The Book of Joshua: its Theme and Use in Discussions of the Israelite Conquest and Settlement and the Relationship of Archaeology and the Bible

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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA: ITS THEME AND USE IN
DISCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELITE CONQUEST
AND SETTLEMENT AND THE RELATIONSHIP
OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
David Merling, Sr.
February 1995

A dissertation presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

by

David Merling, Sr.

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ABSTRACT


by

David Merling, Sr.

Adviser: William H. Shea
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE BOOK OF JOSHUA: ITS THEME AND USE IN DISCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELITE CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

Name of researcher: David Merling, Sr.
Name and degree of faculty adviser: William H. Shea, Ph.D.
Date completed: February 1996

Problem

It has been suggested that the biblical account of the Israelite conquest of Canaan and the archaeological data are incompatible. This study evaluates the five main Israelite settlement theories and reevaluates the Book of Joshua as it relates to archaeology.

Method

Chapter 1 surveys the five archaeological theories of the Israelite emergence in Canaan. Chapter 2 critiques each theory. Chapter 3 examines the Book of Joshua from an archaeological and thematic perspective. Chapter 4 highlights presuppositions that have been brought to the archaeological data and the Book of Joshua. Chapter 5 uses the discussions of chapters 2, 3, and 4 to identify the main issues in the relationship between archaeology and the Book of Joshua. Chapter 6 summarizes the study’s conclusions.
Results

This study demonstrates that each of the settlement theories has weaknesses. By misapplying the Book of Joshua and selectively using archaeological materials, each theory has created a false construct.

The archaeology of sites connected to the Book of Joshua provides little evidence that can be related to that book, while the Book of Joshua itself provides few specific details useful to archaeologists. This situation has been interpreted to mean that the Book of Joshua is unhistorical. This study has determined that archaeology and the Book of Joshua are unique theories that rarely intersect.

Conclusion

The central purpose of the Book of Joshua is confirmation of the presence and power of YHWH when the Israelites entered Canaan. Its theme is not conquest, but rather confirmation of YHWH.

Archaeology has been seen as an objective measure of the truthfulness of the historical statements of the Book of Joshua. Archaeology, rather than being objective data, is itself, like the Book of Joshua, a theology proposed by its presenters. This study supports the view that the lack of evidence for destructions mentioned in the Book of Joshua is not the same as evidence.

If the archaeological data and the Book of Joshua are allowed a wide spectrum of interpretation, they are compatible. It is simplistic assumptions about the Book of Joshua and archaeology that are incompatible.
To Stephanie, my companion, my friend and my love
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INTRODUCTION

The popular press has often reported that the Bible is the most widely distributed book in the world. It is theologically significant to three world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Yet, the identity, circumstances, and provenance of its main characters—the Israelites—are greatly disputed.

The Bible story is simple. The Israelites were a related group of people, all descended from a man called Abraham (Gen 12:1-4). He and his son Isaac and grandson Jacob lived in Canaan (Gen 12:5). After a time, famine conditions forced their family to migrate to Egypt, where they were saved by a relative who had become the second most important person in that country (Gen 46:1-7). There they lived a long time before an Egyptian-educated family member named Moses was directed by God to lead them from a forced bondage (Exod 3:7, 8). After leaving Egypt, these "Israelites" (children of Israel. Gen 32:28) then spent some time on a pilgrimage (Exod 16:35), eventually migrating as a group to their adopted home country Canaan, where they set about forging an independent kingdom (the books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel). To the uninitiated reader it may come as a surprise that, at this time, there is currently no scholarly consensus on any point of this story.

The primary reason why scholars disagree about the specifics of these events is that their central characters Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Moses, and Joshua are unknown outside the biblical record. That is, there is currently no extra-biblical historical or archaeological evidence for these persons. Nevertheless, the Bible portrays these biblical characters as important enough to interact with other major political characters (e.g., Gen 12:14-20; 41:41-46; Exod 5:1-20). Archaeologists and
historians have sifted through the ancient records of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Palestine, finding no mention of these biblical heroes.

Another problem is that key biblical events (e.g., the Israelite Exodus from Egypt, the Conquest of Canaan by the Israelites) are likewise unsupported by extrabiblical literary materials. Plausible paradigms have been made, creating room for the biblical accounts within other venues (e.g., Egyptian history and the Exodus, Shea 1982), but concrete links between the early biblical accounts and other peoples await the discovery of supporting documentation. (It is not until the latter part of the divided Israelite monarchy that the histories of Israel and other peoples begin to merge in some tangible fashion.) The lack of corroborating written information for either the early characters or the events of the Bible has made the role of archaeology seem especially important.

Extensive archaeological work has been conducted throughout the regions of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Like their written records, the archaeological finds of Mesopotamia and Egypt have produced no material evidence to substantiate the details of the early history of Israel or to provide evidence of its leaders. Because of this void in Egyptian and Mesopotamian records, the importance of Syro-Palestinian archaeology is considered essential if the nature of the Israelite Conquest and Settlement is to be fully understood. The archaeology of ancient Canaan has been regularly combined with the biblical stories, especially the Book of Joshua's and the Book of Judges' accounts of the Israelite Conquest and Settlement. The results of this combination have been widely disputed and no consensus is in sight.

In general there is little confusion in what the archaeological data are. The problem is, how should the data be associated with the biblical accounts. The present state of confusion could be clarified with a few new archaeologically recovered texts, if they exist. The sparse assemblage of written documents is a major problem of interpretation.
In other words, regarding the subject of Israel’s origins, there are plenty of bibli- 
cal and archaeological data but no accepted paradigm in which to best organize and 
discuss those data. Nothing can better illustrate this point than that Israel’s eventual 
presence in Canaan is currently being explained through five different scenarios, as dis- 
cussed below. As for the Book of Joshua, its veracity has been challenged because key 
sites mentioned in its stories have produced no archaeological support for those stories. 
Yet, the range of acceptance for the book is both wide and highly disputed. Such 
widely divergent views can call only for further investigations and new hypotheses. 

In summary, there is no consensus among scholars about the origins of Israel. 
This lack of consensus is present in the face of archaeological data that are generally 
accepted and biblical stories that appear to be simple, yet neither seems to match the 
other. Since the archaeological data are not, in the larger picture, disputed and since 
they have been found serendipitously (i.e., without influence other than accidental 
finds), they have been elevated by many into a superior position to the story of the 
Book of Joshua. In this work I attempt a better understanding of the relationship 
between the biblical text and archaeology and the Israelite presence in Canaan.

Problem

The problem this thesis addresses is, What is the central theme of the Book of 
Joshua and how does that theme relate to the archaeological data? The Book of Joshua 
has been used as a guide for archaeological research, yet, the archaeological data have 
not supported the statements purported to that book. Many scholars have concluded 
that the biblical text is not historical and serves no useful purpose for questions regard- 
ing Israel’s origins. The Book of Joshua, some have concluded, was written hundreds 
of years after the events portrayed and has been subsequently amended by those 
unassociated with the early events in Israel’s history for the purpose of supporting their 
own politico-religious agendas.
Thesis

One of the central assumptions of this dissertation is that the biblical writers, as represented by the Masoretic Text (MT), purposefully sent their readers a message about the Israelites' acquisition of land in Canaan. That message has been inadvertently overshadowed by the war passages of Joshua 6, 8, 10, and 11. These conquest stories have been falsely seen as the central theme of the book. In such a position they neither speak for the whole book nor do they provide an adequate model to explain how the Israelites entered the land.

This thematic overemphasis on conquest, as the central theme, has led scholars to unjustified conclusions about the Book of Joshua and has led to explanatory models about the settlement of Israel based on incomplete and even faulty information assumed to be from that book. A more accurate theme realigns the meaning of the Book of Joshua and allows the book to speak for itself.

It is a primary thesis of this study that the Book of Joshua is generally accurate as it relates to the themes it proposes. That is, it is the assumptions about what the Book of Joshua says that are most often inaccurate.

Methodology

In this study I have investigated the Book of Joshua as it is in the MT. I am aware of the source-critical disputes that surround the Book of Joshua. On the other hand, it seems only logical that, despite the processes that produced the Book of Joshua, the biblical writers still composed with a message about the early Israelites. The final editors (who henceforth are called the biblical writers) must have had an opinion about the circumstances under which the Israelites emerged in Canaan. Even if written much later than the stories they supposedly record, which is by no means certain, the biblical writers were attempting to communicate with their readers. It is with their message about how Israel gained its land that we are concerned.

In order to find that message, I have tried to bring as few preconceived ideas as
possible to their story but have sought to listen to their claims. For the sake of this thesis, I have assumed that the message of the Book of Joshua is reasonable and understandable and that those who took the effort to compile the Book of Joshua had a purpose and a message.

The archaeological data are clear. Questions arise with interpretation of that data. I have, again, attempted to allow the archaeological evidence and theories to speak for themselves. By this I mean that rather than choosing a pet theory and binding the data to support that theory, I have tried to let the data speak for themselves.

Chapter 1 reviews the evidence that has led scholars to see the LBII/Irl transition period as the time when the Israelites appeared in Canaan. This evidence includes the LBII/Irl destruction, Irl settlements, the new material culture of Irl, the arrival of the Philistines, Merneptah's stele, and the Bible. It surveys the five primary theories that archaeologists and biblical scholars have developed about Israel's origins.

Chapter 2 evaluates each of the proposed theories. This evaluation compares each theory with the archaeological data and the Book of Joshua. In the end, each theory has its weaknesses.

Because of the inadequacies of the proposed theories, chapter 3 reassesses the Book of Joshua. It lets the biblical writers tell us about the city demolitions that the Israelites wrought when they arrived in Canaan, then reviews the available archaeological information from each of the archaeological sites. Once the archaeological and biblical data have been compared, we turn our attention to the Book of Joshua. I evaluate its theme and, with that theme in mind, ask of the war passages the extent of the Israelite conquest, whether or not the land was possessed at the same time it was claimed, and whether the battles involved were wholesale slaughters.

Chapter 4 considers the assumption that the Book of Joshua pictures Israel as a large nation. I also discuss what the Israelite settlement meant, what was the origin of the Israelites, and issues of their formation.
Chapter 5 discusses what we have learned from this study regarding the relation between the Book of Joshua and archaeology. I have arranged this topic along the lines of explaining non-evidence, expectations of the story, and the limits of archaeology.

Chapter 6 reviews what we have discovered and offers my conclusions. It also offers some suggestions for further use in associating the biblical text and archaeology.
CHAPTER 1

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL THEORIES OF
THE ISRAELITE CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT

The Problem of the Existence of Israel

The subject of the Israelite presence in Canaan is as widely discussed and disputed as any biblical issue. As evidence for the lingering debate, consider the headline chosen to introduce two articles. "Two Prominent Israeli Scholars Assess One of the Most Controversial Aspects of Biblical History: Israel Comes to Canaan" (Shanks 1982: 14-15). Albright's statement written almost 50 years previously is just as true today, "There have been few problems in the field of the historical interpretations of Palestinian archaeological data which have fascinated scholars so much as the one described in our title" ("Archaeology and the Date of the Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," 1935: 10). Mendenhall, likewise, highlighted this situation, "There is no problem of biblical history which is more difficult than that of reconstructing the historical process by which the Twelve Tribes of ancient Israel became established in Palestine and northern Transjordan" (1962: 66; also Hauser 1978: 2).

Scholars approach the subject of the Israelite conquest of Canaan in such different ways that they reach conclusions radically dissimilar. In fact, the conquest/settlement theories run across a spectrum of ideas that are theoretically unrelated (according to the various theories, as we see below, Israel purportedly gained the land either by conquest, peaceful infiltration, indigenous rebellion, societal and environmental evolution, or that the Israelites of the Book of Joshua never existed; later peoples in search of
cohesiveness and identity just collected unrelated heroic and conquest stories, which have been misunderstood by later readers as historical).

The primary issues of this debate are focused on the origins of the first Israelites and when (and under what circumstances) these people gained possession of the land called Canaan (Finkelstein 1991: 47). The primary interest of this work is with the latter: how they gained their "promised land" and more specifically what, and why, the biblical writers report what they did about that acquisition. While the issues of who the Israelites were and what they did are distinct (and I focus on what they did), they are so intertwined by all theories about the Israelites that I must deal with the question of their identity in later chapters.

