

Appendix B7

Summary of Totals

Introducton

Data sample

Things change over time. In Genesis and Exodus the north is a place to get brides, not a place from which world empires exert their influence. The only international power in Pentateuch is Egypt. Because no contrast between North and South is possible in an environment where there is no great northern power, I exclude the Pentateuch from the sample, and all later references to the period of Israel's slavery in Egypt or the exodus under Moses. The sample begins, perhaps arbitrarily, with 1 Kings. Assyria is not mentioned in the book of Daniel, but the same political dynamic affects both Assyria and Babylon, so I felt that omitting it would be arbitrary and included it in the sample.

Distinctions to track

In what follows I bring together the totals counted in various ways from the data set forth in appendices B1-B6. There are different ways to do this and a number of distinctions to make in the process.

One distinction is that between the various powers listed, which fall in two categories: northern ("North," Assyria, Babylon, Chaldea) and southern ("South," Egypt). The hypothesis is that the four northern powers will have more in common with each other in the totals than any of these will with the two southern powers.

A second distinction is between negative, neutral, and positive perceptions. A northern territory can be seen negatively or positively (or neutrally), a southern territory can be seen in any of these ways, and the way one views northern powers can be different from the one s/he sees southern powers.

A third distinction is between Israel and God. Here the question is, Who's doing the seeing? Whose perceptions are we tracking in any given verse? For each verse in the sample I jotted down my opinion of how Israel was portrayed as seeing the power in question, and how God was portrayed as seeing it. As it turns out, the way Israel sees a given power can be widely different from the way God sees it.

Perceptions by Territory

We begin by showing how Israel and God view powers represented by the six territorial terms for which I did word searches, taking the northern ones first.¹

¹ In regard to including Assyria in the tally, its presence has almost no impact on the results. Of 764 total references to a northern or southern power involving Israel, only 18 of these pertain to Assyria. Of 760 total references to a northern or southern power involving God, 16 have to do with Assyria.

The first set of figures shows one graph for each territorial term, but at this point the Y axis is not drawn to the same scale in the various graphs.

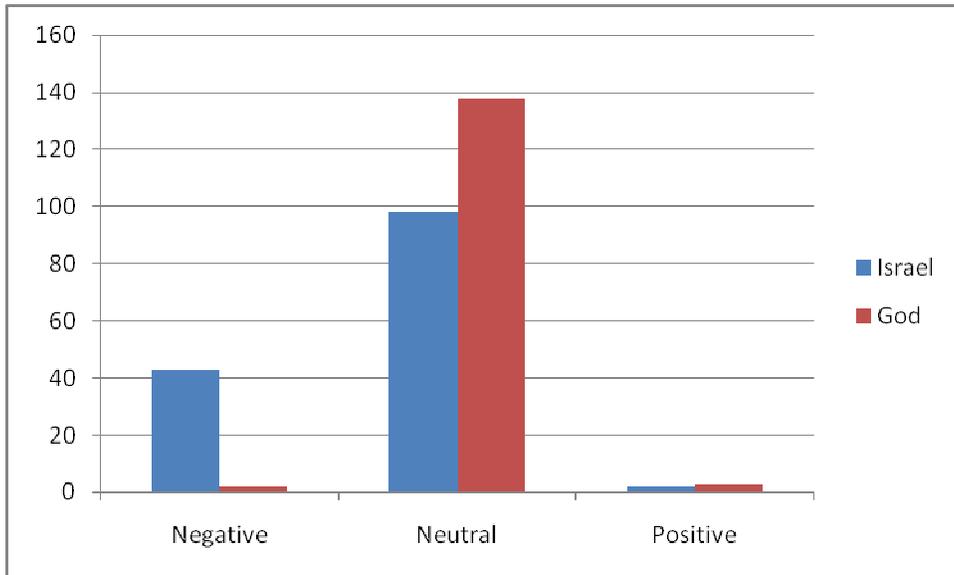


Fig. 1. The perceptions of Israel and God in references using the word "North."

