INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has read or studied Ancient Near Eastern history is probably familiar with the Amorites as one of the Canaanite peoples who were captured by the Israelites when they entered the Promised Land. However,, if one delves into the biblical sources, one can easily determine that although the Bible always uses the term Amorites to refer to a unified people in one region, it actually refers to a number of groups who lived in different regions:

> Regarding the land of Sihon, "King of the Amorites" (Numbers 21:21) it is written: "…for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites" (Numbers 21:13). The Arnon (today, Wadi Al Mujib which flows into the Dead Sea from the east, opposite Ein Gedi), is approximately 150 km from Kadesh Barnea.

> About Ein Al Kudirat in northeast Sinai, near Nizanah, it is written that the Israelites were told when they reached it: "…you have come to the Amorite hill country" (Numbers 1:20).

> In the section about the Battle of Givon, in which the Israelites fought under the leadership of Joshua the son of Nun against the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, those kings are referred to as "the five Amorite kings" (Joshua 10:5).

> The remainder of the land which had not been captured by the time of Joshua's death is described as "all the Canaanite territory, from Arah in the region of Sidon to Aphek, as far as Amorite territory"; and it appears adjacent to "The territory of Byblos and all Lebanon to the east" (Joshua 13: 4-5).

> In the beginning of the Book of Judges it says: "The Amorites forced the people of Dan to live in the hill country. They did not allow them to live in the coastal plain. The Amorites managed to remain in Har Heres, Aijalon, and Shaalbim" (Judges 1: 34-35).

> In Ezekiel's admonitions of Jerusalem, the prophet throws her inferior genealogy in her face: "…your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite" (Ezekiel 16:3).

This brief survey is adequate to clarify that the term "Amorites" is used in the biblical text to designate one of the ancient populations of Canaan whose connection to the land is not limited to a specific territory.[1] In fact, the origin of the term "Amorites" predates the Israelite settlement period by about a thousand years – regardless of whether the Israelites were external invaders, or whether they were a native group who separated themselves from the others for religious or societal reasons.[2]

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[1] John Van Seters suggested that the biblical usage of the proper names "Amorites" and 'Hittites' is based on the usage of the geographical names *Amurru and Ḫatti* in the writings of the Assyrian kings as an inclusive designation for the inhabited region between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean Sea (John Van Seters, "The Terms 'Amorite' and 'Hittite' in the Old Testament", Vetus Testamentum 22, (1972), pp. 65-66) . Mordechai Cogan disagreed with Van Seters' explanation of the term *Ḫatti* in the writings of the Assyrian kings. He pointed out that initially, this term designated the Hittite Empire which was centered in Anatolia, and later it designated the lands of Northern Syria which carried on the political and cultural legacy of the Hittite Empire after the latter's destruction circa 1200 BCE (Cogan 2002). But Van Seters' comments are directed towards the use of the term *Ḫatti* specifically in the late writings of the Assyrian kings from the 7th century BCE, where this term also refers to different regions along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, in the Land of Israel, and in Trans-Jordan (see Bagg 2007, p. 100).

[2] For an updated discussion about the origins of the Israelites and the biblical concepts regarding this issue, see Wazana ואזנה 2007.

In Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (modern day Iraq and eastern Syria), there are clay tablets from the 3rd millennium BCE inscribed in cuneiform which designate two terms: *Amurrum* in Akkadian (which was a Semitic language) and *mar.tu* in Sumerian, the language of the ancient inhabitants of southern Mesopotamia.[3] The term *mar.tu* originally designated any region in Syria west of the Euphrates as indicated in the 24th century BCE documents discovered in the city of Ebla, approximately 55 km southwest of Aleppo (today's Tel Mardich).[4] It's possible that this land was the source of the word for the direction "west" in the two ancient languages of Mesopotamia: *mar.tu* in Sumerian, and *Amurrum* in Akkadian. On the other hand, the term *Amurrum* with the possessive Suffix (*Ammurûm)* is apparently the source for the biblical term Amorite, even though the biblical term – as mentioned above – is used in a different geographical context than the Akkadian term.[5]

During the Third Dynasty of Ur (the dynasty that ruled from 2102 - 1995 BCE all of Mesopotamia as well as a number of adjacent regions from its capital in the City of Ur), the term *mar.tu* designated the inhabitants of a specific region in Syria.[6] On the other hand, that term also designated any geographical region northeast of the Tigris River in the proximity of the eastern tributary, the Diyala River.[7] It is possible that it refers to a region whose inhabitants migrated from the west, from territories in Syria. In addition, approximately 600 personal names of individuals designated as Amorites (mar.tu) are mentioned during the Third Dynasty of Ur in the context of the internal workings of various Mesopotamian cities.[8] As far as can be determined from the documents, these people were part of the population of the cities that were included in the Greater Kingdom of Ur. In effect, there is no noticeable difference between their jobs - as reflected in the documents - and the jobs of people who are not called Amorites.