The LBII/Ir1 Transition and the Israelites

For most of the archaeological theories of how the Israelites gained land in Canaan, it is axiomatic that the Israelites first appeared in Canaan toward the end of the 13th century or early 12th century (Herr 1995b: 9). Sharon looked at this period from the point of view of four variables (population growth, resources, social organization and technology) and concluded.

In the thirteenth/twelfth centuries B.C.E., Palestine underwent a crisis manifested by a decline in urban culture; the appearance of many small settlements, usually in previously unpopulated regions; and a comprehensive change in material culture. The new culture underwent a process of reurbanization in the eleventh/tenth century, resulting in the crystallizing of a new national entity known by the name Israel." (1994: 123)

That these events did affect Israel has been based on five lines of evidence: the wide-ranging LBII/Ir1 destructions and the new settlements that followed, the introduction of an apparently new material culture at Ir1 hill-country sites, the arrival of the Philistines, the textual evidence of Merneptah's stele, and the biblical record.
The LBII/Irl Destructions and Irl New Settlements

The Bronze Age was concluded by a sweeping destruction that touched nearly every active site in Canaan. These destructions began toward the end of the 13th-century and continued into the 12th century, making this phase of destructions a transitional period between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age (see Wood 1985: 221-356 for a more complete discussion of this subject). Sites in which archaeological work has detected destruction during this transition period are Tell Abu Hawam (Stratum VC. Balensi. Herrera and Artzy 1993: 11, 12); Aphek (Stratum X-12, Beck and Kochavi 1993: 68); Ashdod (Stratum IV, M. Dothan and Gitin 1993: 96); Tell Beit Mirsim (Stratum C2. Greenberg 1993: 179); Beth Shan (Mazar 1993a: 218); Beth-Shemesh (Stratum IV, Bunimovitz and Lederman 1993: 250); Beitin (i.e., Bethel, Kelso 1968: 32; 1993: 194); Tel Dan (Stratum VII, Biran 1993a: 326; 1994a: 108, 120); Deir 'Alla (Phase E, Van Der Kooij 1993: 340); Tell el-Far'ah N (Stratum 4, Period VIIa. Chambon 1993: 440); Tell el-Far'ah S (The Residency, Yisraeli 1993: 442); Gezer (Stratum XIV, Dever 1993b: 503, 503); Hazor (Strata XIII, 1a, Yadin 1993: 606); Jaffa (Stratum IVB, Kaplan and Ritter-Kaplan 1993: 656); Lachish (Stratum P-1. Ussishkin 1993: 898); Megiddo (Stratum VIIB, Shiloh 1993: 1012); Tel Mor (Stratum 7. M. Dothan 1993c: 1073); Qashish (Stratum V, Ben-Tor 1993d: 1203); Tell esh-Shari'a (Stratum IX, Oren 1993b: 1331); Shechem (Stratum XII, Wright 1965: 101, 102; Magen 1993: 1352); Tel Yin'am (Liebowitz 1993: 1516); Tel Yoqne'am (Stratum XIX, Ben-Tor 1993b: 809); and Tel Zippor (Stratum III, Biran 1993b: 1527). (See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the wide-ranging destructions.)

Biblical and archaeological writers have seen in these destructions evidence of the Israelite Conquest. Bright concluded after surveying the number of sites destroyed at
Figure 1. Map of Late Bronze II/Iron I destructions.
the end of the 13th century. "The above evidence is impressive, and it has served to support the widely held opinion that the Israelite conquest was a violent one and that it took place in the latter part of the thirteenth century" (1981: 132).

Following the LBII/Irl destructions, new Irl settlements were established all over Canaan. Irl sites have been excavated at Acco (Stratum 8, M. Dothan 1976: 14, 15, 20; M. Dothan and Goldmann 1993: 21); 'Afula (Stratum III, M. Dothan 1993b: 38); et-Tell (i.e., Ai, Stratum IX, Callaway 1993: 44, 45); Aphek (Stratum X-11, Beck and Kovachi 1993: 68); Arad (Stratum XII, Aharoni 1993: 82); Ashdod (Stratum XIII, M. Dothan 1989: 65; 1993: 97); Ashkelon (Stager 1993: 107); Tel Batash (Stratum V, Mazar and Kelm 1993: 153); Tel Beersheba (Stratum IX, Herzog 1993: 169); Beitin (i.e., Bethel, Kelso 1993: 194); Tell Beit Mirsim (Stratum BI, Greenberg 1993: 179); Beth Shan (Mazar 1993: 218, 219); Beth Shemesh (Stratum III, Bunimovitz and Lederman 1993: 250); Beth Zur (Sellers 1933: 37, Funk 1993: 260); Tel Dan (Stratum VII, Biran 1993: 326); Mount Ebal (Stratum I and 2, Zertal 1993: 375-377); Tell el-Far‘ah N (Period VIIa, Chambon 1993: 439); Tell el-Far‘ah S (Yisraeli 1993: 442); Tell el-Ful (Period I, N. Lapp 1993: 446); Tel Harashim (Stratum III, Gal 1993b: 451); Gezer (Stratum XIII, Dever 1993b: 504); Giloh (Stratum I, Mazar 1993b: 519); Tel Ḥalif (Stratum VII, Seger 1993: 557); Tel Haror (Strata B6-5, Oren 1993a: 582, 583); Hazor (Stratum XII, Yadin 1993: 600, 601); Tel Hesban (Stratum 19, Geraty 1993: 627. 628); 'Izbet Sarta (Stratum III, Kochavi 1993a: 652, 653); el-Jib (i.e., Gibeon, Pritchard 1964: 50, 51; 1993: 513); Tell Jemmeh (Stratum JK, van Beek 1993: 669); Lachish (Level VI, Ussishkin 1993: 898, 900, 901); Tel Masos (Stratum IIIb. Kempinski 1993b: 988, 989); Megiddo (Stratum VIIa, Yadin 1993: 1012, 1013, 1023); Tel Miqne (Stratum VII, T. Dothan and Gitin 1993: 1053); Tell en-Nasbeh (Stratum 4, Zorn 1993: 1098, 1099); Tel Qasile (Stratum XII, Mazar 1993c: 1207); Tel Qiri (Stratum IX, Ben-Tor 1993c: 228); Khirbet Rabud (Stratum A4, Kochavi 1974: 12; Kochavi 1993b: 1252); Khirbet Raddana (Phase 2, Callaway and Cooley...
1971: 11; Callaway 1993b: 1253); Horvat Rosh Zayit (Tel Rosh, Stratum 3, Gal 1993b: 1291); Sahab (Phase 1, Ibrahim 1972: 30; 1974); Tell es-Sa‘idiyah (Stratum XII, Tubb 1993: 1298); Tell esh-Shari‘a (Stratum VIII, Oren 1993b: 1331); Shechem (Stratum XII, Campbell 1993; Wright 1965: 102); Shiloh (Stratum V, Bunimovitz 1985: 131-138; Finkelstein 1985: 129; Finkelstein 1993a: 1367; Kempinski 1993a: 1365); Ta‘anach (Stratum IA, Rast 1978: 6; Glock 1993: 1432); Yoqneam (Strata XVIII-B, Ben-Tor 1993b: 808); Tell el-‘Umeiri (Field Phase 9, 11B, Herr et al. 1995: 237, 241).

Figure 2 presents the many Irl settlements (sites located are those with significant archaeological work; see also, map in Mazar 1990: 309; chart in Dever 1992: 100). A common interpretation of the newly planted Irl settlements is that these settlements reflect the introduction of new ethnic entities. For example, Mazar suggested that the end of the Late Bronze Age was also the end of Canaanite city-states and the new political power entity was regionally based ethnically related units:

During the Iron Age the ethnic makeup and the material culture of Palestine underwent significant changes. The Bronze Age Canaanite city-state system was replaced by an ethnopolitical structure in which the various regions of the country were inhabited by different peoples. Thus, in western Palestine there were Israelites; Philistines and other related Sea Peoples; and the remnants of the indigenous Canaanite population. (Mazar 1990: 295)

This means that the independent city-state system of the Bronze Ages was abandoned for larger, more centrally located-style governments. The assumption is that along with the Sea Peoples, others (including the Israelites) were on the move in the Near East in the late 13th century. While the Sea Peoples were finding a new home in 12th-century Canaan, many other peoples were doing likewise.

Among those who emerged from the rubble of the LBII/Irl destructions were those we call the Israelites. Dever, as one of many, discussed Irl under the rubric, "The Israelite settlement in Canaan" (1990: 37-84), while for some Israeli
Figure 2. Map of Iron I settlements.
archaeologists Irl is the "Israelite Period" (e.g., Aharoni 1982: 153-279). Although the name "Israelite" is not found in Irl Canaan, some have isolated a new material culture among the hill-country sites that has been labeled "Israelite."

A New Material Culture

The second reason why many scholars have concluded that the Israelites entered and settled Canaan during the LBII/Irl transition period is the new architectural features and assumedly new material culture of the Irl sites, especially in the hill country (see Finkelstein 1988: 27-33 for additional discussion about Israelite sites). In general, the basic observations about the Israelite sites are that they were located in the hill country and that they share a commonality in pottery and constructions.

To locate the Israelites has been seen as an important aspect in identifying them. To many, it is obvious that the Israelites settled in the hill country. Finkelstein wrote,

The starting point of a discussion about the characteristics of Israelite Settlement sites is the historical biblical text (the only source available), which specifies the location of the Israelite population at the end of the period of the Judges and at the beginning of the Monarchy. Israelite cultural traits must therefore be deduced from the Iron I sites in the central hill country, especially in the southern sector, where the identity of the population at that time is not disputed. (1988: 28)

Rast agreed with Finkelstein and wrote.

According to the Bible, it was primarily in the central hilly area of the land that the Israelites first began to settle. Thus it seemed that looking for evidence of the settlement patterns of this region might help to clarify the earliest Israelite occupation. (1992: 110)

At the same time that some have seen in the Bible evidence for Israelite settlement in the hill country, it has been discovered that, in just that zone, there were many new settlements (Mazar 1990: 334-338). In addition, it has been suggested that the Irl population growth of the hill country was too great to be accounted for by a natural population increase, implying the detection of an Irl people's migration into the hill country (Stager 1985: 3). This increase in population, coupled with a change in material culture, all occurring in the hill country of Canaan that the Bible suggests was
controlled by the Israelites, has led to the conclusion that evidence of the biblical
Israelites has been found.

The characteristics of these Israelite sites have been clearly defined. Finkelstein,
in a chapter titled "The Characteristics of Israelite Settlement Sites," delineated five
characteristics of an Israelite site (geographical location, site size, settlement pattern,
architecture and site layout, and pottery; 1988: 29, 30; and also Mazar 1985: 64-70).
Finkelstein's approach (that is to say, how he determined the characteristics of Israelite
sites) was to assemble the common characteristics of the Irl hill country sites. Putting
these criteria together, a "classic" Israelite site would be a small, newly settled,
unfortified site located in the Canaanite hill country, that would be characterized by pil­
lared buildings associated with silos, and a large proportion of collared-rim store jars.

In addition. Irl Israelite sites have been "characterized by a low level of plan­
ning" (Herzog 1992: 231). As Albright noted,

We cannot help but be struck by the extraordinary simplicity and lack of cultural
sophistication which we find in the twelfth and early eleventh centuries. The
contrast between the well-constructed Canaanite foundations and drainage systems
of the thirteenth century and the crude piles of stone, without benefit of drainage,
which replace them in the twelfth century, especially at Bethel, can scarcely be
exaggerated. (Albright 1971: 119)

The "low level of planning" mentioned by Herzog is viewed as evidence of the weak­
ness of any central or powerful governing authority. This is evidenced in the small size
of the Irl sites, lack of defensive features, and simple construction features.

The settlements of Irl are universally smaller than those of the preceding LBII
period. Finkelstein suggested that the average size of Israelite sites is between 5-6
dunams (1988: 30). This means that the average Irl site was between 1 1/4 to 1 1/2
acres in size (ca. 4 dunams to 1 acre). It might be assumed that the smallness of the
sites would imply a decrease in population from the Late Bronze Age. The contrary is
ture. Population increased in the hill country during Irl. What changed after the Late
Bronze Age was that, while there were larger cities in the Late Bronze Age, there were
many more settlements in Irl, making the total area populated larger, if indeed, poorer
(Stager 1985: 3, and Table 1, p. 4; Hopkins 1985: 164).