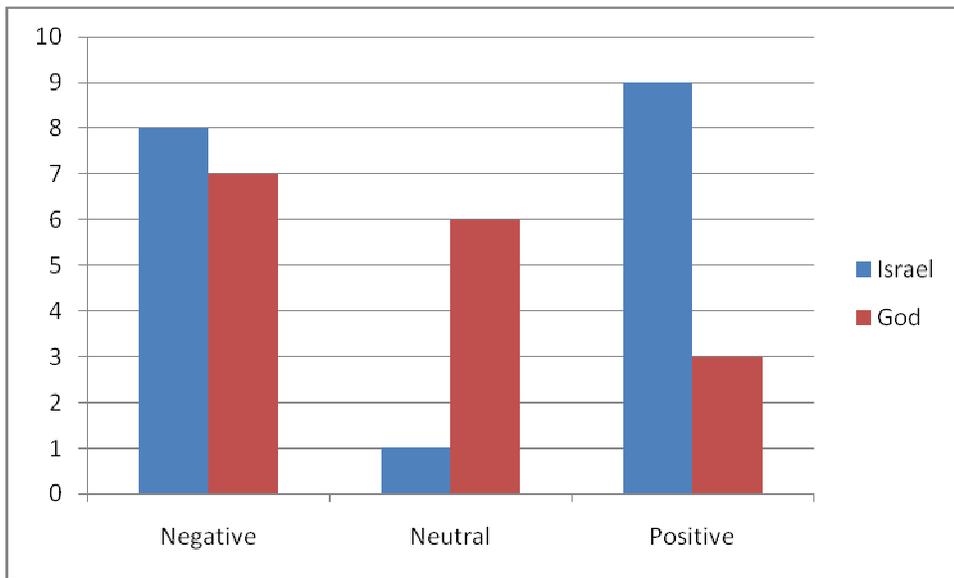


Fig. 2. The perceptions of Israel and God in references using the word Assyria.

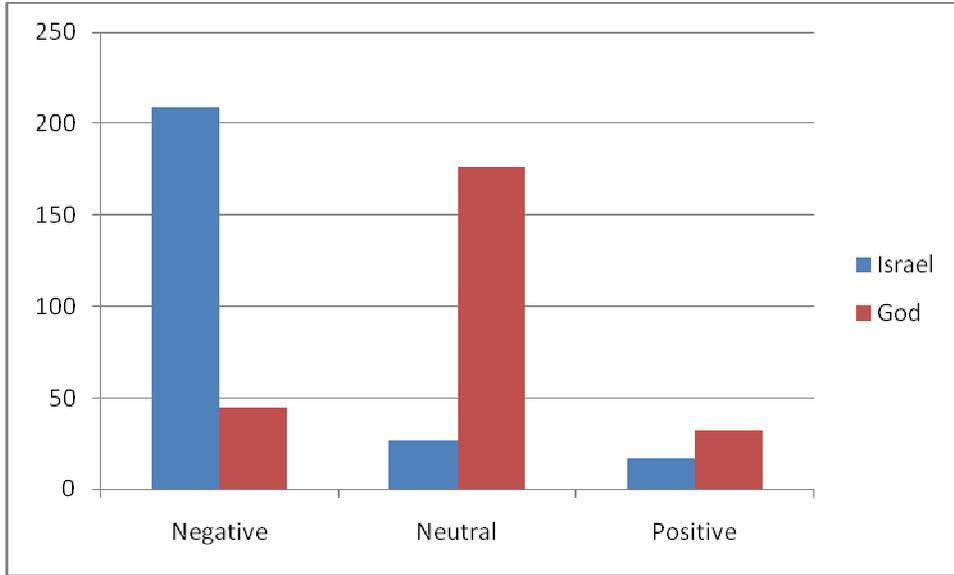


Fig. 3. The perceptions of Israel and God in references using the word Babylon.

