

**EARLY ISRAELITES IN CANAAN:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL  
PERSPECTIVES.**

By

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

in the subject

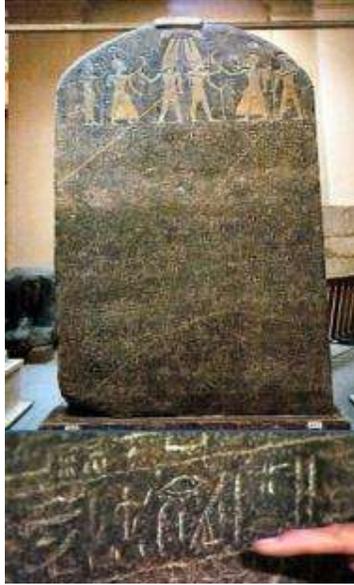
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*“Israel is wasted, bare of seed”* – Stelae and Reliefs of Pharaoh Merneptah, c. 1207 BCE <sup>a</sup>



**The First Mention of the God of Israel YHWH** — And...I took the vessels of **YHWH**, I am Mesha, son of Kemosh[-yatti], the king of Moab, the Dibonite... Omri was the king of **Israel**, and he oppressed Moab for many days, for Kemosh was angry with his land. And I took from there the altar-hearths of **Yahweh**, and I dragged them before Chemosh. And the king of **Israel** built Jabaz and dwelt in it while he fought with me and Chemosh drove him out from before me. <sup>b</sup>

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a. The Center for Online Judaic Studies <http://cojs.org/?s=the+merneptah+stela>

b. The Center for Online Judaic Studies [http://cojs.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/Moabite\\_Stone.jpg](http://cojs.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/Moabite_Stone.jpg)

I declare that **EARLY ISRAELITES IN CANAAN: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that this thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in South Africa or overseas. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

*Michael John Walmsley*

18 MAY 2018

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SIGNATURE

DATE

# SUMMARY

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This dissertation investigates the Israelite occupation of the Land of Canaan as reflected in the Old Testament in order to conclude how the Israelites came to occupy the Promised Land. In order to arrive at that end, this research work reviews the current theories of occupation, analyses the biblical books of Joshua and Judges, and reviews the current archaeological and epigraphic data from Canaan during the Late Bronze Age. The specific sites examined in detail include Jericho, Ai, Hazor and thirty-one cities mentioned as defeated or destroyed in the books of Joshua and Judges, of which twenty sites have been identified and excavated.

Additionally, the thesis concludes that a vast amount of archaeological evidence indicates that the sites of Jericho, Ai, Hazor and twenty out of the thirty-one cities discovered were occupied, destroyed and resettled at the specific times and in the manner consistent with the records from the books of Joshua and Judges and that ancient documents indicate that the Israelites had appeared in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age.

**Key terms:**

Israelite Conquest: Joshua, Judges, Canaan, Late Bronze and Early Iron Age, Israel, Jericho, Ai, Hazor, the 31 cities, archaeology, epigraphic evidence, bullae, seals; papyri and tablets.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This dissertation is the result of an intense interest on my part to learn more about the biblical history of Israel that was further kindled by my participation in the 2012-2014 excavations at Tel Hazor and Tel Lachish. It is with deep appreciation and sincere gratitude that I thank and recognize those who supported and believed in me in the pursuit of my career.

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# **Chapter 1 Archaeological, Biblical and Extra-Biblical Perspectives on the Israelite Conquest or Settlement of Canaan**

## **1. Introduction**

The modern state of Israel has been dominating the frontline news for decades; with the primary focus on the defence of the created state of 1948 as opposed to the existence of Ancient Israel. Religious extremism has deepened the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of very recent, while in the academic world archaeologists are locked in debate over Israel's existence in biblical times. Traditionally knowledge about the way the Early Israelites entered Canaan was based predominantly on biblical sources, but over the past number of decades, advances in the field of archaeology have challenged this perception.

No other people on the face of the earth have as an extensive recorded history as the ancient Israelites, contained in the text of the Bible. The scriptures, especially the Old Testament, explain the origins of the Early Israelites and how they eventually conquered Canaan. Modern scholars are attempting to reconstruct Israel's early history based on the archaeological evidence, ancient textual evidence, and a critical reading of the Bible.

Today several scholars agree that the ancient Israelites originated in the highlands of Canaan in about 1200 BCE. The key question here is; where do these early highland settlers come from? At present, the most popular theory among scholars is that the settlers migrated into the highlands from the Canaanite lowlands, so that the earliest Israelites were essentially Canaanites. But that theory is now being questioned vigorously by scholars who emphasize the role of nomadic pastoralists in the highland settlements. These important debates are essential to understanding how the Early Israelites entered and or settled in Canaan.

In recent years, the Bible itself has received a fair amount of criticism concerning its historical reliability. The critical remarks made against the Bible are usually based on a lack of evidence from outside sources to confirm the biblical record. Although the Bible may be a religious book, today many sceptical scholars have taken the position that the Bible is biased and untrustworthy unless they have corroborating evidence from extra-biblical sources and archaeological data that can convince them. Furthermore, the ancient Israelites were given another name as they were also known as the Hebrews and are often referred to by this term in ancient writings (Wiseman 1973: 1-23).

## 2. **Research Problem and Objectives**

### 2.1 **Research Problem**

This dissertation addresses one of the most problematic topics in the history of archaeology on the origins of early Israel. During the past three decades, there has been much discussion in identifying “Israel” (people / land) and attempts to trace its roots have caused modern historians and archaeologists to question the reality of Israel as described in biblical literature. In *Whence Came the Israelites and Their Language*, A.F. Rainey explores the continuing controversies regarding the true nature of ancient Israel with his comparative archaeological approach in providing evidence for assessing the accuracy of the well-known biblical stories (Rainey 2007: 41-64). Firstly, the Iron I period (1200-1000 BCE) has been the most problematic issue among archaeologists, as scholars attempt to locate the earliest Israelite community in the settlements to emerge in the highlands. Secondly, attempts to correlate the findings of archaeology with the biblical records for the period of the Exodus, Joshua’s Conquest and its origins have met with seemingly insurmountable obstacles, as the majority of biblical scholars today have dismissed the entire biblical narrative as little more than myth and legend.

After taking control of the cities throughout the land of Canaan, the people of Israel began to identify themselves as "Israelites", composing documents to legitimize their existence (Finkelstein 1988b: 295-314). Another problematic issue regarding the archaeological search for the ancient Israelite towns and cities in Canaan is that there is a lack of archaeological evidence concerning the Israelites living in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age I/II and Iron Age I period. As per the biblical texts, the ancient Israelites were nomads living in tents since they were wandering in the wilderness (Sinai) for forty years after leaving Egypt.

It was only upon entering Canaan that the people of Israel started to live in towns and cities during the early part of the United Monarchy period; under the reign of David and his son Solomon (1 Sam 4:10; 13:2; 2 Sam 18:17; 20:1; 20:22). Since it was predominantly the Canaanites who lived in towns and cities during the period of Joshua / Judges, we cannot expect to find evidence of the ancient Israelites to show up in excavations of towns / cities in order to refute scholars who hold a different view on the origins of the Ancient Israelites.

As Ze’ve Herzog, head of the Beer-Sheba excavation expedition, rightly puts it when commenting on Iron Age sites:

...most of the [Iron Age] villages were established prior to the destruction of the urban centers on the nearby tells.... Villages so characteristic of the Israelite settlement period began at a time when the Late Bronze Age cities had not yet been destroyed. The resulting archaeological picture is one of cultural overlapping, with urban and rural settlements existing side by side.... Sites typical of the Late Bronze Age - the Canaanite cities - and sites characteristic of the Iron Age - the Early Iron Age villages are now known to have been contemporary. In relative terms, the Iron Age appears to have begun earlier than previously suspected. The excavations of the village sites have raised the date for the beginning of the Iron Age, while the Lachish and Tel Sera inscriptions have lowered the date for the end of the Late Bronze Age. The result is a broad range of overlap between what is commonly known as the "Late Bronze Age" and the "Early Iron Age" lasting almost 100 years, from about 1230 to 1150 B.C.E. (Herzog 1984: 67).<sup>1</sup>

The above passage illustrates well the notion that the Ancient Israelites were living in tents throughout Canaan while the Canaanites were city-state dwellers who were eventually displaced by the Israelites over a long period. Yet scholars remain adamant that there is a lack of extra-biblical literary evidence to support their theory on the origin and events of the Ancient Israelites during the earlier part of biblical history.

## 2.2 **Aims of study**

The main objective is to investigate the Israelite occupation in the land of Canaan - as reflected in the biblical tradition - to conclude how the Israelites came to occupy the Promised Land. This dissertation sets out to: review the current theories of occupation; analyse current archaeological evidence and the biblical books of Joshua and Judges; and investigate the roles of the terrain and military tactics.

## 2.3 **Hypothesis**

In recent years, there has been a great deal of discussion about the existence of the Ancient Israelites and the relationship between archaeology, artefacts, ancient texts and the Bible.

There are four conquest theories that scholars have proposed regarding the history of Israel. Each of these models is discussed by various scholars who have relied heavily on their own specialized field and give conflicting reviews regarding the history on the origin of the Ancient Israelites. The work has confined itself to an analysis of the two pertinent books in the Bible: Joshua and Judges, of which each school of thought either supports or opposes it. Additionally, there is no direct extra-biblical reference to the Israelite occupation of the land of Canaan.

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1. Herzog, Z. (1984). Beer-Sheba II: The Early Iron Age Settlements. Tel Aviv University: Institute of Archaeology.

The Bible is the main source of information for comparison against others. The evaluation of the books of Joshua and Judges - the extra-biblical sources and the current archaeological information - requires the careful scrutiny of a keen military eye to arrive at a conclusion that satisfies all the archaeological data.

The discussion on the origin of the Israelites and its history is merely between two schools of thought arguing their case regarding the events in the book of Joshua and Judges. The main objective of these schools of thought is to independently re-evaluate the settlement process and conclude how the settlement occurred in the land of Canaan.<sup>2</sup> Four models are discussed briefly.

### 2.3.1. The Conquest Model

The main discussion starts off with the conquest model in which the book of Joshua is widely accepted as the historical basis and the archaeological data is used to support the theory of Joshua's account on the occupation of the land. The conquest model involves the massing of the twelve tribes of Israel and their invasion of the land of Canaan. In this theory, Joshua and his forces attack the land, killing all the Canaanite inhabitants and taking over the land.

This approach tends to accept the basic historical accuracy of the Joshua account and finds evidence in modern archaeological fieldwork to affirm the essential correctness of the biblical text. It suggests that Joshua led a core group of Hebrews who had escaped from Egypt into Transjordan and Canaan, and secured their presence in the land. They claim the evidence of a sudden violent destruction in 1200 BCE can be found at several city sites. This is still the dominant model in many American academic studies by the likes of Dr. Bryant Wood, a strong proponent, conducted at Jericho and Khirbet el-Maqatir (Wood 1990: 44-58; 2008:205-240).

William F. Albright developed a "conquest" hypothesis of a unified Israel conquering Canaan, based on the results of excavations that he conducted in the 1930s, 1940s and

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<sup>2</sup> McDermott, John J. (1998). *What are They Saying About the Formation of Israel?* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press).

1950s.<sup>3</sup> He attempted to correlate the archaeological evidence of destructions at key sites such as Hazor, Jericho, Ai, Bethel, Lachish and Tell Beit-Mirsim (Debir) with the biblical text of Joshua. In Albright's view, the conquest occurred at the transition between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. Later proponents such as George Ernest Wright, John Bright, and Yigal Yadin also supported Albright's conquest model as described in Joshua. Yadin's excavations at Hazor (1955-8) gave compelling evidence of the violent destruction that took place in approximately 1220 BCE.

Yadin cites the destroyed remains of the Canaanite City (stratum XIII) that he uncovered below the layer of the semi-nomadic Israelite settlement (stratum XII) in support of his theory, which is based on the findings of the Mycenaean pottery in the final Canaanite occupation layer (Yadin 1973: 258-260). Archaeologist Bryant Wood suggests that Khirbet el-Maqatir is the biblical Ai. He uses his latest scientific and archaeological research at areas A, D, E, and G - including the Late Bronze I fortress that meet the biblical requirements as referred to in Joshua 7-8 – to reach this conclusion. However, not all scholars agree on the conquest theory or on Albright and Yadin's archaeological evidence found at various sites in Israel.

### 2.3.2 The Peace Infiltration Model

This model, which denies the military action of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, was formulated by Martin Noth in the 1960s and later refined by Manfred Weippert (1971).<sup>4</sup> This school of thought believed that the Israelites started out as seminomadic herdsmen in the regions of Canaan over the period that can sustain a sedentary agricultural way of life. It was only later, down the centuries, that the people began to call themselves "Israel" when they had settled, following a period of peaceful infiltration. According to this theory, the group of "Israelites" were from a common socio-theological perspective where each group brought

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3. Albright, William F. (1935). "Archaeology and the Date of the Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *BASOR* 58 :10–8; idem, "Further Light on the History of Israel from Lachish and Megiddo," *BASOR* 68 (1937) 22–6; idem, "The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology," *BASOR* 74 (1939) 11–23.

4. Noth, Martin. (1960). Harper & Row Publishers; Revised Edition edition; Weippert, Manfred (1971) *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine*, Illinois.

their history of stories and religious traditions, combining them to form the product of the entire group that became known as Israel.

These scholars have suggested that the entire narrative of Genesis through Joshua is a synthesis of many histories and thus further hypothesize that the twelve tribes were joined together as a religious league around a central sanctuary. This idea was borrowed from the typical Greek amphictyony; a term described as a religious confederacy, first developed from the Apollo league at Delphi. Martin Noth goes on to say that the twelve tribes of Israel were formed as a covenant league under the leadership of Joshua, initially making Shechem their shrine city before finally appointing Shiloh their central sanctuary.

### 2.3.3 The Peasant Revolt Model

George Mendenhall (1962) developed a new theory that there was only a minimal incursion by foreign groups into Canaan and that the birth of Israel was the result of internal political upheaval and social revolution.<sup>5</sup> Canaan was controlled by numerous city-states in about 1200 BCE, run by powerful kings and aristocrats who oppressed the rural farmers and herdsmen. Here Mendenhall noticed that the tribes known as Habiru/Apiru mentioned in the famed Amarna letters were a social class and that the city-states in Canaan had deep class divisions between the rulers and rural peasants.

These so-called peasants united as a confederacy under a single religion; “Yahwism”, which became a powerful entity by overthrowing the rulers of the city-states and developing into the emerging nation of Israel. It has also been suggested by Martin Noth that the Israelites borrowed the idea of Akhenaten's monotheistic revolution back in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century or were even influenced by the Shasu nomads who worshipped YHWH (Noth 1963: 83-104). In support of Noth’s idealistic view on the religion of the Israelites, Norman Karol Gottwald believed that the Israelites emerged as local Canaanite peasants who sought to overthrow the corrupt regimes;

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5. Mendenhall, George E. (1970). The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine, BAR 3 (100-121), Mendenhall, George E. *"The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine."* Biblical Archaeology (1962): 66–87.

their actions fueled by a liberating faith in the deity of Yahweh (Dever 2006: 53-54).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Gottwald proposes that these Israelites relocated to the previously unsettled Judean hills in order to form a more equal community and thus the ideals are reflected in the mythical stories of the Pentateuch, Joshua and Judges.

#### 2.3.4 The Symbiosis Model

A new theory called the Symbiosis model - developed by German scholar Volkmar Fritz - is like an amalgamation of the “infiltration” model (Alt-Noth) and the “peasant” model (Mendenhall-Gottwald). Fritz’s three most popular written works reflect his passion and expertise in both fields: 1) *The City in Ancient Israel* (Continuum); 2) *An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology* (JSOT Press); and 3) *The Emergence of Israel in the Twelfth and Eleventh Centuries BCE*. In the latter, he traces the history of urban life in southern Levant during the biblical period; their economics, social organization of their inhabitants, their everyday life, administration and culture. He also focuses a lot on the location, layout, size, architecture, building materials and water provision of the Israelite cities in Canaan.

According to Fritz’s findings, he believes that the Iron Age remains have close affinities with the previous Late Bronze Age, suggesting that a symbiotic relationship existed between the Israelites and the Canaanites. This symbiosis explains why their Early Iron Age pottery reflects a knowledge of Late Bronze Age Canaanite pottery.<sup>7</sup> Fritz calls the early Israelites “culture-land nomads,” since he does not identify these nomads with the Habiru as Lemche does. Although the hypotheses of Lemche and Fritz are very similar and equally reductionist, Fritz asserts that the book of Joshua has no historical value as far as the process of settlements is concerned. As far as Fritz is concerned, the narratives of Joshua 1-11 are aetiological sagas. He did not completely rule out the inclusion of pastoral or urban people as settlers, but leaned toward their sedentary attributes in his vision of the genesis of the Israelite nation. He believes the Israelites were always there in the steppe lands, coming into the cultivated lands after the harvest and trading with the farmers, grazing their flocks in the harvested fields and thus have always lived in symbiosis with the settled, agricultural society.

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6. Gottwald, Norman. N. K. (1979). *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 BCE*. Maryknoll, N.Y. Gottwald, N. K. (1989). "Israel's Emergence in Canaan-BR Interviews Norman Gottwald," *Bible Review* 5/3 (Oct, 1989) 26-34.

7. Fritz, Volkmar. (1995). *The City in Ancient Israel*, Edition: 1st Imprint: Sheffield Academic Press. Fritz, Volkmar (2012). *The Emergence of Israel in the Twelfth and Eleventh Centuries B.C.E*. Publisher: Leiden: Brill.

Fritz concludes:

The various groups that settled in the country from the twelfth century onward cannot be regarded as former nomads..., and in order to accommodate the shift in emphasis proposes a new name in place of the "Infiltration Model: "I would like to call the new theory the symbiosis hypothesis. <sup>8</sup>

In agreement with Fritz's "symbiosis model," William Dever believes that many of the early Israelites were proto-Israelites who could have lived near the Canaanites for a long period.<sup>9</sup> Dever concludes that the best fit is that the ancient Israelites came from various backgrounds; urban and rural Canaanites, some nomadic people, and a small number of escaped slaves from Egypt.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the emergence of the Israelites was likely part of a transformation within the Canaanite society.

### 2.3.5 Conclusion

The debate around the origin of the Israelites and their history, as recorded in the biblical texts, continues to rage on in academic circles in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. An accurate account on Israel's occupation of Canaan has proved to be difficult to conclude, but one can say that both internal and external evidence is required in order to treat Israel's traditions concerning her origins and early history with greater respect.

This requires that we look for a historical, archaeological and cultural context in which the traditions concerning the conquest/settlement can retain their integrity. More importantly, significant findings over the last two decades relating to the history of the Israelites occupying Canaan will be discussed in this thesis.

## 3. Preliminary Literature Review

A preliminary review of the literature indicates that there is sufficient information available on the ancient people of Israel to make this study viable. A wide selection of books and journal articles has been consulted in examining the biblical books of Joshua and Judges.

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8. Fritz, Volkmar. (1987). "Conquest or Settlement?" BAR, 50:2.

9. Dever, W.G. (1992). "How to Tell a Canaanite from an Israelite," in *The Rise of Ancient Israel: Lectures presented at a symposium sponsored by the Resident Associate Program, Smithsonian Institution October 26, 1991* (Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992:30).

10. Scholars Disagree: Rainey A.F. (1991). Can You Name the Panel with the Israelites? BAR 17:06, Nov- Dec. Also see, Hoffmeier. James K. (1997). *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*.

These reveal a much more complex situation and raises archaeological, historical and theological questions regarding the reliability of the accounts as straightforward history, as well as the very nature of Israel's entry into Palestine.

The debates surrounding this issue have been intense and at times acrimonious, ranging from those who deny any historical validity, to the accounts of those who insist that every detail is absolutely and totally accurate. For instance, the Book of Joshua (11:10-13) has described Hazor as the head of the Canaanite city-states and it is said to have been the site of one of Joshua's most important victories in the Israelite conquest of Canaan. The book of Judges also mentioned the battles of the Israelites led by Deborah and Barak against 'Yabin, king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor' (Judg 4-5) and is described as one of the Canaanite cities rebuilt as a royal administrative centre by Solomon (1 Kgs 9:15). Regarding the scripture on the conquest of Hazor:

And Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor and smote its king with the sword, for Hazor formerly was the head of all those kingdoms. And he put to the sword all who were in it, utterly destroying them; there was none left that breathed, and he burned Hazor with fire (Joshua 11:10-11). (In verse 13) None of the cities that stood on mounds did Israel burn, except Hazor only; that Joshua burned.

Then leading archaeologist, Yigal Yadin, wrote in *The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible* (1975) that the destruction of Hazor 'is doubtless to be ascribed to the Israelite tribes, as related in the Book of Joshua.'<sup>11</sup> Despite Yadin's opinions on the matter, critics have long argued that the biblical account of the Joshua conquest of Hazor is to be considered a mythical saga, written centuries after the events it describes. Their arguments suggested that the destruction was the work of the Egyptians or the Sea Peoples from the Aegean who were marauding along the eastern Mediterranean coast during that period.

Critics believed it was the Egyptian king, Seti I, in an inscription describing his military campaign against Canaan in approximately 1300 BCE, who claimed to have destroyed Hazor. Another theory proposed by critics is that Ramses II could have conquered the city, either on his way northward to Syria before the Battle of Kadesh in 1275 BCE, or on his return to Egypt afterward. However, Professor Ben-Tor - modern archaeologist and current director of Tel Hazor excavations - believes that the intentional smashing of statues (Egyptian / Canaanites) at Hazor makes these possibilities improbable. Firstly, he dismisses

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11. Yadin, Yigael. Hazor. (1975). *Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible*, Littlehampton.

the likelihood that the Egyptians were responsible for attacking their rival Canaanite city-state, because of the apparent absence of nearby cities powerful enough to attack Hazor. Secondly, he questions whether the Sea Peoples were responsible for the destruction of Hazor, as he notes that not a single sherd of their distinctive decorated pottery has been found in the city. When one considers that Hazor is much further inland than the sites they are known to have conquered, it makes it more likely that the Israelites were the conquerors.

In general, consulting extra-biblical sources alongside the biblical narrative is a very useful method of extracting and evaluating whatever historical data it contains regarding the origin and history of the Ancient Israelites. Over the past century of modern archaeology, particularly the last two decades, there has been significant proliferation of new sources of data on the Ancient Israelites, shedding more light on the events of the Bible. These include the *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, documents, inscriptions and material remains recovered throughout the Near Eastern archaeological excavation sites.

Generally, Dever's explanation on the use of extra-biblical sources helps archaeologists to study the archaeological record in order to understand the human interaction at a location across the history of time (Dever 2001: 97-156). Therefore, this dissertation provides the latest archaeological evidence over the last two decades in the quest to find out more about the Israelites; both in Egypt and Palestine (Israel), in which much valuable information has been obtained from the works of leading scholars in the field of archaeology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#### **4. Methodological Considerations**

##### **4.1 Research Design and Approach**

The research design will be primarily archaeological, with special attention given to various ancient texts describing the Israelite Conquest / Settlement. The framework of the research will be examined to facilitate the interpretation of archaeological information based on the books of Joshua and Judges. The methods of research will cover an archaeological analysis of site excavation reports from Jericho, Hazor, Ai (Khirbet el-Maqatir) and other listed sites as described in Joshua 12 that may have a major impact on the understanding of the Israelite Conquest / Settlement. The research design will also include ancient documentary evidence

such as the Amarna Letters (another ancient, historical text that existed during the Bronze Age period) and data from site surveys, in addition to site plans, maps, photographs, illustrations and scholarly articles that will enhance the archaeological analysis of the Israelite Conquest / Settlement.

## **4.2 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

### **4.2.1 Delimitations**

The study focuses on the way scholars present their theories and interpretations of the early period of Israel and to assess their likelihood in relation to archaeology, the extra-biblical sources and textual analysis of Ancient Israel. A change has taken place concerning the evidence and its application is suggested by the opinions of two schools of thought: the minimalists and the maximalists. Since the hypotheses of various schools of thought have proliferated the question of Israel's origins, the theories discussed here fall into two main groups: 1) those who assume that Israel entered the land of Canaan from outside; and 2) those (now the majority) who assume that Israel was indigenous to Canaan. A lot of attention is focused on the Bronze / Iron Age I period throughout the Syria-Palestine region. Furthermore, the purpose of this dissertation is to provide some account on the development and current standing of the main theories on offer, and to assess their relative merits. The regions covered are Palestine (Israel), Egypt and Mesopotamia. In this case, it is important to conduct the study across all three regions as it allows for a holistic perspective rather than an isolated view.

### **4.2.2 Limitations**

Over the past century, significant sources have been identified relating to archaeological excavations that took place in three of the well-known regions; Egypt, Syria-Palestine (Israel) and Mesopotamia (Iraq). However, many of the archaeological sites in Israel have only been partially excavated thus leaving unanswered questions relating to the people of Israel. As a result, many answers to our questions are not concrete, forcing us to adapt our ideas and opinions, as new information becomes known.

In order to attempt a practical study of the ancient Israelites, it is necessary to view these limitations of archaeology and the growing body of socio-scientific methods that have been designed, as a sort of hybrid; focusing on the ancient near-eastern sources and

anthropological, geographic, historical, literary, and sociological methods that will make the study of the Ancient Israelites more complete.

### 4.3 Structure of Dissertation and Outline of Chapters

**Chapter One** introduces the topic and discusses various general views on the Israelite Conquest / Settlement as portrayed in the narrative of the books of Joshua and Judges.

**Chapter Two** discusses the origins of the Ancient Israelites, which has become a centre of debate and a vastly complex one. The purpose of this chapter is simply to provide some accounts on the development and current standing of the main theories on offer, using the latest data from ancient texts and archaeology to present a new theory about the origins of Ancient Israel. In this brief overview, I hope to expose some of the misunderstandings in this field and to utilize the biblical model as a framework for understanding the early history of Israel.

**Chapter Three** introduces the various schools of thought on the conquest theories narrated in the Book of Joshua and Judges, which is the main source of reconstructing how early Israel emerged in the land of Canaan (Israel). The historicity of this episode has been questioned by many scholars, based on the archaeological evidence which no longer regards the accounts of the Books of Joshua and Judges as historically reliable when discussing the beginning of the Late Bronze / Early Iron Age in Canaan. The aim of this chapter is to address this problem about the relevance of the archaeological evidence in the explanation of the Israelite settlement.

**Chapter Four** deals with the identification of the sites of the thirty-one conquered cities as recorded in Joshua 12. Its primary focus is to provide the applicable information available on each archaeological site, which includes pertinent biblical and extra-biblical references and archaeological evidence associated with the site. The chapter also discusses the general evaluation of the terrain analysis of the region that Joshua and his military used during the Late Bronze Age period.

**Chapter Five** contains an analysis of the archaeological data from the various excavations - over the past century - on the city of Jericho during the Bronze-Age period, according to the

narrative in the book of Joshua. The chapter introduces the topic and discusses the various views and arguments on the fall of Jericho during the Israelite conquest, including the subsequent studies that have discovered new evidence or re-examined archaeological data.

**Chapter Six** will present a survey of Khirbet el-Maqatir (Ai) and its location, and the various excavations that have been carried out since 1995. The biblical Ai of Joshua's Conquest has been a matter of mystery and controversy since the beginnings of archaeological research in Israel. Bryant Wood's theory seems to have collected enough geographic, historical and archaeological evidence to demonstrate that Khirbet el-Maqatir is the real Ai of Joshua. The excavation history is discussed to evaluate the latest excavation results and archaeological evidence found on this site.

**Chapter Seven** will evaluate the latest archaeological data on the history of the Israelites' occupation of the city of Hazor. The Joshua narrative indicates that the conquest of Hazor occurs near the end of Joshua's time as commander, that the city was burned, and that the populace was killed. The date and causes of the violent destruction of Canaanite Hazor have been an important issue ever since the first excavations of the site. The chapter discusses the past twenty-five seasons of excavations which have corroborated many of Yadin and Ben-Tor's conclusions that have greatly increased our understanding of the Israelite settlements at Hazor.

**Chapter Eight** is reserved to summarize the conclusions reached during this thesis and is limited to key points that support that overall conclusion.

## Chapter 2      The Origins of the Ancient Israelites

### 2.1 Etymology

Among the non-biblical sources, the name “Israel” first appears in an inscription of the Merneptah Stele dated to about 1209 BCE. This Merneptah Stele is significant to biblical archaeologists; firstly, because it is the earliest extra-biblical reference to the nation of “Israel” yet to be discovered; and secondly it shows the existence of “Israel” was significant enough to be included by name among the other major city-states that were defeated by the Egyptian king Merneptah around the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.<sup>12</sup> More importantly, “Israel” was probably a political entity of the central highlands already established in Canaan. It indicates that the Israelites were probably seen as an ethnic group rather than an organized state, while many of their ancestors may have included Semites (who occupied Canaan) and the Sea Peoples (Dever 2003b: 206; Miller & Hayes 1986: 78-79). Not all archaeologists agree with the general scholarly consensus regarding the name “Israel” found on the Merneptah Stele; that the Israel of the Stele and the biblical Israel are related to one another. Reference can be made to a book by Finkelstein & Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed* (2001: 56-57), to give an idea of how this Stele can be interpreted differently. Nevertheless, the inscription of the Stele reads as follows:

The (foreign) chieftains lie prostrate, saying ‘Peace.’ Not one lifts his head among the Nine Bows. Libya is captured, while Hatti is pacified. Canaan is plundered, Ashkelon is carried off, and Gezer is captured. Yenoam is made into non-existence; **Israel** is wasted, its seed is not; and Hurru is become a widow because of Egypt. All lands united themselves in peace. Those who went about are subdued by the king of Upper and Lower Egypt...Merneptah (Hoffmeier 2000: 41).



**Fig 1.** The Merneptah Stele is also known as the Israel Stele or the Victory Stele of Memeptah, an inscription by the ancient Egyptian king Merneptah who reigned in approximately 1213 to 1203 B.C.E. It was discovered by Flinders Petrie in 1896 at Thebes (Egypt), and now housed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

12. Bright, John. (1981). *History of Israel*, 3rd Edition, Westminster Press; Hasel, M.G. (1994) “*Israel in the Merneptah Stele*”. *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 296: 45-61; Wilson, John A. (1969) “*Hymn of Victory of Mer-ne-Ptah (The 'Israel Stele')*,” in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard, Princeton, 3rd ed. pp. 376-8.

The next non-Israelite references are present in the inscriptions of Mesha of Moab (Moabite Stele), whose victory-inscriptions (c.830 BCE) make repeated mention of Israel, including the boast that Israel perished utterly forever (Pritchard 1958).<sup>13</sup> The famed Ugaritic tablets also make reference to the name Israel as 'ysril' (UT 2069, 00-4.623:3, ysril, and UT 328, R1-4.50:6, ysril) (Gordon 1998: 1.2).<sup>14</sup> These clay tablets were discovered in the late 1920s at the ruins of an ancient city - Ugarit, near the coast of Syria - at a site called Ras Shamra. The city of Ugarit dates to the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE. The mention of "ysril" in the second text appears to be in some type of name list, though it may refer to the tribes of Israel and, since the text is dated to about the 14<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, the mention of Israel is probably dated earlier than the Merneptah Stele, meaning that the Israelites were already settled in Canaan by the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Görg 2001: 106: 21–27).



**Fig 2.** Egyptian column base fragment depicting bound captives superimposed on name rings. The first two names are Ashkelon and Canaan. Egyptologist Manfred Görg suggests the third, incomplete name is Israel. He believes the name list was originally compiled in the early 18th Dynasty, the time of the Exodus-Conquest according to Biblical chronology. (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung).



**Fig 3.** The Moabite Stone (Mesha Stela) was discovered in 1868 about 20 miles east of the Dead Sea. The inscription mentions "Israel," and "Yahweh." It is now in the Louvre Museum in Paris.

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13. Pritchard, James. (1958). *The Ancient Near East – An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, Princeton University Press. Albright, W. F. (1969). "*Palestinian Inscriptions*." In *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, edited by James B. Pritchard, 320-22. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

14. Gordon, Cyrus. (1965). *UT-Ugaritic Textbook*, CTA-Corpus Tablettes Alphabetiques by Herdner in 1963. *KTU-Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (Second, enlarged edition) published in 1995. Cyrus Herzl Gordon was an American scholar of Near Eastern cultures and ancient languages. He was well known for his books on Ugaritic, the ancient language of 14th century (BC/BCE) coastal Syria, which were first published 1940 and he played a key role in deciphering that language (June 29, 1908 – March 30, 2001).

## 2.2 Historical Israelites Part One – Apiru / Habiru

Over the last few decades there has been an enormous increase in the number of archaeological publications dealing with ethnicity and culture in the Southern Levant. The study of cultural ethnicity has become of great importance to biblical archaeology of recent times, as it investigates the empirical relationship between ethnicity and culture in the land of Canaan (Palestine). Norwegian anthropologist, Thomas H. Eriksen, describes the term ‘ethnicity’ or ‘ethnic group’ as extremely ambiguous and vague in social anthropology and thus the use of ethnicity and culture in archaeology has resulted in an extreme dualistic thinking focused on stereotypes, where only difference is given value.<sup>15</sup> Today the majority of biblical scholars are in agreement that the Israelites were a mixture of peoples predominantly indigenous to Canaan, including the Habiru/Apiru and the Shasu people.

Modern scholars have debated over the ethnic identity of the Canaanites and Israelites who seem to be fundamentally different in culture, as archaeological data suggests. Given the information available on the material culture found in the Southern Levant, there appear to be some similarities between the Israelites and Canaanites during the Iron I period (ca. 1200–1000 BCE). Many biblical scholars believed that the Israelite culture was largely similar to that of the Canaanites (Smith 2002: 6-7).<sup>16</sup> In his book *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* American archaeologist, William G. Dever, comments (Dever 2003: 219):

Canaanite is by far the most common ethnic term in the Hebrew Bible. The pattern of polemics suggests that most Israelites knew that they had a shared common remote ancestry and once common culture.

As discussed in chapter one, several theories propose the origins of the Israelites as either infiltrating nomads, raiding groups, or emerging from indigenous Canaanites - driven from the wealthier urban areas by poverty to seek their fortunes in the highlands (Finkelstein: 2002: 104).<sup>17</sup>

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15. Hylland, Eriksen T. (1993). *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Anthropological Perspectives*, London: Pluto Press (second, expanded edition 2002, third edition 2010).

16. Smith, Mark. (2002). *The Early History of God: Yahweh and Other Deities of Ancient Israel*, (Eerdman's).

17. Deist, Ferdinand E. (2002). *The Material Culture of the Bible, an Introduction*, Bloomsbury Academic, pp 82-84.

These distinct groups, such as the Habiru and the Shasu, were highly active and frequently mentioned in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts in the land of Canaan, and may well have been the later Israelites. The etymology of both appellations; Habiru and Hebrew, seem to be closely linked as both groups shared a similar social status. The term “Habiru” is derived from a root meaning “Dusty Ones,” describing them as traders “trudging behind long lines of loaded donkey,” (Albright 1966:40). The Etymology of *Ha-Bi-Ru* is probably of Semitic origin as the following etymological explanations described the root of the verb “*br*” as “pass (from place to place)”, “nomad” or “cross” (the frontier) or a foreigner. The meaning of this word could also be “one from the other side” - referring to the “river” - which is obtained from *Ha-BI-Ru*, derived from the preposition “*br.*” The root “*apar*” probably means “dust”, which has been cited with the possible secondary meanings; “man of the steppe land?” or “dusty traveler.” This can also be considered a hypothetical Semitic “*pr*” “provide”, with verbal-adjective, “*epirum*,” meaning “one provided with food.”<sup>18</sup>

In Genesis 18:27 we see Abraham represents himself as a traveller saying, “Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes” (i.e. Hebrew or Habiru). German Orientalist and Bible scholar, Hugo Winckler, discusses the term *Apiru/epu* as a possible source of *Efer*, the Hebrew word for “dust” employed by Abraham (Albright 1966: 111-112). During the past 100 years, archaeologists have been unearthing clay tablets in the Ancient Near East, finding an abundance of references to a group of people called the “Habiru” dating from the 2<sup>ND</sup> millennium BCE.

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18. Speiser, E. A. (1933). *Ethnic Movements in the Near East in Second Millennium B. C.* p. 41. W. F. Albright, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (hereafter, *JOS*) 48, 1928, pp. 183 ff., held it was an intransitive participle meaning “nomad” originally, though it was later used in the sense, “mercenary.” Lewy J. (1939) *Hebrew Union College Annual* (hereafter, *HUCA*) XIV, p. 604; cf. his note in Bottero, *op. cit.*, p. 163. Kraeling, E.G. (1941) *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* (hereafter, *AJSL*) 58, pp. 248 ff; DeVaux, R. (1948) *Revue biblique* (hereafter, *RB*) 55, p. 341, n. 2: “Cependant R. DeLanghe juge certain son rattachement a rpf 'poussibre' (*Les Texts de Ras Shamra-Ugarit II*, p. 465). On pout en etre moms assure mais s'il avait raison, les Habiri-Apiri seraient les 'hommes de la steppe' comme Enkidu, le saggasu, le SA-GAZ.” Dhorme E. (1954) *Revue historique* CCXI, avril-juin, pp. 256-264. The *ha-BI-ru* were “des 'poussiereux', autrement dit: ceux qu'on appelait jadis les 'peregrins' et qu'on appelle aujourd'hui ... les personnes 'depla-ees'. Ce sont des emigrants que se refugient a l'etranger”. For criticism of this approach see Greenberg, Moshe. *The Hab/piru* (New Haven, 1955), p. 91, n. 25.



Fig 4. Civilizations influenced by the Habiru / Apiru stretching across the Fertile Crescent from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf, and southward into Egypt.

Since the discovery of the Amarna tablets in Egypt (1887) that makes reference to the Habiru, many scholars have tried to equate the words “Hebrew” and “Habiru,” with describing the same group of people; believing the "Habiru" includes all the nomadic tribes known as Hebrews or early Israelites who occupied Canaan during the period of Joshua and Judges (Archer 1974: 271-279; Harrison 1969: 318-322). Egyptologist James Hoffmeier commented in his book *Israel in Egypt*:

At an earlier date, identifying the Hebrews with the habiru was common, but in recent decades, the association has been discouraged, largely because habiru is now understood to be a sociological term, not indicative of any one ethnic group. More recent studies consider the habiru to be more specifically groups of refugees who lived out of reach of urban, settled areas, who nevertheless preyed upon such states. This generally accepted meaning need not preclude the term habiru from being applied to the Hebrews who were dislocated in Egypt and then again when they returned to Canaan (Hoffmeier 1999:124).

It seems that James Hoffmeier did not approve of the idea that the Hebrews were the original Habiru since he felt that they were classified as a social class who were considered to be the good people of towns and cities. George Mendenhall, in his book *The Tenth Generation*, raised the question of why the term “Apiru” came to be applied to the Israelites:

It came to be applied to Israel because there was a continuity in pre-Israelite tradition and history of refusal by villagers and shepherds to become assimilated to the existing political organizations in whose environs they lived. When the political empire became intolerable and unable to preserve order, they withdrew from all obligation and relationship to it in favor of another non-political overlord (whose obligations were of an entirely different and functional order (Mendenhall 1974: 137).<sup>19</sup>

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19. The Tenth Generation proposed that the Ancient Israelite settlement was actually the result of a cultural-religious egalitarian revolution within Canaanite society, rejecting the views that it was either a military conquest or a process of peaceful sedentism settlement.

Here Mendenhall stated earlier in one of his articles, 'The similarity of the Amarna Habiru to the Israelite Hebrews has been known for a long time' (Mendenhall 1962: 72). However, he did suggest that the Hebrews were probably not the real Habiru, but should rather be seen as villagers and shepherds who were slandered as Habiru since they refused to accept the rule of the Canaanite city-states and thus argued that there was no statistically important invasion of Palestine (Canaan) at the beginning of the twelve tribe system of Israel. Mendenhall goes on to explain the emergence of Israel as a result of a Marxist-style rebellion of the lower classes against the elites in Canaanite society who held the political and religious power, leading to a withdrawal of the lower classes and eventual formation of a separate culture (Mendenhall 1962: 66-87).

Biblical scholar Niels Peter Lemche, who is notorious as a biblical minimalist, argues that the origin of the Israelites was the result of an internal process showing the continuity in material culture and thus clearly explained in his view that there is no direct evidence of waves of immigrants coming into Canaan. His argument is that the new settlements that became Israel were mainly groups of peasant farmers that basically made up 90 percent of the population of Canaan. His alternative reconstruction is based entirely on the archaeological record, and is summarized as follows in one of his books, *Early Israel*:

Therefore, as a working hypothesis I propose the following scenario: at least as early as from the first half of the 14th century and subsequently the mountainous regions were 'inhabited' by a para-social element, the **habiru**, who consisted of runaway former non-free peasants or copyholders from the small city-states in the plains and valleys of Palestine living as "outlaw groups of freebooter" (Lemche 1985:427).

Lemche was implying that the Habiru should be referred to as an outlaw group of freebooters who eventually settled in the hill country of Canaan (Palestine) dating to about 1200 BCE. In this case, Lemche's view has much in common with that of archaeologist Israel Finkelstein, and forms part of a widespread re-assessment of Israel's origins and of the historicity of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>20</sup> Having brought together the various theories among biblical scholars regarding the Habiru/Apiru in the above paragraph, it seems scholars were having a difficult time in understanding the etymology of the name and the origins of the group. The majority of scholars appear to have favoured a Semitic etymology, since the origin and the name of the

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20. Bimson, John. (1989). Lemche's Evolutionary Israel in "*The Origins of Israel in Canaan*."

Habiru/Apiru was given by various kingdoms across Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt (i.e. Sumerian, Egyptian, Akkadian, Hittite, Mitanni, and Ugaritic sources) that were dated between 1800 BCE and 1100 BCE.<sup>21</sup>

According to these ancient kingdoms, the Habiru/Apiru were living as nomadic invaders in areas of the Fertile Crescent from North-eastern Mesopotamia and Iran to the borders of Egypt in Canaan. Despite the differing opinions among various scholars, the terms "Hebrews / Israelites" of the Hebrew Bible and the "Habiru/Apiru" in archaeological contexts are generally accepted as sociological rather than tribal designations. Both of these appellations describe these groups as displaced persons and should not be associated with any ethnic group, which explains why the Habiru/Apiru are referred to in archaeological texts with the same sociological parameters as those with which Hebrews are alluded to in the Bible. As Na'aman suggested, the Hapiru (Habiru) were seen as a socioeconomic entity, a group of people who were "uprooted from their original political and social framework and forced to adapt to a new environment"; an intermediary between urban and tribal, consisting of formed bands led by a prominent leader, often becoming dangerous to sedentary society because they lacked lands of their own (Na'aman 1986: 272-273).

Because of the abundance of references found among the Habiru people across various regions of the Ancient Near East, it seems correct they did not constitute a tribe or nation, but rather a social class in the period from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE, stretching back as far as the Sumerian 3rd Ur Dynasty. Philologists have equated the Sumerian word SA.GAZ with the Hab/biru people found in the Akkadian texts, Ugaritic literature, Amarna texts, Hittite treaties and other ancient texts available from the Near East.<sup>22</sup> The Akkadian equivalent for the Sumerian SA.GAZ is always *habbatu* which means brigand, highway robber which is normally thought to be a logogram for Habiru (Wiseman 1973:6-7). See Figure 5 on page 21 for illustration of cuneiform script on the Sumerian word, SA .GAZ.

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21. McNeil, W. H. and Sedlar, J.W. (1962). "*The Ancient Near East*" discuss the etymology of the name habiru and references to it in the Amarna letters and Egyptian campaign literature).

22. Greenberg, Moshe. (1955). "*The Hap/biru*," in "Ancient Times-Patriarchs and Judges," in *The World History of the Jewish People*, vol. 2, rep., New Haven American Oriental Society, 1970, 189. Philology is the study of language in written historical sources; it is a combination of literary criticism, history, and linguistics. It is more commonly defined as the study of literary texts and written records, the establishment of their authenticity and their original form, and the determination of their meaning.

The majority of biblical scholars explain the term Hapiru/Apiru as referring to fugitives/refugees living outside of mainstream society (Lemche 1992: 1-6; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 102-103). Then again it can be suggested that the Habiru/Apiru were not a single, cultural or socio-political entity, as one is led to believe, simply because they represented a wide range of peoples from various parts of Mesopotamia and the Southern Levant region that had fallen away from society (Wiseman 1973:7-21).<sup>23</sup>

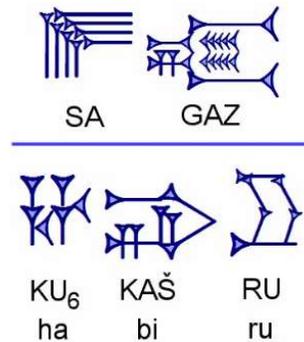


Fig 5. Cuneiform writing of the Sumerian logograms SA and GAZ, and the logograms KU<sub>6</sub>, KAŠ, and RU (equated with the pronunciation "ḥa-bi-ru" or "ḥa-pi-ru"). Created/drawn by al-Shimoni (2011).

More importantly, they spoke different languages and worshipped different gods, as was common throughout the Ancient Near East. An interesting source like the Nuzi tablets have given many accounts of the names of the Habiru who were seen as outlawed slaves that came from various city-states in Babylon, Assur, the Land of Akkad and from Mitanni (Chiera 1933: 117-118).<sup>24</sup>

23. According to Wiseman the heading of such a list: (AT 182:13). sabuMES LUSA-GAZ, is to be translated, "*The troops of the SA-GAZ-man*", so that the names which follow would not necessarily be all SA-GAZ, as is the case if the rendering "SA-GAZ troops" is accepted. The evidence of a SA-GAZ/H. official could be used to support Wiseman's view. The specific designation of one man in a similar list (AT 181) as LUGAZ (1.19) might imply the others were not (SA)-GAZ. But on Wiseman's view this man would also be a GAZ-officer and why then would he be listed among the ordinary troops? The translation "SA-GAZ troops" is favored by the parallel appearance of the sabuMES sa-na-nu in some texts (e. g., AT 183, 226, and 350), the usage in the contemporary Idri-mi inscription, Amarna letters and elsewhere, the quantities of pasture-sheep assigned to the SA-GAZ, comparable to those for a town (AT 350), and the large number of those who have LUSA-GAZ holdings (AT 183:4-5, 1 li-im 4 ME 36 bit LUSA-GAZ, "*1436 having SA-GAZ holdings*"). The singular bit is a collective and corresponds to the singular found elsewhere with large groups (e. g., AT 226:7, 8; 213 bit ha-ni-a-hu 33 bit e-lai-el-e) though the plural, bitatu, is also used (e. g., AT 185). This bit apparently means "property" rather than "family" (though the presence of families would be implied) for parallel with bitatuMES ehelena and bitatuMES haniahena is found bitatuMES sa narkabatiMES, "chariot sheds" (AT 189). Finally, the singular LUSA-GAZ may signify a plurality as in AT 184:5, [an]-nu-tumn LUSA-GAZ, "these are SA-GAZ".

24. NUZI (noo zi). A town occupied by Hurrians in the second millennium B.C.E. The name is always written in cuneiform as Nu-zi, but has not yet been found in any case other than the genitive. The remains of Nuzi were buried in the mound of Yorghan Tepe, about nine miles west of the modern town of Kirkut in north-eastern Mesopotamia. It was excavated in 1925-1931 by the American Schools of Oriental Research in conjunction with the Harvard University Museum.

The Alalakh Tablets found at ancient Alalakh (Tell Atchana) have references that the Habiru/Apiru was in fact an urban and heterogeneous group of linguistic origins.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Wolfe's article quotes an interesting statement from page 843 of F. H. Hallock's book, *Excursus*:

But we must admit some association between Hebrews and Habiru; linguistic and historical considerations make this inevitable, even though in the light of present-day knowledge we cannot speak with too great certainty concerning that association (Wolfe 2011:15).

It seems the Habiru were considered to be a marginalised group who operated from both outside and inside of Canaan (Palestine) and perhaps one could say that there is a real possibility that there is a direct semantic link between the words "habiru" and "yrb" (Hebrew), and a connection between the Habiru/Apiru and the nation of Israel (Bezuidenhout 1996:594). If this is the case, then the contents of the Amarna Letters and the relationship between the Habiru/Apiru and the Israelite people are remarkably significant.

The Amarna Letters represent one of the greatest archaeological discoveries of the 20th century and it is here that the ancient texts give detailed descriptions about the Hapiru (Habiru) dating from the 18th century BCE (Na'aman 1986: 272). The Amarna Letters frequently mention the invasions of the Hapiru (Habiru) in the territories of Canaan, leading scholars to conclude that the identity of this group is either Israelites/Hebrews or an as yet unidentified cultural group, considering that the Habiru disappear from the historical record in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Na'aman 1986: 272).

Therefore, the Amarna letters suggest that this class of people held unique status in the Near East and thus the identification of groups of Habiru and their activities correspond well to the conquest of Canaan as described in the Book of Joshua. Firstly, we need to emphasize that the people of Israel/Hebrews dwelt in tents, since tent dwelling was prevalent during the earliest stages of the biblical narrative. Genesis 9:21-27 contains numerous references to tent-dwelling: during the post-flood period Noah retired to his tent; Japheth dwelt in the tents of Shem; repeatedly Abraham pitches his tent (Gen 12:8, 13:18, 18:1); and Isaac (Gen 26:17)

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25. Wiseman, Donald J. (1958). *Abban and Alalah*, Journal of Cuneiform Studies, vol. 12, pp. 124-129, 1958. Wiseman, Donald J. (1953). *The Alalakh Tablets*, (London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara); reviewed by Joan Lines in American Journal of Archaeology 59.4 (October 1955), pp. 331-332; Reprinted 1983 in series AMS Studies in Anthropology. Chiera, Edward and Speiser, Ephraim A. (1924 - 1925), A New Factor in the History of the Ancient East, The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research, Vol. 6, pp. 75-92.

and Jacob dwelt in tents (Gen 31:33). The biblical narrative goes on to say that after the Exodus, the Israelites lived in tents during the wilderness journey before entry into the Promised Land. Sometime later, King David wished to build a temple because he found it unsatisfactory that “Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent” (2 Sam 7:2) Wight, on the other hand, proposes that many Israelites still lived in tents at the time of the revolt under Jeroboam, citing 1 Kings 12:16 (Wight 1953: 13). Deist suggests that the tent dwelling diminished steadily as the Israelites took up residence in Canaan, although it remained a part of life when viewing the society as a whole. Israel had gradually developed from a nomadic or semi-nomadic existence into a sedentary community, at which stage they came into direct and prolonged contact with the Canaanite city dwellers (Deist 2002: 79).

According to biblical scholars, the Amarna Habiru had no headquarters, and no national or political entity attached to them; since they wandered and moved from place to place across various regions throughout the Near East, in typical semi-nomadic fashion. As we can see in the Book of Judges, there was a large-scale Israelite transition to sedentary life that began in that period with a mixture of living in tents or houses (Judg 20:8). Judging from the textual evidence of the Amarna letters, the Habiru/Apiru, who were attempting to conquer Canaan, were a displaced people who seemed to differ from the Canaanites in terms of ethnic origin and religion. Therefore, one can finally suggest that the two groups - the Israelites and the Habiru - shared similarities during the Conquest as described in the Amarna Letters, as both groups are attacking cities in Canaan. It seems that all these documents that were discovered in Egypt led us to fully identify the similarities between the Hapiru/Apiru of the Amarna Letters and the Israelite tribes during the Conquest, and thus a closer examination of the possible correlation is now warranted. Yet in reality, the evidence of the identity of the Hebrews and Habiru is quite overwhelming.<sup>26</sup>

The Amarna tablets are an archive, written on clay, primarily consisting of diplomatic correspondence between the Egyptian administration and its representatives in: Canaan, Amurru (during the New Kingdom), various parts of Mesopotamia - i.e. kings of Babylonia,

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26. Redmount, Carol. (1999). “*Bitter Lives: Israel in and out of Egypt*” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, Ed., Michael D. Coogan. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Assyria, Hatti (Hittites), Mittani (Hurrian) - and the eastern Mediterranean coastal lands, including Cyprus (Alashiya).<sup>27</sup>

For example, we have letters from Jerusalem (Urusalim) from Abdi-Heba (EA 285-290), full of dire news of invasions and desertions by local mayors, to the Hapiru/Apiru lamenting; “Lost are the lands of the king,” and imploring the king of Egypt for military rescue. “*As the King (of Egypt) has placed his name in Jerusalem forever, he cannot abandon it!*” (EA 287; Moran 1992). Furthermore, the letters describe the names of Canaanite cities such as Ashkelon (Asqaluna), Gaza (Hazzatu), Gezer (Gazru), Hazor (Hasura), Joppa (Yapu), Lachish (Lakisa), Megiddo (Magidda), Shunem (Sunama), and others. The table below shows several different names for each city; its biblical names and listed kings throughout the region of the Syria-Palestinian territory as described in the El Amarna Tablets.

BIBLE CITY NAME	AMARNA CITY NAME	CITY MAYOR / KING
ACCO	AKKA	SATATNA & SURATA
AIJALON	AYYALUNA	?
AMMIYA	NOT IDENTIFIED	?
ARKA	IRQATA	ADUNA
ARVAD ISLAND	ARWADA, RUAD	?
ASHKELON	ASHQELUNA	YIDYA
ASHTAROTH	ASTARTU	BIRIDASHWA & AYYAB
NOT IDENTIFIED	BATRUNA	?
BEROTHAI, BEROETHAH	BEIRUT, BIRUTA, BERYTUS	AMMUNIRA
CYPRESS	ALASHIYA	?
DAMASCUS	DIMAŠKI	BIRYAWAZA
GAMMAD	KUMIDU, GAMMADIM, GAMMATITES	?
GAZA	HAZZATU	YAHTIRU
GEBAL	BYBLO, GUBLA	RIB-HADDA
GEZER	GAZRU	MILKILU & YAPAHU
HAMATH	LAPANA, EMATU	TEUWATTI/TIWATI
<b>HAZOR</b>	<b>HASURA</b>	<b>ABDI-TIRSHI</b>
HEBRON	QILTU (MIGHT BE KEILAH)	SHUWARDATA
<b>JERUSALEM</b>	<b>JERUSALEM</b>	<b>ABDI-HEBA</b>
JOPPA	YAPU	?

27. Niebuhr, Carl. (1903). The Ancient East, No. Ii. *The Tell El Amarna Period The Relations Of Egypt And Western Asia In The Fifteenth Century B.C.* According To the Tell El Amarna Tablets By Translated By J. Hutchinson London: David Nutt 57-59 Long Acre.

KADESH ON THE ORONTES	QIDSU, QISSA, QINSA	ETAKKAMA/AITUAMMA
KEILAH	QILTU (MIGHT BE HEBRON)	SHUWARDATA
KENATH	QANA, NOBAH	?
LACHISH	LAKISHA	ZIMREDDA & SHIPTI-BALA
<b>MEGIDDO</b>	<b>MAGIDDA</b>	<b>BIRIDIYA</b>
QATNA	MISHREFEH	AKIZZI
SHECHEM	SAKMU	<b>LABAYU</b>
SIDON	SIDUNA	ZIMREDDA
SHILOH	SILU	YAPTIH-HADDA
SUMUR	SIMYRA, ZEMAR	?
TAANACH	TAHNAKA	?
TUNIP	TUNIP	AKI-TEŠŠUP
TYRE	SURRU	ABI-MILKU
UGARIT	UGARITU	NIQM-ADDA II
NOT IDENTIFIED	MUHHAZU	?

Table 1.1 Biblical names and kings described on Amarna Tablets.

It seems that the Hapiru (Habiru) of these Amarna letters can be identified as the Hebrews of the Old Testament during the time of the judges - before the monarchy - as Ahlström states, “several letters seem to indicate that most of Palestine (Canaan) is apiru territory” (Ahlström 1993: 245). This description of the Habiru/Apiru attacking the Canaanite tribes seems to match the description of the border land of Canaan in Numbers 34, especially during the reign of the Egyptian king Merneptah, where Israel is specifically mentioned. The archaeological evidence that we have in the Amarna letters discusses some of the complaints from various Canaanite city-state rulers who wrote letters to the Egyptian administration during the time of the Habiru (Israelites) attacking the southern Levant region (Canaan). Therefore, these groups of letters must be considered for further in-depth study.

Starting off with the letters of EA 243; Biridija, mayor of Megiddo, claims to be loyally protecting the city from the unceasing attacks of the Habiru. Here Biridija informs the king, “*I am guarding Megiddo, the city of Pharaoh, day and night, as the warring of the Habiru in the land is severe,*” (Moran 1992: EA 243:8-22). The text suggests that the Habiru/Apiru may have well been the Israelites who were waging war in the central region of Canaan. Also found in another letter from Biridija is a warning to Pharaoh that the two sons of Labayu, mayor of Shechem, were traitors who had joined the Habiru and the mercenary army known as the Suteans (Moran 1992: EA 246). The text of EA 246 reads, “*From Biridija, mayor of Megiddo to Pharaoh: The two sons of Labayu (mayor of Shechem) have given money to the Habiru & the Suteans to wage war against me...*”

According to the books of Joshua and Judges, the famed city of Megiddo is mentioned specifically among the list of Canaanite cities where the Israelites did not take possession of this territory since the Canaanites still dominated that region (Josh 17:11; Judg 1:27). But the book of Joshua makes clear reference to the fact that the city was indeed attacked, if not defeated, by the Habiru (Israelites?); listing the king of Megiddo as having been conquered (Josh 12:21). As described in the EA 246 & 247 by Biridija, mayor of Megiddo, this attack may be related to the Israelite attack led by Joshua; and the deal struck by Labayu with the Hapiru for possession of Megiddo may explain why the city of Megiddo was defeated by the Israelites, yet still occupied by Canaanites before finally being conquered by King David, who established it as an important regional centre of his kingdom.



**Fig 6.** Letter EA 365 is authored by Biridiya of Megiddo and is written to the Pharaoh of Egypt (14th century BCE, Egypt referred to as Mizri/Misri). Moran, William L. (1987-1992). *The Amarna Letters, letter EA 365, Furnishing Corvée Workers*, p. 363.

The next letter discusses the biblical narrative of the city of Hazor that suffered an enormous defeat at the hands of the Israelite military campaign, under leadership of Joshua. Here both the biblical and the Amarna letters describe how the city had been sacked and destroyed by fire (Horowitz 2000: 16-28). According to Joshua 11:10-14, Hazor's king, Jabin, perished under the fierce onslaught and yet once again the city of Hazor managed to survive and thrive as a Canaanite kingdom as evident from both the Amarna tablets (EA 227 & 228) and the Bible (Judg 4:2-3).<sup>28</sup> Judging from what we read in both of these texts, it appears that the king of Hazor had tremendous power and influence over the Canaanite region during the Late Bronze I period, as supported by archaeological excavations between the years of 1950-2015 (see chapter 7 for further in-depth study on biblical Hazor). The book of Joshua explains that Hazor was the head of all these kingdoms which may be why Abdi-Tirshi calls himself "king of Hazor" (Josh 11:10; Moran 1992: EA 227). This gives an indication of the prominent position that Hazor had during the Late Bronze IB period. In EA 148, this letter mentions

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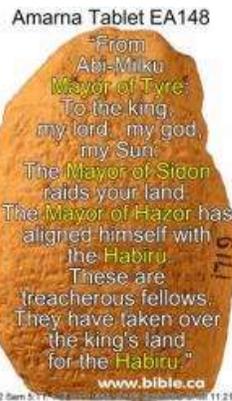
28. Jabin may have been a dynastic name for the rulers of Hazor. In the Bible the name is associated with two Canaanite kings of Hazor (Josh 11:1 and Judg 4:2). A fragment of a royal letter addressed "to Ibni," a name similar in derivation to Jabin, was discovered by excavators at Hazor. Written in Old Babylonian, it could be a reference to Ibni-Addu, (meaning "Son of the storm-god Hadad,") the 18th Century B.C.E king of Hazor known from the Mari archives. Wayne Horowitz and Aaron Shaffer, "A Fragment of a Letter from Hazor," *IEJ42* (1992):165-167.

Hazor, the Hapiru and the Egyptian ruler addressed as “my Sun” and the “7 times and 7 times,” indicating that the Pharaoh being written to at this time is Amenhotep III. The text reads as follows:

From Abi-Milku Mayor of Tyre: To the king, my lord, my god, my Sun: The Mayor of Sidon raids your land. The Mayor of Hazor has aligned himself with the Habiru. These are treacherous fellows. They have taken over the king's land for the Habiru (Moran 1992: EA 148:41-47).

The text appears to indicate that the Pharaoh of Egypt was Amenhotep III since many of the Canaanite letters, including the EA 148 (Fig 7), were written to him at the time of the Habiru’s attacks on Hazor. Hazor is definitely one of the cities explicitly conquered by the Israelites / Hebrews in the book of Joshua, since these correlations in military campaign and territorial occupations of the Habiru (Hapiru) in Canaan suggest that these specific texts could be referring to the same event. Once again we see in the EA 253, a letter from Labayu to the Pharaoh using the same phrase “7 times and 7 times” and the title “my Sun” which suggest the Pharaoh being addressed is Amenhotep III and not Akhenaten as originally thought (Moran 1992: EA 253: 1-14).<sup>29</sup>

In the next important Amarna letter regarding the Habiru (Israelite?) conquest, the Abdi-Heba



records that Labayu had given the land of Shechem (Shekem) to the Hapiru (Moran 1992: EA 289: 18-24). It appears that this event took place during the reign of Amenhotep III and possibly refers to the same period during which Joshua conquered Canaan and the Israelites camped out in Shechem (Shekem). An interesting storyline found in the Amarna letter of EA 289 reads, “From Abdi-Heba, mayor of Jerusalem to king Pharaoh: As for Jerusalem, the king's land, are we to give the land of Shechem to the Hapiru?”

Fig 7.

29. ANET 484 RA, XIX, p.100 Lists: Canaan pp. 242-243. Under Egyptian Rule of Thutmose III, he listed cities which was later taken by Joshua in the conquest of Canaan listed in the Bible: Makkedah, Megiddo, Gezer, Meron, Achshaph, Taanach, Kadesh, Dibon, Ashtarith, Edrei, Socho, Migdol, Beth-Anath, Beth-Sean, Geba, Beeroth, Anaharath, Kishion, Rehob, Chinnero, and Hazor. During that period Amenhotep II mentions only Hazor under his rule sometime during his reign. The rest are not mentioned either in his reign, or his successors Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III. Therefore, it can be deduced that the conquest of Canaan happened most likely in the reign of Amenhotep II or his successors, i.e Amenhotep III (?).

The text above clearly shows that Abdi-Heba, mayor of Jerusalem, had warned Pharaoh that Shechem (Shekem) was soon to be given to the Habiru (ANET 488; EA.287). As described in the book of Joshua, the area of Shechem (Shekem) is located in the valley between Mount Ebal (north) and Mount Gerzim (south), suggesting that the city of Shechem was a gathering place for the Israelite tribes. There was no military attack by the Israelites on the area of Shechem (Shekem). In fact, Joshua 24:1 refers to it as follows: “Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers” for a meeting. It appears that the area was indeed a meeting place, since the city of Shechem (Shekem) is curiously missing from Joshua’s extensive list of 31 cities that the Israelites attacked and conquered throughout Canaan (Josh 12:9-24). For whatever reason and by whatever means, there is every indication that some kind of peace treaty was reached between the Habiru (Israelites?) and the people of Shechem (Shekem). In retrospect, the EA 289 has given us a better understanding of why Labayu gave the land of Shechem (Shekem) to the Habiru (Moran 1992: EA 289).

It becomes apparent that the Amarna Letters merely reflect the struggle of the Habiru / Hapiru class against the aristocracy for dominance of the land, as well as the warfare between city-states in Canaan. In all the military attacks by the Habiru on various city-states, and the pleading of the Canaanite vassals for Egyptian support to protect their land; the possibility that the Habiru may have been the biblical Israelites - supported by the strong correlation with events in the book of Joshua - is hard to deny. In the Amarna letters of EA 285-290, the texts record the reign of Abdi-Heba, whose region was under attack from marauding bands of Habiru. Whether he was part of a dynasty that governed Jerusalem or whether he was put on the throne by the Egyptians, is not quite known. Here the texts clearly show how Abdi-Heba made frequent pleas to the Pharaoh of Egypt (probably Amenhotep III), for an army to take care of the matter of fighting off his enemies (bands of Apiru):

Say to the king, my lord: Message of Abdi-Heba, your servant. I fall at the feet of my lord 7 times and 7 times. Consider the entire affair. Milkilu and Tagi brought troops into Qiltu against me... ..May the king know (that) all the lands are at peace (with one another), but I am at war. May the king provide for his land. Consider the lands of *Gazru*, *Ašqaluna*, and *Lakisi*. They have given them [my enemies] food, oil and any other requirement. So may the king provide for archers and send the archers against men that commit crimes against the king, my lord. If this year there are archers, then the lands and the *hazzanu* (client kings) will belong to the king, my lord. But if there are no archers, then the king will have neither lands nor *hazzanu*. Consider Jerusalem! This neither my father nor my mother gave to me. The strong hand (arm) of the king gave it to me. Consider the deed! This is the deed of Milkilu and the deed of the sons of Lab'ayu, who have given the land of the king to the Apiru. Consider, O king, my lord! I am in the right!.... (Moran 1992: EA 287).

However, there seem to have been some conspiracy charges leveled against Abdi Heba, who defended himself vigorously in his correspondence with Pharaoh, and it is believed that he later joined the Apiru (EA 179). Abdi-Heba was the author of letters EA 285-290 (Moran 1992: 325-334).

Among other El Amarna letters are some very interesting ones from Adoni-zedec to the King of Egypt. These letters illustrate a remarkable similarity on the history regarding the Habiru/Israelites recorded in Joshua 10, and thus throw light on the wars of conquest as described in the book of Joshua. Here the conquering Habiru (Hebrews) are graphically described: "Behold, I say that the land of the king my lord is ruined," "The wars are mighty against me," "The Hebrew chiefs plunder all the king's lands," "Behold, I the chief of the Amorites, am breaking to pieces." The author makes a desperate plea to the king of Egypt to send soldiers to help him, directing that the army should come by sea to Ascalon or Gaza, and then march to Wru-sa-lim (Jerusalem) by the valley of Elah.

Now it came to pass, when Adonizedec king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them; That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty. Wherefore Adonizedec king of Jerusalem, sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying, Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel. Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it (Josh 10:1-5).

Furthermore, we see in the book of Joshua that Lachish and its king are said to have been defeated and killed by the Israelites, and thus further evidence is found in the Amarna Letters indicating that the city of Lachish has indeed been defeated with its leader slain by the Hapiru (Josh 10:31-32, 12:11). One of the texts tells of the slaying of the king, saying that 'servants who were joined to the "Api(r)u smote Zimredda of Lakisu," (Moran 1992: EA 288:41-47). Another famous city, Gezer, also sends a letter to the Egyptian administration, warning that the Hapiru (Habiru) will take the land of Canaan if the Pharaoh does not send military support. "May the king, my lord, know that the war against me and against Suwardata is severe. So may the king, my lord, save his land from the power of the Apiru," (Moran 1992: EA 271: 9-16). The Bible provides evidence of a battle between the armies of the king of Gezer and the ancient Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, in which the Israelites were eventually victorious (Josh 10:33, 12:12).

In order to provide more substantial evidence in identifying the Hab/piru as the possible biblical Israelites - active in the land of Canaan during the Amarna Age in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE - interesting references such as the Late-Egyptian texts from the time of Seti I (1294-1279 BCE) and Ramses II (1279-1213 BCE) should be included (Yeivin 1971: 23- 31). The texts speak of a western portion of Galilee as “I-s-r” seemingly a reference to the territory settled by the Hebrew tribe of Asher. Perhaps the most interesting of these references is the Papyrus Anastasi I from the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. A number of scholars have maintained that the name “I-s-r” appearing in Egyptian texts is the Israelite tribal name Asher (Aharoni 1979: 179, 183; Hadley 1992: 482). Not all scholars, however, are in agreement, but it’s worthwhile discussing this papyrus since it gives a general picture of Canaan as the Egyptians knew it during the reign of Ramses II; from the Nile border to Damascus. This, in turn, describes the land of Canaan found in the biblical conquest narratives of Numbers 34:1-2, matching precisely the Egyptian province called Canaan during that period.

The earliest mention of the name I-s-r is in a list of conquered peoples from the time of Seti I, early in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Simons 1937:147, List XVII, no. 4), as well as being listed several times in the inscriptions of Rameses II (1279-1212 BCE) (Gauthier 1925:105; Kitchen 1993:39-40; Simons 1937: 162, List XXV, no. 8). Well known Israeli archaeologist, Yohanan Aharoni, interprets “I-s-r” as the name of the tribe of Asher; while noted Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen disagrees, citing several reasons why the Egyptian name "I-s-r" cannot be the Israelite tribe of Asher (1993: 40- 41; cf. Kitchen 1966: 70-71). According to Kitchen, the texts indicate that “I-s-r” is rather a territory or place-name and should not be equated with a tribe.<sup>30</sup> Another ancient source that should make the case difficult to argue is the discovery of the Beth-shan Stele of Seti I, dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century when the Israelites were already in Canaan. The stele commemorates a military campaign in which Pharaoh’s Forces encountered a band of warriors whom Seti’s scribe called Apiru (the Egyptian equivalent in cuneiform is Habiru).<sup>31</sup>

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30. The identification of *I-s-r* in the list of Seti I with the tribe of Asher is considered doubtful by W. F. Albright, O Northwest-Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C., *JAOS* 74 (1954):229-231. Yeivin, on the other hand, feels the equation is certain. Yeivin, *op. cit.*, 23: The occurrence of Asher in the list of Seti I provides the clearest indication for the name Os connection with W. Galilee. Diana V. Edelman, O Asher, O in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, *op. cit.*, 482.

31. Wilson, Beth-Shan Stela of Seti I, in *ANET* 255.

The mention of the Apiru in the Beth-shan Stele is an important inscription of identification which can help to answer precisely the question of where they came from.<sup>32</sup> The hieroglyphic inscription describes the Apiru homeland as Yarmuta (Yarmuth heights), a Galilean hill in the northern part of Israel within the territory of the Hebrew tribe of Issachar (Josh 21:29). The Apiru lived in the hill-country rather than the plains or the low hill-country of western Canaan (Palestine/Israel), as known from biblical records.<sup>33</sup> According to the Hebrew Bible, when the Israelites first entered Canaan they found the Canaanites in possession of chariots used successfully to push the early Israelites off the plains, forcing them back to the interior highlands (Josh 17:16, 18; Judg 1:19; 4:3; Judg 1:19, 34).

This may explain why the important Canaanite fortress of Beth-shan remained a Canaanite stronghold city among those allotted to the tribe of Manasseh by Joshua (Judg 1:27). Today Beit She'an is a city in the Northern District of Israel which has played a historically important role due to its geographical location at the junction of the Jordan River and the Jezreel Valleys. Therefore, the Apiru in the region of Yarmuta could reasonably be identified as the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Hebrews / Israelites from the tribe of Issachar.

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32. **Beth-Shan Stela:** Between 1921-1933, widespread excavations were conducted at Tel Beth-Shean by a team from the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, directed consecutively by Clarence Fisher, Alan Rowe, and Gerald FitzGerald. The most important finds belonged to the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I, which was the time of the Egyptian New Kingdom (15th-12th Centuries BCE). During this era, Beth-Shean served as the center of Egyptian imperial rule in the north of Israel. This period yielded temples, governors' residencies and dwelling quarters of the soldiers and officials of the Egyptian garrison stationed at the site. The most renowned finds of this excavation included three monumental basalt stelae with inscriptions from the reign of Seti I and Ramses II, a life-size statue of Ramses III, as well as numerous other Egyptian stelae and inscriptions, which constitute the most significant assemblage of Egyptian monuments to be found in Israel.

33. Wilson, J.A. (1957). *ANET* 261, n. 9, and Wilson in a review of The *Hab/piru* by Moshe Greenberg in *JNES* 16 140. W. F. Albright commented on the hapiru, these warriors are unquestionably the *Ha-pi-ru* warriors of the Amarna Tablets...There is in general such extraordinary resemblance between the role of the Apiru and that of the Hebrews in the earliest biblical sources that it is scarcely possible to doubt some relation. Albright, The Smaller Beth-shan Stele of Sethos I (1309-1290 B.C.E), *BASOR*, No. 125 (1952):27, 32. Yeivin believes that the group called Teyer, who are allies of the Apiru, is to be identified with *To'la* (one of the main Issacharite clans, Yeivin, *op. cit.*, 40. **Palestine:** Though the definite origins of the word "Palestine" have been debated for years and are still not known for sure, the name is believed to be derived from the Egyptian and Hebrew word *peleshet*. Roughly translated to mean "rolling" or "migratory," the term was used to describe the inhabitants of the land to the northeast of Egypt - the Philistines. The first clear use of the term Palestine to refer to the entire area between Phoenicia and Egypt was in 5th Century BC Ancient Greece, when Herodotus wrote of a "district of Syria, called Palaistinê" in *The Histories*, which included the Judean mountains and the Jordan Rift Valley.

Since the Beth Shan Stele dates to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, together with the famous Merneptah Stele, testifies to the fact that Israel was a well-established ethnic people which had been in existence long enough to enjoy a prominent position within the land of Canaan. <sup>34</sup> But the most compelling data indicating that the Hebrews were already in Canaan by the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE is found within the Amarna Letters themselves.<sup>35</sup>

There is certainly a struggle between the Hab/piru and the Canaanite cities in the events of the Amarna Letters and the early Israelite Conquest in the book of Joshua / Judges. This scenario sounds plausible, but while there is ample evidence of Hab/piru participating in armed attacks against the Canaanite city-states, there seems to be a correlation between interpretations of the past and recent archaeological discoveries of small Iron Age sites on hilltops being defined as Israelite sites dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. As discussed, the issue of identifying ethnic groups such as the Israelites and the Hab/piru - both in prehistory and in more recent historical periods - remains problematic among various scholars. However, I believe that the evidence presented here supports the hypothesis that the Amarna Age was largely contemporaneous with the conquering Hab/piru as the original Israelites (Hebrews).

These letters also reflect an anxious disunity among the various Canaanite kings, and an eager tendency for them to forsake their Egyptian alliance and become politically affiliated with the invading Habiru or Apiru (Pritchard 1958: 276). Therefore, the possibility that the Hab/piru were the Israelites certainly cannot be ruled out, but more and better evidence is needed before the matter can be finally settled.

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34. Ahlström, G. W. and Edelman, D. (1985). "Merneptah's Israel," JNES 44: 60-61. In Michael Hasel's careful analysis of the poem's structure, Israel, as a people, constitutes a subdivision, along with other listed city-states, within the land of Canaan; Michael G. Hasel, "Israel in the Merneptah Stela," BASORNo. 269 (1994):48. Yurco, Frank J. (1990) "3,200-Year-Old Picture of Israelites Found in Egypt," BAR1 6/5 (Sept/Oct), 27-28. Wilson, J.A. Hymn of Victory of Mer-ne-Ptah (The Israel Stela), ANET 378.

35. Amarna Letters Translation: The translations given here are a result of consulting several sources, including: William L. Moran (ed. and trans.), The Amarna Letters (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992); William F. Albright, "The Amarna Letters" in Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (hereafter ANET); Second Edition, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1955), 483-490; Anson F. Rainey, El Amarna Tablets 359-379. Second Ed. (AOAT 8, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978); Richard S. Hess, Amarna Personal Names. ASOR Dissertation Series 9 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993); and Samuel A. B. Mercer (ed.), The Tell El-Amarna Tablets (Toronto: Macmillan, 1939).