[3]Many signs in cuneiform have different possible readings, and some researchers transcribe the combination of signs mar.tu as mar.du or even ĝar$_7$.dú (see Attinger 2011).

[4] Archi 1985; Pettinato 1995; de Boer 2014, p.21.

[5]Speiser 1981$_1$ספייזר, pp.103-106. In light of the parallel between the Sumerian term mar.tu and the Akkadian terms *Amurrum/Amurrûm,* going forward, we will refer to all people and groups who are called by these terms in the Mesopotamian sources as "Amorites". (The first two groups of kings of Ur who are mentioned in the list belong to the period around 2500 BCE. The dates of the reign of the dynasties and the different kings in Mesopotamia at the end of the third millennium and the first half of the second millennium BCE are presented according to the chronological order methodology of תיכונה-נמוכה, the basis for which is addressed in Chapter 4.

[6] Owen 1992, pp. 113-114. Owen 1995, p. 219. The Third Dynasty of Ur is designated as such in modern research because the kings, who belong to multiple generations of one family, are the third group of kings of the City of Ur who are mentioned in the Sumerian King List.

[7] Lieberman 1968-1969, pp. 55-56; Beaulieu 2005, pp. 39-40; Marchesi 2006, pp. 11-14; Michalowski 2011, pp. 103-105. In Sallaberger's opinion 2007, pp. 446-449, "the land of mar.tu" is a wider geographic region that spreads both east and west of the Tigris.

[8] 309 such names were examined in Buccellati's research 1966. (For the total number of the names, see ibid. p.100). This number should be doubled to reflect the documents that have been published since Buccellati's research.

Map 1. The central cities of Mesopotamia in the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur.

A particularly significant cultural distinction between the Amorites and the other inhabitants of the Mesopotamian cities is reflected in their language. Whereas the Akkadian language is included among the eastern branch of Semitic languages, the languages and dialects that were spoken in the area between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean Sea belong to the western branch of Semitic languages. In the period following the end of the Third Dynasty of Ur, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia designated all the languages and dialects that were spoken by Amorites as the Amorite language.[9] Although we have no documents that were written in this language - neither in Mesopotamia nor in the area west of the Euphrates – the language is apparent in the numerous personal names mentioned in thousands of Mesopotamian cuneiform documents.

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[9] For the Mesopotamian sources which mention the Amorite language, see Ziegler and Charpin 2007. Apparently, this is not actually one language, but rather a group of dialects which shared a number of characteristics; some of them were more similar to written Akkadian and others less so. (See Durand 2012).

Those personal names are comprised of elements which are characteristic of the western branch – and not the eastern branch - of Semitic languages.[10] The elements may be words whose dispersion is completely limited to the western branch, and they may be phonetic phenomena and grammatical constructs characteristic of the western branch.   For example, in the name *Yantin-Eraḫ,* "The moon (god) gave", the verb *nt"n* appears with the third person prefix *ya-* (whereas in Akkadian, the verb comes from the root *nd"n* and the prefix is *i-),* and the noun is *(Y)ēraḫ,* the name of the moon god (whereas his name in Akkadian is *Sîn*).[11] Akkadian names with the same meaning are, for example, *Iddin-Sîn* (the name of one of the officials of Rim-Sîn I, King of Larsa, 1814-1755 BCE), or *Sîn-iddinam,* the King of Larsa approximately 30 years before Rim-Sîn I.[12] Another identifying characteristic of the Western Semitic names is the use of special terms to designate relatives who are not part of a person's nuclear family. For example, *Ḫammu-rāpi* - the name of the Babylonian king who wrote the famous law code stele – contains the element *'ammu* "grandfather, ancestor".[13]