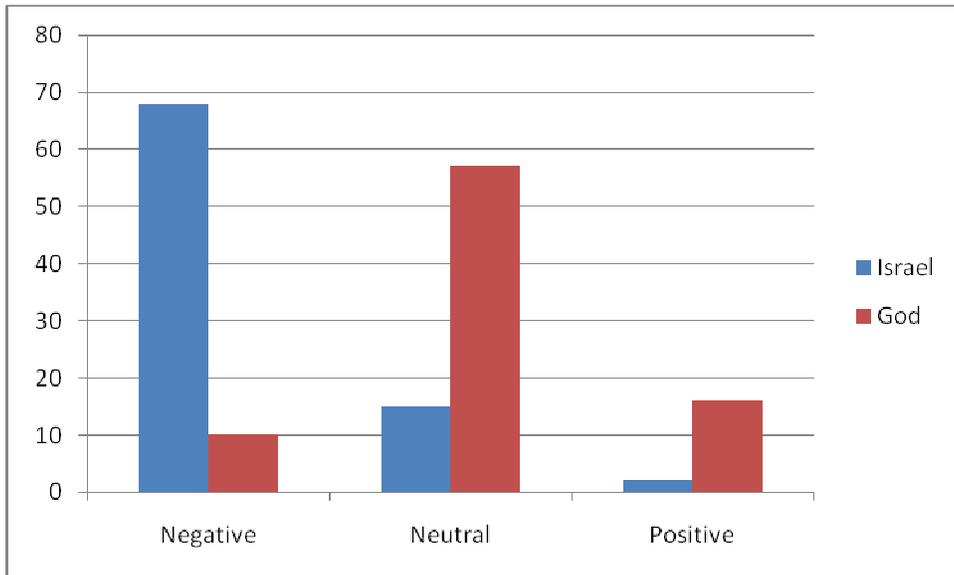


Fig. 4. The perceptions of Israel and God in references using the word Chaldea.

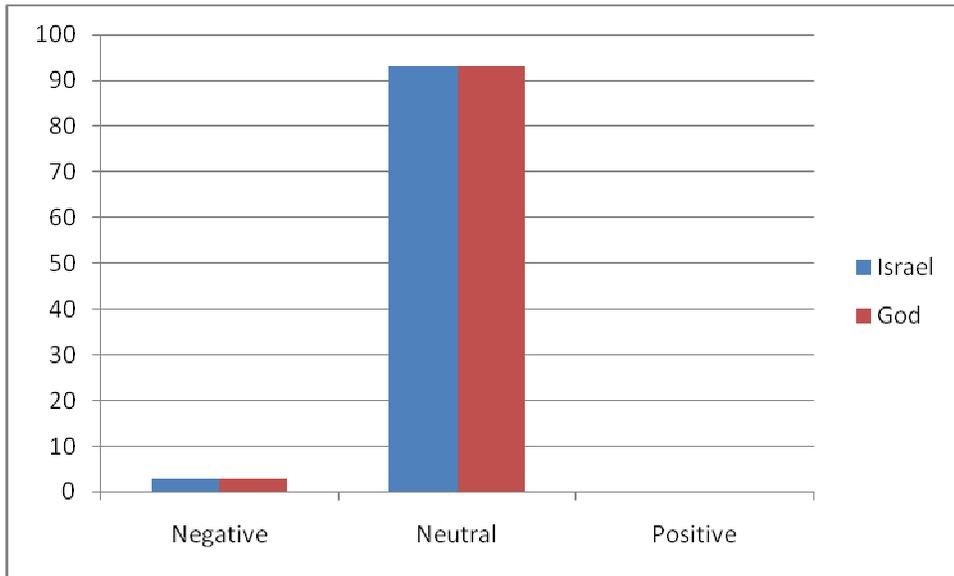


Fig. 5. The perceptions of Israel and God in references using the word "South."