## 2.3 Historical Israelites Part Two - The Origin of Eber/Hebrew

The Bible tells us that the Hebrew nation first originated from Shem. Through Arpachshad and Shelah came Eber, the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrews, and from his descendants through Peleg, Reu, Sereg and Nahor came Terah, the father of Abram (Abraham) and his brothers Nahor and Haran. A great deal of speculation surrounds the biblical figure of Eber as the eponymous ancestor of the Hebrew people, which is problematic since the Genesis genealogical material makes it clear that Eber is a descendant of both Ham and Shem.<sup>36</sup> This is because the descendants of Shem and Ham shared between them the greater region of Mesopotamia, Canaan, Asia Minor (Turkey) and Arabia with Ham's descendants subsequently spreading into the African continent. One has to add the fact that there was certainly a great degree of intermingling taking place between the descendants of Shem and Ham; and consequently it is sometimes difficult to assess whether certain early nations were predominantly Semitic or Hamitic.<sup>37</sup>

Shem was Noah's oldest son and part of Noah's family of eight who survived the great flood. He and his wife were childless before the flood, but after the flood Shem produced a son at 110 years of age. He was father to five sons who became the fathers of the five Semitic nations as shown below. In fact, Shem was the father of the nations of the Ancient Near East including the Hebrews / Israelites that sprang from the line of Shem.



36. Kraeling E. G. (1941). The Origin of the Name "*Hebrews*" Author(s): Source: The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Jul issue), pp. 237-253.

37. Morris, Jastrow, Jr. (1904). The Hamites and Semites in the Tenth Chapter of Genesis, Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society Vol. 43, No. 176 (Apr issue), pp. 173-207.

Ham was Noah's second oldest son. He too survived the Genesis flood with his father. Ham and his wife bore four sons who became the fathers of the nations of Africa. Ham's fourth son, Canaan, was prophetically cursed (theologically speaking) because when his father was in a drunken state he gazed on his nakedness. This curse would mean that Canaan would later lose his land to the Hebrews and would be subservient to the descendants of Shem (NBD 1982: 450).

**THE FOUR HAMITIC NATIONS  
AFRICA**

- Cush (Ethiopia) settled in Ethiopia south of Egypt and some north of the Persian Gulf
- Miziriam (Egypt) settled in Egypt, northern eastern part of Africa.
- Put (Libya) settled in modern day Libya in northern part of Africa
- Canaan (Palestine/Israel), Canaanites first settled in Canaan (Palestine) and later the Hebrews (Hab/apiru)

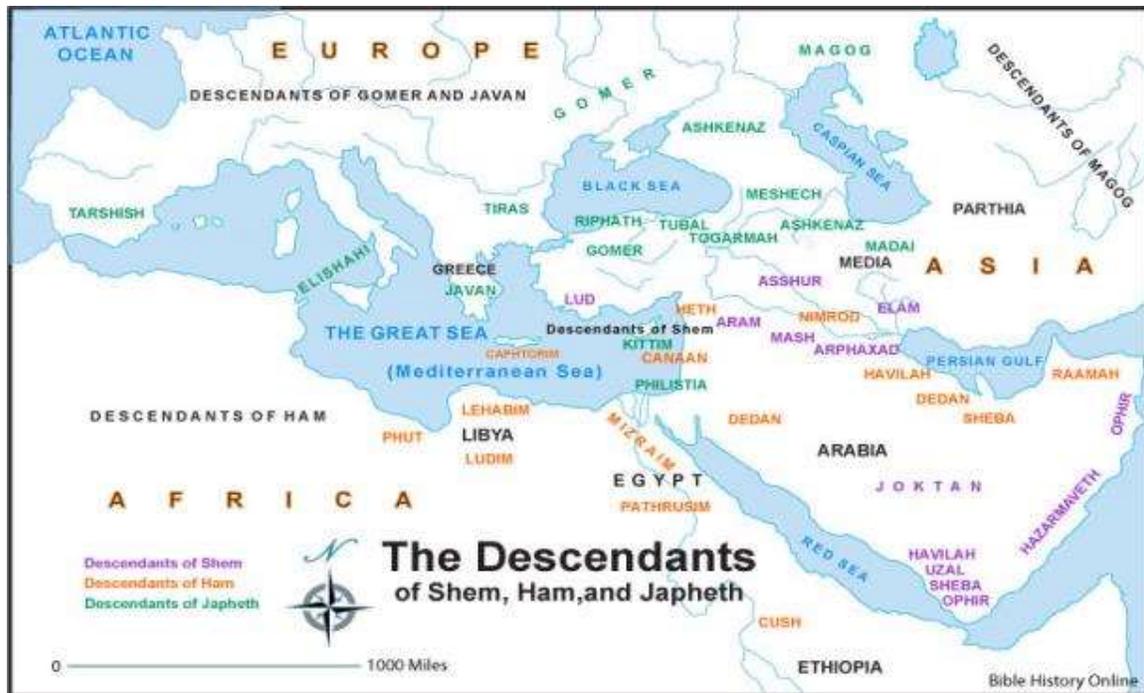


Fig 8. These are the families of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 10:32) after their generations, in their nations and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the Genesis flood.

What we do know is that Eber's sons became the founding patriarchs of two linguistically distinct Afro-Asiatic groups: 1) the Afro-Arabians and 2) the Afro-Asians. In Genesis 10-11 and 1 Chronicles 1, Eber is listed as the ancestor of the Hebrews (Israelites) as part of the "Table of Nations," (NBD 1982: 295). We also find in the writings of Josephus that the Hebrews were called after Eber (Antiquities of the Jews I, 6:4).<sup>38</sup> An etymological analysis of the term "Hebrew" ('ibri) points to a root word meaning "to go over" or "to go across", suggesting a person who went from place to place as a nomad, a wanderer; a designation that would certainly fit some aspects of patriarchal behaviour (NBD 1982: 466).<sup>39</sup> As we've discussed in Part 1 on the origin of the Hab/piru, the appearance of similar names in texts from Ebla, Mari - as well as various other ancient texts - suggests the appellation of the Hebrew people.

The discussions on the origin and the identity of the Hebrews are as enigmatic as those of the biblical Israelites in terms of archaeology and the Bible. Among biblical scholars, the ethnic term "Hebrew" is described in a way that raises baffling questions about the social status of these people and thus leaves us in the quandary as to their place of where they origin. At various times the Bible describes the two titles; "Hebrew" and "Israelite," as interchangeable and at other times there seems to be a sharp distinction between the two (Wiseman 1973: 1-3). From the archaeological and biblical perspective, the term Hebrew can be described as referring to a sociological group rather than an ethnic or tribal one. The real story of the Hebrews begins in the time of Abraham where it is clearly stated that the origin of the Hebrews is actually outside of Canaan. This brings us back to the three possible "conquest" theories discussed in the first chapter: 1) Israel (Hebrews) came in from the **outside** and conquered the land; or 2) there was a "peaceful settlement" as the Israelites entered gradually, settling in the sparsely populated areas of the central highlands; or 3) the "peasant revolt" or "social revolution" in which the Canaanites rose up against their overlords.

Despite the wide range of disagreement among scholars on the conquest theories, there are certain related matters, consistent with the biblical account, upon which there is virtual unanimity. The early reference to "Abram the Hebrew" (Gen. 14:13) relates to his migrant

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38. Flavius, Josephus. (1981). *Josephus: Complete Works*, translated by William Whiston, Pickering and Inglis. London and Glasgow.

39. See also: KLINE, M.G. (1957). *The Habiru, Kin or Foe of Israel?* WTJ 20, pp 46ff; F.F. Bruce in AOTS, pp 31ff; R. de Vaux, "Le Probleme des Hapiru apres quinze Annees," JNES 27, 1968, pp221-228; R. Meyer and T. McComisky, NIDNTT 2, pp. 304-323.

status - having left his ancestral home and journeyed to Canaan, accompanied by a divine promise - that becomes a sub-motif in the patriarchal accounts found in the biblical narrative (cf. Gen. 12:2; 13:14 f., 15:5 f., 18:10, 22:17, 26:24, 28:13 f., 32:12 f., 35:9 ff., 48:16 & 17:14 ff). The ancestral background of Abraham was typically of Akkadian origin and thus ethnically of Aramaic descent. In this case the two terms Hebrew and Aramean are both used in the biblical text to refer to the Israelites, but they are used quite differently since they refer to totally different aspects of ancient culture. In the Hebrew bible (Old Testament) the term Hebrew ('ibri) was rarely mentioned in Genesis 14:13 when referring to Abraham, but later in history the name occurs five more times during the reign of Joseph in Egypt (39:14, 17, 40:15, 41:12, 43:32). In the book of Exodus, the name appears fourteen times between chapter 1:15 and 10:3 and again two more times in chapter 21:2. It is mentioned twice in Deuteronomy 15:12 and a further ten times in a number of the Old Testament books (1 Sam 4, 6; 1 Sam 13:3, 19, 14:11, 21; 1 Sam 29:3; Jer 34:9, 14; and Jon 1:9).

However, the Bible also described Abraham as an Aramean, since he dwelled in the land of Mesopotamia descended from the lineage of Akkadian (Wiseman 1977: 228-237).<sup>40</sup> To identify Abraham as "a wandering Aramean" - as described in Deuteronomy 25:5 - is not uncommon, since it is simply making a geographical reference to his homeland. At the same time he can also be called a Hebrew as a social designation referring to his status without land or a settled home, on the fringes of established society. Furthermore, the genealogical table of the Nahorites suggested that Aram is the grandson of Nahor (Gen. 22:21) which would mean that the Hebrew Patriarchs were close kinsmen of the Arameans (Dringer 1957: 301-313). In the book of Genesis, Abraham is listed as the brother of Nahor; Abraham's son Isaac marries a granddaughter of Nahor who is the "daughter of Bethuel the Aramean and sister of Laban the Aramean" (Gen. 25:20); and Jacob marries the daughters of "Laban the Aramean" (Gen. 31:47) (NBD 1982: 668-669).

On one occasion Jacob himself is described as "a wandering-destitute-Aramean" (Deut. 26:5). This tradition conforms to the later Hebrew names for the ancestral home of the Patriarchs in the Haran district: "Paddan-Aram" (Gen. 25:20; 28:2); the "country of Aram" (Hos. 12:13); and "Aram-Naharaim" (Gen. 24:10). Although there are rather complex

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40. Wiseman, Donald J. (1977). "Abraham the Hebrew," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 134 (January-March Issue pp. 123-30).

historical issues with regard to the Israelites/Aramean, Rainey points out that the origins of the Patriarchs lay in Mesopotamia or Aram - as the region was called in Hebrew.<sup>41</sup>

Technically the term for the Hebrews in Mesopotamia is considered to have been Aram-Naharaim meaning “Aram of the Two Rivers” - referring to the Tigris and Euphrates – as well as the name Paddan-Aram. Since Isaac and Jacob needed wives, the family returned to the ancestral home in Aram to find them (Gen 24:10, 28:2). This suggests that the Israelites’ ancestral roots can be traced to that area. Perhaps one can anachronistically call Abraham an “Israelite” because he is the descendant of Aber (Gen 10:21). While the details are not clear, there is ample evidence in the biblical narratives to conclude that the Israelites traced their origins to that area. As we’ve discussed in Part 1, there’s a possibility that the term Hab/piru is used to describe the Hebrews/Israelites in the Ancient Near East. This term is found in most of the ancient collections of texts dating back as far back as the 20th century BCE down to the 11<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. They appear all over the ancient world in sources such as the El Amarna letters, the Ugarit texts, Nuzi texts, the Hittite archives and a few other ancient texts across Asia Minor. It is important to bear in mind that the term basically refers to a class of people, not in terms of race or nationality or ethnic identification, but in terms of social class or strata.

Despite the differing opinions among biblical scholars, the relationship of the term “Hebrew” suggests that the name itself used in scripture is related in some way, if not linguistically then culturally, to the term Hab/piru. Later in the Hebrew Bible, when the Hebrews / Israelites settled in Canaan, they were no longer known as Hebrews but as Israelites; a national identification.

## **2.4 Historical Israelites Part Three - The Mystery of the Shasu**

In this chapter we have discussed the main theme on the origins of the Habiru/apiru, the Hebrews and the historical Israelites. Many scholars assume the Habiru/apiru were closely related, if not identical to, the earliest Israelite tribes. But the questions remain: Who are these people, the Shasu? Are they related to the biblical Israelites?

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41. Rainey, Anson (2008-11). "Shasu or Habiru. Who Were the Early Israelites?". *Biblical Archeology Review* (Biblical Archaeology Society) 06 (Nov/Dec).  
Rainey, Anson (2007). "Whence Came the Israelites and Their Language?" *Israel Exploration Journal*, 57, 41-64.

To begin with we conduct a systematic investigation of the links between the Israelites and the Shasu, using the existing Egyptian texts to see what we can learn about the Shasu people. We will also look at the term Shasu and at the territories of Canaan (Palestine) and Egypt, with which the Shasu were associated, in an attempt to answer these questions. The earliest known reference to the Shasu appears repeatedly in the Egyptian texts of the Late Bronze Age (1550–1070 BCE). Mention of the Shasu of Yahweh was first made in the Egyptian topographical lists under Amenhotep III (ca. 1400 BCE.) The etymological term for Shasu in the language of the Egyptian hieroglyphics “š3sw” means "to wander," or "to plunder," (Adams & Muniz 2004:66). It is generally accepted as nomads or Bedouin people, referring primarily to the nomadic peoples of Syria-Palestine (Canaan).

These Egyptian texts have listed six groups of the Shasu: 1) the Shasu of S'rr, 2) the Shasu of Rbn, 3) the Shasu of Sm't, 4) the Shasu of Wrbr, 5) the Shasu of Yhw, and 6) the Shasu of Pysps. These lists were probably copied later by Seti I or Ramesses II at Amarah-West in Egypt (Sivertsen: 2009: 118; Hasel 1998: 219). An Egyptian text of Papyrus Anastasi I dating back to 1250 BCE also listed a group of people called Shasu who were living in Canaan and were identified with the giants encountered by the Israelites during the Exodus period. Two well-known Egyptian texts from the periods of Amenhotep III (14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) and Ramesses II (13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) refer to the people (Shasu), ‘Yahu in the land of the Sosu-Bedouins’ (t3 š3šw jhw3). The name “Yahu” in itself is a toponym of “Yhw,” of which Michael Astour points out that the "hieroglyphic rendering corresponds very precisely to the Hebrew tetragrammaton YHWH, pronounced as Yahweh (Astour 1979:18).<sup>42</sup>

From an archaeological perspective, we can clearly assume that the Egyptians were quite familiar with the Israelite deity, “Yahweh”, as mentioned in the Soleb and Amarah-West topographical lists.

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42. See also "Yahweh in Egyptian Topographic Lists," in Festschrift Elmer Edelman: 12 Marz 1979, eds., M. Görg and E. Pusch, 17-33. Bamberg: M. Görg, 1979. See also Grabbe, Lester. (2010). "Many nations will be joined to YHWH in that day." The question of YHWH outside Judah". Michael Czernichow Astour (17 December 1916 - 7 October 2004 ) was an orientalist of Ukraine , professor of Yiddish and Russian Literature at Brandeis University and professor of history (Culture Classics and Ancient Middle East) to Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville.



**Fig 9.** Amenophis III topographical list: Temple in Soleb Nubia at 'Amarah West.

A) The picture represents the land of the Shasu of Yahweh. The inscription dates to the reign of Amenophis III (c. 1387–1350 B.C.E.) and is inscribed in his mortuary temple at Soleb. It contains three stations listed in north-south direction: Aqrabat-Hareseth-Melach (the latter means Salt and refers to the Salt Sea, or the Dead Sea)." (Exodus Itinerary Confirmed by Egyptian Evidence, Charles R. Krahmalkov, BAR 20:05, Sep/Oct 1994 AD).

B) "Sets of Names inscribed around Lower Parts of Columns & Door-passages. This is most prominent in the runs of names around columns in the main hypostyle hall of the vast temple of Amenophis III at Soleb in Nubia. In Upper-Egyptian Abydos, two short lists (engraved as if on royal sphinx-bases) adorn the door-thicknesses of the King's chapel of the Temple of Sethos I." (Egyptian New-Kingdom Topographical Lists, K.A. Kitchen, University of Liverpool).

C) "land of the Shasu of Yahweh" The writing in the Soleb inscription runs from left to right.



Furthermore, the Egyptian topographical lists are of paramount importance in understanding the naming of cities after an important person or deity (god). With the naming of the Hab/apiru people and names of a deity YHWH, there seems to be some evidence that proto-Israelites were already in Canaan from the time of 1481 BCE. The oldest list that we currently have is from the time of the Egyptian king, Tuthmosis III, which names "Jacob-El" and "Joseph-El" as cities in Canaan. The Turin king list mentioned six Hyksos kings who ruled for 108 years. Most scholars have placed the proto-Israelites in Egypt at the time of the Hyksos. The name "Jacob-El" (found inscribed on many of the Hyksos Scarabs) may refer either directly or indirectly to the biblical Jacob of the Old Testament. A good source for further reading on the name Jacob-El is (Zobel 1990:189, 194; Kempinski 1985:134; 1985:132-3; Shanks 1988: 24-25; Albright 1935:191; Ward 1976:358; 1976: 359).

During the reign of Amenhotep II (1453-1419 BCE) there was a list of prisoners including 3,600 Apiru and 15,200 **Shasu**, taken captive from Canaan, who may have been the Hebrews themselves. Graham Phillips neatly summarizes a statement regarding the Apiru:

Hikau khasut seems to have been the term the Egyptians used for the chieftains of the city states which the migrant Mari people had established in Canaan ... There is even evidence of a people who may actually have been the Israelites being prominent among the Hyksos slaves. They are specifically referred to as **Apiru** – also rendered as Hapiru or Habiru by some translators – a name which some scholars believe to have been the origin of the word Hebrew ... In fact the word Apiru almost certainly refers to a specific Hyksos tribe (Phillips 1998: 190-200).

Foremost, two New Kingdom inscriptions which refer to “the Land of the Shasu of Yahweh,” are found in topographical lists. One list is at Soleb and the second at Amarah-West. The ancient town of Soleb is located north of the third cataract of the Nile, on the western side of the Nile, whereas Amarah-West is on the left bank of the Nile about 135 miles south of Wadi-Halfa. Both of these places are located in Sudan (Ancient Nubia). In the temple of Amon in Soleb, from the time of Amenhotep III (1408-1372 BCE), one of the topographical lists reference the name "Yahweh of the land of the Shasu," which suggests the people called the Shasu were living in Canaan during the Bronze age periods (Givon 1964:244; Redford 1992:272; Astour 1979: 17-34).<sup>43</sup>

The temple of Soleb was dedicated to the god Amon-Re, which was built by the Pharaoh Amenhotep III circa 1400 BCE, while the construction in Amarah-West was developed by Rameses II during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. The section of the Amarah-West topographical list, which contains the reference to “the land of the Shasu of Yahweh,” was almost certainly copied from the earlier list at Soleb.<sup>44</sup> The Egyptian topographical lists provide the first extra-biblical evidence in the name "Yahweh." The term “Yahweh” will be elaborated on further in the chapter.

Another interesting text worth mentioning is the "Stela of the Year 400" which Ramesses II (1279 BCE) built for himself (Budge 1902:156-161; Gardiner 1961: 165). The stela was discovered by Auguste Mariette in 1863 while excavating at the great temple of Tanis. According to sources Mariette copied and then reburied the stela before it was rediscovered by Pierre Montet several decades later and finally placed in the Cairo Museum<sup>45</sup> This 7.2

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43. See also Leclant, J. “Soleb,” in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* V, 1076-1080. Schiff Giorgini, Michela (with Clément Robichon & Jean Lechart) Soleb, 2 volumes, Firenze: Sonsoni, 1965. Schiff Giorgini, M. & Janssen, J. Preliminary Excavation Reports in Kush 6 (1958), pp.84-86; 7 (1959), pp.154-157, 166-169; 9 (1961), pp.185-209; 10 (1962), pp.152-161; 12 (1964), pp.87-95.

44. Spencer, Patricia. (2002). Amara West. Egypt Exploration Society; *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* Vol. 84, 1998 Amara West, I.

45. See also *Tanis, douze années de fouilles dans une capitale oubliée du delta Égyptien*, Payot, Paris, (1942) [English: *Tanis, twelve years of excavations in a forgotten capital of the Egyptian delta*, Payot, Paris, (1942)].

foot high granite monument was built at Avaris which he renamed Pi-Ramese, ‘House of Ramese’ (ANET 1969: 252-3; Breasted 1988: 3:238-42; McCarter 1996: 46-7). The “Year of the 400” was celebrated during the reign of Egyptian King Seti (1320 BCE) to honour the 400th year of the reign of Seth, which marked the beginning of the Hyksos rule in 1720 BCE. Scholars are not quite sure of the meaning of “Year of the 400”, but it has been suggested that the 400th anniversary could have been an important event such as the construction of a temple of Seth or the arrival of the Hyksos at Avaris; modern-day Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt (Budge 1902: 156-161; Gardiner 1961: 165; Breasted 1906: 226-228; Georges 1987: 22; Grimal 1992:185; Hayes 1971: 42–76).

This reference of the Hyksos rule is in direct line with the biblical narrative of Numbers 13:22; “*Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan (Avaris) in Egypt*” (Mazar 1986: 21; Albright 1957: 242). During Seti's first campaign there was a military battle between the Egyptians and the Shasu people, which is depicted on the Karnak reliefs (ANEP 1969: fig. 323-9). The text describes how the tribal chiefs of the Shasu people gathered on the mountains of kharu (upper Galilee) to fight the Egyptians:

It says: The foe belonging to the Shasu are plotting (5) rebellion. Their tribal chiefs are gathered in one place, waiting on the mountain ranges of Kharu. They have taken to clamoring and quarreling, one of them killing his fellow. They have no regard for the laws of the palace (ANET 1969: 254; Breasted 1988: 3:52).

The abbreviation of this tribe “I-s-r”, an earliest reference to the Israelite tribe of Asher, has already been discussed. Despite the opposing views of Kenneth Kitchen, Aharoni remained convinced that the name I-s-r is equated with the tribes of Israel since this name also occurred in other ancient Egyptian texts: “Onomastica,” (Gardiner 1947: 192-3; Paton 1913, 39).

NAMES	TUTHMOSIS III (1481 B.C.E)	AMENHOTEP II (1440 B.C.E)	AMENHOTEP III (1386 B.C.E)	SETI I (1291 B.C.E)	RAMSES II (1275 B.C.E)
JACOB-EL	YES	---	---	---	YES
JOSEPH-EL	YES	---	YES	---	---
ASHER	---	---	YES	YES	YES
YAHWEH	---	---	YES	---	YES
SHASU	---	YES	YES	YES	YES
HAPIRU	---	YES	---	YES	---

Table 1.2 – The table above shows the summary of key names found in the Egyptian Topographical lists.

Once again the stela of Seti I references the Hapiru from Mount Yarumta, with the Tayaru, attacking the Asiatics of Rehem (ANET 1969, 255; Rowe 1929, 88-93), suggesting they were the tribe of Issachar that were already settled in Canaan (ca. 1303 BCE; Josh 21:29; Aharoni 1982: 124). Egyptologist James Henry Breasted from the University of Chicago believes that the Shasu (Bedouin) were probably the same people as those of the Hab/piru in the Amarna letters. He concludes, “*The attempt of the Hebrews to gain a footing in Palestine (Canaan) is undoubtedly involved in the larger movement of the Bedouin, which Seti here records*” (Breasted 1988: 50). However, there have been a number of objections to the proposed link between the Israelites and the Shasu in the Merneptah Stela that bring into question the correct interpretation of the name of Israel / Shasu and the Tetragrammaton of YHWH as described in the Egyptian execration texts.<sup>46</sup> While there are some debates among various scholars linking the Israelites and the Israelite god Yahweh with the Shasu, Gosta W. Ahlstrom has argued for the differentiation between the Israelites and the Shasu. He concludes, however, that this doesn't disprove a possible connection, suggesting that the Israelites were a sedentary subset of the nomadic Shasu (Ahlström 1993: 277–278).

The discovery of the Merneptah Stela gave good reason to define the demonym “Israel” that refers to the Shasu enclave - later the biblical tradition portrays Yahweh “coming forth from Se'ir” - originally coming from the country of Moab and Edom (modern-day Jordan). This went on to form one major element in the amalgam that was to constitute "Israel"; later established as a Monarchy (Redford 1992: 272–3; 275; Dever 2001: 118-121).<sup>47</sup> K. Van Der Toorn concludes that, “*By the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BC, before the cult of Yahweh had reached Israel, groups of Edomites and Midianites worshipped Yahweh as their god,*” (Van Der Toorn 1996: 282-283).

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46. According to Anson Rainey, a social group known as the shasu provides a more accurate depiction of early Israel than habiru.

The shasu appear repeatedly in Egyptian texts of the Late Bronze Age and often show up in Egyptian art as bound prisoners with bag-shaped headdresses, as in this colorful faience tile found at the temple of Medinet Habu, near Luxor. The shasu moved widely throughout the Levant -- sometimes working as mercenaries or laborers for Canaanite kings -- but they are most often identified as nomadic pastoralists originating from the steppe east of the Jordan. The nomadic character and eastern origins of the shasu are strikingly similar to the biblical description of early Israel's wanderings. See article Shasu or Habiru: Who Were the Early Israelites? *Biblical Archaeology Review* (BAR 34:06) November/December 2008 | Anson Rainey.

47. A **demonym** or gentilic is a word used for people or the inhabitants of a place. The name of a people's language is usually the same as this word, for example, the "English" (language or people). Some places may not have a word for the people that live there. George H. Scheetz (1988). *Names' Names: A Descriptive and Pervasive Onymicon*. Schütz Verlag. Oxford English Dictionary (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press. September 2005; Davidson, Thomas, ed. (1901) *Chambers's Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language*. London: W. & R. Chambers; p. 382.

When interpreting texts on the hieroglyphics of the Shasu, one tends to read with a determinative indicating a land, not a people (Nestor 2010:185). In other words, determinatives are non-phonetic glyphs which give extra information about the meanings of words, distinguish homophones and serve as word dividers (Miller 2012: 94). Michael G Hasel describes the designation on the "foes of Shasu" as a hill-country determinative (Hasel 2003: 32–33). Lawrence Stager has explicitly explained that the Shasu people were differentiated from the Canaanites who were defending the fortified cities of Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yenoam (Stager 2001:92). Egyptologist Frank J. Yurco would distinguish the Shasu in Merneptah's Karnak reliefs from the people of Israel, since they wore different clothing and hairstyles. Yurco concluded in an article published in the September issue of the biblical *Archeology Review* (1990):

...by far the earliest visual portrayal of Israelites ever discovered" shows the people wearing ankle-length cloaks, the same style as the Canaanites, and not the short kilts and turbans of the Shasu, nomadic people that many scholars had associated with the origin of Israel (Yurco 1986: 195-207; Hasel 2003:27–36).

The famed Moabite stela bears the earliest extra-biblical reference to the Israelite God, Yahweh, on which the Mesha describes his victories over Israel. Among the spoils he acquired were the "altar-hearths of Yahweh," (lines 17-18).<sup>48</sup> This is the earliest mention of Yahweh, God of the Israelites, outside the Bible. Yahweh was the national deity of Ancient Israel, including the Kingdom of Judah, even after the death of King Solomon when the United Monarchy split into two kingdoms. The origin of Yahweh among the Hebrews is still unknown to scholars, but the toponym of YHWH probably began as an epithet of El, the head of the Bronze Age Canaanite pantheon (Dijkstra 2001: 92). The earliest plausible explanation on Yahweh was first mentioned in the Egyptian texts that place him among the nomads of the southern Transjordan (Dever 2003: 128).

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48. Beyerlin, Walter. (1978). *Old Testament Library, Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to The Old Testament*, Published by Westminster Press, p.236-239.



**Fig 10.** As concerns the Divine Name, the right side of the stone is very important. On the 18th line we see written 'YHWH'. The Divine Name in the form of YHWH was well known to Mesha and his contemporaries.

We know from textual evidence of the Ancient Near East, as well as the Bible, that Yahweh became the main deity of Ancient Israel, where he was proclaimed the creator of the cosmos and the true deity of the ancient world (Hackett 2001: 158–159; Smith 2002: 72; Wyatt 2010: 69–70; Betz 2000: 917). The Egyptian inscriptions that refer to “the Land of the Shasu of Yahweh” found at Soleb and Amarah-West, have been discussed by various Egyptologists. There has been much dispute on the appearance of the name “Yahweh”; who or what is being referred to? Was it a reference to the deity of Israel, a country or nomads (Bedouin) living in the east of Egypt (a desert region)? As Donald Redford writes of the reference to Yahweh at Soleb:

For half a century it has been generally admitted that we have here the tetragrammaton, the name of the Israelite god “Yahweh”; and if this be the case, as it undoubtedly is, the passage constitutes the most precious indication of the whereabouts during the late 15th century BCE of an enclave revering this god (Redford 1992: 272-273).

Redford identifies the Shasu of Yahweh with the Edomites. He believes that Yahweh was first worshipped as an Edomite god and thus argues that one of the tribes of the Edomites may have disbanded from the main group that moved northwest which eventually became one of the tribes of the Israelites, bringing their god Yahweh with them (Redford 1993: 272-273). Foremost Redford also believed that all six references to “the land of the Shasu of X” were references to Edomite groups who in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE lived in the entire region of Edom. However, in his chapter *Festschrift Elmar Edel*, published in 1979, Michael Astour suggested that the place names listed at Soleb and Amarah-West include both Egyptian-possessed land in Syria-Palestine as well as non-Egyptian controlled ethnic groups and regions in that area. In other words, Astour was suggesting that the Egyptians of the New Kingdom Period classified all of the neighbouring groups in Canaan - including the Amalekites, Ammonites, Amorites, Arameans, Edomites, Kenites, Hab/piru, Israelites, Midianites, Moabites - as the Shasu people. In Papyrus Anastasi I the text describes a group of giants (the Shasu) living in Canaan, which may have been the Amalekites. According to

the Book of Genesis and 1 Chronicles, Amalek was the son of Eliphaz who appears in the genealogy of Esau (Gen. 36:12; 1 Chr. 1:36) and was the chief of an Edomite tribe (Gen. 36:16).

According to the archaeological record, a 19<sup>th</sup> century Dynasty document mentioned the Shasu in a letter dating 1192 BCE:

Another communication to my Lord: We have finished letting the Shasu tribes of Edom pass the fortress of Merneptah Hotep-hir-Maat...which is in Tjeku, to the pools of Per Atum of Merneptah Hotep-hir-Maat, which are in Tkeku, to keep them alive and to keep their cattle alive... (Herrmann: 1973: 25).

It appears that the Shasu tribes were strongly linked with the Edomites, a tribal people with a well-known relationship to the Israelites. This is partly true since Jacob and Esau were twin brothers from the lineage of the Hebrew patriarch. They were the grandsons of Abraham, the sons of Isaac and Rebekah, and became fathers of nations (Gen 32:28; Gen 36). The two are representative of two different grades of social order; Jacob being a pastoralist and Esau a nomadic hunter.

Sometime between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty, the Shasu crossed into Egyptian territory at Per Atum in Tjeku, which is Pithom in Succoth (Papyrus Anastasi VI, lines 51–57; Giveon, *Les Bedouins*, 130–34; translation adapted from Rainey and Notley, / *Sacred Bridge* 103). (LBD, Shasu, 2015 A.D) A number of references in the Egyptian texts have made mention of this group of Shasu nomads living in the area of modern-day Nubia, south of Egypt, but the vast majority of the Shasu were living north of Egypt. The Bible describes that the Hebrews settled in the land of Goshen. Nevertheless, Kenneth Cooper has suggested that most Egyptologists derive the name Shasu from an Egyptian verb meaning “to wander” and thus translate it as “nomads” or “Bedouin,” (Cooper 2005:7) This statement is supported by the exclusive use of the term in the New Kingdom texts for semi-nomadic peoples living in parts of Canaan, Lebanon, Syria, Sinai and Transjordan. When used for nomads living in these areas, the term Shasu seems to have been used by the Egyptians almost exclusively for people groups that can clearly be identified as Semitic herders.

Furthermore, it is difficult to come to a conclusion on the exact identity of the Shasu since they were both described as nomadic / semi-nomadic or marauders/bandits, which has been clearly noted. For instance, we see Shasu soldiers lining up with the Hittites against the

Egyptian king, Rameses II, at the famous Battle of Kadesh in 1275 BCE (Tyldesley 2000: 70–71).

Hence, although a priori, it would be reasonable to speculate that the majority of the scholars have accepted that the Shasu were likely not an ethnic group, but rather seen as a social class in the Ancient Near East. Ramesses II has listed the phrases “Land of the Shasu” or “Shasu Land” more than ten times in eight of the inscriptions found at Amarah, Memphis, Tanis, and other locations in which he provides lists of places he conquered (Kitchen 1980: 194:15; 217:10 289:15; 300:2; 304:14; 409:1; 413:8; 163:14; 184:9; 186:15; 406:6.465:7). The inscriptions identified in the texts are of Ramesses’ military campaign with the Shasu people at Edom or Seir (modern-day Jordan). Furthermore, during the military campaign at Kadesh in Syria, he also encountered a couple of Shasu spies, suggesting that the Shasu were found near the northern region of Syria. Here, in one of his accounts on the battle of Kadesh, Ramesses refers to the Shasu spies and reports:

Now, these Shasu spake these words, which they spake to his majesty, falsely, (for) the vanquished chief of Kheta made them come to spy where his majesty was, in order to cause the army of his majesty not to draw up for fighting him, to battle with the vanquished chief of the Kheta (Breasted 1906: 144).

Ramesses had not only captured these spies who served the Hittites, he also defeated the Shasu in a minor skirmish. Later, in an inscription at the Temple in Abu Simbel, Ramesses claimed that he settled Shasu:

...to the land of Nubia. He has placed the Shasu (Šk-sk) into the land of ---, he has settled the Tehenu on the heights, filling the strongholds, which he built, with the captivity of his mighty sword, [slaying] Kharu (Hk -rw), [wasting] Retenu (Rtnw), which his sword overthrew (Breasted 1906:198).

Several of Seti I’s reliefs on the wall at Karnak were devoted to the Shasu. According to Breasted, these reliefs provide the most important documentation regarding the wars of Seti I. The first scenes of these Karnak reliefs portray the battle with the Shasu through the Negev into the southern part of Palestine. The inscription over the battle scene with the Shasu reads as follows:

The Good God, Sun of Egypt, Moon of all lands... has extended the boundaries of Egypt as far as the heavens on every side. The rebels, they know not how they shall [flee]; the vanquished of the Shasu, who were ---, --- --- his majesty; (becoming like) that which exists not.

Considering the overall comments on the Shasu presented in this paper, I am of the opinion that the references to the nature of their culture and lifestyle are rather similar to that of the Hab/apiru and the Hebrews. As Michael G Hasel puts it:

...the pillaging of their sources of shelter (tents), their economic base (property), and their subsistence system (livestock/animal husbandry...) have provided the core elements of their subsistence and their economy (Hasel 1998: 238).

The Shasu were certainly a pastoral people living in tents with their livestock and at best described as Bedouin-type people, wandering as nomads all over the Syria Palestinian region, where they were encountered foraging for pasture for their livestock. Perhaps they were described as a loosely structured tribal people who were seen as pastoral, but fierce, warriors defending their territory and flocks from perceived intruders. Another interesting point made by Hasel regarding the reliefs of Seti I is that he described the term Shasu with the determinative “hill country.” The quote ‘vanquished of the Shasu’ in the Karnak relief, suggests that they came from (or belonged to) a land or region of the Shasu, making the term a geographical designation rather than an ethnic one.

Throughout this chapter it has been discussed that many scholars believe that the Hab/apiru and the Israelites all came from the hill country. Thus, the captives (Shasu) depicted in the Egyptian relief also came from the land of the Shasu, which would appear to be the hill country of Canaan (Palestine). From what I read and understood, the Egyptians encountered Shasu over a wide geographic area during the years of the 18th and 19th Dynasties.

In conclusion it must be said that the group of Shasu were indeed living in the Syria-Palestine region and were strongly attached to a place or deity named Yahweh. Once again it has to be acknowledged that the name Yahweh was known to the Egyptians in the 18th Dynasty, during the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep III. However, Yahweh was already established as a national god of the Hebrews and the Shasu. Of particular importance is the fact that the Old Testament also mentions that there were other worshippers of Yahweh in Canaan who did not go into Egypt and therefore did not leave Egypt at the time of the Exodus.

Finally, while not all the insight offered by archaeology has been consulted, it is reasonable to conclude that the “Shasu of Yahweh” mentioned in the Egyptian topographical texts at

Soleb and Amarah-West could very well have been the Israelites who settled in Canaan by 1400 BCE. However, the debate among various schools of thought over the origins of the ancient Israelites is far from over.

## 2.5 Biblical Israelites

The knowledge of the biblical Israelites is largely based on the book of Genesis. It records the legendary Hebrew Patriarchy from their humble beginnings as pastoral tribes, through their migration across the Mesopotamian region, to their settlements along the margins of the emerging urban societies of ancient Sumeria, Akkadia and Babylonia. After Abraham migrated from Ur in southern Mesopotamia to Canaan (c. 1850 BCE), sometime later between the periods of 1700 and 1580 BCE, Jacob and his sons experienced a severe famine in the land of Canaan that lasted seven years. The Hebrew Bible traces the Israelites to the patriarch Jacob, grandson of Abraham, who was renamed Israel after wrestling with God's angel one evening. Jacob's twelve sons - Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin - became the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 35:23-26; Gen 48; Ex 1:1-4; Num 1:32-33; Chron 2:1-2).<sup>49</sup> Of special note is Joseph's wife, Aseneth. She bore two sons; Manasseh and Ephraim, who were adopted by Jacob and became the tribal eponyms (Gen 41:50-52).<sup>50</sup>

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49. Wylen, Stephen M. (1996). *The Jews in the time of Jesus: an introduction*. Paulist Press, pp.18-20.

50. Bohak, Gideon, Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis (*Early Judaism and Its Literature* 10; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1996); Chesnut, Randall D., *From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth* (*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series*, 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

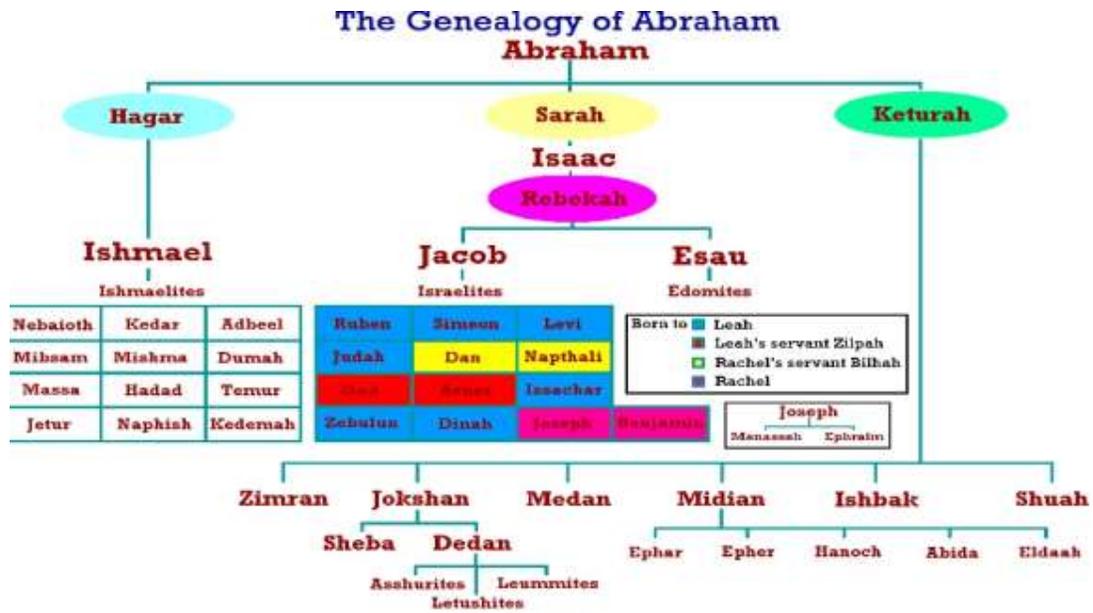


Fig 11. The following information, along with the migration map, will be helpful in shedding more light and understanding on the twelve tribe of Israel (Colour Coding).

At the time of severe famine, Joseph (promoted to Vizier of Egypt) invited his father and his brothers (tribes of Israel) to live in Egyptian territory (Mehler 2005:133; Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, Book II, 7.1.168). According to Genesis, seventy people settled in the country of Goshen (Gen. 46:26-27; Ex. 1:5; Deut. 10:22; Hoehner 1969: 306-316; Rohl 1995; Barnes 1949a & b). The land of Goshen was considered to be the best portion of land in Egypt, well suited for growing crops and for livestock as Genesis records 46:34, “*Ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.*” After the death of Joseph the people of Israel grew exceedingly populous in number and according to Exodus they stayed in Egypt for a period of 430 years.

The Israelites were becoming too numerous and thus perceived as a possible military threat to Egypt. The enslavement of Israel began under the rule of a new king of Egypt - possibly Ahmose - who did not know about Joseph. He hated the Semites and thus expelled the Hyksos invaders from Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty. After many years of enslavement, the biblical narrative describes how the Hebrew god, Yahweh (YHWH), had promised the Israelites that he would send them a deliverer who would eventually lead the Israelites out of bondage and into freedom. That man was Moses, the principal figure in the exodus story told in the books from Exodus through to the end of Deuteronomy (Redmount

1998:63). It is here that the biblical Israelites began their journey from Egypt across the Sinai Peninsula and into the land of Canaan.



Fig 12. The Twelve Tribes of Israel Based the book of Joshua.

Since the early days of biblical archaeology in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, archaeologists and Egyptologists found no evidence directly related to the Exodus captivity and their escape and travels through the wilderness (Meyers 2005:5) As far as the majority of scholars are concerned, there is no archeological evidence to support the biblical narrative foretold in the Book of Exodus and most archaeologists have therefore abandoned it as a "fruitless pursuit" (Meyers 2005: 5-6; Dever 2001: 99). Professor W.G Dever has branded the question of the historicity of Exodus “dead,” while Israeli archaeologist Ze'ev Herzog provides the current consensus view:

The Israelites never were in Egypt. They never came from abroad. This whole chain is broken. It is not a historical one. It is a later legendary reconstruction—made in the seventh century [BCE]—of a history that never happened (Sturgis 2007: 74).

Many archaeologists and historians have come to an agreement that the ancient Israelites were actually Canaanites who eventually formed a separate culture and their own ethnic identity. These scholars claim that Israelites and Canaanites shared the same ancestry based upon archaeological evidence which shows similarities in language and material culture in

terms of pottery, architecture, tools, etc. (Kempinski 1983: 1-7). However, more recent archaeological evidence has suggested otherwise.

In 1966 a team from the Austrian Archaeological Institute (Cairo) conducted extensive excavations under the direction of Manfred Bietak and managed to find some valuable evidence on the biblical Israelites living in Egypt (Shea 1990: 100-103; Wood 1991: 104-106; Aling 1996: 20-21; Wood 1997: 53, *The Sons of Jacob, New Evidence for the Presence of the Israelites in Egypt, Bible and Spade*). As far as archaeology is concerned, the land of Ramesses II has been found at the modern site of Tell el-Daba in the eastern Delta, approximately 100 km northeast of Cairo (Egypt). It was here that the Hyksos - a Semitic people from the region of Syria-Palestine (Canaan) who took up residence in the eastern Nile Delta - ruled Egypt for over a century (1663-1555 BCE; 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty?) The ancient town Rowaty, later changed to Avaris in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, was indeed the royal foundation of the district that became the capital of the Hyksos hegemony (Bietak 1996: 9-19;40). Bietak's mission revealed that the actual Hyksos capital was indeed Tell al-Dab'a (Karmil 2007:77).

Evidence shows the origin of the people living in the district of Avaris (Rowaty) during the latter part of the 12th Dynasty (c. 19<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) to be Asiatic. At that time it was a rural settlement, according to archaeologists. The village area was unfortified except for enclosure walls intended for containment of their livestock (Area F/I, Str. d/2, and Area A/II, Str H). The actual living quarters typically consisted of rectangular huts made from sand bricks, suggesting that these Asiatics were likely the true biblical Israelites living in Egypt, since the culture is identical to that of the Hebrews / Asiatics in Syria-Palestine (Bietak 1986: 237; 1991b: 32).

Archaeologists have also discovered that not all of the residents from the Asiatic settlement lived in huts at Tell el-Daba, since they unearthed a small villa believed to be the dwelling of an important official. This particular villa measured 10 x 12 metres in size and was situated on one side of an enclosure measuring 12 x 19 metres. Also noteworthy is the fact that the villa contained six rooms laid out in typical horseshoe fashion around an open courtyard with the floor plan that is identical to the Israelite "four-room house" during the late Iron Age period in Canaan (Holladay 1992a). This villa house had two side rooms and a back room that were arranged around a central space or courtyard. Holladay concluded that the side rooms were usually delineated by stone columns in Palestine (Canaan), whereas in Egypt

they lacked the building material of stone, which was therefore not expected. Holladay suggests that the ground floor of such a house was primarily utilized for the economic aspects of family life, such as the storage of food, tools and supplies, and the housing of animals. The family living space, thus, was most likely on the second floor.

Furthermore, near the villa there were poorer two-roomed homes measuring 6 x 8 metres in size. The most striking part of the discovery around the village area is that archaeologists have discovered at least 20% of the pottery found in the settlement debris was that of Palestinian origin dating to the Middle Bronze Age period (Bietak 1996: 10). When referring to Palestinian pottery, we are actually talking about the Canaanite origin which may also include the Hebrews. Just outside the open spaces of the villa, in the south-west area, was the cemetery of the settlement. The majority of these tombs were constructed in typical Egyptian fashion made from mud-bricks, but the actual contents were strictly of Asiatic origin. What is particularly striking is that 50% of the male tombs contained weapons of Canaanite origin. Many of the deceased males were equipped with two javelins, battle-axes and daggers; and in Tomb 8 archaeologists discovered a duckbill-ax and an embossed belt of bronze (Bietak 1996: 14).

The most spectacular tomb ever discovered was Tomb 1, situated along the southwest side of the burial area. This monumental tomb composed of a nearly square superstructure, contained the main burial chamber and a chapel annex. It is here that Prof Bietak found the remains of a monumental statue that appears to have belonged to a non-Egyptian ruler of Avaris (Asiatic origin). He discovered the fragmented remains of the statue of a seated figure which archaeologists estimate to have been about two metres in height and one and half metres in depth. On the right side of the statue's shoulder was a "throw stick" which suggests that he was an important ruler. On the back of the statue were the painted remains of three basic colours - black, red and white - that may suggest the ruler was wearing a striped garment. Even more interesting was that the colour of this person was yellow and the head had a mushroom-shaped hairstyle used in Egyptian artwork to depict someone of Asiatic origin. The entire statue was made of limestone and exhibited excellent workmanship, but unfortunately, it had clearly been intentionally smashed and defaced (Bietak 1996: 20-21).

Although it's merely conjecture, some archaeologists believed that this statue may have been of the biblical Joseph; in fact Egyptologist David Rohl goes as far as to conclude in his book

*Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest*, that there is a possibility that this is the tomb of Joseph (Rohl 1995: 360-67). The evidence presented by Rohl and Bietak supports this hypothesis, as the Hebrew Bible is very clear about Joseph's burial place in Genesis 50:26 “*So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.*”

In conclusion, the argument pertaining to the existence of the biblical Israelites in Egypt is far from over. Much more material evidence is needed to support the true biblical Israelites coming from outside of Canaan as presented in the Exodus story. It is fair to say, however, that the early Israelites did share various aspects of material culture, language, and religion with their Canaanite ancestors and thus the ancestors of the Israelites did live in Canaan at one time (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph). It cannot be denied that the early Israelites from the tribe of Jacob lived in Canaan at that time. However, the assertion by various scholars - like Finkelstein, Davies and other minimalists - that the Israelites were originally Canaanites and that there was no Exodus or Israelite Conquest is not fully supported by the evidence found in Egypt. The conclusion I come to regarding this hypothesis is that the Israelites were in fact an ethnic group that intermarried with people from various regions in Canaan and perhaps adopted some aspects of Canaanite culture in the Bronze / Iron Age Period. The archaeological evidence unearthed in Egypt in recent years exposes some holes in what previously appeared to be strong biblical minimalists held views on the matter. <sup>51</sup>

As Zertal points out, ‘*We found almost certain proof that the story of the entry into Israel is very believable,*’ (Herzog 1999). In this case it is quite possible that Professor Bietak has indeed found physical evidence to support the presence of the biblical Israelites in Egypt. It is also worth mentioning that Avraham Malamat once said, “*Archaeology does not have the power to disprove the written record.....*” and “*If you ask a good archaeologist, he will say that he cannot find out the entire truth.*” (Matthew Kalman (1999) *Archaeologist Draws Fire for Doubting Biblical Accounts*, Salt Lake City Tribune, USA Today 6 Nov issue).

Recommended further reading on the evidence of the Israelites in Israel is listed in the

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51. Notes on biblical minimalists: The so called revisionist criticism represents the latest and best scholarly and archaeological research on biblical origins today. The recent issues of journals such as BAR and Bible and Spade (ABR) are crammed with criticism of the minimalist position, and the debate between traditional and radical views among biblical scholars continues to rage.

footnotes.<sup>52</sup>

### 2.5.1 The Patriarch

For the past century biblical archaeologists have tried their utmost to prove the historicity of the patriarchs and to trace them to a particular period, but according to them there is no direct archaeological proof that Abraham, Isaac or Jacob ever existed. If this were true, there would be much disagreement among biblical scholars as to the exact period into which the Patriarchal Age fits. Some scholars would opt for a first millennium date, while most would favour the early 2nd millennium BCE, during the Middle Bronze Age (Seters 1975: 121; Albright 1957: 200).

In the course of the past century, particularly the last few decades, critics have dismissed the theory of the existence of the Patriarchs in terms of names and places. But scholars have been basing their case entirely on what they deem to be the absence of archaeological evidence to corroborate material in the earlier eras of the Hebrew Bible. Various schools of thought have developed over the past few centuries advocating a particular approach to the Bible and to the reconstruction of Ancient Israel's history. Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) who created the "Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis" holds a different view, suggesting that the Patriarchs were not historical figures, but were either personifications of the various clans that bear their names, or they were works of fiction. Wellhausen states:

Abraham alone is certainly not the name of a people like Isaac and Lot: he is somewhat difficult to interpret. That is not to say that in such a connection as this we may regard him as a historical person; he might with more likelihood be regarded as a free creation of unconscious art (Prolegomena to the History of Israel 1878).

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52. Aling, Charles, & Billington, Clyde. (2010). *The Name Yahweh in Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts*. Associates for Biblical Research. Argubright, John (2013). *Bible Believer's Archaeology, Volume 3: Behold the Man!* p. 108. BibleHistory.net. Becher, Mordechai. *The Ten Plagues - Live From Egypt*. Ohr Somayach. Bietak, Manfred (2003). *Israelites Found in Egypt*. Biblical Archaeology Society. Retrieved July 10, 2014. *Pattern of Evidence* (DVD) & website at <http://patternsofevidence.com/>

- a) Documentary 'Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus' All-Star Panel Confirmed for Fathom Events Q&A on January 19, [justlovemovies.com](http://justlovemovies.com), 1/14/15.
- b) Exodus' review: New analysis puts pressure on science for truth, [theglobaldispatch.com](http://theglobaldispatch.com), 1/19/15.
- c) Documentary Has Convincing New Evidence Clearly Matching the Exodus Stories, [PolitiChicks.com](http://PolitiChicks.com), 12/26/14.
- d) Film Review: Patterns of Evidence: Exodus, by Darris McNeely, January 20, 2015.
- e) Digging Into The Exodus Story, by Steve Lipman, Interview with Galit Dayan, 3/31/15.

Wood, Bryant G. (1998). Is there evidence that the Israelites once lived in Egypt as the Bible says? Has Joseph's original tomb been found? Associates for Biblical Research. Retrieved July 10, 2014. Byers, Gary (2008). *Israel in Egypt*. Associates for Biblical Research. Retrieved July 10, 2014. Wiener, Noah (2014). *The Expulsion of the Hyksos*. Biblical Archaeological Society. Retrieved July 10, 2014. Dollinger, Andre. *The Amarna Letters*. Reshafim.org.il. Kessler, Rebecca (2011). *Thousands of Tombs in Saudi Desert Spotted*. From Space. LiveScience.

William Albright, on the other hand, holds a very different view in support of the historicity of the patriarchal stories and defended these against the views of Wellhausen (*The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, published in 1935). Albright has contributed valuable insight in this area, among others penning a book entitled *The Biblical Period in The Jews, Their History, Culture, and Religion* (New York 1949). In his book *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York 1963), Albright made the following comments regarding the patriarchal stories of the Bible:

Eminent names among scholars can be cited for regarding every item of Gen. 11-50 as reflecting late invention, or at least retrojection of events and conditions under the Monarchy into the remote past, about which nothing was thought to have been really known to the writers of later days. Archaeological discoveries since 1925 have changed all this. Aside from a few diehards among older scholars, there is scarcely a single biblical historian who has not been impressed by the rapid accumulation of data supporting the substantial historicity of patriarchal tradition (Horn 1973: 1-2).

In another of Albright's articles, *Return to Biblical Theology*, he deals with subjects such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, Old and New Testament problems, and current theological trends. He states how the Bible has benefitted from some modern discoveries:

Thanks to modern research we now recognize its substantial historicity. The narratives of the Patriarchs, of Moses and the Exodus, of the Conquest of Canaan, of the Judges, the Monarchy, Exile, and Restoration, have all been confirmed and illustrated to an extent that I should have thought impossible forty years ago. --History, Archaeology, and Christian Humanism (Chapter 14: 293; Horn 1973).

Because various contentions claim to be based on academic scholarship, we must now examine their allegations more closely. The discoveries of the Mari texts and the Akkadian tablets at Nuzi, that have resembled the biblical stories found in Genesis, have certainly shed more light on the subject. This, however, does not mean there are no authenticating references to any of the biblical patriarchs, but the evidence that concerns the biblical narrative is indeed quite compelling since it fits the culture, its tradition and particularly the periods (timeline).

Firstly, there are a number of biblical names found in Genesis appearing in extra-biblical texts. Names like Abraham, Benjamin, Jacob, Nahor, Gad, Dan, Levi, Terah, Serug and Ishmael have all been mentioned in the Mari texts. The name Abraham has parallels to that of "A-ba-am-ra-ma, A-ba-ra-ma, and A-ba-am-ra-am" found in these documents which are of typical Amorite origin. The name "Jacob" also occurs as a place name in Canaan (on Thutmose III list in the Execration Texts), so too the name Ya-ah-qu-ub-il in tablets from

Chagar Bazar in northern Mesopotamia (also see information on Jacob-El, Zobel 1990:189; Kempinski 1985:134; 1985:132-3; Zobel 1990:194; Shanks 1988: 24-25; Albright 1935:191; Ward 1976:358; 1976: 359).

Abraham's brother, Nahor, has been found in the Mari texts when referring to a city by that name and the name Banu-Yamina, referring to the "Benjamites," is also present. However, the name does not necessarily reflect the tribe of Benjamin since these people were described as a fierce tribe of nomads who roved the fringes of the desert. The tribes of Benjamin arose in the land of Canaan from one of Jacob's sons and thus were never in Mesopotamia from a biblical point of view. These Mari texts bear indirectly upon the Hebrew tribal society, its structure, organization, institutions; as well as geographically on the "patriarchal homeland" in the Mesopotamian region of Aram-Naharaim. The wide range of sources on the Hebrew tribes found in the Mari texts – progressing from the nomadic through to the sedentary lifestyle – testifies to the understanding of the gradual process of the Israelite settlement in Canaan. Furthermore, the customs mentioned in the Nuzi texts bear significant parallels to the patriarchal customs that deal with institutions, practices, inheritance, adoption, laws, marriages and treaties; as found in the book of Genesis. See 2.5.2 for further summary on the Nuzi tablets.

Secondly, Sir Leonard Woolley's systematic excavations during the 1922–34 season have uncovered a ziggurat at the ancient site of Ur, near the mouth of the Euphrates in Mesopotamia (Winstone 1990; Woolley 1982). Ur, one of the great cities of the ancient world at the time, was the original home of Abraham. The only possible evidence regarding the existence of the patriarch emerging from the excavations were that of a small ornate figure of a ram standing on its hind legs, found in a graveyard site (Death Pit of Ur) for kings and nobility at the ancient site of Ur.<sup>53</sup> Here, British archaeologist Woolley found an object guarding the tomb that he called the "Ram in the Thicket" because it resembled the story in

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53. Woolley, C.L. (1934). and others, *Ur Excavations, Vol. II: The Royal Cemetery*, The British Museum Press, London. Woolley C.L. & Moorey. P.R.S. (1982). *Ur of the Chaldees*, revised edition, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press. Woolley, Leonard. (1946). *Ur: the First Phases*. Penguin Books, London and New York. D. Collon. (1995). *Ancient Near Eastern Art*, The British Museum Press, London. Saggs, H.W.F. (1995). *Babylonians*, The British Museum Press, London.

Genesis 22:13, ‘And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.’ Woolley’s description of the “Ram in the Thicket” was a reference to the binding of Isaac just before the Hebrew deity Yahweh intervened at the last moment, telling him:

Do not harm the boy and do not do anything at all to him, for now I do know that you are God-fearing because you have not withheld your son, your only one, from me. At that Abraham looked up and saw just beyond him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son (Gen 22:12-13).



Fig 13. The Ram in a Thicket is one of a pair of figures excavated in Ur, in southern Iraq which dates from about 2600–2400 B.C.E. The one in the picture is currently exhibited in the Mesopotamia Gallery in Room 56 in the British Museum in London; the other is in the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia, USA.

Furthermore, American Assyriologist, Ephraim A. Speiser, noticed that the culture of the Patriarchs as described in the Book of Genesis bears a striking resemblance to the Hurrian culture of the Haran region as described in the Mari and Ugarit texts. The texts found at Mari are located in the vicinity of the homeland of the Patriarchs, 320 km southeast of Haran.<sup>54</sup> It shares a common culture with the area where the Patriarchs originated and thus would bear testimony to the biblical narrative on the marriages of Isaac and Jacob seeking their brides in “Paddan-Aram” in the same region as Haran. Also noteworthy are the stories of Abraham and Isaac describing their wives as sisters to ensure their safety in Egypt, which can also be traced to Hurrian customs.

Nevertheless, one cannot assume without any hard evidence that the Hebrews / Israelites were part of the Indo-European, non-Semitic Hurrian people, as opposed to a group of people merely influenced by their culture, since Laban described himself as an “Aramean” according to the Hebrew Bible.

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54. Livingston, G. Herbert. (1992). *The Archive of Mari*. Bible and Spade 5: 105-108.

While the names of the actual Patriarchs may not have been found in any excavations thus far, their existence seems undeniable based on the evidence as discussed in this chapter. To counter argue that the patriarchs definitely did not exist because their names have not appeared archaeologically is merely an argument from silence - the weakest form of argumentation. As fair-minded historians put it, “*Absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence*” (Maier 2004).<sup>55</sup>

### 2.5.2 The Nuzi Tablets

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, extensive investigations have been carried out throughout the Middle East that have made the larger world of the Bible living and real. During a series of expeditions by the American School of Oriental Research in Baghdad (1925), archaeologists have discovered some 20,000 cuneiform clay tablets at the ancient ruins of Nuzi, east of the Tigris River, dating to about 1500 BCE. The ancient texts reveal institutions, practices and customs that are remarkably congruent with those found in the book of Genesis dealing with treaties, marriage arrangements, rules regarding inheritance, adoption and the like. This famous site is located in an ancient Mesopotamian city southwest of Kirkuk in modern Al Ta'amim (Iraq), consisting of one medium-sized, multi-period tell and two small single period mounds.

The famed Nuzi Tablets have provided scholars with some information concerning the legal customs of the Hurrian Mitanni Empire during the 15<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE. The information contained in the tablets discloses considerable data regarding the laws and customs of the Hurrians, in parallel with the patriarchal narratives. Documents found in the region of Cappadocia, to the north of Haran, have shown a strong Hurrian presence dating back as early as 2000 BCE. There is every reason to believe that the Hurrians had an ever-increasing influence in the area during the Patriarchal period.

However, it must be remembered that these tablets do not necessarily reflect the names of these biblical patriarchs, but they still constitute such valuable testimony about their

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55. Maier, Paul L. (2004). Christian Research Journal, volume 27, number 2). <https://www.equip.org/article/biblical-history-the-faulty-criticism-of-biblical-historicity/>

lifestyles, as William F. Albright points out:

...the narratives of Genesis dealing with Abram may now be integrated into the life and history of the time (the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.E) in such surprisingly consistent ways that there can be little doubt about their substantial historicity (Biblical Archaeologist 1973:10).

The customs and lifestyles of the Patriarchs conform so closely to the cultural world described in these tablets that it greatly increases the possibility that they were real people. Several customs have surfaced here that are helpful in shedding light on the biblical narratives, providing a summary on some of the suggested parallels between the biblical and Nuzi practices. Here follows a short summary on William Albright's comments: <sup>56</sup>

1. Abraham's relationship with Hagar (Gen 16) and Jacob's with Bilhah (Gen 30) can be better understood by a comparison with a marriage contract from Nuzi, in which the wife was required, if she proved to be barren, to provide a substitute for her husband.
2. Abraham's reluctance to drive out Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 16:6) is understandable in the light of Nuzi customs governing such relationships.
3. Another Nuzi tablet revealed the adoption by a childless couple of a servant born in their house. He became the heir if he cared for them in their old age (Gen 15:2-3).
4. Jacob's relationship with Laban (Gen 29-31) becomes more understandable when compared to other tablets from Nuzi (**adoption customs**) as well as Abraham and Eliazar his slave (Gen. 15:4).
5. Rachel's theft of Laban's *teraphim* (household gods/idols) (Gen. 31:34) is better understood now in light of the Nuzi tablets.

With the rise of secularism and revisionism in the field of biblical archaeology over the past 50 years, there is much disagreement among scholars as to whether these Nuzi texts can be compared with the biblical narratives.

Modern biblical minimalists and other biblical critics have argued that the theories and interpretations which defend the historical and archaeological contexts of the Patriarchal period are, for the most part, not accepted in the current politically-correct climate of main-

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56. Anderson, G.W. (1989). *A History and Religion of Israel*. Oxford: OUP. Also see Gordon, Cyrus. (1940). "Biblical Customs and the Nuzi Tablets," *Biblical Archaeologist* 3:1-12. Bush, F.W. (1940)"Nuzi," *ISBE*, Vol. 3, 569; *NIDBA*, 54.).

line universities.<sup>57</sup> The majority of modern archaeologists and historians in the academic scholarship of the Ancient Near East have questioned the existence of the biblical patriarchs; arguing that the Nuzi texts are nothing more than just entertaining stories and the similarities to the patriarchal biblical characters of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are equivalent to the epic Greek myths of Hesiod, Ovid and Homer.

The new methodological approach of biblical archaeology is currently racked by fierce polemics (i.e. Davies, Thompson, Dever, Finkelstein, Rainey), since the various schools of thought and different theories on the origin of Ancient Israel have been debated for several decades now. Chapman & Tubb argue that the narratives do contain elements of fact, but also other unreliable material from a long period of history that has been telescoped down to produce a coherent narrative, spanning about four generations. They conclude that it is therefore incorrect in their view to speak of a “Patriarchal Period” as such (Chapman & Tubb 1990:62). Thompson, on the other hand, points out:

The fact that Bible customs are so close to contemporary customs (discovered through archaeological research) is a strong argument either for written records, or for reliable oral traditions. We are compelled to conclude that the narratives of Genesis 12-50 have a solid historical basis (Thompson 1973:35).

However, we view these Nuzi texts, one must treat with caution the interpretation of these extra-biblical materials. Selman urges that any text being considered as a possible “parallel” must be properly understood in its own context. Perhaps the view of the patriarchal age based on these 'parallels' owes more to the ingenuity of “parallelogists” than to the biblical record (Selman 1980: 119-121). British archaeologist A.R. Millard had pointed out that the selection of information was eclectic, being based solely on its similarity to a biblical passage, regardless of whether it was representative of practices recorded in other texts found at the same location. Here Millard concludes:

When all is said these 'parallels' prove nothing. At worst, they can be misleading as additional evidence shows a custom to be local or commonplace. At best they show the possibility that the Patriarchal Narratives exhibit some practices, so permitting us to conclude that they may tell of the same times (Millard 1980:47-48).

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57. See Kitchen, Kenneth. (1995). “*The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History?*” *Biblical Archaeology Review* (hereafter BAR), March/April 48ff. They are not to be neglected, however, when they are thoroughly understood in their context (Millard 1980:47).

In conclusion, the archaeological study on the Nuzi tablets - in parallel with the patriarchal period - has proved partially certain, since we do not have enough evidence to make any unequivocal statement as to the historicity of the patriarchal events. The best that can be said regarding the discovery of the Nuzi tablets is that archaeology has added a tremendous amount of knowledge on the biblical practices of the Patriarchs.

## **Chapter 3 The Israelite Conquest: The Chronology Dispute**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Over the last several decades the biblical description of the conquest of Canaan has been the accepted model among mainstream scholars. The chronological disputes have been highly vulnerable to a range of criticisms since archaeology has not produced an answer as to whether the actual Israelite Conquest took place, either in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Century. The reason for the lack of archaeological support is due to issues such as: 1) the occupation and control of Canaan by Egypt until the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century; 2) the lack of any evidence for a new population entering Canaan in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century; 3) the Amarna correspondence dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century; 4) the non-existence of Edom and Moab in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century; 5) and the evidence for the destruction of Canaanite sites matching a 13<sup>th</sup> Century rather than a 15<sup>th</sup> Century conquest. These pose a formidable challenge to the traditionally held view of a later date. The excavations of Jericho, Ai, Hazor and other listed sites in Joshua 12 have led to a vigorous debate on the dating of the destruction of various Canaanite cities during Israel's conquest of Canaan. This dating issue has been one of the biggest problems facing archaeologists today, thus if the findings are set in a chronological framework, they will be able to construct a narrative into which their findings can be integrated (Moorey 1981: 68).

However, the archaeological evidence is mute and therefore open to different interpretations, which in turn are vulnerable to the presuppositions, even biases, of the archaeologist. Initially the biblical date for the Israelite Conquest was generally accepted at 1400 BCE, but the interpretation of the archaeological data changed when John Garstang and William F. Albright excavated at Jericho and Beitin, giving it a later date of around 1250 BCE, (Albright 1957:13). The period around of 1400 BCE was taken from 1 Kings 6:1 which records the exodus as having taken place 480 years earlier than the inauguration of the Israelite Temple in 966 BCE - the fourth year of Solomon's reign. When adding the 40 years spent in the Sinai Peninsula between the exodus from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan (Ex 16:35; Num 14:34–35), the conquest is calculated to have taken place in 1406 BCE.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Century exodus-conquest theory was formulated by William F. Albright in the 1930s and was then widely accepted as between 1220-1230 BCE. This view further

dominated from the 1950s when Kathleen Kenyon dated the destruction level at Jericho at about 1550 BCE, and thus concluded that there was no city with protective walls for Joshua and his Israelite troops to destroy in 1400 B.C.E (Stiebing 1985:58-69; Kenyon 1957: 259). Furthermore, Kenyon claimed she found no archaeological evidence of any occupational activity on the site of Jericho during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, which supported neither the early (1400 BCE) nor the late date of a military conquest (1230-1220 BCE). However, Garstang's archaeological interpretations seem to be quite consistent in finding evidence in the ruins of Jericho of a violent conflagration at that location around 1400 BCE. He attributed this to the Israelites (Garstang 1941: 368-72). In this case Kenyon's conclusions sharply contradict Garstang's interpretations.<sup>58</sup>

Yigael Yadin remained adamant that the Israelite Conquest did occur in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Yadin 1982:16-23), and together with fellow well-known Professor Amnon Ben-Tor from the Hebrew University - director of the Hazor excavations, which included Steve Ortiz, excavator of Tel Gezer - regard the Israelite conquest as a historical event. Both Yadin and Ben Tor seem to agree with W.F. Albright's theory – along with Egyptologists Kenneth Kitchen and James Hoffmeier - that the actual event took place sometime in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Ben-Tor 1998: 456-67; Kitchen 2002: 310; Hoffmeier 2007: 225-47). The proposed 15<sup>th</sup> Century date for the Exodus is based on 1 Kgs 14:25 and 2 Chron 12:1-12, which describes Shishak's invasion of Judah in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Solomon's son, King Rehoboam. To calculate the date of Shishak and Rehoboam's reigns, the date for the invasion would have been around 925 BCE, placing the death of Solomon in 930 BCE, and the fourth year of his reign in 966 BCE. When the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1 is added, it brings one to the year 1446 BCE, in which the Exodus must have occurred.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Century date for the Exodus is based on Ex 1:11 which says that while in Egypt, the Israelites built for Pharaoh the store-cities of Pithom and Rameses and thus would

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58. Instead of considering the biblical model of a 15th Century exodus-conquest, however, the majority of Palestinian archaeologists rejected the concept of an exodus-conquest altogether, in favour of other hypotheses for the origin of Israel. The most popular theory today is that Israel did not originate outside of Canaan, but rather arose from the indigenous population in the 12th century BCE. For a recent discussion of this view, see Dever, William G. (2003). *Who Were the Israelites and Where Did They Come from?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans). For a critique, see Bimson, John J. (1991). "Merenptah's Israel and Recent Theories of Israelite Origins," JSOT 49 (1991): 3–29. Some scholars allow for a small "Egypt exodus group" which became the nucleus for 12th century Israel, (Pitkänen, Pekka. (2004) "Ethnicity, Assimilation and the Israelite Settlement," TynBul 55.2;165).

have placed the Exodus in the reign of Ramesses II, the Pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty who ruled from 1279-1213 BCE. This also lines up with the Merneptah Stela that contains the first reference to Israel outside the Bible since Merneptah ruled Egypt from 1213-1203 BCE, thus dating it to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

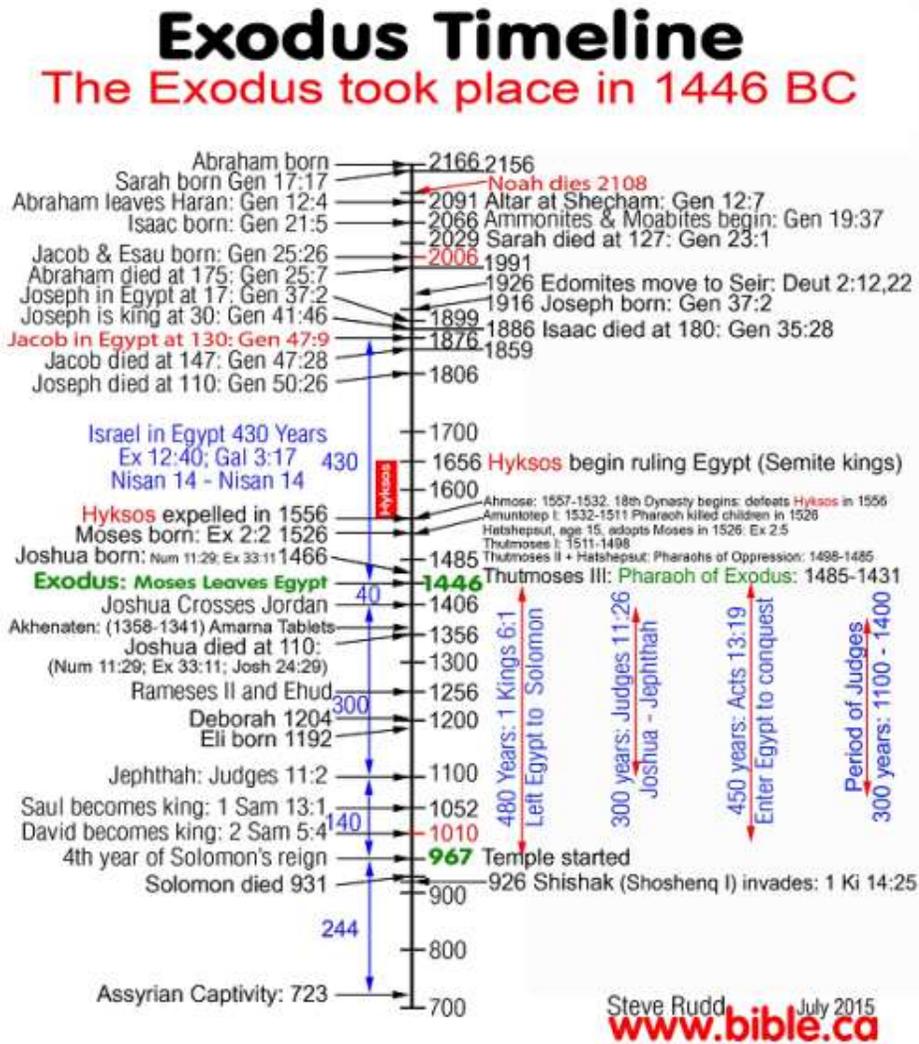


Fig 14. With reference to this website, the low chronology follows K.A. Kitchen. The Ebers Papyrus dates from 1550 BCE and records the heliacal rising of Sothis on the 9th, 3rd month, 3rd season (i.e. the 11th month of the Egyptian calendar) as happening on the 9th year of the reign of Amenhotep I. This low Egyptian chronology is derived, in part with the Ebers Papyrus, by assuming that the heliacal rising of Sothis was observed from the city of Thebes (Theban) which produces a date of 1523 BCE (+/- 6 yrs) and therefore sets the reign of Amenhotep I to 1532-1511 BCE. Using this standard chronology, the last of Thutmose III's 17 annual military campaigns end in 1446 BCE, when his army drowns in the Red Sea, which also corresponds with the beginning of the erasure of Hatsheput. This Christian website had adjusted the historical dates to 1446 BCE as the date of the Exodus. In courtesy of <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-exodus-route-date-chronology-of-judges.htm>

Firstly, it appears the archaeological evidence relevant to this conquest theory may have either been deliberately ignored or interpreted in a different context, to which Israel Finkelstein comments that “*archaeology has uncovered a dramatic discrepancy between the Bible and the situation within Canaan at the suggested date of the conquest, between 1230 and 1220 BCE*” (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 76). This sounds plausible, since the account of the Israelite Conquest under the leadership of Joshua seems to paint a different picture than the archaeological data shows in Canaan towards the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. However, the Joshua account represents a unified effort of all the tribes of Israel working together in a swift and complete military victory, while the account in Judges portrays a long process accomplished by individual groups or tribes working independently as individual clans. This disparity in the apportioning of the lands can be used to support the differing chronology of the two texts.

Secondly, the search for supporting evidence on the Israelite Conquest can be looked for in the incorrect geographic location or according to the wrong timeframe, and thus create conflict among various scholars.

Thirdly, there is a lack of evidence or incorrect data that supports the argument that the events were either unhistorical or partially historically true. Archaeology has its limitations, and can be hampered by: 1) poor preliminary excavating techniques; 2) conflicting evidence; 3) subjective interpretations; 4) changes in interpretation; 5) unsettled issues; and 6) the inability to prove many events (Wright 1971:69-76). It has to be admitted to a degree that archaeology is mute and therefore open to various interpretations, so even if all the evidence points to a specific time period, there are likely to be differing viewpoints, presuppositions and biases. These chronological disagreements concerning the Israelite Conquest have spanned the past few decades. As professor Michael D. Oblath stated:

The exodus from Egypt is a topic around which whirl controversy, debate and heated argument. There is no consensus regarding the date of the Israelite slavery, nor its nature, nor even its historicity...It is an area where archaeological interpretation and biblical narrative collide (Oblath 2007: 380).

Despite over a century of detailed investigation, the date of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt remains a topic of extensive debate within scholarship and in this chapter we will summarize the emergence of the two most commonly proposed dates. Hoffmeier is focused on the biblical account of Israel in Egypt, whereas Kitchen and Woods give a much broader scope in

both Egypt and Canaan. All three, through scholarly debate, provide a balance to some extreme positions on the early and later date of the Exodus / Conquest theory.