Another characteristic feature of Irl sites is that, like most sites in the Late
Bronze Age, they were unfortified. As Finkelstein wrote, "As far as we know today,
most . . . Iron Age I sites were not fortified" (1994b: 164). Except at Tel Miqne,
Ta'anach, Tell el-Far'ah (S), Giloh, el-Jib, and Tell el-'Umeiri, Irl sites, thus far
excavated, have been found to be unfortified. As Mazar wrote about Irl sites,
"Fortifications are almost unknown" (1985: 64).

Among the characteristics of Irl sites are multiple cisterns and silos (and/or pits).
Sites where silos and/or cisterns have been found include: Acco, 'Afula, Tel Beer-
sheba, Tell Beit Mirsim, Beth Shan, Tel Dan, Tell Deir 'Alla, Hazor, Tel Halif, Tel
Haror, Tel Masos, Tell en-Nasbeh, Tel Qasile, Khirbet Raddana, Tell esh-Shari'a, and
et-Tell. Khirbet Raddana is a good example of an early Irl settlement. Dever wrote:
"Here [Khirbet Raddana] there were only six courtyard houses, each with one or more
cisterns, arranged around a number of open work and storage areas, some with hearths
and silos" (Dever 1990: 62).

It is acknowledged that cisterns were not an innovation of the Irl peoples, but the
needs of their settlements established in less watered areas and the increased population
to the region forced their more common use (Stager 1985: 9, 19). Population pressure
forced settlers to improvise.

The "courtyard houses" referred to by Dever are another common feature at Irl
settlements. These structures were low-roofed two-story "three-" and "four-room"
houses. Their presence in Irl sites has associated them with the settlement of the
Israelites. Y. Shiloh wrote, "It would seem that the four-room house is an original
Israelite concept" (Shiloh 1970: 180; Wright would assign this building to a more
specific "North" Israel. 1978: 154). In the construction of the houses, pillars were
used to support the ceiling of the first level and floor of the second level. It is assumed
that the lower floors were used for animals and/or storage, while the upper floors were living areas (Netzer 1992: 193-199; Stager 1985: 17).

Irl also saw the introduction of new ceramic forms. Chief among these forms is the collared-rim store jar. A. Biran credits H. Kjær with the discovery of this form at ancient Shiloh (Biran 1989: 71). While at first the connection between collared-rim store jars and the Israelites was doubted, Albright early on added his support to this pottery form as an Israelite ethnic indicator (1937: 25). Mazar has shown that collared-rim store jars are to be found all over Irl Canaan (1981: 27-29; and discussed Irl Canaanite pottery in general as it compared with Giloh, 1981: 18-29). Aharoni said that "in this pottery [collared-rim store jars], the fundamental characteristics of the conquest settlements in their consolidated elements are prominent" (1982: 174).

It should not be surprising that with many unwalled, simply constructed settlements being found in the hill country—virtually all of them using cisterns and/or silos as a foundation of settlement and containing a unified corpus of ceramics, chief of which is the collared-rim store jars—that they should be associated with one ethnic group. Such a correlation between Irl and the Israelites has almost been taken for granted. Albright’s own description of Irl is a blend of Bible tradition and archaeology. Since the new material thus makes it possible to fix certain dates connected with the Israelite Conquest much more precisely than has been possible in the past the historian is naturally tempted to undertake a fresh correlation of the external data with Israelite traditions. (1935: 14)

Given the accepted nature of Irl sites, it has almost become an axiom that Irl and Israelite are synonymous terms.

The Arrival of the Philistines and Others

The third reason that scholars have assumed that the Israelites arrived in Canaan during Irl is the arrival of the Philistines during that period. Within a few years of the earliest 13th-century destructions, the unsettling attack of the Sea Peoples on Egypt and their settlements on the Canaanite coast occurred. According to Ramesses III (actually
compiled by his son Ramesses IV and found in Papyrus Harris), he fought, defeated, and settled the Sea Peoples.

I extended all the boundaries of Egypt; I overthrew those who invaded them from their lands. I slew the Denyen (‘D’-yn-yw-n’) in their isles, the Thekel (‘T’-k-r’) and the Peleset (‘Pw-r’-s’-ry’) were made ashes. The Sherden and the Weshesh (‘W’-s-f’) of the sea, they were made as those that exist not, taken captive at one time, brought as captives to Egypt, like the sand of the shore. I settled them in strongholds, bound in my name. (Breasted 1988, IV: 201)

Their attack and defeat are also proclaimed in the mortuary temple of Ramesses III,

Medinet Habu:

The countries — , the Northerners in their isles were disturbed, taken away in the fray -- at one time. Not one stood before their hands, from Kheta (‘Ht’), Kode (‘Kdy’), Carchemish (‘K-r-k-m-f’), Arvad (‘-r’-w’), Alasa (‘-r’-s’), they were wasted. They set up a camp in one place in Amor (‘-m-r’). They desolated his people and his land like that which is not. They came with fire prepared before them, forward to Egypt. Their main support was Peleset (‘Pw-r’-s’-f’), Thekel (‘T’-k-k’-r’), Shekelesh (‘S’-k-rw-f’), Denyen (‘D’-y-n-yw, sic!), and Weshesh (‘W’-s’-f’), (These) lands were united, and they laid their hands upon the land as far as the Circle of the Earth. Their hearts were confident, full of their plans. . . .

Now this happened through this god, the lord of gods, that I was prepared and armed to trap them like wild fowl. . . .

Those who reached my boundary, their seed is not; their heart and their soul are finished forever and ever. As for those who had assembled before them on the sea, the full flame was in their front before the harbor-mouths, and a wall of metal upon the shore surrounded them. They were dragged, overturned, and laid low upon the beach: slain and made heaps from stern to bow of their galleys, while all their things were cast upon the water. (Breasted 1988, IV: 37-39)

As can be seen, the inscriptions of the Medinet Habu make it clear that the Philistines (Pelesets) were already living in their own Canaanite coastal towns at the time Ramesses III fought with them. Ramesses III hung them in "their towns" (Breasted 1988, IV: 41) and "they set up a camp in one place in Amor" (Breasted 1988, IV: 38; "Amor" being Amurr=Syria, Gardiner 1947: 187*). The Philistines are also listed as one of the peoples living in Canaan in the late 20th Dynasty Egyptian work of The Onomasticon of Amenopé (Gardiner 1947). The Egyptian story of Wen Ammon (dated to about 1100 B.C.) makes it even clearer that, as Egyptian power waned in the later part of 1Ir., the Sea Peoples gained control over the Palestinian coast (Breasted 1988, IV: 274-287).
In addition to the literary evidence, there is an abundance of archaeological evidence for the settlement of the Philistines during Irl. The primary sites thought to be Philistine are concentrated in the coastal and Shephelah regions of Canaan (T. Dothan 1982: 25). The Philistine settlement process is well documented in the archaeological evidence. T. Dothan catalogs 28 sites that introduced the characteristic Philistine pottery and culture (1982: 25-86). The timing of this new culture is precise and connected to the eighth year of Ramesses III.

The absolute chronology of the first stage of Philistines in Canaan (which may include other Sea Peoples) seems to be clear. The Late Bronze Age cultures both in Cyprus and on the Syro-Palestinian coast disappeared in the late thirteenth century, followed by the emergence of the culture of the Sea Peoples; the beginning of Myc. III C: 1 must be related to the end of this period. This hypothesis is supported by the ever growing documentary evidence that at least one wave of Sea Peoples invaded Syria and Palestine before the great onslaughts in the fifth and eighth years of Ramesses III. The first stage has so far been better observed in Cyprus than in Canaan.

The next stage in Canaan, which is definitely Philistine in character, emerges about 1190 B.C. (T. Dothan 1982: 294, 295, see p. 289 for a connection between 1190 B.C. and Ramesses III).

The Book of Judges also supports this general time period by placing its stories about the Philistines near the end of the Book (Judges 13-16). There the Philistines first became significant when they are associated with Samson, the last of the judges. Even a rough estimate of the judges period would place the period of the judges, and thus, Samson, in the 12th-11th centuries. In short, Egyptian sources, the Book of Judges, and archaeology view the Philistines as settling on the Canaanite coast in the 12th-century.

Not only is the evidence of the Philistines used to mark their entrance and settlement in Canaan, but the Philistine evidence is also often linked as a demarcation for the evidence of the beginning of Irl in general and the Israelites in particular. Note that the discussions of Irl are often initiated or discussed primarily with the Philistines (e.g., a chapter title used by Kenyon, "The Philistines and the Beginning of the Early Iron Age," 1979: 212-232). Since the Philistines entered, conquered, and settled the
Canaanite coastal region during roughly the same period that the Irl hill-country sites were being established and since the Bible portrays the Philistines as the major competitor of the Israelites, who lived in the hill country, it has been assumed that both the Philistines and the Israelites were settling during Irl.

Meneptah’s Stele

The fourth reason archaeologists have concluded that the Israelites were settling during Irl is the "Hymn of Victory of Meneptah" (commonly called "Meneptah’s Stele" and also known as the "Israel Stele," Pritchard 1969: 376-378). This monumental find is the point of reference for any discussion regarding the Israelites. The significance of this stele is the appearance of the name Israel (‘-s-r-’-r; transliteration follows Breasted 1988, III: 264) in the text.

In 1896, Flinders Petrie discovered this granite monument in Meneptah’s mortuary temple at Thebes. The significance of that find cannot be better expressed than in Petrie’s own words:

Thus until this spring there has been no trace in Egypt to show that any descendants of Jacob ever existed. Had we no other material, we should never have suspected that any such people as the Jews were known in the ancient world, so far as the evidence of Egypt carries us. (1896: 618)

Meneptah had his "victory hymn" crafted on the reverse of a stele erected 200 years earlier by Amenhotep III. "Israel" is mentioned toward the bottom of the monument and is mentioned together with other place names from the same geographic region.

The passage we are interested in is near the end of the inscription and reads,

The princes are prostrate, saying: "Mercy!"
Not one raises his head among the Nine Bows
Desolation is for Tehenu; Hatti is pacified:
Plundered is the Canaan with every evil;
Carried off is Ashkelon; seized upon is Gezer;
Yanoam is made as that which does not exist;
Israel is laid waste, his seed is not;
Hurru is become a widow for Egypt!
All lands together, they are pacified. (Pritchard 1969: 378, emphasis supplied)
This stele came about because Merneptah, the son of the great Ramesses II, faced a not too uncommon Egyptian enemy—the Libyans. During Merneptah’s fifth year, an army of Mediterranean peoples led by the Libyans attacked Egypt’s delta population. Merneptah was in Memphis when he learned his enemy was approaching. He rushed his army to meet the Libyans and defeated them during a six-hour battle. So impressed was he by this victory (or because he had so few), Merneptah commissioned four separate inscriptions to celebrate this victory ("The Great Karnak Inscription, the Cairo Column, the Athribis Stela, and the Hymn of Victory," Breasted 1988, III: 238). The Merneptah stele is actually a song of praise of victory over an attacking foe, thus Breasted’s title. "Hymn on the Victory over the Libyans" (Breasted 1988, III: 256). In addition to celebrating his victory over the Libyans, this stele provided Merneptah with a vehicle for boasting of his other successes, including the imposition of Egypt’s control over parts of Canaan’s hill country (Singer 1988: 4). Although Singer suggested that the motivation for Merneptah’s campaign was the growing problems of tribal groups settling in Canaan’s hill country (1988: 6), there is nothing in this stele that supports such a conclusion.