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[10] A comprehensive collection of the personal names in the documents of the Third Dynasty of Ur, and from the first half of the second millennium BCE which have Western Semitic elements was published by Gelb 1980. A discussion of the grammatical characteristics of these names, and of the vocabulary reflected in them was published by Streck 2000. (See also the criticisms of Streck's book published by Tropper 2000; Pruzsinszky 2001; Knudsen 2002; Charpin 2003-2006.) For a summary of the findings that come out of the discussion of the Western Semitic names, see Streck 2011. A shorter review of the grammar of the Western Semitic names in Mesopotamian documents from the end of the third millennium and the first half of the second millennium BCE was published by Knudsen, 1991. For a discussion of the special link between the vocabulary that is reflected in those names and the vocabulary of the Northwest Semitic languages – a subcategory of the Western Semitic branch – see Knudsen 2004. Knudsen found a strong similarity between the vocabulary reflected in the Amorite names and the biblical Hebrew vocabulary, but also a significant similarity to the vocabulary of other Northwest Semitic languages: Ugaritic and Aramaic (Knudsen 2004, p. 327; compare to Bodi 2014, pp 399-401). The suggestions that mention of the Israelite god (y-h-w-h) can be found in Amorite names - for example, the suggestion that was raised most recently by Bodi 2014, p. 398, are unfounded - see Streck 1999.

[11] For the name Yantin-Eraḫ (Ia-an-ti-in-E-ra-aḫ) see Streck 2000, p. 189, ¶2.83. It should be noted that various guttural consonants are represented in cuneiform by the uvular consonant ḫ. The reason for this is that, of all the guttural and uvular consonants, Akkadian preserved only the consonant ḫ, and likewise the glottal stop ʾ in the transition between syllables. A systematic way of indicating the glottal stop did not develop in Akkadian until the second half of the second millennium BCE. During the period under review in this book, the Akkadian scribes used symbols that were designated to indicate the consonant ḫ in order to indicate all the glottal and uvular consonants in the Western Semitic names. The spelling E-ra-aḫ indicates the phonetic shift from ya >ē, which is characteristic of the Amorite names. Although a common noun of common origin, Yeraḫ in Hebrew, is found also in Akkadian: warḫum; but this is not the name of the moon god who can bestow offspring.

[12] For the writings of Iddin-Sîn (the official of Ram-sîn I) and of Sîn-iddinam the King of Larsa, see Frayne 1990, pp. 157-179 (no. E4.2.9.1-15), pp. 312-313 (no. E4.2.14.2015). The verb form that appears in the name Sîn-iddinam is inflected for the end of a sentence in accordance with Akkadian practice, but this rule is not always applied in proper nouns (as reflected in the name Iddin-Sîn).

[13] For the spelling *ḫammu* for the element *'ammu,* compare to note 11 above. For the use of the element *'ammu* to mean "grandfather, ancestor" in Western Semitic names from the second millennium BCE, see Durand 2008, p. 303; Durand 2012, p. 173. The name of the Babylonian king (and of other people who had the same name) was generally written *Ḫa-am-mu-ra-bi (*see Streck 1999, 659-660). But it is also possible to read the sign *bi* in cuneiform as *pí* (the second cuneiform sign that designates the syllable [*pi*], according to the standard symbols accepted among modern scholars). Therefore, for a long time it wasn't clear if the second element in the Babylonian king's name was *rabi* "big" or *rā. pi "physician".* However, in a number of documents from the City of Larsa, after it was captured by the King of Babylonia, his name appears in the writings as Ḫa-am-mu-ra-pi and Am-mu-ra-pi (Streck 1999, pp. 660-659). These writings, from the time of the king of Babylonia himself, clarify that the second element in his name is rāpi "physician". (Additional evidence for this is collected in Streck's research 1999). In an effort to adhere to the spelling of the names in Mesopotamian cuneiform, we will designate the name of the King of Babylonia as Ḫammurapi (rather than Ḫammurabi, which is accepted in the older scholarly literature).

This usage attests to the importance of the extended family in the social structure of the populations who spoke the Western Semitic languages.

In the administrative documents from the Third Dynasty of Ur, only approximately 40% of the population who were designated as Amorites had names that were linguistically part of the western branch of the Semitic language family. Approximately 20% of the people who were designated as Amorites in the administrative tablets had Sumerian names, and approximately 15% of them had Akkadian names.[14] The explanation for this is: the Mesopotamian scribes who wrote the documents designated more people as Amorites than it is possible for modern researchers based only on linguistic analysis of people's names. The key to understanding this discrepancy is that many Amorites who came to Southern Mesopotamia assimilated thoroughly into the local culture and gave their children names that were Akkadian in every way. However, the local inhabitants knew that so-and-so was of Amorite origins and designated him as such in the documents.