### 3.2 Wood's Perspective on the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Conquest Theory

Dr Bryant G. Wood, research director of Associates for Biblical Research, is well-known for his 1990 proposed re-dating on the destruction of Tel Jericho (Tell es-Sultan) in accordance with the biblical events at around 1406 BCE - based on the early 15<sup>th</sup> century BCE exodus-conquest model. Several leading biblical archaeologists, such as James Hoffmeier and Kenneth Kitchen, contend that a 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE date better fits the Exodus narrative evidenced largely by alleged connections between sites mentioned in the biblical text and the store-city of Ramesses (Ex 1:11) which is most likely the Delta capital, Pi-Ramesses, in Egypt (Kitchen 2003:24-25; Hoffmeier 2007:36).

Wood, however, rejects the 13<sup>th</sup> Century theory proposed by Kitchen and Hoffmeier, and strongly suggests that the Exodus-Conquest must have occurred sometime during the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, since the ordinal number "480<sup>th</sup> year" in 1 Kgs 6:1 should be taken literally and not from a symbolic point of view, as some have proposed (JETS 48/3 (2005)).<sup>59</sup> Wood remained adamant that his archaeological research has provided enough evidence to support his 15<sup>th</sup> Century Exodus-Conquest hypothesis and thus urged scholars to abandon the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Exodus-Conquest model.<sup>60</sup> According to the Hebrew Bible, Joshua and the Israelite troops destroyed three cities to the point of razin them to the ground; 1) Hazor (Josh 11:10–11), 2) Jericho (Josh 6:21–24), and 3) Ai (Josh 8:18–19).

Wood claims to have found enough additional evidence on three of these cities torched by Joshua, to be consistent with the Bible. Therefore, we shall discuss some of Wood's hypothesis on his 15<sup>th</sup> Century Exodus-Conquest theory.

During a series of excavations carried out between 1930 and 1936, British archaeologist, John Garstang, found a destruction layer at Tell Jericho corresponding to the termination of

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59. Bimson, John & Livingstone, David. (1987). "Redating the Exodus," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 13[5]:40-68, September / October.

60. Wood, Bryant. G. (2005). "The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory," *JETS* 48:3; (Sep), 489.

City IV as the community Joshua conquered in 1400 BCE (Garstang 1931/1978: 52-55). According to the more recent research by archaeologist Bryant Wood, new evidence has emerged indicating that Garstang's dates were correct after all. Garstang's findings included local Canaanite pottery, massive destruction by a fierce fire from Joshua's time which left ash deposits up to three feet thick.<sup>61</sup> In response to the 13<sup>th</sup> century theory, John Garstang argued that there was no sufficient evidence of Akhenaten's reign in that city or tombs, and neither was there any reference to Jericho in the Amarna letters or evidence of any scarabs found after the reign of Amenhotep III; yet there is an abundance of scarabs from earlier Egyptian kings (Dyer 1983:232). In this case the "evidence" was consistent with an Israelite attack on the city around 1400 BCE, which fits the biblical date for the Israelite Conquest.<sup>62</sup> In the September/October issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review; Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?* (1990:45-59), Dr Wood explains that the John Garstang analysis was correctly interpreted. Thus he argued that his extensive research on the reanalysis of pottery sherds, stratigraphic considerations, scarab evidence and radiocarbon dating excavated on City IV, has demonstrated that the city of Jericho was indeed destroyed in about 1400 BCE, and not 1550 BCE as Kenyon assumed.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, Wood goes on to show that there is additional evidence for the earlier date and thus highlights a number of problems with the late 13<sup>th</sup> century conquest model. While the majority of biblical scholars have accepted Albright's identification of et-Tell as the true site of biblical Ai, Wood pointed out that there is no additional evidence of occupation or destruction on this particular site at the time of the Israelite Conquest. Many scholars have

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61. Garstang, John. (1934). "*Jericho: City and Necropolis Fourth Report.*" *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 21 (1934), pp. 99–136, pls. 13–44; "*The Fall of Bronze Age Jericho.*" *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* 67 (1935), pp. 61–68. Garstang, John. and Garstang, J.B.E. (1940). *The Story of Jericho*, 2nd ed., 1948 (1st ed. 1940). London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott.

62. The biblical arguments for this date has been widely accepted by many conservative scholars today, in *Kingdom of Priests* (Baker Academic, (2008), pages 83–92. Important note, there are some earlier works that have slightly different dates, such as James Ussher's 1451 BCE. For a defence of the 15th Century Exodus / Conquest, see: Young, Rodger C. (2006). "*The Talmud's Two Jubilees and Their Relevance to the Date of the Exodus,*" *Westminster Theological Journal* 68, no. 1 (March 2006): 71–83; Young, "*Evidence for Inerrancy from Second Unexpected Source: The Jubilee and Sabbatical Cycles,*" *Bible and Spade* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 109–122; Andrew Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011).

63. Wood, Leon James and O'Brien, David. (1986). *A Survey of Israel's History*, Zondervan; Revised ed. edition p. 74 (1); Millard, Alan Ralph, Hoffmeier, James. K., David Weston Baker. (1994). *Faith, Tradition, and History Eisenbrauns*, p. 15 (2) 22. For a discussion on the debate that includes more recent radiocarbon considerations that support Wood's research, see the Jericho's chronology dispute at [http://www.conservapedia.com/Jericho\\_chronology\\_dispute](http://www.conservapedia.com/Jericho_chronology_dispute) See also Bryant G. Wood, "Dating Jericho's Destruction: Bienkowski Is Wrong on All Counts, *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16:05, Sep/Oct 1990.

rejected the basic historicity on account of Joshua 7-8, but Dr Wood has been highly critical of their views, as he believes that they are looking in the wrong place, and thus he provides a number of topographical and geographical clues that could potentially identify the true biblical Ai of Joshua (Callaway 1992: 25-130; 1993: 39-45; Wood 1997).<sup>64</sup>

In 1995 Dr Wood and his team from the Associates for Biblical Research (ABR) conducted archaeological excavations at the nearby site called Khirbet el-Maqatir, believing it to be the true site of Joshua's Ai. These resultant discoveries include pottery evidence from the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, evidence of a fire in the form of burned stones and calcined bedrock, and a rare Egyptian scarab which points to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. It also fits the additional criteria in accordance with the Hebrew Bible (Smith 2013: 36–38). For a full report on Khirbet el-Maqatir see chapter six of this dissertation.

Wood also concludes that the biblical Hazor fits the criteria described in Joshua 11:10 which refers to it as “the head of all these kingdoms,” as two significant destructions at Hazor have been discovered. He points out that the first fiery destruction was dated in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, while the second has been dated to the mid-late 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. His reports suggested the 15<sup>th</sup> Century destruction of Hazor should be attributed to Joshua's Conquest, while the mid-late 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE one should be attributed to the campaign of Deborah and Barak against Jabin, king of Hazor, in Judges 4.12. As Wood observes, “*If the 1320 BC destruction at Hazor is assigned to Joshua, where is the city that the Jabin of Judges 4 ruled, since Hazor was not rebuilt until the time of Solomon?*” (JETS 50/2 (June 2007), 256).

During the earlier years of his excavations at Hazor, the distinguished Yigael Yadin found evidence of a massive destruction by fire of which he quoted, “*There is evidence of a massive destruction. I once called it the mother of all destruction*” (Price 1997:149). It appears that the destruction of Hazor must have occurred during the same period as that of Jericho, dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Additionally, Yadin suggested that the picture painted by archaeological finds was consistent with the biblical portrait on the Israelite Conquest of fortified Canaanite cities that were destroyed and replaced by a new culture (Yadin 1982: 16-23), even though he was committed to the later date of the Israelite Conquest.

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64. Wood, Bryant. (2009a). The ABR Excavation at Khirbet el-Maqatir: Review of Past Work and Report on the 2009 Season. ABR Newsletter 9.7.

Furthermore, most archaeologists who uncovered the city of Hazor over the past few decades seem to agree that it was destroyed earlier as well as in the Late Bronze II era. As Dyer notes, “*Thus if two destructions were in this period, how does one know which is to be associated with the Exodus?*” (Dyer 1983:232). Whichever way one looks at the archaeological evidence found at Hazor, the timing of the Exodus-Conquest theory cannot be underestimated, since the archaeological data has shown strong evidence for a potential Israelite conquest of Hazor in both the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

There is more evidence that Dr Wood pointed to in support of the general events of the Israelite Exodus-Conquest hypothesis. He cites the relationship between the “Habiru/Apiru” of the Amarna letters and the invading Israelites / Hebrews, as he has reason to believe that they were the same people since these documents provided secular confirmation of the biblical description of the Israelite Conquest; both chronologically and methodologically (Wood, JETS 48/3, September 2005:489). More importantly, these letters were dated from 1400 BCE, and thus confirm that the initial stages of the Israelite Conquest occurred in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and not the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, as some have proposed. <sup>65</sup> Dyer concludes, “*The Amarna letters and the Apiru can confirm the early date of the Exodus, but they cannot prove the early date,*” (Dyer 1983: 240) while Wood concludes:

Since the Israelites under Deborah and Barak were able to overthrow the largest city-state in Canaan in ca. 1230 BC and the Merenptah Stela indicates that Israel was the most powerful people group in Canaan in ca. 1210 BC, it stands to reason that the ‘apiru who were taking over the highlands in the previous century were none other than the Israelites (JETS 48/3; September 2005:489).

Additionally, they corroborate the view of a concentrated military penetration into Canaan and thus Dyer concluded that in both instances, they supported the biblical record of the Israelite Conquest. Dr Wood has acknowledged that many biblical scholars would hold to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century theory since many archaeologists were sceptical about the Israelites / Hebrews being in Canaan as early as 1400 BCE, causing them to favour a much later date. Wood

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65. Many scholars associate the Habiru with the biblical Hebrews which includes Dr. Bryant G. Woods, (cf. Archer, 1974, pp.

271-279; Harrison, R.K. (1969). 318-322) but there are different opinions on the identity of the Habiru that have been offered as the like of Rainey who disagreed with Wood and thus such disagreement also tends to intensify the problem. Rainey has demonstrated that the term cannot be etymologically related to “Hebrew,” and the range of use of the term makes it clear that the ‘apiru cannot be equated with Israelites. Nevertheless, some would contend that it does not entirely rule out the possibility that Israelites, along with other peoples, could have been designated by the term.’, Walton, ‘Exodus, Date of’, in Alexander & Baker, Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (2003), 263.11.

argued that his methodological and archaeological evidence showed - throughout his excavation expedition in Jericho and Ai (Khirbet el-Maqtar) - that the earlier date theory (15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) is more accurate than the later date theory (13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE).

### 3.3 Kitchen's Perspective on the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Conquest Theory

The well-known Kenneth Kitchen, an Egyptologist and Professor at the University of Liverpool in England, has written extensively on Egyptology, the Ancient Near East (ANE), and biblical history. In his recent book, *Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), Professor Kitchen argues that the ANE setting provides texts, context and physical data to indicate a long history of biblical "Israel" and its literature, and thus aligns himself squarely in the "maximalist" camp of Old Testament scholars who draw upon a vast array of Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Canaanite inscriptions, historical patterns and cultural customs.

For this reason Kitchen, who specializes in the chronology of Egypt, has been a critic of the High Chronology. In his view there is an error margin of twenty years in the early New Kingdom, making past reconstructions within that twenty-year window tentative (Kitchen 1991: 205). In brief, Kitchen's defence of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century theory presents strong archaeological evidence based on physical inscriptions from the Merneptah Stela that describe the people as "Israelites" – dated to no later than the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, as most scholars agree. The Merneptah Stela records how the Pharaoh launched a campaign into Palestine (c. 1213-1210 B.C.E). Kitchen implied that the battle against Israel may have been designed to discourage banditry among the highland tribes as they came into the lowlands to raid the harvests of Gezer and Ashkelon (Judg 1:18). Most of his evidence is either described as explicit or direct evidence, but also clear in his statement "implicit or indirect evidence," which he believes "can be equally powerful when used aright" (Kitchen 2003:4).<sup>66</sup>

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66. Several of the arguments was put forward by the proponents of alternative views regarding the biblical model of a 15<sup>th</sup> / 13<sup>th</sup> Century Exodus-Conquest theory but there are other several leading Palestinian archaeologists who have rejected the concept of an exodus-conquest theory who have proposed another hypothesis for the origin of Israel. Today the most widely accepted and popular theory is that Israel did not originate outside of Canaan and thus arose from the indigenous population during the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE. For further discussion, see. Dever, W.G (2003). *Who Were the Israelites and Where Did They Come from?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Also see Bimson, John J. (1991). "Merneptah's Israel and Recent Theories of Israelite Origins," *JSOT* 49 (1991); Pitkänen, Pekka (2004). "Ethnicity, Assimilation and the Israelite Settlement," *TynBul* 55.2 (2004) 165.

Kitchen gave several reasons why the Exodus/Conquest occurred during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

According to Exodus 1:11 of the Hebrew Bible; the Israelite slaves were employed to build a city called “Ramesses”. Here Kitchen pointed out that the construction of the delta capital, Pi-Ramesses, may have occurred during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, when it was at the zenith of its power and thus declined sometime in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. He argued that Pi-Ramesses was abandoned as a royal residence in about 1130 BCE, shortly after the reign of Ramesses VI, who reigned from approximately 1141 to 1133 BCE. Here he concludes:

When the city was largely abandoned from circa 1130 onward, and the new (21st) dynasty needed stone to build great new temples at its capital Tanis, they simply removed the Ramesside temple stonework from Pi-Ramesses to Tanis for reuse...” ...“Ramesses IV to VI continued to work there, after which Pi-Ramesses was abandoned as a royal residence circa 1130 (Kitchen 2003: 255-256).

At this, his home town, Sethos I built a palace. and the work here culminated in the vast projects of Ramesses II, from 1279 onward, for his new capital of Pi-Ramesses, biblical Raamses by name and not only location...as stated already, Pi-Ramesses (becoming defunct ca. 1130) was replaced by Tanis as a Delta outpost already before 1080...And Pi-Ramesses slips from the public record entirely.” (Kitchen 2003:310) Again he stated, "...Pi-Ramesses was the Delta capital just for the 13<sup>th</sup> and most of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and not later. Then, from circa 1070, Tanis (Zoan) took over... (Kitchen 2003:460).

As seen in the above passage, Kitchen argued that there was lack of a royal residence in the delta in the vicinity of Pi-Ramesses from the time of the expulsion of the Hyksos (c.1555 BCE) until the last Pharaoh Horemhab of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Egypt who began to rebuild the city in around 1320 BCE (Hornung, Krauss & Warburton 2006: 493). And for that reason Kitchen argued that if there was an exodus before the period of 1320 BCE there would have been no Delta capital from which to march (Kitchen 2003:310).

Several leading scholars agree with Kitchen’s proposed theory since the fall of Lachish and Megiddo was dated to the Early Iron Age period in 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, by which time the Israelites had already settled. This coincided with the decline of Pi-Ramesses, based on the archaeological evidence of the cartouches discovered at Lachish during the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh of Ramesses III ca. 1182-1151 BCE and Ramesses VI at Megiddo ca. 1141-1133 BCE.

Firstly, strong evidence was also found at Tel Hazor where Israeli archaeologist, Moshe Dothan, concluded that the two pottery sherds discovered there were clearly of Philistine

origins. This suggests that they settled in Canaan in about 1176 BCE, during the reign of Ramesses III. According to Kitchen, this means Hazor fell after the Philistines had arrived in Canaan and, as some archaeologists suggest, the fall of Meggido and Lachish must have occurred in around 1130 BCE during the biblical period of Pi-Ramesses, when it was going into decline. Furthermore, he explained that the name Ramesses used in Exodus 1:11 is an editorial updating of an earlier name that went out of use and thus there was a long history of occupation in the area of Pi-Ramesses, with several names being given to the various cities there (Wood 2008: 258-262). Throughout Egyptian history the name Pi-Ramesses was in frequent use from the time of the reign of Ramesses II down to 1130 BCE, before it was finally abandoned when the newer kings of Egypt built a new capital northeast at Tanis.

The editorial updating of names that had gone out of use was not uncommon in the Hebrew Bible. As Kitchen points out, there are some excellent examples like Bethel (Luz) in Genesis 12&13 and Dan (Laish) in Judges 18. Also, Kitchen allows for editorial updating of the name Ramesses in Genesis 47:11-30 and Dan in Genesis 14:14 & 31, but not for Rameses in Exodus 1:11. However, Wood does not agree with Kitchen's views on the allowance for editorial update for Genesis 47.11 and Genesis 14.14.

Secondly, Kitchen's treatment of the biblical chronological data has differed from Wood's proposed theory since he explained that the 480 years found in 1 Kings 6 cannot be taken literally (Hoffmeier, see page 77-79). He suggests that there are two ways of dealing with the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1 to support the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE date for the Exodus; 1) the traditional view of 12 generations of 40 years each, or 2) the addition of years using the figures for the length of time that the judges reigned in the book of Judges. Kitchen explains that the Sinai covenant uses a treaty form that did not appear in the ancient world before the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and thus the traditional early date of 1446 BCE does not fit this theory proposed by Wood (Kitchen 2003: 310-312). Kitchen based his arguments on the formats of Ancient Near East treaties, laws and covenants from the period 2500 BCE-650 BCE since he believed the Sinai covenant documents of Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy - including the renewal contract in Joshua 24 - which have all been closely matched and dated to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE Hittite treaties (ca. 1400-1200 BCE). The table below compares Kitchen's rearranged covenant format with the actual format of Joshua 24 (Kitchen 2003: 283-94).<sup>67</sup>

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67. See Kitchen's article: Kitchen, Kenneth (2003) "On the Reliability of the Old Testament," pp 331--493.

	<b>KITCHEN'S REARRANGED FORMAT<sup>70</sup></b>	<b>ACTUAL FORMAT</b>
1	2a Title/Preamble	Preamble
2	2b–13 Historical Prologue	2b– 13 Historical Prologue
3	14–15 Stipulations	14–15 Stipulations
4	26 Depositing Text	16–18 Oath
5	22, 27 Witness	19–20 Curses
6	20c Blessings (implied)	21 Oath
7	19–20b Curses	22 Witnesses
8		23 Stipulations
9		24 Oath
10		25–26a Depositing Text
11		26b–27 Witness

Table 1.3 Kitchen's rearranged Format vs actual format in Joshua.

Furthermore, Kitchen questioned the historical validity of the account of the conquest found in the book of Judges, which does not present an alternative view to the same events as occur in Joshua. According to Kitchen, the selective nature of the book of Judges seems to overlap in the periods of rule for the different judges; since his interest in chronology establishes a persuasive argument for 1255-1215 BCE as the period of Exodus and 1160 BCE as the date of Deborah and Barak's war campaign against Jabin (Kitchen 2003: 204-208).

There is much controversy over the name of "Jabin" mentioned in the book of Joshua and Judges, and thus Kitchen argues that if Hazor was destroyed circa 1230 BCE, there would have been no city for the Jabin of Judges 4 to rule, and for Deborah and Barak to conquer, since the city of Hazor was not rebuilt until the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. He suggested the ruling dynasty of Hazor moved their capital elsewhere up in the Galilean region sometime after Joshua's destruction of Hazor (c. 1230 BCE), while Jabin of the 13<sup>th</sup> century was probably used as a dynastic title over the territory of Canaan (Kitchen 2003: 213).

In contrast, Yigael Yadin - the archaeologist who excavated at Hazor between 1955 and 1969 - had documented the great conflagration that accompanied the total destruction of the final Late Bronze Age (LBA) city and dated it to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century (c.1233 BCE). Evidence of this

destruction consists of layers of ashes, burnt wooden beams, cracked basaltic slabs, mutilated basaltic statues, and fallen walls. These show that the Israelites were indeed the culprits who destroyed the city. Among the finds, the decapitated remains of basaltic statues of gods and kings found in temples are attributed to the practice of the Israelites (I Sam 5:1-4; Isaiah 11:9). This desecration of statues during the destruction campaign is typical of the Israelites as argued by both Yadin and Ben-Tor (Yadin 1999: 22–39). For this reason, Kitchen agrees that the Israelites were the main destroyers of the city of Hazor and thus declared that the Egyptians, Canaanites and the Sea Peoples were not responsible for destroying the LBA city of Hazor (Kitchen 2002: 313).

However, Kitchen does differ slightly in his opinion on the dating of the destruction of Hazor proposed by both Yadin and Ben Tor, as he prefers to lower the date to at least 1220 BCE. He argues that the dating of 1230 BCE was based on the work of Arne Furumark who had used the old, high Egyptian dates not usable today (Kitchen 2002:310). Kitchen later added that the Vizier Prahotept erected a monument in Hazor sometime during the decade following the years of 40-45 of Ramesses II; thus lowering the legitimate date for the destruction of the final LBA city from 1245-1235 BCE to 1234-1230 BCE (Kitchen 2003: 24-25; Wood 2005: 476). Of special interest regarding Jericho and Ai, Kitchen offers a variety of possible explanations for the absence of evidence on these excavation sites. He commented:

The recently investigated Khirbet el-Maqatir does not (yet?) have the requisite archaeological profile to fit the other total data.” (Kitchen 2003: 189). “There may well have been a Jericho during 1275-1220, but above the tiny remains of that of 1400-1275, so to speak, and all of this has long, long since gone. We will never find ‘Joshua’s Jericho’ for that very simple reason (Kitchen 2003:187).

However, Kitchen’s book, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, did not meet with everyone’s approval. Dr Wood did not agree with Kitchen’s 13<sup>th</sup> Century theory and thus one can say that much of Kitchen's evidences is designed to be more speculative than definitive.

### **3.4 Hoffmeier’s Perspective on the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Conquest Theory**

In this section the arguments that Professor James Hoffmeier presents for the date of the Exodus (Israelite Conquest) shall be discussed. Like Kenneth Kitchen, James Hoffmeier is a strong advocate for the Late-Date Exodus / Conquest Model and recently gave a detailed exposition in an article *What Is the Biblical Date for the Exodus? A Response to Bryant Wood*

(JETS 2007:225–47). Here he offers additional support for the biblical late-date Exodus (1230 BCE). He objects to the idea of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century theory (1446 BCE) posited by Dr Wood and argues that the biblical and archaeological evidence point to a 13<sup>th</sup> Century date for the Exodus.

The arguments begin with the most important text in 1 Kgs 6:1 that supports a 15<sup>th</sup> Century date theory for the Exodus narrative (KJV):

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.

However, the above text can be interpreted in different ways, as Hoffmeier demonstrated in his article that the dates found in the book of Joshua through 1 Kings did not add up to 480 years. Hoffmeier calculated the number of years for Joshua, Judges and the listed kings of Israel, including Solomon, which come to a total of 630-650 years. In this case, those who strongly support the idea of the 15<sup>th</sup> century date for the Exodus have to harmonize the text by presupposing overlaps in the years some of the judges ruled in Israel. Hoffmeier backs up his view that the archaeological evidence for the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Exodus is stronger than for the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, since the biblical data would put the Exodus during the Hyksos occupation of Egypt and the 13<sup>th</sup> Century date for the Exodus is based on the biblical text of Exodus 1:11, *‘Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Ramesses.’* (KJV) Even though the texts did not mention the name of the Egyptian king during the Exodus period, it appears the text of Exodus 1:11 does place the Exodus in the reign of Ramesses II, the Pharaoh of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty who ruled from 1279-1213 BCE, according to Hoffmeier’s calculations.

He also finds support in the Merneptah Stela (otherwise known as the “Israel Stela” that the stela contains the first reference to Israel outside the Bible which means that Merneptah must have ruled Egypt from 1213-1203 BCE, which indicates that Israel was already in Canaan during his reign. The majority of scholars seem to agree that the Merneptah Stela is correctly dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, as Michael G Hasel observes:

Archaeological evidence supports the fact that the Israelites were agriculturalists in the late 13th century BC. Grain storage pits were a common feature of hill country sites of this period. Teeth from a

tomb dating to ca. 1200 BC excavated by the Associates for Biblical Research at Kh. Nisya indicate that the inhabitants of the site ate grain (BASOR 1994: 296: 45-61).

In this case Hasel is saying that Israel was well established in Canaan in the late 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and was a significant political force to be reckoned with as he concludes:

Israel functioned as an agriculturally-based/sedentary socio-ethnic entity in the late 13th century B.C., one that is significant enough to be included in the military campaign against political powers in Canaan. ...While the Merneptah stela does not give any indication of the actual social structure of the people of Israel, it does indicate that Israel was a significant socio-ethnic entity that needed to be reckoned with (BASOR 1994:54:65n.12).

Hoffmeier gives further evidence that the geographical references which appear in the book of Exodus; Pithom (Ex 1:11), Migdol (Ex 14:2) and Yam suf (“Sea of Reeds”) were all verified according to 19th Dynasty sources, but are not found prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century (JETS 2007:235).<sup>68</sup> He also concludes that the toponyms such as Pi-hahiroth and Baal-Zaphon (Ex 14:2) also began in 13<sup>th</sup> Century documents. Other related problems that Hoffmeier pointed out were the absence of references to Egyptian military presence in Canaan found in the books of Joshua and Judges. He clearly explained that the Merneptah’s presence in Canaan was largely due to Israel’s expansion during the Judges period. After the invasion of Merneptah, Egypt’s influence in Canaan began to diminish because of the arrival of the Philistines who came to settle in this region.

Foremost, James K. Hoffmeier also believes the name of Merneptah may be found in Joshua 15:9 and 18:15, since the Hebrew words עֵין מִי נַפְתוּחַ were found and translated as “*The Springs of Waters of Nephtoah*,” near the city of Jerusalem (JETS 2007:243). According to Hoffmeier the words for “*spring*” and “*waters*” are redundant and should be translated as “*The Spring of Menephtoah*,” a name identical to Merneptah.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, further evidence found in Papyrus Anastasi III (verso 6, 4) contains a very important reference to the “wells of Menepta”, giving its approximate location somewhere in Canaan, and thus Ricardo Caminos stated that there is some probability that the name of Merneptah has been equated with “the fountain of the waters of Nephtoah” (Josh 15:9; 18:15; Caminos 1954: 108-111).

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68. Hoffmeier, James K. (2005). *Ancient Israel in Sinai*, chapters 4 and 5.

69. The redundancy of spring and waters was recognized by Robert Boling and G. E. Wright (Joshua: The Anchor Bible [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982] 429), but they did not recognize the connection to Merneptah. For further reading, see Petrie, *Egypt and Israel* 40-46; George Mendenhall, “The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26,” *JBL* 77 (1958).

In another interesting twist, Hoffmeier questions the vast number of biblical scholars who seem to take the symbolic numbers 480 and 40 literally in the Hebrew Bible. It is understood that the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1 should be interpreted as a symbolic figure derived from 12 times 40 - 40 years being a symbolic number for a generation - which signifies twelve generations that had elapsed between the Exodus journey and Solomon's 4th year as king. Hoffmeier suggests that if one were to use the approximate period of 25 years for a generation between a father and a son, you'd end up with about 300 years, which he considered to be more accurate. When one adds 300 - working backward from 967 BCE - this suggests a date of around 1267 BCE for the Exodus to have taken place (20 years into the reign of Ramesses II).<sup>70</sup> The following reference is found in Judg 11:26:

While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the towns that are along the Arnon, three hundred years, why did you not recover them within that time?

In contrast, Hoffmeier noticed that the number forty (40) is one of the most frequently used numbers in the Old Testament and when used to signify a block of years, it occurs 33 times. This use is only surpassed by a block of seven years, which occurs 34 times in the Old Testament. The period of 40 years occurs frequently in the Old Testament, appearing in the following passages of the Hebrew Bible: Solomon reigned 40 years (1 Kgs 11:42); David reigned 40 years (1 Kgs 2:10); Eli's judgeship lasted 40 years (1 Sam 4:18); the period of peace after Deborah and Barak's victory was 40 years (Judg 5:31); 40 years of peace followed Gideon's delivery (Judg 8:22); and the Philistines oppressed Israel for 40 years leading to Samson's exploits (Judg 13:1). Again Hoffmeier has pointed out that there is an apparent division of Moses' life into three 40-year periods (Ex 7:7; Deut 34:7) and the 40 years in the wilderness (Num 14:33-34; 32:13; Deut 2:7; 8:2, 4). With this in mind, he

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70. According to John Bright and Albright, (A History of Israel, 3rd edn. London: SCM, 1981: 123) they suggested that the idea of 480 years is symbolic of 12 generations (traditionally 40 years; e.g. 40 years in the desert) If 25 years is used then a more realistic amount of 300 years is obtained to provide an Exodus of c.1270 BCE. Petrie even suggested 17½ year generations to allow for 210 years giving a date of 1220 BCE. Opponents to these theories would question the amount of generations. Why should twelve generations be so embedded in the writer's mind that he chose this number to make such an important estimate? Harrison accounted for the twelve generations by linking it to the twelve generations of high priests from the 1st temple to Zerubbabel's restoration. A post-exilic writer sought to balance this by allowing for 12 generations of priests from the Tabernacle to the 1st temple. Critics point out, however, that 12 high priests are unconvincing especially as it involves a suggestion that 1 Chron.6:1-15 is mistaken in attributing the first temple to the wrong Azariah. A similar idea to the above is that the 480 years is to balance the time between the 1st temple and the 2nd. 966+480=486 BCE and the temple was built in 536 and finished in 515. The dates don't fit but when the initial amount of 480 years is only attempting to roughly balance it is questionable if 60 years make much difference and this view has a little more credibility.

questions whether these biblical references on the number 40 are a mere coincidence since the last judge and the first three kings; Saul, David, and Solomon, ruled for the same number of 40 years.<sup>71</sup>

Furthermore, Hoffmeier pointed out that for the past three thousand years of Egyptian history, no pharaoh had ever ruled 40 years and only two early Assyrian kings have ruled for approximately 40 years according to the recently published eponym lists from Kultepe, Irishum I (c. 1974–1935 BCE, Middle Chronology) and Sharrukin (c. 1920–1881 BCE).<sup>72</sup> He then elaborated on the number 40 that originated out of the literal 40 years in the wilderness, stated in the following passages; “*For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the nation, the men of war that came forth out of Egypt, perished*’ (Josh 5:6), and ‘*For forty years I loathed that generation*” (Ps 95:10). The verse described above was part of the divine punishment in the wilderness for forty years, which allowed the sinful generation to die off and be replaced by the newer generation of Israelites. In this case, Hoffmeier has argued that the number 40 was subsequently applied to a generation and later, from the Sinai experience, it also became a period of judgment.

However, he did admit that the number 40 was extremely difficult to interpret literally. For instance, Hoffmeier mentioned that Moses was purported to have spent forty days and nights on Mt. Sinai when receiving the law and during that period ‘he neither ate bread nor drank water’ (Ex 34:28; cf. Deut 9:9, 18, 25).<sup>73</sup> He argues that it is impossible for a human to survive for 40 days without water, concluding that these verses force scholars to accept either the 40 days or the complete fasting literally, but not both. Hoffmeier also cites an example taken from an extra-biblical source which suggests that the number 40 also has symbolic meaning. By example Mesha declared in his famous stela, “*Omri had taken possession of the whole la[n]d of Medeba, and lived there (in) his days and half the days of his son, forty years.*”<sup>74</sup> According to 1 Kgs 16:23, Omri had reigned twelve years, and Ahab twenty years, further down the passage of 1 Kgs 16:29.<sup>75</sup> In the Mesha Stele, the king of Mesha claims

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71. The Apostle Paul gives the 40-year figure in Acts 13:21.

72. Veenhof, K. R. (2003). *The Old Assyrian List of Year Eponyms from Karum Kanish and its Chronological Implications* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society).

73. Hoffmeier, James K. (2005) *Ancient Israel in Sinai* 35–36.

74. Smelik, K. A. D. (2000). “*The Inscription of King Mesha,*” in *Context of Scripture* II.137.

75. Grabbe, Lester L. (2007). “*The Kingdom of Israel to the Fall of Samaria: If We Had Only the Bible,*” in Lester L. Grabbe, *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty*, A&C Black, 2007 pp.54-99 p.70; pp.82-4 (Lemche-Thompson hypothesis).

to have liberated his land from the Israelite dominance halfway through Ahab's reign of twenty years meaning that the forty-year period actually was actually about twenty years.

As far as Hoffmeier is concerned, the mentioning of the number 40 may symbolize an undisclosed period of time; an approximate number. As he puts it, trying to reconstruct history and to establish dates involving the number 40 can be challenging. On returning to the year of 408 in 1 Kgs 6:1, he concludes that it is undeniable that the number 480 corresponds to '12 times 40' and thus one should not lightly dismiss the possible symbolic nature of the number.<sup>76</sup> It appears that Hoffmeier does have a case to counter the interpretation of these symbolic numbers in the Bible, since he believes the numbers in the Old and New Testament books were meant to be interpreted symbolically and should not be taken literally. While Hoffmeier makes quite a strong case for symbolism, it would be worth-while to bring in another scholar to tackle this sensitive issue.

Professor David M. Fouts, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the hyperbolic approach to large numbers in the Old Testament, has made several interesting observations:

Deuteronomy 7:1:7 states that Israel was the least of all peoples, numerically speaking. He argues that if the number of Israelites was literally two-three million, and one includes the seven Canaanite nations mentioned here, it would put the population of Canaan somewhere around 21 million—a figure which is clearly absurd (Fouts1967: 19–53).

What Fouts has suggested is that many modern scholars and current students need to be more sensitive to the fact that the Old Testament writers used hyperbole, which is a natural function of language and thus involves the use of numbers, and was a very common practice throughout the ANE.<sup>77</sup> For instance, figurative statements such as, “the sand on the shore,” may refer in the same manner to large numbers, which should at least give us pause when interpreting them.

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76. Hoffmeier, James K. (2007). “*What is the biblical date for the exodus? A response to Bryant Wood*, JETS 50/2 (June) 225–47.

77. Dr. David Fouts is an associate professor of Bible at Bryan College, Dayton See also Wenham, John W. (1967). “*Large Numbers in the Old Testament*,” TynB 18 (1967) 19–53; Millard, Alan (1991). “*Large Numbers in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*,” Scripta Hierosolymitana 33 (1991) 213–22; Fouts, David (1994). “*Another Look at Large Numbers in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*,” JNES 53 (1994) 205–11; idem, “*A Defense of the Hyperbolic Interpretation of Large Numbers in the Old Testament*.” JETS 40 (1997) 377–87; idem, “*The Incredible Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*,” in Giving the Sense 283–99; and Humphreys, Colin (1998). “*The Number of People in the Exodus from Egypt: Decoding Mathematically the Very Large Numbers in Numbers 1 and XXVI*,” VT 48; 96–113.

Professor Hoffmeier questions Wood's article on the 13<sup>th</sup> Century date exodus that asserts that 'there is no valid evidence, biblical or extra-biblical, to sustain it', claiming that enough biblical and archaeological evidence has been provided for espousing the 13<sup>th</sup> Century date, and thus there is no reason to abandon the idea.<sup>78</sup> He has stated, however, that should any new evidence emerge that would support the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Theory; he would be willing to modify his position since he has already stated that he is not ideologically committed to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century date. He concludes by urging all evangelical biblical scholars, historians, and archaeologists not to spend all their energies on defending a specific date for the exodus.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In the light of this admission it seems that the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Conquest Theory has become the favoured one over the last few years, although a minority of scholarship still prefers the early date. The two Exodus Date Theories proposed in this chapter demonstrate the tenuous nature of both positions; whether working primarily from a literal reading of the biblical texts (the early date) or primarily from the evidence of archaeological excavations (the later date). It is true that the historical evidence can contribute significantly to a better understanding of the Hebrew texts from a variety of perspectives, but cannot solve every historical question that may arise from the biblical text. One must admit that both of these proposed theories have too many unresolved issues and thus, without any new additional discoveries, the archaeological evidence will remain inconclusive for the time being.

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78. This possibility means that one of the supporting arguments used by Wood and others to support the conquest date at c. 1400 bc should be used with utmost caution. See also, Wood, "The 13-century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 484. See also Rendsburg, Gary (1992). "The Date of the Exodus and the Conquest/Settlement: The Case for the 1100s," VT 42; 510-27.

## Chapter 4 The Israelite Conquests: Archaeology and Identification of Sites

### 4.1 Terrain Analysis

It is necessary to briefly discuss the terrain analysis of Ancient Canaan that applies to the Joshua Conquest, which can be broken down into three categories: 1) the road network; 2) the regional topography of Canaan; and 3) the military aspects of terrain. In ancient Canaan (Palestine) most people travelled on foot where highways and roads were built over the centuries, connecting travellers to five parallel divisions in the topography: the coastal plains, the central hills, the Rift Valley, the Plateau of Transjordan, and the Negev Desert (NBA 1985:10). The topography of the area is important because it relates to the use of the land in terms of its strategic and tactical value, which warrants the various military excursions.

Firstly, the land of Canaan was ‘the only land-bridge that connects Eurasia with Africa,’ (Gabriel 2003:2). Secondly, another ‘factor contributing to the geopolitical strategic equation in antiquity was the relative poverty of the country’ which made it easy and tempting to those seeking conquest (Gabriel 2003:3). And thirdly, the tactical seduction of a military invasion of the land is found in “*Israel’s long coastlines [which] made it relatively easy to invade the country from the sea,*” (Gabriel 2003:3). The vital role the land plays in the transfer and trade of goods, as well as the relative ease of conquest of its poor accessible natives, leads to the overall value of the land, and the added incentive of an aggressive Israelite invasion and defence. In this case it is critical to investigate the tactical and strategic significance of the terrain as it applied to the Israelite Conquest of Canaan.

#### 4.1.1 The Road Network

Ancient Canaan was a busy land, interconnected with roads leading to big, fortified cities during the Late Bronze Age which were occupied by a wide array of peoples.<sup>79</sup>

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79. According to various archaeologists no walled cities existed during the period of the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1480-1175 B.C.E.- Mazar 1992: 243). However, in spite of clear statements in the Bible that Canaanite cities were walled, and many locations named in Joshua are described as fortified, archaeological evidence has established the fact that Late Bronze I Canaan was similar to the Biblical description with both walled and fortified cities, cultic sites, and unwalled villages. Of the 51 Palestinian archaeological sites with evidence of Late Bronze I occupation, 27 (53%) were “fortified” with city walls and/or other fortifications (Hansen 2003: 83).

Travel was vitally important for political and military strategy for the nation of Israel, since at a time of conquest they needed an extensive road network that connected key cities throughout Canaan. These ancient roads can be broken down into three categories: 1) international highways; 2) intra-regional roads; and 3) local trails / footpaths. Two of the most important international highways in Canaan were the Way of the Sea and the King's Highway, which were both essential for trade and political purposes. The Way of the Sea is one of three main sites of strategic importance along the coastal plain: Gezer along the southern section of the road in the area contested by the Egyptians and the Philistines; Megiddo in the central section guarding the fertile Jezreel Valley; and Hazor in the north, where the road forks toward the city-states of the Phoenicians in the northwest or toward Damascus in the northeast. The King's Highway was a very ancient trade route that was important during biblical times since it begins in Egypt, runs through the Sinai Peninsula over to Aqaba and up the eastern side of the Jordan River to Damascus and the Euphrates River (Num 20:17-21). In contrast to the Way of the Sea, the King's Highway was largely void of major fortified cities and remained generally under the control of the semi-nomadic residents of the area; and more importantly, this highway had two branches that ran into Egypt allowing lateral or alternate trade routes (Donnan 1996: 29-38). Importantly, the internal roads served to connect the various cities within their regions and, more significantly, the majority of these internal, latitudinal roads connected the two main international highways of Canaan (Aharoni 1967: 39-57).

#### **4.1.2 Topography**

An understanding of the topography of Canaan is of tremendous value in correctly interpreting the Bible. The daily life of ancient Israelites in the Fertile Crescent was quite different from those settled in the modern state of Israel and therefore we must become conversant with their geography. Ancient Israel has a distinct geographical identity that heavily influenced its early settlers when they first came to settle in Canaan, now modern day Israel, Jordan and Lebanon. The area was bordered by the Mediterranean Sea on the west and included desert and mountains, creating a contrast between arid and fertile zones. The geography of ancient Israel included both desert landscapes and fertile regions of which the land is divided into five physiographic regions: 1) the coastal zone; 2) the central mountain range; 3) the Jordan Rift Valley; 4) the Trans-Jordan Highlands; and 5) the deserts (NBA 1987: 10).

**Coastal Zone** - The coastal zone is narrow in the north but broadens as it continues south toward Egypt. Much of the plain stretches 4-7 kilometres wide in the north, expanding to about 50km as it moves southward. The soil in the coastal plain is extremely fertile with a vast number of water resources, making it attractive for agricultural farming. The plain is divided from north to south into; the Galilee Plain, the Acre Plain, the Carmel Plain, the Sharon Plain, the Mediterranean Coastal Plain, and the Southern Coastal Plain. East of the coastal plain are the lowlands – moderate hills that create a transitional region between the coast and the mountains.

**The Mountain Zone** - Further inland, east of the coastal plain, lies the central highland region in which the central mountains can be further divided into sub-regions; Galilee, Mount Ephraim, the Judean Hill Country and the Eastern Negev. Up in the north of Israel lie the mountains and hills of Upper Galilee and Lower Galilee. These are generally 500-700 metres (1,640 to 2,297 ft.) in height, although they reach a maximum height of 1,208 metres (3,963 ft.) at Mount Meron. As one travels down south of Galilee into the West Bank area, there are the Samarian Hills with numerous small, fertile valleys rarely reaching the height of 800 metres (2,625 ft.). Further south - moving from the central region of Canaan and surpassing Jerusalem - one enters the Judean Hills/Deserts, including Mount Hebron. The central highlands are 610 metres (2,001ft) in height and reach their highest elevation of 2,122 metres (3,963ft) at Har Meron in Galilee, near Safed. Several valleys cut across the highlands roughly from east to west; the largest is the Plain of Esdraelon (Jezreel Valley), which stretches 48 kilometres from Haifa in the southeast to the valley of the Jordan River, and is 19 kilometres across at its widest point (Israel Topography 2008). The hilly Golan region is east of the Jordan River. The Israeli Golan Heights are at the end of a large basalt plain, mostly located in Syria.

**The Jordan Rift Valley** - Also known as the Great Rift Valley, it follows the path of a fault line that runs north from the Gulf of Aqaba, through the Dead Sea, along the Jordan River, through the Sea of Galilee and continues into the current state of Lebanon. The Jordan Valley is divided from north to south into the Hula Valley, the Kinneret Valley, the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea Valley and the Arava (Aharoni 1967: 29-33).

**The Trans-Jordanian Highlands** – The region is known as Transjordan which is formed from the mountain tableland. The New Bible Atlas describes the region between the river and the desert as “a narrow fertile belt, perhaps 30 km wide, running parallel with, and sometimes hidden behind; the savage, bare cliffs that overlook the Jordan and the Dead Sea.” This fertile belt includes the territories of Moab, Ammon, Gilead and Bashan. The Transjordan Plateau is often 3,000 feet above sea level. South of the Dead Sea, east of the Arabah, the elevation is nearly 5,700 feet. While the region is described as a tableland that is intersected from east to west by some deep valleys / gorges, many of these rivers such as the Yarmuk, the Jabbok, the Arnon, and the Zered flow from this region. The key feature of the Jordanian Highlands at the time of Joshua’s Conquest was the King’s Highway, which ran through the centre of the region (Aharoni 1967: 33-38).

**The Desert** - The Negev Desert is a continuation of the central mountain range, which is geographically an extension of the Sinai Desert, forming a rough triangle with its base in the north near Beersheba, the Dead Sea, and the southern Judean Mountains; with its apex at the southern tip of the country at Eilat (Aharoni 1967: 24-29). Topographically, it parallels the other regions of the country with lowlands in the west, hills in the central portion and the Arava valley as its eastern border (NBA 1987: 22). Many of the Old Testaments events transpired here. The Judean Desert, also known as the Judean Wilderness, is one of the world’s smallest - characterized by a large number of wadis cutting through the rock - and is part of Judah in the eastern section of the Hill Country, descending to the Dead Sea. The Judean wilderness extends from the waters of the Dead Sea to the very edge of the central plateau (or hill country) and from the north-eastern Negev to the east of Beit El. It is also marked by terraces with steep escarpments dropping to the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley. The Judean Desert is an area with a special morphological structure along the east of the Judean Mountains.<sup>80</sup>

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80. Geography and Politics in Israel Since 1967.



Fig 15. The Topography of Canaan (Palestine).

### 4.1.3 Joshua's Terrain and its Military Campaign

The majority of biblical scholars and scholarly experts in the art and science of warfare believe that the basic principles of war, strategy and tactics have changed little throughout the centuries. Thus military operations were fought over terrain which dictated the tactics and strategies of military leaders. An example of this is found in the Old Testament where Moses gives guidance to the twelve men sent to collect strategic information about Canaan (Num 13:17-20; Malamat 1979: 33). Examining the terrain in an effort to answer the question of the sequence of battles listed in Joshua is extremely limiting, but one can conclude that the land of Canaan was a mountainous region that was an obstacle to invading armies for many millennia, and therefore a good place of refuge for its inhabitants. It has to be stressed that the Canaanite army was superior to that of the Israelites, since the Canaanites were a well-organized unit - largely a chariot-based force. The Israelite army, on the other hand, was a foot-infantry force with relatively simplistic weaponry and distinct from those of neighbouring tribes who had vastly superior military technologies (Gabriel 2002: 111; Orlinsky 1954:63).



**Fig 16.** Ivory plaque from excavations at Megiddo; chariots with horses in full gallop. The Canaanite's war chariot was mobile, feared, fast. Each vehicle was manned by two warriors, an archer and a driver (Elizabeth Fletcher: [http://www.bible-archaeology.info/deborah\\_sisera.htm](http://www.bible-archaeology.info/deborah_sisera.htm))

When it comes to discussing warfare in ancient Israel, it is somewhat challenging to piece together the fragmentary archaeological and written evidence about the military tactics of this ancient people (DeVaux & McHugh 1961: 213).<sup>81</sup> The only primary source of information that is available is the Old Testament, The Torah and other extra-biblical sources which offer limited scope and accuracy of Israel's military history.

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81. Miller, James Maxwell and Hayes, John Haralson. (1986). *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

It has also been noted that traditional sources that are used to corroborate historical interpretations, such as archaeology, have not always been helpful in terms of expanding historians' knowledge of ancient military history in Israel.

Unfortunately, we have very little information on the military weapons used by the Israelites, as biblical texts do not describe their weapons, however, four main types of weapons and pieces of protective gear - believed to have been used for military purposes by the ancient Israelites - are mentioned in the literature. The weapons most likely used are the Romah (Pike) and the Hanith (Javelin) (DeVaux & McHugh 1961: 241-244).

It appears that the tactical military intelligence of the Israelites was superior to that of the Canaanites. By restricting their operations to a more mountainous terrain, they denied their enemy the optimal use of their best weapons. The Old Testament and the extra-biblical historical records have given us some clues as to how the early Israelites made excellent use of intelligence in defeating their enemy. The writers of the Hebrew Bible indicated that the Ancient Israelites resorted to a tactical approach or battlefield intelligence in obtaining a comprehensive picture when their objective was settlement of the land (Num 13; Josh 2).

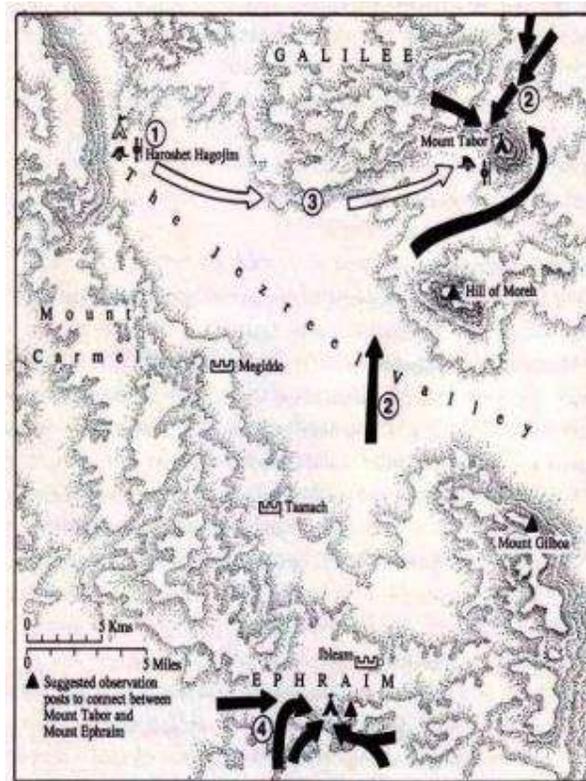
The Old Testament made frequent reference to sending out spies (i.e. Moses/Joshua), or - as more correctly stated by the Israeli Bible scholar, Abraham Malamat - to "dispatching a reconnaissance unit before an operation" (Malamat 1979: 33). Strategic intelligence was important for the ancient Israelites since commanders needed to; guarantee safety, secure borders and interior lines, and ensure troop security on long campaigns in hostile and unknown terrain, requiring accurate and timely information. Fig. 17 depicts the terrain of the first phase battle between Deborah and Sisera found in the book of Judges. The area marked as (1) is Sisera's base camp moving his forces (3) towards Mt. Tabor while the Israelite duo of Deborah and Barak moved their forces from the central region of the Jezreel Valley (2), travelling north to meet up with Sisera's army.<sup>82</sup>

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82. <http://www.womeninthebible.net/war-in-the-bible/deborah-bible-battle/>

The second group of Israelite forces in area (4) were stationed near the northern slopes of Mt. Ephraim. The biblical account of Judges 4 and 5 describes how King Jabin and his general Sisera relied heavily on their iron-wheeled chariots that were meant to be very effective on the flat plain below Mount Tabor. However, their ultimate downfall was the torrential rain that turned the ground into a quagmire (Judg 5:4-21) and thus the well-organized Canaanite army became vulnerable and useless in the boggy marsh of the Jezreel Valley, giving the lightly armed Israelite infantry the advantage in defeating their enemy.

It is quite obvious - when you are in this type of hilly, rocky, and forested topographical region - that the terrain offers the infantry soldier the advantage of protection, and allows him to approach his opponent to within the effective range of his weapons. This is how the Israelites went about defeating their enemy by making use of the mountainous terrain rather than the open field that would allow the Canaanites to manoeuvre their chariots to overrun or to break up the massed attacking infantry formations.



**Fig 17.** 1) Sisera's first base camp; 2) Deborah and Barak concentrate their forces on Mt. Tabor; 3) Sisera moves to occupy Mount Tabor; 4) the second Israelite force near the northern slopes of Mount Ephraim.

## 4.2 In Search of a Biblical City – Archaeological Reports

Today nearly all the biblical places mentioned in the Hebrew Bible are identified with certainty. According to the Bible, throughout the districts in the land of Israel, there were at least sixty cities that “were fortified with high walls, gates and bars” (Deut 1,28; 9,13:5; Num 13,28; Josh 10,20; 14,12). Archaeology reveals these cities that exist both in the regions of Cisjordan and Transjordan were indeed fortified and established during the Middle Bronze period. Many of the LBA cities were without fortifications, as Jane M. Cahill has put it:

...the Late Bronze Age was a period during which settlements were smaller in both number and size than during the previous Middle Bronze Age and during which virtually all settlements, regardless of strategic location and/or importance, remained either unfortified or fortified solely by defines systems built during the Middle Bronze Age’ (Cahill, in Andrew G. Vaughn, Ann E. Killebrew (eds.), 2003: 27).

Although the book of Joshua has clearly stated that the Israelites conquered many “cities,” the book of Judges indicates that the Israelites did not conquer all of the places such as Bethshean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, Gezer, Kitron, Nahalol, Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, Rehob, Beth-shemesh, Beth-anath, Aijalon, Shaalbim and the lowland coastal plain around Gaza and Ashkelon (Judg 1:19,27-35).

Perhaps the apparent textual disagreement between total and partial conquest of the land of Canaan can be resolved by examining and comparing particular conquest and land grant claims found in various narratives of the books of Joshua or Judges, including the later resettlements of Israelites during and after the United Monarchy of Israel. The chapter examines the archaeological and epigraphic data from Canaan during the Middle/Late Bronze and Early Iron Age periods in order to evaluate the historicity of the Israelite Conquest accounts in the books of Joshua and Judges - as well as that of the later settlements by the Israelites during and after the United Monarchy. The biblical accounts of the prominence and destruction of Late Bronze cities such as Jericho, Ai, Hazor, Lachish etc. by the Israelites during the Iron Age (1200 -1000 B.C.E) all conform to the archaeological data (TAPA:100, 110, 113; OT: AAI: 284-285). The archaeological evidence on the alleged conquest of the 31 cities is summarized in this chapter except; with the exception of, Ai (Khirbet el-Maqtar) and Hazor as they will be discussed in detail in chapter five, six and seven.

**Jerusalem** – This city is located in ancient Judah and has a history going back to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, making it one of the oldest cities in the world.<sup>83</sup> According to Judges 1:8, the men of Judah attacked and burned Jerusalem and, later in verse 21, the tribes of Benjamin were unable to dislodge the Jebusites from Jerusalem - with no reference to their king.<sup>84</sup> The great difficulty with the biblical text is that there are two accounts on the defeat of Jerusalem; one during the Conquest (Josh 10:5–27; 12:10) and the other during the period of the Judges (Judg 1:8). The text explicitly states in Judges 19:10–12 that the Jebusites were in complete control of Jerusalem during that period until the Israelite King, David, finally annexed Jerusalem from the Jebusites in about 1000 BCE (2 Sam. 5:6–10).<sup>85</sup>

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars were in disagreement over the founding date of the city, its location, its size and its history; since Jerusalem has experienced periodic disasters and destructions with layers upon layers of rubble that have piled up over the centuries (NBD 1962: 566-567; Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 143-169). As a result, Jerusalem has been continuously inhabited until this day and it has been extremely difficult for archaeologists to dig up the evidence on this ancient site where necessary. So far archaeology has not managed to find any significant evidence on the destruction of Jerusalem as recorded in both Joshua and Judges, except for the possible clues found in the Amarna letters. However, the Amarna Letters from Jerusalem are of interest for a number of reasons. They correspond with a Jerusalem ruler in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, providing evidence for occupation in the city during the Late Bronze Age II period which in turn corresponds well to the conquest of Canaan described in the Book of Joshua / Judges. The Amarna letters contain correspondence from Abdi-Heba who complained of the Hab/Apiru attacking and raiding the Pharaoh's lands around Jerusalem. It was an urgent plea from Er-Heba to the Egyptians about the threat of losing Jerusalem to the Habiru, as he concluded:

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83. Jewish Virtual Library. (1999). "*Timeline for the History of Jerusalem*". American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. Retrieved 16 April. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/timeline-for-the-history-of-jerusalem-4500-bce-present>

84. Na'aman, Nadav (2009) "*Saul, Benjamin and the Emergence of 'Biblical Israel'*," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 121, pp. 211-224, 335-349; Philip Davies, Philip (2007). *The Origins of Biblical Israel* (LHBOTS, 485; New York/London: T & T Clark).

85. *Biblical Archaeology Review* (2006). *Who Were the Jebusites?* March–April issue, BAR32:02. "The letter refers to an Amorite ethnic group known as the Yabusi'um. This, Lipinski says, implies the existence of a tribe or clan of Yabusi, or Jebusites. (The Semitic letter Y becomes a J in Germanic languages such as English.) However, the clan of Jebusites in the Mari letter may not be the same as the clan of Jebusites living in pre-Davidic Jerusalem. More than one clan or tribe could have had the same name, Lipinski cautions."

They have seized the land of Rubute. The land of the king has fallen away to the Habiri. And now, even a city of the Jerusalem district, Bit-in-ib by name, a city of the king, has fallen away to the side of the people of Qeila. Let the king listen to Er-Heba, your servant, and send an army of archers that they might restore the land of the king to the king. For if there are no army of archers the land of the king will fall away to the Habiri (Barton 2013: 348-9; See also ANET 487-488 EA.286).<sup>86</sup>

Later on in history there was an abundance of evidence of an Israelite presence in Jerusalem, dating back to about 1000 BCE, during the reign of King David, as verified by archaeological excavations performed within the City of David (Diane 2001: 60; Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 143-163). Although there is significant evidence of the Canaanites occupying Jerusalem beginning from the Chalcolithic to Late Bronze Age, the period of the tenth and ninth centuries BCE has been the subject of an intense scholarly dispute regarding the United Monarchy of Israel, with ongoing archaeological investigations continuing till this day (Finkelstein, Herzog, Ussishkin 2007:142-164; Mazar 2009: 52-3). However, archaeologist Elizabeth Bloch-Smith has stated that the material culture is clearly of Israelite origin, starting from the Iron II period (950-600 BCE) at the very earliest (Bloch-Smith 2003: 401-425).<sup>87</sup> In conclusion, only a small percentage of Jerusalem has been excavated thus far and much work has yet to be done to reveal the full picture of the history of Jerusalem.

**Hebron** – The archaeological site called Tel Rumeida is located on a slope descending eastward from Jebel Rumeida, west of Hebron's old quarter.<sup>88</sup> Scripture tells us that Joshua and his troops personally conquered Hebron by defeating the descendants of Anak (Josh 14: 14-15). Excavations were first begun in the 1960s by Philip C. Hammond, and more recently in 2014 by Emanuel Eisenberg of the Israel Antiquities Authority and David Ben-Shlomo of Ariel University.<sup>89</sup> As far as archaeology is concerned, the settlement dates back to the

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86. Compare the analysis of Z. Kallai and H. Tadmor, *ÒBit Ninurta=Beth Horon, On the History of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the Amarna Period*, *Ó Eretz-Israel 9* (W. F. Albright Volume), ed. by A. Malamat (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1969), 138. On the identity of Beth-horon the Nether in EA 290, see Albright, W.F. (1968). *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (London: Athlone, 1968), 120 and n. 72. See also Rollston, Christopher. (2017). "Jerusalem in the Amarna Letters", n.p. [cited 8 Aug 2017]. Online: <https://www.bibleodyssey.org:443/en/places/related-articles/jerusalem-in-the-amarna-letters> Redford, Donald B. (1992). *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Time.*, Princeton University Press, pp.268,270.

87. See Na'aman, Nadav. (1996). The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem's Political Position in the Tenth Century B.C.E., *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 304, pp. 17-27.

88. Jericke, Detlef. (2003). *Abraham in Mamre: Historische und exegetische Studien zur Region von Hebron und zu Genesis 11, 27–19,38*, Brill.

89. Yaakov, Yifa. (2014). 'State funding archaeological dig in heart of Hebron,' *The Times of Israel* 9 January 2014.

Chalcolithic era (3500 BCE), occupied during the Early Bronze III (2800-2500 BCE), Middle Bronze I-II periods (2000-1600 BCE); and later revived from the Iron Age I / IIA (1200-1000) periods with structures attesting to a small settlement in the transition from Late Bronze Age to Iron Age I (Jericke 2003: 24).<sup>90</sup>

The majority of historians and archaeologists claim that Hebron was uninhabited during the Late Bronze Age (1550-1250 BCE), which suggests the biblical accounts of Joshua conquering Hebron were not historically accurate (Stiebing 1989: 92; NEAE, Vol. 2 at 608-609; Also see Dever 2003: 56-57). Despite the archaeological gap, between the Middle Bronze and Iron Age, archaeologists have reason to believe that there must have been a Late Bronze Age fortification since the Amarna tablets (c.1400 BCE) mentioned that the city existed during that period. One of the three letters, Shuwardata - king of the Hebron district - wrote in EA 281, addressing the Egyptian ruler Akhenaten (ANET: 486-489):

My cities are rebelling against me... archers are needed... like in the city of Hebron... they trembled before the Pharaoh... I prostrate myself before the Pharaoh... know that the hostilities are great against me... send archers... (EA 281).<sup>91</sup>

If it was the case that diplomatic relations existed between the king of Hebron and the Late Bronze Age king, Akhenaten, during the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, then one can conclude that Hebron must have been in existence during the Late Bronze Age (Hammond 1963: 253-258).

During the 1998 expedition at Tel Rumeida, the late Israeli archaeologist, Yuval Peleg, discovered more than 50 burial sites with grave goods, dozens of artefacts, including jars, jewellery, artefacts from the late Bronze era. Also present were a large number of pieces of pottery, some of which were of the conventional Israelite collared-rim style dating to the Early Iron Age. In 2005 Professor Jeffrey Chadwick of the Brigham Young University revealed in his doctoral thesis that Hammond had indeed found evidence of Late Bronze occupation in six different areas of Tel Hebron (See: *Discovering Hebron*, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, BAR 31:05, Sep / Oct 2005).

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90. Mizrachi, Yonathan. (2014). *Tel Rumeida Hebron's Archaeological Park*, Emek Shaveh November 2014.

91. Pritchard, James B. (1950). *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 487 note 13 and Lamoine DeVries, *Cities of the Biblical World: An Introduction to the Archaeology, Geography, and History of Biblical Sites*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997) 114-115. See <http://www.specialtyinterests.net/eae.html#281>. See also Amarna Letters EA# 271, 277-284, 290a. 14.

In his concluding reports, American archaeologist Hammond discovered a room in one structure in Area 6 which yielded fragments of typical Late Bronze Age painted pottery and imported Cypriot “base ring” vessels. He also discovered a Late Bronze II arrowhead and a limestone scarab bearing the praenomen of Pharaoh Ramesses II, User Ma’at Ra Setep N Ra, which means this Pharaoh dominated Canaan during his reign in approximately 1290–1224 BCE, close to the end of the Late Bronze Age. Furthermore, a Late Bronze Age burial cave south of the city wall line was found with only a few scattered Late Bronze Age pottery sherds remaining; and archaeologists suggested that many of the artefacts were looted by robbers at some point.<sup>92</sup> In his interesting article, *Did Hebron Disappear?*, Rabbi Leibel Reznick - senior lecturer in Talmudic studies in Rockland County, New York - concluded that Hebron is not a single archaeological site, but rather a sprawling archaeological area comprising seven distinct sites. Some of these, around the districts of Hebron, that have not been fully excavated include: 1) Haram el-Khalil; 2) Jebel Nimra; 3) Khirbet en-Natzara; 4) Jebel Batrak; and 5) the current modern city of Hebron. The latter is inhabited, making excavations almost impossible and at least six of the seven sites are yet to be investigated.<sup>93</sup>

During 1999 Emmanuel Eisenberg, who was leading the excavation expedition for the Israeli Antiquities Department, made important finds from the Early Bronze to Iron Age Periods (Hezekiah’s time) and voiced his confidence in Tel Rumeida indeed being ancient Hebron.<sup>94</sup>

To conclude this section, although there is no archaeological material evidence regarding the destruction of a Joshua’s Conquest on Tel Rumeida, the archaeological and extra-biblical evidence given in the above presents a strong case that Hebron was a thriving city in the Late Bronze Age before it was captured by the Israelites. Thus the fullest analysis of all the evidence indicates that the archaeological data provided is consistent with the account relayed in Joshua.<sup>95</sup>

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92. Based on pottery sherds that have been casually found. <http://www.arij.org/pub/Hebron-Profile.pdf>

93. Rabbi Leibel Reznick: [http://www.aish.com/societyWork/sciencenature/Did\\_Hebron\\_Disappear\\$.asp](http://www.aish.com/societyWork/sciencenature/Did_Hebron_Disappear$.asp)

94. Eisenberg, E. (2011). “*Hebron’s fortifications during the Bronze period*,” The Land of Israel, Studies in the Land and its Antiquities – The Book of Amnon Ben-Tor, The Israel Exploration Society, Jerusalem, pp. 14-32. See also E. Eisenberg, (2014). “*Excavations resume in Tel Hebron*,” Youtube video, Hebron Conference; Ofer, A. (1995). The Judean Mountains in the Biblical Period, Volume 1: Tel Rumeida (PhD dissertation), pp. 52-60.

95. Adam, Mikaya. (1978). “The Politics of Ebla,” BAR, Sept/Oct; Jonathan Swift Polite Conversation. Dialogue iii. See also [http://www.hebron.edu/Magazine/Archive/M1\\_F2/5-26.pdf](http://www.hebron.edu/Magazine/Archive/M1_F2/5-26.pdf), p. 92; <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/article.php3?id=2052>.

However, due to the political dispute between the Israeli government and the Palestinians, future excavations around the district of Hebron will be improbable should the site be handed fully to the Palestinians, preventing archaeologists from finding any conclusive evidence of a Joshua Conquest.

**Jarmuth** - This ancient site has been identified as Khirbet el-Yarmut (Tel Yarmuth), located 25 kilometers southwest of Jerusalem and five kilometers south of Bet Shemesh, between Tel Bet Shemesh and the Tel Azakah National Park. It is first mentioned in the biblical narrative of Joshua's conquest of Canaan (Josh 10:3-5, 23-25; 12:7, 11; 15:20, 33, 35) and later as a city in Judah (Josh 35:35, Neh 11:25-29). The Canaanite royal city was also mentioned in a 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE Akkadian letter found at Tell al-Ḥasi under the name Ia-ra-mu-ti.<sup>96</sup> To date approximately twenty seasons of excavations have been conducted at Tel Yarmuth, starting in 1970, on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (under the direction of Professor Amnon Ben-Tor) and later by the French Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University (under the direction of Professor Pierre de Miroschedji). The excavations uncovered the remains of the biblical city of Yarmuth, dating back to the Early Bronze Age; including an impressive system of fortifications, a large palace, residential quarters and public buildings, as well as a small acropolis overlooking the city - in which there also existed a settlement in later periods (Miroschedji 1999:2-19).<sup>97</sup>

The city was completely abandoned and therefore the finds from the Early Bronze Age were not disturbed in later periods. Currently the archaeological data relating to Joshua's Conquest and its identification has not provided sufficient evidence to support the conquest theory and thus to date the excavations that have been conducted at this site remain problematic (NEAE, Vol. 2 at 661).

**Lachish** – This large fortified city is now identified as the modern Tell ed-Duweir which is located 40 km SW of Jerusalem. Four expeditions have excavated at Lachish: starting in

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96. Abel, Geog, 2 (1938). 356; Albright, in: BASOR, 77 (1940), 31; EM, 3 (1965), 865-7; Aharoni, Land, index.

97. Miroschedji Pierre de. (1990). The Early Bronze Age Fortifications at Tel Yarmuth, An Interim Statement, Israel Exploration Society.

1932–1938, under the direction of James Leslie Starkey and his assistant Olga Tufnell; Yohanan Aharoni of Tel Aviv University in 1966 -1968; and David Ussishkin of Tel Aviv University in 1974-1987. New excavations began in 2013-2017 - directed by Yosef Garfinkel, Michael G. Hasel, and Martin G. Klingbeil - to investigate the Iron Age history of the site on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology.

At first Lachish was identified as Tell el-Hesi, since Flinders Petrie first discovered it as the biblical site and especially based on a cuneiform tablet found there (EA 333). The tablet is a letter from an Egyptian official named Paapu, reporting cases of treachery involving a local kinglet, Zimredda (Petrie 1891). However, subsequent archaeological research conclusively revealed that Tell ed-Duweir is the site of ancient Lachish, while the ancient name of Tell el-Hesi remains unknown (Blakely & Horton 2001: NEA 64 (1-2): 24–36).

According to the Bible, the Israelites captured and destroyed Lachish (Josh 10:31-33) and then later in history the territory was assigned to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:39) which became part of the Kingdom of Israel during and after the United Monarchy. As far as archaeology is concerned, there is some additional evidence of the destruction of the city circa 1200 BCE, though the Hebrew Bible does not explicitly state that Joshua was responsible for it (Josh 11:13).<sup>98</sup> When the Bible mentioned that there were at least sixty cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars (Deut 3:5), then one would expect to find evidence to support this biblical narrative in the extensive excavations conducted at the site (for excavations results, see Tufnell, Inge, and Harding 1940; Tufnell et al. 1958; Ussishkin 1993: 899–900; Barkay and Ussishkin 2004: 344–51).

According to archaeologists, the Late Bronze Age city was only established in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Level VI), which was then controlled by the Egyptian hegemony. Findings from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Level VII) were in fact scarce since they only discovered a modest-sized temple built in the moat of the Middle Bronze Age fortifications containing rich offerings to the local deity (Tufnell 1940). It appears that the Middle Bronze Age city was already strongly fortified by 1750 BCE, before it was razed to the ground by an invading

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98. King, Philip J. (2005). "Why Lachish Mattes." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 31 (4). Retrieved November 18, 2013.

army and then rebuilt again. However, excavations have shown that the Late Bronze Age city was unfortified since it was un-walled with no public buildings found during the Amarna period. A possible reason is that the Egyptians very much controlled the southern part of Canaan and thus there was no need for a city to be heavily fortified at that time. In 2014 I went to excavate at Tel ed-Duweir (Lachish) with an American team from Virginia Commonwealth University, in a joint operation with several leading institutions, directed by Professor Yosef Garfinkel from the Hebrew University. We discovered another gate entrance in Area B on the northeast side of the site opposite the well-known Iron Age gate.

Although the dating of this gate has not yet been confirmed (circa MBA / LBA), it clearly shows the blackened destruction layer at the bottom of the original wall with a vast number of layers of ash spread across the floor. This scenario was also found in numerous excavation squares in Area B indicating a widespread burning of the city.<sup>99</sup>



**Fig 18.** The newly-excavated mud brick wall (entrance gate) along the north-eastern side of Tel Lachish has been discovered. You'll notice the blackened destruction layer indicating a widespread burning of the city at the bottom of the photo. (Photo by Michael John Walmsley 2014).

Currently it is too early to identify the conquering army that destroyed the city in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, but it is quite possible that it was indeed the invading Israelites that were responsible for the burning of this city (level VI) during the periods of 1150-1130 BCE

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99. See Luke Chandler's excellent article, "New Gate Discovered at Tel Lachish," 14 Jul 2014.

<https://lukechandler.wordpress.com/2014/07/14/new-gate-discovered-at-tel-lachish/>

(Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 221-230).<sup>100</sup> If my conjecture is correct then one can conclude that it was a lot easier for the invading Israelites to have conquered this un-walled city during that period. The Amarna letters mention the two rulers of Lachish; Yabni-ilu and Zimrida. One also documents Abdi-Heba, king of Jerusalem, accusing Zimrida of conspiring with the Hapiru (Moran 1992: EA 287, 288, 328, 329, 335). The following is a paraphrase of a message from the El-Amarna letters:

From Abdi-Heba, mayor of Jerusalem to king Pharaoh: The Habiru have taken all the cities. Not a single mayor remains. Turbazu & Yaptih-Hadda were slain in the city gate of Silu (Shiloh). **Habiru killed Zimredda of Lachish** The king did nothing. Why? (EA 288).

The archaeological data provided on the history of Tell ed-Duweir fits well within the framework of the Joshua narrative as well as with the rest of the biblical accounts on the later generation of Israelites occupying the city of Lachish (NEAE, vol.3 at 899; Ussishkin 1993: 735-753).

**Eglon** – At first W. F. Albright proposed that Tell el-Hesi was the biblical Eglon, which was then accepted by Yohanan Aharoni in the 1970s (Albright 1924; BASOR 15: 7–8; Aharoni 1979: 219). John Garstang and John Brights believed the site was indeed destroyed in the late 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, since archaeology reveals the city was occupied in around 1350-1200 BCE, with evidence of a strong Egyptian influence. This is clear in the discovery of scarabs, art objects and some of the buildings were destroyed by an enemy with numerous iron objects found in this destruction layer (Garstang 1931: 373-4; Bright 1981: 128-132).

However, this identification is no longer supported, as most scholars today have identified Tel Eton as the biblical Eglon since it is mentioned in Judah's list of cities (Josh 15: 39), as well as the story of the alleged conquest found in Joshua 10: 34-36.<sup>101</sup> The location of Eglon

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100. Also see Ussishkin, David. (1987). *Lachish—Key to the Israelite Conquest of Canaan?* BAR 13:01, Jan/Feb issue; David Ussishkin (1979) Answers at Lachish, Sennacherib's destruction of Lachish identified; dispute over a century's difference in Israelite pottery dating resolved by new excavations; stamp impressions of Judean kings finally dated, BAR 5:06, Nov/Dec issue.

101. William Dever places Eglon at the ruins of Tell Eton noting that "Late Bronze Age," occupation is unclear (p56). Professor David Ussishkin from Tel Aviv University has carried out limited excavations at Tell Eton in which he discovered several tombs in which he commented, "Salvage excavations were carried out in a number of rock-cut tombs dating to the Late Bronze Age, the Iron Age and the Roman period." Ussishkin, David, "Tel 'Eton (Tell 'Aitun): Excavations in Tombs and Soundings on the site." [http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/archaeology/projects/proj\\_past\\_eton.html](http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/archaeology/projects/proj_past_eton.html). See also NEAE, Vol. 2 at 632.

is some 11 km east-southeast of Tel Lachish (Horton 2001: NEA 64 (1-2): 24–36). In 2006 the BIU expedition (Bar-Ilan University) initiated large-scale excavations, directed by Prof Avraham Faust and co-directed by Haya Katz, in the hope of reconstructing the history of the settlement at Tel Eton.

Most of the excavations took place in "Area A" on the south east side of the summit, "Area B", and "Area C" on the north eastern side and "Area D" on the south western side of the mound.<sup>102</sup> So far the survey conducted on this mound shows that the first significant settlement was during the Early & Middle Bronze Age, finding a few sherds on the site. Various pottery rims dating to the Late Bronze Age were also discovered, including some finds from Iron Age I/IIA periods. The excavations and surveys conducted on the mound were predominately of the Iron Age IIB layer (8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE). Tel Eton proved to be a significant city in the highlands, which were always the central part of Judah as it expanded during the Iron Age II period (c. 970–530 BCE).<sup>103</sup> It became an important Iron Age Judahite Administrative Centre and a destruction layer dating to the late 8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE suggests that the town was one of the Judahite cities destroyed by Assyrian King Sennacherib in 701 BCE.

In conclusion, the finds unearthed so far do not provide any additional evidence of a Joshua Conquest, but what archaeology has unearthed is the location and size of the city. The majority of archaeologists have indicated that they believe this site to be the biblical Eglon. Since the excavations are fairly new on this site, future seasons may provide more clues to the identity of Tel Eton.

**Gezer** – This ancient site is currently called Tell Jezer / Tell el-Jazari and is strategically located on the road from Jerusalem to Joppa on the most North ridge of the Shephelah, some thirty kilometres northwest of Jerusalem. In 1871 C. Clermont-Ganneau confirmed the site as the biblical Gezer since he discovered the first of many boundary stones inscribed with the city's name.<sup>104</sup> According to scripture, during the Hebrew conquest it's Canaanite king,

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102. [http://www.biu.ac.il/js/te/teleton/previous\\_seasons.html](http://www.biu.ac.il/js/te/teleton/previous_seasons.html)

103. Ngo, Robin (2015) Tel 'Eton Excavations Reveal Possible Judahite Administrative Center, *Biblical Archaeology Review*; See also Faust, Avraham and Katz, Hayah. (2011). "*Philistines, Israelites and Canaanites in the Southern Trough Valley During the Iron Age I,*" *Egypt and the Levant* 21 (2011), pp. 231–247. Faust, Avraham and Katz, Hayah. (2015). "*Excavating Over 2,000 Years of History at Tel 'Eton,*" *ASOR* <http://asorblog.org/2015/07/09/excavating-over-two-thousand-years-of-history-at-tel-eton/>

104. Clermont-Ganneau, Charles. (1896). *Archaeological Researches in Palestine during the Years 1873-1874*, vol. II, London: 251-255 275.

Horam, tried to help Lachish but was ultimately defeated by the Israelites (Josh. 10:33; 12:12). The book of Joshua also clearly indicates that the Israelites did not take Gezer but included the city in Ephraim's territory as a Levitical city (Josh 21:21).