In general, the composition and reading of this stele have not been seriously challenged. One Egyptian syntactical concern that has caused some discussion is the determinative used with "Israel." Of the names mentioned in the stele, "Israel" is the only one followed by a determinative for "people" rather than "land" (or, as Yeivin defined this latter determinative, "territorial." 1971: 28; or Petrie, "places," 1896: 624). It has thus been concluded that a "people" determinative means the Israelites were not yet a settled people at the time this stele was composed (late 13th-century). Petrie observed that the difference between the "places" and "people" is that "it was not a city that was destroyed, but a people that were left without seed" (1896: 626). Others, like de Vaux, have warned that such a conclusion may be too hastily drawn, since it is possible that this determinative may be the result of scribal "carelessness."
Davies has suggested that names and historical identity are not necessarily the same and that the name "Israel" in the Merneptah stele may represent an identity not connected with later "Israel" (1992: 61, 62).

Merneptah's stele does associate Israel with the general territory of Canaan, listing it with Canaan, Ashkelon, Gezer, Yanoam, and Hurru (Pritchard 1969: 378). The problem is how to interpret "Israel." de Vaux sees the pairing of Ashkelon and Gezer, two southern cities, as a pattern for Yenoam and Israel: since Yenoam is in the north, Israel must be in the north or, at least, centrally located (1978: 390-391). Yeivin sees Canaan and Kharru as general terms that serve as parentheses in which the "smaller territorial units (city-states) are recorded (in correct order from south to north . . .)"

(1971: 30). Ahlström and Edelman, on the other hand, have attempted to persuade the scholarly community that the use of "Israel" on this stele should be understood as paralleled with (and thus, connected by type with) Canaan, a territory, rather than with the city-states of Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yanoam (1985: 59-61). They saw a "ring pattern" in the literary style of Merneptah's stele moving from the general Canaan to the more specific elements of the text (1985: 59-61; Ahlström 1993: 284). Their conclusion was that "Canaan and Israel would be synonymous designations for the entire Cisjordanian region usually called Palestine" (1985: 61; 1986: 40; Ahlström 1993: 285).

de Vaux, Davies, Ahlström and Edelman give too much weight to the possible "loose application of determinatives" by the Egyptian scribes, and thereby dismiss the "people" determinative too easily. As Hasel has concluded, "To suppose that this determinative may be in error avoids the overall consistency of the use of determinatives in the entire unit" (1994: 52). Those who think this determinative is an error must provide, what they have not, convincing evidence. As for Ahlström and Edelman, they assumed that the text of Merneptah is wrong since it disagrees with their hypothesis of a "ring pattern." They have provided no illustrations of such a phenomenon elsewhere within the inscription. Ahlström and Edleman have not
received strong support for their "ring pattern" theory. The consensus of the scholarly community is that the "Israel" mentioned in the Merneptah stele was a people, not a place or region.

Hasel has clarified the relationship and meaning of "seed" within the frame of "Israel is laid waste, his seed is not" by showing that "seed" refers to grain (1994: 52-53). This conclusion becomes abundantly clear due to the Egyptian determinatives used. While the word "seed" (prr, Egyptian) could mean descendants, in this case the determinative for grain was used (Hasel 1994: 52). That Israel had no grain when Merneptah finished his attack was Merneptah's claim that he had either confiscated it or destroyed it (Hasel 1994: 52).

It must not be forgotten that Merneptah's stele is not about geography. It is about the ritualistic elevation of the king who "is always triumphant over his enemies on behalf of the gods" (Garthoff 1988: 23). The stele's plain message is that Merneptah was the conqueror of a people called "Israel." Hasel's proposed structure of Merneptah's stele makes it certain that Israel was a "people" (Hasel 1994: 48). Merneptah's stele is, thus, pivotal in placing Israel in time and space. In other words, it provides a terminus ad quem of sometime before the beginning of the 12th century B.C. for Israel's recognition as an independent entity, by its most powerful foreign neighbor (see Margalith 1990 for a discussion about the use and antiquity of the name "Israel"). Even if evidence eventually surfaces to substantiate the suggestion of Coote (1990: 74) that Merneptah himself never led such a campaign, the very fact that the Israelites are mentioned in the stele and that they were identified as a "people" acknowledges their existence in Merneptah's time. That they were identified as a "people," as opposed to a city-state or even a specific region, complements the Book of Judges' record that the early Israelites were unorganized and independent of centralized control (Judg 17:6: 21:25). In other words, both Merneptah's stele and the biblical tradition agree that the early Israelites were a loosely organized group of people.

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albright 1939: 22; de vauX 1978: 391). Perhaps, as Hasel suggested, they were "some type of agricultural society" (1994: 53). In any case, that the Israelites were mentioned with Canaan, Ashkelon, Gezer, Yanoam, and the Hurru, all significant powers, implies that they were significant enough that announcing a victory over them would bring glory to Merneptah (Hess 1993: 134).

Evidences of the Bible

Some have seen the Bible as coordinated with the Merneptah stele and the other evidences of an 11th settlement of the Israelites.

As Rast stated,

According to many biblical scholars, this group's departure from Egypt (the Exodus) as described in the Bible would have taken place sometime during the reign of Pharaoh Rameses II (1279-1212 B.C.E.). This would mean further that the Hebrews began to enter the land of Canaan toward the latter part of the thirteenth century B.C.E., at about the end of the Late Bronze Age in archaeological terms. (1992: 107)

One of the key passages for such an interpretation is Exod 1:11, which says that the Israelites "built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses" (NASB).

The key word of this passage is "Raamses." The name "Raamses" is also associated with Jacob, the father of the Israelites in Gen 47:11, and with the Israelite Exodus (Exod 12:37).

The name Ramesses was introduced into pharaonic Egypt at the beginning of the 19th Dynasty, when a general Paramesess became Ramesses I (Redford 1992: 179, 180). Since Ramesses I came to power as an old man and the highest year date for him is two, it seems obvious that the Ramesses, mentioned in biblical passages ["Raamses"] must be his illustrious son Ramesses II, whose reign was at least 67 years (Gardiner 1980: 445). Ramesses II came into power at the end of the 14th century (1304, 1290, or 1279 B.C.: Schmidt is inclined to support 1290 B.C. [1973: 2, 3, 4, 13]). This means that Ramesses II was the most significant pharaoh of the 13th century and considered by many to be the pharaoh of the Exodus (Wente 1992: 618). Archaeological
excavations have been conducted at "Raamses" (Piramesse; Tell el-Dab’a) by Manfred Bietak (Bietak 1981).

Those who have taken the name Ramesses as a connecting link between the Bible and Egyptian history see the Israelite Exodus as occurring sometime during the 13th century.

A biblical argument used to support the late date of the Exodus is based on Exodus 1:11... The thrust of this argument is this (1) The Israelites built the city of Raamses just before the Exodus (2) This city is to be equated with the city of Pi-Ramesse built by Pharaoh Ramesses II, who ruled from 1240 to 1224 B.C. [sic] (3) Therefore the Exodus must have occurred sometime in the 13th-century during the reign of this pharaoh. (Dyer 1983: 225, 226)

For example K. Kitchen wrote,

Exodus 1:11 links the oppression of the Israelites with the building of the store-cities of Pithom and Ra’amses, giving thereby an indication of the date for the end of the oppression and for the Exodus. Ra’amses is most probably the PiRamesse of Egyptian texts, founded by Sethos I and mainly built (and named) by Ramessess II. The Exodus, therefore, is best dated after the accession of Ramesses II (1304 or 1290 BC). (Kitchen 1978: 57, 58)

Kitchen also saw Exod 1:11 as evidence that the Israelites left Egypt during "the first three decades of Ramesses II’s long reign" (1982: 71). Since Merneptah was the pharaoh who followed Ramesses II, there is a seemingly close correlation between the Bible and Egyptian history.

From these five lines of evidence scholars have understood that the Israelites gained their homeland during the Irl period. The destructions that began in the 13th century and continued in the 12th century have appeared to be the work of a new migrating people. The Irl settlements that followed the LBII/Irl destructions have also appeared to be settlements of new-to-the-region peoples. Evidence of a new group of people has been deduced from the innovations in material culture that have been detected in the hill country that included: minimal planning, the lack of fortification, the use of cisterns and/or pits, the courtyard house, and new ceramic forms. These new settlements were close in time to the arrival of the Philistines and Merneptah’s stele, which mentions the Israelites as a tribal people. All of these features together
have led scholars to believe that the Israelites were arriving in Canaan during the LBII/Irl transition.

With this archaeological and biblical backdrop we can now turn to the five basic theories about how the Israelites gained the promised land. As each theory is discussed, I will frame it within the parameters of its most outspoken proponents. Similar reviews of these proposals have been provided elsewhere (e.g., Callaway 1985a: 31-33; de Vaux 1978: 475-487; Dever 1990: 40-84; Finkelstein 1988: 295-314; Gottwald 1985: 191-219; Hess 1993: 125-133; Waltke 1990: 181-200; Weippert 1971: 5-62), but are needed, here again, as background information for future discussions. I am interested in these theories from a slightly different perspective than other reviewers, which have dealt with these theories almost singly within historical concerns. While I am intently interested in historical questions, I am more interested in how each theory relates to the Book of Joshua.

Of the five basic theories of how Israel came to live in Canaan, three are relatively new. Through much of this century there have been two basic opposing views. One view says they gained the land by peaceful means, the other says they got it by fighting for it.

The Five Settlement Theories

Israel Gained the Land as the Result of War

The name of W. F. Albright has been inseparably linked with a concept of an Israelite settlement availed by conquest. His name is so often associated with the conquest theory that it is commonly referred to as "Albright's theory" or some such title (e.g., de Vaux 1978: 482). Noncritical biblical students, before and after Albright, have accepted an Israelite conquest as a key ingredient for an Israelite settlement, but Albright's contribution is unique and far-reaching. What Albright brought to the subject of Israelite settlement by conquest was a certain scientific credibility based on
archaeology. (Among recent scholars, Yehezkel Kaufman [1953/1985] supported a "biblical view" of an Israelite conquest, but since his ideas have received limited scholarly support, and since he did not attempt to support his biblical interpretations with archaeological evidence or any other corroborating information, his interpretations are more aligned with general Bible studies. (I do not review or critique his points in this section; see de Vaux 1978: 476-478 and Bright 1956: 56-78 for a review of Kaufman's interpretations.)

By 1935, Albright had already become the authority in American archaeological circles. (He became director of the American Schools of Oriental Research on July 1, 1921, Running 1991: 93; for the briefest of summary regarding Albright's early involvement and contributions to Near Eastern archaeology, see Wright 1979: 73, 74.) His 1935 article on the Israelite conquest/settlement is a synthesis of the then available archaeological evidence combined with what he termed "Historical Conclusions." Albright believed that at the time of his writing with Jericho, Bethel, Lachish and, less importantly, Tell Beit Mirsim under investigation and preliminary conclusions reached, enough evidence had been gathered finally to frame a chronological outline of the Israelite conquest/settlement (1935: 10).

Albright concluded that a military campaign had been launched by the Israelites to obtain Canaan as a homeland. This conquest included multiple incursions by the Israelites, with one group ("the tribe of Joseph") arriving with the "Khabiru" (Albright's spelling) during the Amarna period, and the Moses group participating in an Exodus somewhat before 1290 B.C., which then began a conquest of Transjordan about 1250 B.C. (1935: 15-17).

Jericho had been destroyed, according to Albright, during the mid-14th century (Albright 1935: 13). Since his discussion of Jericho focused on its destruction in the 14th century (Albright's view), and of Bethel (which Albright associated with Ai, Albright 1935: 15: 1934: 11: 1939: 15-17) and Lachish in the later part of the 13th
century or early 12th century, he must have maintained his previously expressed idea that at least some of the Israelites had made their way into Canaan in the 16th and 15th centuries, and settled in the 13th and 12th centuries (1935: 13-14; 1929: 6).

Albright's "Historical Conclusions" were based largely on his interpretations and applications of Alt's *Die Landnahme der Israeliter in Palästina* from which he acknowledged the helpfulness of Alt's Territorial History (Albright 1935: 14; also see below). Simply stated, "territorial history" was an interpretational collation of historical accounts with an underlying assumption that stories portrayed in the same region are derived from similar geographically-based sources. Albright used Alt's territorial history and Noth's studies on the Israelite settlement to develop his understanding of the Israelite tribes and traditions. In all, he saw at least four different Israelite groups, which eventually amalgamated to form a large whole (1935: 17).