There are approximately 900 administrative documents from the Third Dynasty of Ur which designate specific people as Amorites, which is approximately 1.2% of the administrative documents from that period which have been published to date.[15] Therefore, it is difficult to assume that the Amorites played a significant role in the internal workings of the Mesopotamian cities during this period. The situation in the non-urban areas of Mesopotamia, the border areas in which all or part of the population were nomads, was undoubtedly different. There the Amorite ethnic component was more significant, but we have very little documentation about these areas.

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[14]This is according to the statistics quoted by Buccellati 1966, p. 100. The publication of new documents in the years since Buccellati's research did not result in a substantive change in these statistics. The significant similarity between Akkadian and the Western Semitic languages must be taken into consideration. Therefore, in many cases – approximately 9% of all personal names of people who are mentioned as Amorites – it is not clear whether we are talking about a Western Semitic or an Akkadian name. If we assume that all the names in question are Western Semitic, then the percentage of Western Semitic names among the Amorites goes up to approximately 50%.

[15] In his research, Buccellati indicated 463 different documents that mention Amorites by name; in some cases, a single individual is mentioned in a number of documents (Buccellati 1966, p. 100). If we double this number in order to reflect all the documents which have been published, including those since Buccellati's research was published, we come up with approximately 900 documents. The number of administrative documents from the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur that have been published to date stands at approximately 74,000 (Molina 2008, p. 20).

On the other hand, literary sources which describe various aspects of life in the Kingdom of Ur enable us to get a glimpse of the life of the Amorite population outside the boundaries of the kingdom. One document written by the king Šū-Sīn (2027-2019 BCE) describes the Amorites as "nomadic people who have wild thoughts."[16] Another document by Šū-Sīn mentions him as the one who "built the wall of the Amorites 'which expelled the [tribes of] the Tidnum' and returned the Amorites to their land".[17] Construction of the wall started already in the days of Šulgi, the father or grandfather of Šū-Sīn (Šulgi, 2084-2037 BCE).[18] It's possible that it wasn't a continuous wall, but rather a series of fortresses intended to defend the Kingdom of Ur against invasions from the north and northeast.[19] There are also mentions of the building of the wall in literary works, written in the form of letters sent to the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur by their officials, and as kings' responses to the letters. (These works were copied by students in schools for scribes for hundreds of years after the fall of the dynasty).[20] Despite the fact that the wall was intended to drive away the Amorite population - or a specific part of the population, i.e. the Tidnum tribes – beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Ur, there is evidence that part of the Tidnum population

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[16] Frayne 1997ₐ, p. 299, E3/s.1.4.1, row v, lines 25-26. The Sumerian combination lú ḫa.lam.ma which means "wandering people" can be understood to mean "bad people" (see Michalowski 2011, p. 84, note 4). If Frayne's reconstruction of another line in the same work of Šū-Sīn: lú [še nu]-zu "people [who don't] know crops" (row v, line 27) is correct, it is an additional expression of the concept of the people of mar.tu as nomads.

[17] Frayne 1997ₐ, p.328, number E3/2.1.4.17, lines 20-26. Tidnum is the name of a specific group within the Amorite population and of an area of the ????? of that group (see Marchesi 2006, pp.11-19; Michalowski 2011, p. 111-121; de Boer 2014ₐ, pp. 24-25; Wasserman 2018).

[18] See Michalowski 2011, p. 137, ‏ושם ספרות קודמת‎?????

[19] On the other hand, in the Syrian Desert, 75-130 km east of the modern cities ...., the remains of a wall were uncovered, which are continuous for almost their full length of approximately 220 km. The wall was built in the Early Bronze Age (circa 2400-2000 BCE) and was apparently intended to designate the border between the settled lands west of the wall, and the area where nomads lived to the east of the wall. In the length of the wall no fortresses were uncovered, with the single exception in the northern end; and the maximum height apparently did not exceed 1.5m (Geyer 2009). If this is the case, we are talking about a wall which a group of people could go over with minimal effort. However, there was no real possibility of going over the wall with herds of sheep, which served as the main source of sustenance for nomads in the Ancient Near East. If one can conclude that this Syrian wall was the "wall of the Amorites" that the kings of Ur, Šulgi and Šū-Sīn built, then this wall was intended to delimit the movement of the Amorites with their herds in periods of peace rather than to serve as a high barrier to protect against violent invasion by them. (Sallaberger 2009, p. 32).