During the period of the Judges, the city remained a strong Canaanite influence that lasted for hundreds of years, as the Canaanites lived side by side with the Israelites (Josh 16:10).<sup>105</sup> From the beginning of the Israelite Monarchy, the city remained under Philistine rule until King David pursued the Philistines (2 Sam 5:25, 1 Chron 14:16). Excavations clearly reveal Philistine occupation during the Judges period. From an archaeological point of view there is no material evidence to support the theory of Joshua's Conquest at Gezer, other than the Egyptian writings such as the Amarna Letters (EA 271, EA 299, EA 288). At least three of the Amarna Letters described the events of Gezer under attack from the Habiru/Apiru during the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, since the letters were dated to that period. In one of these letters, Yapahu, the then mayor of Gezer, warns Pharaoh that war with the Habiru (Hebrews?) was intense and begged Pharaoh to send help and rescue him. The letter reads as follows:<sup>106</sup>

From Yapahu mayor of Gezer to Pharaoh: my god, my Sun, the Sun from the sky: The Habiru are stronger than we, send help and save me from the Habiru lest the Habiru destroy us (Moran 1992: EA 299).

Furthermore, archaeologists have unearthed traces of a 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE Canaanite city dating to the Late Bronze Age containing several pottery vessels, a cache of cylinder seals and a large scarab with the cartouche of Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep III. These attest to the existence of a city, but it was destroyed in 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, probably by Thutmose III. Archaeological findings reveal it was inhabited by Canaanites with strong ties to Egypt.<sup>107</sup>

More importantly, during the later-part of the Late Bronze Age, archaeologists discovered that the Canaanites built new fortifications such as a palace that was constructed on the high western part of the tell and a wall measuring four metres thick; both dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Toward the end of the Bronze Age, the city declined and its population diminished.

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105. Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them" (Judges 1:29).

106. Journal of the Adventist Theological Society, 12/1 (2001): 31—42. Article copyright ' 2001 by S. Douglas Waterhouse.

107. "Hidden secret of Gezer: A pre-Solomonic city beneath the ruins" at the Wayback Machine (archived November 27, 2013), Haaretz, published October 24, 2013, retrieved November 27, 2013. See more on Gezer in the Tell el-Amarna Letters Author(s): James F. Ross Source: The Biblical Archaeologist, Vol. 30, No 2 (May 1967) 62-70.

Later in Gezer's history the city became an Israelite possession when the Egyptian Pharaoh gave it to his daughter on her marriage to Solomon, who rebuilt the city and its defences (1 Kgs 9:16). According to the excavators of Gezer, there is evidence of a building from the days of Solomon's kingdom - specifically at the main city gate which is referred to as the "Solomonic gate" - with six chambers, dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Although previous excavations have revealed much of Gezer's history, there are still many issues regarding Gezer's stratigraphy and chronology left unresolved and debated in the scholarly literature.

Renewed excavations at Tel Gezer, as of 2016 - led by co-directors; Dr Steven Ortiz of the Tandy Institute for Archaeology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Dr Samuel Wolff of the Israel Antiquities Authority - are currently addressing the revisionist trends, ethnic and social boundaries, and redefining the Iron Age cultural horizon in the Levant.<sup>108</sup> From the preceding discussion it is clear that there is a vast amount of archaeological evidence indicating that the sites of Gezer were occupied and resettled at the specific times and in the manner consistent with the records from the books of Joshua and Judges, and the ancient documents indicate that the Israelites had appeared in Canaan during the Late Bronze/Earlier Iron Age periods (NEAE, Vol. 2 at 496ff).<sup>109</sup>

**Debir** – The search for biblical Debir is one of the most interesting fields of work since there are two possible sites that have been identified: Tell Beit Mirsim and Khirbet Rabud. Both of these sites revealed interesting finds that support strong evidence on the nature of the Israelites occupying this mound for several centuries. Debir is the name of a biblical city, as well as a king, and is one of the eleven cities to the west of Hebron in the highlands of Judah (Josh 15:49; Judg 1:11-15).

It was originally one of the towns of the Anakim (Josh. 15:15), and was also called Kirjath-sepher and Kirjath-sannah. Originally the city of Tel Beit Mirsim was excavated in the 1920s by W.F. Albright, who identified it as Kiryat Sepher or Debir (Josh 15:15), located 20 km WSW of Hebron (BSOR 15, 1924: 47, 1932; AASOR 17, 21). The discovery of six scarabs

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108. The Tel Gezer Excavation and Publication Project: The Tel Gezer Excavation and Publication Project is a consortium of institutions under the direction of Steve Ortiz and Sam Wolff. It is a multi-disciplinary field project investigating the Bronze and Iron Age history of the ancient biblical city of Tel Gezer. <http://www.telgezer.com/overview/project-goals-and-strategy/>

109. For further reading see Gezer Revisited: New Excavations of the Solomonic and Assyrian Period Defenses Author(s): Dever, W.G. Source: The Biblical Archaeologist, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Dec., 1984), pp. 206-218 Published by: The American Oriental Research.

dating from the period of the Hyksos confirmed the site determination for Albright (Garstang 1931:210; See also Yohanan Aharoni's list of site identifications, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* -1967).

Excavations have produced evidence of the destructive layer dating back to the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age (13<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) and thus approximated the time of Joshua's Conquest. However, this site is not currently universally accepted as scholars have since come up with other suggested sites such as Khirbet Rabud, which is considered the more likely candidate. Professor Moshe Kochavi from Tel Aviv University argues that William F. Albright has misidentified Tel Beit Mirsim as the true site of Debir using his latest methodology of excavations at Tel Rabud (BAR 1:01, Mar 1975; Kochavi 1974: 2–33). Here Kochavi and his team discovered the remains of an impressive Israelite wall near the ancient cemetery at Khirbet Rabud, along with numerous other pieces, such as pottery (Rainey 1979).

The layers of material evidence on the site shows a strong mixture of the Canaanite and Israelite cultures dating back to the Late Bronze Age occupation, pre-Israelite pottery (Mycenaean and Cypriot), followed by an Iron I stratum. Archaeological evidence has also shown that the destruction stratum on Khirbet Rabud was probably due to the Assyrian siege under the leadership of Sennacherib, who defeated the Israelites, dating to 701 BCE. Among the unique finds were distinctly Israelite remains: 1) two stamp seals inscribed in Hebrew and 2) a four-winged lamelekh seal (OEANE 2011: 401). Whichever site is generally accepted as Debir, there is evidence that the Israelites had settled on both at some point and thus lines up with the biblical narrative.

**Geder** – As far as archaeologists are concerned, Geder is generally accepted as Tel Haror / Tell Abu Hureireh (NBD 1962: 408; Aharoni 1979: 231; Walton & Chavalas 2000: 230). This ancient site (ancient Gerar) was the last southern city mentioned in the “List” placed between Debir and Hormah (Josh 12,13-14), which was one of the largest cities in the southern region of Canaan - covering 16 hectares (40 acres) - and most prosperous during the Middle Bronze Age.<sup>110</sup>

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110. Oren E.D. and Yekutieli Y. (1996). The Middle Bronze Age Defence System at Tel Haror. *Eretz Israel* 25:15–26 (Hebrew; English summary, p. 87).

Although not much has been found relating to Joshua's Conquest, these findings seem to suggest that there was a gap in occupation during the Late Bronze Age I periods, which could point to the conquest at the end of the MBA and following abandonment of this site for some time at the beginning of the LBA. Even though Joshua 12:13 mentions no destruction of the site, it is difficult to prove that the destruction of the Joshua Conquest physically happened.

**Hormah** – so far the ancient biblical name of Hormah has been identified as Tell Masos which is approximately ten miles east of Tell Sebac. This site is mentioned in Num. 14:45; 21: 3; Deut. 1:44; Josh. 12:14; Josh 15: 30; Josh. 19: 4; Judg. 1:17; 1 Sam 30:30. According to the biblical narrative, the Israelites were defeated in their attempt to conquer Canaan without divine aid (Num. 14:1-45). Israeli archaeologist and historian Benjamin Mazar has suggested that the identification of Tel Masos (Khirbet el- Meshash) is associated with the biblical Hormah (Mazar 1954: 22; Kempinski 1993: 816-819). Although archaeologists have not managed to find much archaeological data regarding the Late Bronze Age settlement (1600-1200 B.C.E) at the time of the attempted Israelite conquest, the existence of an early Iron I settlement (c. 1200-1000 B.C.E) is well attested to in Areas A, C, and F. Archaeological findings have revealed impressive house remains in those excavated areas showing a strongly Israelite period which can be compared with many other sites throughout Israel (Canaan) dating from later periods, such as Hazor, Megiddo and Lachish,.

These typically four-roomed houses, several of which were excavated at Tel Masos, were usually designed with set patterns of one or two rows of stone pillars covering an additional area of twelve acres. According to the archaeological record throughout Israel, the four-roomed houses were never found at any non-Israelite settlements, thus making it likely that the four-roomed houses found at Tel Masos were built by the Israelites (Shiloh 1970: 189-190). At some point during the Iron I settlement these houses were established and thus no fortifications were found. Excavations reveal that Stratum I in Area A came to an abrupt end before the establishment of the Israelite kingdom around 1050 BCE and that the early Iron I settlement was during the period of Judges.

Currently archaeological excavations at the proposed site have raised questions about its identification because no remains of a destruction layer during Joshua's Conquest have yet been found dating to the Late Bronze Age and thus the archaeological data has yet to be further investigated.

**Arad** – The site retains the name as recorded in the biblical narrative (Num 21:1; 33:40; Josh 12:14; Judg 1:16) where it is strategically situated in the eastern Negev, about 30 km east-northeast of Beersheba (the most southern city in biblical times) and 30 km west of the Dead Sea. Arad was destroyed and renamed Hormah and it is listed in Joshua 12:14 that the king of Arad and king of Hormah were among the conquered; while Judges 1: 16-17 tells of the Kenites settling in the area and of Judah and Simeon destroying Zephath, renamed Hormah. Since excavations by Y. Aharoni and R.B.K. Amiran began in the 1960s, the excavation reports have revealed a large fortified city dating back to the Early Bronze to Iron Age period (NBD 1982: 66; Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 278-279).

As far as excavation is concerned, there is no evidence of a significant Late Bronze Age city that fits the time of the Israelite Conquest or thereafter.<sup>111</sup> It appears there is definitely a multiple-site problem at Arad (OEANE: s.v. "Masos) since various archaeological sites such as Tel Malhata, Tel Sera, Tel Masos or Tel Ira have been proposed for Horma (Arad).

Israeli archaeologist, Zeev Herzog from Tel Aviv University, pointed out that in Shishak's list of conquered cities the name "Arad" is mentioned twice, meaning there are actually two different Arads (OEANE, s.v. "Arad"). Excavation reports have shown that there is a Late Bronze Age city at a nearby site, Tell Malbatah, 12 km to the south west of the region. The two Arads; Rad Rabbat / Arad of Yersham, were listed by Shishak after his invasion (see EAEHL. 1, s.v; and K\*tuvot Arad, 1975). The reference to two Arads could indicate a group and a specific community related to it.

What is important about the Hebrew Bible is that it does not clearly state that the city of Arad was fortified (Num 21.1). When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atharim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them some 50-plus miles from his city (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 304).

In this case one can suggest that the indirect data available regarding Tel Arad is certainly not contradictory to the biblical account of Joshua's Conquest, even though there is not much

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111. Bimson, John. J. & Livingston, David. (1987). "Redating the Exodus," *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 13[5]:40-68, September / October.

conclusive evidence of material data to show for it. Furthermore, the archaeological evidence - regarding the later generation of Israelites - possesses a rich collection in Iron Age material on the site of Arad which is without doubt from the Iron II period (1000-550 BCE) which witnessed the rise of the states of Judah and Israel in the tenth-ninth century.<sup>112</sup>

**Libnah** – Since 2009 archaeologists from Ariel University and Bar Ilan University have been excavating the site, known today as Tel Burna, located 20 km southwest of Jerusalem, an area which was once a strategic border region between ancient Israel and the Philistines from the west. It's still too early to confirm whether the ancient Israelites conquered this city during Joshua's campaign, but we have strong evidence that the later generation of Israelites did occupy this site as it was settled during the early Iron II Age periods (10<sup>th</sup> / 9<sup>th</sup> BCE) as well as the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

The book of Joshua (10:29) records that Joshua and his troops attacked Libnah, and later a revolt of Libnah during the time of Jehoram, king of Judah, is mentioned in 2 Kings 8:22; 23:31 and 24:18. Once again Libnah is mentioned in 2 Kings 19:8 as the city Sennacherib besieged and attacked after he had sacked Lachish. Based on the results of the new archaeological excavations at Tel Burna, one would expect to find Late Bronze Age remains at the site of Libnah, as well as a layer indicating destruction at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Iron Age Period). This is a good set of criteria since another possible candidate for the biblical Libnah is that of Tel Zayit, just a few kilometres to the west.

Although Tel Zayit has the potential to be the biblical Libnah, after a careful survey concluded that at one stage the tell was a lot bigger as per Dr Ron Tappy's discovery of good remains from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and earlier periods at this site (Tappy 2000:7-36)<sup>113</sup>

However, the site still does not fulfil certain criteria since the occupation from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BCE is not yet confirmed. This makes Tel Burna more convincing where Itzick Shai and his team have uncovered huge fortifications, building structures, idols, decanters, human and

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112. Herzog, Z, Aharoni, M., Rainey A.F. & Moshkovitz, S. (1984). The Israelite Fortress at Arad.; Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, No. 254 (Spring, 1984), pp. 1-34, Published by: The American Schools of Oriental Research.

113. Tappy, Ron E. (2000). The 1998 Preliminary Survey of Khirbet Zeitah el-Kharab (Tel Zayit) in the Shephelah of Judah, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, no. 319, pp. 7-36.

animal remains, and pottery with the seal of Judah from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE.

Here Dr Itzick Shai concluded:

We believe Tel Burna to be the Biblical Libnah for a number of reasons," Shai explains. "Based on the location of the site, the dates of the artifacts we found and the very nice architectural elements that date to the 7th century; adding this all together we believe it to be Libnah." ... "We found jar handles with the stamped seal that is unique to the administration of Judah in the 7th century," Shai explained. "Because of this, we are able to identify the (human) remains we found as belonging to the administration of the kingdoms of Judah."<sup>114</sup>

For the past six seasons archaeological surveys suggest that the site had been settled during the Early Bronze Age II / III, Middle Bronze Age II, Late Bronze Age, Iron Age I and Iron Age II. The largest settlement at the site seems to date to the Iron Age II period when the summit was enclosed by fortifications, with the discovery of artefacts such as figurines, stamps, grains and ceramic vessels originating from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE. This period coincides closely with the historical accounts of the Bible and stories of the city of Libnah. So far the excavation results show that there was a Late Bronze Age IIB city dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, with layers that have been exposed on the western terrace below the summit including; a well-built wall, tabun, flint blades, pottery for restoration, a stone bowl, two noses that may have been a part of masks and animal bones that were probably related to cooking activities in the courtyard (Ngo 2014). This area was most likely part of a domestic area and it is here that excavations will continue in the near future. The Iron Age IIA period level has also been excavated and shows strong evidence of a Judahite kingdom (9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) with fortifications exposed from the outside and inside.

On the outside section of the fortification a surface with several smashed vessels was discovered, suggesting that the settlement was extended outside the walls to the east, since the Philistine threat was more prominent on the western side of the site. Inside the inner wall of the city, dating to the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, various artefacts, including pottery such as a hand-burnished bowl and rows of loom-weights, were discovered. The 8<sup>th</sup> Century Iron Age IIB levels cover the entire summit exposing the recovered fortifications such as flagstone pavement, a beaten earth surface with vessels and loom-weights, and an LMLK stamped handle.

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114. Ngo, Robin. (2014). *Canaanite Cult Complex Discovered at Tel Burna, Baal possibly worshipped at Burna*, archaeologist says, Biblical Archaeology Review.

The Iron Age IIC level has also been excavated resulting in the discovery of several silos and related architecture dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Several of these silos contained grains (McKinny 2015; Shai & Cassuto 2012: 62.2: 141-157).<sup>115</sup> Thus far the excavation reports on this site do not show any additional evidence of a Joshua Conquest. Excavations revealed that Tel Burna was indeed a Canaanite stronghold during the Late Bronze Age, but archaeology has shown that there was a strong cultural shift during the early Iron Age periods indicating that the archaeological record supports the biblical account.

**Adullum** – So far scholars have identified this site as Khirbet esh-Sheikh Madhkur which has not yet been excavated.<sup>116</sup> Another possibility is the site of Khirbet Id el-Ma, but there is no certainty at this point. (Avraham Negev, Shimon Gibson, 2005:17). It would be interesting to see if any additional evidence relating to Joshua and the later generation of the Israelites, dating from the MB/LB/IA periods, can be found. We know from scripture that this Canaanite city was mentioned in Gen. 38:1; Josh. 12:15; 15:35 and was a place of refuge during the reign of David (1 Sam. 22:1).

**Makkedah**- At present scholars are not certain which site is the biblical Makkedah. Two theories have been proposed: Khirbet el-Qom and Tel Zafit. So far there is no archaeological evidence relating to Joshua's Makkedah.<sup>117</sup> According to scripture the Canaanite city is located in the Shephelah near Lachish and was later conquered and destroyed, and thus the king of Makkedah is included in the list of defeated Canaanite cities (Josh. 12:16). Eusebius places the city 13 km to the east of Eleutheropolis (Bet Guvrin; Onom. 126:22ff.). However, the conclusive identification of the ancient site remains uncertain.<sup>118</sup>

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115. McKinny, Chris. (2015). Tel Burna: *An Introduction to the Biblical Town, Is Biblical Libnah located at Tel Burna?* Biblical Archaeological Review. See also Tel Burna 2015: *The Iron II Fortifications in Areas A1 and B2*, Biblical Archaeological Review Tel Burna (07/22/2015): *Area A2—A Judahite Administrative Building?* Biblical Archaeological Review (08/04/2015); Shai, I., Cassuto, D., Dagan, A., Uziel, J. (2012) “*The Fortifications at Tel Burna: Date, Function and Meaning*,” Israel Exploration Journal 62.2: 141-157. See also Tel Burna <http://www.foxnews.com/science/2013/07/11/archaeologists-uncover-biblical-city/>
116. <http://www.bible-history.com/geography/ancient-israel/ot/adullam.html>
117. NEAE, Vol 4 at 1233, 1522. At least one scholar has suggested that Tel Erani (listed above as a possible site for Eglon) is actually Makkedah. See AEHL at 309.
118. Abel, Geog. (1938). 378; Aharoni, in: Atlas Yisrael (1956), Map IX: 4c; J. Garstang, Joshua-Judges (1931), 394; Aharoni, Land, index.

**Bethel** – Traditionally this site is identified as Tell Beitin, though this city is still a matter of considerable debate among scholars. Scripture makes no mention of Joshua’s Conquest in the Book of Joshua, but rather an account of the conquering of Bethel by the sons of Joseph is recorded at the beginning of the book of Judges (Judg 1:22-26). From an archaeological point of view, the city was already fortified in the MBA period with a wall erected at 3.3 m in height, much later a wide clay revetment and defensive buildings were added within the walls of the city (Geoffrey W. Bromiley, A-D, 1979: 465-466,). From limited data collected on this site, it appears the occupation of this city may have continued past the beginning of the LBA, however it remains difficult to assess its date accurately, which could have been around the 15<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Cambridge Ancient History, Volume II, Parts 1-2, 2000: 547).

Interestingly the site of Bethel turned out to be one of the rare fortified cities occupied during the Late Bronze Age with a very sophisticated drainage system and an olive oil factory with three installations, as discovered on site. Unusually this Late Bronze Age II city contains two different occupation levels with a conflagration between them dated in the late 14<sup>th</sup> / 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. This means that the LBA city was destroyed by fire (1240-1235 BCE), according to the report of Albright and Kelso. Archaeologists have made the startling discovery that the site experienced a complete cultural break during the Iron Age as the building patterns, pottery and other remains differed between the LBA II and Iron Age I. Here Albright and Kelso concluded that the city was indeed an Israelite city that was once predominately Canaanite (Albright & Kelso 1968: 28-35, in Eero Junkkaala, 2006).

So from an archaeological perspective it could be said that the city of Bethel may be a match for the biblical account of Joshua Conquest as recorded in Judges, even though the site may not have been captured at the end of the Middle Bronze Age period. Strong archaeological evidence has shown that the later generation of Israelites resettled at Bethel during the Iron Age period, as found in Ezra 2:28 and Nehemiah 7:32, upon their return from the Babylonian exile.

**Tappuah** - This ancient site has been identified as Tell Skeikh Abu Zarad. The biblical Tappuah was mentioned seven times in the Hebrew Bible, five in the Book of Joshua and one in Chronicles. The site is first mentioned in the list of the kings defeated by Joshua and the Israelites on the western side of the Jordan (Josh. 12:17; 16:8; 15:33; 17:7-8). This site has not been fully excavated since it’s only been surveyed in the Ephraim survey by Israel

Finkelstein. The pottery sherds collected on-site dates from the MBA, LBA, and Iron Age I/II periods (Finkelstein 1988: 152-186). The report shows the site was more densely populated during the Middle Bronze and Iron Age periods, than during the Late Bronze Age periods (Junkkaala 2006: 259). It appears that during the MBA Tappuah was an important regional centre during the Canaanite periods. Currently there are no signs of any Joshua Conquest on this site, but much excavation has yet to be conducted. <sup>119</sup>

**Hepher** – Currently three possible locations for Hepher have been identified; 1) Tel Hefer/Tell el-Ifshar, 2) Tell Assawir (both on the Sharon Plain) and 3) Tell el-Muhaffar which is located on the northern section of the Dothan Valley. It is mentioned in the lists of conquered kings (Josh 12:17) and is also mentioned in 1 Kings 4:10 as a district connected with Socoh, and placed by Solomon under the direction of Benhesed of Arubboth – as yet unidentified (Junkkaala 2006: 260). In 1992 Israeli archaeologist, Adam Zertal, conducted a survey at Tell el-Ifshar and Tell Assawir stating that these two sites were improbable candidates for Hepher since Tell el-Ifshar was too small to be a Canaanite city-state and Tell Assawir had no remains from the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, concluding that it had no connection to Socoh during the reign of Solomon.

Zertal pointed out that in Joshua 17:2 and in Numbers 26:32-33 the Hepher family settled in the area of Manasseh and thus several names mentioned in these Bible passages resemble the names found in the excavations at Samaria (See Samaria ostraca at Aharoni 1979:356-369). From a geographic point of view those sites could be located in the region of Shechem, since the name of the site is found in older maps as Umm el-Haffeh or Mu-Haffar.

It seems that Tell el-Muhaffar is the best possible candidate for this city (Junkkaala 2006: 260-261). Zertal also argued that in the biblical narrative of Joshua 12:17 the Canaanite kings should be referred to in pairs, since the territory of the “king of Hepher” is listed alongside the territory of Tappuah which is in northern Manasseh, thus Hepher must have controlled the area in the hill country up north.

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119. For the references regarding Abu Zarad, see Finkelstein 1988a, ch. 4; 1988b; Finkelstein -Bunimovitz - Lederman 1997, 606- 610.

The site was also visited by the “Shechem Regional Survey” between 1957 and 1968 (Campbell 1991, fn. 2, 98). 4 Abel 1936; 1938, 475-476. Further references to historical geography referring to Abu Zarad as biblical Tappuah see also Jenni 1958; Noth 1966, 270-273; Kallai 1986, 151-153. Also Y. Aharoni reported Tappuah (as Sheikh Abu Zarad) and the Wadi Qanah as the western limit of the northern boundary of Ephraim which separated it from Manasseh (Aharoni 1966, 236, Map 18).

Furthermore, during the reign of Solomon, the former Canaanite territory became the large Hopher district under the supervision of Solomon's official, Ben-hesed and it is fair to conclude that the biblical Hopher be identified as Tell el-Muhaffar - based on the toponym "Muhaffar", and the connection to Tappuah in Josh 12:17 (Zertal 1992-III, 139; John M. Monson, Egon H. E. Lass and George A. Pierce, 2005:10-13).

Zertal also suggested that the site of Tell El-Muhaffar forms part of the List of the Conquered Kings (Josh 12) in the territories of Canaanite cities during the mid-second millennium BCE and that the "Land of Hopher" mentioned in 1 Kings 4:10 likely referred to the entire Dothan valley that reached further south to Tell Dothan. In this case, during the MBA and the monarchical era of Dothan (Tell Dothan), the city came under Hopher's (Tell el-Muhaffar) control and was later incorporated in the Omride dynasty which became vastly prominent during that era (pp. 10-13, *ibid*). At present there are no signs of any Joshua Conquest on this site and much excavation has yet to be conducted in the future in order to confirm its supremacy as a regionally important town during the Middle Bronze Age.

**Aphek** – The site has been identified as Tell Ras el-Ain / Tel Aphek). Excavations reveal that the site was inhabited from as early as the EBA, through the MBA, LBA, IA, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine times. The biblical town of Aphek is mentioned in Joshua 19:30 as belonging to the Tribe of Asher. As early as EB II (3000-2700 BCE) the city was already established with walls enclosing nearly 12 ha (30 acres). Later, around 2300-2000 BCE, Tel Aphek once again became an important city during the MBA (Laughlin, 2006:21-22).<sup>120</sup> From the mid-half of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, the city began to decline until its violent destruction, after which it was rebuilt during the LBA period. Sometime during the latter part of the LBA, in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, an Egyptian governor's house was built there, only to later be violently destroyed (Laughlin 2006: 21-22). As far as archaeologists are concerned, Joshua's conquest took place towards the end of MBA, which is visible and thus the city was at that time the centre of its polity, which explains its inclusion into the "List."

**La-Sharon** – At present, there is no archaeological information about this site since the exact location has yet to be determined. While some sites have been suggested, none are considered viable by current scholars. An alternative name for the city of Aphek is "Sharon", but Aphek

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120. <http://www.tau.ac.il/~archpubs/projects/aphek.html>

has already been reliably identified (Eitan 1993: 70-73). Some scholars believe La Sharon could be associated with the Plain of Sharon, as a region and not a city; others that there are as yet undiscovered ruins in that region (Gophna 1993: 1071-1074). Neither view is conclusive and no suitable alternative has been discovered, thus La Sharon remains unidentified.

**Madon** – Although there is very little information on this site, some scholars identify the ruins at Tel Qarnei Hittin as the biblical Madon in the Galilean region. The ruins of a Late Bronze Age fortress are discovered there with pottery dating to the thirteenth century BCE (NEAE Vol., 2 at 452). If they are correct then the occupation is consistent with the time of Joshua's narrative (Josh 11:1, 5).

**Shimron-Meron** – This site has been generally accepted by most scholars as Khirbet Sammuniyeh (Tell Shimron) which became one of Zebulun's tribal cities (Josh 19: 15) and later during the Second Temple periods. According to Israeli archaeologist Zvi Gal, from Israel Antiquities Authority, Tell Shimron was the biggest settlement in the Jezreel Valley during the EB / MB II Ages (Zvi Gal 1992:9).<sup>121</sup>

During the Late Bronze Age, the city was expanded by the Canaanites. This is also supported by Israel Finkelstein's division of peer-polity centres and units in EB / MB periods (Strange 2000: 69-70). Though limited, the excavation/material data of the remains of the city does somewhat support the Joshua Conquest theory. References to the Canaanite city were found in several Egyptian sources such as the Enemy Curse tablets in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, as well as the Tell Amarna letters dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. New archaeological excavations currently underway were started in 2016.

**Achshaph** - Much debate still remains over the identification of this city. Several theories propose Tell Kisan (Tel Kison) located SE of Acco (Acre), while others favour Khirbet el-Harbaj (Tel Regev) SE of Haifa (AEHL:16, NEAE Vol. 1 at 31 and Vol. 3 at 864; See also Briend 1972: 239–50; Lemaire 1991:140-141; Lipinski 1991:158-159; Negev & Gibson 2005: 16). There is a substantial difference in size between these two sites. Tell Khirbet el-Harbaj is a small mound of 3-4 ha (7.5-10 acres), while Tell Keisan is an

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121. See [http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/images/Shimron\\_west.pdf](http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/images/Shimron_west.pdf)

impressive 6 ha (15 acres) in size which suggests a settlement at this ancient mound in both the second and first millennia BCE, fitting textual indications extremely well (Jean-Baptiste Humbert 1993:862-867). While it attained its greatest prosperity during the Early and Middle Bronze Age, there is an indication of a great wealth of information during the Late Bronze Age when the Egyptian stele indicates the dominant power of the Egyptian hegemony. (Markoe 2000: 194-195; Avraham Negev, Shimon Gibson, 2005: 280).

Furthermore, strong evidence coming in the form of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, El-Amarna Letter (EA 223), sees a ruler by the name of Achshaph mayor of Endaruta, indicating that the origin of the tablet is likely to be Tell Keisan - the true biblical Achshaph which was first suggested by Yohanan Aharoni (Aharoni, 1957:121, in p. 9, Assaf Yasur-Landau, Eric H. Cline, George A. Pierce, 2008; Also see Yuval Goren, Israel Finkelstein, Nadav Na'aman, 2004: 231-3). Therefore, the latest and fullest analysis of all the archaeological evidence indicates that it is consistent with the biblical account related to Joshua.

**Taanach** – so far this site has been identified as Tell Ti'innik / Tell Ta'annek). The biblical city of Taanach is mentioned as the town of a Canaanite king which Israel could not conquer (Judg 1:27; Josh 17:11f.), although its king is listed as one of the 31 kings defeated by Joshua (Josh 12:21). The city was theoretically assigned to Issachar and Asher, and later to Manasseh. Later in Taanach came under Israelite control at the time of Solomon and became one of his administrative centres (1 Kgs 4:12) before it was once again rebuilt under the Omrides in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Nigro 1994).

Excavations were conducted by Professor Sellin and his team discovered a series of valuable pieces of information, shedding light upon the social and religious life and practices of the inhabitants beginning with the Canaanites and moving down to the Israelite periods. The remains of this 40-metre-high mound have been partly excavated showing Early Bronze Age fortifications which were nearly 5.6 ha in size (Lapp 1967:2). Excavations also reveal that there was a Middle Bronze Age II regional service centre described as impressive, which became a lot smaller during the Late Bronze Age (Negev & Gibson, 2005:486; Kreuzer 2000:1268-9). While there is little evidence of the Joshua Conquest of Taanach, this is to be expected, as scripture has clearly stated that the Israelites did not manage to conquer it. Evidence of a later generation of Israelites occupying this site, however, is strongly supported by the biblical narrative.

**Megiddo** is identified as Tel Megiddo/Tell el-Mutesellim which is located strategically overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon (Valley of Jezreel), approximately 35 km southeast of Haifa in north Israel (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:93; Meyers 1993: 830-856). Excavations reveal a strong Middle Bronze Age city surrounded by a fortification wall, a glacis extended down from the base of the city wall, and an impressive city gate. The city continued to be an important centre during the Late Bronze Age and excavations have uncovered a clear destruction layer relating to the transition from the LBA to the EIA period (Finkelstein & Ussishkin 1994: 28-31). From an archaeological perspective there are many inconsistencies regarding the LBA city of Megiddo, since there was no evidence found of surrounding walls. As was the case among other prominent Canaanite cities, there is almost a total lack of fortifications during that period (Mazar 1992: 243).

The Egyptian execration texts provide some clues during the time of the Conquest. In one of the Amarna letters, EA 244, the king of Megiddo writes of his city under siege by Labayu; complaining of Egypt's lack of response, and pleading for military assistance. In other letters - EA 287 and EA 288 - we see the king of Jerusalem, requesting reinforcements to protect against the Habiru who were attacking cities, and accusing Labayu, the king of Shechem, of giving land to the Habiru (Pritchard 1958: 270-72). All these extra-biblical references outlining the history of Megiddo show its importance and power in the region during that period (Meyers 1993: 830-847). Of special reference to the Habiru/Apiru, these tablets referred to a migratory people group who were invading the Promised Land at the time of the Conquest. Many conservative Bible scholars believe the Habiru to have been the Israelites.<sup>122</sup> Thus, using the available data, a strong case can be made in support of the Joshua Conquest theory.

The Israelites came to settle in this region after the biblical David first conquered this city and his son Solomon went on to build fortifications in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. It reached the height of its powers under King Ahab around 2,900 years ago (Shiloh 1993: 1021; Ussishkin 1997: 467). Excavations revealed the remains of a large gated complex of six chambers, three on each side, with two towers (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 104-115). The archaeological data once again has shown strong evidence of the Israelite culture occupying this site during the Iron Age Period.

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122. For a discussion of the Amarna tablets and the identity of the Habiru, see Archer 1994: 288-95; Wood 1995 and 2003: 269-71.

**Kedesh** - has not been clearly identified as yet since there are three possible sites with the similar biblical name. These are 1) Tel Abu Kudeis (Tell Abu Qudeis) a small mound in the Jezreel Valley between Taanach and Megiddo, 2) Khirbet el-Kidish/Qedish on the south-western shore of the Sea of Galilee, 3) Tel Kedesh/Tell Qades in northern Galilee just ten kilometres northwest of the biblical Hazor (Junkkaala 2006: 295).

Based on the older report by Professor Aharoni, the excavations that took place at Tell Kadesh Naphtali (upper Galilee) in 1953 have revealed a variety of pottery dating to the Early and Middle Bronze Age period; very similar to that which he discovered at Hazor. According to Professor Aharoni, very little Late Bronze and Early Iron Age pottery was found, even though the archaeological data has revealed that the occupation continued throughout that period (Aharoni 1993: 855-856).

While the report does not mention a destruction layer or any form of evidence of cultural change during the LB or EIA period given the fact that the excavations were only preliminary, it cannot be conclusively established whether this site supports the Conquest theory. The identity of the site remains unresolved to this day.

**Jokneam** – This site is now being identified as Tel Yokneam/Tell Qeimum (Laughlin 2006: 231). It was mentioned in the Bible as a city of the Levites within the Israelite tribe of Zebulun (Josh 12:1, 12:22, 19:10-11, 21:34). Excavations revealed that this city was occupied during the Middle Bronze Age II period and was heavily fortified with a three-metre-wide wall and glacis (Laughlin 2006: 232-233). During the Late Bronze Age (circa 1550- 1200 BCE) the city expanded and gained prominence, and was mentioned in the list of cities that were conquered in 1468 BCE by the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III. Although the archaeological data available does not permit the dating of the destruction of Joshua's Conquest in anything more than broad terms, it likely occurred between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Based on the article written by Professor Amnon Ben Tor – "Jokneam, the new encyclopaedia of archaeological excavation of the Holy Land" - there appears to be a break in occupation between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, although the duration has not yet been determined. As far as the report is concerned it appears that during the Early Iron Age it was rebuilt unfortified, and thus he concludes that the archaeological data supports the Joshua's Conquest theory. Regarding the Israelite occupation during the

Early/Late Iron Age periods, the archaeological data clearly indicates that the material culture is Israeli since some impressive walls/fortifications were found on this site. <sup>123</sup>

**Dor** – This site has been generally accepted as Tel Dor / Khirbet al-Burj or Tantura which is located on Israel's Mediterranean coast at a size of 10 ha (25 acres) established during the Bronze Age (Golden 2009: 145). As far as archaeologists are concerned, the city was founded sometime in the Middle Bronze Age. Currently there is no trace of any destruction layer relating to Joshua's Conquest, and none is expected to be found, since the biblical account of the Israelite victory over the king of Dor and his army (Josh. 11:1-2; 12:23), the town itself was not destroyed, but remained a Canaanite enclave throughout the period of the judges. <sup>124</sup>

However, excavations have shown strong evidence of the Israelite culture on this site corroborating the biblical account that the city was incorporated into David and Solomon's Israelite kingdom by the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Stern 2000: 85-146). The city itself then became the capital of the Sharon province under Solomon's new administrative scheme; governed by the king's son-in-law, Abinadab, the spouse of his daughter Tafath (I Kgs. 4:11).

**Gilgal** – According to scripture Gilgal is the camp where Joshua and the children of Israel first settled upon entering the Promised Land. This site has remained uncertain as there are two possibilities; one near the modern village of Jiljulieh, about four miles south of Antipatris, 16 miles northeast of Joppa, and the other site of Kilkilieh, about two miles east of Antipatris. <sup>125</sup>

A third theory, proposed by Zertal and Noth, is that Tell El Unuq fits the biblical description of the camp. This supports the conquest theory in its location and in the lack of housing, indicating its temporary use. Israeli pottery dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE has been unearthed at the site, indicating that Gilgal alone supports the Joshua narrative and the conquest theory. <sup>126</sup> At this point one cannot elaborate much further on this site, as it became

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123. <http://www.biblewalks.com/Sites/Yokneam.html#WesternWalls>

124. [http://dor.huji.ac.il/periods\\_IR.html](http://dor.huji.ac.il/periods_IR.html); See also <http://dor.huji.ac.il/theSite.html> and [http://berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/12/18\\_teldor.shtml](http://berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2003/12/18_teldor.shtml)

125. For further reading on the possible find of Gilgal, it may be worth the while to read this interesting article published by Gigaal Education Center at this website, [http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display\\_art.html?ID=10348](http://www.breakingchristiannews.com/articles/display_art.html?ID=10348) See also "Where's the historical Gilgal?" at <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3344688,00.html>;

126. See Tel el-Unuq at <http://www.bible.ca/archeology/bible-archeology-gilgal.htm>

Israel's base of operations after their crossing of the Jordan, sparking off the series of events during the conquest campaign.

**Tirzah** – This site is identified as Tell el-Far'ah, which is located north-east of modern-day Nablus. It was excavated by Roland de Vaux (de Vaux 1961: 576-592). The city was already fortified in the EBA II periods (3000-2650 BCE), and later became a true fortified city during the MBA (18<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE). A city gate was found that had survived throughout the IA period, thanks to many repairs and alterations (de Vaux 1992: 1297–1302). As for the LBA, it was poorly preserved as far as archaeology is concerned and thus the activity for this time is unclear (Laughlin 2006:117).

So far no sign of any archaeological evidence in supporting of Joshua's Conquest has been found on this site. During the Iron Age periods there is abundance of evidence of the Israelite settlement beginning from the time of Jeroboam to the reign of Omri; who built the city of Samaria, which then became the capital of Israel (1 Kgs 15:21,33 16:6,23 2 Kgs 15:14,16).

The following table (Table 1.4) is a condensed summary of the information and conclusions reached in this chapter and thus organized using the sequence of the list of kings in Joshua 12. The applicable dates correlate with the information available on each site.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Table 1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>A Summary of the Archaeological Data for the Book of Joshua / Judges</b></p>					
NO	BIBLICAL NAME	MODERN NAME	APPROX DATE (MBA TO EIA)	ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA	CONCLUSION
1	JERICO *	TEL-ES-SULTAN	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST
2	AI *	KHIRBET EL-MAQATIR	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST
3	HAZOR *	TEL HAZOR (TEL EL-QEDAH)	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST

3	HAZOR *	TEL HAZOR (TEL EL-QEDAH)	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST
4	JERUSALEM	JERUSALEM	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
5	HEBRON	TEL RUMEIDA	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
6	JARMUTH	KHIRBET EL-YARMUT	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
7	LACHISH	TEL LACHISH (TEL ED DUWEIR)	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST
8	EGLON	TEL ETON	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
9	GEZER	TEL JAZARI / TEL JEZER	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
10	DEBIR	TEL RABUD / TEL BEIT MIRSIM	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST
11	GEDER	TEL HAROR / TELL ABU HUREIREH	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
12	HORMATH	TELL MASOS (KHIRBET EL-MESHASH)	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
13	ARAD	TEL MALHATA / SERA / MASOS / <u>IRA ?</u>	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
14	LIBNAH	TEL BURNA	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
15	ADULLAM	KHIRBET ESH-SHEIKH MADHKUR	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
16	MAKKEDAH	KHIRBET EL-QOM / TEL <u>ZAFIT ?</u>	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
17	BETHEL	TEL <u>BEITIN ?</u>	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST
18	TAPPUAH	TEL SKEIKH ABU ZARAD	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
19	HEPHER	TEL EL-IFSHAR / ASSAWIR / MUHAFFAR	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
20	APHEK	TEL RAS EL-AIN (TEL APHEK)	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
21	LA SHARON	UNKOWN	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
22	MADON	TEL QARNEI <u>HITTIN ?</u>	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE

23	SHIMRON-MERON	KHIRBET SAMMUNIYEH (TEL SHIMRON)	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
24	ACHSHAPH	TEL KISAN / TEL REGEV (KHIRBET EL HARBAJ)	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
25	TAANACH	TEL TI ' INNIK (TA' ANNEK)	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
26	MEGIDDO	TEL MEGIDDO (EL-MUFFSELLIM)	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST
27	KEDESH	TEL ABU KUDEIS (QUDEIS) / KHIRBET ELKIDISH / TEL KEDESH	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
28	JOKNEAM	TEL YOKNEAM (TEL QEIMUM)	MBA-EIA	DESTRUCTION *	CONQUEST
29	DOR	KHIRBET AL-BURJ (TANTURA) / TEL DOR	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
30	GILGAL	TEL EL-UNUQ ?	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE
31	TIRZAH	TEL EL-FAR'AH	MBA-EIA	NO DESTRUCTION	INCONCLUSIVE

A. The Early Bronze Age site has not been included in the table since much of Joshua's Conquest may have occurred between the Middle Bronze and Early Iron Age.

B. A number of difficulties arise over the disputes over the dates of the Israelite Conquest that remains problematic to this day.

C. \*. Jericho, Ai, and Hazor has been included in this table (See Chapter 5, 6 and 7)

D. **Total Conquest = 8** – **Inconclusive Total = 23**

E. Estimate Timeline

- MBA I (formerly MB IIA) = 2200–2000 BCE
- MBA II (formerly MB IIA) = 2000-1750 BCE
- MBA III (formerly MB IIC) = 1750–1550 BCE
- LBA I = 1550–1400 BCE
- LBA II = 1400–1200 BCE
- Iron I = 1200–1000 BCE
- Iron IIA = 1000-930 BCE
- Iron IIB = 930-721 BCE
- Iron IIC = 721-586 BCE

F: Table Drawn Up By Michael J Walmsley

Table 1.4

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

To conclude this chapter, it is important to summarise all the arguments that have been presented for the Conquest so far. From what has been discussed thus far, it appears that the archaeological data weighs far more strongly in favour of the end of the Middle rather than the Late Bronze Age.

Firstly, when the Bible describes the cities of Canaan as being ‘fortified up to heaven,’ the biblical narrative of the Joshua Conquest better fits the Middle Bronze Age. Secondly, the cities in Cisjordan territories at that time were acting independently without any external factor or power as independent self-governing city-states. During that period Cisjordan was relatively at peace which may well fit with a Joshua Conquest narrative towards the end of the MBA; since the Egyptians were in control of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age. Regarding the Transjordan territories; there is strong evidence of urban and centralized kingdoms towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age, yet there were no cities in the southern part of Transjordan during the Late Bronze Age period. Archaeology has indicated that during the LBA this was a poorly populated region which was probably inhabited in great part by nomads, with very little permanently settled population living in very scanty urban settlements. Further evidence in the El-Amarna Letters has shown very scanty urbanisation in the central part of Transjordan and no urbanisation in the southern Transjordan (i.e. King Sihon’s territory). So in this case the greatest part of the Transjordan may have regressed to nomadism. Therefore, the situation described in the Books of Joshua and the relevant parts of the Books of Numbers and Deuteronomy fit better with the Middle Bronze Age (circa 1550 BCE).

As for the later generation of Israelites settling in the land of Canaan during the Iron Age periods, it appears there are no real issues with identifying the Israelites. The archaeological evidence exists in abundance indicating that these groups indeed existed and thus their presence is beyond question.

## Chapter 5 The Israelite Conquest: The Biblical City of Jericho

### 5.1 Introduction

The reliability of the account of the Conquest in the book of Joshua has been challenged by various critics as they argue that it simply did not happen; or at least not in any way that resembles the account as described in the book of Joshua. The most relevant biblical account for an evaluation of the Israelite Conquest of Jericho is recorded in the book of Joshua as follows:

<sup>17</sup> And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. <sup>18</sup> And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it <sup>19</sup> But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD. <sup>20</sup> So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. <sup>21</sup> And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword. <sup>22</sup> But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her. <sup>23</sup> And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel. <sup>24</sup> And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. (Josh 6:17-24 KJV).

To date the tendency for most archaeologists and historians in the modern era has been to consider the conquest of Jericho as a myth. Some scholars go as far as to suggest that the actual story was a political fabrication, invented to unite the disparate tribes living in Canaan through a falsified heroic past (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 81-82). When the account is treated as a true event, then the ongoing debate is about whether the walls unearthed at Jericho are of the 16<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, the latter of which may appear too early to have been destroyed by Joshua and his Israelites troops. Since the beginning of the 1900s various expeditions have taken place at Jericho as many archaeologists have searched for the tumbled-down walls of Joshua as described in the Book of Joshua. British archaeologist, John Garstang, was the first to suggest in 1930 that he had found evidence of the broken walls at Jericho and thus the matter was finally settled, and the biblical account was proven to be historically accurate. He concluded:

In a word, in all material details and in date the fall of Jericho took place as described in the Biblical narrative. Our demonstration is limited, however, to material observations: the walls fell, shaken apparently by earthquake, and the city was destroyed by fire, about 1400 B.C. These are the basic facts resulting from our investigations. The link with Joshua and the Israelites is only circumstantial but it seems to be solid and without a flaw (Garstang 1937:1222).

However, the views of a Joshua Conquest of Jericho have been dramatically changed since Kathleen Kenyon, the newly appointed director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, initiated a new excavation project at Jericho in 1952. Kenyon held that Garstang's interpretation for the destruction of the site's fortifications had been incorrectly dated and she believed that Jericho was actually destroyed in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century BCE; and thus there was no walled city at the ancient site of Jericho for Joshua to conquer. Her modern excavation technique, known as the Wheeler-Kenyon system, involves digging within a series of squares that can vary in size set within a larger grid which help to discern the long and complicated occupational history of the site. Thus this approach allowed more precise stratigraphic observations than earlier "horizontal exposure" techniques which relied on architectural and ceramic analysis. Since her introduction of this modern technique approach, it has seemed to have won many applauders for her outstanding effort and thus her methods are still used today (Dever 1982: 49-51).

Not everybody applauded her work and she drew sharp criticism from several leading archaeologists like Dr. Bryant Wood who disagreed with Kenyon's interpretation of material data. He believed that a walled city had existed at Jericho during the latter part of 1400 BCE, when it was destroyed in a conquest that would match the chronology derived from the Hebrew Bible. While the book of Joshua has received a fair amount of criticism on the account, the results of archaeological investigations remain inconclusive, since many of these minimalist archaeologists had insisted that there was no complete destruction of Jericho - including other cities cited in the book of Joshua - at the presumed time of Israel's incursion. According to the archaeological record the Israelite Conquest on Jericho was never, in fact, completely carried out. Tel Aviv University archaeologist Israel Finkelstein argues:

...there was no trace of a settlement of any kind in the thirteenth century BCE, and the earlier Late Bronze settlement, dating to the fourteenth century BCE, was small and poor, almost insignificant, and unfortified. There was also no sign of destruction. Thus the famous scene of the Israelite forces marching around the walled town with the Ark of the Covenant, causing Jericho's mighty walls to collapse by the blowing of their war trumpets, was, to put it simply, a romantic mirage (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 81-82).

However, other maximalist scholars strongly argued that the account is an historical narrative of the Israelite Conquest which should not be seen as a myth or etiological legend and they were adamant that the biblical account of Jericho agreed with the biblical chronology, which places the Israelite entry into Canaan in about 1400 BCE. In general, most scholars today still reject the possibility that the Israelites were the chief destroyers at Jericho in 1400 BCE, based on their belief that Israel did not arrive in Canaan until about 150 to 200 years later; at the end of the Late Bronze II period. The dispute between the two schools of thought; Minimalist versus Maximalists, is well documented and thus the archaeological findings are subject to different interpretations. Perhaps one could say that the historical perspective is very subjective since there is an internal conflict between Near Eastern archaeologists and those who seek to prove the literal truth of the Bible. The problems of subjectivity, objectivity and the gradual accumulation of knowledge, plague the science of biblical archaeology. American archaeologist Randall Price went on to conclude the following on the changing view of the historicity of the Israelite Conquest of Jericho, 'only a generation or so ago, this account of conquest was accepted as historical by almost everyone' (Price 1997: 143).

The historical accuracy of the biblical destruction of Jericho has been under a cloud of doubt for many biblical scholars over the past three decades. In the March / April 1990 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*, in a piece entitled; *Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? - A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence*, Dr Wood argued that a proper study of the archaeological data, including pottery evidence, indicated that the original date on the biblical destruction of Jericho (City IV), postulated in the 1930s by Garstang, was correct. However, the battle has raged continuously among biblical scholars continuously for some years now as some did not agree with Wood on the dating of Garstang's analysis; shown to be wrong by the subsequent studies of Kathleen Kenyon. For the purposes of this dissertation, the historical background of the debate and its three principal protagonists will be examined. (Section 5.4: The Three Protagonists' Views on the Fall of Jericho).

## **5.2 The Strategic Location of Jericho**

The city of Jericho described in the Old Testament is generally identified as the present mound of Tell es-Sultan, 16 km northwest of the present-day mouth of the Jordan at the Dead Sea - 2 km northwest of et-Riba village and about 27 km east-northeast of Jerusalem. The

imposing pear-shaped mound is about 400 m long, from north to south, and roughly 200 m wide at the broad north end and some 20m thick. The mountain of Judea rises abruptly from the plains of Jericho a little distance to the west and, more importantly, the city is at 670 feet below sea level making it the lowest city in the world (NBD 1982: 563). Furthermore, Jericho has access to the heartland of Canaan, thus any military force attempting to penetrate the central hill country from the east would first have to capture Jericho, as the Bible described when the invading Israelites conquered the ancient city (Josh 3:16; Monson 1988: 8–21).



Fig 19. The Map Shows the Location of Tel Jericho.

### 5.3 Excavations History of Jericho

The Jericho excavations, located at modern Tell es-Sultan, have been conducted by five different teams this past century. The first expedition took place in 1867 when the Palestine Exploration Fund made a survey of sites in Palestine (Israel). As part of his expedition at Tell es-Sultan, Charles Warren made an unsuccessful attempt to prove the biblical account of Joshua 6 and thus concluded that there was nothing to prove at this ancient mound.

The second expedition was conducted by an Austro-German team under the direction of Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger, from 1907-1909 and 1911, which revealed part of the Early Bronze Age (EBA) city wall and many houses to the north of Tel Jericho (Sellin & Watzinger 1913). Since the practices of chronology and classification of pottery had not yet been established, their clear-cut interpretations of the results of Joshua's Conquest on Jericho were hampered. As a result of their sterling efforts - despite the limitations - their carefully drawn

plans and sections have provided some invaluable information on the history of Jericho. They managed to trace the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) revetment wall around three-quarters of the base of the Tel, even though they lacked the full understanding of the complexities of the MBA fortification system (Watzinger 1926: 131-136). After an extensive expedition at Tel Jericho, Carl Watzinger concluded that Jericho was unoccupied during the Late Bronze Age period (c. 1550-1200 BCE); the time when the Israelites first appeared in Canaan. In the end the excavation results turned out to be a disappointment, since in their time, the dating of pottery was far from accurate. As a result, they ascribed erroneous dates to various buildings.

The third expedition was led by the British archaeologist, John Garstang. Using more sophisticated excavation techniques on the larger portions of Tell es-Sultan, from 1930-1936, he managed to date pottery correctly and shed more light on the time-line of Jericho (Garstang 1930-1931; Garstang Et Al.1935; 1936; Garstang – Garstang 1948). Garstang found a defensive wall which he dated to the Late Bronze Age (LBA) and the destruction of Jericho, which he associated with the invading Israelites, must have occurred about 440 years before 967 BCE, around 1407 BCE - no earlier than 1426 and no later than 1385 BCE (Garstang 1948: 135). After quoting the sixth chapter of Joshua, which describes the collapse of the walls and the Israelites' burning of the city, he states:

These episodes are confirmed in all material particulars: the fallen walls have been laid bare, while the burning of demolished buildings is found to have been general and so conspicuous as to suggest a deliberate holocaust (Garstang 1948:6).

The fourth expedition, from 1950 to 1958, was led by Kathleen Kenyon, also a British archaeologist. She used her newly developed Wheeler-Kenyon method during the excavations at Jericho, which led to her new theory that the account in the book of Joshua was historically inaccurate and Jericho was not destroyed in the Late Bronze Age. She believed that Jericho IV had been destroyed in about 1550 BCE, at the end of the Middle Bronze Age, and not by the Israelites (Kenyon 1957: 262).

For the fifth expedition, 1997-2000, Dr Wood of the Association of Biblical Research was joined by Lorenzo Nigro and Nicolo Marchetti. It was resumed in 2009 by the Rome "La Sapienza" University and the Palestinian Mota-Dach under the direction of Nigro and Hamdan Taha (Marchetti - Nigro 1998; 2000; Nigro 2006a); ([www.lasapienzatojericho.it](http://www.lasapienzatojericho.it)).

Dr Wood, an expert in Canaanite pottery and director of the Khirbet el-Maqatir excavations (Ai), attempted to re-analyse and reinterpret the data from the three major excavations at Jericho, arguing that Jericho must have been captured in the Late Bronze Age (1400 BCE) by the conquering Israelites under the leadership of Joshua.

#### **5.4 The Three Protagonists' Views on the Fall of Jericho: A) Garstang, B) Kenyon & C) Wood**

##### **A. John Garstang's Views**

In the preface to his book, *The Story of Jericho*, Garstang states his main concern was the fourth city of Jericho that was reportedly destroyed by Joshua. During the archaeological expedition of the 1930s, Garstang and his team made several important discoveries in all periods of occupation, from the Neolithic period to the very beginnings of settlement at Jericho, covering four successive incarnations of the city.

One of Garstang's main features were the walls of Jericho where he first discovered a layer of destruction and a wall breached at City IV, dating it to approximately the Middle Age Bronze III period, the time frame in which the purported conquest of Israel took place. He found these walls in a ruinous state; collapsed and burnt extensively along all the visible sections. Along parts of the walls, Garstang also discovered houses that were charred and bricks which had turned various colours as a result of the heat. Even the houses contents, like pottery and grain, were blackened. Garstang states in his chapter entitled "The city destroyed by Joshua,"

The main defences of Jericho in the Late Bronze Age (LB) followed the upper brink of the city mound, and comprised two parallel walls, the outer six feet and the inner twelve feet thick. Investigations along the west side show continuous signs of destruction and conflagration. The outer wall suffered most, its remains falling down the slope. The inner wall is preserved only where it abuts the citadel, or tower, to a height of eighteen feet; elsewhere it is found largely to have fallen, together with the remains of buildings upon it, into the space between the walls which was filled with ruins and debris. Traces of intense fire are plain to see, including reddened masses of brick, cracked stones, charred timber and ashes. Houses alongside the wall were found burnt to the ground, their roofs fallen upon the domestic pottery within (Garstang 1948:9).

Garstang explains that despite their impressive size, the walls were poorly constructed of unbaked mud bricks with the main foundation in a relatively poor state, and houses that were built along the inner walls were further weakened. He also believes that the massive

destruction of these walls was caused by an earthquake for which he presents a very plausible case. He explained that the city of Jericho lies on a fault that runs along the west side of the Jordan Valley, and that it has experienced many earthquakes throughout the centuries. From an archaeological point of view, and based on Garstang's interpretation, these collapsed walls on City IV fell outward, which suggests a possible scenario of an earthquake, and thus the city's buildings were flattened as the result of a superhuman destructive force.<sup>127</sup>

To conclude, Garstang's basing of the destruction of Jericho on the certainty of his dating period, circa 1400 BCE was derived from five important observations:

- There was a lack of Mycenaean pottery that flourished during the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE which was not found during the periods of 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Garstang 1935: 65, 68; 1948: 126).
- Pottery discovered in the destruction level was compared to pottery from excavated tombs and all were dated to the Egyptian era, based on Egyptian scarabs also present (Hatshepsut, Tuthmosis III, Amenhotep III) (Garstang 1934: 107–10, 113–16; 1937: 1219, 1220; 1948: 121–27).
- The majority of these scarabs were found on site and in the tomb ends with Amenhotep III (ca. 1386–1349 BCE) (Garstang 1933:42; 1948:127).
- The mentioning of Jericho was sorely missing in the Amarna Letters (mid-14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) (Garstang 1948: 126).
- The use of the cemetery declined dramatically after 1400 BCE (Garstang 1935: 63; 1948: 128–29).

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127. Regarding the earthquake in Jericho, the account of the Israelites conquering the city contains no reference to earthquakes. As far as archaeology is concerned, our records show no technical justification to support the conclusion that the destruction was due to an earthquake. However, from an archaeological perspective the ancient city of Jericho sits directly on top of a very large fault associated with the Jordan Rift Valley and according to Geophysicist Amos Nur of Stanford University has studied that the Dead Sea sediment core has a distinctive mixed sediment layer at a depth of 15.1 feet that is evidence of a big earthquake at about 1400 B.C.E. (Wood 1990a: 54) Also see more information on earthquakes, the Israel Exploration Journal published by the institute of archaeology at the Hebrew University published an article "Earthquakes in Israel and Adjacent Areas: Macrosismic Observations since 100 BCE." On page 265 they list a slight earthquake in Jerusalem in AD 30 and one in AD 33 which affected Judea, Jerusalem including damage to the temple. Full reference is D.H.K. Amiran; E. Arieh; Turcotte, "*Earthquakes in Israel and Adjacent Areas: Macrosismic Observations since 100 BCE*," Israel Exploration Journal 44 (1994):260-305. According to Kenyon's reports there were three layers in Jericho that show some strong evidence of earthquake damage, 1) the periods of 8500-7000 BCE (stratum: PPNB); 2) the periods of 3400-3100 BCE (stratum:EBA I); and 3) the periods of 2300-1950 BCE (stratum:EBA IIIB), of which none are associated with Joshua and the fall of Jericho.

## A. Kathleen Kenyon's Views

Since British archaeologist, John Garstang's preliminary report on his excavations at Jericho, the city has been an area of interest for biblical scholars seeking to prove the historicity of the Book of Joshua. The board members of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem led them to revisit Jericho, appointing Kathleen Mary Kenyon to lead the expedition.

Kenyon's main objective was to date the "beginning and end of ancient Jericho," and to investigate whether the end of the Bronze Age occupation could be ascribed to the period of Joshua. She also set out to examine the early occupation revealed by Professor Garstang in the hope that her further excavation might help to settle some of the questions still in dispute (Kenyon 1957:33,43). In one of Kenyon's books, *Digging up Jericho*, Kenyon gave an outline of her views on the excavation of the ancient city in which she laid out reasons for the decision to investigate Jericho again, as well as her disagreements on many of Garstang's preliminary reports/analyses on the true biblical dates for the fall of Jericho. Kenyon considered his conclusions to be inaccurate and has reasoned that the city of Jericho IV was destroyed around 1550 B.C.E, and that it remained uninhabited for more than 150 years thereafter (Kenyon 1951: 113, 115, 117, 122; 1956: 194; 1957: 256–63; 1967a: 270–73; 1967b: 75; 1973: 544–45; 1978: 38; 1979: 182). In this case, she concluded, Joshua could not have conquered Jericho in 1400 B.C.E, since her archaeological findings show that the city was non-existent on this site during that period.

Furthermore, Kenyon made two important observations that proved her theory. Firstly, there was a lack of knowledge about pottery which resulted in an incorrect dating; and secondly, she affirms "its complete absence meaning there was a total absence of a certain kind of pottery and that the 'complete absence' did not appear in Garstang's conclusions. According to Kenyon's theory the destruction of Jericho must have happened much earlier since there was a lack of certain types of later-period pottery at the site that one would have expect to find during the Late Bronze Age Period. Here Kenyon concludes:

The site was abandoned during most of the second half of the sixteenth century and probably most of the fifteenth century [i.e., 1550-1400]. The conclusion formed during the 1930-1936 excavations—that there was continuous occupation in this period—was due to a lack of knowledge of the pottery from the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. The significance of its complete absence was not appreciated (Kenyon 1993: 680).

It is quite clear that Kenyon has based her opinion almost exclusively on the absence of pottery imported from Cyprus which was quite common to the Late Bronze Age I period (c. 1550-1400 B.C.E.). These imported potteries from Cyprus were discovered in a tomb at Tel Megiddo and Kenyon has used these imported wares to construct her ceramic typology for the Late Bronze Age I period.<sup>128</sup>

In another contradictory twist, Kenyon and Garstang's archaeological expedition of Jericho - both excavated on the same site during different eras - was that Kenyon claimed that 'no fragment of the walls of the Late Bronze Age city, that of the period within which the attack by the Israelites under Joshua must fall survived,' (Kenyon 1957:170). According to Kenyon, during the early stages the people of Jericho found it necessary to enclose themselves from the outside world through the aid of walls. She concluded that "the need of town walls may have been in part due to jealousies and even struggles for supremacy between the towns of Palestine itself" (Kenyon 1957:173). Therefore, she has reasoned that the ancient city of Jericho, lying in relatively fertile land compared to the neighbouring deserts, would have felt it necessary to protect their city at all cost.

During Kenyon's screening review she noted that in Garstang's preliminary report of previous excavations, he believed that he had managed to trace the double line of wall that he considered to be the final stage of the Bronze Age walls of Jericho, and that 'signs of destruction by earthquake and fire were attributed to the time of the Israelite attack,' (Kenyon 1957:170). Kenyon, however, claimed that these two walls belong to the Early Bronze Age period. Then in the 1950s Kenyon had used advanced radioactive dating asserting that the walls of Jericho cited in the book of Joshua were dated to approximately 1550 BCE, bearing no resemblance to Joshua's Conquest. However, she did acknowledge the city was, 'blackened or reddened by fire ... in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt,'

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128. Kenyon, K. (1969). "The Middle and Late Bronze Age Strata at Megiddo," *Levant* I (1969), pp. 50-51; "Palestine in the Time of the Eighteenth Dynasty," in *Cambridge Ancient History (CAH3)*, Vol. 2.1, ed. I.E.S. Edwards et al. (Cambridge: The University Press, 3rd ed., 1973), pp. 528-29; Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land* (New York: Norton, 4th ed., 1979), pp. 182-183; Kenyon, K. ("The Middle and Late Bronze Age Strata," p. 51; "Palestine in the Time of the Eighteenth Dynasty," pp. 528-529; *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, p. 182. Pottery is one of the main dating tools in archaeology since the type of material, shape, and colour can determine the culture and time from which a piece originated, thus providing important evidence in the dating of Jericho (City IV).

(Kenyon 1957: 370). In Kenyon's final conclusion, she has argued the following:

...we need not accept the exact chronological succession of subsequent events, nor the resultant implication of the almost immediate conquest of the rest of Palestine, in which indeed there are many discrepancies in the biblical record itself (Kenyon 1957: 258-259).

In other words, as described in the above passage, she felt strongly that the chronology presented in the Hebrew Bible should not be taken literally as originally thought, citing the fact that entire literacy of the Tanakh (Old Testament) formed a traditional history that was transmitted verbally. She has reasoned that the verbal history was innately incomplete with only major events that were remembered vividly, thus resulting in a loose and sometimes faulty chronology. Once again Kenyon concluded:

...any adjustment is possible according to what one wishes to adjust it to; if the chronology is too long, one can say that it has been inflated by making events successive which are really contemporary; if too short, one has only to say that generations have been omitted (Kenyon 1957: 258).

As far as she is concerned archaeology would be the decisive criterion, but "only when the archaeological time-scale has been firmly fixed" (Kenyon 1957: 258). As a result of her spectacular findings and superior methods of archaeological digging, Kenyon chose to emphasize the imported wares in reaching her chronological conclusions and thus her research work was widely accepted by the majority of archaeologists / scholars who seem to have agreed that Joshua must have led Israel to Canaan at a much later date; probably in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century (1200 B.C.E). In this case the historical accuracy of the Bible was called into question.

## **B. Bryant Wood's views**

Years later, after Kenyon's unexpected death, modern scholars of the 1990s, such as Dr Bryant G. Wood, have revisited the archaeological reports making strong objections to Kenyon's dating theory on the absence of pottery (absence of evidence) that proved that the destruction of Jericho City IV was assigned to 1550 B.C.E. He concluded, "*In other words, Kenyon's analysis was based on what was not found at Jericho rather than what was found*" (Wood 1990:50).

In assessing Garstang's analysis, Dr Wood noted that Garstang did manage to find a considerable amount of pottery decorated with red and black paint which appears to be imported Cypriote bichrome ware. As Wood pointed out, Garstang was not aware of the importance of the classification of painted pottery which imitated Cypriot bichrome ware that was found on the destruction site of City IV. At the time of Garstang's archaeological expedition at Jericho, the significance of this type of pottery was not then recognized and thus the reports were simply published along with all the other decorated pottery without being singled out for special notice (Wood 1990). In this case a criticism can be made of Garstang's earlier methods of archaeological work for not emphasizing the significance of the imitation Cypriot bichrome ware. Because of its ubiquity, pottery was used to show a connection to different places in different periods, placing them along an absolute chronology. However, the pottery found at the site could not be used much for absolute dating since it has no resemblance to pottery found at other archaeological sites, and thus bears no correlation between Jericho and the outside world.

Since the introduction of modern techniques to archaeology, modern archaeologist Dr Wood, a specialist in Syro-Palestinian pottery of the Late Bronze Age, explained that the pottery found on site during Garstang's excavation has long been recognized as an indicator for the LBA (period from 1550 BCE - 1400 BCE). Wood was highly critical of Kenyon's work as she only excavated on a small section of the town, two 26-foot by 26-foot squares which clearly shows that Kenyon's argument is poorly founded. As a result it was not surprising that Wood observed some faulty assumptions in Kenyon's work and especially with reference to the date of Jericho's destruction. Wood noted that Kenyon failed to find the expensive, imported pottery in a small excavation area in an impoverished part of a city, which one would not have expected to find.

Kenyon's report hinged on what was not found at Jericho rather than what was found and she reasoned that City IV must have been destroyed at the end of the Middle Bronze Age (c. 1550 BCE) because no imported Cypriote ware – diagnostic for the ensuing Late Bronze I period – was found at Jericho. Her reasoning on the 'complete absence' of Bichrome Cypriot pottery was based on comparative material from large cities like Megiddo, which was strategically situated on major trade routes far from Jericho (Kenyon 1952: 4-6; 1952: 62-82; 1953: 81-96; 1954: 45-63; 1955:108-117; 1956: 67-82; 1957:58; 1960:88-113).

During biblical times Jericho was not a major trade route centre in comparison to Megiddo with its substantial amounts of imported pottery found at that site, thus the same find should not have been expected. In this case, Kenyon should not have expected expensive pottery from Cyprus in a poor part of town. Foremost, Wood drew his conclusions that Kenyon's methodological approach was indeed unsound, if not unacceptable, and especially concerning was how Kenyon ignored Garstang's report of potteries found on the Jericho site. Although both Garstang and Kenyon found large quantities of domestic potteries on site, Wood explained on the basis of extensive samples of potteries that the extant data was interpreted incorrectly, and that biblical chronology actually is vindicated by the evidence.

Furthermore, Wood gives at least four lines of evidence to support Garstang's proposed date for the destruction of City IV (c. 1400 BCE), in the Late Bronze Age, the following of which will be discussed throughout this chapter: 1) ceramic data (see 5.4.7 Ceramic Analysis of Jericho); 2) stratigraphically approach (see 5.4.3 The Stratigraphy of Jericho); 3) scarab evidence (see 5.4.6 on further evidence on the Egyptian scarabs); and 4) a radiocarbon date (see 5.4.5 Carbon-14 Dating of Jericho). Beyond the dispute on the analysis and correct interpretation of this pottery that required questioning, Wood's critique of Kenyon's research has uncovered serious oversights or flaws in Kenyon's methodology. This is of importance since she introduced a new technique into Israel (Palestine), entailing detailed analysis of soil and debris layers, and careful recording of the sides of the excavation squares called balks, also known as the Wheeler-Kenyon method. Wood concludes the following:

Kenyon was able to identify many different occupational phases during the Bronze Age at Jericho. Middle Bronze III, the last sub period of Middle Bronze, lasted from about 1650 to 1550 B.C.E. [2] The beginning of the Middle Bronze III phase at Jericho can be fixed quite confidently at Kenyon's Phase 32. From Phase 32 to the end of the life of City IV, Kenyon identified 20 different architectural phases, with evidence that some of these phases lasted for long periods of time. Over the course of the 20 phases there were three major and 12 minor destructions. A fortification tower was rebuilt four times and repaired once, followed by habitation units that were rebuilt seven times. If Kenyon were correct that City IV met its final destruction at the end of the Middle Bronze Period (c. 1550 B.C.E.), then all these 20 phases would have to be squeezed into a mere 100 years of the Middle Bronze III period (Wood 1990).

The evidence for Wood's support of Garstang's conclusion that City IV was indeed destroyed in about 1400 BCE, at the end of what archaeologists call Late Bronze I, is as follows:

- i. The destruction of Jericho by the Israelites must have occurred during the early spring, just after harvest, as archaeologists discovered many of the grain storage jars were still full (Josh 2:6, 3:15, 4:9, and 5:10).
- ii. This means when the storage jars were full, the siege could have not lasted very long when the City IV of Jericho fell.
- iii. Furthermore, during that time when the city was basically uninhabited, Garstang discovered an isolated palace-like structure which he called it the "Middle Building," dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E. The resident that lived in that area was from the upper class as evidenced by a large quantity of imported Cypriot pottery.
- iv. Archaeological evidence on the "Middle Building," has shown that it was inhabited only for a short period and thus its description and chronology fit the biblical narrative of Eglon, king of Moab, who set up camp in the abandoned city of Jericho years later after the death of Joshua (Judg 3:12-30).
- v. Archaeological evidence has shown that Rahab's house was evidently located on the north side of the city and thus her house was built against the city outer wall.
- vi. According to Joshua 6:20 the city walls collapsed to the base of the mound (Tel) which is exactly what archaeologists have found.
- vii. Since the destruction of Jericho, the entire city remained uninhabited for a number of decades with Kenyon finding evidence for a massive destruction by fire just as scripture has stated. Kenyon wrote in her excavation report:

The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire, and every room was filled with fallen bricks, timbers, and household utensils; in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt, but the collapse of the walls of the eastern rooms seems to have taken place before they were affected by the fire (Wood 1990:56).

In conclusion, while the debates continue to this day, Wood remains convinced that his archaeological methodology and pottery analysis on the various expeditions conducted by both Garstang and Kenyon have provided enough additional evidence to demonstrate that Kenyon's conclusions were incorrect and that Garstang's analysis is the correct interpretation for the dating of the destruction of Jericho. Wood believes the evidence indicates that Kenyon's Middle Bronze Age city only lasted for a short period of time during the early stages of the Late Bronze Age which was then not destroyed until about 1400 BCE. As Wood pointed out, Garstang was right all along that the strongly fortified city at Jericho did exist at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.

#### 5.4.1 The Destruction of Jericho IV

Despite the opinions of various archaeologist interpretations and biases towards the biblical account of the Israelite Conquest, there is overwhelming evidence that demonstrates Jericho was inhabited during Joshua's conquest of Canaan. Strong conclusive evidence, based on the ceramic and scarab chronology, indicates that Jericho was deliberately destroyed and burned at the end of the Late Bronze IB, ca. 1400 BCE.<sup>129</sup>

The reports of Kenyon describe in detail that Jericho IV was indeed destroyed by fire, but the collapse of the walls of the eastern rooms seems to have taken place before they were affected by the fire (Kenyon 1981: 370). Kenyon also noticed that 'the grain is completely carbonized, which has preserved it, and in one season we collected some six bushels,' and 'in the bricks and debris which piled the ground-floor were charred beams' (Kenyon 1957: 261). Evidence on the conflagration of the city of Jericho is both reported by Garstang and Kenyon:

Remnants of the final phase of City IV were also found on the southeast slope, just above the spring...Garstang dug a large area, about 115 feet by 165 feet, which he called the 'palace storeroom area'; Kenyon found remains from the final phase of City IV only in two excavation squares (H II and H III). The results reveal that City IV was massively destroyed in a violent conflagration that left a layer of destruction debris a yard or more thick across the entire excavation area (Wood 1990a: 56).

With her concluding remarks Kenyon also makes note that an earthquake did feature at the site of Jericho, followed by a fiery destruction of the city itself; "*The first two phases may, from the way the bricks fell bodily outwards, have been destroyed by earthquake, and one phase was destroyed by fire*" (Kenyon 1957: 179). However, Kenyon expresses her opinions of seeing the walls of Jericho collapsing during the fire destruction at City IV as two separate events; the sequence is the same as that recorded in the book of Joshua, 1) the collapse of the city walls, 2) then the burning of the city by fire by the Israelites (Josh 6:20 -24).

In view of Kenyon's opinion, the most likely possibility for the explanation of the destruction of Jericho is "*an earthquake, which the excavations have shown to have destroyed a number of the earlier walls, but this is only conjecture*" (Kenyon 1957: 262).

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129. Reprint by permission from Good News 7.2 [2002]: 10-11).

Furthermore, evidence of an earthquake hitting Jericho was strongly supported by John Garstang who noticed signs of both an earthquake and a massive fire that destroyed the city; but in a connected sequence. In his conclusions:

In the excavation of the Palace and its adjoining store-rooms we noted at two different levels the effects of earthquake and extensive burning.” “Traces of intense fire are plain to see, including reddened masses of brick, cracked stones, charred timbers and ashes. Houses alongside the wall were found burnt to the ground, their roofs fallen upon the domestic pottery within (Garstang 1948: 118-136).

In this case, Garstang knew very well that there was a strong volcanic rift/geological fault in the rift valley of Jericho; explaining that the way the walls fell was the result of an earthquake or tectonic activity since the city has a history of earthquakes throughout the centuries, especially during periods of Egyptian domination (Garstang 1948: 118; 138). As a result of this, Garstang believed that an earthquake was the only known agent capable of the demonstration of force he observed in the evidence he encountered at the site, as expressed in the following statements:

Wherever the walls of the Fourth City have been disclosed, they are found to be deeply fissured and as it were dislocated...that the walls should have fallen mostly outwards, down the slope, was the natural consequence of their situation and of the defects already described in the foundations of the inner one on that side (Garstang 1948: 138-39,159).

Lending the support to Garstang’s theory regarding earthquakes is an important piece of biblical literature that describes the crossing of the Jordan River in vivid and very explicit language:

The waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap far off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off; and the people passed over opposite Jericho (Josh 3:16).

As per Joshua 3:16, the river Jordan was apparently blocked at Adam - modern day Damiya - near the mouth of the Jabbok, twenty miles north of Jericho. The seismology of the southern Jordan Valley has recorded the history of the Jordan where experts have long held that the city of Jericho is located in the Rift Valley, an unstable region where earthquakes are frequent. Geophysicist, Amos Nur of Stanford University, has studied the well-documented earthquakes of this area and noticed several earth tremors that caused phenomena quite similar to what is described in the Book of Joshua:

Today Adam is Damiya, the site of the 1927 mud slides that cut off the flow of the Jordan. Such cut-offs, typically lasting one to two days, have also been recorded in A.D. 1906, 1834, 1546, 1267, and 1160.<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, Arab historian Nowairi recorded in 1267 CE that a mudslide fell from a large mound on the west side of the Jordan at Damiya into the river, damming it up. No water flowed south from Damiya for 16 hours. Then in 1927 there was another earthquake, a section of a cliff 150 feet high collapsed into the Jordan near the ford at Damiya, blocking the river for some 21 hours.<sup>131</sup> In this case one can conclude that earthquakes and the stoppage of the Jordan's flow, as described in the Bible, are not as far-fetched as they may at first seem.

Reverting to our discussion on the collapsed walls, according to the archaeological excavations conducted at Jericho; these mud brick walls above the stone retaining wall would have fallen down in front of the retaining wall. During ancient war, battering rams were used to break the walls down and thus bricks would have fallen into, rather than out, of the city. Thus, as suggested by the evidence, the destruction has generally been attributed to an earthquake. This evidence matches what is described at Jericho in the book of Joshua, where the walls were dislodged, fell outwardly to the ground by some great force of activity, and formed a ramp into the city. The evidence is very clear that the city was indeed burnt in a sudden and complete fashion and making the hypothesis of intentional burning of the city by an invading army valid.

Again, Garstang concludes:

The layer of ashes was so thick and the signs of intense heat so vivid, that it gave the impression of having been contrived, that fuel had been added to the fire" (Garstang 1948: 142).