Albright's conclusions were strengthened by his interpretations of excavations at Megiddo and Lachish (1937: 22-26). Starkey, and Albright agreed, suggested that the latest phase of Canaanite Lachish was destroyed with a great conflagration. Albright viewed this conflagration as a "decisive value for the question of the date of the main phase of the Israelite Conquest" (1937: 24). He dated the destruction of Lachish at the earliest, during the time of Merneptah's year four (1231 B.C., to use Albright's date).

According to Albright, Megiddo remained a Canaanite city until sometime after 1150 B.C., when it was destroyed (Megiddo Stratum VII), and its culture was replaced by a less sophisticated culture (Megiddo Stratum VI). The pottery of that stratum was "indistinguishable from contemporary Israelite pottery in Shechem, Shiloh, Bethel, Ai, Gibeah and Beth-zur, etc., and must accordingly be Israelite" (Albright 1937: 25). Albright stated that even the previous year he had not been ready to assign this pottery to the Israelites. The realization that pottery from Irl, found outside of the hill country (e.g., Tell Abu Hawam), was "quite dissimilar" to Megiddo Stratum VI (1937: 25).
convinced Albright. He was also encouraged in his conclusions by Nelson Glueck's findings of the regionally unique potteries of Transjordan.

Thus by 1937 Albright's view of the Israelite conquest and settlement had crystallized. According to him, the Israelites had arrived in several groups, with at least one of those groups arriving in the late 13th century, destroying the indigenous culture as it expanded, and replaced that culture with its own less sophisticated culture (i.e., simply made pottery and primitive building styles). The Israelites themselves were seen by Albright as a reflection of their material culture. He would eventually describe the Israelites as "a wild, semi-nomadic horde, who differed mainly from similar invading desert hordes in the speed with which they settled down" (Albright 1971: 119).

In 1939, Albright found himself caught in a three-way debate about the Israelite conquest/settlement. In an article titled, "The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology," he attacked Noth's etiological approach to the Bible (1939: 11-23). While Albright agreed that etiology is a useful tool in Bible study, he criticized Noth for using etiology to the point of divorcing all meaning from the stories (1939: 13). Albright argued that the intentional use of etiology by the ancients was a means of remembering past events, thus those events should not be seen as developed solely for fictional use. In addition, Albright saw Noth's stress on etiology as overcritical, and therefore, unhelpful.

In the same article he challenged other scholars, although in only a cursory manner, as those who "are devoid of concrete archaeological foundations" (1939: 23). With this preface he reintroduced his disagreements with Garstang and Marston. At the same time, Garstang and others were being too influenced by the biblical material, specifically the stories of the Book of Joshua, by not allowing the archaeological evidence its full weight. Albright accused Garstang of uncritically accepting a biblically based chronology and the biblical story of the fall of Jericho and insisting on a pre-13th-century conquest by the main wave of Israelites (1939: 23). G. Ernest Wright later
summarized and critiqued Garstang’s conclusions that Jericho was destroyed about 1400 B.C. According to Wright, Garstang’s conclusions had been based on two points: the large number of tombs in which scarabs were found, none of which were dated later than Amenhotep III, and the scarcity of Mycenaean ware. Wright also noted his objections and those of Albright and Vincent (1940: 34-36.)

Albright was adamant in his belief that the archaeological evidence clearly demonstrated that the main thrust of the Israelites came at the end of the Late Bronze Age and, therefore, their most significant invasion was at that time. J. Bright followed Albright and concurred that the archaeological evidence supporting a brutal conquest at the end of the 13th century was "impressive" (1981: 132).

Although the outline of the Conquest Theory had been established, the details provided by newer excavations continued to have their impact. Albright, himself, always maintained that the Israelites invaded Canaan about 1220 B.C., with an earlier destruction of Jericho and Bethel (Albright 1971: 108-109). He saw a distinct difference between the Bronze Age Canaanite strata, with large complex buildings and esthetically superior ceramics, and the Iron Age Israelite strata of simple construction and primitive pottery (e.g., 1971: 118, 119).

As the excavations of the 1950s and 1960s were reported to the archaeological community, there was increasing pressure for modification of the theory. G. Ernest Wright, the best spokesman for the Conquest Theory, wrote plainly about the need for adjustment to the Conquest Theory.

It has now become necessary, however, to modify the common scholarly view. For one thing, a closer reading of the Deuteronomic historian’s work in Joshua makes it quite clear that while he claims spectacular success in overrunning the country for Joshua, he is quite aware of much left to be done (cf. 11:13, 22). (Wright 1979b: 69)

This adjustment was more than an acknowledgement of the greater dynamics in the Book of Joshua. It had largely to do with archaeology, an archaeology that reveals many more destructions than the Book of Joshua mentions.
Yet so far few of the [Ir1] destructions can be correlated with one another; and this suggests precisely what the Book of Judges implies: namely, that the fighting was continuous and largely local in nature. . . . When we put the historical and archaeological data together, we arrive at a view somewhat as follows: There was an Israelite campaign of great violence and success during the 13th-century. Its purpose was to destroy the existing Canaanite city-state system, weakening local power to such an extent that new settlements, especially in the hill country, might be possible. In the centuries that followed, however, there was not only the necessity of reducing unconquered city-states but also of continuous struggle with many of the inhabitants who, though their major centers of power had been reduced, still were able to offer resistance to Israelite clans encroaching on their territory. (Wright 1979b: 70)

Albright himself recognized that the archaeological picture that continued to emerge was difficult to combine with the biblical account. It was so difficult that Albright acknowledged that "at present we cannot propose any safe reconstruction of the actual course of events during the period of the Israelite settlement in Palestine" (1965: 95; 1963: 27; Bright likewise agreed, 1981: 129, 130).

Wright was in the forefront of emphasizing a much-needed flexibility in the Conquest Theory. On the other hand, Wright's flexibility was also focused on "the centuries that followed" (the Joshua conquest) and not the nature of the conquest itself (1979b: 70). Yadin wrote that "in its broad outline the archaeological record supports the narrative in Joshua and Judges as Albright said" (1982: 19). By that, Yadin meant that conquest was still the vehicle by which the Israelites gained the land.

To limit the nature of the Israelite conquest would by necessity redefine what conquest meant, which is not at issue among those who support the theory. The Conquest Theory is, by definition, the Israelite acquisition of territory by conquest. Consequently, even though Albright and Wright acknowledged, in later times, a more flexible interpretation of the Book of Joshua and the conquest, still they saw in it a Conquest.

The manifold evidence for the terrific destruction suffered by the cities of Bethel, Lachish, Eglon, Debir (Kiriath-sepher), and Hazor during the 13th-century certainly suggests that a planned campaign such as that depicted in Josh. 10-11 was carried out. . . . We may safely conclude that during the 13th-century a portion at least of the later nation of Israel gained entrance to Palestine by a carefully
planned invasion, the purpose of which was not primarily loot but land. (Wright 1979b: 84)

The Conquest Theory, as enunciated by Albright, was based on the idea that the Israelites gained their land as a result of war. To support a reliable war tradition some stories of the Book of Joshua were combined with the evidence from some archaeological sites. It was believed by those who supported the Conquest Theory that the Book of Joshua has a generally dependable integrity and that its stories can be coalesced with the complexities of the expanding archaeological data, especially the nearly universal destructions of the LBII/Ir1 transition period.

As we shall see, one corollary of the Conquest Theory, which is unique to that proposal, is that it accepts the biblical writers' suggestion that the Israelites already had identity, a shared ethnicity, when they came to Canaan. However flexible the issue of war in conquest was, those who held to the Conquest Theory never doubted how the Israelites conquered: they conquered as the Israelites. This is an important distinction of the Conquest Theory.

Albright proposed a theorem by which biblical scholars should be guided when interpreting literary documents in which historical events are mentioned. Albright wrote, "The ultimate historicity of a given datum is never conclusively established nor disproved by the literary framework in which it is embedded: there must always be external evidence" (1939: 13). In other words, the proof of the reality of an event cannot lie in the literary record of an event. Additional concrete (i.e., archaeological) evidence must be found corroborating the claims for it to be proven historically. It was this theorem that, above all, gave Albright's Conquest model its uniqueness.

Those who supported Albright's emphasis on the necessity of archaeology saw in his theorem a kind of solid scientific ground that was more helpful than theoretically based arguments. For instance, P. Lapp thought that archaeology did a better job of helping to recreate the biblical picture than simply applying imaginative ideas like
Noth’s to the biblical text. (He wrote that the “historical picture of the conquest era conserves as historical much more of the literary traditions than the reconstruction of Noth” [1967: 284].) Albright’s theorem was the major contribution to Albright’s model. What Albright attempted to do was blend the Bible and archaeology, using archaeology as “external evidence,” which was needed as an independent external source in interpreting the biblical stories.

On the occasion of Albright’s centennial birth year, several scholars read papers assessing both his life and legacy (“W. F. Albright in Myth and Reality” [Dever and Silberman 1991]). One paper in particular, “Is It Only a Metaphor? Ideological Trope in the Historiography of William Foxwell Albright,” by Burke Long (now published in a special edition of BA. see Hopkins 1993: 2, and Long 1993: 36-45) took issue with Albright’s explanation of his conversion from biblical skeptic to friend of the Bible. Long suggested that there was no such conversion; Albright always remained a conservative Christian. Long explained Albright’s recollection of his supposed conversion as being influenced by the larger picture of the “self-as-scientist” that had become more friendly to the text (Long 1993: 44). Accordingly, his supposed conversion from skeptic to believer never occurred; he remained a conservative from youth to old age.

Long misunderstood the uniqueness of Albright’s relationship to the Bible. Some see the Bible a priori as an accurate recording of history, while some see in the Bible a collection of stories that do not reflect true historical events. Albright saw the Bible as accurate unless corrected by the external evidence of archaeology. He was ever ready to amend the text, if there was sufficient external evidence. For example, he wrote, “Archaeological discoveries have compelled us to modify the standard tradition of the Conquest, as reflected in the book of Joshua” (Albright 1965: 95, as in his suggestion that the history of Bethel was taken over for the stories about Ai, 1963: 29, 30). By this statement he clearly states that archaeological discoveries are to be seen as superior
to the biblical text. This position would not be supported by many conservative Christians.

Albright's perspective was neither liberal nor conservative. Albright availed himself of all evidence—literary and archaeological—accepting the archaeological material as primary evidence since he saw it as a noninfluenced neutral record.

Albright's emphasis on the occupation of Canaan by an Israelite conquest reigned while he and Wright were alive. Even among evangelicals today, there is some support for the Conquest Theory (e.g., Wood 1986: 141-153; Free 1992: 111-116), but most of the support comes from these older reprinted books. One is impressed most by the silence of evangelical scholars on the Israelite conquest, who, unlike critical scholars, have not produced in recent times an influential history of Israel. By the mid-1960s, scholars, as a whole, became dissatisfied with conquest as an answer to Israel's presence in Canaan.

Israel Gained the Land by a Peaceful Migration

The theoretical opposite of Albright's Conquest Theory is the Peaceful Migration Theory of Albrecht Alt and his student Martin Noth. The basis of Alt's theory was territorialgeschichtliche Fragestellung (territorial-historical investigation) based on the territorial divisions he hypothesized for ancient Canaan (Alt 1989: 136; Lemche 1985: 39, 40). According to Alt, not only was the Canaanite hill country geographically separate from Canaan's lower-lying areas, but it also had a distinct political history (Alt 1989: 149-157). Lemche described Alt's process thus.

This method requires one to describe the topographical relations of a particular area, that is, the potential for settlement inherent in a given territory. One is further constrained to analyze the information concerning conditions of settlement which is contained in the available historical sources. By comparing information about settlement conditions in Palestine both before and after the Israelites' arrival it should be possible to demonstrate the meaning of this immigration for the pattern of settlement in Palestine. (1985: 39)
During the historic periods before the Iron Age, Alt believed that the plains and foothills of Canaan were controlled by a city-state system, where a large city acted as a suzerain, dominating the small region around itself, with a similar city-state not far away. He wrote, "No feature is more obvious in the political scheme in Palestine under the rule of the Pharaohs, than the division of the country into a large number of districts each centered on a city, and possessing its own hereditary prince" (Alt 1989: 145).

