

Glock, Albert E. "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament" in Concordia Theological Monthly, Feb., 1967 (Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2)

p. 2. Statements as to precise parts of P, giving correct material from a far earlier period.

p. 100 As a case in point we may consider the period between the patriarchs and the conquest with the independent testimony of one extra-Biblical source, the 20,000-tablet archive from Mari on the upper Euphrates. The Mari material is limited to a 70-year period contemporary with the earliest patriarchs. The site is in North Syria, near Haran, the family home of Terah, father of Abraham. The language of the tablets is Akkadian, which is clearly different from the West Semitic languages of which Canaanite and Hebrew are representative. Thus, for example, one may observe that Akkadian has no special term for "tribe" or any of its subdivisions. But Mari is on the edge of the desert, and its kings were frequently in contact with mobile tribes. It is thus of no little interest to learn that the terminology employed in the Mari archive referring to tribal units is borrowed from West Semitic and, in fact, corresponds to that in the Old Testament. Illustrations of this are Gen. 25. 16 and Num. 25.15, where "people(s)" is in reality a technical term denoting a tribal unit, a datum the latter text itself acknowledges and explains by the addition "father's house," a synonym for clan (Archives Royales de Mari, VIII, No. 11, line 21)

A detailed study of the parallels between the Mari tablets and the Old Testament remains to be done. It is important to note that the Mari records offer the first evidence of prophecy as an independent religious institution in the ancient world outside the Old Testament. The military census with accompanying expiatory rites (Ex. 30.11-16; 2 Sam. 24) is much like the administrative order in Mari known as the tēbibtum. The personal names in the earliest strata of the Old Testament are parallel to Amorite names from Mari. These and numerous other independently attested social, political, and religious data could not have been invented. Their meaning for history requires evaluation. The ancient historian was primarily a theologian. The modern historian has great difficulty when he refuses to be a theologian in his study of the Old Testament.