Further evidence was strongly backed up by the recent Italian / Palestinian excavation team during the late 90s that found evidence of massive fire destruction in Jericho IV. It was reported that here at Area E, adjacent to Area A, next to the:

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130. Amos Nur, (1988). Quoted in "*The Stanford Earth Scientist*," pull-out section of the Stanford Observer (Stanford Univ. News Service), November, p. 5. Recent discussion on Amos Nur (Stanford) - Earthquakes and Archaeology: The Catastrophic End of the Bronze Age in 1200 BC, was held Friday, January 13, 2017, 12:30 pm, Building 110, Room 112., See website at <http://events.stanford.edu/events/653/65331/>

131. Garstang, J and Garstang, J.B.E. (1978). *The Story of Jericho*, pp. 139-140; John Garstang, *Joshua, Judges* (reprinted Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.

...easternmost section of the wall, appearing at the south-western edge of Kenyon's Trench III, is a massive stone corner called Wall W.5...From this structure southward up to the northern inner side of Cyclopean Wall W.4, a 7-10 m wide layer of destruction extended, with thick accumulations of ash, charcoal and carbonized beams at the foot of the curving stone wall (Nigro and Taha 2009: 735).

From what we know, the typical Cyclopean Wall was built during the Middle Bronze III periods while the massive destruction must have taken place during or after Middle Bronze III.<sup>132</sup>

The joint Italian-Palestinian Expedition revealed the following:

A violent destruction brought to a sudden end the city of Period IVc, around 1550 BC or some years later. There is no available evidence for attributing this event to some enemy, even though one has to stress the strategic importance of the site, the southern gate of the Jordan Valley. The intervention of a strong foreign power seems, thus, historically possible (Sultan IVc - Middle Bronze III (1650-1550 BCE) – (Jericho 1997-2000 Seasons Report)<sup>133</sup>

From this archaeological data, it is clear that the ancient site of Jericho City IV (C) did suffer a major catastrophe by the invading army at a date no earlier than around 1550 BCE; a transition between the Middle and Late Bronze Age periods. Again the ceramic and scarab evidence shows continuous occupation until the end of the Late Bronze IB, when the final destruction must have occurred (See 5.4.6 Scarabs and Seals of Jericho).

#### 5.4.2 The Walls of Jericho IV

Scripture revealed in the Old Testament that Moses told the people of Israel, before entering the land of Canaan, that they were about to dispossess nations which were far greater and stronger than themselves, with large cities having walls that reached, as it were, to the sky (Deut 9:1). These retaining walls were sometime four to five meters in height (approx. 12–15 feet high). The German team of the 1907–1909 discovered these retaining

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132. The Cyclopean Walls of Mycenae: The characteristic of the Mycenaean walls is that they are made of huge limestone boulders, which have been fitted together rather roughly. As these boulders are very big in size, the ancient people believed that it was the Cyclops who built these gates, as the thought it impossible for men to move such big rocks. That is why these walls were named Cyclopean Walls. See also MB III Rampart & Cyclopean Wall of Tell es-Sultan/Jericho -

[https://www.academia.edu/7322013/MB\\_III\\_Rampart\\_and\\_Cyclopean\\_Wall\\_of\\_Tell\\_es-Sultan\\_Jericho](https://www.academia.edu/7322013/MB_III_Rampart_and_Cyclopean_Wall_of_Tell_es-Sultan_Jericho)

133. Jericho 1997-2000 Seasons Report - <http://www.lasapienzatojericho.it/Season.php?Res=1997-2000#byz>

walls that consisted of a mud brick wall measuring two meters (six feet) thick and about six to eight meters (20-26 feet) in height. (Sellin and Watzinger 1973: 58; Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie 1998:141).

Then at the crest of the embankment was a similar mud brick wall with a base roughly fourteen meters in height (46 feet) above the ground level, outside the retaining wall, (Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie 1998:131, 138, 141). The German excavation of 1907–1909 found the preserved city wall on the north side of the city. It had houses built against it which were still standing at a height of over two meters in some places (Wood 1999a: 36-37; Sellin and Watzinger 1973: Plan 111). It is in this area where these houses were built against the wall that Rahab's house quite possibly once stood. From what we know from the design of the wall structure of the city, houses were typically built against the wall. This also makes sense as the northern side of the city was just a short distance from the hills of the Judean wilderness, allowing the Israelites to rescue Rahab and her family as promised (Joshua 2:12–21, 6:17, 22–23). More importantly, the north side of the city was probably the main overflow from the upper city and the poorest part of town.

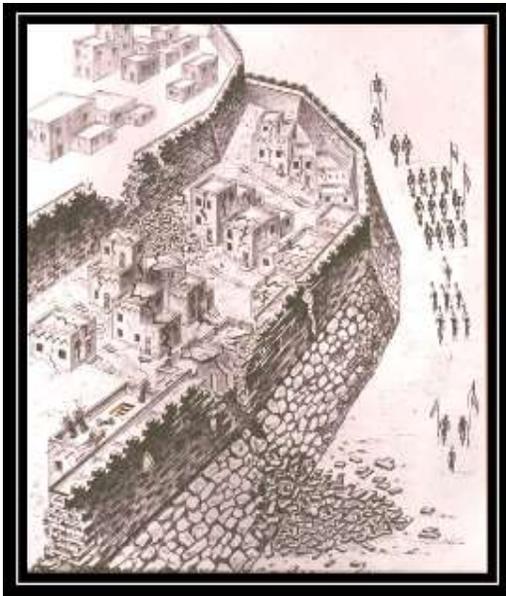
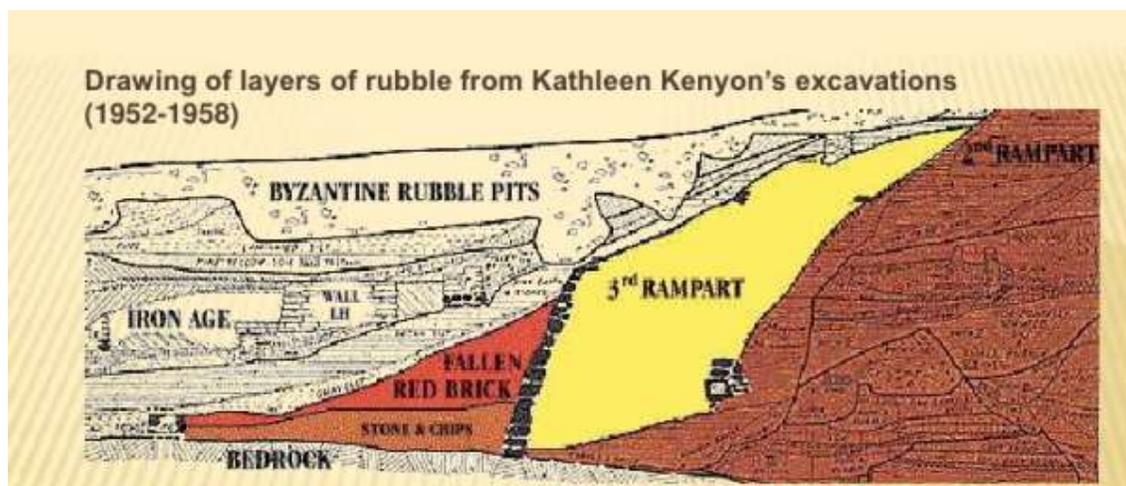


Fig 20. Artist's impression of the Fall of Jericho.

These collapsed walls were most likely due to an earthquake since the Israelite did not have the necessarily weapons, such as a battering ram, to pull down the walls. Geological evidence has shown that the city of Jericho has a history of earthquakes and thus it is the likely scenario during the siege of the Israelites. However, one can conclude that the nature of the earthquake was unusual since it struck in such a way as to allow a portion of the city wall on the north side of the site to remain standing, while everywhere else the wall fell. The sketch on the left shows Gene Fackler's impression of the fall of the walls, showing the lower revetment wall and upper mudbrick wall. Bryant Wood places Rahab's house between the two walls (From Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998], 210

(fig. 10.6). Scripture tells us that Rahab's house was built into the fortification system on the north side of the city. (Josh 2:15).<sup>134</sup>

During one of Kenyon's excavation expeditions in the 1950s, she wrote in her reports that she too had found the ancient site of Jericho heavily fortified and with this in mind, archaeology has demonstrated that the ancient site of Jericho was surrounded by a great earthen rampart, or embankment, with a stone retaining wall at its base. Here she concludes, 'fallen red bricks piling nearly to the top of the revetment. These probably came from the wall on the summit of the bank [and / or] ... the brickwork above the revetment,' (Kenyon 1981:110).



**Fig 21.** The sketch by Kathleen Kenyon describes what was found in a trench cut through the western defences of the city. The drawings show the excavated materials of a vertical slice cut through the revetment wall at the base of a mound and through the high earthen embankment that rose to the top of the tell. The black 15-foot-high stone revetment wall at the base of the mound (tell) was buried under the later remains. A plaster-covered earthen rampart sloped upwards, as seen on the right section of the drawing, travels towards the top of the mound behind the revetment wall. The wall itself, which surrounded the city, once stood atop this earthen embankment off to the right side of the drawing. The section coloured in red shows the fallen red bricks that lay outside the revetment wall. These red bricks most likely came from the city wall on top of the tell or from a mud brick parapet wall atop the revetment wall, or both, as Kenyon recognized.

The above diagram suggesting that Kenyon found a heap of bricks from the fallen walls is mirrored by the findings of the Italian team excavating at the southern end of the mound during their 1997 expedition. However, she disagreed with Garstang's interpretation on the identification of the Late Bronze Age walls during Joshua's conquest, as she stated that "*no*

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134. She was the Canaanite prostitute who hid the Israelite spies who came to reconnoitre the city.

*fragment of the walls of the Late Bronze Age city, that of the period within which the attack by the Israelites under Joshua must fall, survives”* (Kenyon 1957: 170). Based on Kenyon’s reports, she rectified the “mistake” of Garstang’s stratigraphy, stating:

The material associated with (the double wall) is entirely of the Early Bronze Age and thus the latest of these walls on the outer line is securely sealed by levels of the Intermediate Early Bronze-Middle Bronze period” (Kenyon 1957: 181).

Regarding the date of the Late Bronze Age double wall that Garstang identified; Dr Wood is of the opinion that Kenyon has dated the double wall on the top of the tell correctly and thus believes that Garstang was wrong in this matter (Wood 1990a: 50).

However, Wood pointed out that, although Kenyon’s dating of the double wall was correct; her dating analysis on the final phase of the city was flawed because of her focus on some specific types of imported pottery (Waltke 1990: 192). Of the existence of these unusual Cyclopean Walls that surround the mound of Jericho - shown to be dated to the Middle Bronze III - Kenyon’s excavations report stated that a:

...terminus ante quem for these walls is provided by the patching and repairing carried out on the latest in the series during the transitional Early Bronze-Middle Bronze period, followed and overlaid by the three great revetments of Middle Bronze (Tushingham 1952: 8).



**Fig 22.** This map shows the areas inside the hills of Jericho excavated during the 1900s. Sellin/Watzinger (blue), Garstang (green), Kenyon (yellow) and the Italian Lorenzo Nigro (red) 1997-2000 (excavations continues as from 2012). Courtesy of Ottar Vendal.

The excavations report of 1952 stated that “the latest surviving defences were M.B.” and, ...an M. B. revetment rested against and covered all the walls lying below and within it. All of these walls must be earlier than M. B. Therefore, in this season's work, no walls which could be assigned to L. B. were discovered (Tushingham 1952: 10).

In this case these walls were clearly constructed during the Middle Bronze Age periods and thus Kenyon argued that the city of Jericho was neither fortified nor destroyed during the Late Bronze Age. This seems to be untrue as the ceramic data and scarabs that were discovered on site have clearly shown that Kenyon's dating occupation of the final Bronze Age city to the end of the Middle Bronze Age were interpreted incorrectly since these walls of Jericho IVc were dated to the Middle Bronze III. In a sense, one cannot expect to find these Cyclopean walls built during the Late Bronze Age periods. Yigael Yadin gives an excellent reason for this:

Evidence of a Late Bronze Age town was also found but Kenyon could not find even a trace of a Late Bronze Age wall. How could the walls of Jericho come tumbling down during the Late Bronze Age if there was no Late Bronze Age wall around the town. There may be an explanation. In many cases the Late Bronze Age people did not actually build new fortifications but, rather, reused Middle Bronze fortifications, strengthening them where necessary. Interpreters often overlook this fact, and it may have an important bearing on the case of Jericho. It may well be that the Late Bronze Age settlement at Jericho reused the city wall from the Middle Bronze Age (Yadin 1982: 22).

Once again, Yadin concludes with some vital clues on the massive fortification wall at Tel Hazor during his prime time:

Under the Israelite fortification in area G, on the extreme eastern end of the tell, we found a well-built stone glacis, or battered wall, fronted by a narrow and deep moat. This glacis is actually a huge revetment wall for the platform on which the defensive brick wall was most probably built...quite similar in appearance and function to the famous battered-stone glacis at Jericho. This element of the fortifications may have been erected in stratum XVI (Yadin 1975a: 266-267).

According to Yadin the structure at Hazor was preserved to a massive height which appears to be mostly intact since the remains on top of it were Israelite fortifications, and thus the excavated gates at Tel Hazor were built during the Late Bronze Age. Yadin has reason to believe that these existing walls were built during the Middle Bronze Age, which was then reused through the Late Bronze Age periods - according to archaeological excavations and the biblical texts that the city was well fortified. Furthermore, Yadin also mentioned in his reports that he had noticed that earlier walls near the gate of Area K were reused to build the city during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages of which he concludes:

To carry both rampart and platform the Middle Bronze age engineers built a great revetment wall, strengthened by huge basalt boulders, to a height of twelve feet...We found this wall intact; it is a veritable feat of engineering (Yadin 1959: 9; cf. Yadin 1959: 19).

More evidence was supported by other leading scholars such as Sukenik who reported on his excavations at Tell Jericho, explaining that ‘there was no clear break or conflagration between this period [the MBA] and the following LBA, during which the MB fortification system continued in use’ (Sukenik 1944: 199; See also Dever 1992: 17).<sup>135</sup> As far as archaeology is concerned, there is ample evidence throughout the southern Levant of Middle Bronze Age walls reused as fortifications through the Late Bronze Age. These existing fortifications at Jericho’s City IVC - consisting of massive stone retaining walls around the ancient mound, with a mud brick wall on top of that - were built during the MBA III period. Although there were no signs of any city wall during the Late Bronze Age, there was strong evidence of habitation during the Late Bronze I which has relied on other archaeological evidence from other sites to suggest that the walls of the MBA III at Jericho were reused at the end of the Late Bronze I, when Jericho fell to the invading army.

From an archaeological and biblical textual point of view, the evidence seems to have a direct relationship between the two concerning the walls and the destruction of Jericho. According to the biblical narrative of Joshua, the Israelites went up into the city after the walls fell down, confirmed by archaeology that has shown ample evidence that ‘the collapsed mud-bricks themselves formed a ready ramp for an attacker to surmount the revetment wall’ (Wood 1990a: 56). As discussed earlier in this chapter, Kenyon describes the collapsed walls in details:

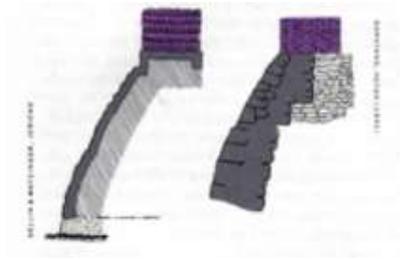
Above the fill associated with the kerb wall, during which the final MB bank remained in use, was a series of tip lines against the face of the revetment. The first was a heavy fill of fallen red bricks piling nearly to the top of the revetment. These probably came from the wall on the summit of the bank...[or] the brickwork above the revetment (Kenyon 1981: 110).

The Italian team that excavated on the southern end of the mound of Jericho back in 1997 noticed a sloping layer - different from the main fill - in front of the stone retaining wall, which they believed was likely the mud brick ramp that was identified by Sellin and Watzinger in the early 1900s (Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie 1998: 143). Judging from the reports of their observations, these piles of toppled mud bricks that came down in front of the stone

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135. Geva, Shulamit. (1982). Tell Jericho: The Sukenik Excavations of the Middle Bronze Age.

retaining wall were most likely the upper mud brick portion of the outer wall of the final Bronze Age city.



**Fig 23.** The diagram shows two sections - by Sellin and Watzinger on the left - and Garstang's on the right - indicating the revetment wall and violet highlights that point out the parapet wall on top of it. Courtesy of Associate for Biblical Research.

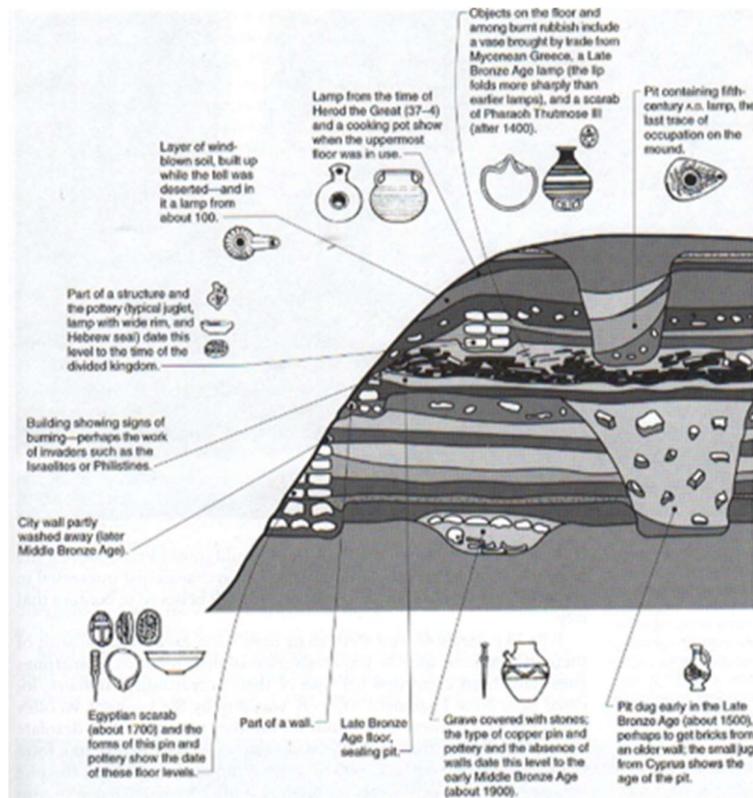
The ceramic and scarab archaeological evidence - to be discussed later in this chapter (See 5.4.6 Scarabs and Seals of Jericho & 5.4.7 Ceramic Analysis of Jericho) - demonstrate that the final Bronze Age city was inhabited during the end of the Late Bronze Age I period. It is certain that these walls were constructed during the Middle Bronze Age III periods and thus would have been toppled and left in ruins when that city was abandoned at the end of the Late Bronze Age I period (ca. 1400 BCE). As a result, these walls may have been referred to in the biblical narrative of Joshua during the Israelite conquest of Jericho.

Overall, the multiple archaeological expeditions that took place at Jericho over several decades have all managed to find these mud brick walls that fell directly in front of the stone retaining wall of the ancient city, creating a “ramp”. Today some of these toppled walls are still visible in Area City IVc, of which Dr Wood believed, *“the pile of bricks resting against the outer face of the revetment wall came from the collapsed city wall. Here is impressive evidence that the walls of Jericho did indeed topple”* (Wood 1990a: 54). It is apparent that the multiple archaeological expeditions found the same mud bricks that fell on the city, matching the description in the book of Joshua, *“that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city,”* (Josh 6:20; Wood 1999a: 37).

### 5.4.3 The Stratigraphy of Jericho

Stratigraphy is one of the most important concepts to understand in biblical archaeology; especially the site of Jericho which must be examined in order to determine which stratum of Jericho could be associated with the period of Late Bronze I. A brief definition of the term of stratigraphy is that it is the study of the layering of soil and other materials in the earth's

surface over time. This layering can be naturally caused by geological processes or artificially caused when materials such as rocks, soil, pottery, and traces of plants and animals settle on the earth's surface and can accumulate in layers over periods of time. Each layer, or stratum, may be distinguished by its physical characteristics such as colour and texture. The structure of these strata, provide archaeologists with temporal and spatial information. The site of Jericho contains important evidence of repeated occupations in which each occupation is associated with a distinct stratum containing vital artefacts and other evidence. These can point to cultural change over time, with the potential to give vital clues about the destruction of the site.



**Fig 24.** The diagram shows the stratigraphic sequence - cut-away view. Courtesy of Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 23.

During the early 1900s, the city of Jericho IV was excavated by both Garstang and Kenyon to test the hypothesis that this ancient Jericho was indeed the last Bronze Age city. According to the Garstang's report, the ancient site of Jericho did contain the Middle Building because of its stratigraphic position between the City IV ruins below and a large Iron Age structure above. Kenyon's report, too, found the fragmentary remains of the Middle Building which she labelled as "Phase 54." A lot of her pottery findings were artefacts such as 1-7: bowls, 8: store jar, 9: saucer lamp, 10-12: cooking pots, 13: water jar, 14: dipper juglet - all dated to the Late Bronze IB (end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) during the final phases of Jericho City IV.

Despite the impressive remains on the structure of the Middle Building, there was an abundance of painted pottery found in and around the building, including an inscribed clay tablet just outside the east wall attesting to a high-level administrative function for the complex. Both Garstang and Kenyon agree that this structure dates to the latter half of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and thus the archaeological evidence has demonstrated that the Middle Building was occupied for a short period of time and then later was abandoned (see Judg 3:29-30; Wood 1990b: 49; Garstang 1934: 106, 111; Bienkowski 1986: 112; Kenyon 1951: 120-21).

Later in the 1990s Wood came to the fore to examine the pottery associated with each of the Bronze Age phases, noticing that some of the ceramic data such as the ‘Chocolate on White’ ware and the flat-bottomed cooking pot, all ‘attest[s] to the Middle Bronze III nature of Phases 32–36 at Jericho’, ‘securely places Jericho Phase 32 at the beginning of the Middle Bronze III period’; while Phase 52 was clearly seen as the final Bronze Age city that was destroyed by the invading army (Wood 1990b: 49, 68).<sup>136</sup> So if one accepts Phase 32 as the beginning of the Middle Bronze III period - taking into account Kenyon’s chronology - then we have to conclude that Phase 52 can be dated at the end of the Middle Bronze Age, thus it only occurs 100 years later. This means the average phase during that period would be only five years. According to Kenyon’s report that there are at least twenty sets of phases with fifteen destructions of varying intensity and scope, and structures such as houses were rebuilt several times (Kenyon 1981: 354-370). However, it is highly unlikely that 20 phases were developed in the space of 100 years.

If we take Phases 44 to 52 at face value, dating it to the Late Bronze Age I period – as indicated by the ceramic evidence - then the final calculation would be in excess of 250 years and a more plausible average of 25 years per phase (Wood 1990a: 52). From an archaeological point of view, the method of stratigraphy at Jericho is not so straightforward, since there was considerable erosion that took place on the Tell during over time.

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136. Further reading - Inverted-rim bowls with a bevelled outer edge and **chocolate-on-white** ware begin appearing with regularity in this phase (Jericho 4, figs. 104:3; 105:4, 18; Jericho 5, figs. 168:1, 9, 15; 169:6). They are both diagnostic types for the MB III period, Lawrence E. Toombs and Wright, "The Fourth Campaign at Balatah [Shechem]," BASOR 169 [1963], p. 51; Amiran, Pottery, pp. 158-159; Joe D. Seger, "Two Pottery Groups of Middle Bronze Shechem," in Wright, Shechem: Biography of a Biblical City [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965], p. 236; Seger, "The Middle Bronze II C Date of the East Gate at Shechem," Levant 6 [1974], pp. 123, 130; Hennesy, J. B "Chocolate-on-White Ware at Pella," Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages: Papers in Honour of Olga Tufnell, ed. Jonathan N. Tubb (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1985).

My principal observation is that every archaeologist involved in the excavations has approached the site in a different way which is to be expected when varied archaeological methods are used to assess a site, such as was the case with Jericho. As David Ussishkin put it; recent excavators of Jericho and Shechem - including Kenyon, G. E. Wright, Dever, and their colleagues - have followed the "debris / layer excavation method", and have tended to interpret constructional differences in monumental structures and different layers of debris associated with them as representing chronologically different phases of construction, settlement, and use (Ussishkin 1989:29).

The problem with the methods of stratigraphy layers is that it can shift at any time, modifying the layers, artefacts and building structures; thus dating the site to one particular year or range of years is extremely difficult since the environmental changes yield varying evidence over time. For instance, one should take into account that all the materials such as pottery and dirt discovered on the site of Jericho were washed down from the higher areas of the tell. As Wood concludes that "during this period, material from the top of the tell washed down the slopes, forming a thick layer of erosional debris (Garstang's "streak," Kenyon's "wash")" (Wood 1990b: 49). In Area H, archaeologists noticed that the Middle Building was built on the east side of the mound and thus discovered a layer of wash underneath its foundations. When the people of Jericho abandoned the Middle Building, archaeologists discovered that the erosion again formed a wash layer over the stratum of the Middle Building. During the Iron Age period, the Hilani structure was built over the existing Middle Building structure and after its abandonment, erosion from the top of the tell once again washed it down and covered the stratum of the Hilani.<sup>137</sup>

In conclusion, the stratigraphic and the ceramic evidence support the view that the destruction of Jericho City IV occurred around the end of the Late Bronze Age I period, about 1400 BCE. All the evidence provided throughout this chapter converges to demonstrate that City IV was destroyed in about 1400 BCE; not 1550 BCE, as Kenyon originally stated.

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137. DEFINITION: A Bit-hilani is an ancient architectural type of palace which seems to have become popular at the end of the 10th and 9th Century BCE which was probably originated in northern Syria and quite possibly the architectural design existed as early as the Bronze Age. This sort of architectural type is a wooden-pillared portico or 1-3 columns at the top of a short flight of steps at the entry to reception suites. At one end of the portico there was a staircase to an upper story, leading to a reception or throne room. There was usually an adjoining staircase to the roof and a varying number of retiring rooms. It was a standard palace unit, first found at the Syrian site of Tell Atchana with a date of mid-2nd millennium BC. It was adopted by the Syro-Hittites and Assyrians. Another fine example of bit hilani is the Kaparu Palace at Tall Halaf.

#### 5.4.4 The Destroyers of Jericho

The destruction of Jericho has always been come to this question: Who was responsible for the destruction of Jericho City IV? Kathleen Kenyon contended that Jericho (City IV) had been destroyed in about 1570 BCE, by the so-called Hyksos who were first expelled from Egypt and then laid an attack upon Jericho while entering Canaan (Kenyon 1993: 680). However, the analysis provided by Kenyon is problematic, since she has not argued only regarding City IV at Jericho, but other destroyed Middle Bronze Age cities in Canaan (Israel / Palestine) that met their end at the hands of the Hyksos. In my opinion Kenyon's hypothesis seems illogical; for the Hyksos to destroy any cities in Canaan while fleeing and seeking refuge. Rather, the Hyksos retreated to Sharuhén in southwestern Canaan, which became an important fortress for them during the Second Intermediate period.

From an archaeological and textual point of view, there is no mention of the Hyksos attacking any cities in Canaan; and with regards to the Egyptian punitive campaigns in the southern Jordan Valley during the XVIIIth Dynasty - a period in Egyptian history following Hyksos rule - there is no textual evidence in Egyptian literary sources to indicate that the Egyptians went beyond Sharuhén in southwest Canaan in their pursuit of the Hyksos.<sup>138</sup> The hypothesis surrounding the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt is the only recorded historical

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138. Also see "Dating the Exodus," a Th.D. dissertation by Dr. Stephen C. Meyers (1997, Trinity Evangelical Seminary, Florida), which discusses various proposals for the Exodus' date using Jewish and Non-Jewish sources in addition to the biblical evidence. He favours the Hyksos Expulsion as being behind the Exodus traditions...<http://www.bibleandscience.com/archaeology/exodusdate.htm>; David Goldstein titled "Of Pharaohs and Dates: Critical Remarks on the Dating and Historicity of the Exodus From Egypt," (published 24 July 2006) In this article David calculates an Exodus as occurring circa 1447 or 1528 BCE (the latter of which by my calculations falls in the reign of Pharaoh Ahmose I who expelled the Hyksos). However, his article is primarily critiques a 1312 BCE Exodus date (found in the Rabbinical Seder Olam Rabbah) espoused by Jonathan Adler, "Dating the Exodus: A New Perspective." pp. 44-51, in the journal Jewish Bible Quarterly 23 (1995). cf. at this website <http://www.talkreason.org/PrinterFriendly.cfm?article=/articles/exodus1.cfm>

The following sites, Sharuhén., have been possibly identified: (A) **Tell el-Farah** (south) (31°16'55"N 34°28'57"E), situated on Nahal Besor near the border with Gaza. The site was first excavated by Flinders Petrie in the late 1920s. He first identified the site as Beth-Pelet (Joshua 15:27) and published the excavation reports under the names Beth-Pelet I - II. It was William F. Albright that laid the basis for identification of Tell Farah south as Sharuhén. - Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Amsterdam University Press. 31 December 2000. pp. 1194-. ISBN 978-90-5356-503-2. Retrieved 2 May 2011. (B) **Tell el-Ajjul** (31.467665°N 34.404297°E), in the Gaza area, in the 1930s. Flinders Petrie excavated this area and thought that Ajjul was the ancient town of Gaza, a theory that has since been partially disproven. Archaeologist Aharon Kempinski proposed identifying Ajjul with Sharuhén in the 1970s. Excavations at Ajjul were resumed in 1999 by a Swedish-Palestinian team under the directors Peter M. Fischer and Moain Sadeq. (C) **Tel Heror**, Anson Rainey proposed this site along the Nahal Gerar near the border with Gaza, and about 15 km northeast of Farah south, (31.382117°N 34.606522°E) as the site of Sharuhén. This identification is also supported by Donald Redford, because of the site's immense size and important geographical position.(2) Donald B. Redford, The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III. Volume 16 of Culture and History of the Ancient Near East Series. BRILL, 2003 ISBN 9004129898 p.11.

occurrence of a collective movement of Asiatics out of Egypt prior to the first millennium, and thus the only occurrence that could be equated with the Exodus. As far as textual evidence is concerned, a date at the beginning of the New Kingdom is only about a century earlier than that mandated by strict biblical chronology. Furthermore, the ousting of the Hyksos follows an equally historical Asiatic descent into, and sojourn in, Egypt.

The great historian, Josephus, suggested nearly two thousand years ago (*Against Apion* 1.16) that the Exodus should be equated with the Hyksos' expulsion from Egypt. According to this view, destruction levels in Ancient Canaanite sites dating to the transition period between the Middle and Late Bronze Ages - often attributed to Egyptian military campaigns - could have resulted from an Israelite conquest and settlement of Canaan (de la Torre: 2001).

Evidence is provided by Ahmose, son of Abana, who recorded the events of the pursuit of the Hyksos:

Then Avaris was despoiled, and I brought spoil from there...Then Sharuhen was besieged or three years. His majesty despoiled it and I brought spoil from it... Now when his majesty had slain the nomads of Asia, he sailed south to Khent hen-nefer, to destroy the Nubian Bowmen (Lichtheim 1973: 13).

From the textual evidence described in the above passage, the Egyptians completed the siege of routing the city of Sharuhen, with no mentioning of battles fought among the Hyksos, and thus the Egyptians sailed south to do battle with the Nubians in their next campaign. In general, there are no textual sources mentioning the Egyptians going any farther into Canaan to battle Hyksos. The only sources that we have are recorded Egyptian annals on the life of the Egyptian genius military leader, Thutmose III, who claimed to conquer 350 cities throughout Nubia, Canaan and Syria thus expanding Egypt's borders (Clayton 1994: 110). It appears Thutmose's claims were greatly exaggerated, even though there were a number of cities in Canaan. Among the well-known campaigns that Thutmose III undertook was the battle of Megiddo in which he defeated and brought the city under Egypt's control (c. 1456 BCE).<sup>139</sup> In one of his commentaries, the legendary Pharaoh recorded his triumph in Egypt,

In as much as every prince of every northern land is shut up within it, the capture of Megiddo is the capture of a thousand towns! (Lichtheim 2006:33).

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139. Cline, Eric H. (2002). *The Battles of Armageddon: Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley from the Bronze Age to the Nuclear Age*. University of Michigan Press. Cline, Eric H., and O'Connor, David (2006). "Thutmose III: A New Biography". University of Michigan Press.; Redford, Donald B. (2003). *The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III*.

However, Jericho has not been mentioned in any of the annals of his campaign, leaving us one final possible conclusion. As far as archaeology is concerned, there has been abundant evidence at Jericho that militates against a destruction of City IV by the Egyptians. Both Garstang and Kenyon have found burnt debris in the City IV area which contains storage jars full of grain, indicating that when the city was under attack there was ample food supply. When one finds grain evidence still intact, we can turn to a verse in the book of Joshua that Israelites were commanded to leave the food supply intact. And it says:

And ye, in any wise, keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed...but all the silver, and gold and vessels of iron, are consecrated unto the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD...they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.

**Fig 25.**



As the scripture revealed in the above passage, the jars of grain remain as the primary source of evidence on the truth of the biblical account and, in fact, Joshua 6 clearly stated that the siege only lasted for seven days. The battle took place very soon after harvest time in which Joshua 3:15 tells us that the Israelites entered the land during the time of harvest (April-June), and Joshua 5:10 clearly tells us about their keeping the Passover which took place at that time of year (March). The photo above shows jars full of grain found by John Garstang at Jericho in which Garstang believed that they were charred in the fire that the Israelites set to destroy the Canaanite city (Wood 1999a:42).

In this case the Israelite attack had been launched after the harvest, and thus it was an extremely quick siege. Returning to our discussion about the possible military campaign by the Egyptians in Canaan with regards to Jericho; this is contrary to the tactics of the Egyptian military. For one, the sieges were usually quite long, such as the seven-month siege of Megiddo and the three-year siege of Sharuhen (Pritchard 1969: 246; Lichtheim 1973: 13; Cline 2002: 21).<sup>140</sup>

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140. Wilson, J.A. (1969). "Egyptian Historical Texts," *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET), ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 3rd ed., 1969), p. 233. Wilson, "Egyptian Historical Texts," p. 238.

It was extremely advantageous for the Egyptian army to harvest the grain in the field, thus providing additional food for the military as they camped around the city – a desirable practice which is described at the siege of Megiddo (Lichtheim 1973: 34). Furthermore, any would-be invading army would have normally plundered valuable grain once they captured a city. Furthermore, it doesn't make sense for the Hyksos – Kenyon's proposed conquerors – to destroy the very cities they were fleeing to (Canaan) after fleeing from the Egyptians who had chased them out of Egypt. Ultimately the grain supply found at Jericho City IV also conflicts with this hypothesis. For the Egyptians to begin their siege directly after harvest time would have been in contradiction to their customary military tactics; a most irregular move for any attacking Egyptian army. In this case we have to rule out Kenyon's hypothesis on the dating of the destruction of Jericho City IV to the end of the Middle Bronze Age (c. 1550 BCE), and in her historical reconstruction that attributes the destruction of Jericho to the Hyksos or to the Egyptians.

The remarkable discovery of the abundant food supply found at Jericho, is contrary to Egyptian military tactics, since it would have been an advantage for the Egyptians to feed their army or perhaps destroy it, placing a further hardship on the indigenous population living around the region of Canaan.

As Wood stated, the evidence on the amount of grain found was 'unique in the annals of Palestinian archaeology. Perhaps a jar or two might be found, but to find such an extensive amount of grain is exceptional because "*successful attackers normally plundered valuable grain*" (Wood 1990a: 56). Furthermore, the evidence of the Canaanite vessels described in the Amarna archives clearly demonstrates that the Egyptian military camp had not been in the area for many years - since they were not concerned with or even able to send troops to cities in the region at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Once again, Garstang has clearly stated in his defence of the argument "*about 1478 BC, each successive Pharaoh until Amenhotep III is shown by the records to have kept his hand firmly on the country.*" Then after Akhenaton's death, "the authority of the Pharaohs was immediately and vigorously re-established" (Garstang 1948: 143-44).

This supports the proposition that the biblical Jericho indeed had strong links with Middle Kingdom Egypt as well with the later Hyksos during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intermediate Period (Nigro 2009: 373-74). From what archaeology has revealed, the Egyptian military influence in Canaan was

sorely lacking by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, which allowed the invading Israelite army to conquer Jericho without any Egyptian interference. As Garstang concludes, it would have been “*impossible to place the episode of the fall of Jericho elsewhere than in the interlude of military inactivity on the part of Amenhotep III*” (Garstang 1948: 146). Furthermore, there is the ceramic evidence found, as well as the Amarna letters that clearly state that the Egyptian influence was at its weakest in Canaan during the reign of Amenhotep III (circa 1414-1378 BCE); which perfectly fits the destruction of Jericho. The Amarna letters mentioned clearly that Amenhotep III was ignoring the Canaanite pleas for help against the Hapiru (appearing as the possible Israelites). It appears that Amenhotep III lost interest in maintaining the entire Egyptian empire across the Canaan region and thus was concerned with domestic interests, leaving the Canaanites to fend for themselves during the Israelite conquest. <sup>141</sup>

Fig 26.

Amarna Tablet EA289



Additionally, during the reign of Amenhotep III, the Habiru were already controlling the town of Shechem which makes it more significant when Er-Heba makes the claim that Shechem was handed over to the Apiru – one of multiple appellations used to describe the Habiru in the Amarna tablets (W. L. Moran 1992; EA 289). The fact that Habiru exercised some extent of control over Shechem in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE is very interesting when one considers the importance Shechem played in the early development of Israel. It became a principle centre of Hebrew worship, and in fact was the first capital of Israel. Military activity in southern Canaan during the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE has tantalized biblical scholars, and Shechem's importance in the Amarna tablets imply a Hebrew / Habiru connection of some sort.

It was very unusual that almost all Canaanite cities were unfortified in that period and should be seen as a sign of the Egyptian policy. More importantly, el-Amarna is crucial from an archaeological point of view since it deals with the entire period of the Late Bronze IIA and the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty; when the Egyptian administration in Canaan was first

141. We have already discussed the origin of the Habiru in chapter two of this dissertation and for further reading Nadav Na'aman has written an excellent article on the Habiru / Hebrews: The Transfer of a Social Term to the Literary Sphere,” appearing in Volume 2 of his Collected Essays, concludes the term “Hebrew” is typically used to describe “Israelites in exceptional circumstances,” and in particular to describe “Israelites migrating to a foreign country” or “Israelites in a position of slavery.” He adds that the use of the term “Hebrew” is especially prevalent “in the stories of the book of Exodus, in which it is applied to Israelites who were enslaved and exploited by the Egyptians for hard labor.” His final conclusion on page 271: “*It seems clear that all biblical references to the ‘Hebrews’ reflect some traits borrowed from the image of the second millenium Habiru.*”

established during the reign of Thutmose III. At Tell el-Ajjul, archaeologists revealed fragments of Egyptian pottery on site adorned with leaf patterns - mainly lotus leaves - painted in bright colours; mostly blue, red, white, black and yellow. These were typical of Mycenaean IIIA2 pottery which is clearly an indicator of the Amarna age (Amiran 1969:124-187; Rainey 2002:46; Stubbings 1951:90).

In conclusion, in answer to the question of who the real destroyers of Jericho were, it can be none other than the Israelites. The archaeological evidence again agrees with the descriptions of the Jericho conquest as reflected in the Bible.

#### **5.4.5 Carbon-14 Dating of Jericho**

To date the archaeological debate over the city of Jericho in the first half of the second millennium BCE has been one of the most controversial in the discussion of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan. The main issue - in the correlation between the Israelite destruction of Jericho found in the text of the Hebrew Bible and the archaeological findings of the Bronze Age city of Jericho - has been the date. Over the past century many scholars have appealed to Carbon-14 dates that validate claims that the City IV was destroyed and dated to 1410 BCE, lending support that Jericho occurred during the Late Bronze Age 1 period (Wood 1990:53). Wood concludes on C-14 samples from Jericho:

Initially, a C14 date of 1410 +/- 40 B.C. (done by the British Museum) was published for charcoal from the destruction level of Jericho (Jericho V [1983], p. 763). This was later found to be in error and corrected from 3080 +/- 40 BP to 3300 +/- 110 BP (Radiocarbon 32 [1990]: 74; BP = before present), which calibrates to 1590 or 1527 +/- 110 B.C., depending on how one reads the calibration curve (Radiocarbon 35 [1993]: 30). Additional tests were done on six grain samples from the destruction level resulting in dates between 1640 and 1520 B.C. and 12 charcoal samples from the destruction level resulting in dates between 1690 and 1610 B.C. (Radiocarbon 37 [1995]: 217). More recently, the Italians obtained two samples from a structure at the base of the tell that yielded dates of 1347 +/-85 and 1597 +/-91 B.C. (Quaderni di Gerico 2 [2000]: 206–207, 330, 332). The locus the samples were taken from appears to contain debris from the final Bronze Age destruction of the city. My dating of the destruction of Jericho to ca. 1400 B.C. is based on pottery, which, in turn, is based on Egyptian chronology. Jericho is just one example of the discrepancy between historical and C14 dates for the second millennium B.C. C14 dates are consistently 100–150 years earlier than historical dates. There is a heated debate going on among scholars concerning this, especially with regard to the date of the eruption of Thera (Santorini). The literature on the subject is enormous, so I will not attempt to give you references. A recent overview can be found in Manfred Bietak and Felix Höflmayer, "Introduction: High and Low Chronology, pp. 13–23 in *The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C. III*", eds. Manfred Bietak and Ernst Czerny, Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007. Because of the inconsistencies and uncertainties of C14 dating, most archaeologists prefer historical dates over C14 dates."(Wood 2008).

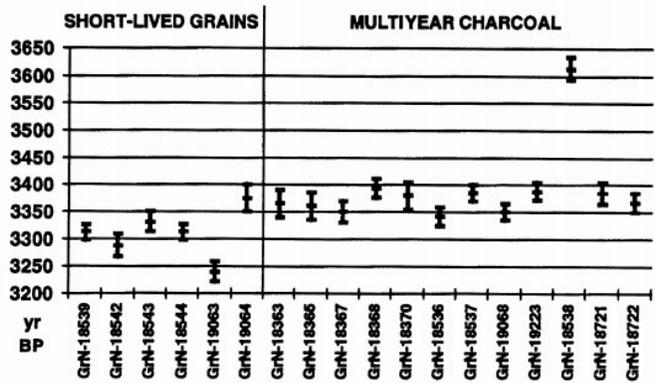


Fig 27. The chart shows the end of Middle Bronze Age Jericho:14C dates in years BP. Courtesy of Hendrik J. Bruins.

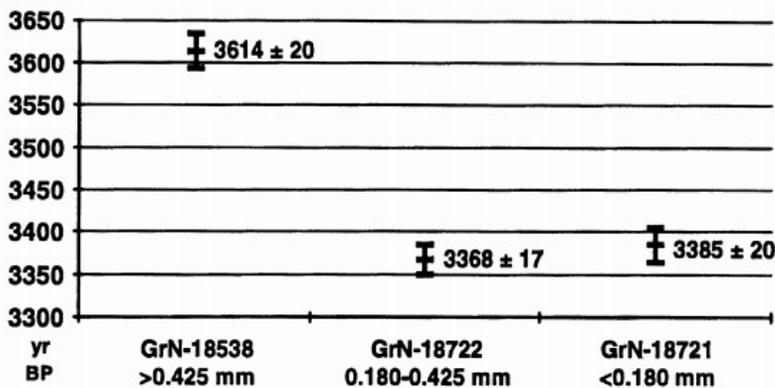


Fig 28. Dates BP of charcoal sample from Area H (stratigraphy: HAF XII- XIII. Iii. IiiI), split in 3 fractions. Courtesy of Hendrik J. Bruins.

According to scholars, the city of Jericho was not occupied during the Israelite Conquest and thus the controversy over Carbon-14 dating began to play a key role in the date debate during the 1990s, after excavation reports from the Kenyon expedition in the 1950s. The archaeological data found at the Bronze Age city of Jericho gave evidence that it was destroyed by a fire and one can expect that the burnt grain and wood was carbonized, preserving some of it in the destruction layer (Kenyon 1957: 261). In 1995, Hendrik J. Bruins and Johannes van der Plicht used high-precision radiocarbon dating on eighteen samples from Tell es Sultan (Jericho); of which six samples of charred cereal grains from the destruction of the burnt layer were all calculated to approximately 1562 BCE - plus or minus 38 years (Bruins and van der Plicht 1995: 214-216). These preliminary calibration results suggested that the C 14 dates did not support the low 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE chronology towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age, as Bimson (1978) proposed. Once again the results showed the fortified Bronze Age City at Tell Jericho (Tel es-Sultan) was not destroyed in 1400 BCE as Wood suggested (Wood 1990: 44-58, 53).

Initially it appears that the preliminary calibration results favour the archaeological dating of Jericho's destruction proposed by Watzinger and Kenyon (Watzinger 1926: 131-136; Kenyon 1957: 272). It should be noted, however, that their dating was not based on firm chronological evidence, but rather on an assumed association with the beginning of the XVIIIth Dynasty in Egypt. Thus this date in the floating Egyptian chronology has gradually shifted from ca. 1580 BCE (Breasted 1906), used by Kenyon, to the current low chronology of 1539 BCE (Kitchen 1987; Ward 1992).<sup>142</sup>

Sometime during the year of 2000, an Italian team under the guidance of Lorenzo Nigro, who lead the excavation expedition, tested two samples from a building that contained important debris from the final destruction of the Bronze Age City. The results showed that these two samples were dated to 1347 BCE +/-85 and 1597 BCE +/-91, giving an overall range of C-14 dates of 1688-1262 BCE (Marchetti & Nigro 2000: 206-207, 330-332). In a nutshell, these results do seem to support both the theories of Kenyon and Woods, as the dates roughly fit the proposed dates of a 1400 BCE and 1550 BCE destruction. However, there are serious problems in matching the preliminary C-14 dating in Ancient Israel to the established ceramic, epigraphic and historical chronologies; since the destruction of the Bronze Age City of Jericho range from as high as 1883 BCE to as low as 1262 BCE, a range of over 600 years, and thus the archaeological dispute only varies by about 150 years.<sup>143</sup>

In this case ceramic typology (pottery) is still the preferred and trusted method in the field of biblical archaeology in the Ancient Levant. The application of scientific methods to the clay itself can also give great insight to the archaeologist in identifying a particular group from which the pottery came. Normally the presence of pottery within a culture shows the very

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142. Dating Dispute: See Bimson John J. and Livingston, David. (1987). "Redating the Exodus," **BAR**, September/October. Halpern, Baruch (1987) "Radical Exodus Redating Fatally Flawed," **BAR**, November/December 1987; Bimson, John.J. (1988). "A Reply to Baruch Halpern," and Manfred Bietak, "Contra Bimson, Bietak Says Late Bronze Age Cannot Begin as Late as 1400 B.C.," **BAR**, July/August.

143. Levy, T.E and Higham, T.F.G. (2005). "Introduction: Radiocarbon dating and the Iron Age of the Southern Levant: Problems and potentials for the Oxford conference," in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science*. London: Equinox; Mazar, A. and Bronk Ramsey, C., "C14 Dates and the Iron Age chronology of Israel: a response," *Radiocarbon*, 50(2), 2008: 159-180).

existence of a sedentary life (Renfrew & Bahn 1996:320). However, the use of C-14 dates from the Jericho samples has not managed to settle a debate between a destruction layer dated to either 1550 BCE or 1400 BCE.

#### 5.4.6 Scarabs and Seals of Jericho

Scarabs discovered on the site of ancient Jericho form an extremely important piece of the puzzle on the dating of the destruction of Jericho since there were only certain types of scarabs used during different reigns of certain pharaohs in Egypt. In the 1930s John Garstang, a professor at England's Liverpool University, discovered three Egyptian scarabs and a seal from a cemetery northwest of Tell es-Sultan (Jericho), bearing the names of Tuthmosis III (c. 1504-1450 BCE), Amenhotep III (c. 1386-1349 BCE) and Hatshepsut (c. 1503-1483 BCE) of which all were dated from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century through the early 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE, (Garstang 1948: 126). These scarabs are usually small, beetle-shaped Egyptian amulets that made a first appearance by the end of the First Intermediate Period (c. 2055 BCE). They were engraved with the names and titles of an official which was common during the Middle Kingdom period.



**Fig 29.** The picture shows the discovery of **three scarabs and a seal found on a cemetery northwest of Jericho.** These scarabs were typical amulets and impression seals in Ancient Egypt which are usually small, beetle-shaped, inscribed on its underside, often with the name of a pharaoh. The most common size for scarabs is from 6mm to 4 cm (length) and between 1 cm and 2 cm long. Shown clockwise from upper left are scarabs bearing the names of Tuthmosis III (c. 1504-1450 B.C.E.), Amenhotep III (c. 1386-1349 B.C.E.) and Hatshepsut (c. 1503-1483 B.C.E.) and the reverse side of a seal, lower left, of Tuthmosis III.

During the New Kingdom scarabs bearing the names and titles of officials became a lot rarer (Daphna Ben-Tor 1989:8). With special attention to Amenhotep III scarabs, Garstang suggested that the city fell during the reign of Amenhotep III (c. 1400 BCE) since there was a lack of Egyptian material from after the reign of Amenhotep III. His successor, Akhenaten, during that period there was no trace of a royal signet, influx of Early Mycenaean pottery, or

any mention of Jericho in the Amarna letters (Garstang 1948: 179). Foremost, credit must be given to Garstang since he called in three of the then top Palestinian archaeologists and pottery experts, Pere Vincent, Clarence S. Fisher, and Alan Rowe, to assist with the interpretation of his findings. After studying the findings of Garstang, they each independently confirmed the date of 1400 BCE, with the possible alternative of any date not later than 1377 BCE.

In this case, due to a lack of evidence, the city of Jericho was not re-established during the 14<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE, pointing directly that the city would have been destroyed by the Israelites, according to the biblical narrative of Joshua. It has been suggested that the reign of Amenhotep III must have occurred between the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and the early 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, thus a date of about 1400 BCE is a plausible hypothesis, additionally based on the ceramic data from the end of the Late Bronze I era in City IVc. It is my opinion that the ceramics from the Late Bronze Age II period that were found in the Middle Building have no direct connection to the earlier settlement and tombs. As a result, the strong evidence of constant occupation during the Late Bronze Age I directly contradicts Kenyon's conclusions that Jericho was abandoned after 1550 BCE.

Furthermore, the name of Jericho is not mentioned in the Amarna Letters, making it difficult to conclusively confirm the dating of the destruction of this city. However, this does not necessarily mean that Jericho was uninhabited during the entire period of the Amarna Letters. The scarab of Amenhotep III indicates habitation during his reign. Because many of the Amarna Letters were from the period of his reign, one can guess the city of Jericho had either another name and/or was not mentioned because the city had for some reason remained unimportant to the Egyptians during that period. The scarab evidence does, however, strongly demonstrate that Jericho was occupied during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, indicating that Jericho could have been destroyed by the Israelites at the end of the Late Bronze I era, ca. 1400 BCE.

While the debates on the dating of these scarabs and seal continue, the biblical scholar, Piotr Bienkowski, attempts to dismiss this evidence, affirming that scarabs were in fact very common during the XVIIIth-Dynasty and could have remained in circulation long after the kings themselves had died (Bienkowski 1990: 46). Rather, he strongly believes that the finding of a Hyksos Dynasty scarab is more important since these rare artefacts of the Hyksos kings were not commonly known to have been kept as heirlooms and/or manufactured later

and thus provide a better guidance to the absolute date (Bienkowski 1990: 46; Kirkhride 1965: 581-583).

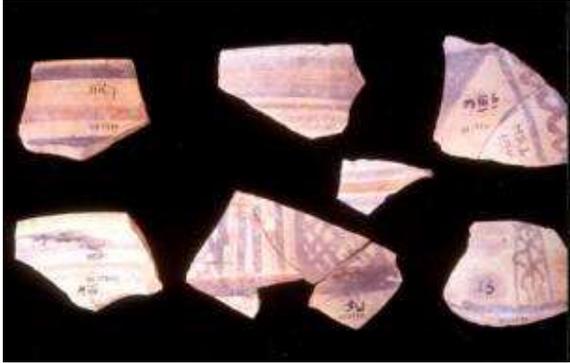
While Dr Wood agrees with Bienkowski on the interpretations of the scarabs in the case of Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep III, he strongly disagrees on the scarab of Hatshepsut. This scarab was a rare find because, as a result of her unpopularity, the ancient Egyptians attempted to remove her name and status as Pharaoh from the records and monuments of Egypt (Gardiner 1961: 181-184). Therefore, the Hatshepsut scarab at Jericho can be considered contemporary with her reign in the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. In conjunction with Garstang's discoveries of the seal of Tuthmosis III - also considered a rare find - the scarabs of Hatshepsut, Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep III led Wood to strongly argue that the cemetery at Jericho was in active use throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. This further indicates that the Amenhotep III and Thutmose III scarabs were from the periods of their respective reigns. In this case Dr Wood found Garstang's interpretations of these scarabs to be and thus Solomon's date of 961 BCE would mathematically match the 480 years of Israel's stay in Egypt followed by their 40-year march through the wilderness. This led the Ancient Israelites to conquer Jericho at or around 1397 BCE, effectively confirming Garstang's date of around 1400 BCE.

#### **5.4.7 Ceramic Analysis of Jericho**

Ceramic typology has been the primary dating method in Israel (Palestine) and thus the pottery analysis for the establishment of relative and absolute chronologies has become significant for the ancient site of Jericho. The discussion on ceramic typology is relevant because of the differing views among various archaeologists and biblical scholars over the past century on the occupational periods of the site of Jericho. The debate is centred around whether or not Jericho was occupied during the Late Bronze Age 1 period (ca. 1550-1400 BCE).

Dr Bryant Wood, of Associates for Biblical Research, undertook the tedious task of re-analysing and reinterpreting the evidence from the various archaeological excavations at Jericho stating, '*I became intrigued by a considerable amount of what appeared to be Late Bronze I (c. 1550-1400 B.C.E.) pottery he (Garstang) had excavated*' (Wood 1990a: 49). Originally, Garstang found a considerable amount of quality imported Cypriot bichrome

pottery ware, decorated with red and black paint, dating to the Late Bronze Age 1, which Kenyon did not find during her excavation expedition during the 1950s (Wood 1990b: 48). As Cypriot bichrome ware was the dominant trade and plentiful during the Late Bronze I period it is strange that Kenyon claimed it was absent in her excavations at Jericho.



**Fig 30.** Cypriot bichrome ware – Pottery decorated in two colours. These were found by John Garstang at Jericho IV (Wood 1999a: 37. Cf; See also Wood 1990a:53).

Here Wood explains that Kenyon has based her conclusions on a very limited excavation area - two 26-foot by 26-foot squares - in which he says an argument from silence has become problematic since, Kenyon's argument was weak on both grounds: 1) dating the destruction of City IV to the end of the Middle Bronze Age (c. 1550 BCE) and 2) her historical reconstruction that attributes the destruction of Jericho to the Hyksos or to the Egyptians (Wood 1990a: 50). Wood made careful examination of the local potteries excavated by Kenyon and noted that these simple, round-sided bowls with concentric circles painted on the inside (No. 2 - Jericho 5, fig. 206:2; Jericho 4, fig. 110:8 and Jericho 5, fig. 206:1) were most important for the dating of Jericho's City IV, because such bowls were used only for a short period during the latter half of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.<sup>144</sup>

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144. See report of Garstang who recognized the chronological significance of this bowl and correctly dated it to the 15th Century B.C.E. ("Jericho: City and Necropolis," LAAA 21, p. 121). This bowl was commonly found at Ashdod stratum XVII (Moshe Dothan, Ashdod 2-3: The Second and Third Seasons of Excavations, 1963, 1965, *Antiqot* 9-10 [English Series, 1971], p. 81) and Hazor stratum 2 (Yadin et al., Hazor 2: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations, 1956 [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960], p. 94; Yadin, Hazor: The Head of All Those Kingdoms, Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1970 [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972], p. 32).

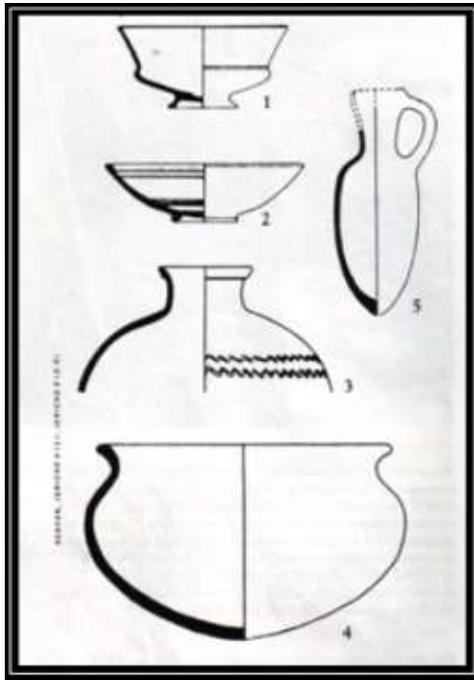


Fig 31.

Other drawings in the diagram are the flaring carinated (angled) bowl with a slight crimp (**No. 1** - Jericho 4, fig. 110:1); a storage jar with a simple folded rim (**No. 3** - Jericho 5, fig. 199:6); a cooking pot (**No. 4** - Jericho 5, fig. 198:10; Jericho 4, figs. 150:22 and 121:11); and a dipper jug (**No. 5** - Jericho 5, fig. 196:5) which was very common during the Late Bronze Age period (Wood 1990b: 47). In this case Wood argued that Kenyon has inexplicably ignored these examples of common, locally made domestic pottery found on the site of Jericho and instead based her Middle Bronze Age date for City IV on the absence of expensive imported Cypriote ware known to date to the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.

Wood further noticed that Kenyon's research did not properly account for the evidence of the ceramic analysis of what he asserts as an error on Kenyon's part. 'That she did not focus more on the local pottery is especially strange because considerable stratified local daily-use pottery from the Late Bronze I period had been excavated and was available' (Wood 1990a: 50). Accordingly, Wood explained that Kenyon had reported herself that she did not find Cypriot or Mycenaean wares in any of her trenches dug at Jericho, and thus concludes in the following statement, 'dating habitation levels at Jericho on the absence of exotic imported wares...is methodologically unsound, and indeed, unacceptable' (Wood 1990a: 50). In her own words Kenyon refers to Jericho City IV as "something of a backwater". Wood pointed out that she should at least not have been surprised by the absence of Cypriote imports in Late Bronze Jericho and thus paid greater attention to the locally made household pottery she managed to find on site. It should be noted that she was excavating on a very limited site in a poor section of the city and thus should not expect to find any sorts of exotic imported materials (Kenyon 1967: 271). In addition, Wood went on to say:

Kenyon never published a definitive study of the pottery from the last phases of City IV, before its destruction. The final excavation reports published after her death reflect Kenyon's meticulous field work and contain a complete and detailed presentation of her excavation results. But they merely present the raw data, with no analysis or comment...it becomes clear that Kenyon based her opinion almost exclusively on the absence of pottery imported from Cyprus and common to the Late Bronze I period (Wood 1990a: 50).

According to Woods, these Late Bronze Age imports were typically found in tombs in large cities on major trade routes (Wood 1990: 44-58). Before Kenyon excavated at Jericho, Garstang reported several important types of pottery which were then not recognized, but which were published along with all the other decorated pottery without being singled out for special notice. Garstang reported the following:

...two whole vessels of this class in the topmost levels of the palace storerooms—in spots, it should be noted, that lay outside the area of the Middle Building and were accordingly freer from disturbance. These vessels are similar to those from Tomb 5, where they seem to date their incidence to the age of Thutmose III. Another type of painted wares—the last of our LB I series—is represented by a number of long-necked jugs found in Tomb 4; they appear to imitate in a way the larger type of Cypriote jugs of bil-bil fabric; and their introduction as a type into the repertory of Bronze Age Canaan seems to be dated both at Jericho and at Lachish by contemporary scarabs of Amenhotep III (Garstang 1941: 369-70).

These important types of potteries were discovered along the erosional layers on the east side of the site and thus the archaeological data showed with strong evidence that they originated in a large structure upslope, which he referred to as the palace (Middle Building). Of importance during Garstang's expedition, there were fragment remains of the eastern wall connected to the palace/middle building during that period. In retrospect, the area where Kenyon excavated on Area H appears to be far too north from the actual runoff of the palace and thus no bichrome ware was found in her squares.

However, Bienkowski disagreed with Wood on the dating of these Cypriot sherds, since he believed the fine Cypriot ware should be dated to the Late Bronze II period (ca. 1425-1275 BCE), and thus these sherds were actually not part of Jericho IV (Bienkowski 1990: 46).<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, Bienkowski argued that some of the local Canaanite pottery forms that Wood cited as Late Bronze I, did in fact have some parallels to those from the Middle Bronze Age II periods at nearby Gibeon, citing material from a tomb (Bienkowski 1990: 46). But Wood responded defensively that his thorough analysis of Cypriot bichrome sherds discovered by Garstang were in fact markedly different to that of the local painted ware and thus concluded:

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145 Cf. also Bienkowski, P (1986). Jericho in the Late Bronze Age figs. 52:8, 53:10 and pgs. 118-120.

The fabric of the Jericho bichrome pottery is much different than the local Late Bronze II wares. The fabric of Late Bronze II pottery...has large grits and is not fired all the way through. The Jericho bichrome pottery...is the pinkish-buff, well-levigated fabric common to Cypriote bichrome ware. It has a finely ground temper all but invisible to the naked eye and is well fired with no core. Garstang published a considerable amount of this pottery, which he referred to as "red ware." Among the sherds he published are several with classic Cypriote bichrome ware motifs" (Wood 1990b: 48).<sup>146</sup>

However, even if Bienkowski's interpretation is correct, it is still a weak parallel, since tomb pottery cannot in any way be stratified and thus could come from a number of different periods. In my opinion, the ceramic analysis examined from a variety of sources and excavation teams at Jericho over the last few decades have shown strong indications that the pottery was present during the Late Bronze Age I period, and thus the argument on the ceramic dating of City IV at Jericho should be settled. Furthermore, I agree with Wood's deduction that Kenyon's methods of interpretation and analysis were flawed. As the result of her flawed conclusion, we must dismiss the fact that Jericho City IV was not inhabited during the Late Bronze Age I. The current ceramic data found in publications of the Garstang, Kenyon, and Italian Palestinian excavations suggest that the site was indeed occupied during the Late Bronze Age I period.

#### 5.4.8 Conclusion

The debate on the dating of Jericho is - one already well-known to readers in the Biblical Archaeology Review - will no doubt continue for many years to come. It would be wise for scholars to be at least open to the possibility that the destruction involved the invasion of the Israelites at some period, but whether it will continue to confirm the biblical account of Joshua of Tel es-Sultan (Tel Jericho) remains to be seen. What is needed is a new expedition seeking answers to the questions raised by these archaeologists.

Based on the discussion in this chapter, the archaeological evidence - the ceramic data, stratigraphically, scarab and radiocarbon dating - the evidence presents a strong argument for habitation of the city of Jericho City IV and its destruction in about 1400 BCE, at the end of the Late Bronze Age I period.

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146. Examples of these sherds are found in Garstang, John. (1934). "*Jericho: City and Necropolis, Fourth Report*," University of Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology 21, pls. 29: 4, 7, 12; 34:3; 36:12; 39:5.

Additionally, the discovery of the Middle Building by Garstang was the most crucial piece of evidence, since the site was identified as an isolated residence of a wealthy and powerful individual around the late 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, which correlates with the biblical account of Eglon of Moab. The palace-like structure, as described by British archaeologist John Garstang, was discovered between the Iron Age structures above and was destroyed in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. According to the results of his findings, this stratum matches the biblical description exactly, since the Middle Building dates to the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, which was during the time of Eglon's oppression as per the biblical chronology. Furthermore, the plan of the Middle Building is similar to other palaces of the period and fits the description given in the Bible, thus there was no evidence for a town at Jericho at this time. Additionally, the resident was involved in administrative activities, as evidenced by a cuneiform tablet, including a large quantity of imported Cypriot and other decorated pottery on site. Lastly, the Middle Building was only occupied for a short period of time and eventually abandoned (Garstang 1941: 368–72; Halpern 1988: 32–41). I would suggest that the claim that the city of Jericho was unoccupied during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE is not entirely correct, based on the most current analyses of the archaeological data done on the site.

## Chapter 6 The Israelite Conquest: The Biblical City of Ai

### 6.1 Introduction

The biblical city of Ai was a Canaanite royal city, in the central part of Israel (Palestine), in the area inhabited by the tribe of Benjamin, near to and just east of Bethel (Gen 12:8). Ai is first mentioned in the earliest journey of Abraham through Canaan (Israel / Palestine) found in Genesis 12:8, where its location is given as east of Bethel, and near the altar which Abraham built between the two places. The Book of Joshua 7–8 records how the Israelites attempted to conquer Ai on two occasions. The first attempt failed when they were defeated by the Canaanites, but on the second attempt, the Israelites' attack met with success. The conquest of the city of Ai is recorded in the Old Testament:

He commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready: And I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them, (For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore, we will flee before them. Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, that ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you (Josh 8:4-8).

As the scripture describes in the above verses, the Israelites were successful on their second attempt during which the city was taken, burned and left in a heap of ruins. The inhabitants numbering twelve thousand were put to death, including the king who was hanged and buried under a heap of stones at the gate of the ruined city (Josh 7 & 8). Since its destruction, Ai was mentioned again in post-exilic times by Ezr 2:28 and Neh 7:32 and 11:31, identified in each case by the grouping with Bethel. According to Isa 10:28, the name Aiath probably refers to the Ai of Josh 7:2: an area through which the Assyrian army passed.

The search for the correct site for the ancient city of Ai has been much disputed, since the location of Bethel-Baitin has not been properly identified. As far as scripture is concerned Genesis 12:8 records that Ai is to the east of Bethel, and that there is a mountain or hill between the two cities (Gen 12:8). In identifying Bethel, most scholars agree that the ancient site is located in the central part of Israel / Palestine, on the border between Ephraim and Benjamin, on the great north south watershed road of Israel / Palestine, about 19.3 kilometres

north of Jerusalem, 4.4 kilometres south of Shiloh, and just west of Ai.<sup>147</sup> Eusebius, in his work *Onomasticon*, places Bethel 19.3 kilometres from Jerusalem, on the road to Neapolis. Today most scholars consider Bethel to be the modern village of Beitin, with some 400 inhabitants, which stands on a knoll east of the road to Nablus.<sup>148</sup> It appears the biblical sites of Ai and Bethel are in the same general area since they were known as the twin cities recorded in Genesis 12:8. Again, we find in Joshua 7 that Ai is near Beth-Aven and east of Bethel (Josh 7:2, Masoretic Text).<sup>149</sup>

From an archaeological point of view, the village of Beitin existed as early as 3200 BCE, with continuous occupation of the site around the sixteenth century where an enlarged settlement was discovered with an 11-foot-thick stone wall still intact. Around 1235 BCE, the city was destroyed in a great fire that left debris five feet thick in places and is believed to be attributed to the Israelite conquest of Judges 1:22-25. The city became a major place during the Hellenistic period and grew even larger during the Roman / Byzantine period. Archaeological remains in the area show that the city continued to exist throughout the Byzantine era, before it disappeared when the Muslims took over Palestine.

More importantly, the book of Joshua 7 & 8 indicates that the city of Ai was supposed to have been inhabited during the time of Joshua, describing the city as being fortified with a gate (Josh 8:29). It also indicates that the biblical site of Ai was smaller in size than the city of Gibeon. In Joshua 10:2, we find the verse describing the city, “*That they feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty,*” (KJV). In this case the verse has given archaeologists and scholars some clues to the actual size of ancient Gibeon and thus this geographical data can be a valuable piece of evidence in accurately determining the site of Ai.

During the Middle and Late Bronze Ages the site of Gibeon was approximately 7 to 15 acres, and probably greater during the Late Bronze I period - based on population and building

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147. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, 1976; Vol. 1, p. 531.

148. Taken from The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Bethel.

149. According to the Masoretic text, Ai is near Beth-Aven and east of Bethel, while the LXX makes no mention of Beth-Aven and simply says that Ai is down from Bethel. The Dead Sea Scrolls text, 4QJoshua, containing part of Joshua 7, is missing in verses 1-11.

expansion of the city over a period describing it as a royal city which was greater than Ai.

Archaeological data shows that the most recent survey records of the site estimate its size to be approximately 15 acres (Broshi and Gophna 1986: 82; Finkelstein and Magen 1993: 46, 235). In this scenario, the city of Ai must have been occupied during the Late Bronze Age, the same period as the cities of Jericho and Hazor would have been burned during its destruction by the Israelites (Josh 8:28). More importantly, the city must have been smaller than Gibeon. Fortification and a destruction layer from the Late Bronze Age are additional points of data that could be used to identify the site of Ai during the time of the Israelite Conquest.

## 6.2 Several Theories on the Biblical Site of Ai

The ancient city of Ai is the most elusive and debated site in the book of Joshua, since the issue on the location and whereabouts of the biblical site has been both confusing and detrimental for the archaeological viability of the Israelite Conquest. The reason for this is that there are five main hypotheses surrounding the biblical city of Ai in light of archaeological evidence.

The first theory is that the Book of Joshua was written at a much later period for the Israelites who lived either in the period of the judges, during the monarchy, or during the Babylonian exile. In this case, the story of Ai was probably edited / compiled following Joshua's death.<sup>150</sup> As Martin Noth puts it, the story of Ai's conquest was part of an Israelite corpus of fictional, etiological myths, meaning these are legendary stories that explain the origins and characteristics of significant geographic locations (Noth 1935:7-29; 1960:149; Albright 1939: 16). The second theory is that the people of Bethel lived in the city of Ai during biblical times and that they were the ones who were invaded. In the third theory, William Foxwell Albright believes that et-Tell was the city of Ai when he excavated the site in the 1920s.<sup>151</sup> He reported that the conquest of Bethel, which was just 2.4 kilometres away from the actual location of Ai, was later transferred to this city (Ai) which explains why the city was in ruins. As a result of Albright's concrete theory Khirbet et-Tell must have been the site of Ai.

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150. Killebrew, Ann E. (2005). *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, and Early Israel, 1300–1100 B.C.E.* Society of Biblical Literature.

151. Davis, Thomas W. (2004). *Shifting Sands: The Rise and Fall of Biblical Archaeology.* New York: Oxford University Press.

This has led most scholars to be confident in the identification of et-Tell as the biblical Ai.<sup>152</sup>

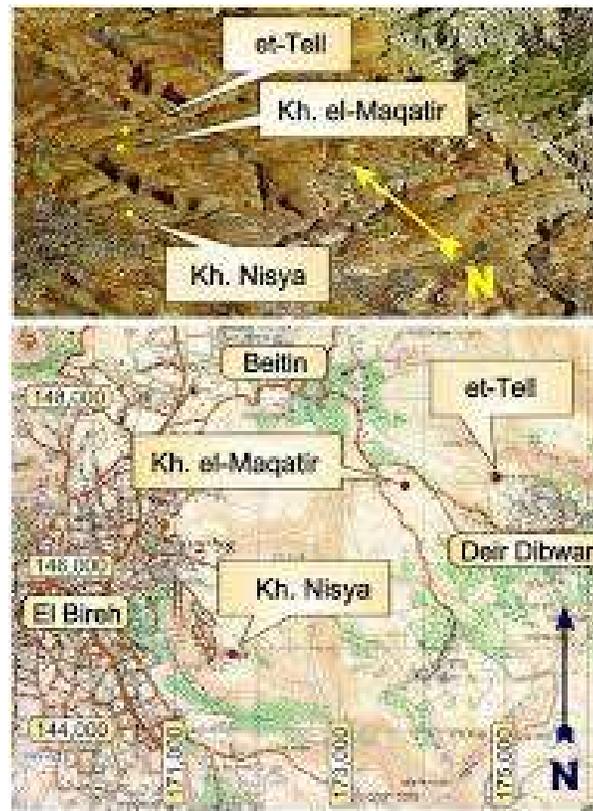
In the fourth theory, Callaway proposed that the people of Ai had in some way angered the Egyptians by rebelling and / or attempting to gain independence and thus the Egyptians destroyed the city as part of their punishment (Callaway 1992:125-130). For the fifth theory, some archaeologists propose that Joshua's Ai was not to be found at et-Tell, but rather at a different location entirely. However, for many years et-Tell has quite widely been accepted as the site of Ai.

Others, such as J. M. Grintz of Tel Aviv University who has revised Dussaud's identification of et Tell with Beth-aven, have suggested that **Khirbet Haiyan** could be the biblical site of Ai (Grintz 1961:201-216). However, this site does not provide any archaeological evidence of an occupation since excavations conducted by Callaway conclude, 'at Khirbet Haiyan in 1964 near the tomb of Sheik Ahmed uncovered first century Roman coins and pottery on bedrock. Not one sherd earlier than Roman was found' (Callaway 1968: 315). Further proof that there was no architecture earlier than the Byzantine period was discovered and the earliest datable objects were coins from around 68 CE, found on the bedrock (Callaway 1970: 10; Callaway 1993: 40; Wood 2008: 207). The excavation history of this site has only managed to find various sherds from the Early Bronze III, Middle Bronze, Iron Age, and the Hellenistic Period, but most of the sherds were all predominantly from the Byzantine period (Finkelstein and Magen 1993: 36, 183; Kallai 1972: 178-79; Wood 2008: 207; Zevit 1983: 24). In this case, Khirbet Haiyan can be ruled out as the site of Ai.

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152. Et-Tell indeed is Ai - there is no doubt about this" (van Selms 1936: 208); "*et-Tell . . . unquestionably represents biblical Ai*" (Albright 1939: 15); "There is no doubt about the correlation of the Old Testament sites (of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor) with the mounds of ruins at Tell es-Sultan, et-tell and Tell Wakkas, respectively. In all three cases, there are clear and apparently final archaeological results" (Noth 1960a: 273); "*There can be no possible doubt about the identification [of Ai with et-Tell]*" (Albright 1963: 29); "The site of Et-Tell, which is certainly 'Ay' . . ." (de Vaux 1969a:273); "Et-Tell is the only really conspicuous tell in the vicinity immediately east of Bethel, as the Arab name °et-Tell ("the tell") suggests, and it meets all the topographical requirements of both Gen 12:8 and Josh 7-8. That biblical Ai is to be equated with present-day et-Tell is an obvious conclusion"(Miller 1977: 88); "The identification of et-Tell with the Ai of the Joshua narratives remains virtually assured by its regionally sealed archaeological context . . . and by its geographical locus" (Zevit 1983: 28); "*All geographical indications in the biblical text point to the area of Khirbet et-Tell as the location of Ai*" (Zevit 1985: 61); "Between Beitin and the desert to its east, there is only one site which could have been referred to as °Ai —the large mound of et-Tell near Deir Dibwan" (A. Mazar 1990: 331); "*East of Beitin only one site can possibly be identified with Ai, and that is the large site of et-Tell, near Deir Dibwan*" (A. Mazar 1992: 283); "*Albright's identification of et-Tell with Ai was therefore based upon biblical traditions and the topography of the region and was supported by the evidence of an ancient city of the Canaanites which lay under heaps of stones. His location of the site of Ai has not been seriously challenged in the last half-century*" (Callaway 1992: 126).

**Khirbet Khudriya** was also proposed as the possible site of Ai, but the archaeological data has included only Byzantine ruins, burial caves, and tombs along the side of Wady Asas, yielding some Herodian and Roman pottery. In general, the search for the true site of biblical Ai has remained a mystery. As Joseph Callaway puts it; “*Ai is simply an embarrassment to every view of the conquest that takes the biblical and archaeological evidence seriously*” (Callaway 1968: 312). However, there are three possible candidate sites for Joshua’s Ai that seem to show strong support for the biblical narrative of Ai, (1) Khirbet et-Tell (2) Khirbet Nisya and, (3) Khirbet el-Maqatir. The map chart below shows the portion of the Benjamin hill country of interest to this research, depicting the three possible candidate sites for Joshua’s Ai with respect to each other and the geographical and topographical features in the vicinity.