In his opinion, however, the Canaanite hill country did not lend itself to such organization. The hill country, given its undeveloped status and isolated nature, tended toward "larger territorial formations" (Alt 1989: 152). It was this tendency that allowed the Israelites to settle there and what kept them unique from those groups that settled the low-lying areas (Alt 1989: 159-160).

Alt saw the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan juxtaposed with the arrival of the Philistines. The Philistines, he wrote, came to Canaan as a diverse but united front who "owe[d] a great deal of their success to their strong cohesive unity" (Alt 1989: 174). The Philistines also came to Canaan, as it were, suddenly, as part of one event. For Alt, neither of these statements characterized the Israelites. He saw their arrival in Canaan as a gradual, unorganized, long-term process.

For a start, the outward details of the immigration of the Israelites into Palestine were completely different; this was no single movement completed in a relatively short time, as it appears, I admit, in the later literary works of the Israelite tradition, particularly in the Book of Joshua. It was in fact a series of movements by single tribes and bands which may well have lasted for several centuries; and in the majority of cases they did not proceed by force of arms, so that although the accounts of individual military victories over older towns may well be correct, they insinuated themselves into thinly populated or even totally unpopulated districts where there was no chance of serious opposition. (Alt 1989: 175)

It was in these "thinly populated" areas or "gaps" in the city-state system of territorial divisions that, according to this theory, settlement occurred.

In these circumstances it is very probable that the settlement of the Israelite tribes in the gaps in the city-state system took place peacefully and that, therefore, in these extremely thinly populated regions no resistance worthy of mention was to be expected from an old-established population, with the exception of a few iso-
lated cities such as Luz-Bethel (cf. Judg 1:22-26) and perhaps Laish-Dan (cf. Judg 18). The hypothesis of a settlement growing out of the regular change of pasture on the part of nomads with small cattle fits very well into the picture which can be derived from the sources of the territorial divisions in Palestine and the changes in them. (Weippert 1971: 18)

Noth, following Alt, denied the plausibility of an Israelite military conquest for explaining Israel's presence in Canaan, as described in the Bible, and maintained that the Israelites had gained the land by a slow peaceful migration into the land. This is the Peaceful Migration Theory as suggested by Alt/Noth.

For Noth, the Israelite settlement occurred over a long period of time beginning sometime after the Amarna period and ending at least 100 years before Saul was crowned king (1960: 80-81). He reasoned that had the Israelites moved into Canaan before the Amarna period they most certainly would have been mentioned in the Amarna tablets. Noth also thought that the events in the stories of the Judges would have needed no less than 100 years before the monarchy in order to transpire. He would have liked to say that the primary Israelite intrusion was during the 13th century B.C., but since sufficient evidence was lacking, he was forced to allow broader time boundaries. During the settlement process, loose, even unaffiliated, bands of semi-nomads drifted into the nearly unoccupied Canaan, the central hill country (1960: 68). That they settled into sparsely inhabited territory was proof for Noth that a "warlike encounter" between the Israelites and Canaanites did not occur (1960: 68).

The Israelites were peaceful ("these peaceful semi-nomads always hanker after a more settled life in the coveted agricultural countryside" [Noth 1960: 69]) and almost unknown. "It is clear that, to begin with, the occupation of the land by the tribes took place fairly quietly and peacefully on the whole and without seriously disturbing the great mass of the previous inhabitants" (Noth 1960: 69). These tribal people follow their herds, summer in the hill country and winter in the deserts, until finally they do not return to winter pastures because they have found permanent homes in the general territory of Benjamin (Noth 1960: 73). The settlement of the Israelites was not in
isolation, for Noth saw them as part of the larger Aramaean movements of peoples (1960: 83).

The 12th-century B.C. destructions that Albright credited to the Israelites, Noth saw as the result of squabbles among the active city-states and the Sea Peoples (1960: 82). For Noth, the Israelites were far from a fighting people; they lived in isolated patches of mountain wildernesses.

Among Alt’s/Noth’s most notable ideological followers was Y. Aharoni. Aharoni believed that the Israelites experienced the transformation from transhumant to sedentary because of a "vital compulsion and a strong ambition" (1979: 193). This metamorphosis was not uniform among the tribes. Each tribe and family changed as environmental conditions allowed (Aharoni 1979: 193).

The biblical tradition, according to Aharoni, reflects at least two "waves" of Israelite tribes. In the 14th-century the first "wave" was the "House of Joseph" (1979: 205, 210-214). It was this Israelite group that captured Jericho and met the Amorite kings near Gibeon (1979: 210, 212, 213). The second "wave" was the tribe of Judah, coming to Canaan in the 13th-century (1979: 214-220). This settlement centered on Bethlehem and moved into the Shephelah (1979: 219, 220).

Aharoni suggested that it was not the Israelites’ natural love of peace that caused them to settle in the hill country rather it was their military weakness that forced settlement in an area previously unoccupied (1982: 159). According to him at least the earliest tribes "had no choice" (Aharoni 1982: 159). They were just too weak to do anything else.

Aharoni saw the new Israelite settlements scattered all through Galilee and the hill country as evidence of this new community’s arrival (1982: 159-172). For that purpose they needed land.

Investigation of the Israelite settlement at Tel Masos makes it necessary to modify one’s views of the Israelite conquest to a large degree. This is not a military conquest, but rather, as in the internal areas of the country and the other peripheral zones, this is a clear picture of penetration into a hitherto unoccupied region.
The tribes were not deterred by the special difficulties of settling in the arid Negeb, which was possible only with the help of appreciable technological skill and in the utilization of water sources. More than anything else, the movement testifies to the great hunger for land on the part of the tribes who were compelled to settle down. (Aharoni 1982: 167)

That so few of the Irl sites were fortified only demonstrated to Aharoni the peaceful nature of the Israelites and the times (1982: 167).

Callaway (1985a) found the Alt/Noth hypothesis the most appealing, except that he interpreted the people movement associated with the Israelites in a new arena. Contrary to Alt/Noth, he saw no infiltration of nomads from the east.

The thinly-populated highlands were indeed peacefully infiltrated at the end of the Late Bronze Age, but the newcomers were primarily farmers and secondarily came to the highlands with fixed cultural patterns of village life and established settlements in marginal land even inhospitable areas with the aid of two new subsistence technologies...bell shaped rock-cut cisterns...and the introduction of agricultural terraces. (1985a: 33)

Callaway’s conclusion was based on a survey of archaeological sites, their location, and remains. He found the Irl sites to be small (1985a: 38) and located away from natural water sources (1985a: 39). Their inhabitants had an evenly divided diet between plants and animals (1985a: 41). They were economically independent of other villages and were family-centered (1985a: 42). He concludes, “The evidence seems convincing that settlers of the scores of villages in the highlands were part of more general population movements in the entire land of Canaan by people whose background was in agriculturally-based sedentary village life rather than that of nomads or even semi-nomads” (1985a: 43). Callaway concluded that these settlers came from “lowland areas in west Palestine” moving into the hill country (1984: 64; 1985b: 95).

Weippert has also found the Peasants’ Migration Theory to be more "objective" than the Conquest Theory (Weippert 1971: 145; also 1976; 1979: 31-34; 1982). This objectivity is shown, according to Weippert, in that it is not influenced by either the Bible or archaeology (1971: 145).
The largest difference between Albright and Noth may well have been Noth's placement of archaeology on a back burner of importance, while Albright brought archaeological data to the forefront. While Albright saw archaeology as the test of the validity of Bible stories, Noth saw his own interpretation of the Bible as the test for both the Bible and archaeology. It is not that Noth did not see archaeology as helpful, but he saw its use as limited. Archaeology for Noth added "colour and life" or "colour and plasticity," but at the most it was a "prehistory," while the text was "history" (Noth 1960: 42, 48). On the other hand, Noth agreed that a "history of Israel" could not be written without archaeology: "It is no longer feasible to describe the 'history of Israel' on the basis simply of the written records that have come down to us, ignoring the abundant and, to a very large extent well authenticated, results of Palestinian archaeology" (1960: 42). Such statements, however, meant only that archaeology was used by Noth to add scattered details to his hypotheses. For him the text was the primary source for those theories. "When one asks, however, what this modern knowledge is primarily based on, the answer must inevitably be the innumerable written documents" (Noth 1960: 46). Likewise for Alt who wrote that "Israel's own records of the time of the migrations and the settlement are the most important and indeed practically the only sources providing an answer to these questions" (1989: 135). On the other hand, for both Alt and Noth the text itself was of limited usefulness. Alt continued. "But in the Old Testament they are clearly always either too incomplete, or in too late a form, to preserve every important feature of the history of the tribes and the whole nation" (1989: 135). Thus, neither archaeology nor the Bible provided Alt or Noth enough data for explaining the Israelite presence in Canaan. Paradigms developed from other times and cultures were needed.
Israel Gained the Land as a Result of a Revolt

George E. Mendenhall

With his 1962 article "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," George E. Mendenhall greatly redirected, albeit temporarily, the course of the discussions about the Israelite conquest/settlement. He proposed what is commonly called the "Peasants' Revolt" theory (also known as the "The Sociological School," Finkelstein 1988: 306) for explaining the origins of Israel. Mendenhall forthrightly admitted that the purpose of his article was an attempt to offer an alternative "idea model" to Albright's conquest model and Alt's/Noth's peaceful infiltration model (1962: 66-87). He wrote, "This picture is, of course, highly theoretical and in part is a transference from observations of the modern world. It is of value, however, since it offers an alternative to the classical, indefensible, concept of the origins of the twelve tribes of Israel" (1962: 71).

Mendenhall rejected the basic assumptions of both Albright's and Alt's/Noth's hypotheses: that the Israelites came from outside of Canaan, that the Israelites were unlanded peoples, that the 12 tribes were ethnically related to each other and were unrelated to the Canaanites (1962: 67).

According to Mendenhall, a small group of Egyptian slaves, Canaanites who had been previously "exiled" to Egypt for their subversive activities (1976: 20), escaped from bondage. (Mendenhall suggested that the murder of the Egyptian by Moses [Exod 2:14] may well have been the significant first step in Moses' assumption of political power [1976b: 20-21].) The eventual flight of these slaves from Egypt left them politically and socially isolated, that is, without human allies. This lack of human support forced these Canaanite slaves to make a covenant with YHWH (1962: 73).

What happened at Sinai was the formation of a new unity where none had existed before, a "peace of God"; among a "mixed multitude" and tribally affiliated families who had in common only the deliverance from an intolerable political monopoly of force. Perhaps for the first time in history, a real elevation to a new and unfamiliar ground in the formation of a community took place—a formation...
based on common obligations rather than common interests—on ethic, rather than on covetousness. (1976b:21-22)

According to Mendenhall the Sinai experience demonstrated that there was an alternative to blind allegiance to a human state that required absolute obedience. That alternative was the religion of YHWH (1976: 65). Mendenhall supposed that the personal code of conduct, with the double responsibility to man and YHWH, espoused in the worship of YHWH, was a revolutionary insight, one which produced in the escaping slaves their sense of community.

Although Mendenhall saw a small group from Egypt as those who ignited a spark in the Sinai wilderness, the full-blown fire of revolution occurred in Palestine. When the Moses-led Canaanites returned to their homeland,

entire groups having a clan or "tribe" organization joined the newly-formed community, identified themselves with the oppressed in Egypt, received deliverance from bondage, and the original historic events with which all groups identified themselves took precedence over and eventually excluded the detailed historical traditions of particular groups who had joined later. (1962: 74)

Mendenhall suggested that the "small religious community of Israel polarized the existing population all over the land" (1962: 81). Instead of 12 tribes of people descended from 12 brothers (Exod 1:1-7), the Israelites were not ethnically related (1962: 85, 86). They were, rather, a political unit composed of indigenous peasants who chose to identify with the experiences of the small religious community of YHWH. By a "deliberate choice" those who rejected the Canaanite society and joined the emerging religious community "reverted to a culture of farmers and shepherds" (1976b: 12).

