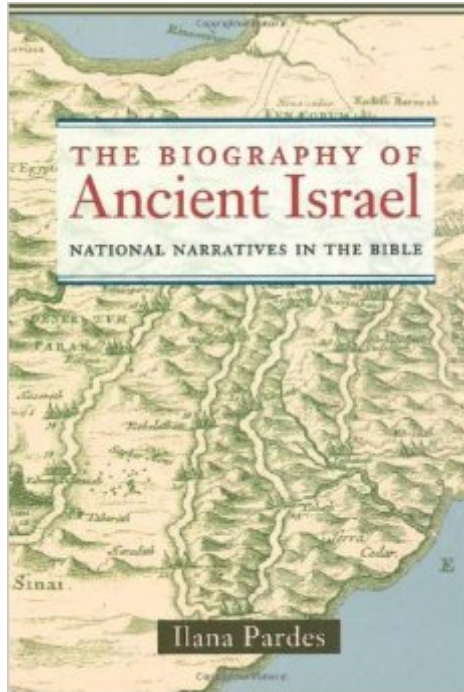


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The Biography Of Ancient Israel: National Narratives In The Bible



Synopsis

The nation--particularly in Exodus and Numbers--is not an abstract concept but rather a grand character whose history is fleshed out with remarkable literary power. In her innovative exploration of national imagination in the Bible, Pardes highlights the textual manifestations of the metaphor, the many anthropomorphisms by which a collective character named "Israel" springs to life. She explores the representation of communal motives, hidden desires, collective anxieties, the drama and suspense embedded in each phase of the nation's life: from birth in exile, to suckling in the wilderness, to a long process of maturation that has no definite end. In the Bible, Pardes suggests, history and literature go hand in hand more explicitly than in modern historiography, which is why the Bible serves as a paradigmatic case for examining the narrative base of national constructions. Pardes calls for a consideration of the Bible's penetrating renditions of national ambivalence. She reads the rebellious conduct of the nation against the grain, probing the murmurings of the people, foregrounding their critique of the official line. The Bible does not provide a homogeneous account of nation formation, according to Pardes, but rather reveals points of tension between different perceptions of the nation's history and destiny. This fresh and beautifully rendered portrayal of the history of ancient Israel will be of vital interest to anyone interested in the Bible, in the interrelations of literature and history, in nationhood, in feminist thought, and in psychoanalysis.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Biography of Ancient Israel by Ilana Pardes is based on a reading of the nation as a collective

character, not an abstract concept. Particularly in Exodus and Numbers ("where the primary questions about the origin and singularity of the nation are raised"), Pardes argues, Israel is "personified; it is a character with a distinct voice ... it moans and groans, is euphoric at times, complains frequently, and rebels against Moses and God time and again." The Biography of Ancient Israel considers its subject a "male character who is God's first-born son" (though Pardes acknowledges that the Hebrew Scriptures are also full of female metaphors for Israel). Following Israel through its birth, youth, and young adulthood, and ending at Mt. Nebo, where the Scriptures' personification of Israel as God's son ends, this book is preoccupied with understanding the ways in which individual and national lives influence one another. "The biography of the nation seeps into the lives of individuals and shapes their desires and destinies, wittingly and unwittingly," Pardes writes. Although many readers may find it hard getting through parts of this academic biography, their work will be amply rewarded by such insights. --Michael Joseph Gross --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"A creative reading of the text emerges that helps explain its continual power to shape individual and communal identities far beyond its historical and geographic origins. . . . A wonderfully written book."--"Choice

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