**Fig 32.** The three possible candidate sites for Joshua’s Ai – Associate for Biblical Research.

Therefore, we shall summarize the first two of the three possible candidate sites of Ai, 1) Khirbet et-Tell and 2) Khirbet Nisya.

**Khirbet et-Tell** has been of special interest to the archaeologists for more than four decades. The site lies approximately three kilometres east of the modern village of Beitin (Bethel), atop a watershed plateau overlooking the Jordan Valley and the city of Jericho fourteen km to the east. Over the years the site was surveyed by multiple explorers and archaeologists since the earliest pioneers such as Edward Robinson (1838) and Charles Wilson (1866), suggested that et-Tell may have been the site of the biblical city of Ai; basing their evidence on the biblical references and nearby topography. Then, in his 1924 article, American scholar William Foxwell Albright supported the idea of both Robinson and Wilson that the site of et-Tell held the ruins of a great Canaanite city, corresponding with the biblical narrative of Joshua 8:28, “*burnt Ai and made it a heap forever*” He concludes, “*there is no other possible site for Ai than et-Tell*” (Albright 1924: 141-49; Albright 1936: 29).

Again, the hypothesis that Albright proposed was favoured since the Hebrew word "Ai" means "the ruin" or “ruin par excellence,” which is more or less the same meaning as the modern Arabic name, et-Tell, which means “the mound,” and thus the identification of this site. Biblical Ai has been widely accepted by the majority of the archaeological community for over four decades (Albright 1934: 11). However, not all scholars agreed with Albright on the meaning of et-Tell. Studies have shown that the use of the Hebrew definite article “ha” might have referred to the tribal area of Benjamin; perhaps used in conjunction with several other cities or place names listed in the land allotted to the tribe of Benjamin, within which the area of Ai appears to be located (Grintz 1961: 210; Josh 18:20-28).

At least four leading scholars have argued against Albright’s theory on the meaning of the Hebrew word, “Ai.” J. Simons believes the true meaning of Ai should be interpreted as ‘a heap of stones,’ (1959: 270) and Y. Kaufman stated that ‘Ai does not mean “ruin”, but heap, a pile or piles of stones’ (Kaufman 1953: 77, fn. 46; Num 21:11, 33:44-45; Josh 15:29; Isa 10:28; Jer 49:3.” J. Grintz argued that instead of “ruin,” Ai means “pile or heap of stones” (Grintz 1961: 209-211 211). Ziony Zevit concludes:

Ostensibly the names et-Tell, "the tell," and ha'ay, "the Ai," always with the definite article in Hebrew, should support the identification of the site. [But] a common explanation, that both names refer to "the ruin," and hence the Arabic is a translation of the Hebrew, does not bear up under scrutiny. . . . the etymology of the word "Ai" negates any connection with a word meaning "ruin." Etymologically, Ai does not refer to a ruin (Zevit 1983: 26-32; 1985: 62).

Furthermore, there are six other sites that bear the same name, et-Tell, which occur in other parts of modern Israel; 1) Jenin, 2) Nablus (two sites), 3) Jerusalem, 4) Ramleh, and 5) the Golan Heights (Zertal 1983: 26). Zertal concludes the etymology of et-Tell does not support its identification as the site of ancient Ai.

Before discussing the excavation history of Khirbet et-Tell, it would be best to summarize the description of Ai recorded in the Old Testament. As far as the Book of Joshua is concerned, we are given more clues about the biblical site of Ai since “*the men of Bethel and Ai*” were listed among the returning exiles in the Book of Ezra 2:28 and Nehemiah 7:32. Both recorded that there was a settlement at Ai towards the end of the Iron Age Period (Early Persian Period – 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E). In Isaiah 10:28, Aiath (Ai) was rebuilt at some later period (Iron Age) which is mentioned by the prophet Isaiah in his vivid description of the approach of the Assyrian army; the feminine form (‘ayyath) being used.

However, scholars were at odds as to whether both Abraham and Joshua appeared at the same place / name, Ai, since the site was located east of Bethel (Gen 12:8 & Josh 7:2), but looking more closely into the texts this does not appear to be the case. Judging from the textual analysis of Genesis 12:8, the biblical site of Ai in Abraham’s time may have been a major landmark as his position was given in relation to it. The biblical site of Ai during Joshua’s time was a tiny place where only a few men were stationed, and the Hebrew Bible described Ai as smaller than the great city of Gibeon (Josh 7:3 & Josh 10:2) measuring more or less 12 acres in size (Broshi and Gophna 1986:82).

From a chronological perspective, it appears that Abraham’s Ai and Joshua’s Ai were separated by almost seven centuries and thus the site of Ai was most definitely separated geographically, even though they are both east of Bethel. From what we have examined, the identification of the biblical site, Ai, should be straightforward, but this is not the case here (Grintz 1961: 201). In this case the archaeology and geography of the site must be evaluated in order to determine if et-Tell is truly the original site of the city of Ai mentioned in the book of Joshua.

The first actual excavations at Khirbet et-Tell took place in 1928 and were conducted by John Garstang and he reported that there was some Late Bronze Age habitation at the site of et-

Tell - although the majority of his eight soundings were on the side of the tell, outside the city walls (Callaway 1993: 39). Garstang reported the following:

...a sherd of M.B.A.i (Middle Bronze I) technique was picked out of the bonding at the fourth course. The origins of the defences were not tested, but evidence was found of the occupation of the site in the E.B.A. (Early Bronze Age) While, as usual, M.B.A. wares were most abundant, there was found a considerable proportion of L.B.A. including (in the collection of the America School) a Cypriote wish-bone handle, but nothing of Mycenaean date or character, nor any local fabrics of a date later than 1400 B.C., (Garstang 1931: 356).

According to Garstang's report, he had found ceramic evidence on the edge of the tell dating from the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age periods. As a result of Garstang's findings, Albright took the opportunity to do further studies on the site. He included the data from Garstang's September 1928 soundings in which he concluded that et-Tell was occupied in the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age I period at which point occupation ceased in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, based on a comparison of the pottery found at et-Tell and that of Tell Beit Mirsim Area D and C (Albright 1929:11-12). In examining the pottery findings from Tell Beit Mirsim and et-Tell, Albright deduced that the latest Bronze Age sherds from et-Tell were later than the end of Tell Beit Mirsim Area D but earlier than C, and thus sometime near the end of Late Bronze I in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Also, in the 1929 edition a summary on the reported work of Garstang further elaborated, "*The expedition organized by Sir Charles Marston disclosed the ancient walls of Ai; and it was reported that the city dated from the Early Bronze Age and was totally destroyed in the Late Bronze Age.*"<sup>153</sup>

However, Albright's proposed theory was quickly dismissed together with Garstang's Late Bronze findings when Judith Marquet-Krause's expedition reported that the site was not occupied in the Middle or Late Bronze Age, during her excavation season of 1933-1935. In the 1936 annual of the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly, W. J. Pythian-Adams made this observation:

The results of the recent excavations at Ai will cause some perplexity to those who pin their faith too simply to the spade. The eminent French archaeologist, M. Dussaud, writes concerning these results: 'One of the most unexpected results of the two campaigns of excavation carried on at Ai has been to show that site remained unoccupied during the whole of the Middle and Late Bronze Age, that is from 2000 to 1200 B.C. The name, Ha-ay, 'the ruin,' can only have been given to the site after the destruction of the city, that is, after 2000 B.C. From this, Mme. Judith Marquet-Krause concludes that the site was desolate when the Israelites began the conquest of Canaan (Pythian-Adams 1936:54).

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153. Notes and News. (1929). "*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly*," p. 3.

According to Marquet-Krause she had discovered a walled city that was great in size (27.5 acres) during the Early Bronze Age underlying the almost insignificant Israelite village of only 2.75 acres. Her findings produced no evidence of a Late Bronze Age occupation, which led her to conclude that the Israelite conquest account of Ai in Joshua chapters 7 and 8 was primarily legend (Callaway 1976: 19; Marquet-Krause 1935: 341). Martin Noth agreed with Marquet-Krause casting doubt upon the biblical account and called the narrative an etiological legend (Noth 1935: 7-29; 1960:149). After the untimely death of Judith Marquet-Krause in 1936, her husband compiled a catalogue of objects found in the excavation and published it in 1949. According to Krause's report, the excavation was mainly concentrated on the upper region of the mound and exposed regions of the acropolis and a village dating to the Iron Age period.

Later, et-Tell was excavated by Joseph Callaway and the American Schools of Oriental Research for nine seasons between 1964-1970. Callaway opened eight new sites at et-Tell in areas next to Marquet-Krause's expedition and along the lower east city walls, including three smaller sites in the neighbourhood, which were surveyed to create a more whole archaeological profile of the region. His findings basically confirmed and clarified the 1930s excavations in which Callaway concludes:

...the earliest occupation evidence after the Early Bronze IIIA destruction of the site is Iron Age I, contemporary with Stratum BI at Tell Beit Mirsim. There is no evidence of Late Bronze occupation at et-Tell (Callaway 1968: 314).

This is further supported by present archaeologists such as Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar who reported the following:

Assuming the identification of 'Ai with modern et-Tell, the only prominent site east of Bethel, is correct, the story of its conquest in Josh 8 is negated by the archaeological finds. No Late Bronze Canaanite city was found at this place or in its vicinity. Thus the conquest narrative in Josh 8 cannot be based on historical reality, despite its topographical and tactical plausibility (Finkelstein and Mazar 2007: 62).

Due to the nature of these findings, the statements have made it clear that archaeology has demonstrated that et-Tell as Ai is an obvious problem in the Israelite Conquest narratives since et-Tell was uninhabited during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. If the argument is true, then one could suggest the biblical narrative of the Israelite conquest of Ai is either unhistorical, or the site of et-Tell is not the city of Ai recorded in the book of Joshua. In other words, archaeologists may have looked in the wrong place.

However, there are other scholars who were not in agreement and J. Simons gave four valid reasons why he believes et-Tell is not the biblical site Ai:

- 1) Ai is not near Bethel (Beitin) as it is approximately 3.2 kilometres apart from each other.
- 2) The site was not inhabited during the Conquest.
- 3) The entire area of the excavation site was much larger than the royal city of Gibeon.
- 4) There appears to be no broad valley to the north (Simons 1947: 311; 1959: 270).

Since the two other major sites, Hazor and Jericho, were destroyed and burned in the early phase of the Israelite conquest under Joshua – evidenced by the fire destruction layers at the end of Late Bronze I - the archaeological requirements for Joshua's Ai should find an occupation layer at the time of the Israelite conquest towards the Late Bronze Age I period.

To expound on the first reason listed by J. Simons in the above, there has been much dispute among various archaeologist and biblical scholars on the true location of Bethel, since many have agreed that the village of Beitin, north of Jerusalem, is the site of biblical Bethel (Kelso 1993: 192).<sup>154</sup> Over the past few decades there has been a large volume of literature published since W.F. Albright and James L. Kelso excavated there intermittently through the 1930s. The reports that have been published have allowed many scholars to conclude that Beitin is the ancient city of Bethel.<sup>155</sup>

As far as the Bible is concerned, the city of Ai was east of Bethel, and they were not very far away from each other (Gen 12:8; 13:3.) They were considered to be “twin cities” according to Joshua 12:9 and thus Beth-Aven was *beside* Ai and east of Bethel (Josh 7:2).<sup>156</sup> This meant that Beth-Aven should be east of Ai, while the site of Michmash must have been east of Beth-

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154. Scholars have uncritically accepted this identification to the present day. Rainey, Anson. (2006: 270); Rainey and Notley 2006: 116; cf. Ritter 1866: 226; Albright 1968: 1; Mazar, A.1990: 331, 1992: 283) has gone so far as to say “*the equation of Beitin with biblical Beth-el is absolutely certain*” and (1988b: 68) “*the validity of the equation, Beitin = Bethel is unimpeachable. . . . If Bethel is not Beitin then there is no Historical Geography of the Bible.*” The identification is so fixed in the literature, as with et-Tell, that if one wishes to look up Beitin in an archaeological dictionary or encyclopaedia, generally one must look under “Bethel.” (see The Anchor Bible Dictionary (Dever 1992a).

155. Annual of the American School of Oriental Research, 39, (edited by James L. Kelso, Cambridge, 1968). Hereafter referred to as Bethel.

156. This was Albright viewpoint in The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research (hereafter AASOR), IV (1924), 143. According to Albright these cities must be close together. Brown, Driver, Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon, p. 110, commented that Beth-Aven is “eastward from Bethel.”

Aven (I Sam. 13:5). The search for the proper site of Ai has caused a substantial number of problems in the identity of Beitin / Bethel and because of the uncertainty surrounding the location of Ai, there have been several theories proposed concerning the Bethel-Ai locations. In brief, we shall summarize on these proposed theories; 1) Albright proposed that the authors of the Bible have mistaken Ai for Bethel,<sup>157</sup> 2) it was suggested that the city of Ai was only an insignificant outpost of wooden structures of which there are no remains,<sup>158</sup> 3) some scholars suggested that Bethel is near Shechem,<sup>159</sup> 4) Joseph Callaway concludes that the Conquest of Ai was during the Iron Age I period (circa 12th Century B.C.E.) based on his extensive excavations at et-Tell over the nine seasons, which later became widely accepted by most scholars<sup>160</sup> 5) Grintz proposed that et-Tell is Beth-Aven,<sup>161</sup> 6) Noth and several other leading scholars have dismissed the whole biblical account as unhistorical and they consider it to be purely aetiological,<sup>162</sup> and lastly, (7) the proposed link in etymology between Bethel and Beitin was identified by the earlier pioneer Edward Robinson who used the Onomasticon of Eusebius in an attempt to locate ancient Bethel (Kelso 1993: 192).<sup>163</sup>

However, these proposed theories were strongly refuted by some archaeologists, notably David Livingston and Bryant Wood, who proposed that el-Bireh was probably the proper candidate for ancient Bethel (Livingston 1970: 20-44; Livingston 1971: 39-50; Livingston 1994: 154-59; Wood 2008: 230-31). According to Livingston, Bethel is located at el-Bireh based on his observations that; 1) there is a mountain or hill between el-Bireh and Khirbet Nisya, called Jebel et-Tawil, 2) there is a valley to the north of Khirbet Nisya which has a ridge making it suitable for the ambush to the west and south of the site, and 3) there is a

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157. BASOR, 74 (1939). 16-17; BASOR, 56 (Dec., 1934), 11, But Bethel was a hallowed and well-known centre for centuries in Israel. How could it be confused with Ai? Furthermore, the tribe of Joseph attacked and conquered Bethel while Ai was still a "heap of ruins" (Judg. 1:22-26).

158. Owen, G.E. (1961). *Archaeology and the Bible* (Westwood, N.J., p. 321).

159. Conder, C.R. (1878). *Tent Work in Palestine*, II (London), 106-7. He speaks of a "heretical Bethel". Cf. also W. Ross, "*Is Beitin the Bethel of Jeroboam?*" *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 1941, 22f.; also, Ritter, *Geography*, IV, 227.

160. Callaway, Joseph A (1968). "*New Evidence on the Conquest of Ai*," *JBL*, 87 (Sept), 316.

161. Grintz, J.M. (1961). *Biblica*, 42, 201 f.

162. Albright, W.F. (1939). *BASOR*, 74 (Apr), 16. G.E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (abridged edition; Philadelphia, 1960), p. 48.

163. According to Edward Robinson, he identified the village of Beitin in the West Bank (Israel / Palestine) with ancient Bethel in *Biblical Researches in Palestine, 1838-52*. Based on his conclusions it was fitting that the location described in the earlier texts, and thus the philological similarities between the modern and ancient name, arguing that the replacement of the Hebrew "el," with the Arabic word was not unusual. Dever, W.G. (2006) *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever*, ed. Gitin, Wright and Dessel, Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns.

descent leading down to Jericho through the Wadi Sheban and the Wadi Qelt (Livingston 1999: 15).<sup>164</sup>

Furthermore, Livingston strongly argues that the textual reference of Joshua 7:2 makes no mention of Beth-Aven, which does not meet the prerequisite requirement for locating Ai (Livingston 1999: 16). As Livingston indicated, there is no archaeological evidence that Beiten is Bethel based on the following:<sup>165</sup>

- A. There is no mention in the Bible of Bethel being burned by Joshua. (Livingston 1970: 34-39; Kelso 1968: 3-4).
- B. There's not a single place of archaeological evidence for the identity of Beiten being Bethel.
- C. The Bible explicitly states in I Kings 12:29, II Kings 17:16; 19:29 that Jeroboam's temple was built at Bethel, which archaeologists have never found.<sup>166</sup>
- D. There is no conclusive evidence that Beiten was occupied during the time of Eusebius / Jerome.
- E. The true location of Ai has not been found east of Beiten (Gen 12:8).
- F. No Canaanite occupation was found at Beiten in the Late Bronze Age I period.
- G. The site of Beiten shows no sign of occupation during the Persian period.

Foremost, the Book of Joshua has recorded specifically that the city was fortified at the time of the conquest and thus would have a gate on the north side of the site which will have been destroyed by fire and left in ruins sometime around 1400 BCE (Josh 7:5; 8: 11-:29).

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164. Livingston (1970; 1971; 1989; 1994; 1998; see also Bimson and Livingston 1987: 47-48) pioneered research on the location of Joshua's Ai by first re-investigating the location of Bethel. He gives the following reasons why Beiten cannot be Bethel and why Bethel must be located at el-Bira (see on defence of Robinson's location of Bethel at Beiten, see Rainey 1971; 1978: 9-10; 1980; 1988b; 2006; Rainey and Notley 2006: 116-18).

165. <http://davelivingston.com/bethel14.htm>

166. According to Livingston surface surveys have been conducted at el-Bireh where archaeologists have discovered numerous potteries on the acropolis at Ras et-Tahuneh dating to the Early Bronze, Middle Bronze, Iron I, Iron II, Roman, and Byzantine periods, with the majority coming from the Iron II period - the same period when Jeroboam built the high place in which Bethel was then an important religious centre for the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Finkelstein, Lederman, and Bunimovitz 1997: 512-13). He also suggests that the Ras et-Tahuneh acropolis could have been the location of the high place built by Jeroboam (Livingston 1994: 159; Livingston 1998: 83). However, surveys indicated that no pottery remains were found from the Late Bronze Age and thus for now el-Bireh is still questioned as the site of Bethel.

The biblical narrative was quite clear about walled cities in the land of Canaan before the Israelites arrived and thus found in Numbers 13:28 when Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan to bring back the report in which they complained, “*the cities are walled, and very great . . .*” Again, we find in Deuteronomy 1:28 the spies cried, “*The people are greater and taller than we are; the cities are great and walled up to heaven . . .*” In Deuteronomy Moses promised the Israelites that they would possess “. . . cities great and fenced up to heaven” (Deut 9:1). In Joshua 7:5 we see how the army of Ai chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries, indicating that the site of Ai must have been walled with gates inserted.

Referring to the debates between the Early and Late Date Conquest of Canaan in chapter three; from an archaeological perspective, if we take the Late Date Conquest, many believe the walled cities were non-existent at the time of the Conquest. For the Early Date Conquest, the archaeological evidence for walled cities in the land is quite striking as Benjamin Mazar notes a, “*great upsurge in the construction of large fortresses in the hill country and the Shephelah*” during the Middle Bronze Age (Mazar 1968: 92). Archaeological evidence also revealed that there was no cultural break between Middle Bronze II / III and Late Bronze I, which suggests the walled cities continued through the Late Bronze I period. An example of this was found at Khirbet Nisya where archaeologists unearthed an abundance of Middle and Late Bronze ceramics and artefacts on site, about which Dever commented:

Beginning with Middle Bronze II, and continuing until the end of Middle Bronze III, the archaeological record at nearly every site shows a continual process of **defensive construction**. . . Not only are all the larger sites **fortified**, as might be expected, but even towns and villages as small as 2 to 4 acres are surrounded by city-walls. . . Indeed, scarcely a single excavated Middle Bronze Age site in Palestine has failed to yield formidable fortifications (Dever 1987:154, our emphasis).

While there is universal agreement among archaeologists that et-Tell is probably located in the Benjamin hill country, it fails to meet all the criteria of the true site of Ai. For one, archaeology has revealed that the area of the Early Bronze Age city of et-Tell is 27.5 acres, which is larger than the site of Gibeon measuring 16 acres. As Pritchard concludes, “*The area of the top of the south hill, the site of the ancient settlement, is approximately sixteen acres*” (Pritchard 1962: 392). Secondly, the EBA city at et-Tell was fortified with the exposed gate structures in the south or southeast sectors of the city, in contradiction to the biblical description in the Book of Joshua 7 & 8. Furthermore, only a portion of et-Tell has been

excavated which only reveals three eras of occupation, 1) Early Bronze Age 2) Iron Age, and 3) Byzantine period.

Finally, since Joshua's Ai is widely accepted to be et-Tell, and Bethel to be Beitin, it is important to note that they are linked through a geographical relationship. The geographical and archaeological data pertaining to et-Tell and Beitin (Bethel), however, reveal that et-Tell does not meet the biblical requirements for Joshua's Ai, since Beitin does not meet the biblical requirements for Bethel.<sup>167</sup> Neither can Beth-Aven can be identified as a city, a region, or a landmark since the occupational periods of Beth-Aven remain unclear, meaning that one cannot assign Beth-Aven to any tell or use it as a marker to locate Ai.<sup>168</sup> As far as the evidence is concerned, the biblical requirements for Joshua's Ai meet the criteria of three important sites, Bethel as el-Bira, Beth Aven as Beitin, and either Khirbet Nisya or Khirbet el-Maqtir as the true Ai (to be discussed later). These three sites form a triad linked together by a complex network of geographic and archaeological parameters described in Joshua 7 & 8. In this case the site of et-Tell is not a viable candidate for Joshua's Ai.<sup>169</sup>

**Khirbet Nisya** is another important site that is located just two kilometres southeast of el-Bireh. In subsequent studies and excavations, both Professors, J. Bimson and D. Livingston put forth the theory that Khirbet Nisya is the most likely location of the ancient city of Ai (Bimson and Livingston 1987: 48–51; Livingston 1994: 159; 1999; 2003: 203–22).<sup>170</sup> Livingston who excavated this site for the past ten seasons states:

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167. The reason is this that there were abundant of potteries dating from the Late Bronze I period discovered at Beitin. One specific type of bowl with interior concentric circles painted that was discovered date to the Late Bronze IB period (circa 2nd half of the 15th Century BCE), the time of the Joshua's Conquest. This means this type of pot was rare and unique which did not occur before or after the Conquest period and thus Beitin was occupied at the time of the Conquest. Furthermore, there is abundant Iron Age I remains from the time of Saul / David that Beitin meets both the geographic and archaeological requirements to be identified as Beth Aven.

168. According to Kallai, there is no other identification that can seriously be considered for this site, (Beth Aven) "...there are hardly any other candidates available" (Kallai 1991: 176). In the 3rd edition of Egeria's Travels, J. Wilkinson concluded in his footnote that Bethar equals with Beth Aven (1999: 27).

169. Since et-Tell has been extensively excavated for long periods of time, it is unrealistic to believe that a Late Bronze Age phase have yet to be found or one can conclude that the Late Bronze Age phase was subject to "serious denudation," as some have suggested (Allen 1977: 44, 52; Kitchen 2003: 189).

170. The location of Biblical Bethel and Ai reconsidered, *The Westminster Theological Journal*, 33.

...have clearly shown that the site was occupied during the biblical periods when Ai was in existence. Periods of significant occupation, determined by ceramic, artefactual and architectural evidence are: Early Bronze (possibly), Middle Bronze II, Late Bronze I, Late Bronze IIB, Iron Age I and II, Persian, Hellenistic, Early Roman, Byzantine and Early Arab...Furthermore, the topography around the site matches every detail given in the account of the destruction of Ai in Joshua 7-8 (Livingston 1994: 159).

According to Livingston, the topography around Khirbet Nisya matches every detail given in the account of the destruction of Ai in Joshua 7-8 since excavations have shown that the site was occupied during the biblical periods when Ai was in existence. The archaeological data that Livingston collected indicates significant periods of occupation; determined by artefacts, ceramics and architectural remains dating from the Middle Bronze II, Late Bronze I, Late Bronze II B, Iron Age I and II, Persian, Hellenistic, Early Roman, Byzantine and Early Islamic (Livingston 1987, 1989). As mentioned earlier, he believes that Bethel is located at el-Bireh for several reasons; 1) Between el-Bireh and Khirbet Nisya there is a mountain or a hill that is called Jebel et-Tawil, 2) north of Khirbet Nisya is a valley, 3) towards the west and south of Khirbet Nisya is a ridge suitable for an ambush and (4) there is a descent leading down to Jericho through the Wadi Sheban and the Wadi Qelt (Livingston 1999: 15). Again Livingston argues that the LXX of Joshua 7:2 makes no mention of Beth-Aven, therefore he does not consider it to be a suitable location for Ai (Livingston 1999: 16).

Secondly, Livingston argues that Khirbet Nisya did have existing walls during the Middle Bronze II and Late Bronze Age I periods, and thus probably were constructed of mudbricks with a fieldstone base. These Middle Bronze II and Late Bronze I walls were built on a fieldstone base about one-meter-high and topped with mudbricks to the desired height. There is evidence of such walls found at Aphek (Kochavi 1975:30), Beth-Shemesh (Avi-Yonah 1975 1:250), Beitin (Avi-Yonah 1975 1:192), Beth-Zur (Ibid. 1:265), Dan (Biran 1984:8), Hazor (Avi-Yonah 1975 2:481), Jericho (Ibid. 2:562), Khirbet Zurekiyeh (Gophna and Ayalon 1981: 69), Shechem (Seger 1975:35) and Tel Nagila (Avi-Yonah 1975 3:896).

Livingstone explains that many of these existing mudbrick walls have eroded over long periods due to winter rains. An example of this was found at Tel Dan where archaeologists discovered mudbricks that were deteriorating very rapidly when exposed and it was difficult to preserve these walls. As a result, the soil of the earlier strata on site has been destroyed with very little stratigraphy remains to work with. Thus the search for the remains of mudbrick walls may be futile, as in the case at Tel el-Ful, Tel en-Nasbeh, Gibeon, and Shiloh including Khirbet Nisya.

The sites of Tel el-Ful, Tel el-Jib and Tel en-Nasbeh were all near Khirbet Nisya and archaeology reveals that there were some remains of ceramics found at each of these sites, but no remains of buildings and no evidence of agricultural activities were found. The report of Tel el-Ful was further elaborated on by Paul Lapp:

From a very few maceheads and potsherds, Sinclair judged that the earliest occupation at Tell el-Ful was Middle Bronze; there were no building remains. . . . The building of the fortress and the housing on the eastern edge of the mound destroyed most of the pre-fortress evidence, except what could be found in pockets in the bedrock. It is possible that some of the silos were cut in this period, but they were reused in later periods, rendering a date for most of them impossible (Lapp 1981: 6).

With regards to Tel en-Nasbeh, Magen Broshi states:

Of the Calcolithic-Early Bronze Age) No architectural remains whatsoever were discovered on the mound from these periods. The only evidence of occupation were the sherds found scattered over the surface of the site and in the caves (Avi-Yonah 1976: 914).

However, Dr Bryant Wood did not agree with David Livingston's theory that Khirbet Nisya is the biblical site of Ai. Firstly, the site of Khirbet Nisya is located southeast of el-Bireh rather than east, which does pose a problem for its geographic identification as Ai, as both professors agreed that el-Bireh is probably the correct site for Bethel. Secondly, Wood explains that while Khirbet Nisya may have been in the correct general area, the ultimate problem is that archaeology hasn't delivered any evidence of fortifications / architectural buildings from the Late Bronze Age period - let alone the Hellenistic Period - which indicates that the fortified city and gates at Khirbet Nisya were not found. Thus it did not exist during the Israelite Conquest. The site also lacks any form of evidence of the fire destruction that could possibly relate to the conquest of Ai recorded in the book of Joshua.

And finally, the size of Khirbet Nisya was in fact smaller than Gibeon, measuring 4 to 6 acres in size during the Late Bronze Age (Livingston 2003: 12). In this case the site of Khirbet Nisya should be removed from consideration as ancient Ai and a continuation of the search for the true location of Ai is now warranted. Wood has proposed that Ai is instead located at the site of Kirbet el-Maqatir, arguing that the evidence for this site being Ai is stronger than both at et-Tell and Khirbet Nisya.

### 6.3 Excavation History of Khirbet el-Maqatir

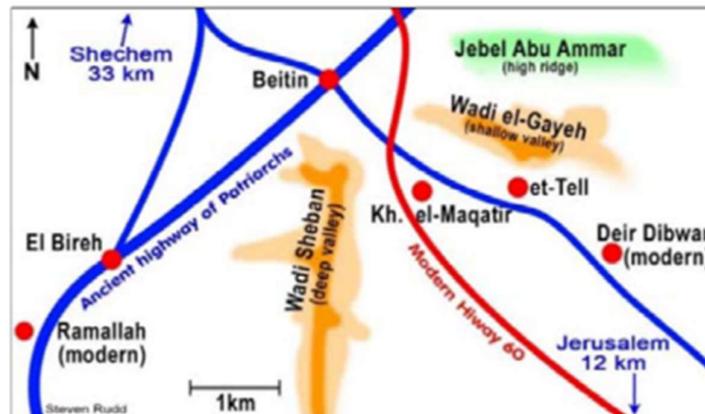


Fig 33. Location of Khirbet el-Maqatir.

The site of Khirbet el-Maqatir is strategically located in the highlands of Canaan, 15 km north of Jerusalem, on the south bank of the Wadi el-Gayeh.<sup>171</sup> It also lies just east of the north-south ridge road which runs through the central hill country from Jerusalem to El Bireh (the proposed site of Bethel), west of the site and then northwards towards Shechem. The site itself is situated on an eroded natural limestone hill with a summit 890 m (2920 ft) above sea level. Bedrock is exposed in many places, with the remaining soil less than 1m (3.3 ft) deep in most cases.

The survey of the site began in 1994 when Dr. Bryant Wood, of the Associates for Biblical Research, and his colleague, Gary Byers, scouted and surveyed the area for possible research and a year later, under the direction of Dr. Wood, the ABR team began full-scale excavations. In 2014, Scott Stripling replaced Bryant Wood as the director of excavations and was joined

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171. The first part of the name of the site, *khirbet* – a word which is generally understood as meaning “ruin.” Technically speaking *khirbeh* (no T) is the word for ruin. *Khirbet* with the T is always followed by another noun, e.g. *Khirbet Khuweilfeh*. In Arabic and Hebrew, a noun followed by another noun is called the construct form and implies the preposition “of” as falling in between the two, so *Khirbet Khuweilfeh* means the ruin of *Khuweilfeh*. With Hebrew (and probably with Arabic) construct forms only acquire an ending T if the word ends with a vowel sound, such as *khirbeh* where the “h” is not pronounced. Nouns that end with consonants aren’t given a final T when used in the construct form. For example, the plural of *khirbeh* is *khirab* (ruins). A tell is another type of archaeological site found in Israel. The tell is an artificial mound of dirt & debris that has been accumulating for centuries. Imagine a layer cake and instead of cake there are several ancient cities stacked on top of each other. The *khirbeh* – (or ruin) on the other hand, doesn’t have the same archaeological profile as a tell. The features of the *khirbeh* can generally be seen on top of the ground – (for example, walls, gates, and other structures). A very famous *khirbeh* (or ruin) in Israel is *Khirbet Qumran* where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. The second part of the title – **maqatir** means “incense” and may have a connection with the Byzantine church & monastery on a hill overlooking the ancient site.

by other members of the excavation team including well-known scholar Leon Ritmeyer.<sup>172</sup> Five phases of occupation have been identified (see chart on next page on the excavation history of Khirbet el-Maqtar, Fig 34).

Table 1.5

NO	ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIOD	APPROXIMATE DATES
1	THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE PERIOD	circa 1600-1500 BCE
2	THE LATE BRONZE I PERIOD	circa 1500-1400 BCE
3	THE IRON AGE I PERIOD	circa 1200-1100 BCE
4	THE LATE HELLENISTIC / EARLY ROMAN PERIOD	circa 100 BCE – 100 CE
5	THE BYZANTINE PERIOD	circa 375-525 CE

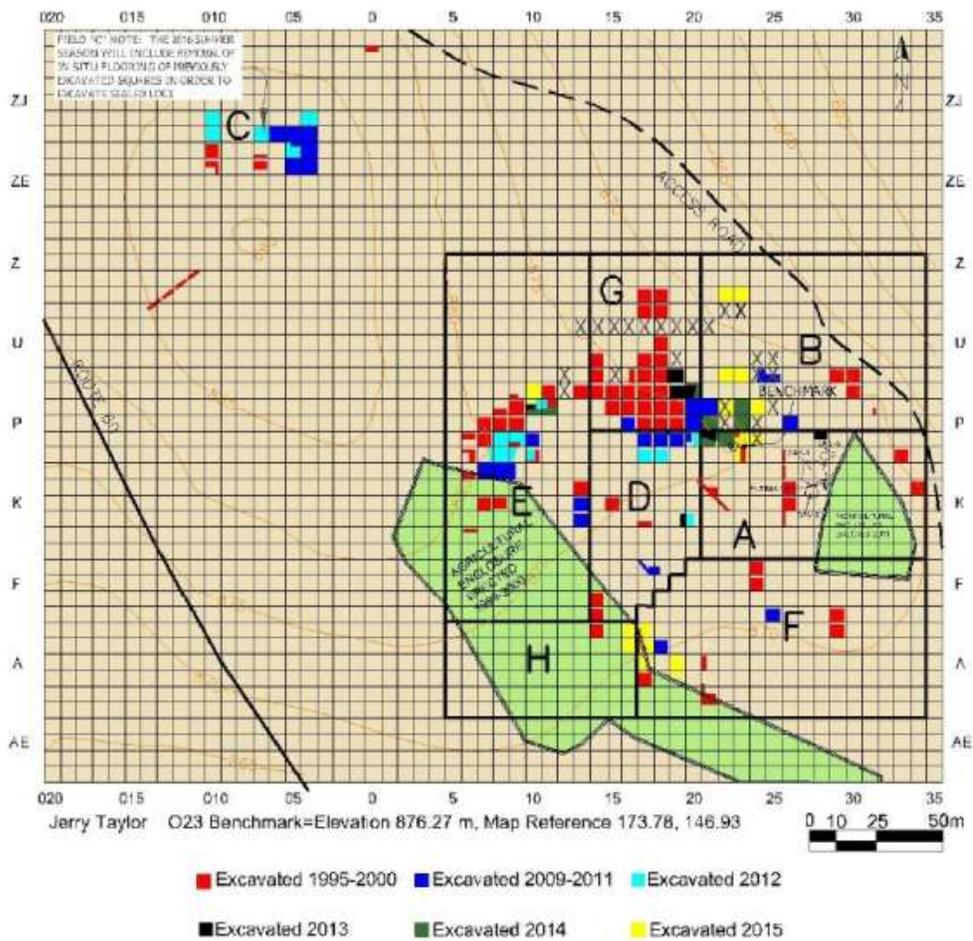


Fig 34. Excavation History of Khirbet el-Maqtar: 1995-2000 – 2009-2016 – Associate for Biblical Research.

172. Visit Leon Ritmeyer Archaeological Design for the latest research, analysis and products on Biblical Archaeology at <https://www.ritmeyer.com/author/admin/>

## 6.4 Geographical Data in Correspondence with Joshua's Ai

In this section it is essential that we find the correct locations of Beth Aven, Bethel and Joshua's Ai which is absolutely crucial in understanding the date, nature and historicity of the Conquest as described in Joshua. Over the past century the identification of these sites has eluded scholars, since the beginning of scientific historical-geographical research in the modern state of Israel (Palestine). It began with Edward Robinson in 1838 when he claimed to have identified Beitin as Bethel and he rejected the local tradition that Ai was located at Khirbet el-Maqatir. The majority of biblical scholars have universally accepted Robinson's conclusions to the present day and as a result, not only have Bethel and Joshua's Ai been misidentified, but also Beth Aven.

**BETH AVEN:** The book of Joshua provides specific geographical indicators for the location of Ai when Joshua entered Canaan. Joshua's brilliant military strategy was to divide and conquer land with his tactical decision to avoid the flat coastal plains where large armies, cavalry, and chariots had the advantage over them. The best way was to head for the hills, where a lightly armed strike force could manoeuvre easily and divide the land at a logical and strategic location, the Wadi el-Gayah, 16 km north of Jerusalem. The wadi was a naturally formed ravine/valley that served as a political boundary in the land of Canaan to separate areas governed by the city-state of Jerusalem and the central territory governed by the city-state of Shechem.<sup>173</sup>

Secondly, the wadi functioned as the border between the Benjamin and Ephraim regions in which Professor Wood suggested the military outpost in that area was visible from Jerusalem, which guarded the northern border from the Amorites in the south (Josh 18:12–13; cf. 7:7; 10:1–6). Thirdly, Wood pointed out that on the north side of the wadi stood a fortress at Beitin which was only 1.5 km away and not far away enough from the southern border fortress for the Shechem league. The sites of Khirbet el-Maqatir and et-Tell both sit near the southern embankment of the Wadi el-Gayeh.

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173. Wood, Bryant G. (2008). "The Search for Joshua's Ai," in *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History*, ed. Richard S. Hess, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Paul J. Ray Jr. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 237–38. A Wadi is a valley, ravine, or channel that is dry except in the rainy season.

The Book of Joshua 7:2 describes Ai as being near Beth Aven that is located on the northern boundary of the territory of Benjamin (Josh 18:12) east of Bethel and west of Michmash (1 Sam 13:5; 1 Sam 14:23). According to 1 Samuel, Beth Aven may have been occupied towards the latter end of Iron Age I period, although nothing has specifically been said to indicate that it was an occupied city (1 Sam 13:5; 14:23). Once again, we find the name Beth-Aven mentioned in the Book of Hosea, which was probably during the Iron Age II period, an unoccupied period at Et-Tell; but once again nothing in the book specifies that it was an inhabited site (Hos 4:15; 5:8; 10:5).<sup>174</sup>

Because Khirbet el Maqatir sits across the Wadi el-Gayeh 1.5 km to the south-southeast of Beitin, the wadi in fact formed a border between the territory of the Jerusalem city-state coalition to the south and the territory of the Shechem city state to the north (Wood 1999: 23; Toombs 1992: 1183).<sup>175</sup>

In other words, the wadi actually became the border between the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim when the tribal allotments were made (Josh 18:12–13). In general, the site of Khirbet el-Maqatir was the northern border fortress for the Jerusalem city-state coalition that became strategically important to the Israelites. The chief in command of the Israelites confederation, Joshua, most likely chose this site in the central hill country of Canaan as the first to be attacked and thus Beth Aven could have been the logistical support in this undertaking. This means that the site of Beitin was the southern border fortress for the city-state of Shechem that should be identified as Beth Aven (Wood 1999).

**BETHEL:** One of the main issues with identifying Beitin as Bethel is the ongoing argument among various archaeologists and biblical scholars that the site is generally considered to be the ancient city of Bethel (Kelso 1993: 192). This stems from the idea of the early explorer Edward Robinson who used the Onomasticon of Eusebius to locate ancient Bethel, based upon the general geographic area; a proposed link in etymology between Bethel and Beitin (Kelso 1993: 192).

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174. There are no candidate sites for Beth-aven northeast of and reasonably close to Beitin, providing additional evidence that Beitin cannot be Bethel.

175. According to biblical evidence the Israelites were working closely with the Shechemites in carrying out the conquest of Canaan (Wood 1997: 246–47; 1999b: 22).

However, Livingston proposed that el-Bireh was the more likely candidate for ancient Bethel (Livingston 1970: 20-44; Livingston 1971: 39-50; Livingston 1994: 154-59).<sup>176</sup> This view was supported by Wood and Scott Stripling of ABR.<sup>177</sup> They reasoned this on two fronts:

1. The Bethel / Beitin equation contradicts the idea that the fortress at Bethel served the Shechem alliance. If we take the Bethel / El Bireh equation it has no contradiction since the site of El Bireh lies south of the Wadi el-Gayeh, positioning it with the southern alliance.
2. The Bethel / Beitin equation contradicts the work of Eusebius as Rupert Chapman pointed out that Eusebius commentary of Gibeon was 6.4 km west of Bethel which is incompatible with the currently accepted identification of Bethel with Beitin. In Joshua 7:2, the biblical texts have clearly stated that fortress of Ai stood east of Bethel in which one can say that both sites Khirbet el-Maqatir and et-Tell lie east of Bethel, El Bireh and Beitin.

Furthermore, three members of the ABR excavation team did a trial walk in 2014 from Wadi Sheban to Khirbet el-Maqatir which took them just five minutes to complete. According to Joshua 8: 2-9, "*Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people.*" This means the ambush site was west of the fortress that is between Bethel and Ai.

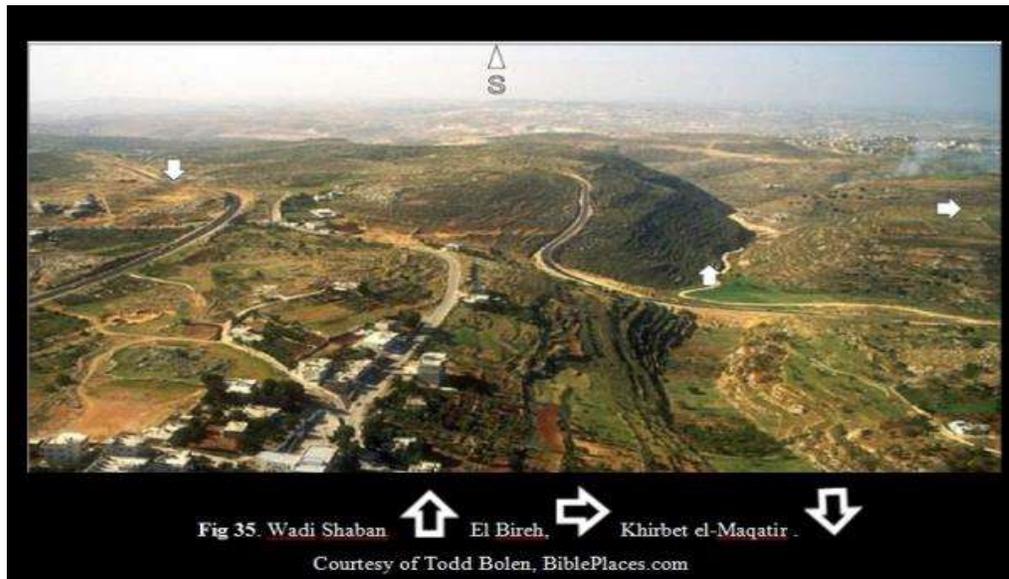
Looking at the aerial view of the Benjamin plain (Fig 35), the Wadi Sheban runs between El Bireh and Khirbet el-Maqatir which has a deep ravine that could have easily concealed numerous troops from watchers at Khirbet el-Maqatir or El Bireh. The map below shows the geographical relationship of the sites, with El Bireh situated to the right of the photo, while on the west side of the photo you can clearly see that the site of et-Tell already lacks an ambush site, ruling it out as the possible Ai. In verse eleven Joshua stationed his soldier north of Ai and it clearly says that there was a valley between him and Ai. The Khirbet el-Maqatir

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176. Livingston, D. Khirbet Nisya, 177; Wood, "Joshua's Ai," 221. Rupert L. Chapman III, "*Annotated Index to Eusebius' Onomasticon*," in *The Onomasticon by Eusebius of Caesarea: Palestine in the Fourth Century A.D.*, trans. G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, indexed by Rupert L. Chapman III, ed. Joan E. Taylor (Jerusalem: Carta, 2003), 131.

177. Stripling, Scott and Mark Hassler, Mark. (2016). The "Problem" of Ai in Joshua 7–8: Solved after Forty Years of Excavation in the West Bank of Israel.

sits exactly near the southern slope of a west-east valley, the Wadi el-Gayeh, which is visible from Khirbet el-Maqatir. Just north of Khirbet el-Maqatir beyond the Wadi el-Gayeh, stands Jabel Abu Ammar, 1.4 km away; a west-east ridge that would have provided the Israelites with excellent visibility and thus the geography and topography of Khirbet el-Maqatir meets the criteria set out in Joshua 7–8. We shall now shift to the archaeological data that was found on the site of Khirbet el-Maqatir.<sup>178</sup>



### 6.5 Archaeological Data in Correspondence with Joshua’s Ai

As we’ve discussed in the geographical aspects of the book of Joshua it’s important that we discuss the archaeological aspects of Khirbet el-Maqatir, the proposed site Joshua’s Ai which should meet the criteria as described during the conquest recorded in Joshua 8:1. The prerequisite archaeological requirements must include the following: (1) occupation at the time of the conquest (circa 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, towards the end of the Late Bronze Age I period); (2) Ai was a fortified city at the time of the conquest (Josh 7:5, 8:29); (3) the city gate was on the north side of the site (Josh 8:11); (4) the city was destroyed by fire (Josh 8:19, 28), and (5) the entire city was left in ruins in approximately 1400 BCE (Josh 8:28).

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178. See catalogue of all the criteria required by the biblical text and that comport with Maqatir’s location and setting, see Bryant Wood, “*Researching Ai*,” *Bible and Spade* 22/3 (2009): 75-78.

As far as the dating is concerned, the Israelites entered the land of Canaan in approximately 1406 BCE - a date derived from the biblical scripture of 1 Kings 6:1 which reflects the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE exodus-conquest model (the “biblical” model) rather than the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE model. According to the ABR team, the artefacts that were found were already established in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE at Khirbet el-Maqatir.

The discoveries made at Khirbet el-Maqatir include: rare 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE Egyptian scarabs, one displaying a falcon-headed sphinx, tentatively dated to the reign of Amenhotep II; a Middle Bronze two-chambered city gate with sling stones around the area and a wall complex; Late Bronze Age I fortifications; large quantities of pottery from the Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age I, Iron Age and an infant burial jar; remains from the Judges period; evidence of destruction by fire; ancient coins; a First Century CE city / town; and a Byzantine monastery.<sup>179</sup> Archaeological data shows that the site was continuously occupied until the end of the Late Bronze Age I, when the city was destroyed and burned as indicated in Joshua 8.

In 2009 the ABR team discovered an infant burial jar beneath a building located just inside the entrance gateway of the Late Bronze I fortress (Square O18). The mortuary custom of burying infants in jars was common during the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1950–1485 BCE) but less common in Late Bronze Age I (ca. 1500 - 1400 BCE) and largely unknown in Late Bronze Age II (ca. 1400-1200 BCE - Gonen 1987: 97; 1992: 98–123). The grave goods that were placed inside the jars were common during the Middle Bronze period, but it became more common to place the grave goods outside the jar during the Late Bronze Age I periods.<sup>180</sup> The burial jar was sitting on a bedrock just 15 inches below the surface which had a hole cut into it, which appears to be quite unusual since the vast majority of infant burial jars had the neck and rim broken off and the insertion was made from the top of the jar (Ilan 1996: 248; Yadin et al. 1960: 85). Just outside the infant burial jar were four offering vessels (Figs. 36) with the remains of human bones scattered about the jar. According to archaeologist a rodent had removed the remains soon after internment.<sup>181</sup>

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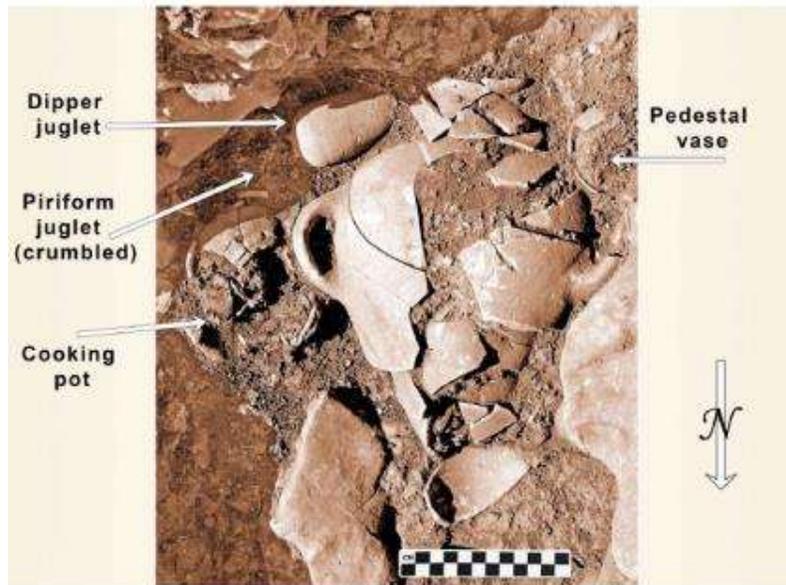
179. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/07/01/Follow-up-Report-on-the-2013-Season-at-Khirbet-el-Maqatir.aspx>

180. The site el-'Ajjul Tomb 1 (Fischer and Sadeq 2002: 135–137, 142); Megiddo Tombs 37K4, 37M (Guy 1938: 80–81) and 3026 (Loud 1948:127 [Fig. 333], 168, Area BB, Str. X, redated to early Late Bronze I by Gonen (1992: 106).

<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/02/09/ABRe28099s-2009-Excavation-at-Khirbet-el-Maqatir-The-Infant-Jar-Burial.aspx>

181. Excavations at Khirbet el-Maqatir: the 2009–2011 Seasons, Gary A. Byers, D. Scott Stripling, and Bryant G. Wood. With a contribution by Marina Faerman.

The scattered remains found in the storage jar were the bones of a perinatal infant that was identified by anthropologists at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The term “Perinatal,” means “relating to the time, usually a number of weeks, immediately before and after birth.” In the event of the discovery, it appears that the human bones were defined as a foetus, a newborn less than 28 days old. The discovery of infant burial jars indicates that women were living in the area despite the fact that women did not normally live at a military fortress.



**Fig 36.** Infant burial jar surrounded by offering vessels. Photo by Michael Luddeni, © Associates for Biblical Research 2009.

Furthermore, pottery was an important piece of evidence in the dating of Khirbet el-Maqatir, since the discovery of the intramural infant burial jar with accompanying grave goods - such as the dipper juglet, piriform juglet and the flat-bottomed cooking pot - were all dated to the Middle Bronze Age III and Late Bronze Age I periods. It is understood that the grave goods associated with the Khirbet el-Maqatir burial jar were of Middle Bronze III / Late Bronze Age I periods as the context and typology of the burial tends toward the Late Bronze Age I suggesting the burial jar itself is a Late Bronze Age I type. As a result, this pottery should be dated towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age or the beginning of the Late Bronze Age Period (ca. 1500 BCE).

The table below demonstrates the subsequent activity at Khirbet el-Maqatir used to determine the date and approximate layout of the Late Bronze Age I fortress. The evaluation of the Late Bronze Age I pottery is presented in Square Q17 as follows.

Table 1.6. Late Bronze Age I pottery from Khirbet el-Maqatir, Square Q17

NO	TYPE	LOCUS	DESCRIPTION
1	Store jar	10	Paste: 10 YR 6/1; many fine and few small white, few medium ceramic; light grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior 7.5 YR 6/4, fine combing beginning 6 cm below base of neck.
2	Jar/jug rim	10	Paste: 7.5 YR 7/6; many fine and occasional small-medium white, some small red ceramic, few small sand, occasional large wadi gravel; dark grey core; hard. Surface: interior as paste, exterior 2.5 YR 6/6 slip.
3	base	10	Paste: 2.5 YR 6/8; many fine and few small white, occasional small red and black ceramic; grey core; hard. Surface: interior as paste, exterior 7.5 YR 8/2 slip.
4	Cooking pot	10	Paste: 2.5 YR 5/8; many small, medium, large white; some small, medium sand; dark grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste; bottom is fire blackened.
5	Pithos rim	12	Paste: 7.5 YR 7/6; many small and medium white, many small and medium wadi gravel; dark grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
6	Pithos	12	Paste: 2.5 YR 6/6; many medium white, many medium wadi gravel, some medium red ceramic; dark grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
7	Jug rim	12	Paste: 5 YR 7/6; many small, medium large white; some small, medium, large wadi gravel; occasional small, medium red ceramic; light grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
8	Jug rim	12	Paste: 5 YR 7/8; many small and medium wadi gravel, some medium white; light grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
9	Jug rim	12	Paste: 5 YR 6/6; many fine and few medium white, few medium wadi gravel, occasional small red and black ceramic, occasional organic; light grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
10	Jug rim	12	Paste: 7.5 YR 7/3; many fine white, few small wadi gravel; light grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
11	Krater rim	12	Paste: 5 YR 7/4; many small and medium white, few small and medium organic, occasional small red and black ceramic; dark grey core; hard. Surface: interior as paste, exterior 5 YR 8/1 slip.
12	Jar/jug	12	Paste: 5 YR 7/6; many fine and occasional small white, occasional small red ceramic; grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.

13	Jug rim	12	Paste: 5 YR 6/1; many fine and occasional small white; dark grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
14	Globular bowl rim	12	Paste: 5 YR 7/6; some fine and few small white, some small black ceramic; light grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
15	Jar/jug rim	12	Paste: 5 YR 6/6; many small and medium white, many small and medium wadi gravel, occasional small red ceramic; no core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
16	Jar rim	12	Paste: 7.5 YR 7/4; some fine white, few small red and black ceramic; no core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
17	Globular bowl rim	12	Paste: 5 YR 7/6; many fine and occasional small white, few small and medium wadi gravel, few small and medium red ceramic; light grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
18	Krater base	12	Paste: 5 YR 7/6; many small and medium wadi gravel, some small and medium white, occasional small and medium red ceramic; black core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
19	Jug rim	12	Paste: 5YR 7/6; some small red ceramic, few fine and occasional small white; light grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
20	Globular bowl	12	Paste: 7.5 YR 7/4; many fine and few medium white, few medium and large wadi gravel, few small red ceramics in slip; grey core; hard. Surface: interior as paste, exterior 2.5 YR 6/8 slip.
21	Cooking pot rim	12	Paste: 2.5 YR 4/8; many small, medium and large white; some medium organic; black core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
22	Cooking pot rim	12	Paste: 2.5 YR 5/6; many small wadi gravel, some small crystal; dark grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.
23	Cooking pot rim	12	Paste: 2.5 YR 6/6; many small and medium white, many small and medium wadi gravel, some very small crystal; grey core; hard. Surface: interior and exterior as paste.

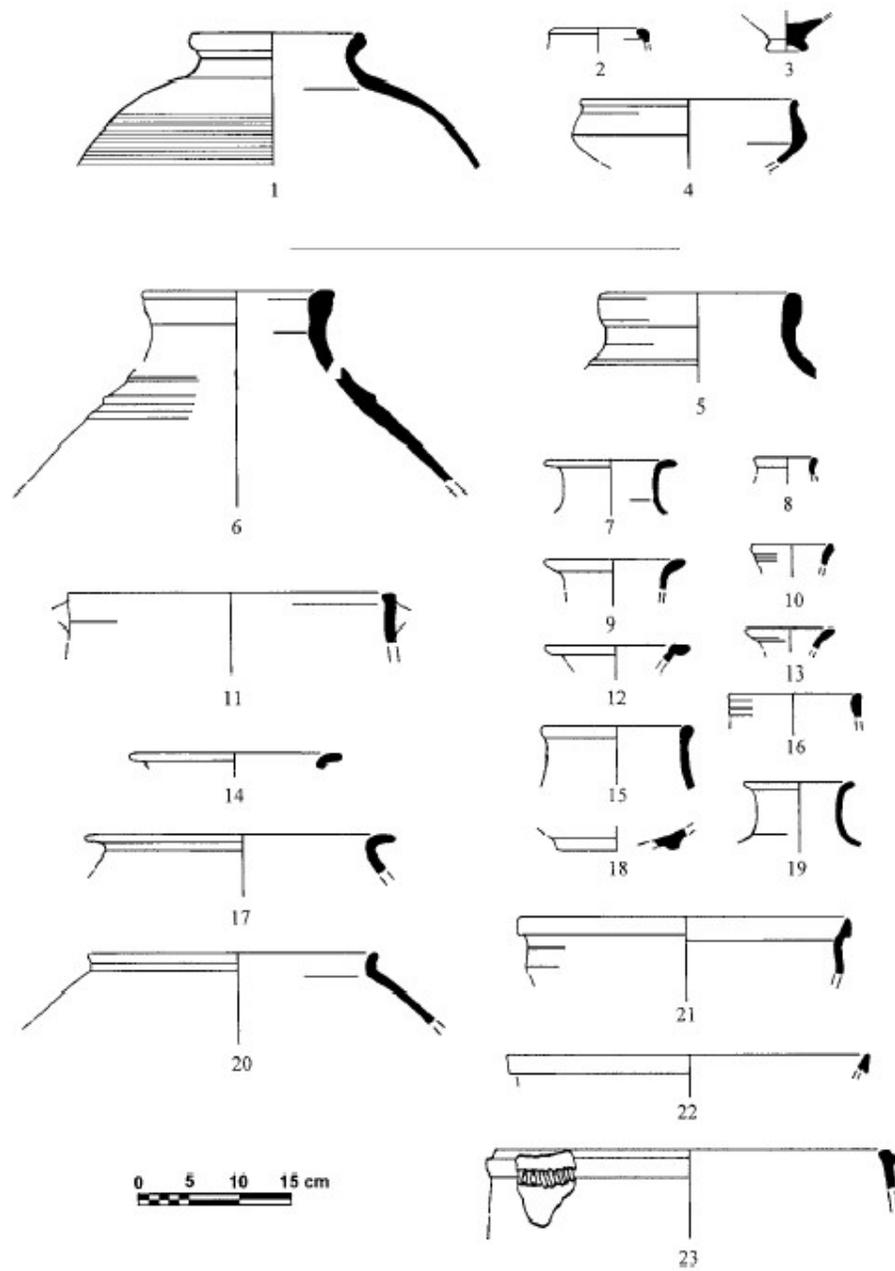


Figure 37. The chart shows the Late Bronze Age I pottery found at Khirbet el-Maqatir, Square Q17.

From what archaeology has revealed, the burial indicates that the building inside the gate of Khirbet el-Maqatir was not just an administrative centre, but living quarters where people once lived. In other words the building probably served both as the living quarters for the fortress commander and the administrative centre for the fortress. The archaeological evidence strongly suggests that the building was the residence of a high-ranking family and probably the king of Ai who features prominently in the narrative of Joshua 8. This suggests

that the site of Khirbet el-Maqatir is Joshua's Ai (Jos 7–8; Wood 2009).<sup>182</sup> Another piece of evidence that is crucial to the dating and destruction of this site, is the discovery of a bronze figurine, a decapitated ram's head, from the Late Bronze Age I period that lay a few metres from the Egyptian scarabs. This was discovered recently in 2014. This suggests that the decapitated ram's head was deliberately smashed, most likely by the Israelites during the destruction of Ai in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.<sup>183</sup>

It was common practice at the time for the conquering Israelites to destroy not only the city but to mutilate statues of kings and dignitaries.<sup>184</sup> The ram's head was discovered in conjunction with decapitated statues/stone figurines found at Hazor under the directorship of first Yigael Yadin in the 1950s -1960s and then Amnon Ben-Tor in the 1990s. They both identify the Israelites as the most likely candidates for the destruction of the Late Bronze IIB city of Hazor (Stratum 1A). The picture (Fig 38) shown below depicts the evidence of a downward slash on the neck of the figurine that penetrated almost a third of the way through it.



**Fig 38.** Left, Bronze ram's head; right, sever mark on the neck from the decapitation.

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182. 2009 The ABR Excavation at Khirbet el-Maqatir: Review of Past Work and Report on the 2009 Season. ABR Newsletter July 2009.

183. Peterson, Brian N. (2018). "The Kh. el-Maqatir Ram's Head: Evidence of the Israelite Destruction of Ai?" Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin (in press).

184. Ben-Tor, Amnon. (2006). "The Sad Fate of Statues and the Mutilated Statues of Hazor," in *Confronting the Past: Archaeological and Historical Essays on Ancient Israel in Honor of William G. Dever*, ed. Seymour Gitin, J. Edward Wright, and J. P. Dessel (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 14.

The head was deliberately broken off, which appears to be the first evidence on the destruction of Ai. It appears there is a strong connection between the Late Bronze I severed ram's head found at Khirbet el-Maqatir and the ritual desecration of statues and cult sites at Hazor. If this is correct, one can assume that the ram's head figurine may have some direct connections to one of the Egyptian deities, Khnum or Amun, which were dominant throughout the Eighteenth Dynasty. In general, the ruler of Ai (Maqatir) may have met and supplied Amenhotep II on one of his campaigns into the Levant, during year 9, when he stopped at Apeh. And if correct, this means the ruler of Ai may have received the Amenhotep scarab and bronze figurine which is expected to have been at the hands of Israelites during their conquest of Canaan; especially if there was any connection to the possible Pharaoh of the Exodus, Amenhotep II (Petrovich 2006:81–110).<sup>185</sup> Further discussion on gates, fortifications and remains of ashes to follow.

## 6.6 Late Bronze I Fortress

In Joshua 8:11 a description is provided of Joshua's arrival at Ai, where his army stood "*in front*" of the city on its north side. Then further down in verse 29 we are told that the Israelites threw the king's corpse into "*the fortress gate.*" This means they must have stood in front of the walled city with a gate and thus in search of the true identity of the biblical city of Ai, one should expect to find the remains of the city gate.

During the 1995 expedition, the team from ABR discovered the remains of the gate and socket stones which held the doorposts of the gate in place, fulfilling the precise requirement for Ai. The finding of the remains of the city gate meant that the site of Khirbet el-Maqatir must have had a fortification system; which proved to be the case, as archaeologists discovered a megalith structure there dating to the Middle Bronze III period (ca. 1560 -1485 BCE).

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185. Petrovich, Douglas. (2010) Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus Pharaoh, <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2010/02/04/Amenhotep-II-and-the-Historicity-of-the-Exodus-Pharaoh.aspx> Secondly, the Amarna Tablets EA 285–90 describes the correspondence from the king of Jerusalem, Abdu-Heba, to the Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs (either Amenhotep III or IV) clearly showing his loyalty to Egypt. These letters are within just a few decades of the reign of Amenhotep II. The evidence is clear that Egypt was in control of Canaan especially after the campaigns of Thutmose III. For the texts of EA#286–90, see ANET 487–89. Also see, Amenhotep II as Pharaoh of the Exodus by William Shea, <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/02/22/Amenhotep-II-as-Pharaoh-of-the-Exodus.aspx>

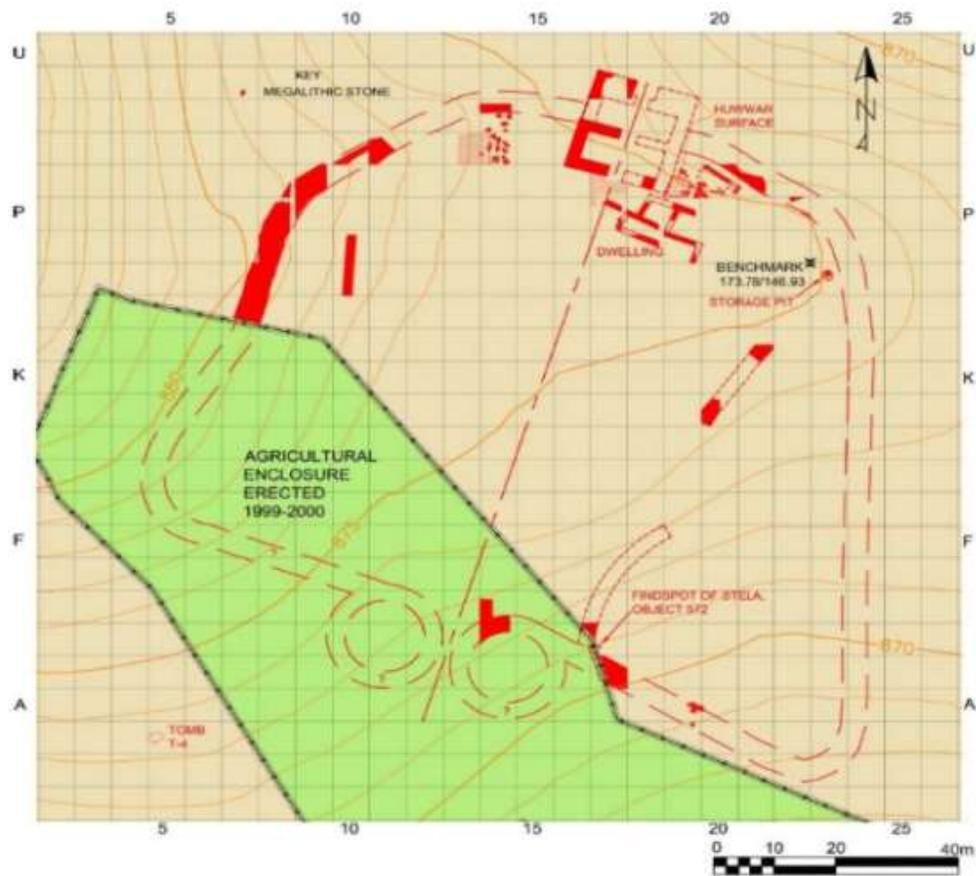
The term "megalithic" describes structures made of such large stones - without the use of mortar or concrete - that existed in the Levant during prehistoric times.<sup>186</sup> These megaliths were formed structures inside the fortress of Khirbet el-Maqatir, found on the east and west sides of the gate. The size of these cyclopean stones measures a massive 7.2 x 3.8 x 2.9 feet (2.2 x 1.2 x 0.9 m) and they appear to be part of the intersection of the southern and eastern walls of the fortress. The fortifications at Khirbet el-Maqatir went under construction towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age which later fell during the Late Bronze IB period; the time of the Israelite conquest (Fig 39).

Coming back to the discovery of the city gates, archaeologists only managed to find the one chamber that had survived the Israelite conquest. The chamber did not show any signs of interior benches, while the gate complex was still laid with flagstone paving. Also discovered in the gate passageway were tiled vats that were reused for industrial purposes during the latter half of the Second Temple period. According to archaeologists, the gate was probably four-chambered since they found six lower socket stones of which two were discovered during the 2016 excavation season. The first lower gate socket was discovered in 1995 when the well-worn post hole was visible on the surface. Then in 1996 they unearthed a second lower socket stone, as well as a rare upper counter socket stone. The three socket stones were located south of the southern pier of the western gate chamber which seems to suggest that they were part of the inside southern door of the gate. Then some seventeen years later, in 2013, they discovered a third lower socket stone (Fig 40) dating from the Late Bronze I fortress of the time of Joshua<sup>187</sup>. The size and thickness of the western wall of the fortress measured thirteen feet (4 m).

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186. Megalithic Jordan; an introduction and field guide. Amman, Jordan: The American Center of Oriental Research. See more megaliths: Birch, Nicholas (22 April 2008). "7,000 years older than Stonehenge: the site that stunned archaeologists" – via The Guardian. Scheltema, H.G.

187. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2013/07/01/Follow-up-Report-on-the-2013-Season-at-Khirbet-el-Maqatir.aspx> Also see 2013 DIG REPORT at [http://www.bibleinterp.com/PDFs/BibleInterp\\_2013\\_report.pdf](http://www.bibleinterp.com/PDFs/BibleInterp_2013_report.pdf)



**Fig 39.** Fortress at Khirbet el-Maqatir. Plan of the MB III-LB I fortress showing the location of Square C17 24 m east of the conjectured southern entrance of the fortress.



**Fig 40.** The city gate socket discovered on the first day of the 2013 excavation season.

## 6.7 Khirbet El-Maqatir 2000 Dig Report

The summary of the 2000 dig report is given below.<sup>188</sup>

### 6.7.1 The Ashes of Ai

The book of Joshua (8:18–19) mentions that the Israelites burned three cities in Canaan; 1) Jericho, 2) Ai, and 3) Hazor. At Khirbet el-Maqatir, the team of ABR discovered large numbers of ash layers buried in the ground. As described in verse 28, the Israelites burned the city in which archaeologists have discovered a layer of ash in Square G24 during the 1999 excavation season. In 2000 work was expanded into Square F24 where they discovered a layer of ash at least 10 cm thick in some areas. It was all made up of heated (calcined) bedrock, burned stones and “re-fired pottery (Wood 2000c: 68-69).<sup>189</sup>

Pottery that was discovered on site indicated that the general practice of firing was typically baking in a kiln and thus whenever pottery is exposed to the intense heat for a second time, especially when the city is under siege (up in flames), it will become extremely hard. There were large quantities of “refired” pottery found on site all dated to the time of Joshua. Upon the discovery of ashes, they uncovered a well-preserved flagstone pavement beneath it. Just towards the east side of the square is a north-south line of stones that may be the result of the collapse of the eastern wall. It appears that the flagstone pavement found in Squares R13 and R14 were part of a "ring road" inside the fortress adjacent to the wall. The area, Squares R13 and R14, is located west of the gate and just inside the northern wall. On top of the pavement was a thin layer of ash and some clumps of burned material that were exposed in this area.

In addition to the indirect evidence of destruction, there were some re-fired potteries that were metal-hard found on the east and west sides of the early fortress phase. These findings,

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188. 1999a Kh. el-Maqatir 1999 Dig Report. *Bible and Spade* 12: 109–14.

1999b The Search for Joshua's Ai. *Bible and Spade* 12: 21–30.

2000a Kh. el-Maqatir 2000 Dig Report. *Bible and Spade* 13: 67–72.

2000b Khirbet el-Maqatir, 1995–1998. *Israel Exploration Journal* 50: 123–30.

2000c Khirbet el-Maqatir, 1999. *Israel Exploration Journal* 50: 249–54.

2001 Khirbet el-Maqatir, 2000. *Israel Exploration Journal* 51: 246–52.

See also <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/file.axd?file=2012%2f5%2f2000+IEJ+Maqatir+Exc+Report.pdf>

189. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/file.axd?file=2012%2f5%2f1999+IEJ+Maqatir+Exc+Report.pdf>

according to ABR, show that the chief suspects may have been the Israelites who burned the city.

Furthermore, another vital piece of evidence, found on the same spot of Squares R13 and R14 during a 1998 excavation, was large megalithic stones in random positions.<sup>190</sup> Several of the stones were lying in Square R14 under 20-25cm of soil above the flagstone pavement. Similar stones were also found on the east side of the gate in Squares Q19 and P19; they formed part of the fortification system on either side of the gate. It appears these stones collapsed, probably due to the magnitude of an earthquake, and thus shifted to their present locations.

### **6.7.2 The Structure inside the Fortress on square P19**

The remains of the Late Bronze fortress were discovered on the corner of a building on the north side of Square P19. These remains were badly disturbed with two poorly preserved walls measuring just three feet wide (0.9m). The northernmost wall is oriented northwest-southeast; parallel to the line of the fortress wall which was originally a few metres to the northeast. The structure inside the fortress had remains of paved floor with some of the stones heavily calcined from the intense fire that destroyed the fortress. Calcination of the bedrock from extreme heat was also discovered in Squares P17, P18, Q17 and Q20 near the gate.

### **6.7.3 The Storage Pit on Square N23**

Further excavations were made in Square N23 to locate the east wall of the fortress forty meters southeast of the gate. Although archaeologists did not find the remains of the wall, they made a startling recovery of a storage pit that was cut into the bedrock on the north side of the probe trench. The bottle-shaped covering stone was still intact and its measurement is 1.5 x 1.5m, while the pit itself measures 2.2m deep with an opening of around 45cm in diameter. The pit was filled with soft, fine, soil to a depth of about 1.3 metres.

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190. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/file.axd?file=2013%2f12%2fMaqatir+IEJ+Report+1995-1998.pdf>

According to ABR the soil may have sifted through the crack between the covering stone and the edge of the opening. During the discovery they came across several pottery sherds, evidently having also sifted in through the crack. These refined pottery pieces were all dated to the time of Joshua since they had been subjected to a very high temperature subsequent to manufacture. From the archaeologists' point of view, they understood the pit was emptied of its contents towards the final Canaanite period at Khirbet el-Maqatir fortress in which the cover was deliberately put back in position before the fortress was torched to the ground, thus the cover became hidden from view. For many centuries, while the city of Khirbet el-Maqatir was left in ruins, the soil filtered into the pit along with pottery sherds from the time of destruction. The question remains: were the Israelites responsible for having the pit emptied and replacing the cover when they plundered Ai in Joshua 8:27?

#### **6.7.4 The Iron Age Village**

Approximately 100 years after the Late Bronze I fortress was destroyed by Joshua and his troops and left in ruins - during the latter part of Judges period - a new generation came to occupy the city with newly built structures along the existing ruined north wall. According to archaeological reports, these new occupants were most likely the Israelites that had dominated the central hill country at that time. From the excavation report it appears that the Israelites had removed the fill stones of the north wall leaving the outer face as the back wall of their new buildings. The area concentrated in Squares Q9 and R11 have demonstrated that the structures were of Iron Age I period but poorly constructed of stone walls; one stone wide. In Square R11, they discovered a hard-packed clay floor and beneath the building in Square Q9 was an almost complete cooking pot from the construction phase of the fortress.

#### **6.8 The Major Find of an Egyptian Scarab**

When combined with several types of pottery and a study of the stratigraphy, an important scarab discovered in 2013 shows that Khirbet el-Maqatir was a city at the time of the Exodus.<sup>191</sup> The scarab dates to Egypt's Hyksos Period, 1650-1550 BCE, at the end of the Middle Bronze Age; a time just before the period of the Exodus. The Hyksos - a group of foreigners

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191. Wood, Bryant G. (2013). "The Remarkable 2013 Season at Khirbet el-Maqatir," Bible and Spade 26/4 (2013): 91-93.

who immigrated into Egypt's delta region and gradually settled there during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century BCE - had an important influence on Egyptian history with a series of Hyksos kings that ruled northern Egypt from the 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. <sup>192</sup> These scarabs are an important source of information for archaeologists and historians of Palestine (Israel) since they can be dated rather accurately. We know how popular scarabs were in Ancient Egypt which led to them becoming a trademark during the Middle Bronze Age across the Levant. Two Egyptian scarabs - rarely found in any of the former Canaanite sites of Israel were discovered; one of which displayed a falcon-headed sphinx (Fig 41), and was tentatively dated to the reign of Amenhotep II. <sup>193</sup>

The scarab was discovered inside the fortress, near the ancient gate, on bedrock in a sealed locus beneath the layer of burnt ash. Along with the scarab were four diagnostic and re-fired sherds from the Late Bronze I period (circa. 1485-1400 BCE). A second scarab was discovered in 2014 that features Egyptian hieroglyphs surrounded by eight sets of concentric circles. This scarab was manufactured locally in Canaan and was typical during the ruling years of the Hyksos and the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty BCE period, prior to the subjugation of Canaan by Thutmose III in approximately 1485 BCE (Fig 42). <sup>194</sup>



**Fig 41.**



**Fig 42.**

Fig 41. 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Egyptian Scarab found at Khirbet el Maqatir Bronze Age Fortress – 2013.

Fig 42. Hyksos Scarab found at Khirbet el Maqatir Bronze Age Fortress – 2014.

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192. Hyksos (Egyptian dynasty). Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Retrieved 8 September 2012.

193. Stripling, Scott and Hassler Mark. (2016). The “Problem” of Ai in Joshua 7–8: Solved after Forty Years of Excavation in the West Bank of Israel.

194. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2015/03/09/2014-Excavations-at-Kh-el-Maqatir-A-Proposed-New-Location-for-Ai-and-Ephraim.aspx>

The pottery and scarab together provide irrefutable evidence for the dating of the Late Bronze Age 1 fortress at the time of Joshua, when Khirbet el-Maqatir was inhabited. Even though the scarab was probably manufactured between 1550 and 1450 BCE, it is possible that the scarabs were still in use in 1406 BCE; the date of the destruction of Ai, according to biblical chronology.