[20] The literary letters that are attributed to the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur and their officials were recently published in a detailed, annotated edition by Michalowski (2011). Michalowski included a broad introduction in the edition, in which he discusses the literary and historical background of those letters. (For the story of the building of the "wall of the Amorites" see ibid. pp. 122-169.) For additional discussions regarding this wall, see Sallaberger 2009; Charpin 2017.

actually assisted in building the wall.[21] Apparently, the population of the Tidnum was divided - as were other Amorite populations - into different tribes, some of which fought the central government of Ur and others which cooperated with the government, depending on the circumstances of time and place.

The internal division within the Amorite population may help explain their roles in the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur. On the one hand, a literary letter written in the Sumerian language and attributed to Išbi-Erra, senior general of the last king of the dynasty, Ibbi-Sîn (2018-1995 BCE) designated the Amorites as an enemy: "It is known [to me about] the entry of the hostile Amorites into your borders. All the grains, seventy-two KUR of barley, I have brought into [the city] of Isin. Now, all the Amorites have entered the land, [and] occupied the big granaries."[22] On the other hand, in another Sumerian literary letter ascribed to Ibbi-Sîn himself, after Išbi-Erra rebelled against him and seized the government of Isin, the king writes: "Now, the god Enlil enlisted to my aide the Amorites from the mountain. They will expel the Elamites and catch Išbi-Erra in order to return the land to its place".[23] During the period in which internal political weakness befell the Third Dynasty of Ur, part of the Amorite population forcefully invaded the kingdom, and another part cooperated with Ibbi-Sîn, possibly as mercenaries.[24] And it is possible that - rather than an external invasion - the Amorites, who were already in the land, started to fill the political vacuum created by the fall of the central government of Ur. The Amorites evolved from being a marginal factor into a dominant political factor with the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur. Their dominance is expressed - among other things - in the military arena. So, for example, commanders who belonged to the high echelons of the armies of the Mesopotamian kingdom were called (UGULA MAR.TU) *šāpir Amurrî, "*commander of the Amorites" or (GAL MAR.TU*) rabi Ammurî,* "chief of the Amorites", a title which was preserved even when the units they commanded were no longer necessarily comprised of Amorites.[25]

In any case, with the end of the reign of Ibbi-Sîn, the region of southern Mesopotamia - which had been unified for about 100 years under the rule of the Third Dynasty of Ur - split into a number of kingdoms. Even in regions which were outside the direct rule of the kingdom of Ur - in northern Mesopotamia and in Syria - independent kingdoms were also established. At least some of the new kingdoms - whether in southern or in northern Mesopotamia, and certainly in Syria - were ruled by

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[21] In a literary work which is formulated as a letter from Šulgi to one of his officials, Puzur-Šulgi, the kings writes, in the context of building the wall: "Now, the People of Tidnum returned to me (to help me) from the mountain" (Michalowski 2011, pp. 365-366, number 14.1a, line 19.

[22] Michalowski 2011, pp. 416-418, number 21, lines 7-10.

[23] Michalowski 2011, p. 464, number 24(A), l. 32-34. This text, which is formulated as a letter from Ibbi-Sīn to Puzur-Numušda, the ruler of the city of Casalu, is translated in its entirety below.

[24] The theory that part of the Amorite population served the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur as mercenaries was raised by Weeks 1985, and was accepted by Whiting 1995, p. 1234; Michalowski 2011, p. 109, note 46. For an opposing view see Charpin 2004a, p. 57, note 134.

