus he omitted most of the narrative commonly known as the History of David's Rise (1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 5), in which David gradually gained ascendancy over Saul and Kingship over all Israel, and almost all of the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 9–20; 1 Kings 1–2).¹⁹

David at Hebron (2 Sam. 5:1-3)	Parallel in Chronicles (1 Chr. 9:1-3)
David & Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17-25)	Parallel in Chronicles (1 Chr. 14:8-17)
David at Ziklag; many forces join him (1 Chr. 12)	No earlier parallels in Samuel
David and Abigail (1 Sam. 25)	No parallels in Chronicles
David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11)	No parallels in Chronicles
Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem with Levites in attendance (1 Chr.15:1-24)	No earlier parallels in Samuel
David's preparations for the Temple (1 Chr. 22)	No earlier parallels in Samuel
David's organization of the Levites (1 Chr. 23)	No earlier parallels in Samuel

David's organization of the priests (1 Chr. 24)	No earlier parallels in Samuel
David's organization of the musicians (1 Chr. 24)	No earlier parallels in Samuel
The cunning and bloody succession narratives (1 Kgs. 1-2)	No parallels in Chronicles

The sanitized David becomes the idealized ruler. In “Chronicles [David is] a gifted and successful warrior (1 Chr. 14; 18-20), the recipient of dynastic promises (1 Chr. 17), a repentant sinner (1 Chr. 21), and an astute administrator (1 Chr. 22-29). The writer does not simply mention these royal achievements; he clearly considers them to be critical features of the Davidic legacy.”²⁰ More specifically, however from a cultic viewpoint, David is the idealized *religious* ruler.

Chronicles is concerned with religious institutions in Jerusalem, ascribed to David and Solomon, primarily the Temple and cultic tradition; these are to be maintained and strengthened. “The contention of the Chronicler is that David introduced the musical guilds in connection with the cult service centering about both ark and tabernacle” (1 Chr. 16:4-6).²¹ David sets up the twenty-four watches of priests, and the twenty-four watches of Levites (1 Chr. 23; 24:1-19). This includes the singing of certain psalms.²²

David is the founder of the cultus, despite the fact that Solomon builds the Temple. As Jacob M. Myers notes, “As Moses had once received plans for the tabernacle, so David now received plans for the temple from the Lord (I Chron. xxii 1, xxviii, 19); and the place was designated by the angel of the Lord (I Chron. xxi 18 ff).” While personnel arrangements such as the Levites carrying the ark, and the positions of the priests and Levites are connected to Moses (1 Chr. 15:15; 2 Chr. 30:16) “most of the priestly, Levitical, and other personnel appointments in connection with the temple cultus are attributed to David, *who was virtually a second Moses*” (emphasis added).²³ Ralph W. Klein, in reference to 1 Chronicles 15 makes an even stronger statement. “David in this chapter is a second Moses, who also pitched a tent and blessed the people” (see Exod. 33:7; Deut. 33:1).²⁴

In terms of prominence of position, given the emphasis put upon the beloved King David, the references to that monarch overshadow references to Moses. David is mentioned well over two hundred fifty times in Chronicles, Moses on less than two-dozen occasions. Many of those Davidic references are in terms of his role as warrior, or ruler of the state, but again and again, from 1 Chronicles 9:35 to the end of that book, David is featured as the founder of the cult.

David is close to a parallel partner with Moses

Moses is deserving of honor, but for Chronicles, “it is the David who ordained the Levites to their office who brought the worship of Yahweh to its highest perfection and its true fulfillment.”²⁵ David becomes responsible for the organization of Temple worship. He is intimately connected with the role of the Levites and the use of psalmody in the worship at the Temple. This allows David to add new elements to the worship service.²⁶

When David speaks to Solomon regarding the succession, he uses language similar to that of Moses’ charge to Joshua in Deuteronomy. David says to Solomon, “You shall succeed, if you observantly carry out the laws and rules that YHWH charged Moses to lay upon Israel. Be strong and of good courage [*ḥazak ve-ematz*]; do not be afraid or dismayed [*al tira ve’al teiḥat*]” (1 Chr. 22:13). Moses had told Joshua “Be strong and of good courage” [*ḥazak ve-ematz*] . . . fear not and be not dismayed [*lo tira velo teiḥat*]” (Deut. 31:7, 8).

Chronicles acknowledges Moses as having a special relationship with the Deity. Moses is termed the servant of God [*eved ha-Elohim*] twice (1 Chr. 6:34 [6:49]; 2 Chr. 24:9); the servant of YHWH [*eved YHWH*] twice (2 Chr. 1:3; 24:6) and the man of God [*ish ha-Elohim*] twice (1 Chr. 23:14; 2 Chr. 30:16). Moses is the servant of YHWH in the Torah (Num. 12:7-8; cf. Ex. 14:31; Deut. 34:5). Similar imagery also is associated with David. In 1 Chronicles, God comes to Nathan and two times describes David as “my servant David.” The text explains that the word of God (*Elohim*) comes to Nathan, but then the Deity is termed first as YHWH, and then *YHWH Tzvaot* (1 Chr. 17:3, 4, 7).