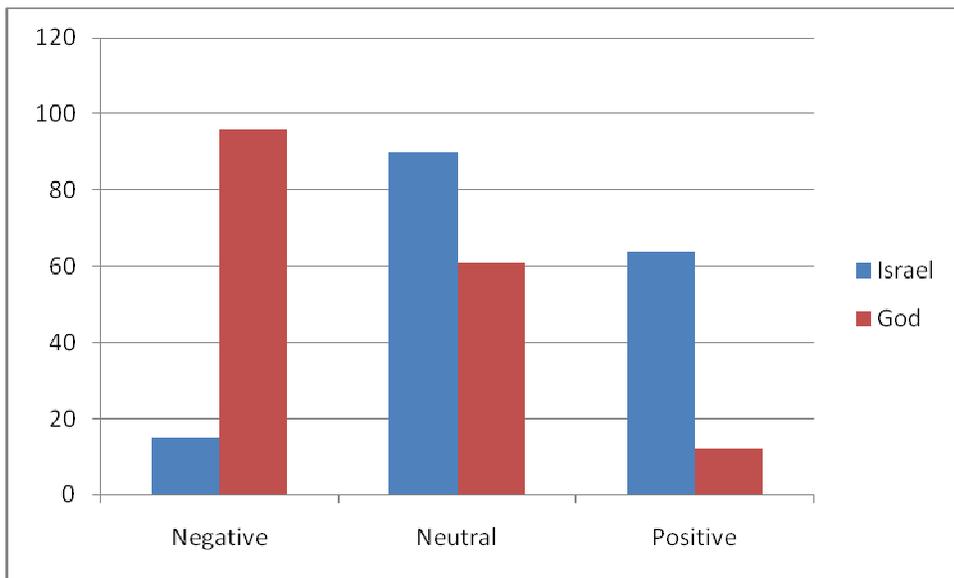


Fig. 6. The perceptions of Israel and God in references using the word Egypt.

In figs. 1-6 notice that Israel tends to perceive northern powers negatively, while God tends to perceive them neutrally or positively. In the same way, Israel tends to perceive southern powers (Egypt) neutrally or positively, while God tends to perceive them negatively.

Perceptions by Party

In figs. 6 and 7 we collapse the distinctions between individual northern and southern powers to achieve a combined view for Israel (fig. 6) and for God (fig. 7).

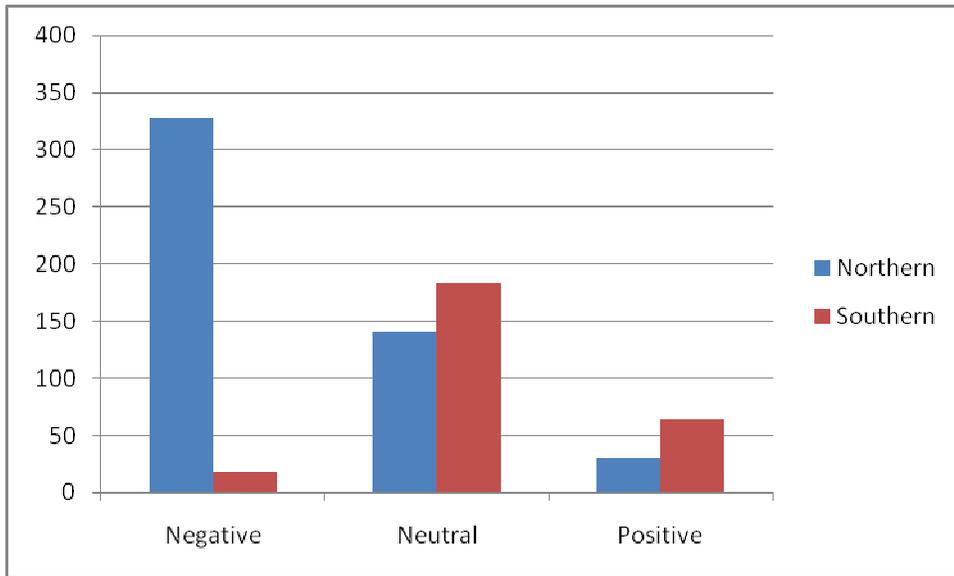


Fig. 7. Israel's perception of northern and southern powers.