[25] Abrahami 1998; Stol 2004, pp. 805-807; Charpin 2004a, p. 282; Charpin 2015a, p. 41; de Boer 2014a, pp. 186-187.

dynasties whose kings had Western Semitic names, or which expressed - in other ways - their connection to the Amorite population. Some of these kingdoms succeeded, in certain periods, to rule the neighboring kingdoms and to become regional powers for one or more generations. The power that lasted the longest was the Kingdom of Babylon, starting with the rule of Ḫammurapi (1784-1742 BCE), who is familiar to the modern reader by virtue of his code of law.[26] Ḫammurapi's dynasty is the one which turned Babylon into the most important political center in southern Mesopotamia, and accordingly it is referred to by academics as "the First Dynasty of Babylon". In the historical memory of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia themselves, the period of the reign of this dynasty – and actually, the entire period between the Third Dynasty of Ur and the Kassite Dynasty which ruled Babylon after the rule of Ḫammurapi's descendants ended - were considered the "Amorite Dynasty" (*palû Amurrî*).[27] In modern research as well, the period from the beginning of the 20th century through the 16th century BCE in Mesopotamian history is called "The Old Babylonian Period", even though the Kingdom of Babylon became the most important political factor in Mesopotamia only in the time of Ḫammurapi and his descendants.

The last of Ḫammurapi's descendants to sit on the throne in Babylon, Samsu-Ditāna (1617-1587 BCE), was removed from his throne during the invasion of Muršili I, the Hittite King of Babylon.[28] The term *Amurru* continued to be used in the Akkadian language to denote the space west of the Euphrates, as well as the direction "west" in more general terms, until the first millennium BCE.[29] The name "Amorite" in the Bible was apparently derived from this usage, and it was dependent on a tradition of more than 1000 years which identified the term *Amurru* with the populated lands along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

The Amorite period in the history of Mesopotamia, as mentioned above, lasted approximately 400 years, from the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur until the end of the reign of Samsi-Ditāna (1995-1587 BCE). This was one of the most important periods in the history of the Ancient Near East, and it is the period which is addressed in this book.

From the political perspective, the Amorite period in Mesopotamia was characterized by political divisions and multiple kingdoms, of which only a minority became regional powers. Nevertheless, most of those kingdoms ruled territories that were larger than those ruled by the Sumerian city-states in the

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[26] For the transcription of the name of Ḫammurapi, see above, fn. 13.

[27] The distinction between *pale Ŝulgi* "the dynasty of Ŝulgi", *pale Amurrî* "the dynasty of the Amorites", and *pale Kašši* "the dynasty of the Kassites" appears in the astronomy essay known as MUL.APIN, "The Star of the Plow", which was consolidated in its final form during the first third of the first millennium BCE (Hunger and Pingree 1989, p. 96, tablet II, row ii, ll. 18-20).

[28] The capture of Babylon by Murašili I is mentioned in "The Will of Telepinu" and in a late Babylonian chronicle from the first millennium BCE (זינגר, א'. תשס"ט, p. 35; Goedegebuure 2006, p. 230; Glassner 2004, pp. 272-273, number 40, reverse side, l. 11).

[29] Van Seters 1972, p. 66; Cogan 2002, p. 89. It should be noted that the term *Amurru* in its late form lost the final consonant *m* that existed in the earlier forms *Amurrum/Amurrûm*, as part of the phenomenon of dropping the consonant *m* at the end of words in Akkadian starting from the middle of the second millennium BCE.

period before the Third Kingdom of Ur.[30] The interesting thing in this period is that, despite the many political divisions, the various Amorite centers shared societal, cultural, and religious outlooks which unified the different kingdoms and created an Amorite world which sprawled from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf (or as it is called in Akkadian: "from the upper sea to the lower sea") and from Hazor in the Upper Galilee to the Diyala Basin which is west of the Tigris River.

The lack of hegemony, or the multiplicity of regional power centers, was destined to exist in Mesopotamia for many years. In the second half of the second millennium BCE, the kingdom of Assyria conquered all the territories of northern Mesopotamia, while the Kingdom of Babylon regained control of southern Mesopotamia. The confrontation between the kingdoms of Assyrian and Babylonia continued - intermittently - from the 13th century until the 7th century BCE. During the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, Assyria became the dominant kingdom and imposed its rule on the Kingdom of Babylonia but did not succeed in dominating it completely. This situation changed in 614-609 BCE, when the Babylonian kingdom succeeded in defeating the Kingdom of Assyria and destroying its central cities: Assur and Nineveh on the banks of the Tigris River, and Haran near the Habalih in northeast Syria (today, in southeast Turkey). During this period, Mesopotamia was unified for the first time since the Third Dynasty of Ur under a single political framework for a number of generations, until 539 BCE when the Kingdom of Babylonia also succumbed to the Kingdom of Persian under Cyrus the Great. In any case, throughout the entire second millennium, as well as the first third of the first millennium BCE, there was a complex array of political rivals and allies in Mesopotamia, an array that was not stable and changed frequently.