At Josiah’s Passover, as described in 2 Chronicles 35, the slaughtering of the Passover sacrifice is to be done “according to the word of God given by Moses [*kidvar YHWH b’yad Moshe*].” It further states that they followed the ritual “as prescribed in the scroll of Moses” [*kekatur b’sifer Moshe*]” (2 Chr. 35:6, 12). In the wider context, however, the Levites are told to comport themselves “as prescribed in the writings of King David of Israel and in the document of his son Solomon [*bikhtav David . . . w’mikhtav Shlomo*]” (2 Chr. 35:4). This is “another point of comparison between the authority of David and that of Moses, both established by ‘books.’”²⁷

Moses moderated

Parts of David’s history are expurgated; the role of Moses is moderated. In “general no prominence is given to [Moses] by the Chronicler, for whom the great climax of his people’s history came with David rather than with the exodus from Egypt.”²⁸ This stands in contrast to the Deuteronomist who in Kings praises God and God’s servant Moses who led the people out of Egypt (1 Kgs. 8:51-53). The Chronicler instead teaches that Israel becomes God’s people over many years as they develop a relationship, this did not happen at one specific moment.²⁹ David is a key character in forming the

ongoing bonds with God. As Gary Knoppers writes, Chronicles “neither stresses the Exodus and Conquest nor ties these events to the founding of Israel as a nation . . . [Chronicles] does not associate the Exodus with the crystallization of Israel’s corporate identity.”³⁰

Nonetheless, the Chronicler has a “place for Moses, as various allusions throughout the work indicate.”³¹ Yet, many of the references to Moses touch on his personal family connections rather than cultic matters.³² For example, about a fifth (four out of twenty-one Moses references) are associated with Moses and his family. Mention is made of his father Amram and his siblings Aaron and Miriam (1 Chr. 5:29 [6:3]); Moses, his father Amram and Aaron (1 Chr. 23:13); and Moses’ children and grandchild (1 Chr. 23:14 ff.; 26:24).

Moses is associated with ritual items on several occasions, the Ark of God/*aron ha-Elohim* – 1 Chronicles 15:15; the Tabernacle/*mishkan*, and the altar of burnt offerings/*mizbah ha-olah* – 21:29; offerings for Sabbath, new moons and three times a year festivals – 2 Chronicles 8:13; and Passover offerings – 35:6. Chronicles connects Moses to the cultus, but these are a mere four citations out of the twenty-one Mosaic references. “Chronistic allusions to Moses are almost restricted to the ‘Law of Moses.’”³³

In principle, the Torah is the ultimate source of the cultus. Yet, Chronicles moderates the figure of Moses in terms of his connection to the Torah. There is an emphasis on the Torah as an authoritative book in Chronicles, perhaps most prominently in 2 Chronicles 34:14, 15, 19 where it is “found” in the Temple by the priest Hilkiah and brought to King Josiah (cf. 2 Kgs. 22:8 ff), although here, the text connects the Torah specifically to Moses [*sefer Torat YHWH b’yad Moshe*] (2 Chr. 34:14), a designation that is not made in the earlier report in 2 Kings.³⁴ More often, Chronicles refers to the more generic Torah of YHWH/*Torat YHWH* (1 Chr. 16:40; 22:12; 2 Chr. 12:1; 17:9; 31:3, 4; 34:14; 35:26).

Cultic numbers

Chronicles’ specific and limited treatment of Moses dovetails with and reflects the whole book’s emphasis on Levitical/cultic matters, including sacred cultic numbers. It is likely that the Chronicler was a Levite (see note 12.) The Chronicler therefore is very deliberate in the ways and number of times that he refers to Moses.

The Chronicler knows that the author of Samuel-Kings mentions Moses twelve (12) times (1 Sam. 12:6, 8; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 8:9, 53, 56; 2 Kgs. 14:6; 18:4, 6, 12; 21:8; 23:25). Twelve in its own right is a favorite biblical number, redolent with connections to the original tribes, including the tribal offerings in the desert for the altar (see Num. 7). It is likely that the author of Chronicles decides not only to nearly double those twelve references, but consciously sought to reflect that specific number in a certain way, using its digital reverse:

twenty-one. Twelve (12) is made up of the digits 1-2; twenty-one (21) its numeric chiasm, 2-1.