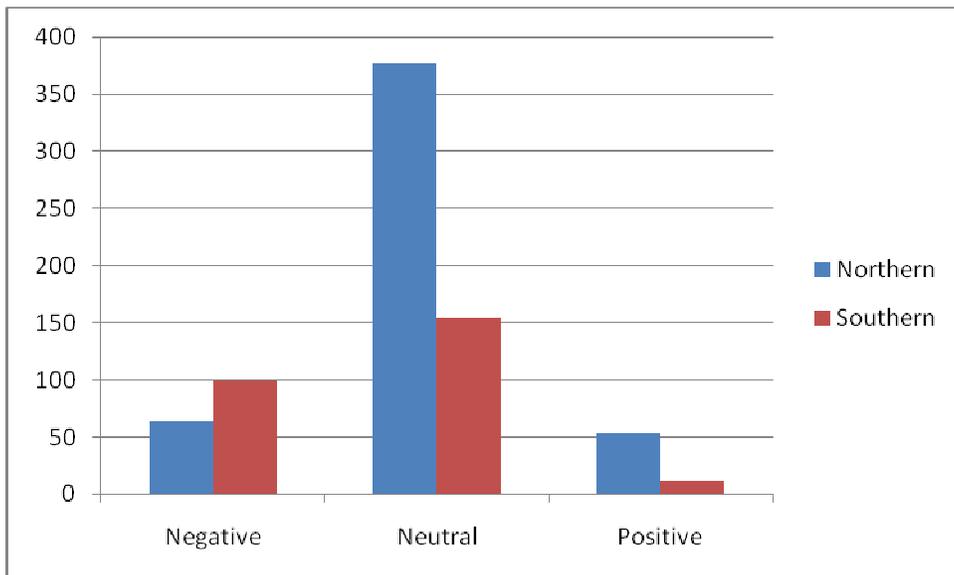


Fig. 7. God's perception of northern and southern powers.

Notice that the neutral category is the largest for both Israel (fig. 6) and God (fig. 7), with one exception. Israel has an overwhelmingly negative perception of northern powers. On the

other hand, god has an overwhelmingly neutral perception of northern powers. We now focus exclusively on what is negative or positive.

Different Points of View

In the remaining figures we attempt to factor out all neutrality. There are different ways to do this. We could simplify the question by asking how negative v. non-negative (positive/neutral) a perception is, or how positive v. non-positive (negative/neutral). But in these two cases we would be skewing the results unnecessarily. Alternatively, we could simply remove neutral values, which means discarding 42.9% of the data in the case of Israel, and 69.5% of the data in the case of God. There's a distortion either way. In this section I discard neutral values, but hope to minimize any distortion by reporting results as percentages and setting the Y axis of each set of graphs to the same scale.

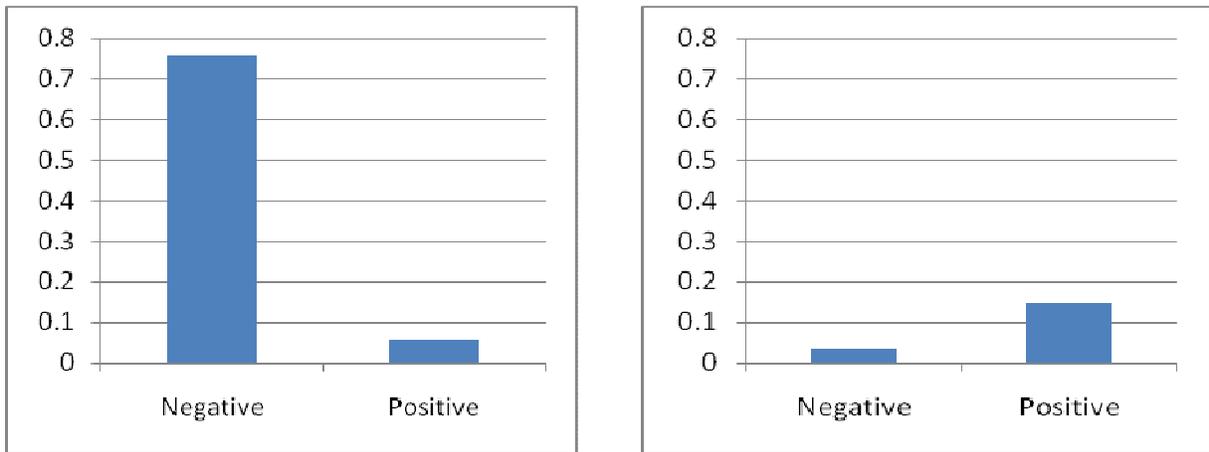


Fig. 8. Israel's perception of northern powers (a) and southern powers (b).