This process, as Mendenhall describes it, was set within the framework of the Late Bronze Age. The entire revolutionary episode was not accidental that could have happened in a different geographic setting; it had to occur where and when it did because the socio-economic situation was ripe, only then, for such an upheaval. To Mendenhall, "early Israel is conceivable only within the framework of the cultural forms of the Late Bronze Age. and its history and faith must be approached from the
perspective of what preceded it, not from what it evolved into" (1976b: 16). By this, Mendenhall meant that the Israelites fit within the larger picture of history. He saw nothing unusual about his suggestion that the Israelite conquest was simply a peasants' revolt. He thought that the revolution of which they were a beneficiary was only one in a series of many revolutions, before and after the Late Bronze Age.

Mendenhall suggested that there is one observable feature in human life "that fashion is constantly changing" (1976b: 216). Other scholars see in those changes a completely new migrating population that destroyed and replaced the old population. Mendenhall saw such theories as "historically naive" (1976b: 216). He concluded that every "tenth generation" (thus, the title of his book *The Tenth Generation*), or roughly every 250-300 years, societal pressures build to the point of eruption. It is the "rhythmic pattern of history" (i.e., 250-300-year cycles of revolutions) that produce the macro changes in society, while micro changes are the natural product of life (1976b: 216-217). For Mendenhall the peasant revolt of the Canaanites (who became the larger part of the Israelites) came about during one of those cycles.

Nomads did not exist. Mendenhall came to his peasant revolt theory via two basic understandings. Mendenhall thought that the equation of the Israelites with nomadism was misleading. His explanation of the Israelite lifestyle was a recognition of the more generally accepted understanding of the Near Eastern nomadic lifestyle as a seasonal "migration from one particular area to another," while maintaining a close symbiotic relationship with village lifestyle (1962: 68-69). Mendenhall refers to previous comparisons between the Israelites and nomads as the "bedouin mirage" and wrote that "it seems most improbable that the Bedouin type of nomadism even existed in the Late Bronze Age" (1976b: 4). He found even a term like "seminomad" unuseful because it "perpetuates those aspects of the Bedouin mirage that have become grafted onto modern ideas about biblical history" (1976b: 5). After rejecting the existence of
nomads for an explanation of the emergence of Israel in Canaan, Mendenhall built a connection between the Israelites and the *Apiru.*

Mendenhall's understanding of the *Apiru* became one of the pillars of his peasant revolt model. An *Apiru*, according to Mendenhall, was a drop-out from normative society, who became something of a bandit. They were outsiders who preyed on regular citizens. Their nature as outlaws made ethnic connections unnecessary. Mendenhall wrote, "It is now agreed by nearly all scholars that the term *Apiru* originally had no ethnic significance, but rather designated a social or political status" (1976b: 122). He saw the biblical David as the best example of an *Apiru* among the Israelites (1976b: 133, 135-136). David divorced himself from the Israelites and joined another political entity, the Philistines. That, for Mendenhall, epitomized an *Apiru*—rejecting ones' political entity. Mendenhall then applied his own definition of the *Apiru* to the Israelites, concluding that there never were any nomads in the Near East.

To those archaeologists who looked to material cultures as evidence of the arrival of a new ethnic people. Mendenhall said that this view "must now be utterly rejected as historically naive" (1976b: 216). To him it was an "old theory" that explained cultural changes with "new populations" (1976b: 216). He would argue that only seldom, if ever, did people groups migrate. He thought that any presupposition where one people group replaced another was outdated.

Reconstructing the picture will be possible at all only by systematic rejection of the idea that the formative period of Israel represents a totally new culture unrelated to anything in the past. The old idea of one ethnic group's moving in to displace or destroy a predecessor which then promptly disappears is based upon most unsophisticated notions that cannot be too thoroughly repudiated. (1976b: 14)

*Conversion created the community.* A second premise of Mendenhall was that the Israelites were not ethnically related, but rather they were related by experience. This shared experience was the glue that caused the rebellious people to cling together. He believed that the faith of Israel transcended the family of Israel (1976b: 5). By this
he meant that the cause of the "Israelite" bond was greater than blood relationship. For Mendenhall, the Israelite covenant was the central, sustaining basis of unity.

It is for this reason that the covenant tradition is so overwhelmingly important in biblical tradition, for this was the formal symbol by which the solidarity was expressed and made functional. The symbolization of historical events was possible because each group which entered the covenant community could and did see the analogy between bondage and Exodus and their own experience. (1962: 74)

The Sinai event is, for Mendenhall, more than a cultic covenant between YHWH and those with Moses, although it was that also; it was the beginning act of a new religious community. Those who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai had no previous familial relationship. Their ethnic and religious heritage began at Sinai. Mendenhall argued, "But no religion which has a point of origin in time and space starts with a cumulative tradition; on the contrary, it starts with a profound conviction, which determines behavior, with regard to good and evil" (1976b: 10, emphasis in the original). In other words, since the history of the Israelites began at Sinai, from where they obtained their "profound conviction," those episodes or traditions recorded as having happened or developed before that time were contrived in later times and were simply myths. Thus, for Mendenhall, the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were written by later members of the Israelite cult as a means of developing a history of blood ancestors. Those passages in Exodus that mentioned ancestry, like Exod 20:5 ("third and fourth generations"), Mendenhall saw as a later development used to explain Israel's heritage (1976b: 178-183). Though their history began in conviction, the biblical writers created a genealogical relationship for those in covenant.

In the biblical reference to the "mixed multitude" (Exod 12:38) Mendenhall saw evidence of the diverse ethnicity of the Israelites (1976b: 225). According to him, it was not until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah that the idea of ethnic unity was developed to explain the Israelite existence (1976b: 226). Mendenhall also saw, in the cultural continuity between the Late Bronze and the Iron Ages, evidence that the
inhabitants of Canaan were homogeneous. If the Israelites were not related by familial bonds, what was it that really held them together? His answer was their common religious experience.

In addition, Mendenhall believed that any reference to ethnicity (especially the idea of an ethnic basis of unity) was contrived and, therefore, rejected kinship as a basis of Israelite "solidarity." He denied that any society is ethnically based and saw such ideas as racist:

There is no such thing as a 'pure' ethnic group in any historical social organization of considerable extent, and such racist ideas must be expunged from the conceptual baggage of the historian. It is most probable that no such concept even existed in the ancient world. (1976b: 220)

He also wrote, "No culture of the ancient world that yields written documents is ethnically homogeneous" (1976: 10).

Norman Gottwald

The revolt theory was assumed by one of Mendenhall's students, who even came to eclipse his teacher in the scholarly discussions of that model. Although Norman K. Gottwald supported the basic theses of Mendenhall's Peasant Revolt Theory, he organized those theses around a more recent political paradigm. For Gottwald, ancient Israel was spawned, not by a religious experience, but by political unrest steeped in class struggle.

Not unlike Mendenhall, Gottwald saw the past attempts at explaining the Israelite settlement from archaeological and nonbiblical sources as "facile and simplistic and at times simply mistaken" (1989: 26). While he saw some truth in both the Peaceful Infiltration Theory and the Conquest Theory, they both lacked the social motivation his own theory provided (1983: 5).

He modeled his own approach after his sociological experiences in the civil rights struggles, antiwar (Vietnam) movement, "anti-imperialist" activities, criticisms of North American capitalism, as well as church and school politics (1985: xxv).
About the biblical text, Gottwald said,

While we wish it were otherwise, the primary source of our knowledge about Israel's beginnings remains the Hebrew Bible. Without it we should not even have guessed from all the other sources combined that so energetic and unique a people as Israel appeared in Canaan at the dawn of the Iron Age. (1985: 26; also 1989: 26, 27)

This placed Gottwald in a not-too-uncommon dilemma. While he acknowledged that the primary source about early Israelite history is the Bible, he had little confidence in its details. He wrote,

Substantively, the events related are altered as a matter of course by selective emphases which delete, interject, condense, transpose, join what was once separate, and separate what was once joined, in order to serve immediate cultic-ideological needs. Editorially, the initially separate units are strung together one after the other or spliced together in frequent rearrangements of material and shifts of context so complex that any given unit will tend to contain two or more meanings, depending upon the stage of its transmission or the scope of the context in which it is read and interpreted. (1985: 28)

The biblical text, according to Gottwald, is so obscure that to understand the stories as they read is not possible.

There can be no denying that the strict historical implications of their [form criticism and tradition history] discoveries are catastrophic for all attempts to write a history of early Israel which merely sum up and underline the surface biblical account treated as straightforward documentary evidence. (1985: 29)

What the scholar must do, he concluded, is "sift" the material and "supply a spatio-temporal framework" (1985: 30). His "spatio-temporal" model essentially paralleled Mendenhall's model with some adjustments. The purpose of his writings was to shore up areas (of Mendenhall's ideas) that were not as convincing as they could be. He wrote, "Personally I believe that there is ample evidence for the revolt model to make it a serious proposal; but in order for it to attain theoretical adequacy, it requires further elaboration and application, and even some modification" (1985: 219).

Like Mendenhall, Gottwald saw the 'Apiru as a sociopolitical movement and not an ethnic or economic unit (1985: 401). According to Gottwald, the 'Apiru were roving bands only "loosely integrated into the general society" (1985: 402). They were "military mercenaries." "renegade robbers" (1985: 402). "armed infantry " (1985:
403), "outlaws," "traitors," "conspirators," and "enemies" (1985: 404), as well as groups "who offer their service to various governments" (1989: 32). At the same time he saw the Apiru as closely associated with the village pastoralist. "While standing distinguishably apart from the existing order, they also relied upon it insofar as their livelihood was dependent upon the wider society, for which they often worked either as individual 'contract laborers' or as hired groups of soldiers, agricultural laborers, or construction gangs" (1985: 401, also see 408). Gottwald saw the influence of the Apiru in the 14th century as limited, but it increased in strength as the influence of Egypt lessened in later centuries (1985: 406). As the powers of the Apiru grew the lower-class city dwellers joined forces with them, thereby providing the combined strength to control whole regions of Canaan (1985: 407). For Gottwald, it is within this context that the identity of the "Hebrews" developed (1985: 407-408).

The Canaanite Apiru, according to Gottwald, lived in a feudalistic world. Taking his model from Europe's medieval period, or perhaps even 17th-century France, he saw their society as divided into socio-strata. He writes of "serfs" (1985: 408), "lower class," "aristocrats," "free citizenry" (1985: 398), and "Canaanite Feudalism" (1985: 391). It was outside the dominant society of Canaanite feudalism that the Apiru lived and from which the serfs eventually deserted.

Gottwald agreed with Mendenhall that the ancestors of the Israelites were not nomads, seminomads, or even pastoral nomads. He rejected these possibilities by searching behind the "façade of the anachronistic patriarchal migratory schema" (1985: 452) and concluded that the "patriarchal communities practiced diversified and intensive agriculture" (1985: 452). He, like his mentor, also had grave doubts about the homogeneity of the Israelites who left Egypt (1985: 455).

His conclusion was that a mixed group of people, basically unrelated, left the melting pot of the eastern delta of Egypt (1985: 453-456) and arrived in Canaan to find a feudalistic society. The major tension existing in the land at that time was between
social organizations. "The conflicts between 'Apiru and pastoral nomads, on the one hand, and resident Canaanites, on the other hand, were not the conflicts of invaders and defenders of land. They were rather conflicts over social organization and the appropriation of economic production between different segments of the population in Canaan, conflicts which arose intrinsically" (1985: 474). The conflicts were caused by "tension between urban-based statism and rural-oriented tribalism" (1985: 475). Gottwald contended that the repressed classes threw off the bondage of the city-state structure (1983: 6). Through a series of peasant rebellions, a social revolution was brought about that was "free agrarian, and lacked a state form of government and class system" (Gottwald 1985: 37, 38).

When the fleeing Egyptian slaves appeared in Canaan, their appearance coagulated the undercurrent unrest of the serfs. "Not only does Israel challenge Egyptian imperialism, it rejects city-state feudalism as well, and does so by linking up exploited peoples across the boundaries of the old city-state divisions" (1985: 489). This "linking up" produced Israel.