Whereas the bible calls the Land of Canaan, or various parts of the land, "The Land of the Amorites" (Numbers 21:31; Joshua 24:8; Amos 2:10, etc.), it is actually more accurate to call Mesopotamia "The Land of the Amorites" in the first half of the second millennium BCE. Nevertheless, the various Amorite dynasties that ruled in the Mesopotamian kingdoms during this period understood, at least partially, their common origin and the religious, and possibly political, obligations that derived from that. The kings of the dynasty that ruled in Mesopotamia even kept strong ties, both political and familial, with the rulers of the large kingdoms in Syria, the most important of which were the Kingdom of Yamhad (centered in Aleppo), and Qatna (which was located in the southern part of the Orontes River basin).

From a cultural perspective, the period of the rule of the Amorite dynasty in Mesopotamia created a blend of the religious concepts, languages, and customs that the Amorites brought with them from Syria

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[30] Also prior to the founding of the Third Dynasty of Ur, there was another period during which there was a political framework in Mesopotamia which united its cities under one government – the rule of the Dynasty of Akkad, which was established by King Sargon circa 2320 BCE and which collapsed in the days of his great grandson, who –ironically - bore the name Šar-Kali-Šari ("King of Kings"), circa 2180 BCE. But the Kingdom of Akkad and the Kingdom of Ur both were superpowers whose reign encompassed all the urban centers of Mesopotamia, and during most of the years they were in existence they were not forced to contend with the many power centers in Mesopotamia proper. (For a review of the history of those kingdoms, see ספיייזר ₂ תשמ"ב pp. 125-128; Franke 1995; Klein 1995; Westenholz 1999; Sallaberger 1999; Foster 2016).

with those that originated in Mesopotamia proper. In fact, the Mesopotamian culture was characterized from its beginnings by an integration between Sumerian elements which originated in the southern part of the land, and Semitic elements which originated in the northern part. (The city of Akkad, from which the name of the Semitic language is derived, was apparently near the modern city of Baghdad.) Therefore, it is justifiable to call the ancient Mesopotamian civilization "an integrated civilization".[31] But, although the Sumerian-Akkadian integration continued to exist in this culture until it was swallowed by the eastern Hellenistic culture around the beginning of the common era, the Amorite foundations barely survived to the end of the period of the Amorite dynasties.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

This book seeks to present the readers with a broad yet concise survey of the history of Mesopotamian politics in the first half of the second millennium BCE. It is comprised of two sections. The first section describes the arena of events: the geographical borders, the different populations that lived in the area, and the chronological framework of the period under discussion. The second section addresses the various kingdoms that existed in Mesopotamia and Syria during the period of the Amorite dynasties.

The discussion of these kingdoms is organized in a chronological/geographical framework. It starts with the most ancient kingdoms which arose when the Third Dynasty of Ur was weakening - the kingdoms of Isin and Larsa – and ends with the kingdom ruled by a dynasty of Amorite kings up until the last one, which is the Kingdom of Babylonia. Given that the kingdoms of Isin and Larsa were in the southern part of the Mesopotamian plain, the discussion in the second section of the book starts with the region of southern Mesopotamian, continues with the kingdoms of the Diyala Basin and the basins of the Tigris, the Habor, and the Euphrates in northern Syria, and proceeds with the kingdoms of Syria – the Kingdom of Yamḥad in northern Syria, and the Kingdom of Qaṭna in central Syria, which also ruled – if only indirectly - in specific regions of southern Syria. The discussion ends with the Kingdom of Babylonia – which actually was in the center of the Mesopotamian plain -- but its survival as an Amorite kingdom until a relatively late period - the beginning of the 16th century BCE - gives it a special position in the historical discussion.