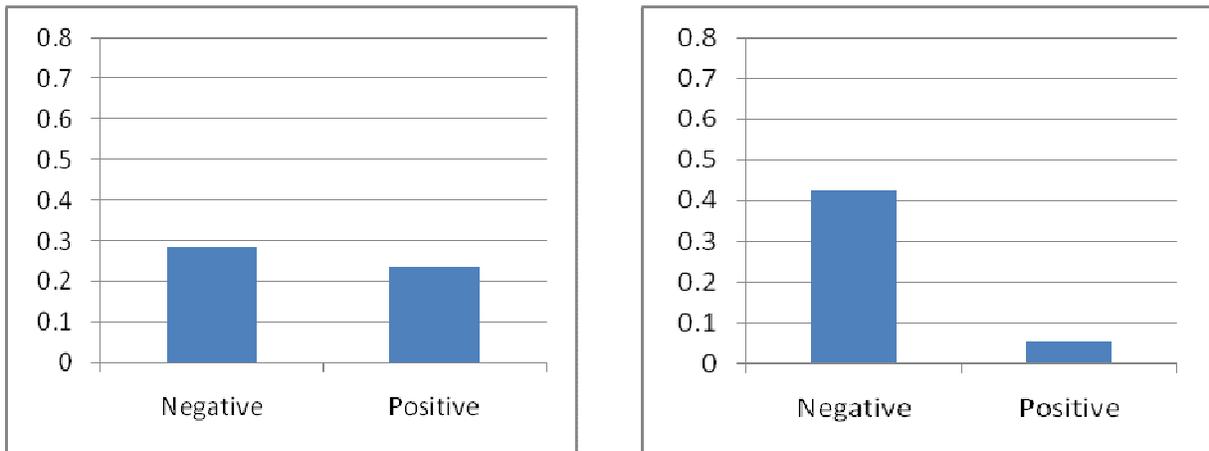


Fig. 9. God's perception of northern powers (a) and southern powers (b).

In fig. 8 Israel is much more negative than positive (76.1% : 5.6%) toward northern powers, but four times more positive than negative (14.8% : 3.5%) toward southern powers. By contrast, in fig. 9 God is barely more negative than positive (28.6% : 23.9%) toward northern powers, but eight times more negative than positive (42.3% : 5.1%) toward southern powers.

Summary

Thus we see a major disconnect between the way Israel sees the superpowers to its north and south and the way God sees them. Both Israel and God are more negative than positive to northern powers, but Israel is three times more so (76.1% : 28.6%). But this is a comparatively small difference of opinion. A much more remarkable difference lies in how the two parties view Egypt. Israel sees Egypt as being four times more positive than negative, but God sees it as being eight times more negative than positive (see percentages above). Why?

During the exilic period, powers to Israel's north were growing in power and Egypt was starting down a long process of decline. And yet, Egypt saw Judea as its "near abroad" and considered any attack on Judea as a threat to its own sovereignty. So Egypt's interests and those of Judea overlapped to a degree, and since Egypt was still large enough to stand up to northern aggressors – or at least to give an appearance of doing so – Jews living in Judea saw Egypt as a potential source of help (see 2 Kgs 18:21; Isa 36:6).

God, on the other hand, saw Egypt as a potential source of competition (see Isa 31:1; Jer 46:25). He didn't want His people to rely on their neighbors, but on Him. So it is natural that God would be portrayed as viewing Egypt negatively, just as it is naturally that the Jewish people would view Egypt positively. On the other hand, the northern powers that Israel hated so much were instruments in God's hand to punish His people for turning from Him, so in their role as His servants carrying out His will He would see them more positively than His people, who were being attacked by these powers.

Conclusion

It would be natural to assume that, since we are studying the Bible and since the Bible is a record of God's dealings with His people, that God's perceptions would be shared by His people. But this is not so. They were on opposite sides, as it were, when it came to dealing with the countries around them. To Israel a power was good if it could help, bad if it attacked. To God a power was good if it did His will.