Twenty-one is a considerable number, (although a small amount compared to the more than two hundred fifty references to David). Yet, it appears to be a purposeful, conscious choice. Twenty-one is three times seven, and both three and seven are important cultic numbers in the Bible. This adds another reason why the author of Chronicles, even if not actually a Levite, was sensitive to the nuances – including certain special numbers in terms – of cultic matters. These numbers then are a way to underscore the importance of Levites, and subtly to encourage the concept of a *Levitical* kind of Covenant between God and Israel, which is centered at the Temple in Jerusalem, the preeminent locus point of communication between God and Israel.

Life after Chronicles

In the centuries following the Temple's destruction in 70 CE, it becomes clear that rabbinic Judaism has become the norm, and that the Temple will not be restored in any foreseeable future time. New conditions require new concepts. Chronicle's Levitical Covenant as the means to connect God and the people of Israel falls out of favor. As an emphasis on the Sinai Covenant replaces that of the Zion Covenant, so the Levitical Covenant also fades. "Mount Zion fell heir to the legacy of Mount Sinai. Zion became the prime locus of theophany, the home of YHWH, the seat of his government, from which he promulgated decrees and at which Israel renewed her partnership in covenant with him . . . The early traditions emphasize Sinai; the latter ones, those of David's time and after, emphasize Zion . . . [yet] the truth is, a quick reading of the Hebrew Bible leaves one with a larger awareness of Sinai than Zion. The notion of a Mosaic revelation at Sinai endured . . . In fact, tradition came to canonize the Mosaic movement, as it did not canonize the Davidic-Solomonic."³⁵

Yet it is not a question of either/or; rather it is a matter of both/and. Clearly the Sinai Covenant/Mosaic reaches back to the desert Revelation (*Mishna Avot* 1.1). Jews continue to read the Torah "given at Sinai" as part of the weekly, festival, and High Holy Day liturgy. Nonetheless, in Judaism the Temple and Mt. Zion retain a central role in rituals and theology despite being destroyed 2000 years ago. Even today, as has been the case for millennia, the physical direction of prayer is toward Jerusalem, towards the place where the Temple once stood.

"Those who are outside of the land must face toward the Land of Israel when they pray, as it is said, 'They are to pray to you toward their land, which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name' (1 Kgs 8:48). Those who are in the Land of Israel

must face toward Jerusalem when they pray, as it is said, ‘and they pray to you toward this city that you have chosen’ (2 Chr. 6:34). Those who are in Jerusalem must face toward the Temple when they pray, as it said, ‘and pray toward this house’ (2 Chr. 6:32). Those who are within the Temple must direct their hearts toward the Holy of Holies when they pray, as it is said, ‘they pray toward this place’ (2 Chr. 6:26). Thus those who are in the north must face the south, and those in the south must face the north, those who are in the east must face the west, and those in the west must face toward the east; thus all Israel will pray toward the same place.” (*Sifre Deuteronomy, Piska 29*).

Levenson suggests that religiously and culturally, the “presence is the presence of Zion, but the voice is the voice of Sinai.”³⁶ We contend that the presence is the presence of Zion, but unlike the days of the Chronicler, it is a Zion without a Temple and Levitical cult, and so in effect, by default the voice is the voice of Sinai. Nonetheless, close to two and a half millennia ago, for the Chronicler in his day, it is a kind of Temple-centered Levitical Covenant with David’s prominent role in its creation that captures his imagination.

Conclusion

The author of Chronicles is well aware of the disparity between the idealized vision for the restored community in Jerusalem as depicted in Second Isaiah and the reality the community is facing. He also comprehends that the Haggai-Zechariah prophecies are not realized, or are they likely to be in the conceivable future. Consequently the Chronicler seeks to write a form of revisionist religious history, a “new” history with a set purpose which is to revitalize, reinvigorate, and renew Judaism for his audience, namely the returning exiles from Babylon and their descendants. Chronicles is selective history. For Chronicles, the pinnacle of Israel’s history is the establishment of the cultus associated with the Temple in Jerusalem, rather than the Exodus and the revelation at Sinai or the establishment of the Davidic dynasty. The Chronicler is mindful of the Davidic dynasty. He accords it honor, yet at no time does the Chronicler call for an independent monarchy. The Chronicler makes choices and takes some materials from the Torah and Samuel-Kings, while omitting other passages. In all likelihood he also had additional, perhaps earlier materials that were not included in the Masoretic Text. Chronicles therefore is selective history. A major feature is an abridged version of David’s problematic personal legacy. Rather what is presented is David’s critical role championing the Levitical cultus. David as God’s servant transmits traditions, writes down directions, and makes clear these matters require scrupulous attention. In place of a Mosaic Sinai Covenant (*history and morality*), or a Davidic Zion Covenant (*politics and dynasty*), the Chronicler focuses on what is never termed, but is nonetheless a much more Jerusalem-based Levitical Covenant. This Levitical

Covenant (*Temple and ritual*), centers on the appropriate functioning of the cultic personnel. Moses merits recognition; consequently Chronicles features Moses twenty-one times in this book, in references to both genealogical and cultic matters. David supersedes Moses in Chronicles; he deserves greater honor than his predecessor. David's role as ruler, warrior, and administrator is noted, yet there is no call for a renewed Davidic dynasty. Chronicles celebrates instead David's role as founder of the cultus. Consequently the Levites are the essential link for the Covenant with God, it is through them that the people connect with God.