### **6.9 Khirbet El-Maqatir (Ai) 2015 Dig Report**

Renewed excavations continued in 2015, on Square C17 and C16, to further investigate the area which was partially excavated in 2009. The main purposes were: to complete the excavation of the square; to clarify the context of the stela; to locate any additional fragments; and to identify the northern face of a large internal wall (Wall 68). In short, archaeologists discovered a badly exposed, partial, limestone Bronze Age stela in the west-central area of the square, embedded in a cobblestone matrix with the top of the broken left side protruding from the modern surface. The stela was the largest Bronze Age artefact ever found in the southern Levant measuring 79 x 40 x 18 cm (Stripling 2015:19).

The entire square is located adjacent to the southern wall of the Middle Bronze III – Late Bronze Age I fortress, just 24 m east of the north-south axis. In this area evidence has shown that there were two destructions; the first (by fire) dating to the end of the LB I period and the second (by two earthquakes) in the LH-ER period, circa 64 BCE and 31 BCE. According to the report, the area of Square C17 did experience earlier activity since there was an erection of the southern wall dating to the MB III-LB I period: Wall 2 (Wall 56B). Just inside the walls is a megalith that is visibly located in the southern western section of the square, and further up in the northern east corner of Square B17 were the remains of large stones in the south. At a right angle to Wall 2 is Wall 12, which is located in the north-west corner of the square. The southern east section of the wall is well defined.

Among the important finds in Square C17 was an abundance of flint, which indicates that there was a flint workshop industry in this city. Archaeologists counted thirty-nine, including many other chips and pieces, which suggest that the city of Khirbet el-Maqatir did have a flint-manufacturing industry during the MB 111 / LB 1 period. The probability is strong that this fortress workshop was where spear points and arrowheads were manufactured for the Amorite troops patrolling the fortress just before the invasion of the Israelites. According to

the report, the section of Wall 4 was built during the Late Bronze I era, leaving the destruction debris, stones, mud brick detritus, MB III and LB I sherds and flint remains during that period; later used as fill.

(<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2015/06/07/Digging-at-Khirbet-el-Maqatir-2015-Week-One.aspx>). The table below shows the discovery of flint objects in Square C17.

Table 1.7 Flint Objects for Square C17.

REG #	DATE	LOCUS	PAIL	DESCRIPTION
Unreg	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint tool
1853	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint Object
1856	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint Blade
1860	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint Object
1872	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint Blade
1877	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint point
1883	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint point
1897	27 May 2015	1	13	Flint point
1912	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint point
1918	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint point
1919	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint Object
1920	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint Blade
1922	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint Core
1944	28 May 2015	1	14	Flint Point
1954	29 May 2015	6	18	Flint Point
1964	29 May 2015	6	16	Flint Core
1065	29 May 2015	6	16	Flint Point
1966	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1967	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1968	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1969	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1970	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Tool?
1971	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1972	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1973	29 May 2015	15	30	Flint Point
1982	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1983	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point

1984	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1985	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1986	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1987	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1988	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1989	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1990	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1991	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
1992	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
2002	29 May 2015	1	14	Flint Point
2004	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2005	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2006	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2007	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2008	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2009	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2010	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2011	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2012	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2013	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2014	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Point
2015	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Blade
2016	29 May 2015	1	15	Flint Point
2017	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Blade
2018	1 June 2015	6	17	Flint Tool
2025	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Core
2047	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Core
2050	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2051	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2052	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2053	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2054	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2055	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2056	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2057	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2058	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2059	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point

2060	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2061	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2062	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2063	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2064	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2065	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2066	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2067	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2068	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2069	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Scraper
2070	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Scraper
2071	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Scraper
2077	2 June 2015	6	18	Flint Point
2118	3 June 2015	6	19	Flint Tools and Points
2124	3 June 2015	6	19	Flint Spear Point?
2190	5 June 2015	7	23	Flint Spear Point?
2192	5 June 2015	7	22	Flint Spear Point?
2193	4 June 2015	Surface Find	Surface Find	Flint Core
2194	5 June 2015	7	22	Flint Core
2195	5 June 2015	7	22	Flint Spear Point?
2196	4 June 2015	6	22	Flint Core
2197	5 June 2015	7	21	Flint Points and Tools
2198	4 June 2015	7	21	Flint Debitage
2199	4 June 2015	7	21	Flint Core
2252	8 June 2015	6	23	Flint Core
2297	9 June 2015	7	24	Flint Core
2298	9 June 2015	7	24	Flint Tool
2300	9 June 2015	7	24	Miscellaneous Flints
2331	10 June 2015	7	23	Flint Tools
2362	11 June 2015	9	26	Miscellaneous Flints
2363	11 June 2015	8	25	Miscellaneous Flints
2414	12 June 2015	11	28	Miscellaneous Flints



**Fig 43.** Flint points from Square C17, which appear to be from a flint-making workshop for the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Associate for Biblical Research.

Next to square C17 was the back corner of Square C16 that has been extensively excavated in an effort to locate the Northern West face of Wall 12 (Stripling 2015:13). Despite discovering many stones in that area, there was no clear wall face that could be discerned. The only conclusion to this is that Wall 12 was part of the southern end of Wall 13 in Square L21 (Wall 69), which is 2.5m wide. According to the archaeological data, the evidence of occupation from the fortress phase ended with an intense conflagration that produced a layer of calcined limestone in L.10. As a result, the evidence of the destruction found across the site was dated towards the end of the Late Bronze I period due to the sensational discovery of a falcon-headed sphinx scarab in 2013, and of course the refired Late Bronze IB pottery found throughout the site (Stripling 2015:16). These discoveries all point to the time of the Israelites' entrance into Canaan around 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

Among other important finds dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE fortress was Area Square P22, where Brian Peterson of Lee University, TN, discovered a large socket stone which was found in secondary usage. This large socket stone was the fourth one they found and probably part of the fortress gate; which was removed and later reused. Just prior to this area were several megalithic paving stones which are definitely part of the existing fortress.<sup>195</sup>

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195. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2015/06/07/Digging-at-Khirbet-el-Maqatir-2015-Week-One.aspx>

Renewed excavations were also continued in the Iron-Age settlement (ca. 1200 - 900 BCE) in the nearby Squares of Q9 and R11. As previously stated in the 2000 report, the dwellings from the early Iron Age building were part of the northwest segment of the earlier fortification wall. In 2014, archaeologists discovered two typical early Iron Age stone-lined storage pits during a dig which was completed under the direction of the Boyd Seevers of University of North Western, St. Paul. As of 2015, Boyd and his team opened a new square, R-10. According to the report, Dr Seevers and his team have managed to uncover some of the remains of the Early Iron Age houses on the northwest side of the site. It appears these existing house walls were built into the Late Bronze city wall, which further demonstrates that the later generation of Israelites had dismantled the interior part of the wall; using the existing stones to build their houses, as well as using the exterior side of the filled wall as the back wall of their house. <sup>196</sup>

#### **6.10 Concluding Thoughts on Biblical Ai**

As far as archaeology is concerned there are problems with both Khirbet et-Tell and Khirbet Nisya as suitable candidates for Ai. While these sites both suit the general geographical requirements as part of the Benjamin hill; Khirbet et-Tell is a better fit if Bethel is located at Beitin, and Khirbet Nisya is a better fit if Bethel is at el-Bireh. Archaeology has revealed that the site of et-Tell does lack any sort of material from the Late Bronze Age. Secondly, et-Tell is far too large to be considered as the site of Ai, as scripture revealed the ancient city was smaller than the royal city of Gibeon, even though the fortified city of et-Tell was located in the central hill country to give them the advantage of attack and conquer (Finkelstein 1993: 46,236; Josh 10:2). Khirbet et-Tell is twice the size of Gibeon, which is less than 12 acres in size (Broshi and Gophna 1986: 82; Wells 1947). Thirdly, the site has no sign of a Late Bronze Age occupation, and especially no sign of evidence of conflagration.

Finally, the site does not have the proper archaeological periods present to match the biblical requirements for Ai. Because the site lacks the essential archaeological evidence, Khirbet et-Tell must be ruled out as the site of Ai.

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196. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2015/06/07/Digging-at-Khirbet-el-Maqatir-2015-Week-One.aspx>

The site of Khirbet Nisya appears to have all the correct criteria to be named the biblical Ai since the archaeological data conducted by Livingston seem to match the biblical account in terms of topography, geography and archaeology. However, there is still an issue with Khirbet Nisya since no fortification walls have yet been discovered. Furthermore, there is no on-site Late Bronze Age material or any form of fire destruction, and there are no reports of any of the Late Bronze Age pottery being burned after production (Livingston 2003: 29). In fact, there was just a mere seventeen sherds from all sixteen seasons of excavations that can be positively identified as the Late Bronze Age I city, specifically relating to the period of Joshua's Conquest in which the Israelites were meant to have attacked and burned the city of Ai. Additionally, there were another twenty-two pottery sherds discovered on site that were dated towards the end of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (Livingston 2003: 36–43). These remains came from fill and not from floors, walls or other archaeologically useful contexts (Wood 2008: 213). Due to the scarcity of Late Bronze Age sherds, despite extensive excavations for the past sixteen years, the site of Khirbet Nisya has been called into question, as well as the lack of evidence of the Late Bronze Age material. Although the few remaining sherds do indicate occupation during the period, the data suggests that the site may have been nothing more than a small village or a small collection of homes, a fortified city.

My final thought on the candidate sites for Ai, based on surveys and excavations on three sites over the past few decades, is that the archaeological evidence provided at Khirbet el-Maqtir stand out strongly as the only possible ancient city of Ai from the period of the Israelite Conquest. The site of Khirbet el-Maqtir fulfils all the geographical requirements and archaeological requirements in terms of occupation, fortification, the size of the site being smaller than Gibeon, and the evidence of conflagration on site dating to the Late Bronze I period. According to Peter Briggs, based on the test results done on site, Khirbet el-Maqtir is the most likely candidate for the biblical city of Ai (Briggs 2005: 157-96). The table below demonstrates the occupation periods of the three sites excavated during the past century.

Table 1.8 Table Showing Occupation Periods at Three Sites.

<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS</b>	<b>BIBLICAL PERIODS/ OCCUPATION</b>	<b>KHIRBET NISYA</b>	<b>KHIRBET ET TELL</b>	<b>KHIRBET EL-MAQATIR</b>
<b>EARLY BRONZE AGE</b>	OCCUPIED?	NO	<b>YES</b>	NO
<b>MIDDLE BRONZE AGE 1</b>	GENESIS 12:8	NO	NO	NO
<b>MIDDLE BRONZE AGE 2</b>	GENESIS 12:8 AND GENESIS 13:3	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>
<b>LATE BRONZE AGE 1</b>	JOSHUA 7-8	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>
<b>LATE BRONZE AGE 2</b>	OCCUPIED?	NO	NO	NO
<b>IRON AGE 1</b>	OCCUPIED?	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>IRON AGE 2</b>	ISAIAH 10:28 (AIATH)	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO
<b>PERSIAN</b>	EZRA 2:28 AND NEHEMIAH 7:32	<b>YES</b>	NO	NO
<b>HELLENISTIC</b>	N / A	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>
<b>EARLY ROMAN</b>	N / A	<b>YES</b>	NO	<b>YES</b>
<b>LATE ROMAN</b>	EUSEBIUS ONOMASTICON	NO	NO	NO

## Chapter 7 The Israelite Conquests: The Biblical City of Hazor

### 7.1 The History of Tel Hazor

The biblical city of Tel Hazor was the site of a Canaanite and Israelite settlement which is situated in the Huleh basin, 8 km south-west of Lake Huleh and some 14 km north of the Sea of Galilee (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:57). The biblical name, Hazor, is also identified as Tell el-Qedah (Arabic) and is described in Joshua 11:10 as ‘the head of all these kingdoms’. and in ancient times it was situated south of the powerful city of Kadesh, which became of extreme importance for trade and economic purposes in connected Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean Sea. The city was the largest in southern Canaan during the Late Bronze Age, and it is currently the largest archaeological site in the modern state of Israel, besides Jerusalem (Ben-Tor 1993: 595). The archaeological site consists of a 30-acre upper city and a lower city of about 200 acres; with the upper city forcibly occupied almost continuously from the 27<sup>th</sup> Century BCE to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE. In contrast, the lower city was only occupied during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. (Yadin: 1975). Israeli archaeologist, Yigael Yadin, revealed the following, ‘The area of the lower city, including its eastern spur, is 200 acres, ten or twenty times the size of the largest of the tells’ (Yadin 1975b: 143).

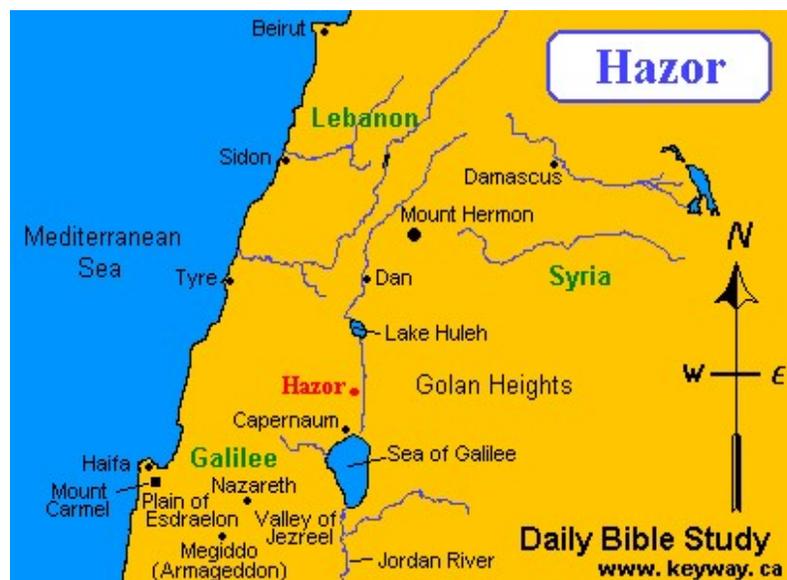
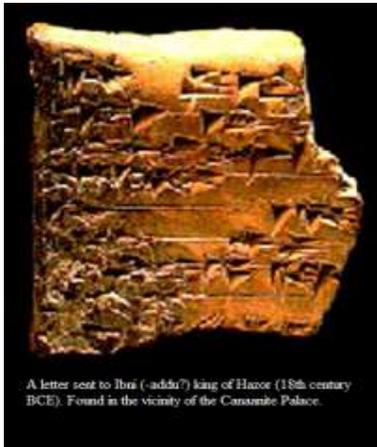


Fig 44. Map of Hazor Area.

The biblical record declares that the Israelite army resoundingly defeated this confederation and burned Hazor to the ground (Josh 11:1-14) and later was incorporated into King Solomon's four "royal cities" (1 Kgs 9:15). According to the biblical texts, the city of Hazor was attacked by the Israelites twice; the first was under the leadership of Joshua, and the second was under the leadership of Deborah and Barak, to be discussed later in this chapter. Hazor has also been mentioned in both of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian Execration texts that pre-date the Amarna letters; as well as a number of clay tablets with cuneiform script recovered from the site of Tel Hazor. That in itself hints at the existence of a Middle and Late Bronze Age (circa 18<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries, BCE) archive which confirm the ancient site's importance for much of the second millennium BCE; the period of the Canaanites.

The discovery of the El Amarna archives in Egypt has indicated that Canaan was already an Egyptian vassal state during the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. The Amarna letters ascertain that the King of Hazor broke away from Egyptian vassal rule and attempted to form a northern



A letter sent to Ibni (adbu?) king of Hazor (18th century BCE). Found in the vicinity of the Canaanite Palace.

Canaanite alliance (EA 227). This ruler of Hazor, called Ibni (etymological origin of Yabin), was recorded in a cuneiform tablet found at Hazor, dated to c.2000-1550 BCE, demonstrating how powerful the ruler of Hazor was in that region (ARM VI: 236).<sup>197</sup> It is believed that Yabin/Ibni was used as a title for the king of Hazor, demonstrating that the correct terms were used in the biblical books of Joshua / Judges and suggesting a period contemporary with the usage of this title, which ceased to exist in the Iron Age.

**Fig 45.** Letter to King Ibni of Hazor.

Excavations at Tel Hazor were first carried out by John Garstang in 1926, before major excavations were conducted between the periods of 1955 and 1958 by a Hebrew University team led by Israeli archaeologist, Yigael Yadin (Garstang 1944: 371-385; Yadin: 1956: 2-11; 1958: 30-47, 1959: 2-20). He later returned to Hazor for a final season of excavation in 1968 (Yadin 1968: 50-71; Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:59-60). Then in 1990, new excavations were carried out by Hebrew University - later joined by the Complutense University of Madrid, led by Professor Amnon Ben-Tor - currently still under way (2018).

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197. <http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/ibni.htm>

During the past 27 seasons at Tel Hazor, the renewed excavations have uncovered an extensive and impressive Canaanite urban centre. Within it were temples, palaces and other public buildings, such as the impressive tripartite (three-roomed) cultic structure in the lower city, complete with altars, statues, and many ritual items where the commoners lived. These findings reveal much about the destruction of the biblical Canaanites' Hazor. The so called building of Solomon was also uncovered, with a six-chambered gate structure known as a 'Solomonic Gate' dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Season Excavation Report: 1991-2014 - <http://hazor.huji.ac.il/>).

Furthermore, the archaeological data recorded on site indicates that the city of Hazor continued to be inhabited during the latter half of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, when Jehu was king of Israel, before it fell to Aram Damascus. Later in history, the Assyrians defeated the Aramaeans during which time the city of Hazor seemingly returned to Israelite control. According to the Assyrian records, the king of Israel was Joash who paid tribute to Assyria, which means Israel became an Assyrian vassal (Page 1968: 139–53; 2 Kgs 12:1–3). During that time Israel entered a period of great prosperity that was later continued by Jeroboam II, who eventually attempted rebellion against Assyrian domination, resulting in an invasion led by the great Assyrian ruler, Tiglath-Pileser III. The city of Hazor was finally captured in 732 BCE, when the city was burnt to the ground and its population deported back to Assyria (2 Kgs 15:19).

## 7.2 The Amarna Letters

Epigraphic evidence can clarify and remarkably extend the archaeological evidence on the biblical city of Hazor and a potential extra-biblical clue can be gleaned as to where and who these people from the Amarna Letters were. Dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, the letters mentioned Hazor five times (EA 22, 145, 148, 227, 228, and 364) and the original spelling of the city Hasura, was used frequently. The earliest mention of Hasura is found in the Egyptian Execration Texts where record is made of a prince of Hdw3í - another variant of the name is Hdwí3. <sup>197</sup> In the Mari documents there is a city with this name, 'Ha-su-ra or Ha-su-ra-a', which was then the only town in Canaan mentioned in the document. <sup>198</sup>

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198. Posener. (1940). 73, ANET 329.

199. Malamat. (1960). 13. See also Malamat 1984, 55-62.

In reference to these names, it is quite clear that this city is to be identified as Hazor.<sup>200</sup> In one of the letters of EA148, the king of Tyre informed the Pharaoh of Egypt that the king of Hasura had abandoned his house and aligned himself with the Apiru. He asked the Pharaoh to be concerned about the servants of the palace (in Hasura) and said that the Pharaoh could learn more from his commissioner in Canaan. This shows that the original city of Hasura (Hazor) was in the land of Canaan and thus the Amarna letters not only give insight to the biblical city of Hazor of the Late Bronze Age, but provide a possible link between the content of the Amarna Letters, archaeological discoveries at Late Bronze Age Hazor, and the narrative about Hazor in the book of Joshua.

These letters were sent from Canaanite kings desperately calling on Egypt for help against the invading nomadic Habiru people. The linguistic similarities between the names Habiru (“Hapiru” / “Apiru”) and Hebrew are unmistakable, and the Habiru invasions have been dated to the same time period as the Israelites’ entrance into the land of Canaan. Of course there is a debate among various scholars as to whether the origin of the Hapiru and the Hebrews are etymologically equivalent or even related (refer back to chapter 2, and for an excellent treatment of the subject, Waterhouse 2001:31-42). On page 124 of his book *Israel in Egypt*, published in 1996, James Hoffmeier presents the standard view as follows:

At an earlier date, identifying the Hebrews with the habiru was common, but in recent decades, the association has been discouraged, largely because habiru is now understood to be a sociological term, not indicative of any one ethnic group. More recent studies consider the habiru to be more specifically groups of refugees who lived out of reach of urban, settled areas, who nevertheless preyed upon such states. This generally accepted meaning need not preclude the term habiru from being applied to the Hebrews who were dislocated in Egypt and then again when they returned to Canaan.

The interpretation in the above comments is correctly applied and it does seem that the identification of the Hapiru very much fits a socio-economic group which in fact is not restricted to one ethnic group. However, the evidence shows in some of the Amarna Letters, that the ethnic term of the Habiru may still represent the Israelites, because of the parallel actions of attacking and conquering cities in Canaan in approximately 1400 BCE.

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200. Müller (1907): 14, Noth (1938a): 55, Yadin (1958): 4, Helck (1971): 129, Görg (1974): 107-118, Aharoni (1979): 160, Ahituv (1984): p.116.

On page 273 of James Pritchard's anthology; *The Ancient Near East* (Volume 1), he concludes that the Habiru and Hebrews in the El-Amarna letters, dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, shared a similar social status since the terminology of the name "Habiru" (or "Apiru") refers to 'slaves who had become Apiru.' According to the Jewish tradition, the original Hebrews were regarded as runaway slaves and the authors of the Torah took this tradition seriously enough to write in chapter 23 and verse 16 of the Book of Deuteronomy:

You shall not turn over to his master a slave who seeks refuge with you from his master. He shall live with you in any place he may choose among the settlements in your midst, wherever he pleases; you must not ill treat him.

While we have already discussed the origin of the Habiru/Apiru in a previous chapter of this dissertation, we will only focus on the mentioning of the city, Hazor, in the following Amarna letters. From the third letter of EA 148, the city of Hazor is mentioned as the writer, Abi-Milku (mayor of Tyre), warns that the mayor of Sidon and the mayor of Hazor were both seen as traitors who had joined with the Habiru. It seems that Abi-Milku had issues with Zimrida king of Zidon (Sidon) and with other groups that were attacking groups like the SA GAZ people (EA 146.22). The SA GAZ, or Apiru as called by the king of Jerusalem (EA 286:19, 56; 287:31; 288:37, 44; 289:24), were viewed by Abi-Milku as rebels fighting against Tyre and the Egyptian Pharaoh (see also EA 146.15; 147.66-70; 148.24-26; 149.49-63, 67-70; 151.11-14; 152.7-8; 154.11-25). The letter was addressed to an unnamed pharaoh which was probably during the reign of Amenhotep III. In lines 41-47 it states the following:

To the king, my lord, [m]y god, my Sun: Message of Abi-Milku, your servant. I fall at the feet of the king, my lord, 7 times and 7 times. 4-17 The king, my lord, has written for glass. I give to the king, my lord, what I have on hand—100 (units) in weight. May the king, my lord, give his attention to his servant and give Usu to his servant so he can drink a jug: a-ku-ni of: mi-ma (water). May the king, my lord, give 10 palace attendants to guard his city in order that I may enter and see the face of the ki [ng], my lord. 18-26 My presence will be as pleasing to the king, my lord, as when the king, my lord, charged me with the guarding of his city. I write to the king, my lord, because every day the king of Sidon has captured a palace attendant of mine. 26-34 May the king give attention to his servant, and may he charge his commissioner to give Usu to his servant for water, for fetching wood, for straw, for clay. 34-40 Since he has acted hostilely, has he not violated the oath? There is not another palace attendant. The one who rai[d]s the land of the king is the king of Sidon. **41-47 The king of Ḫaṣura has abandoned his house and has aligned himself with the Apiru. May the king be concerned about the palace attendants. These are treacherous fellows. He has taken over the land of the king for the Apiru. May the king ask his commissioner, who is familiar with Canaan"** (The Amarna letters, W. L. Moran, introduction, 1992 AD, EA 148).

According to the biblical texts, Hazor was captured first by Joshua in 1401 BCE; and in 1200 BCE Jabin, king of Hazor, was defeated by Deborah. The letter discusses the accusation that the king of Hazor had abandoned his house and aligned himself with the Hapiru; which may

be linked to the events recorded in the book of Joshua. However, the biblical text of Joshua clearly stated that the king of Hazor was not killed during the military campaign at the waters of Merom but instead at his palace in the city of Hazor. If one observes closely in verse 10 of chapter 11 in the book of Joshua; “*And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword: for Hazor beforetime was the head of all those kingdoms.*”

It appears that Abi -Milku of Tyre may only have some vague idea that the Canaanites were defeated by the Israelites, presuming that the king of Hazor had allied himself with the Hapiru betraying his former allies and his city. However, the Book of Joshua clearly states that the king of Hazor never met with the coalition by the waters of Merom:

So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and attacked them. Yahweh delivered them into the hand of Israel, so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and the valley of Mizpeh to the east; and they struck them until no survivor was left to them (Josh 11:4-8).

In this case it is plausible to theorize that the Canaanites could have ever thought that their own king of Hazor would have deserted them in joining up with the Habiru. Perhaps the writer thought that the Canaanites were undefeatable with their supreme leader in chief command of the Canaanite Confederation. It seems the writer did find it hard to believe that the Israelites actually defeated the military might of the Canaanites and came up with the presumption that the king had joined up with the Hapiru, and in so doing weakened the Canaanite army. In this case, it could explain the theory in lines 41-47 about the king of Hazor ‘abandoning his house, the palace and the city’, which were then conquered by the Hapiru with whom he supposedly allied himself.

In another Amarna letter (227), we see the ruler of Hazor addressing the Egyptian Pharaoh, describing himself as “king.” Again in the EA 148 this ruler of Hazor refers to himself as ‘king’, unlike with other Canaanite rulers. The El Amarna Letter of 227 was addressing the fact that the King of Hazor broke away from Egyptian vassal rule and attempted to form a northern Canaanite alliance, making himself ‘king’ throughout all of the Canaanite Confederation in the land of Canaan (Moran 1992: EA 227: 5-13). It’s important to understand the significance of the name of Jabin, as the Bible has mentioned this name a few times; Joshua 11:1 describes how the Israelites defeated this king of Hazor in about 1402

BCE, and then again in 1200 BCE (Judg 4:2). Hazor is described as ‘the head of all these kingdoms’ by Joshua (Josh 11:10) and thus this ‘king’ of Hazor demonstrated how powerful a ruler he was in the region. The king of Hazor was also called Ibni (etymological origin of Yabin) in a cuneiform tablet found at Hazor (dated 2000-1550 BCE) and a tablet from the Mari letters (ARM VI, 236). From what scholars understood from this name, it means ‘servant of Tirshi’. This could effectively refer to Abdi-Tirshi, a title given to him like many previous rulers of Hazor and thus resemble the original name Yabin / Jabin (Yadin 1975b: 18).<sup>201</sup>

In this case the name Yabin / Ibni was a title for the king of Hazor a term used correctly in the books of Joshua and Judges, suggesting a composition contemporary with the usage of this title which ceased to exist in the Iron Age. Judging from a line of this letter the king of Hazor presided over more than just one city as he states clearly, “*I have the cities of the king, my lord, under guard...*” (Moran 1992: EA 227: 5-13).

Furthermore, there is not absolute agreement between the Book of Joshua 11 and the Amarna Letter (EA) 228, which indicates that the king of Hazor was sovereign over many of the city-states throughout the region of Canaan. But reading with caution in the EA 228, the ruler of Hazor referred to himself as king only of this city (Hazor), and not king of the entire region of Canaan (Moran 1992: EA 228). If you look carefully at the Book of Judges, chapter 4, you will notice that the king of Hazor is also referred to as the ‘king of Canaan’ (Judg 4:2, 23, 24).

On the other hand the book of Joshua describes the ruler of Hazor as just king of Hazor, as it is found in the Amarna Letters (Josh 11:1; 12:19; EA 228). Thus one can conclude that there is a strong link between the book of Joshua and the Amarna Letters, describing the same biblical events during the transition periods between the Late Bronze Age I and the Late Bronze Age II; in comparison to the later period of Judges 4 towards the end of the Late Bronze IIB. However, in the EA 228 letter we see how the king of Hazor addresses the Egyptian Pharaoh, assuring him that he was guarding the regional area of Canaan. This confirms that the King of Hazor was not only ruling the city itself, but the wider region of

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201. Weippert, M. (1966). ZDPV 82: 322, proposed an alternative reading of ʾĪR-dir 4-ši, ‘Abd (i)-Irši. Na’aman UF 20 (1988), 188 n. 38 concurred.

Hazor “together with its villages.” This bears testimony to the power and influence of Hazor in the northern territory of Canaan during Joshua’s time, a fact corroborated by the archaeological excavations at Tel Hazor and the claim in the book of Joshua that Hazor was “the head of all these kingdoms.”

Going back to understanding the text in both EA 227 and 228, it appears the writer may have some negative association to the past events since both of the Egyptian rulers, Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, claimed to have conquered Hazor. Perhaps the writer was referring to one or both of those conquests, appealing to the Egyptians to show favour towards Hazor in the future. However, modern scholars are still not sure of exactly which event the writer was referring to, since there was nothing conclusive in the text. As far as scholars are concerned, both EA 227 and EA 228 letters might have been written by Abdi-Tirshi, even though no specific name for the author of EA 227 is given. However, both of these important texts have given essential information about the status of Hazor during the Late Bronze Age period.

The fourth Amarna Letter of EA 364 has mentioned the biblical city, Hazor. Here the writer, Ayyab, leader of Canaan, wrote to the Egyptian Pharaoh (unknown), assuring him that he was guarding the cities of the king but was in distress that the ruler of Hasura had taken three cities from him.<sup>202</sup> The letter concludes:

...the time I heard and verified this, there has been waging of war against him. Truly, may the king, my lord, take cognizance, and may the king, my lord, give thought to his servant (Moran 1992: EA 364: 17-28).

It appears this letter was describing a civil war within the region of Canaan between the city states or some larger force at work. The important thing about understanding this letter is that it indicates that Hazor was a very powerful city state which seems to have a major influence over the rest of the Canaanite Confederacy, as the book of Joshua 11 reported. When examining these letters one can suggest that the letter of EA 364 was probably written after EA 148, in which the mayor of Tyre, Abi-Milku, informs the Egyptian Pharaoh that the king of Hazor has allied himself with the Hapiru by conquering the lands of the king in Canaan.

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202. Ayyab's name is referred to in only one letter of the Amarna letters corpus who was king of Aštartu, named Tell 'Aštara, during the Amarna letters correspondence of 1350-1335 BCE, (about a 15-20 year period). This city was located south of Damascus (called Dimasqu in the letters), and is involved with the takeover of cities by the Habiru of the Amarna letters intrigues.

The reports of Ayyab on the three cities captured by the Hapiru including the king of Hazor, may have strong connections to the biblical events described in EA 148 (Moran 1992: EA 148). Perhaps both Abi-Milku, and Ayyab have mistakenly identified the king of Hazor as the ruler of the Hapiru, when in fact the book of Joshua clearly states that the Israelites were responsible for the capture / destruction of Hazor, orchestrated by the military tactical genius (Joshua) and not the king of Hazor, as they originally thought. While we may not have the clear-cut answer on the civil unrest in the land of Canaan, as described in the Amarna letters, one can say these events were strikingly similar to the book of Joshua in which both texts describe the same biblical events in Canaan during the Late Bronze I / II transition.

Finally, in the Amarna Letter EA 22, the city of Hazor is referred to as this letter was describing the exchanged gifts between Tushratta of Mitanni and the Egyptian Pharaoh, Amenhotep III. The text lists, “1 garment, Hazor-style, 1 pair of shirts, Hurrian-style, of linen and, within the section of the list dealing with clothes, ‘Hazor-style garment,” obviously referring to the city of Hazor, which was then well-known in the land of Canaan (Moran 1992: EA 22: 41).

### **7.3 Did The Israelites Destroy the Final Bronze Age City?**

In chapter three of this dissertation the age-old debate over the date of the Israelite Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent Conquest of the Promised Land - which has been the mainstream scholastic models of the conquest - have already been discussed. The chronological disputes have been highly vulnerable to a range of criticisms, since archaeology has not come with an answer as to whether the actual Israelite Conquest was attributed to the 15<sup>th</sup> / 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE or the Late Bronze I / III period. Over the past few decades, esteemed archaeologists such as Yigael Yadin, Amnon Ben-Tor and James Hoffmeier argued for a later date Exodus during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, or Late Bronze Age (LB) III. The likes of Douglas Petrovich, Bryant Wood, and Charles Aling posit an early date Exodus during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, or LB I (Petrovich 2008: 489; Aling 2010).<sup>203</sup>

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203. Both Wood and Petrovich have argued the 15th Century BCE destruction at Hazor that could be connected to the Israelite Conquest under Joshua. Cf. Wood, Bryant. “From Ramesses to Shiloh: Archaeological Discoveries Bearing on the Exodus – Judges Period,” 256–82 in *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts*, ed. David M. Howard, Jr., and Michael A. Grisanti. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003. Petrovich, Douglas. “The Dating of Hazor’s Destruction in Joshua 11,” *JETS* 51:3 (2008): 489-51.

The debate concerned questions of chronology, sequence, and the historicity of the biblical tale of an Israelite nation that entered the ancient land of Canaan (Palestine) during the Bronze / Iron Age transition; the criteria of evidence, argumentation, and archaeological practice. The dispute between Yadin and Aharoni is well documented since both have disagreed regarding the credibility of these biblical accounts. Yigael Yadin, following the work of the American biblical archaeologist William Foxwell Albright, defended the historicity of the tale of conquest put forth in the Book of Joshua, which was the story of a quick and decisive Israelite military victory over the Canaanite city-states. Yohanan Aharoni, on the other hand, argued that the archaeological evidence supported a peaceful infiltration theory, following in the footsteps of Albrecht Alt and Martin Noth (Yadin 1975b: 255).<sup>204</sup>

The arguments stem from the biblical narrative of Joshua that Hazor was the site of a decisive battle, of which Joshua 11:16–17 states the following:

...took all that land, the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland, from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon.

However, the book of Judges presents a different version:

So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. ... So on that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. Then the hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan” (Judg 4:2, 23–24).

Although various hypotheses have been proposed to explain the origin of the Israelite Conquest accounts, resulting in a general lack of agreement and even confusion about the stories and archaeology of Hazor, one can at least acknowledge that the two schools of thought have to some degree agreed that the archaeological finds at Hazor have produced the strongest evidence for the consideration of those seeking a Conquest-Exodus date. Both positions have produced strong arguments that supports the late date/early date positions of Hazor providing proof of their respective chronologies.

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204. Abu El-Haj, Nadia (2002). Excerpted from pages 99-105 of *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self Fashioning in Israeli Society*, published by the University of Chicago Press. © 2002 the University of Chicago.

These include Hoffmeier's hypothesis that states that the evidence at the city of Hazor supports a late date Exodus because it "*provides the only possible evidence for an Israelite conquest of Canaan in the late 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE,*" while on the other hand, Aling believes that the excavations at Hazor provide undeniable support for an early date conquest and Exodus (Petrovich 2008: 490; Aling 2010).

This controversy seems to become more intricate and intense with each new archaeological discovery, but some of the most hotly contested evidence for an Exodus-Conquest date is that which relates to the destruction dates of Canaanite cities conquered by Joshua and the Israelites - following their Exodus journey from Egypt. Perhaps one has to ask a legitimate question that requires an examination of the Conquest narratives in relation to military strategy and the political status of Canaan at the time of the Israelite Conquest in the Late Bronze Age. A background for the arguments over the Conquest date of Hazor also has to be established in order to ascertain whether any of its destruction layers can be attributed to either the LB I or LB III strata, since excavations have revealed that both destructions were perpetrated specifically by the Israelites.

First of all, it must be emphasized that the various city-states of Late Bronze Age Canaan were often grouped together in a geographical entity and should not be seen as a politically united single kingdom, as some scholars believe that they vacillated between being independent and a tributary to Egypt. According to the archaeological excavations conducted throughout Palestine over the past few decades, the Canaanites were actually made up of different ethnic groups during the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 BCE). Ann Killebrew, an archaeology professor at Penn State University, wrote in her book *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2005) that:

Canaan was not made up of a single 'ethnic' group but consisted of a population whose diversity may be hinted at by the great variety of burial customs and cultic structures.

So it appears that the Canaanites mostly acted as a single tributary populace in the western part of Jordan and had no unified, overall military organization with which to confront the invaders - as seen in the Amarna letters and the list of 31 Canaanite kings allegedly defeated by Joshua (Josh 12:9-24).

Secondly, the individual Canaanite city-states had already endured a period of military campaigns, tributes and subjugation by powerful pharaohs, such as Thutmose III. This would have weakened the Canaanites both militarily and economically, since their resources had been expended in battling the Egyptians; after which they were further crippled economically by tributes. It is also probable that the Egyptians instituted some sort of policy that removed or limited the weapons of the Canaanites so as to safeguard against possible rebellion. This is alluded to in requests of a military nature in the Amarna Letters, especially EA 333 in which Shipti-Balu requests 11 bows, 3 daggers and 3 swords from Zimredda for a proposed military campaign (Moran 1992: EA 333:4-18). Thirdly, the small number of troops requested in various Amarna Letters shows the small size and weakness of the individual Canaanite city-state militias during the late bronze periods.

Typical of biblical archaeology, the debate over the chronology of Hazor has revealed signs of habitation within three specific time periods pertinent to the two Israelite conquests. To understand the significance of this habitation gap, the chronology of Hazor must be examined. Firstly, we have to deal with Hazor's habitation in the Late Bronze Age I period (early date theory) which may have occurred during the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep II (Ben-Tor 1997: 108–109). This habitation corresponds well with Joshua 11:10 that Hazor at the time of the Israelite conquest was “the head of all those kingdoms” (KJV). Secondly, archaeology has revealed another stratum pointing to a second habitation period at Tel Hazor during the Late Bronze II period, spanning approximately a hundred years. And lastly, there was a third habitation period which occurred during the Late Bronze III at Tel Hazor, which connects strongly with the late date Exodus theory under the reign of Pharaoh Ramses II. According to this theory, the second destruction of Hazor took place during the Late Bronze III period that represented the second conquest by Deborah and Barak, as recorded in Judges 4.

Prominent scholars such as Yadin, Ben-Tor and Hoffmeier have provided extensive first-hand excavation, research and analysis that their Late Bronze III conquest theory correlates with the biblical record of two Israelite destructions of Hazor. As stated by Yadin himself:

If Hazor was destroyed and Jabin killed in the times of Joshua, decades before the period of the Judges, how is it possible that the city and its king again figured so prominently in these later battles? (Yadin 1975: 13).

In the meantime, modern scholars such as Aling, Petrovich and Wood have all considered their chronology of Hazor's destructions to provide an answer to the Conquest Exodus theory debate, by placing Joshua's conquest during the Late Bronze I, which corresponds with an early date for the Exodus (circa 1446 BCE). In addition to this chronological conundrum of Tel Hazor, there are at least two answers to the two - conquest dilemma that remains widely propagated, however neither of these two conquest theories are compatible with the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. The main reason behind this debate by scholars such as Yadin, is that they believed the historicity of Deborah and Barak's account of the conquest of Hazor should be rejected altogether, since they considered this second Conquest as a mere legend / exaggeration of a minor battle (Yadin 1975: 250–52). Here Yadin argues that, "*the narrative in the Book of Joshua is...the true historical nucleus, while...Judges 4 must have been a later editorial interpolation*" (Petrovich 2008: 494).

The historical account of a second conquest denies the exactness of the Bible's historical content, which in turn undermines its authorship and factuality. It is clear that the theories promoted by Hoffmeier and Yadin cannot be accepted without creating major problems for biblical interpretation and, perhaps, finding a solution to this debate by looking at the habitation gap theory proposed by Petrovich. According to Petrovich, the archaeological data surveyed at Tel Hazor has revealed that there was a lengthy second habitation gap following the Late Bronze III destruction of Hazor, and thus attributing this to the late Joshua conquest leaves no chronological timeframe on the conquest of Hazor by Deborah and Barak mentioned in Judges 4. Another scholar, Dr Charles Aling, has brought up an interesting scenario; that the first habitation gap following Hazor's Late Bronze I destruction further disproves a later date conquest, because it reveals that the earlier destruction of Hazor can only be attributed to Joshua and the Israelites (Aling 2010).

In order to sort out the chronological conundrum of Hazor, one has to provide further epigraphical evidence against the theory that Thutmosis III razed Late Bronze I Hazor, posited by Yadin and Ben-Tor (Aling 2010).<sup>205</sup> According to Petrovich's argument, the

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205. Yadin and Ben-Tor, "Hazor," in *New Encyclopedia* 594. For a strong defense of the view that the book of Joshua as a whole was not composed by Joshua himself, and that it was written roughly 25 years after his death, see Keil and Delitzsch, "Joshua," in *Commentary of OT*, 15–19. Their position is not only well argued and persuasive, but difficult to oppose with any success.

archaeological necessity of a habitation gap after the Late Bronze I conquest of Hazor does not correspond with the theory that the city was destroyed by Thutmose III (Petrovich 2008: 507–508). Firstly, Petrovich presents the epigraphical evidence of the conquest list recorded from Amenhotep II's Year 3 campaign.

The conquest list describes a victorious military attack against Hazor by Pharaoh Amenhotep II, the son and successor of Thutmose III. As a result of this the existence of this gap renders it impossible to date the Late Bronze I conquest to the reign of Thutmose III, considering that Hazor was already a functioning city a few years after his death. Here Petrovich concludes that the Late Bronze I habitation gap “*renders a conflagration under Thutmose III and a subsequent invasion/conquest under Amenhotep II mutually exclusive, an impossible chain of events*” (Petrovich 2008: 504–505). Furthermore, Petrovich provides more conclusive evidence to demonstrate the impossibility of attributing Hazor's early Late Bronze II habitation gap to a conquest by Thutmose III.

The reason is that Hazor is mentioned in the ancient Egyptian topographical city lists dating to the time of Thutmose III, and thus the city of Hazor did not disappear from the Egyptian city lists until after the reign of Thutmose III's successor, Amenhotep II. This means that Hazor has to be listed on the Egyptian's list of enemies as the city must have at least been occupied during the reign of both of these Egyptian Pharaohs. More importantly, should Thutmose III have been responsible for Hazor's Late Bronze I conflagration, the city could not have been included in these later city lists because of the long habitation gap which followed its destruction (Aling 2010).

Secondly, crucial evidence found in the Hermitage Papyrus 1116A, dated year 18 of Amenhotep II's reign (c. 1400 BCE) records the transportation of grain and beer rations to an Egyptian garrison at Hazor. This presence of such a military garrison in Canaan has given further evidence that during the reign of, Amenhotep II, Hazor was already a thriving, vibrant and operational city. In retrospect, the decades immediately following the reign of Thutmose III shows there was no habitation gap at Hazor since the city existed in a fully occupied state.

Thirdly, Petrovich came across another crucial piece of archaeological evidence, namely the scarab from the tombs of Hazor which bears the inscription of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Thutmose IV, the 8th Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty of Egypt, who ruled in approximately the

14<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E. <sup>206</sup> During Yadin's second year of excavations at Tel Hazor, he began excavating down in the lower city known as Area F in Stratum 1B (Late Bronze IIA:1400–1300 BCE). His team discovered a burial cave, designated 8144, which yielded the critical scarab. This burial cave was situated under Stratum 1A (Late Bronze IIB: 1300–1200 BCE), and archaeologists have dated this stratified scarab at the end of the 15th century BCE, indicating roughly when this cave was first used for burials (Yadin 1975: 59; 63-64).



Importantly, the royal scarab of Thutmose IV cannot be considered a later reproduction or merely a family heirloom that was passed down from one generation to the next. As Yadin carefully explains, <sup>207</sup>

**Fig 46.** <sup>208</sup> All Thutmose IV scarabs are rare and a boon to archaeologists in this country because we know that they were made exclusively during his reign (the names of some pharaohs continued to be inscribed on scarabs after their death, but the popularity of Thutmose IV was buried along with him). We can therefore conclude that the cave was first used sometime during his eight-year reign, from 1410 to 1402 BC, or immediately thereafter. <sup>209</sup>

In order to make this argument plausible, this royal scarab confirms the existence of Hazor during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, since this city was already occupied and operational immediately after the reign of Amenhotep II. As Petrovich concludes, it ‘confirms the existence of Hazor as an occupied and functioning city...immediately after the reign of Amenhotep II’ and during the reign of Thutmose IV (Petrovich 2008: 506). The scarab bears the testimony as further evidence of the vigour and vitality of Hazor fewer than fifty years after Thutmose III's reign, and thus confirms that neither this pharaoh nor his successors

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206. Clayton, Peter. (1994). *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*, Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1994. p.112.

207. The dating and length on the reign of Thutmose IV has been difficult to do with certainty because he is several generations removed from the astronomical dates which are usually used to calculate Egyptian chronologies, and the debate over the proper interpretation of these observances has not been settled. As far as scholars are concerned Thutmose's grandfather Thutmose III succeeded the throne in approximately 1504 BCE or 1479 BCE, based upon two lunar observances during his reign of 54 years (Betsy 1991: 14; Manuelian 1987: 20). His successor Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV's father, took over the throne who then ruled for approximately 26 years but accordingly to some chronological reconstructions he has been assigned up to 35 years during his reign of Egypt (Redford 1966:119; Van Siclen 2001:71).

208. A Photo shows the scarab of Thutmose IV, Menkheperure. National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, Netherlands.

209. Yadin, Y. (1975). *The Rediscovery*. According to Yadin's calculation the dates for the reign of Thutmose IV were slightly different than the ones accepted from various scholars since his choice of 8 years for the regnal length reflects the latest year attested. On the contrary there seems to be a lack of attestation beyond Year 8 which does not require an eight-year reign, because no definitive regnal year for the death of Thutmose IV is currently known. (p. 64–65).

could have destroyed the Late Bronze I Hazor, because of the habitation gap following that destruction (Petrovich 2008: 505–507). Once again, archaeology provides proof of the impossibility of crediting Hazor’s first destruction to Thutmosis III.

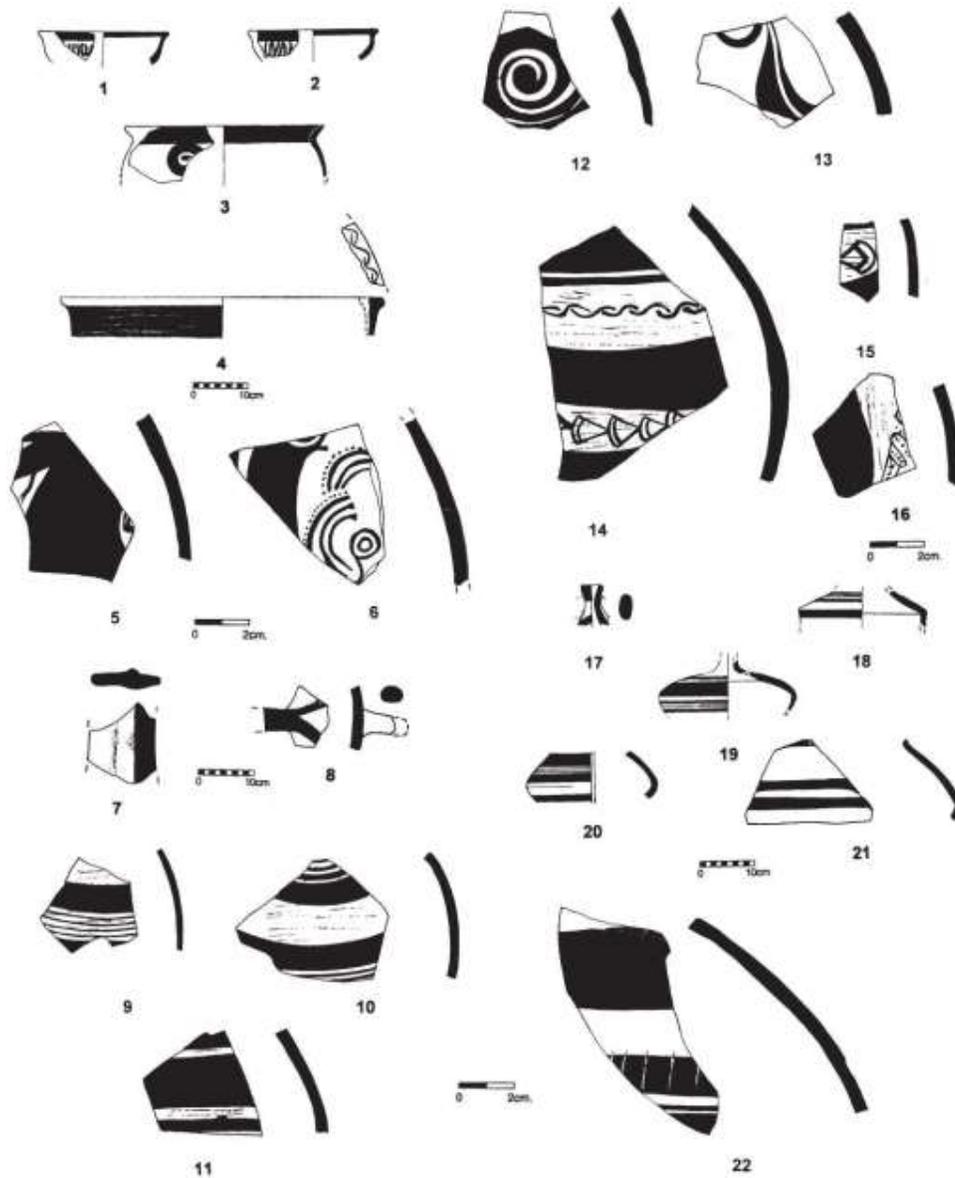
Lastly, we can further argue against the theory that Thutmosis III bears responsibility for Hazor’s first conflagration. Petrovich once again provides more archaeological evidence, using Mycenaean pottery, that Thutmosis III did not destroy Late Bronze I Hazor. The crucial aspect of the discovery of Mycenaean pottery presents an exact timeline for the chronology of the ancient Near East, that archaeologists use it to date excavation layers. These potteries were discovered and excavated from caves surrounding Hazor, and divided into three periods on the Mycenaean pottery timeline:

- A. Early Mycenaean III A: 1 pottery dates from 1425–1400 BCE (end of LB I).
- B. Early Mycenaean III A: 2 pottery dates from 1400–1375 BCE (beginning of LB II).
- C. Late Mycenaean III A:2 pottery dates from 1375–1300 BCE.

Special attention must be given to the three periods on the Mycenaean pottery timeline of which two - the Early Mycenaean III A:1 and Late Mycenaean III A:2 - exist in the ruins of Hazor, while Early Mycenaean III A:2 is conspicuously absent (Petrovich 2008: 505–506). The real reason why there is an absence of Early Mycenaean III A:2 pottery is because there was a gap in Hazor’s greatness, probably due to the lack of trading prowess that would have coincided with the destruction towards the end of the Late Bronze I period and perhaps extending into the earliest stage of the Late Bronze II. As far as archaeology (Egyptian documents and the Mycenaean pottery) is concerned, Hazor could not have been destroyed by Thutmosis III, since it remained an inhabited and thriving city, not only during and after the reign of Thutmosis III, but during that of his successors: Amenhotep II and Thutmosis IV (Aling 2010).

Foremost, the destruction of Hazor by fire does not correspond well with Thutmosis III’s pattern of campaigning and destruction, since he did not burn any other subjugated cities, such as Kadesh, Tunip or Aleppo. In fact, Thutmosis III’s successor, Amenhotep II, did not even burn the city of Kadesh, the vanquished city of their greatest enemy. It remains highly improbable that Hazor’s earlier destruction could be attributed to Thutmosis III, a point that receives further substantiation from the timeline of Mycenaean pottery present (Petrovich

2008: 503–504). Overall, the argument suggests that the very nature of the Late Bronze I destruction provides evidence against attributing that conquest to this Egyptian Pharaoh, and thus the archaeological and epigraphical evidence produced contradict this dating theory, placing Hazor’s early Late Bronze II habitation gap (1400–1375 BCE) about 50 years later than the reign of Thutmosis III (1506–1452 BCE).



**Fig 47.** Selected Mycenaean Sherds from the renewed Excavations of Hazor.

In short, if we place the Israelite conquest of Hazor during the Late Bronze III period, it does produce a substantial unresolved chronological problem. In conclusion, the historical and

archaeological evidence at Hazor indicates that the conflagration should be attributed to Joshua and the Israelites. My reasoning for this that the earlier conquest proposed by Yadin cannot be credited to Thutmosis III, since the archaeological record reveals that there was a long habitation gap following Hazor's Late Bronze I conflagration. It is thus impossible for Thutmosis III to have destroyed the city because of conclusive evidence of a fully functioning occupation of Hazor just decades after his reign. Additionally, it is impossible to attribute Hazor's earlier destruction to Thutmosis III, be a result of archaeological data further substantiated by the timeline of Mycenaean pottery found at the ruin site of Hazor.

Furthermore, the late Bronze Age 1 strata at Hazor contains proof for both biblical requisites of an Israelite conquest in the following; 1) the destruction by fire, 2) the Israelite presence, 3) the burned palace excavated at Hazor contains a scarcity of imported pottery that indicates the structure is dated to the Late Bronze I period. And foremost, the palace contains a number of desecrated Canaanite religious statues which likely belonged to the Israelites, since it is highly improbable that the Egyptians burned the palace and destroyed their own religious statues. As a final note, although the arguments may never be totally settled, the extreme probability of this earlier date (LB 1) for the Israelite Conquest should be carefully considered, rather than the Late Bronze III period.

### **7.3.1 The Fiery Destruction of the Late Bronze Age I City**

Yigael Yadin's expeditions to Hazor, from 1955 to 1958 and again in 1968, have revealed that there were two destructions of Hazor; one in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, and another in the 15<sup>th</sup> BCE (Avi-Yonah 1976: 481-82). At a level dated between 1500 and 1200 BCE, Yadin found temples, palaces and fortifications including; cuneiform tablets, cylinder seals, bronze swords, armour and "the largest basalt statue of a Canaanite god ever found at a biblical site in Israel." As Yadin concludes, in reference to the lower city of this later era, "The end of Stratum 1A came about as the result of a violent fire, as indicated by ashes found in the less exposed areas excavated in Areas H and K," and further described Stratum 2 as "one of great prosperity and cultural standards" (Yadin 1972:3237). With regards to the upper city, Yadin writes that 'the total destruction of the LB III city (Stratum XIII) was evident in all excavated areas' (Yadin 1972:126).

However, several leading archaeologists did not seem to agree with Yadin, as they believed the chief destroyer of Hazor was either the Egyptians or the Sea-Peoples. However, Amnon Ben-Tor, who currently heads the expeditions at Hazor, disputes the fact that the intentional smashing of statues of Egyptian kings could not have been done by the Egyptians or the Sea Peoples (Ben-Tor 1998: 465). If we turn to the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, the Israelites were commanded to destroy pagan religious installations, and even specifically idols or statues. The Book of Deuteronomy clearly states:

Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place (Deut 12:2–3, KJV).

Again, we find in the Book of Numbers the following instruction to the Israelites:

Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places (Num 33:52, KJV).

As we can see in both of these passages, there was a clear command to cut down engraved images of gods, destroy figured stones, and destroy molten images. These instructions were directly referred to statues and images of gods and kings, as in Canaanite and Egyptian that occupied Canaan. In Area C, archaeologists discovered a stela temple statue which is thought to represent a deity, as Yadin concludes, ‘This find taught us...that the head was decapitated deliberately by a blow at the small of the neck with a sharp instrument’ (Yadin 1975b: 43).

Looking at the history of Hazor, there are four possible candidates, active at the time, that may have destroyed the city: (1) the Egyptians, (2) local Canaanite petty princes vying for power in the vacuum, (3) an invading Israelite army under Joshua (Josh 11:1–14) or (4) the Sea Peoples (Philistines). As noted above, the mutilated statues were of Egyptian and Canaanite origin making it unlikely that Canaanite or the Egyptian conquerors destroyed the statues depicting their own kings and gods. The Bible has clearly stated that the city of Hazor was ‘the head of all those kingdoms’ and archaeology has demonstrated that the city was a very powerful and wealthy kingdom, thus the chances are slim that it succumbed to a minor Canaanite rival city. More importantly, there is a lack of evidence for the Sea People’s occupation of Hazor, and the site’s location so far inland also make invasions by groups from

the Aegean world implausible. Further, among the hundreds of thousands of potsherds recovered at Hazor, not a single one can be attributed to the well-known collection of the Sea Peoples (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 38). As far as archaeology is concerned, the excavation reports have revealed that the practice of desecration was widely spread in multiple portions of the acropolis (Upper City) and in various parts of the Lower city. Yadin reported:

...amidst a thick layer of ashes, lay a little statue of a seated male; his chopped-off head rested nearby, surrounded by a number of broken bowls. The figure bears no emblems on its chest and is identical with another, though cruder, statue found headless on the surface in area F. I believe that they represent a king (Yadin 1975b: 94; cf. Yadin 1957: 37).

This is also supported by Ben-Tor, who gave further details on the mutilated objects found on site:

Eleven objects seem to have been mutilated...the torso of an Egyptian statue (no. 7) and the head of an Egyptian royal statue (no. 8), both found in the destruction debris in the “throne room”; the large standing statue (no. 10) also found in the “throne room”; the head of the ivory statue (no. 11) found in the destruction debris of one of the side rooms of the palace; the seated figure (no. 14) from the Area C Stratum IA temple; and the seated figure (no. 17) from the Area H Stratum IA temple—were all most likely mutilated by those who brought about the final destruction of Late Bronze Age Hazor. Of the four Egyptian statues, one is clearly a royal statue, while the others may have represented either kings or dignitaries. Of the locally made anthropomorphic statues, four are of kings or dignitaries: one (no. 12) of the two bronze statues from Area A, the seated statue (no. 15) from Area F, and the two seated basalt statues (nos. 17-18) from Area H. Four statues apparently represent deities: one (no. 13) of the two bronze statues and the large standing basalt statue (no. 10) from Area A, the seated basalt statue (no. 14) from the Area C temple, and the figure standing on a bull (no. 16) from the Area H temple” (Ben-Tor 2006b: 14).



**Fig 48.**

**Fig 49.**



**Fig 48.** The desecrated statue of Ba'al Hadad from the Late Bronze Age Hazor. The Hazor Museum, Israel.

Photo: Michael John Walmsley (2012).

**Fig 49.** The decapitated Canaanite statue, from the Area C Stelae Temple Late Bronze Age IIB destruction. The

Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Michael John Walmsley (2014).

The theories of Yadin and Ben-tor, based on the list of the statues associated with the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE destruction, are further strengthened and supported by Kitchen. He agrees that the Canaanites, Egyptians and the Sea Peoples were not responsible for the destruction of the Late Bronze IIB Hazor, but instead the Israelites were the chief destroyers of the city (Kitchen 2002: 313). This correlates with the Judges 4 and 5 account of the defeat of Sisera and Yabin of Hazor by the Israelites, under the leadership of Barak in about 1208 BCE. In the absence of proof for either of the other two suggestions, the Joshua narrative is the most likely candidate responsible for the destruction of the City.

After the destruction, the city remained uninhabited for about 200 years. As for the second characteristic of destruction, excavations of the LB I and LB III strata also indicate that both destructions were perpetrated specifically by the Israelites. One such evidence is the obliteration of religious structures and artefacts, since God had commanded the Israelites to destroy all pagan culture and religion. Strata representing both destructions of Hazor reveal that the temples and religious foci at Hazor were the nucleus of conflagration. In fact, Wood states that the city's 'cultic centres seemed to have been singled out for especially harsh treatment by the conquerors' (Petrovich 2008: 502). Even the manner of destruction corresponds to Israelite presence, since archaeologists have unearthed a number of severely mutilated religious objects and statuary (Petrovich 2008: 491). This aligns with evidence from other sites that demonstrate that the Israelites had a practice of mutilating and destroying anything associated with pagan religion (Ben-Tor 2006).

Furthermore, because of the nature of these mutilated religious statues and the geographical position of Hazor, it is not viable to attribute Hazor's destruction to any other nearby people group (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 38). The deliberately vandalized religious artefacts at Hazor actually represent both Canaanite and Egyptian religions. This indicates that the city was not destroyed by either the Canaanites or Egyptians, since both of these pagan ancient peoples adopted the deities and temples of conquered cities rather than destroying them. Another group, known as the Sea Peoples, did not invade as far inland as Hazor's location. Foremost, Yadin has pinpointed that the destruction and the text of Joshua 11 are strongly related concluding:

“This destruction is doubtless to be ascribed to the Israelite tribes, as related in the Book of Joshua.”<sup>210</sup> For further evidence on the fiery destruction of Hazor, refer to section 7.4.1 The Excavated Site of Area A on page 242-246, Area F on page 238-242 and Area M on page 246-248.

### 7.3.2 The Egyptians as the Destroyers of the Late Bronze I City

A theory has been proposed that the Egyptians were entirely responsible for destroying the Canaanite Hazor, since there was some destruction at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, in stratum XIV that has been attributed to the Egyptian Pharaoh Seti I. Another possibility is that Ramses II could have conquered the city, either on his way northward to Syria before the Battle of Kadesh in 1275 BCE, or on his return to Egypt afterward. According to the text of Seti I, the Egyptian ruler claims that the people of this land will ‘find out about him whom they did not know - [the Ruler valiant like a falcon and a strong bull wide-striding and sharp-horned, (spreading his wings (firm)) as flint, and every limb as iron, to hack up the [entire] land of Dja[hy]!’ (Hallo and Younger 2000: 28). The ancient text was from the second stele at Beth-Shean set up by Seti I, in which he describes his campaigns against the region of Djahy, identified as part of Canaan and up into southern Lebanon.

Yadin believed that there is a possibility that Seti could have attacked Hazor, since there was massive destruction in the stratum between the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E., and late 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Yadin commented: “We can also assume that the IB city, that of the el-Amarna period, was destroyed by Pharaoh Seti I, or at any rate while Mycenaean IIIA-B was still in use” (Yadin 1975b: 145). This hypothesis was strongly supported by Ben-Tor, as he stated:

From Egyptian records, however, we know that the city (Hazor) must still have existed in about 1290 B.C.E., Pharaoh Seti I (1291-1278 B.C.E.) left an account of a campaign at that time against various Canaanite cities, including Hazor. Seti is the last pharaoh to leave such a reference (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 36).

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210. Ben-Tor, Amnon. (1998). “*The Fall of Canaanite Hazor—the ‘Who’ and ‘When’ Questions,*” in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition* (eds. Seymour Gitin, Amihai Mazar, and Ephraim Stern; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998), 465; Zuckerman, “*Anatomy of a Destruction,*” 24; Yadin, “Hazor,” in *New Encyclopedia*, 603; Amnon Ben-Tor and Maria Teresa Rubiato, “Excavating Hazor—Part Two: Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?” *BAR* 25:3 (May/June 1999), 22–39.

As far as we understand the ancient texts, the Egyptian Pharaoh did not leave a direct reference to Hazor being attacked, although he did record his military campaigns in the Canaanite region according to the Egyptian records (Papyrus Anastasi I 21.2).<sup>211</sup> The name of “Hazor” has been listed twice in the topographical lists of Seti I at Karnak (List XIII: 64A, List XIV: 69A). While some scholars suggested that the name of the city should be read as Hazor, the interpretation of the name was not clear (Hasel 1998: 138-39).

As far as scholars are concerned, they are unsure whether the Egyptian Pharaoh had specifically attacked Hazor itself. What archaeology has revealed in Area M is that a small fragment of an Egyptian statue / offering table, bearing the inscription of a certain vizier from the time of Ramses II, was discovered in the destruction layer of the courtyard. This important artefact probably has a strong connection to the highest level of Nineteenth Dynasty diplomatic activity in Asia. Another important discovery made on the same destruction layer, just a few metres from the Egyptian fragment, was a huge stone bowl, bearing an Akkadian cuneiform inscription.<sup>212</sup> It seems this cuneiform inscription refers to the dedication of a large basin, by a certain high-ranking official, to an unknown god. These important discoveries found on the site of Area M complex have demonstrated the occupied site was dated sometime during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE, until its final destruction (Zuckerman 2010: 171).

The evidence of the monumental entrance of Area M - which contains some cultic installations and possibly administrative buildings - was in fact destroyed in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, and not in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE as originally thought, since the Egyptian Pharaoh Seti I may have campaigned against Hazor, but did not destroy the entire city. Ben-Tor proposes third theory stating that, ‘This destruction is most probably contemporary with the end of Stratum 2 in the lower city, which may have been the result of the military campaign led by Thutmosis III.’<sup>213</sup>

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211. The Papyrus Anastasi I is an ancient Egyptian papyrus containing a satirical text used for the training of scribes during the Ramesside Period (i.e. 19th and 20th dynasties. More importantly, this papyrus is important to historians and Bible scholars above all for the information it supplies about towns in Syria and Canaan during the New Kingdom (Kitchen 2000:530).

212. Allen, J. P. (2001). “*A Hieroglyphic Fragment from Hazor*,” Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar 15: 13–15; Kitchen, K.A. (2003). “*An Egyptian Inscribed Fragment from Late Bronze Hazor*,” Israel Exploration Journal 53: 20–28. Horowitz, W and T. Oshima, “*Two More Cuneiform Finds from Hazor*,” Israel Exploration Journal 52 (2002): 179–83; Horowitz and Oshima, Cuneiform in Canaan, 85–86.

213. Ben-Tor, Amnon. (2001). “*News and Notes*,” IEJ 51:2, 238.

Yadin also believes that the Late Bronze Age I city has strong ties to the Egyptian history; in existence during the reign of Thutmose III.<sup>214</sup> According to the Egyptian record, Thutmose III launched seventeen military campaigns throughout the region of Syro-Palestine, meaning that of which he could be responsible for destroying the Late Bronze Age I Hazor. Among Thutmose III's conquest-lists was Hazor, which the Egyptian Pharaoh claims to have destroyed or subjugated, and then later we find that his son Amenhotep II (ca. 1455–1418 BCE), successor to the throne, also listed Hazor as one of the cities that he conquered. There seems to be a contradiction here, since it is highly unlikely that Amenhotep II could have conquered or subjugated Hazor if his father had already burned it to the ground. As a result of the contradiction, it is more likely that Thutmose III had just subjugated Hazor, rather than destroyed it, as both archaeological and epigraphical evidence shows that he did not burn the city to the ground, since the city was still functioning during the reign of Amenhotep II.<sup>215</sup>

From an archaeological perspective, the stratigraphy of Hazor has demonstrated a long period of non-habitation that occurred between the Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II occupations, which means the city itself was deserted for a considerable period of time after its conflagration, towards the end of the Late Bronze I. Yadin concludes with regards to the discovery made in the Lower City:

In view of a considerable accumulation between Stratum 2 and Stratum 1B above it, it may be assumed perhaps that there was a gap in the history of Hazor, sometime in the middle of the fifteenth century BC (Yadin 1972:31).

As “considerable accumulation” in Yadin’s quotation above indicates, there was definitely a gap period between Stratum 2 and Stratum 1B, meaning that the once mighty city of Hazor was left in ruins and uninhabited for a period of time. According to the Egyptian record, Amenhotep II recorded the city of Hazor in one of his conquest lists during his military campaign (Year 3), which means it could not have been destroyed by his father, Thutmose III. Neither may it have been possible for Amenhotep II to have abandoned it throughout the

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214. Yadin, Yigael. (1972). *Hazor: The Head of all those Kingdoms*, The 1970 Schweich Lectures of the British Academy [London: Oxford University Press, 200].

215. Pritchard, James B. (1950). *ANET* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 242. Hazor is mentioned in a topographical list of Amenhotep II at Karnak (Bienkowski, “*Role of Hazor*,” 54); Grimal, Nicolas. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. p.214. Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1988. Steindorff, George; and Seele, Keith. *When Egypt Ruled the East*. p.56. University of Chicago, 1942.

entirety of his own reign. Furthermore, an important piece of evidence exists in the form of a royal scarab from the reign of Thutmose IV (ca. 1418–1408 BC),<sup>216</sup> which confirms the existence of Hazor as an occupied and functioning city in the last quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, immediately after the reign of Amenhotep II. For further discussion and evidence of the royal scarab, refer to page 238 Area F.

On page 217 we have already mentioned the importance of the Papyrus Hermitage 1116A, which contains a list recording the allocation of beer and corn to messengers from Djahy. This demonstrated that there were strong trading relations between the Canaanites and the Egyptian government, which probably dated to the reign of Thutmose III and his son Amenhotep II.<sup>217</sup> As far as dating of the papyrus is concerned, this letter was probably written during the year 18 of Thutmose III's reign, meaning that the actual manuscript is dated sometime around 1489/1488 BCE. This suggests that the supposed destruction of Hazor by Thutmose III would have occurred five years later, in Year 23 (circa 1484 BCE), the same year in which he besieged Megiddo for seven months before overtaking the city (Redford, Egypt, Canaan, and Israel, 156–157). As Redford concludes:

A date for the two Leningrad papyri shortly after [Amenhotep II's] eighteenth year would satisfy all the evidence. But there is no reason to believe that Thutmose III was still alive and reigning at the time.<sup>218</sup>

Also, when one considers that Amenhotep II was ruling in Year 18 (circa 1438/1437 BCE), the Egyptian Pharaoh had managed only two campaigns into Asia; the first in Year 3, and the second in Year 9.<sup>219</sup> As a result of this sharp decline in the Asiatic campaigning of both Pharaohs, archaeologist Aharoni attributes this to an underlying diminishment of Egyptian power, 'Already in the days of Amenhotep II, the son of Thutmose III, cracks began to appear in the structure of the Egyptian Empire.'<sup>220</sup> This suggests that Amenhotep II did not launch any military Asiatic campaigns after his Year 9, meaning the city of Hazor was not a

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216. Yadin, Yigael. (1972). *Hazor: The Head of all those Kingdoms*, The 1970 Schweich Lectures of the British Academy [London: Oxford University Press, 200].

217. Rainey and Notley. (2006). *Sacred Bridge*, Jerusalem: Carta: 75.

218. Redford, Donald B. (1965). "The Coregency of Tuthmosis III and Amenophis II," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 51 (Dec), 109–110. Redford provides several additional reasons for dating Papyrus Hermitage 1116A to the reign of Amenhotep II.

219. For a discussion of the number and years of Amenhotep II's Asiatic campaigns, see Petrovich, "Amenhotep II," 94–97.

220. Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 34. For a lengthier discussion of the inexplicable decline of Egyptian power and its possible relationship to the loss of the Egyptian army at the time of the exodus, see Petrovich, "Amenhotep II," 100.

functioning city during his Year 18 - assuming the claims were true that he actually destroyed the city as the long occupational gap rules this out. Both Thutmose II and his son Amenhotep claimed to have destroyed the city, but the truth is that there was no actual destruction of the city.

### 7.3.3 The Israelites as the Destroyers of the Late Bronze I City

When looking at the possible evidence for an Israelite Conquest at Hazor, we can safely say that archaeology has revealed at least two Late Bronze Age destructions of this site – one in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and the other 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, (Avi-Yonah 1976: 481-82; Yadin 1975b: 115; <http://unixware.mssc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/2001.htm>). Although Yadin associates the Israelites with the destruction of Hazor at the end of the Late Bronze Age II (circa second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE,<sup>221</sup> he does present a very plausible case in that there is a Late Bronze II gate erected on the foundation of the earlier Middle Bronze Age II gate. He concludes:

This gate must have been destroyed in a violent conflagration, though the exterior walls still stand to a height of nine feet. Traces of the burnt bricks of its inner walls and the ashes of the burnt beams still cover the floors in thick heaps. *The evidence suggests that this destruction occurred before the final destruction of Hazor by the Israelites*, but this problem remains to be studied.<sup>222</sup>

This discovery is significant in understanding that the different conquest theories occurred at Hazor during two different periods. Yadin has acknowledged that there was another earlier destruction that took place during the Late Bronze II period, of which Walton agrees that there were actually two phases of the Late Bronze II period; between 1400 and 1200 BCE.<sup>223</sup> According to Waltke, Hazor has also experienced a third destruction that took place on site, of which he concludes:

There are then from the Late Bronze Age Canaanite city layers of destruction at *ca.* 1400 B.C., *ca.* + 1300 B.C. and *ca.* + 1230 B.C. Moreover, there is no occupation after 1230 B.C. on the Lower Canaanite City and a probable gap on the tell between 1230 B.C. and the era of Solomon. The interpretive problem then is: “With which of these strata shall one associate Joshua?” Most probably Yadin is correct in his suggestion that the destruction

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221. Yadin, Yigael. (1959). “The Fourth Season of Excavation at Hazor,” *The Biblical Archaeologist* 22, (February: 3-8).

222. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

223. Walton, *Chronological Charts*, p. 28.

level at ca. + 1300 B.C. should be associated with the burning of the city by Seti I (ca. 1318 B.C.). So then one is left with the destruction levels at 1400 B.C. and 1230 B.C. Yadin opted for the 1230 B.C. level.<sup>224</sup>

There are textual objections by various scholars who posit that Joshua 11 and Judges 4 describe the events as the same attack. This is not the case here, since the Bible clearly indicates that Jabin, king of Hazor, oppressed the Israelites during the period of the Judges for 20 years (Judg 4:2–3) during which time Deborah and Barak finally defeated Jabin (Judg 4:23–24). In addition to Joshua’s conquest of Hazor during the mid-15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, some two hundred years later, during the period of Israel’s judges, we are told that the Israelites once again engaged the king of Hazor in battle, during which Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites under the leadership of Sisera (ca. 1258 BCE). Professor Siegfried H. Horn has observed the site and concluded that; “undoubtedly Hazor was destroyed” (1963:31).

Whitcomb places the defeat of Jabin approximately 165 years after Joshua’s destruction of Hazor.<sup>225</sup> As a result of this, the passage argues strongly against the 1230 BCE destruction during the military campaign of Joshua, since the city was uninhabited between 1230 BCE and during the reign of Solomon. As Waltke notes:

If the city ceased to exist after 1230 B.C., and if it is still in existence at least three or four generations after Joshua, then Joshua’s destruction cannot be attributed to the destruction level dated at 1230 B.C. . . .<sup>226</sup>

From what we gather here, the argument for the late date destruction of Hazor actually favors the early date. According to early excavations at Hazor, there is strong evidence found at Area K down in the Lower City; massive fortifications were discovered in stratum 2, LB I, indicating the city of Hazor was a powerful, wealthy and organized city state. Yadin concludes:

The gate of stratum 2 is identical in plan to that of the previous phase but is constructed of huge and well-dressed ashlar blocks, further testimony to the high culture and skill of Hazor in the Late Bronze I period” (Yadin 1975b: 139).

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224. Waltke, “Palestinian Artifactual Evidence,” p. 44.

225. Whitcomb, John C. (1968). *Chart of the Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968).

226. Waltke, “*Palestinian Artifactual Evidence*,” p. 44.

The late Sharon Zuckerman, at the time the co-director of the Hazor excavations, supported further evidence, commenting that:

The size and magnitude of the Area M complex and the Area A ceremonial precinct are unrivaled in other Canaanite cities of the Late Bronze Age, as might be expected from the largest Canaanite kingdom in the southern Levant...The Area M complex and the Area A ceremonial precinct went through several phases of existence. The last phase is one of gradual decline, consisting of meager walls and installations built inside the monumental buildings (Zuckerman 2010: 178).