In order to present the reader with a broad historical picture while keeping the scope within reason, the discussion of the kingdoms of Mesopotamia and Syria will be limited to those which for any period had a strong political status with two exceptions: (1) the kingdom of Assur, when it existed as an independent city-state (in other words, before its annexation by the kingdom of the Amorite ruler Samsi Adu, which encompassed all of northern Mesopotamia around 1800 BCE), and (2) the kingdom of Malgium on the banks of the Tigris River, (southeast of the kingdom of Ešnunna which was on the Diyala Basin, and was much bigger and stronger than Malgium). The inclusion of the kingdom of Assyria in the discussion

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[31] ₂ ספייזר תשמ"ב

derives from its importance in the commercial arena in the Ancient Near East during the first quarter of the 2nd millennium BCE. The inclusion of the kingdom of Malgium is to illustrate the conditions of those small kingdoms which found themselves caught in the middle between powers struggling amongst themselves for regional dominance. Other major powers which did not have a dominant position, such as Kisurra, Sippar, Kiš, and Damrum in Mesopotamia, or Emār in northern Syria, were left out of the discussion except on those occasions when they played a role in the history of the kingdoms which were more powerful. Given the limits of the scope of this book, we refer the reader who is interested in the history of the small kingdoms to other research which is focused on this.[32]

The multiplicity of kingdoms addressed by this book, and the large number of rulers who ruled in each of the kingdoms, reflect the complexity of the political history of Mesopotamia in the period of the Amorite dynasty. In order to make it easier for the reader to distinguish between the different parts of this complex picture, at the beginning of each section which deals with the period of a specific ruler, the name of the ruler will appear in the left margin.

All the chapters in the book include translations of select Mesopotamian documents which touch on the topic under discussion. We attempted to select documents of different types: chronological lists, royal writings, contracts, letters, and literary works.[33] Most of the Mesopotamian documents which were written on clay tablets were damaged to varying degrees. It is frequently possible to reconstruct the damaged text based on comparable lines in the tablet itself, or in similar documents. In our translation, we usually reconstructed the damaged text based on the opinions of earlier researchers who published the documents. But, in certain cases we suggested our own reconstructions, accompanied by explanations of our reasons.

Surprisingly, no detailed survey of Mesopotamian history in the period of the Amorite dynasties has been published in English in recent decades.[34] The purpose of this book, a translation of a Hebrew original published in 2019, is to fill this void, and hopefully arouse the reader's interest in this fascinating

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[32] For the kingdom of Emār (which was also known in the period under discussion as Imār), see Durand 1990a. For the kingdom of Kisurra, see Kienast, 1978; Sommerfeld 1983; Goddeeris 2009; Tyborowski 2012. For the other small kingdoms which are mentioned here, which were extant in the 20th -19th centuries BCE, see de Boer 2014[a,] pp.115-156, 236-260

[33] Legal and economic documents from daily life rarely touch upon political history. Accordingly, their contribution to the discussion contained in this book is limited. Yet, in certain places we will present a full or partial translation of these types of documents when they contribute to the topic under discussion. Likewise, we will refer to the formulations of the dates that appear in the documents from daily life, because these formulations frequently contain very valuable historical information.

[34] A brief historical sketch of this period can be found in Liverani 2014, pp. 173-255. More detailed surveys have been published in French by Charpin and Ziegler 2003; Charpin 2004. The prominence of French publications in recent research on the Old Babylonian period is due to the discovery of more than 20,000 cuneiform tablets at the site of the ancient city of Mari on the banks of the Euphrates (around 15 km northwest of the modern Syrian-Iraqi border), from 1933 until the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011. The publication of these tablets is an ongoing project which has been entrusted to several French-speaking teams – the most important of which from the 1980s to the 2010s, was the Parisian team headed by Jean-Marie Durand and Dominique Charpin.

period. Those interested in expandIng their knowledge of the land of the Amorites - which extended from the Tigris to the Euphrates, and from the Euphrates further west to the Mediterranean coast - can avail themselves of the extensive bibliography provided at the end of the book.

The period the Amorite dynasty in Mesopotamia began, as mentioned above, with the fall of the Third Dynasty of Ur. There is no more fitting way to open our discussion than with a translation of a literary work written in the form of a letter, which reflects the political conditions in southern Mesopotamia in the last days of the Third Dynasty of Ur. Ironically, in it the last ruler of Ur, Ibbi-Sîn, hangs his hopes of defeating his bitter enemy, Išbi Erra, King of Isin, on the assistance of the Amorites. Ultimately, Ibbi-Sîn suffered a bitter disappointment, and this hope ended with the transformation of the Amorites into the dominant political factor in Mesopotamia.

Literary Letter Attributed to Ibbi-Sîn, Last King of the Third Dynasty of Ur (short version)[35]

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[35] A complete edition of this work was published by Michalowski 2011, pp. 463-471, number 24(A).