End Notes

¹ Chronicles was written somewhere in the fifth or fourth centuries BCE, although others argue for the mid-third century. For discussions about Chronicles, its authorship, and its relationship to Ezra-Nehemiah, see Ralph W. Klein, *1 Chronicles: A Commentary [Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible]* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006) "Introduction," 13-17; as well as in Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9* (Anchor Bible 12, New York: Doubleday, 2003), 72-89.

² "Compared with the parallel histories of Samuel and Kings, the redactor of Chronicles has a great tendency to dwell on the details of Temple worship, on the arrangements of the Priestly vestments, and on the Levites as well." *JPS Guide – The Jewish Bible*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 215.

³ Chronicles is a "general and comprehensive theological stock-taking, striving to achieve a new religious balance in the face of a changing world." The goal of Chronicles "is a comprehensive expression of the perpetual need to renew and revitalize the religion of Israel." Sara Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 44, 49.

⁴ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 45.

⁵ Knoppers, *1 Chronicles*, 69-71. Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winowa Lake: IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 407-409. See Chronicles' parallel citations to the Masoretic Text, Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles*, AB 13 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 227-231.

⁶ Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 46.

⁷ R. W. Klein, "Chronicles, Book of 1-2." In D. N. Freedman (ed.). *Vol. 1: The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (D. N. Freedman, ed., New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1001.

⁸ The author of Chronicles probably understood correctly that the Sinai Covenant was considered by at least some of the Classical prophets as emblematic of God's relationship with humankind, certainly in terms of its moral demands, for example Amos (3:2; 5:14, 21-24), Isaiah (1:13, 16-17), and Jeremiah (7:4-7). Nonetheless, those kinds of moral concerns were not at the heart of the Chronicler's focus.

⁹ Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, Chicago: Winston Press, 1985), 100-101.

¹⁰ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 47.

¹¹ The term Levitical Covenant is one that the authors of this article propose as descriptive of the Chronicler's viewpoint; it is not of general usage in the relevant literature.

¹² Simon J. De Vries, "Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 107/4 (Dec. 1988), 636. De Vries goes on to suggest that it is not unreasonable to speculate that the Chronicler was a Levite. Klein, however, states that this seems "only a possibility rather than a probability," *1 Chronicles*, 17.

¹³ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 412.

¹⁴ Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29* (AB 12A, New York: Doubleday, 2004), 825.

¹⁵ Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 358.

¹⁶ John Bright, *A History of Israel*, Fourth Edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 401.

¹⁷ Bright, 453.

¹⁸ Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 47.

¹⁹ R. W. Klein, "Chronicles, Book of 1-2," 996.

²⁰ Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9*, 82.

²¹ Jacob M. Myers, *1 Chronicles*, AB 12 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 121.

²² Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10-29*, 856-857.

²³ Myers, *1 Chronicles*, lxxviii, lxxix.

²⁴ Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 358.

²⁵ De Vries, 639. De Vries notes, "the book of Chronicles, seems to make relatively little of Moses while strongly promoting David as a cult founder alongside Moses," 619-638, here 619.

²⁶ Myers, *1 Chronicles*, 122; Klein, *1 Chronicles*, 363.

²⁷ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 1049. Cf. R. J. Coggins, *The First and Second Books of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 299.

²⁸ Coggins, 119. Chronicles only twice utilizes the term *Torat Moshe*/the Torah of Moses (2 Chr. 23:18; 30:16). "Chronicles places a greater emphasis upon the Davidic monarchy . . . and a deemphasis on the Exodus." R. W. Klein, "Chronicles, Book of 1-2," 993.

²⁹ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 600.

³⁰ Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9*, 81.

³¹ Coggins, 119.

³² Knoppers, however, points out that "Mosaic legislation consistently occupies an important place in Chronicles and should not be overlooked in any study of Chronicist theology." *1 Chronicles 1-9*, 83.

³³ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 526. References to the Law/Torah of Moses/*Torat Moshe* are found in Chronicles (2 Chr. 23:18; 30:16). In like manner, there are only two references to the book of Moses/*Sefer Moshe* (2 Chr. 25:4; 35:12). Only once is Moses associated with the Ten Commandments, and there it is because he put the tablets in the Ark (2 Chr. 5:10).

³⁴ Japhet, *I and II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 1030, Coggins, 296.

³⁵ Levenson, 187.

³⁶ Levenson, 188.

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Notes: Quotations from NRSV.