Despite scholars' opinions that the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE Hazor was still a large and powerful city in that period, archaeology has clearly revealed that the Late Bronze I Hazor was at its zenith during the Canaanite period. Abundant examples of Syrian, Anatolian, and Mesopotamian iconography dating to the Late Bronze I period (including the Amarna Letters) clearly indicated the city's power and influence, also its relative independence from the much greater influence that Egypt exerted on other cities of this time in the southern Levant (Bienkowski 1987: 53; Petrovich 2008: 499). However, the argument for the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE destruction of Hazor is far from over, since Yadin and Ben-Tor's interpretations of the data do not support the early date of the destruction of Hazor. But, from the archaeological evidence we have a massive conflagration dating back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, during which period three temples were destroyed. Interestingly two were never rebuilt.<sup>227</sup> John Sailhamer suggests that the destruction level of Hazor should be dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE concluding:

Though hotly contested among modern archaeologists, it appears that both Jericho and Hazor do, in fact, show signs of destruction at about the time of the biblical conquest (around 1400 B.C.) (Sailhamer 2010:57).<sup>228</sup>

From an archaeological perspective we can say that Stratum 1B was dated to the time of Joshua, while the destruction of 1B was during the period of Deborah and Barak in the Book of Judges. In general the city of Hazor was first destroyed by fire under the leadership of Joshua during the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E., and fell subsequently once again sometime in the late 13<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E., by the forces of Deborah and Barak. It appears that Yadin and Ben-Tor are correct that the Israelites were the chief destroyers of Hazor even if their dating on the destruction may not be correct but at least both destructions provide confirmation of the biblical accounts.<sup>229</sup>

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227. Yadin, Yigael. (1975). *Hazor: The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible*. New York: Random House: 250-254

228. Sailhamer, John H. (1998). *Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998).

229. For an extensive presentation, see: Douglas Petrovich, "The Dating of Hazor's Destruction in Joshua 11 by Way of Biblical, Archaeological, and Epigraphical Evidence," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 3 (September 2008): 489-512. Also see Wood and Petrovich are two scholars that have recently argued the 15th century BCE destruction at Hazor could be connected to the Israelite Conquest under Joshua. Cf. Wood, Bryant. "From Ramesses to Shiloh: Archaeological Discoveries Bearing on the Exodus-Judges Period," 256-82 in *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts*, ed. David M. Howard, Jr., and Michael A. Grisanti. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003. Petrovich, Douglas. "The Dating of Hazor's Destruction in Joshua 11," *JETS* 51:3 (2008): 489-512.

### 7.3.4 The Latest Archaeological Report 2012: Scorched Wheat

In 2012, archaeologists made a sensational discovery of massive jars of scorched wheat in Area M, which may shed new light on the destruction of one of Israel's most prominent sites. This important discovery of the 3,400 year-old wheat in a Late Bronze Age palace structure provides tangible evidence of the destruction of the Canaanite city of Hazor. Professor Amnon Ben Tor argues that these jugs of wheat were destroyed around the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.<sup>230</sup>



Fig 50. Photo of burnt wheat found on Area M at Tel Hazor. (Photo by MJ Walmsley 2012).

In addition to the jugs, many other artefacts were found at the site that demonstrated that the city was under intense fire that raged through the palace. Excavations revealed burnt cedar beams, a collapsed ceiling, bricks cemented from heat exposure, and soot on the walls.<sup>231</sup> The Egyptian Amarna Letters describe in detail how the city of Hazor suffered greatly during the destruction from a fierce and devastating conflagration, with heaps of fallen mudbricks and ashes reaching a height of 1.5 meters. The dating on the destruction of Hazor has been widely disputed by various schools of thought, with some accepting the theory that the city of Hazor was destroyed by the Israelites during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE; while other scholars strongly suggest that Hazor was destroyed by either the Egyptians or the Sea Peoples during that same period.

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230. Scorched Wheat May Provide Answers on the Destruction of Canaanite Tel Hazor - Biblical Archaeology Society". [biblicalarchaeology.org](http://biblicalarchaeology.org). Retrieved 2015-09-03.

231. <http://hazor.huji.ac.il/>

However, Professor Amnon Ben-Tor disagreed with the latter viewpoint, since he noted that: 1) Hazor was not included in any of the lists of Israelite cities destroyed by the Pharaohs and 2) the Sea Peoples were known to remain close to the coastline, making it unlikely that they would have conquered Hazor so far inland from their homeland. Additionally, there was a lack of identifiable pottery.

Furthermore, Ben Tor has made a good case against the Egyptians or the Canaanites as culprits, since the statues belonging to both cultures were defaced during the destruction and it was not common for these armies to have destroyed their own statues. As far as Ben-Tor is concerned, he generally agrees with Yigael Yadin that the Israelites were the most likely responsible for the destruction of Tel Hazor.

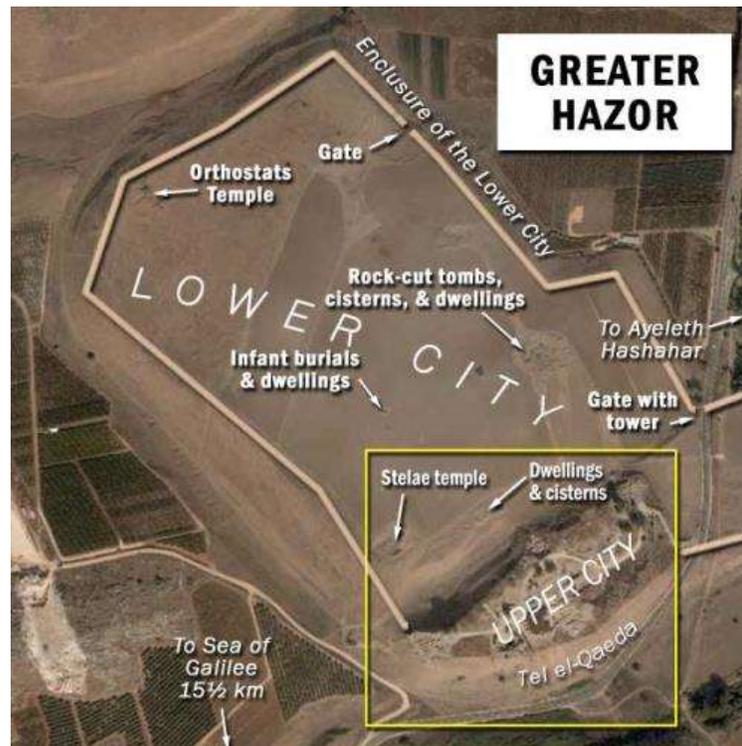
In summary, while most scholars agree that Hazor may have been destroyed in the 13<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, the date of this destruction is still debated. They are still waiting for the final results of the radiocarbon testing of the storage jars full of wheat found at the site during the summer of 2012 to provide a definitive scientific answer.

#### **7.4 Archaeological Excavation Reports of the Lower City**

John Garstang carried out initial soundings in 1926. He concluded that the large plateau was a campsite for infantry and chariots. Since he did not find any Mycenaean pottery sherds (which first appear in the area after 1400 BCE), he dated Hazor's final destruction to about 1400 BCE; the date he ascribed to Joshua's conquest (Garstang 1944: 371-385). However, the excavations showed that the entire enclosure of the Lower City was not a campsite, but a city comprising five different levels. It was first settled in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. (Middle Bronze Age II), to which the fortifications date, and was finally destroyed sometime before the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. The discovery of Mycenaean and local ware from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century helped to disprove Garstang's proposed destruction date.

A series of seasonal excavations began in the 1950s, which were led by Yigael Yadin on behalf of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. During the archaeological expedition at Hazor, he discovered the lower city which contains five levels of occupation, divided into areas C, D, E, 210, F, H, and K. According to Yadin the site was first settled in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, and then later destroyed before the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (circa 1230 BCE). But he

also dated the last destruction to Joshua's day; strata 2 and 1B dating to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Vos 1977:173). This stratum represents the peak of Hazor's prosperity, together with the 14<sup>th</sup> Century city (stratum IB), during which time it was the largest city in the land of Canaan.



**Fig 51.** Map of the Lower City of Tel Hazor. Source: Yadin, Yigael. Hazor: The Schweich Lectures, 1970. London: British Academy, 1972:16.

Excavation reports on Stratum 1B have shown that the city suffered destruction in undetermined circumstances, of which the last settlement in stratum IA was a reconstruction of the previous one; and with its fall, before the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, occupation ceased in the lower city. Reports showed both of these destructions were ascribed to the conquering Israelite tribes, as is related in detail in the Book of Joshua.<sup>232</sup> The list of the different strata uncovered in the Lower City, along with the different dates that they assigned to them, is shown in the following table.<sup>233</sup>

232. Yadin Y. (1967). et al., Hazor, 4 vols. (Eng., 1959–64); Y. Yadin, in: D.W. Thomas (ed.), *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, 245ff. (includes bibl.); Y. Yadin, *The Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 32 no. 3, 50ff.

233. Scheepers, Coenie & Scheffle Eben. (2000). *From Dan to Beersheba: an archaeological tour through ancient Israel*, Menlo Park [South Africa]: Biblia Publishers. p.57-92.

No	Stratum - Lower City	Date
1	Stratum 4	MB IIB, 18 <sup>TH</sup> cent. B.C.E.
2	Stratum 3	MB IIC, 17 <sup>TH</sup> – 16 <sup>TH</sup> cent. B.C.E.
3	Stratum 2	LB I, 15 <sup>TH</sup> cent. B.C.E.
4	Stratum 1-b	LB IIA (el-Amarna period) 14 <sup>TH</sup> cent. BCE.
5	Stratum 1-a	LB IIB, 13 <sup>TH</sup> cent. BCE.

Table 1.9

Several remains and artefacts were discovered in the many areas of the Lower City, for instance; the earliest pot sherds discovered were strongly connected with the architectural remains which date to the Early Bronze Age II, according to Yadin. Then a jar with an Akkadian inscription, incised before firing and bearing the name of the owner of the Bessel (dating to the Middle Bronze Age IIB) was discovered in stratum 4. In stratum 2, above a layer of ash, lay the city inhabited during the Late Bronze Age I, where various dwellings were excavated. These and many more artefacts were unearthed in Area C in the Lower City (Meyers 1997: 1 - 4).

#### 7.4.1 The Excavated Site of Area H

Area H lies at the northern tip of the lower city and consists of a series of four superimposed temples that were unearthed in this area against the inner face of the earth rampart. The earliest level of stratum III consisted of a broad hall with a small niche; a sort of Holy of Holies. Just south of the hall was a raised platform reached by several finely dressed basalt steps (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 82). The next temple was substantially of the same design but it had a closed court added to it and an open courtyard built to the south of it. The courtyard itself contained a large rectangular bamah (high place) and several altars, and one could walk through the court via a broad propylaeum. In this area, a clay model of a liver was found in a pile of debris nearby - inscribed in Akkadian. It was probably used by the priest-diviners and mentioned various evil omens. Also found was a bronze plaque of a Canaanite dignitary wrapped in a long robe. In stratum 1B, the temple was composed of three chambers built on a single axis from south to north; 1) a porch, 2) a main hall, and 3) a broad Holy of Holies with a rectangular niche in its northern wall (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 84). These

designs are similar to several temples found at Alalakh in northern Syria, including the temple of Solomon.

Furthermore, excavators discovered a row of basalt orthostats (probably belonging to the previous temple) forming a dado around the interior of the porch and the Holy of Holies. It resembled the one found at Alalakh and other sites, showing strong evidence of a northern influence. They also found a rare basalt orthostat (with a lion in relief) buried in a pit, flanking the entrance to the porch (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 85). The temple of stratum 1A shows only minor alterations with several important furnishings discovered in this area. These include many ritual vessels, a basalt incense altar with the emblem of the storm god in relief and a circle with a cross in the centre, ritual tables and bowls, a statuette of a seated figure, cylinder seals, and a scarab bearing the name of Amenhotep III.



**Fig 52.**



**Fig 53.**

**Fig 52.** Lion from Hazor at the nearby museum, Tel Hazor National Park.

**Fig 53.** Basalt Incense Altar found in the ashes in the Holy of Holies of the temple in stratum 1A dating 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

Outside the sanctuary fragments of a statue of a deity with the symbol of the storm god on its chest were found. The god had stood on a bull-shaped base. The actual function of the area H temple appears to have been cultic sacrifice and ritual meals. According to the archaeological data, these furnishings were found in a thick layer of ash in the Holy of Holies on stratum 1A, demonstrating that they must have come from the end of the conflagration period during the

second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 86).<sup>234</sup> Yadin writes of this later era in reference to the lower city, “*The end of Stratum 1A came about as the result of a violent fire, as indicated by ashes found in the less exposed areas excavated in Areas H,*” (Yadin, 1972:37). Another important find on stratum 2 at the temple in area H was that of a kiln with twenty-two miniature votive bowls still resting on the floor. This indicates that an invading enemy destroyed the temple of stratum 2 and the people abandoned it abruptly (Yadin 1975b: 115). The vessels were found intact, implying that the siege was a quick desertion in response to a foreign attack on 15<sup>th</sup> century BCE Hazor. A 15cm thick layer of ash, specifically on the floor of the Area H Orthostat Temple in the Late Bronze IB stratum 2, was uncovered by excavations (Yadin 1989: 228). Above the ash, fallen mud bricks and other building debris formed another 70cm thick destruction layer (Yadin 1989: 227).

As far as the biblical narratives in the book of Joshua and Judges are concerned, the archaeological evidence shows a strong indication that the city of Hazor was destroyed. With the pagan statues, masseboth and remnants of sacrifice to pagan gods, a temple such as this would have been an obvious target for destruction by invading Israelites seeking to eradicate idols and other components of Canaanite religion. Finally, this is in stark contrast to the expected findings if one were to argue for a “Peasant Revolt.”<sup>235</sup>

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234. Stratum 1A was designated to the final city of the Late Bronze (IIB/III) Age (ca. 1300–1200 B.C.E) in the lower city, and Stratum XIII on the tel. Yadin believed the destruction of Stratum 1A was during the second third of the 13th Century B.C.E. For instance, he stated in a 1972 publication that “it seems most probable that 1A was destroyed during the second third of the thirteenth century” BC (Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: The Head of all those Kingdoms*, The 1970 Schweich Lectures of the British Academy [London: Oxford University Press, 1972], 108). Again in the 1993 publication, this statement was virtually repeated, with the addition that this destruction and dating applies both to the upper and lower city, and that conflagration was the cause (Yadin, “Hazor,” in *New Encyclopedia*, 603). However, Kitchen was of the opinion who prefers lowering the date to at least 1220 B.C.E., arguing that “Yadin date of 1230 B.C.E. (Mycenaean wares near [the] end of Hazor) was based on [the work of Arne] Furumark (in [the] 1940s!), who then used old, high Egyptian dates not usable today” (Kitchen, K.A. (2002). “*Hazor and Egypt: An Egyptological & Ancient Near-Eastern Perspective,*” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 16:2 [Nov 2002], 310). Later, Kitchen defined the known parameters more precisely, noting that the vizier Prahotept erected a monument in Hazor sometime during the decade following Years 40–45 of Ramses II (Kenneth A. Kitchen, “An Egyptian Inscribed Fragment from Late Bronze Hazor,” *IEJ* 53:1 [2003], 24, 25), translating to 1245–1235 BC, thus leaving 1234–1230 BC as a legitimate option for the destruction of the final Late-Bronze city (Wood, “Rise and Fall,” 476). The high chronology for the 18th Egyptian Dynasty, far from unusable or outdated, despite the claims of Kitchen and Hoffmeier, is quite defensible (Douglas Petrovich, “Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus Pharaoh,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 17:1 [Spr 2006], 87). The low chronology’s current popularity among many Egyptologists may prove to be nothing more than a mere trend.

235. The Peasant Revolt theory argues that the lower classes rebelled against their rulers, destroying their oppressors. However, the abandonment and destruction of a lower class potter’s workshop located in the Lower City of Hazor is in opposition to this theory, as the residents of the Lower City would not destroy themselves and leave Hazor in a rebellion against the ruling class. Any emergence theory must explain away the apparent agreement between the archaeological data at LB IIB Hazor and the ancient Judges narrative claiming the city was conquered by the Israelites.

#### 7.4.2 The Excavated Site of Area F

The site of Area F is located in the eastern side of the Lower City between the city gates and close to the Area P gate. Five Strata (4-1A) have been identified in this area, of which the last three (2, 1B and 1A) belong to the Late Bronze Age (Ben-Tor 1989b, xiii). Excavations have revealed rock-cut tombs with an elaborate network of tunnels connecting them, dating from the earliest stratum. A large building was also found in this area, which could have been a temple, constructed with thick walls and using older tunnels for a drainage system.

These networks of drainage channels and underground tunnels were hewn into the rocks underneath the area by the people of the Middle Bronze Strata 4 and 3, and seem to have been reused for different purposes (such as storage, burials, and drainage) by the inhabitants in the Late Bronze period (Ben-Tor 1989b, plan XXVI, 143-147; Yadin, et al. 1960:129-142).

In the next stratum II a temple was built, whereas in stratum 1B the entire area appears to be of definite cultic character and a large monolithic altar with depressions for draining the sacrificial blood were discovered in this area. In stratum III, archaeologists discovered a large number of infant burials in jars beneath the floors of houses. The entire square structure seems to suggest that Hazor had a strong Egyptian influence during the Late Bronze Age 1 period. During Yadin's second year of excavations, whilst digging in Stratum 1B (Late Bronze IIA, c. 1400–1300 BCE), his team found a burial cave, designated 8144, which yielded the critical scarab from the reign of Thutmose IV (ca. 1418–1408 BCE).<sup>236</sup> This cave was buried under Stratum 1A (Late Bronze IIB, circa. 1300–1200 BCE), so the stratified scarab was placed there at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, indicating roughly when this cave was first used for burials (Yadin 1975: 59, 63–64, 73). In Garstang's report of 1928, he declared that Area F was only a camping ground and thereafter his small-scale trenches failed to find anything - notably no Mycenaean sherds - which led him to date Hazor to the Late Bronze Age destruction before 1400 BCE (Garstang 1931: 184, 382-83).

However, Yadin seems to be more successful in the discovery of imported Mycenaean pottery found on the site of Stratum 1A and 1B which provides more archaeological evidence

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236. This date fits well with the dating of the end of str. 1B at Hazor, represented by the rich assemblage of Tomb 8144-8145 in the Lower City (Yadin et al. 1960, pls. CXXVIII-CXXXVIII).

that Hazor remained an inhabited and thriving city, not only during and after the reign of Thutmosis III, but during that of his successors; Amenhotep II and Thutmosis IV (Aling 2010). For instance, the habitation strata consists of imports from the houses, while the tunnels and the cult site contained a small number compared to those from the tombs down in the areas of the Lower City (Yadin 1960: 156-159). Mycenaean pottery has dominated the largest group of imports found in these occupation strata. At least three pilgrim flasks were found in the dwelling quarter, while the same types of flask were also found in tombs (Yadin 1960, pls. CXLVIII; CXCIV, 1-5). Three stirrup jars of a type dated to Mycenaean IIIB, one of which was complete, were also unearthed from the houses (Yadin 1960:150 n. 31). In a strata representing the same period, a Mycenaean pyxis was discovered in a tunnel and the fragments of two Mycenaean figurines were also found; one in a house and the other was a surface find (Yadin 1960, pls. CXLVIII, 8, 9; CXCIV, 1- 5).

The discovery of caves in Area F further defined the chronology of the cave and the stratum, as indicated by the great wealth of imported Mycenaean pottery found on site. Also uncovered were datable, imported Cypriot ware such as Milk Bowls, a Base-ring, and Bucchero Ware alongside local pottery, none of which dates beyond the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.<sup>237</sup> Because of the abundance of imported Mycenaean vessels discovered, Yadin paid special attention to the late stage of III A: 2, pointing out that this abundance of IIIA:2 pottery was complemented ‘with a few A: 1’ vessels (Yadin 1972: 46).<sup>238</sup> Wisely, Yadin consulted a pottery specialist who dated these Mycenaean IIIA:2 pottery to ca. 1400–1375 BCE, in its early forms and to ca. 1375–1300 BCE, in its late forms; while the Mycenaean IIIA:1 ware was dated to ca. 1425–1400 BCE. This dating was based on Furumark’s chronological scheme of the LH IIIB (1300-1230 BC) (Furumark 1941:113-5; 1972:115).

However, Kitchen was of the opinion that Yadin had improperly dated Furumark’s Mycenaean pottery analysis to the 1940s. Instead, the publication-date here reveals a time 30 years closer to the present than what Kitchen declared. Incidentally, Furumark lived until 1982.<sup>239</sup>

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237. *Ibid.*, 65; *idem*, *The Head*, 46; Yigael Yadin, Yohanan Aharoni, Ruth Amiran, Trude Dothan, Immanuel Dunayevsky, and Jean Perrot, *Hazor II: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations, 1956* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960:153).

238. Yadin Y. (1972). *et al.*, *Hazor II*, 153. Elsewhere, Yadin calls the pottery “the very end of the IIIA: 2 type” (Yadin, *The Head*, 46).

239. See Zuckerman, Sharon. (2007). *Dating the Destruction of Canaanite Hazor without Mycenaean Pottery* Vienna: Publisher of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

In Yadin's report on the discovery of the Late Bronze I Age pottery found in one of Hazor's caves during his expeditions, he fails to comment on any early Mycenaean IIIA:2 pottery that would date to the short period from around 1400–1375 BCE.<sup>240</sup> The importance of this early Mycenaean IIIA:2 pottery is that it matches well with the period of non-habitation as revealed by the noted occupational gap that occurred after the city was destroyed on Joshua's northern campaign ca. 1400 BCE. Therefore, it appears that these caves were in use during the years shortly before ca. 1400 BCE, and throughout the years from 1375–1300 BCE. Perhaps the contribution of Mycenaean pottery to the dating of Hazor's destruction should be evaluated in the light of better knowledge of the chronological and spatial distribution available today.

### **7.5 Archaeological Excavation Reports on the Upper City**

The Upper city lies forty metres above the south side of the valley, protected by massive walls, and the size of the area is 100 Dunam (10 Hectares). This is the main part of the city, with the palaces and temples built on this site. The entire area of the Upper City as excavated in five areas, starting with areas A (in the centre of the tell), B (on the western edge of the tell), G (on the eastern edge of the tell), M (on the northern part of the tell that is the connection between the Upper City and Lower City) and finally L (on the southern edge of the mound) – (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000: 65-73).

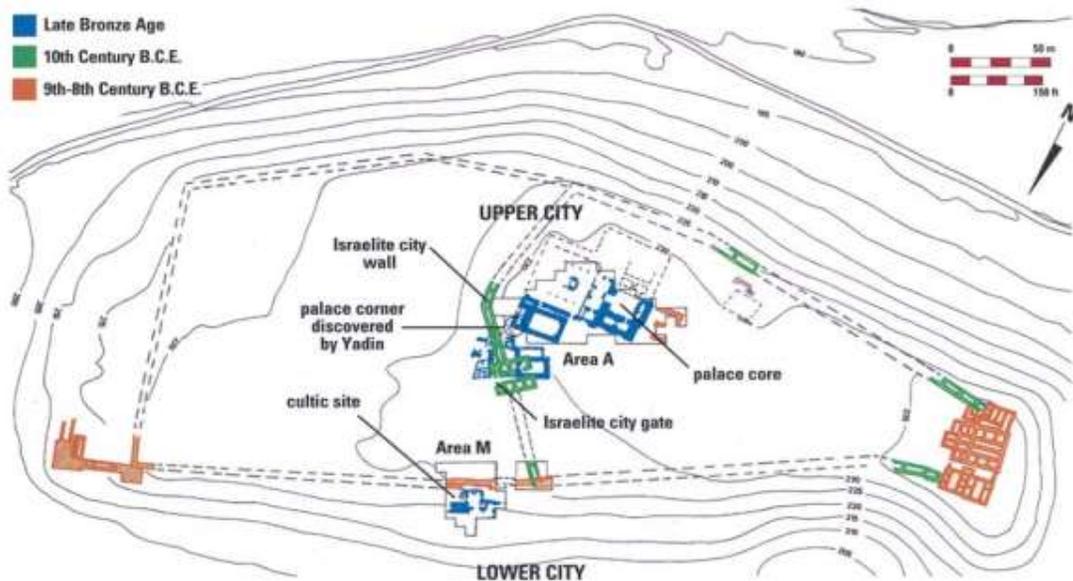
Starting with Area G, archaeologists have discovered remains from the Bronze Ages with fortifications located in the northeastern part of the “terrace,” centred around a curved stone bastion “whose battered outer walls were protected by deep, narrow fosse. The abundant pottery shows an occupation throughout the Middle and Late Bronze ages” (Stern 2008: 603). From an Iron Age perspective, there has not been enough evidence to firmly establish the character of the settlements before stratum VIII. From this level up, and according to Yadin, “the remains clearly indicate that the city defences were expanded to include Area G as well,”

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240. Yadin's Late-Bronze-I finds include the following: Mycenaean vessels from Tomb 8144 and Tomb 8145, which are contemporaneous with a pear-shaped jar from Tomb 8065, all of which are characteristic of the later stage of IIIA:2; three jars (from Tomb 8065) that belong to the period of later IIIA:2; five stirrup-jars (from Tomb 8065), which are divided into three groups, two of which belong to later IIIA:2, and one of which is typical of IIIA:2 in general, but its later stage in particular; a pyxis (from Tomb 8065) of the IIIA:2 variety, the decorative pattern of which belongs only to IIIA:1, thus indicating that this pyxis actually dates to the same time period as the scarab, late in the final quarter of the 15th century B.C.E (Yadin et al., Hazor II, 150–51). Also see Kristina Josephson Hesse Doctoral Dissertation in Archaeology, (2008: 72-94), Hazor Aspects Of Intercultural Relationships And Identity In The Eastern Mediterranean, Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Umea University.

which formed an outer citadel to protect the terrace and the approach to the main gate on the south (Stern 2008: 603). In Area B, strata XV – XII, the remains demonstrated that a settlement existed during the Late Bronze Age, but still there was not enough to ascertain its nature. Important local pottery and imported wares were discovered in this area, all dated to the Late Bronze Age I and IIA – B, while stratum X contained the remains of the “Solomonic” city (Stern 2008: 601). Archaeologists discovered a casemate wall surrounding the mound, which was well preserved on this same stratum. They also noticed that the fortifications were expanded on the western edge to form something similar to a citadel, while on stratum V there were “drastic changes” made compared to the strata previously unearthed in the excavations. Here Stern highlights important finds in the area:

The citadel met its final, complete destruction at the end of this level (the conquest of Tiglath-Pileser III) which was covered in ash and rubble around 1 meter thick. The most noteworthy find in this citadel are an ivory pyxis and several Hebrew inscriptions, including one incised on the shoulder of a storage jar, ‘לפקח ׁמריׁו’ ‘belonging to Pekah, semadar (a type of wine), and another, ‘לרלׁיו’ ‘belonging to Delayo’ (Stern 2008: 603).



**Fig 54.** Plan of excavations areas A and M in the Upper City.

As from the 9th and 8th Centuries BCE, Hazor became a strong Israelite centre evidenced by the discovery of major fortifications, as well as large public structures, storage facilities, domestic houses, and an unusual basalt workshop in the upper city. Finally, Israelite Hazor was destroyed by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III in 732 BCE (2 Kgs 15:29-30).

According to scripture most of the Israelites were deported to Assyria. From that period, limited occupation was continued on the mound until the second century BCE, and thus the city of Hazor never regained its former status as “the head of all these kingdoms.”

### 7.5.1 The Excavated Site of Area A

The site of Area A was heavily excavated for many decades with remains from the Early Bronze Age through the Mamluk period being identified, but more importantly most of the architecture was dated from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (ca. 2000-1200 BCE) and the Iron Age (ca. 1200-586 BCE).

Archaeologists have discovered abundant evidence to support the widespread destruction by fire at the end of Late Bronze I in Area A. Strong evidence was also found in one of the temples in stratum XV, which was destroyed in the Late Bronze I destruction of the city (Ben-Tor 1997: 102; Ben-Tor 1993: 604). The architectural building, also known as the orthostat temple, was designed in a rectangular shape with a measurement of 16.2 metres internally, from east to west, and 11.6 metres from north to south. The walls measured 2.35 metres in thickness and were built of bricks on stone foundations. Just opposite the entrance was a platform made of brick and plaster that measured almost five metres from north to south, and approximately 1.5m from east to west.

Furthermore, some startling discoveries were made in this area such as a quantity of votive offerings and pottery and animal remains found on the platform around it. Archaeologists have also discovered nearly 2 metres of debris composed of bricks that had fallen off the walls in the entire area itself. Crucial pottery evidence was found among the debris dating to the Late Bronze I period (16<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE, i.e., stratum XV). However, there were no remains from the 14<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE found on strata XIV-XIII. Reports show the thick layer of brick debris covering the remains of the Late Bronze I temple, also making note of the fact that this temple was never again reconstructed after its final destruction. As far as observation is concerned, this area was probably maintained through the 14<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE, on strata XIV and XIII, (Yadin 1975b: 260-261; cf. Yadin 1968: 52). The excavation results indicated that this building was deliberately left in ruins and never rebuilt, which has puzzled archaeologists since it was first excavated. As Yadin stated in his report:

...discovered a group of stelae and offering vessels belonging to the final phase of Late Bronze (stratum XIII), which were erected after the temple's demolition. Now it became clear that the whole vicinity of the temple had cultic installations, including probably various temples. The area was littered with relics of cult vessels, bones, etc. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the area kept its cultic character, although, for reasons unknown to us, the temple itself was not restored...On the other hand, no relic was found that could be attributed to the two strata, XIV and XIII (Yadin 1968: 53).

Other important discoveries made on the acropolis of Area A were the ceremonial palace or temple, ascribed to stratum XIII, and its corresponding stratum in the Lower City is 1A, the final phase of the Canaanite lower city whose final destruction was dated to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Ben-Tor 2006a: 8, 78-79). According to archaeologists, there was an earlier version of this building that lies beneath the existing palace / temple area which has not been excavated because of restoration and preservation work done to the stratum XIII building. The 1995 Season Excavation reported on the destruction of this monumental Canaanite building, "*As indicated by finds from previous seasons, the palace was destroyed in a huge fire in which its mud-brick walls melted and its basalt foundations underwent extensive cracking.*"<sup>241</sup> It was discovered that the palace walls were well preserved in some places to a height of more than two metres and made with mudbrick on a stone foundation, with wooden cedar beams placed in the walls at irregular intervals. The entire design of the palace, as well as many of the elements of construction, indicated a strong Syrian influence on the local architecture. The 1994 Season Excavation report images show the actual inner wall of the main room of this building, lined with basalt orthostats that were cracked by an extremely intense fire.<sup>242</sup> As the results of this type of destruction, the fire was estimated to exceed 2350 degrees Fahrenheit, indicating a purposeful, destructive burning of the building (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 22-27). Of special note is the discovery of a wealth of decorated ivories found among the fire debris, indicating that the occupants that resided in the ceremonial palace were very wealthy.<sup>243</sup>

From an archaeological point of view the ceremonial palace or temple was destroyed by an intense fire at the end of the city's Canaanite period in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Ben-Tor 2006a: 8, 78-79).

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241. Professor Amnon Ben-Tor calls this building a ceremonial palace, while Zuckerman argues it is a temple. Ben-Tor, Amnon. "Ceremonial Palace, Not a Temple," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32 (2006): 8, 78-79; Zuckerman, Sharon. "'The City, Its Gods Will Return There ...': Toward an Alternative Interpretation of Hazor's Acropolis in the Late Bronze Age," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69:2 (2010): 172.

242. <http://unixware.msc.c.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1994.html>

243. See the 1995 Season Excavation Report at <http://unixware.msec.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1995.htm>.

Professor Amnon Ben-Tor reports on the findings in this monumental building:

Whoever burned the city also deliberately destroyed statuary in the palace. Among the ashes, we discovered the largest Canaanite statue of human form ever found in Israel. Carved from a basalt block that must have weighed more than a ton, the 3-foot-tall statue had been smashed into nearly a hundred pieces, which were scattered in a 6-foot-wide circle. The head and hands of this statue, and of several others, were missing, apparently cut off by the city's conquerors (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 22).



**Fig 55.** The ash layer from Hazor's fiery destruction in the ceremonial palace. This ash layer exists throughout the site of which the fire that produced it occurred around the time of Joshua's destruction of the city (Joshua 11). Photo by Royce Chandler 2010.

For decades, the issue on the dating of Hazor's destruction has been disputed among various scholars. Both Yadin and Ben-Tor's excavations have revealed that there were at least two important Late Bronze Age destructions of Hazor; one in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Early Date), and the other in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Late Date). After much thorough investigation around the temple/palace area, conducted by Professor Ben-Tor, he concluded that, "*We now date the building to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE,*" and there are "*two carbon 14 dates that seem to point to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE,*" for the destruction (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 27, 36).

According to Ben Tor the temple / palace area was continually used through much of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE and thus not destroyed until the late 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, as originally thought, as revealed by excavations in the next stratum above the final phase of the palace dating from circa 12<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, which is the Israelite Period. The 1995 Season Excavation Report stated, 'Excavations at the Canaanite palace, which is a huge building, began several seasons ago when it was uncovered beneath structures from the Israelite period' (1995 Season

Excavation Report: <http://unixware.msc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1995.htm>). Since the discovery and recent studies of Mycenaean pottery ware chronology and research indicates, “Hazor stratum XIII must have been destroyed at the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the twelfth century” (Fritz 1987: 88). Because of this find, it appears that the late 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE date should be correlated to the time of Deborah and Barak’s defeat of both Sisera and Jabin, King of Hazor, in about 1208 BCE. From a textual and stratigraphy point of view, the stratum XIII of the acropolis and stratum 1A of the lower city of Hazor should be associated with the biblical account of Deborah and Barak.

Once again, the ceramic evidence from both Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II Ages indicate that the palace / temple area was still in use throughout the period. Additionally, with major discoveries found elsewhere on the site, this building structure definitely underwent severe destructions during both the Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II periods. The reason is that archaeologists have discovered decapitated and mutilated statues lying around in this building area, which indicates that it may have originated in either Late Bronze I or Late Bronze II. The 1997 Season Excavation Report concludes, “*Remnants of yet another stone made statue of an Egyptian king was also found. Just like the similar statues found previously, this statue too suffered intentional mutilation in antiquity*” (1997 Season Excavation Report: <http://unixware.msc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1997.htm>).

This suggests that the destruction of Hazor was not partly due to the invasion of the Egyptians: Thutmose III or Amenhotep II in the Late Bronze IB, and Seti I in the Late Bronze II age. The only possible candidate for the destruction of Hazor could have been the invading Israelites; first the Joshua conquest during the Late Bronze I period and secondly the Deborah / Barak conquest during the Late Bronze II era. If one considers both the mutilated statues found in the building dating to the Late Bronze I destruction and the pottery, it further suggests that the Egyptians or the Canaanites could not have destroyed the city and would certainly not have mutilated their very own statues. Evidence has shown this must have been done during the Late Bronze I.

Finally, while most scholars considered it to be a single event, the accounts of Israelite Conquest associated with the great city of Hazor in the books of Joshua and Judges should be considered as separate events. If you read both of these accounts carefully in both books of Joshua and Judges, the biblical texts make it clear that the attack on the destruction of Hazor

led by Joshua and Barak are actually two separate events divided in time by at least 150 years.

### 7.5.2 The Excavated Site of Area M

Ever since the large-scale excavations began in 1990, work began in Area M which is located at the point on the northern part of the mound that connects (between) the Upper City and Lower City. While we have already discussed the significant evidence of the destruction of Hazor during the Late Bronze I Age in the Lower City, perhaps the most defining evidence of the same destruction in the upper city can be found at the recent excavations on the slope of Area M. The excavation report of 2000 which shows the destruction from both the Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II ages concludes:

Two fragmentary walls built on top of the paved [Late Bronze IIB/III] street, which were found covered by the destruction layer marking the end of the entire architectural assemblage, indicate that the last phase of occupation here [during the Late Bronze IIB/III Age] was of a rather poor nature. This is also attested by a huge pit dug through the paved street, immediately in front of the entrance into the citadel, entirely blocking the access to it. The nature of this pit could not be ascertained. The pit cut into an earlier accumulation of fallen mud-bricks and ashes: this is the only clear indication found so far for an earlier destruction, still in the Late Bronze Age, pre-dating the final destruction of the [last Canaanite] city. That earlier phase [i.e. of the Late Bronze I Age], extending beyond the excavated area, was apparently of a substantial nature, as indicated by an orthostat associated with it. The orthostats forming part of the paved open area in front of the podium adjacent to the citadel, some of them clearly in secondary use, may have originated in this earlier phase.<sup>244</sup>

In the highlighted portion of the quotation above, ‘*the pit cut into an earlier accumulation of fallen mud-bricks and ashes...*,’ clearly reveals that the remains of the Late Bronze I city must have been burned to the ground after its destruction. Again in 2001, the renewed excavation did further analysis on the monumental entrance on the Upper City of Area M and these reports concluded:

In this area the upper [Late Bronze IIB/III] pavement covering the street and the entrance to the “citadel” was removed in order to investigate earlier phases of construction. An earlier pavement, differing in nature from the later one, was revealed. This earlier pavement predates the construction of the “citadel”, the western wall of which cuts through it. This earlier phase ended in a conflagration, similar to the one that brought an end to the later phase. The ceramic assemblage associated with this earlier phase, albeit meager, seems to place the date of this earlier destruction somewhere in the Late Bronze Age I (15th century B.C.).<sup>245</sup>

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244. See “2000 Excavation Report,” on the webpage <http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/hazor.html>.

245. See “2001 Excavation Report,” on the webpage <http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/hazor.html>

As a result of this, Ben-Tor compares the fiery destruction of the Late Bronze I city to that of the Late Bronze IIB/III city based on the description of a violent fire and destruction of Hazor discovered on site. He has strongly suggested that this massive conflagration was during the time of Joshua. Once again, the evidence of this conflagration is visible in Area M on the northern slope of the mound of which various sections of the burn-line and residual burned areas were clearly preserved during the 2001 excavation expedition.<sup>246</sup>



**Fig 56.** The Late Bronze I Burn-line at Hazor (Area M). The pictures above reveal the burn line for Late Bronze I (1550-1400 BC) Hazor, which must have been destroyed by the Israelites during the northern campaign under Joshua in approximately 1400 BCE (Josh 11:11). The picture also displays a red circle around the charred remains of the LB-I destruction by conflagration (a mass burning by fire). Photo taken 2007.

Furthermore, the 2001 excavation reports also mentioned that the earlier phase of the Late Bronze I city was strongly associated with the orthostats. These orthostats were discovered at various important sites of Hazor dating to the Late Bronze I period when the city was still at its zenith. After its destruction at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE the city of Hazor never regained its former glory.

The 2004 excavation preliminary report once again reveals that the city of Hazor was a very powerful kingdom during the Late Bronze I period while the final Late Bronze II Canaanite city did not quite attain its previous greatness. As the report indicates, ‘This corresponds well with the findings in other parts of the excavations, as well as in the excavations of Yigael Yadin, which clearly indicate that Hazor is in decline towards the end of the Late Bronze Age’ (2004 Season Excavation Report: <http://unixware.mssc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/2004.htm>).

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246. [http://exegetisinternational.org/index.php?option=com\\_deepockets&task=contShow&id=2&Itemid=30](http://exegetisinternational.org/index.php?option=com_deepockets&task=contShow&id=2&Itemid=30)

Foremost, Morris also concludes that the city of Hazor was then a major city in Canaan as described in the Amarna Letters 36:15; 8:25), indicating that the Israelites were already in Canaan by the 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE (Morris 2006: 186). Many scholars believe that the destruction caused by Joshua's conquest is evidenced by the Late Bronze II destruction of a large palace / temple area. Excavations have revealed; basalt stone orthostats that made up the wall were cracked by fire (1200 degrees Celsius), charcoal remains of burnt wood supports and a metre-thick layer of ash. Additionally, archaeologists have discovered an impressive "podium complex" that was uniquely paved with basalt orthostats and featured a square basalt podium set into a niche in a rear wall in Area M. The podium itself had four indentations on its surface which could have served as a platform for a throne or a statue. According to archaeologists the complex was dated to the final phase of the Late Bronze Age which was consumed by the fire that destroyed the city. Both Yigael Yadin and Amnon Ben-Tor have stated that the burn level of the Late Bronze II city is from the Israelite Conquest.

However, there is an inscription dating to approximately 1290 BCE, recorded by the Egyptian Pharaoh Seti I, that claim that he destroyed Hazor and several other Canaanite cities during his military campaigns in Canaan. Sufficient and corroborating evidence has already revealed that both the upper and lower cities of the Late Bronze I Age of Hazor were first destroyed by the Israelites under Joshua (circa 14<sup>th</sup> Century BCE) before it was rebuilt again, then later destroyed by Seti I, before it fell once again in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE to the Israelite duo of Deborah and Barak (Wood 2007: 78). As Wood puts it, "*The simple (and biblical) solution is that Joshua destroyed an earlier city at Hazor in ca. 1400 BC, while Deborah and Barak administered the coup de grâce in ca. 1230 BC*" (Wood 2008: 488).

## **7.6 Conclusion on the Conquest of the Late Bronze Age City of Hazor**

When considering the historical and archaeological evidence at Hazor as a whole, the 15<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, destructions do seem to correlate with the two phases of the Israelite Conquest of Hazor mentioned in the books of Joshua and Judges. Apart from the theory held by Yadin, the earlier conquest cannot be credited to Thutmose III since the archaeological record reveals a long habitation gap following Hazor's Late Bronze I conflagration. As a result of the archaeological evidence, it can be concluded that Thutmose III was not responsible for the destruction of Hazor, since the city was already functioning/occupied just decades after that Pharaoh's reign. Furthermore, the results once again showed the

impossibility of attributing Hazor's earlier destruction to Thutmose III due to the timeline of Mycenaean pottery discovered on the ruins of Hazor; thus the Late Bronze I strata at Hazor should be attributed to Joshua and the Israelites. All of the evidence that we have already discovered above - the burned palace containing the scarcity of imported pottery and a number of desecrated Canaanite religious statuary - indicates that the structure has a Late Bronze I destruction date which should be attributed to the Israelites.

This is further separated by the presence of mutilated Egyptian statuary, since it is highly improbable that the Egyptians burned the palace and destroyed their own religious statues. As a final note, even archaeological evidence from the Conquest city of Jericho indicates an early date destruction during the LB I Age. This date can be established because of the date and position of the fallen walls at Jericho, the type of pottery found in the city's ruins, and the presence of chronologically significant Egyptian artefacts. Thus, the evidence for an early date Conquest at Hazor only receives further substantiation from the excavation of other Conquest cities.

It can be concluded that archaeology as a whole strongly discredits arguments for a late date destruction of Hazor, and actually promotes the theory that Joshua and the Israelites bear responsibility for the city's LB I conflagration. The following literature supports and discusses the earlier date:

- 1) John J. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 5 (Sheffield: Almond, 1978), esp. 61-68.
- 2) Rudolph H. Dornemann, *The Archaeology of the Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1983), esp. 20-24.
- 3) Manfred Weippert, "The Israelite 'Conquest' and the Evidence from Transjordan," in *Symposia Celebrating the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research (1900-1975)*, ed. Frank M. Cross (Cambridge, Mass.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1979), 15-34.
- 4) Gerald L. Mattingly, "The Exodus-Conquest and the Archaeology of Transjordan: New Light on an Old Problem," *Grace Theological Journal* 4 (1983): 245-62.
- 5) Patrick E. McGovern, *The Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Ages of Central Transjordan: The Baq'ah Valley Project, 1977-1981* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1986).
- 6) J. Maxwell Miller "The Israelite Journey through (around) Moab and Moabite Toponymy," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 577-95.
- 7) James A. Sauer, "Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages: A Critique of Glueck's Synthesis," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 263 (1986): 4-9.

And finally, although the arguments may never be totally conclusive, the extreme probability of this earlier date for the Israelite Conquest should be carefully considered in the Exodus date debate. As posited by scholars like Wood and Petrovich, this LB I Conquest necessitates

an earlier date Exodus circa 1446 BCE. It reflects and upholds the historical accuracy and authority of the Bible of the invading Israelites, along with disenfranchised elements in Canaan, that seem to have been responsible for the devastation of Late Bronze Age Hazor. This issue is far from resolved and is likely to continue as a source of debate.

## **CHAPTER 8: Conclusion**

It may appear at first that the information given throughout the thesis regarding the Israelite conquest and its origin is a simple matter with little room for controversy. However, this is not the case since we are dealing with various views based on the biblical text and mainstream scholastic models of the conquest. Today the field of biblical archaeology is very much divided into two different camps, 1) the "minimalists" who tend to downplay the historical accuracy of the Bible, and 2) the "maximalists," who (majority of them) are more secular than religious and tend to suggest that archaeological evidence supports the basic historicity of the biblical text.

These schools of thought represent the conflicting messages that characterize the field of biblical archaeology. Modern scholars are attempting to reconstruct Israel's early history on the basis of the archaeological evidence, ancient textual evidence, and a critical reading of the Bible. The majority of biblical scholars agree that the ancient Israelites originated in the highlands of Canaan in about 1200 BCE and thus scholars who accentuate the role of nomadic pastoralists in the highland settlements are questioning the theories discussed now vigorously. These important debates are essential in the understanding of the supposed existence of ancient Israel.

In the early part of biblical archaeology, scholars interpreted archaeology in light of what the Bible said and took for granted that everything that was written down was true; not just from a moral and religiously point of view, but from a historical and scientific point of view. It was common for prominent archaeologists such as Albright and Nelson Glueck to confidently affirm: '...no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference' (Glueck 1959:31).

Since the popular Copenhagen School of Thought (biblical minimalism) arose in the early 70s, the amiable relationship between archaeology and the Bible has deteriorated dramatically. It proposes seeing the biblical literature as purely fiction rather than as historiographical literature that can shed light on actual history. In this case the interpretations of archaeological explorations generally heightened the Bible's credibility (Davis 1993:19

(2):54-59) while the new generation of archaeologists dismiss the historical credibility of the biblical narrative (Dever: 1990: 16 (3):52-62).

Ever since the science of biblical archaeology (Syro-Palestinian) has developed to a whole new level beginning from the 1950s, modern archaeologists and historians have started to encounter difficulties regarding the origin of the Israelites and its Conquest; since the evidence they were looking for to confirm various aspects of the biblical records were not turning up. With the use of modern techniques, archaeologists have started to refine their skills and have become much more precise. This has been thanks to the introduction of radiocarbon, dendrochronology, stratigraphy, typology and other scientific techniques now extensively used in reconstructing Ancient Israel.

With this in mind the old archaeological models such as the “conquest model” were eventually discarded and thus had to be reassessed, bringing in new theories such as the infiltration and peaceful model of Ancient Israel. For example, in chapter 3 we discussed Kenyon’s disagreement with Garstang’s interpretation of the Israelites’ responsibility for the destruction of Jericho, contending that in 1400 BCE there was no fortified city for Joshua’s army to conquer. This was in stark disagreement with the large-scale military incursion as described in the Hebrew Bible (Kenyon 1957: 259; Wood 1990; Livingston 1988; Jackson 1990). Kenyon based her conclusions largely upon the absence of pottery typically used around 1400 BCE and her superior technique of digging in squares of 5 x 5m (known as the Mortimer-Wheeler method) gave her the opportunity to view the stratification of the ruins which allowed her to investigate each successive phase of occupation that was built over the preceding phase. With this technique, Kenyon was able to date the various strata more accurately than her predecessor, Garstang. Herr concluded on Kenyon’s new revolution:

The first event was the refinement of stratigraphic techniques that Kathleen Kenyon's dig at Jericho catalyzed. The strict separation of earth layers, or archaeological sediments, also allowed the strict separation of ceramic assemblages (Herr 2002: 53).

Kenyon's legacy in the field of excavation technique became the standard model in modern archaeology and she was able to give a different interpretation; that Jericho fell long before Joshua's arrival (1978:35). Her conclusions on the biblical narrative of Jericho have become the classic example of the difficulties of correlating the biblical account of the conquest with the archaeological record. Consequently Kenyon's work supports the Minimalist School of

Biblical Archaeology, while Garstang's interpretations on the crumbling walls of Jericho during Joshua's campaign have been rejected.

Over the past few decades modern archaeologists who belong to the school of revisionists have not managed to "find" any physical evidence on the ethnicity of the Israelites and the Conquest of Canaan that took place in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. Thus, biblical minimalism arose out of the need to account for some of the major discrepancies between the Bible and the archaeological excavations in modern Palestine (Israel). Despite what the Bible says about David conquering Jerusalem and the Jebusites to establish the capital of his kingdom there, minimalists say there is no conclusive evidence whatsoever (Thompson 1999). Minimalists adopted a new biblical method - using archaeology "artifacts first/bible last" in reconstructing Ancient Israel - that has become very popular in the scholarly circles (Halpern 1995: 26 – 35; 47). In this case it was necessary for modern historians and archaeologists to reconstruct Israel. As Phillip Davies concluded in one of his books, there are three Ancient Israels; 1) the **Historical** Ancient Israel, 2) the **Literary** Ancient Israel, and 3) the **Scholar's** Ancient Israel (Davies 1992).

Foremost, the new theories about ancient Israel are now emerging against the backdrop of a raging dispute over the biblical "minimalists"; a group of scholars who argue that biblical accounts of early Israel were purely theological, not historical. <sup>247</sup>

In this case we are dealing with a variety of hypotheses to explain the emergence of the Israelite culture during the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age Period, and thus the Israelite Conquest narratives were either seen as mythological, etiological or historical. In recent decades there have been a growing number of archaeologists who contend that such an Israelite invasion of Canaan is inconsistent with the archaeological record (Silberman 1992) and therefore argue that there is no truth to the biblically described conquest. As senior Israeli

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247. Davies, Philip R. (1995). *"In Search of 'Ancient Israel.'"* Continuum International Publishing Group; Davies, Philip R. (n.d.). Minimalism, 'Ancient Israel', and Anti-Semitism; Davies, Philip R. (2008). *Memories of Ancient Israel.* Westminster John Knox Press. Dever, William G. (2000) Save Us from Postmodern Malarkey, BAR 26:02, Mar-Apr. For further reading one can look up on the commentary views of Biblical Minimalism "*The Great Minimalist Debate,*" (BAR 2012 and "The Birth and Death of Biblical Minimalism (BAR 2000: 37:03). Jack Cargill Ancient Israel in Western Civ Textbooks. Quoting Amy Dockster Marcus about the minimalists: "*The bottom line is that when it comes to the big picture, they are often right. Many of their ideas, once considered far-fetched, are now solidly mainstream concepts.*"

archaeologist, Israel Finkelstein, puts it:

The historical saga contained in the Bible—from Abraham’s encounter with God and his journey to Canaan, to Moses’ deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage, to the rise and fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah—was not a miraculous revelation, but a brilliant product of the human imagination (Finkelstein and Silberman, 2001, p. 1).

For them these biblical stories of conquered cities (like Jericho/Hazor/Ai) were embellishments of pre-Israelite traditions which provided mythological explanations for the origin of the Israelites who claim to have the right to the land of Canaan (Cross 1992: 8 (5):24). Thus there is still considerable dispute among various archaeologists about how to interpret many recent finds. In response to the minimalists’ views on Ancient Israel, Professor W.G. Dever, who is notably a fierce critic of minimalists, sums up the attitude of objective scholars:

They denigrate it as our only known reference. But one unimpeachable witness in the court of history is sufficient. There does exist in Canaan a people calling themselves Israel, who are thus called Israel by the Egyptians — who after all are hardly biblically biased, and who cannot have invented such a specific and unique people for their own propaganda purposes (BAR 2000: 26:02; Dever 2001: 23-52).

Despite the Minimalists’ strong reaction towards the historical account of the Bible, there are some reputable archaeologists who don’t share these views and who feel that these theories are very much inconsistent with the evidence as compared to archaeology and the bible. For instance, Israeli Bible Scholar, Abraham Malamat, argued that the archaeological evidence demonstrates that a number of Canaanite cities were destroyed and subsequently resettled by the Israelites (Malamat 1982, 8(2):24-35). The late, distinguished archaeologist, Yigael Yadin, had commented that the picture painted by archaeological finds is consistent with the biblical portrait since the fortified Canaanite cities were indeed destroyed and replaced by a new culture; the Israelites (Yadin 1982: 8(2):19). Once again, Dr. Adam Zertal, from the Department of Archaeology at the University of Haifa, in his book *A Nation is Born: The Mt. Ebal Altar and the Beginnings of the Nation of Israel*, goes into greater detail on the excavation of this altar by concluding:

If there was an altar on Mt. Ebal, the most ancient and the first Jewish or Israelite altar here. The meaning is that all the story of Deuteronomy and parts of the story in Joshua are scientifically true...if this corroborates exactly what is written in that very old part of the Bible. It means that probably other parts are historically correct. The impact is tremendous.<sup>248</sup>

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248. Zertal, A. (1986 / 87). An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mt. Ebal: Excavation Seasons 1982-1987. Tel Aviv 13-14: 105-65. 1993.) and (The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavation in the Holy Land, Vol. 1, ed. E. Stern. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta. Ebal, Mount. Pp. 375-77).

In the May / June issue of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Yosef Garfinkel has written an excellent article titled *The Birth & Death of Biblical*, tracing the biblical minimalist position from its inception thirty years ago to the present time, where discoveries have undermined it to the point of it becoming untenable.<sup>249</sup> Garfinkel focuses a lot on the hotly debated issues in biblical archaeology; the existence of the United Monarchy which biblical minimalists described as mere fiction. Even if they did believe that David and Solomon existed as historical figures, they were likely nothing more than petty chieftains. As Hoffmeier describes the minimalist views in the following statements:

David and Solomon did exist, they were simply pastoralist chieftains from the hills of Judea, and the military exploits of David and the glories of Solomon were gross exaggerations from later times (Hoffmeier 2008: 87).

In other words, they are saying that there were no grand palaces, royal inscriptions, let alone a kingdom which ever existed.

However, Prof. Yosef Garfinkel came up with a very interesting case in which he focuses on a very unique site called Khirbet Qeiyafa, where he served as co-director of the dig between 2007 and 2013. This ancient site is located approximately 30 km southwest of Jerusalem, on the summit of a hill that borders the Elah Valley on the north. This is a key strategic location in the biblical Kingdom of Judah, on the main road from Philistia and the Coastal Plain to Jerusalem and Hebron in the hill country.

Garfinkel and his team have discovered that this city was constructed on bedrock, 2.3 hectares in area, surrounded by massive fortifications of megalithic stones. The entire excavation area contained two hundred meters of the city wall, two gates, a pillar building and ten houses were discovered.<sup>250</sup> This particular site has done a great deal to dismantle biblical minimalism as Garfinkel clearly demonstrated the evidence found at Khirbet Qeiyafa that contradicts the argument presented by Israel Finkelstein, one of the major proponents of

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249. Garfinkel, Y. (2011). *The Birth and Death of Biblical Minimalism*. *Biblical Archaeology Review* 37/3: 47-53.

250. "*Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project*". Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Retrieved November 5, 2011; ASOR 2007 Conference abstracts" (PDF). Boston University. Archived from the original (PDF) on 16 May 2008. Retrieved 30 December 2014; Levin, Yigal (2012). "*The Identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa: A New Suggestion*". *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Retrieved November 7, 2012.

the lower chronology, used to support a minimalist view of the history of Israel. He concludes:

The argument that Judah was an agrarian society until the end of tenth century B.C.E. and that David and Solomon could not have ruled over a centralized, institutionalized kingdom before then has now been blown to smithereens by our excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa (Garfinkle, 2011: 50).

Since I've excavated with Yosef Garfinkel in 2014 at Tel Lachish, I had the privilege to travel with him down to this site in Khirbet Qeiyafa where the discoveries were made which clearly demonstrated that a large governmental-style organisation was needed to construct this ancient town (Visit this site at <http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/>). Due to the massive walls found, it is by no means possible that a couple of petty chieftains could have constructed this city. More crucial evidence was found on site where Garfinkel has managed to uncover the earliest example of a Hebrew ostrakon discovered during excavations in 2008.<sup>251</sup>

The ostrakon, measured 15-by-16.5-centimetre (5.9in × 6.5in), is a trapezoid-shaped potsherd with five lines of text. Although the script was poorly preserved, according to Gershon Galil the language on the inscription is Hebrew and eight out of the eighteen words are exclusively biblical. Foremost, Gershon claimed that at least thirty major archeological scholars supported this thesis.<sup>252</sup>

The content itself is unfamiliar to all the cultures in the region of Ancient Canaan and the ostrakon is likely of Hebrew origin. Furthermore, the inscription yielded social elements similar to those found in the biblical prophecies, markedly different from those present in other cultures, which tell of the glorification of the gods and taking care of their physical needs.<sup>253</sup> This sort of writing can only have been produced by a scribe who had been trained

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251. Most ancient Hebrew biblical inscription deciphered". University of Haifa. January 10, 2010. Archived from the original on October 5, 2011. Retrieved November 5, 2011.

252. The keys to the kingdom". Haaretz.com. 6 May 2011. Retrieved 20 December 2014.

253. See also "Qeiyafa Ostrakon Chronicle". Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project. Retrieved November 5, 2011. Garfinkel, Y., Ganor, S. and Hasel, M. 2012. Chapter 5. Greetings from the Past: The Khirbet Qeiyafa Inscription, pp. 123-132, in *Footsteps of King David in the Valley of Elah*. Tel Aviv (Hebrew). Garfinkel, Y. 2012. Christopher Rollston's Methodology of Caution. *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38/5: 58-59. Y. Garfinkel, S. Ganor and M.G. Hasel, 2012. *Footsteps of King David in the Valley of Elah*, pp. 123-132. Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth (Hebrew); Y. Garfinkel, 2012. Christopher Rollston's Methodology of Caution. *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38/5:58-59; Rollston, C.A. 2012. What's the Oldest Hebrew Inscription? *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38/3: 32-40.

for government service and thus if there must have been a government of sufficient size with the resources and ability to train professional scribes stemming from Jerusalem. In this case, Khirbet Qeiyafa could not have been built, fortified, or administrated by a chieftain and thus this large city required a king.

In May 2012, Garfinkel made a stunning discovery of three large rooms that were likely used as cultic shrines. These shrines were completely different to those of the Canaanite / Philistine temple structure since they did not have separate rooms within the buildings dedicated only to religious rituals. This suggests that these rooms may have belonged to the Israelites. Garfinkel has noted in the shrines that the decorations of cultic rooms lack any human figurines and thus he concludes:

...that the population of Khirbet Qeiyafa observed at least two biblical bans, on pork and on graven images, and thus practiced a different cult than that of the Canaanites or the Philistines.<sup>254</sup>

More importantly, Garfinkel discovered three smaller portable shrines on site. The smaller shrines were box-shaped in design displaying impressive architectonic and decorative styles. According to Garfinkel, one of the shrines was decorated with two pillars and a lion, suggesting the style and the decorations of these cultic objects were very similar to the biblical description of some features of Solomon's Temple.<sup>255</sup>

The shrine models demonstrate the existence of sophisticated royal architectural styles during that period and may shed light on design elements of Solomon's Temple as described in the Bible. These spectacular finds on site, have done a great deal to dismantle biblical minimalism, as Garfinkle states:

The argument that Judah was an agrarian society until the end of tenth century B.C.E. and that David and Solomon could not have ruled over a centralized, institutionalized kingdom before then has now been blown to smithereens by our excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa (Garfinkle 2011: 50).

Another biblical archaeologist who is in defense of the bible, Dr. Bryant Wood, stated:

In our day, most scholars, archaeologist and biblical scholars would take a very critical view of the historical accuracy of many of the accounts in the Bible. . . . Many scholars have said there never was a David or a Solomon, and now we have a stele that actually mentions David (Price 1997:173).

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254. Wikipedia. (2017). "*Archaeologist finds first evidence of cult in Judah at time of King David*". Retrieved 20 December 2014.

255. Ibid.

Throughout the dissertation we have readily conceded that the interpretations of archaeological data and the biblical text will continue to clash from time to time, and thus the two schools of thought, Minimalists vs. Maximalist, will always come to different conclusions when politics and religious beliefs enter the equation. It should also be admitted that archaeology has its own limitations thus providing inconclusive evidence since data can be ambiguous and subject to a variety of interpretations. American archaeologist, W.G. Dever, had observed that although archaeology as a historical discipline can answer many questions, it is incapable of determining “why” something occurred (Dever 1990: 16(3):57).

As Dever has pointed out, we know from a human standpoint of view that it may not be possible to verify every detail in the Bible, but since the mid-1800s the discoveries of archaeology have demonstrated the reliability and plausibility of the biblical narrative (Dever 2001). Foremost, the dating methods employed in archaeology (i.e. radiocarbon, dendrochronology, pottery, and other scientific means) are imperfect, and are always based upon certain assumptions. And lastly, biblical archaeology is an imprecise science and therefore it should not serve as the judge of biblical historicity.

It is fair to say that academics and scholars of the Bible, both in the archaeological and theological arenas, should exercise more caution when interpretations disagree with biblical information (Brantley 1993:49-53). But this does not mean that the science of archaeology can prove that the Bible is wrong. For argument’s sake, if we have to use Jerusalem as the prime source for searching for evidence on the United Monarchy of Israel, it would be fruitless to believe as minimalists do; that there is “no evidence” regarding King David or Solomon’s city, palace and its First / Second Temple.

The reason for this is that the modern city of Jerusalem is now occupied by a population of 804,400 people and the Jewish people rebuilt the current city on the existing Old City (East Jerusalem) when Israel became a state in 1948. About forty thousand Palestinians and four hundred Jewish settlers live in the village of Silwan which is in East Jerusalem, also known as the Old City (Reich & Shukron 2005: HA 117). In addition, the city was captured at least 40 times and besieged at least 23 times (Eric Cline, in his book *Jerusalem Besieged: From Ancient Canaan to Modern Israel*).

Clearly we cannot expect to take our spades and ask the residents to evacuate their premises in order to conduct excavations on the primary spot of the Old City. It is also impossible to excavate under the Temple Mount since there are religious shrines such as the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque that is owned by the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs (Jordan). The reality is that we may never be able to conduct any archaeological excavations in those areas and in so doing find any substantial evidence that may exist relating to the biblical texts about Solomon's grand city of Jerusalem and its First Temple.

When 'Minimalists' say that archaeology does not find sufficient material evidence for 'X', then the conclusion would be that there was never an 'X'. In other words, archaeologists did not dig up 'X', therefore 'X' did not exist, therefore the biblical history is incorrect, if not contradictory. Despite the limitations in archaeology, so clearly evident in the case of Jerusalem, we must be honest with ourselves that not everything has been dug up and thus there is a real possibility that the elusive 'X' could turn up during the very next season of excavations.

In this case one could say that silent evidence is not necessarily absent evidence. The mere fact that not all of the archaeological sites have been dug up fully throughout Israel, and with regards to Jerusalem, that only a small percentage has been excavated thus far and therefore there is still an awful lot of digging to do, which makes archaeology quite an exciting field.

I believe that biblical archaeology has indeed provided composite evidence in support of the historicity of Israel. The real purpose of biblical archaeology is that it can make a positive contribution with regards to the Bible and thus it serves as a test for reconstructions of the biblical texts by historical critics. In a nutshell, biblical archaeology can challenge bad theories about the Bible or, to put it in a more positive light, archaeology can provide a different point of view 'against which to test ...[a historical-critical] interpretation of the documents,' (Lance 1981: 66). Additionally, biblical archaeology can provide the contemporary setting and context in terms of historical, cultural, linguistic, and religious events these materials describe. Lastly, archaeology provides clarification and perhaps brings corroborative evidence for the existence of specific people (as in the case of the Israelites), places and events mentioned in the biblical writings. Dever's explanation on the use of extra biblical sources help archaeologists to study the archaeological record in order to understand the human interaction at a particular location across the history of time (Dever:2001).

In this dissertation the archaeological evidence presented indicates that the Israelite Conquest accounts recorded in the Hebrew Bible were not merely propaganda myths or etiological legends. It is also important to note that there is much anti-Semitism and propaganda around the central issue of both Ancient and Modern Israel and thus there is no surprise that the world is doing its best to dismiss the bible as a whole, purely based on the current views of the Jewish nation. All the available evidence to date provided in this dissertation points to the fact that Israel did exist as a tribal society and thus there is enough conclusive evidence that the biblical Israelites did enter the land of Canaan before the transition from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age periods. Throughout the Israelites' history, as evidenced by the temples in Karnak and the Amarna letters, the Israelites eventually became a powerful military force that weakened the Canaanite society upon arriving from Egypt.

The arrival of a large group of Israelites in the Promised Land ignited the existing “Hab / apiru” who had lived in the region as semi-nomadic tribes and on the edges of the Canaanite societies. The archaeological records on the biblical cities of Jericho, Hazor, Dan, Megiddo, Shechem, Samaria, Shiloh, Gezer, Beth Shemesh, Beth Shean, Beersheba, Lachish, Jerusalem (and many other urban sites that have been excavated) are extremely significant in demonstrating the fact that these are not mere fantasies or “once upon a time” narratives. In my view the biblical record on the Israelite Conquest matches the archaeological evidence from excavations at; Jericho in the Late Bronze IA & IB, Hazor in the Late Bronze IB & IIB, and the now recently biblical Ai of Khirbet el-Maqatir, as the sites that Joshua conquered. When the Book of Joshua indicates that the Israelites burned three cities such as Hazor, Jericho, and Ai (Josh 8:18–19) there is enough evidence (as discussed in chapter five, six and seven) in the form of ash layers, heated (calcined) bedrock, burned stones, burned pottery and burnt seeds, to suggest that the city was under conflagration by the Israelites. Additionally, numerous texts from the Late Bronze Age and surveys of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age agree with the general picture of fortified cities, attacks on the Canaanite city-states, and the presence of Israel.

With the Amarna letters providing an abundance of evidence on the Hab/piru attacking Canaan during the Late Bronze Age period, the conclusion that these people were indeed the Israelites themselves seems inevitable. David Rohl's theory on the Hab/piru of the Amarna letters pointed out clearly that the Hab/apiru were most likely the biblical Israelites since his

breakthrough discovery of the evidence for the Exodus in the Thirteenth Dynasty. In support of David's Rohl theory of the Israelites being in Egypt, John Fulton concluded:

Before Moses, the Bible records that the Israelites were enslaved by their Egyptian hosts (Exodus 1:8-14). In the Brooklyn Museum (p.276, fig. 310) resides a papyrus scroll numbered Brooklyn 35:1446 which was acquired in the late 19th century by Charles Wilbour. This dates to the reign of Sobekhotep III, the predecessor of Neferhotep I and so the pharaoh who reigned one generation before Moses. This papyrus is a decree by the pharaoh for a transfer of slaves. Of the 95 names of slaves mentioned in the letter, 50% are Semitic in origin. What is more, it lists the names of these slaves in the original Semitic language and then adds the Egyptian name each had been assigned, which is something the Bible records the Egyptians as doing, cf. Joseph's name given to him by pharaoh (Genesis 41:45). Some of the Semitic names are biblical and include:- Menahem, Issachar, Asher, and Shiprah (cf. Ex 1:15-21).

That 50% of the names are Israelite means that there must have been a very large group of them in the Egyptian Delta at that time, corroborating the testimony of Exodus 1:7 which alludes to how numerous the Israelites became. The sceptics look for Israel in the Egypt of the Nineteenth Dynasty and remain sceptics, because the proof is in the Egypt of the Thirteenth Dynasty (Fulton 2007).

In agreement with David Rohl, John goes on to say that the people who lived in Avaris were not Egyptian, but Asiatic Palestinian or Syrian. Austrian archaeologist, Manfred Bietak from the University of Vienna, admitted that he did not claim to be a Bible scholar himself, but purely an Egyptologist who has at least shed some light on the potential presence of the Israelites in Egypt. He concluded, '...sometimes an outsider can shed new light on an important subject. I hope that will be the case here,' (BAR 2003: 29:05) As Bietak elaborates:

If true, Israelite or proto-Israelite, workers were in Egypt in the second half of the 12th century B.C.E., more than a half century later than has previously been thought. This evidence, in turn, would have important implications for the historicity of the Biblical narrative. "...It is the right culture in the right place at the right time (Bietak 1986: 237; 1991b: 32).

Perhaps it is appropriate to give some credit to several Egyptologists such as; James Hoffmeier, Kenneth Kitchen, Manfred Bietak and David Rohl, who all seem to have made a sterling effort in identifying the possibility of the "Israelite" people living in Egypt before entering the land of Canaan. As discussed in chapter 2, there is a considerable and growing body of literature on the Hebrews in Egypt. Hershel Shanks, in his article *When Did Ancient Israel Begin*, gives ample archaeological evidence of an older hieroglyphic inscription of "Israel" found by three German scholars; 200 years older than the Merneptah Stele. This has shed new light on the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt, suggesting that the Bible may be more accurate than some thought, and thus concludes that the evidence is neither absent nor

silent (BAR 38:01, Jan/Feb 2012).<sup>256</sup>

This in turn provides evidence that the Hebrews began their military attack in Canaan after arriving from their forty-year wilderness journey from Egypt. These conquering hab/apiru, as reported in the Amarna letters, must have started the military campaign during the mid-15<sup>th</sup> Century BCE, which lines up with the dating of the Exodus (described in Exodus 1-15) as 480 years after the dedication of Solomon's Temple (recorded in 1 Kgs 6:1). However, the debate is far from over despite the composite evidence presented in this thesis, as there have been numerous attempts by minimalists to discredit the evidence found in Egypt. As Canadian-Israeli film director, Simcha Jacobovici, concluded:

Of course it's conjecture but, based on the evidence, I think we can say that Joseph's statue may very well have been found in Egypt. Why hasn't anyone noticed? Because historians hide – consciously or unconsciously – Israelite / Jewish history behind terms like “Hyksos,” “Asiatics,” and “Amo”. Interestingly, the Egyptian authorities seem to believe that the statue is, indeed, related to the Hebrew Bible. Some years back, when I was in Egypt filming “The Exodus: Decoded”, I asked to film Prof. Bietak's find. The Egyptian authorities don't like archaeology that confirms the Hebrew Bible, so they told me that the statue has been “misplaced (Jacobovici 2014).<sup>257</sup>

Since the discipline of archaeology began almost 120 years ago, it has provided an excellent source of information on people and communities of antiquity. Many biblical cities are now attested to by archaeology; Hazor, Jericho, Ai, Dan, Megiddo, Shechem, Samaria, Shiloh,

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256. See recent issues of Bible and Spade, especially no. 16 (Winter 2003). Joseph P. Free and Howard F. Vos, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 69–105 is also helpful, as is Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999). 202. See U. Hölscher, *The Excavations of Medinet Habu II*, Oriental Institute Publications (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1939), pp. 68–72, esp. 71 and fig. 59. See also Manfred Bietak, “*An Iron Age Four-Room House in Ramesside Egypt*,” *Eretz Israel* (1991), pp. 10–12, and “*Der Aufenthalt 'Israels' in Ägypten und der Zeitpunkt der 'Landnahme' aus heutiger archäologischer Sicht*,” *Egypt and the Levant* (2000), pp. 179–186. See also Shiloh, “*Four-Room House*,” *IEJ* 20 (1970), p. 180. As illustrated in Papyrus Anastasi V.19, 3–20-6 from the time of the end of the XIXth Dynasty (c. 1200 B.C.E.) “*Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*”, Lesko and Frerichs: editors. Eisenbrauns Publishing, 1997 Essay by Abraham Malamat, “*The Exodus: Egyptian Analogies*.” •Essay by Frank Yurco, “*Mernepthah's Canaanite Campaigns and Israel's Origins*” 203. For further reading on the dating of Exodus, see Ronald Youngblood, “*A New Look at an Old Problem: The Date of the Exodus*,” *Christianity Today* 26:20 (Dec. 17, 1982):58, 60; Charles Dyer, “*The Date of the Exodus Re-examined*,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140:559 (July-September 1983):225-43; Archer, “*Old Testament History ...*,” pp. 106-9; and Bruce K. Waltke, “*Palestinian Artifactual Evidence Supporting the Early Date of the Exodus*,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129:513 (January-March 1973):33-47. See Kenneth Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, pp. 73-75; Durham, p. xxvi; and James K. Hoffmeier, “*What Is the Biblical Date for the Exodus? A Response to Bryant Wood*,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:2 (June 2007):225-47. You may also find that Bryant G. Wood article is richly rewarding, “*The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory*,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48:3 (September 2005):475-89; and “*The Biblical Date for the Exodus is 1446 B.C.E.*,” “*A Response to James Hoffmeier*,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:2 (June 2007):249-58. See John J. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and the Conquest*; and “*Re-dating the Exodus*,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13:5 (September-October 1986):40-53.

257. Jacobovici, Simcha (2014) · *Statue of Biblical Joseph Found: Story Covered Up!* (Feb Issue), *Torah Archaeology*, Is there archaeological evidence for the Biblical Joseph?

Gezer, Beth Shemesh, Beth Shean, Beersheba, Lachish. These and many other urban sites have all been excavated, with the aid of the modern science of archaeology and their geographical locations, and found to be exactly as described in the Bible, making them extremely significant in demonstrating the facts and not just the fantasy, as the Minimalist critics prefer to call it.

Regarding the archaeological evidence on the cities of Jericho and Ai (Khirbet el-Maqatir), Dr Bryant Wood from Associates for Biblical Research (ABR) has certainly found sufficient evidence on the collapsed wall of Jericho and thus concluded that the archaeological finds match the biblical description exactly.<sup>258</sup> As Woods pointed out, there were three major expeditions that took place at Jericho over the past 90 years uncovering abundant evidence of the city's destruction by fire (in a layer) to support the biblical account (circa 1400 BCE).

Its geographical location and material evidence such as pottery recovered from Joshua's time, the western room of the city gate, and the famous Egyptian scarab (a Sphinx inscribed with the head of a falcon), have all provided additional confirmation on the dating of the destruction of the site during Joshua's conquest in about 1406 BCE. With regard to Hazor, Amnon Ben-Tor - of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and director of the renewed Hazor excavations since 1990 - has convincingly concluded that the Israelites were indeed responsible for conquering the biblical Canaanite city of Hazor since strong evidence of this violent destruction by burning was discovered in various areas of excavation of the site (BAR 25:03, May / Jun 1999; BAR 39:04, Jul / Aug 2013).

Finally, the biblical evidence suggests that it may not perfectly coincide with any of the models proposed in chapter one and therefore serves as a caution concerning all the attempts to "prove" or to "disprove" the biblical accounts on the basis of extra-biblical evidence, modern methods of archaeology and of sociological models. In truth, there are no quick fixes or final interpretations in biblical archaeology and thus whatever new discoveries may arise, the interpretations and ideas should always be investigated. The reality is that the modern

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258. For further reading see Wood, Bryant G. (1990). "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?" *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March-April 1990: 44-58; and The Walls of Jericho, *Bible and Spade*, Spring 1999: 35-42; John Garstang, "The Story of Jericho: Further Light on the Biblical Narrative," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* 58 (1941), pp. 368-72.

generation of scholars know very little about the world of Ancient Israel and thus there is more digging to do before finally getting the answers we are looking for.

The Minimalists propose that the various tales of “Ancient Israel” are largely fictional and argue that there was no such entity as “Ancient Israel”. I, on the other hand, am of the opinion that the archaeology that supports and validates the reliability of the Hebrew Bible is overwhelming and that such empirical evidence leaves little room for any doubt.

To say that the Hebrew Bible is a false testament and to dismiss its earlier personalities, banishing them into nonexistence, accordingly has no justification whatsoever in terms of the mass of geographical, archaeological, and historical evidence that correlates so admirably with the Bible. The factual evidence of Ancient Israel has been abundant and should not be seen as a mere fantasy or myth that has been replaced by “Once upon a time” stories. Time and again archaeology has given hard evidence that Ancient Israel did exist during biblical times.

# ABBREVIATIONS

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**AAI** - The Archeology of Ancient Israel.

**AASOR** - Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

**ABD** - Anchor Bible Dictionary.

**AJA** - American Journal of Archaeology.

**AEHL** - Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land.

**ANET** - Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament.

**ARM** - Archives Royales de Mari.

**BASOR** - Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.

**BAR** - Biblical Archaeological Review.

**CAH** - Cambridge Ancient History.

**COJS** - Center for Online Judaic Studies.

**EAEHL** - Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land.

**IAA** - Israel Antiquities Authority Reports.

**IEJ** - Israel Exploration Journal.

**JAOS** - Journal of the American Oriental Society.

**JNES** - Journal of Near Eastern Studies.

**JSOT** - Journal for the Study of the Old Testament.

**NBA** – New Bible Atlas.

**NBD** - New Bible Dictionary.

**NEA** - Near Eastern Archaeology.

**NEAEHL** - New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land.

**OCEANE** - The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East.

**TAPA** - Through the Ages in Palestinian Archeology.

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