Among those who entered Israel in the thirteenth-twelfth centuries, indeed those who formed its ideological and organizational spearhead, were congeries of 'Apiru and mixed agriculturalists and pastoralists, some of whom had fled from Egypt. Consequently, Israel is most appropriately conceived as an eclectic composite in which various underclass and outlaw elements of society joined their diffused anti-feudal experiences, sentiments, and interests, thereby forming a single movement that, through trial and error, became an effective autonomous social system. (1985: 491, emphasis in the original)

Even though Mendenhall provided the basis for Gottwald's later work by writing, "It is necessary to recover the original historical context of the events from the later forms--forms often chosen to be useful and 'relevant' to a radically different and, indeed, often diametrically opposed sociopolitical situation" (1976b: 19) and even though both men thought that the unique circumstances of the Late Bronze Age infected the oppressed Canaanites with the need to revolt (Mendenhall 1976b: 17; Gottwald
1985: 212), there were differences between them. Mendenhall's reaction to Gottwald's book *The Tribes of YHWH* was virulent. Mendenhall wrote,

What Gottwald has actually produced is a modern version of the ancient myth-making mentality. Utilizing both the terminology and the driving ideas of a nineteenth century political ideology, he proceeds blithely to read into biblical history whatever is called for in the program of that nineteenth century ideology. (1983: 91)

The "nineteenth century ideology" critiqued by Mendenhall was Gottwald's imposition of modern historical assumptions (Marxism) on ancient times. Gottwald explicitly acknowledged that the "revolutionary" thoughts of the 1960s and 1970s molded his interpretation of the Peasants' Revolt (1985: xxv) and wrote in general of the influences that affect a scholar.

Generally unacknowledged in the assessment of why biblical scholars approach their subject matter as they do is the factor of the social-class position of biblical scholars. A recent presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis touched upon this factor but failed to develop it. The relevant insight was briefly put: "It is not always realized, or kept in mind, that biblical research, no less than any other branch of group activity, is subject to the social forces—the term "social," of course, represents the longer phrase and concept: social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and the like—at work within the community at large...This principle of social forces, rather than the personal whim of a scholar here and there, being the decisive factor in the shaping of a discipline such as ours, applies of course to every epoch in history, be it the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the demise of feudalism, or the birth of capitalism in Western Europe. (1985: 9-10)

Gottwald, influenced by the political student movements of the 1960s and 1970s, saw those same struggles engulfing the Late Bronze Age Near East. In this, Gottwald and Mendenhall disagreed. Gottwald saw in the peasants' revolt a political struggle, while Mendenhall said "that the Israelite movement was much more a cultural and ideological revolution than a political one" (1983: 92).

By ideological revolution Mendenhall meant the religious element of the Israelite identity that Gottwald dismissed. Gottwald disagreed with his mentor that the Sinai event was a core Israelite experience that was shared by all and was the source of unity, a unity of experience. He also saw within the Peaceful Infiltration Theory and the Conquest Theory an overdependence on religion as explanatory (1983: 6). Gottwald
viewed the Sinai experience as one of afterthought and social need. He believed that during the

historicizing of the entire cultic program . . . , it became urgent to correct the most glaring omission in that body of quasi-historical traditions, and that was the lack of a narrative account of the introduction of theophany, covenant, and law-giving to Israel. Where and when was Israel first formed as the people of Yahweh, i.e., as a covenanted and law-regulated community to whom Yahweh appeared? (Gottwald 1985: 111, emphasis in original)

Gottwald believed it was the descendants of the original Levites, part of the Moses group, that forced this addition to the tradition (1985: 112), while all of the traditions were codified during a time of great stress.

For Gottwald, the "Sinai experience" or formation catalyst was the struggle of the 'Apiru, serfs, and mixed multitude against Canaanite feudalism. This act of throwing off the bondage of the repressive normative society, combined with their growing strength and independence, brought Israel to self-awareness. The Mount Sinai revelation of identity (i.e., shared social struggle) actually occurred in the highlands of Canaan (1989: 29, 33). Gottwald himself tried to distance his ideas from Mendenhall's proposal, even renaming his theory the "social revolution" theory (1983: 5, 6; 1989: 26).

The Mendenhall/Gottwald Peasants' Revolt Theory provides many helpful suggestions in the discussion of the Israelite conquest/settlement. Mendenhall and Gottwald clearly reflect the general scholarly consensus about the ancient 'Apiru and have tried to incorporate biblical events/themes (especially Mendenhall) into their overall theory. Above all, they have approached the problem of the presence of the Israelites in Canaan with great creativity. While the Peasants' Revolt Theory led the discussions for a time, its time has passed.
Israel Gained the Land as the Result of the Transition between the Late Bronze and Iron Ages

In recent literature a redirection has occurred in discussions on Israel's settlement in Canaan. While the "revolt" segment of Mendenhall's (and Gottwald's) model(s) has been eliminated from the newer suggestions, the idea that the Israelites were indigenous to Canaan, neither coming as nomads nor conquerors, has become a central feature of settlement theories. The consensus within these theories has been that environmental and/or social pressures of the LBII/Irl transition created those who have come to be called Israelites. This in truth is an anthropological approach to Israelite settlement. On the other hand, since all theories of this class see Israel's evolution with the LBII/Irl transition, I refer to these theories as the LBII/Irl Transition Theory (called by Kempinski the "withdrawal theory." 1992b: 2).

B. Halpern could just as easily have been included within the parameters of the Conquest Theory. While he did not allow a "single massive invasion and conquest" (1983: 49), he did see some type of Israelite invasion as likely (1983: 91, 92). What is less clear is whether or not he saw that invasion as the act of the "Israelites." For Halpern, it seems safest to postulate that some Israelite Hebrew group did enter Canaan by way of the Aijalon Pass. Entrenching itself particularly in the central hills, this group attracted both by coincident interest and by the nature of the terrain and agricultural climate some proportion of the Canaanite population, which had a history of sporadic petty revolt against Egypt. (1983: 91)

That seems plain enough, but he also wrote that it was "over the course of the 13th and 12th centuries, an ethnic consciousness and solidarity dawning on this Israel" (1983: 91). It is not clear what, if any, "ethnic consciousness" Halpern thought the "Israelite Hebrew group" had that entered Canaan. Obviously, he has allowed more room for the biblical tradition than many others. In some ways Halpern's suggestions are halfway between the Conquest Theory and the Peasant Revolt Theory. Even Halpern...
admits that his suggestions are not innovative; he has only stressed different features of recent theories (1983: 93).

I have placed Halpern within the Transition Theory group because of his suggestion that Israel was formed by outside forces. As mentioned above, the Conquest Theory assumed that Israel came to Canaan with the self-identity and purposes of "Israel." In Halpern's scenario, war was the force that caused the people of the hill country to cling together and finally produce Israel (1983: 90). In their formative years, it was principally the united effort in resisting the Egyptians that served as the cohesive force in creating their identity (1983: 99).

Like all of the Transition models, Coote and Whitelam suggested that Israel must be understood with "extremely complex processes spanning many centuries and covering a vast geographical area" (Coote and Whitelam 1987: 117). These processes continued until there was a marked break in the usual. This break they have called "the shift in the land use and settlement patterns" (Coote and Whitelam 1986: 116). This shift was precipitated by an economic disaster.

The catastrophic event that Coote and Whitelam have suggested produced Israel was a 13th-century economic collapse that undermined trade.

The Mycenaean and Hittite empires fell, Egypt was seriously weakened, and many city-states along the Levantine coast ceased to exist. This precipitated a dramatic decline in interregional trade during this period. The abrupt decline of this trade, which had sustained the power structures of the Palestinian cities and towns, crippled the urban elite and their means to power. It is these dramatic developments which provided the conditions for the emergence of Israel in the Palestinian highland and margins. (1987: 128)

With cessation of trade (Coote and Whitelam would see all groups dependent on trade, 1986: 119) the desperate Canaanite coastal residents fled to the hill country, building simple homes and planting crops to offset the losses due to the cessation of trade (what Coote and Whitelam term "risk reduction," Coote and Whitelam 1987: 129). Interestingly enough, Coote and Whitelam admit that the settlers of the hill country were
new to that region (having come from the lowlands), but obviously, they identify their ethnicity as Canaanite (1987: 125).

Evidences for these suggestions are plentiful. The sophistication of the coastal residents can be seen in the high-quality cisterns that were common in Irl (1987: 123, 124). The lack of discernible defensive features testifies to the peaceful conditions of the time, which are seen as additional evidence of economic problems (1987: 122). Terracing shows the need for immediate food, instead of cash crops (1987: 123).

Under these free-wheeling circumstances the hill-country inhabitants were added because the hill country was free of control (1986: 119). Within this setting the hill-country inhabitants eventually shifted their energies to agriculture. The peasant, bandit, and nomad groups who occupied the hill country were increasingly pressured to submit to the lowland city-states. With this choice they strove towards economic independence by moving to subsistence agriculture (1986: 121).

Israel thus designated a loose federation of highland villages, small towns, pastoral nomad groups, and erstwhile bandits, to preserve and defend local village sovereignty over land and produce, particularly against state encroachment. This was most probably an extension, brought about by the economic crisis, of pre-Israelite decentralized alliances and agreements among hinterland groups. (1987: 135)

As to the makeup of what became "Israel" from these groups, Coote is clear that they had little else, besides economic interests, in common.

The singular term ["Israel"] rather obviously did not apply to a single culture, way of life, or productive economy on the regional, village, or household level, nor a single language, law, religion, or except perhaps in the early monarchical period, state or folk with a folk memory. It did not refer to a single race or genetic type. Similarly, it did not refer to a single, distinctive territory, population, or ethnic group in any commonly understood sense. It did not refer to a nation, which as a designation of a people was a doubtful concept before the industrial era, except in reference to ruling classes and their political projections. (Coote 1991: 39)

In summary, Coote saw the Israelites as unrelated by religion or genetics (1990: 71, 86, 87). He saw the Israelites as emerging first as a political organization only later explained as a family (1990: 71). For Coote, a tribal connection based on kinship
offered an alternative to other forms of political powers (1990: 76-83). In addition, Coote places the Israelites and Egyptians on good terms and working together (1990: 88-93).

P. McGovern (1987) has proposed a nearly identical scenario for Transjordanian peoples. From his own excavations and other Transjordanian sites he has detected a gradual change in technology and culture during the LBII/Irl transition (1987: 267). According to McGovern, the natural symbiotic relationship between pastoralists and urbanites acted like a "safety valve" for urbanites under economic stress (1987: 269). The economic decline at the end of the LBII period encouraged urbanites to move to remote regions.

If this reconstruction is correct, at least in its general features, then the LB city-state system could not have survived. Urban dwellers, many of whom would have been thrown out of work by the economic dislocations, would have needed to seek alternative means of support. The establishment of small outlying village communities, which have been documented in other parts of the Hill Country [sic], might have provided an outlet for survival. (McGovern 1987: 268)

This shift from urban areas, according to McGovern, was accompanied by technological advances in highland Transjordanian sites (1987: 270, 271). These changes fostered the development of "early Ammonite and subsidiary cultures" (1987: 271).

Sharon, following Boserup, does not see history in an evolutionary perspective. He saw the declining Canaanite society as the impetus that produced in the seminomads, previously dependent on that society, the discovery "that economic independence, or even active competition, was a more efficient strategy then (sic) the traditional symbiosis" (Sharon 1994: 130). According to Sharon's theory, opting out of Canaanite society created the need for sedentarization, the development of agriculture, and increased population. Canaanite urban areas, on the other hand, decreased in population and economic power. These two societies continued to function separately as two distinct spheres until Israel itself moved toward urbanization (1994: 131; also Na'aman 1994: 232, 233).
I. Finkelstein (1988) built his theses on the strongest archaeological foundation of any of the Transition Theories, since his theories are based on wide-ranging archaeological surveys and his own excavations (as well as the excavations of others). In addition, he has attempted to offer objectively verifiable arguments for this theory. W. Dever called his book "the most authoritative recent synthesis" (1992: 103).

Fundamental to Finkelstein's interpretation is the belief that the causes that produced the Israelites were not extraordinary. That is, supernatural directives did not lead to the arrival of a new external people group to Canaan. The Israelites were an evolutionary development of the land and political climate. Finkelstein writes,

An additional failing of quite a few of the scholars who have dealt with the Iron I period in recent years is their strictly superficial acquaintance with the region. This has affected their research adversely, because the process of Settlement was intimately connected with the nature of the land itself—the landscape, climate, and economic potential. (1988: 20-21)

In other words, the environmental conditions made the origins of Israel predictable, given the pressures of Late Bronze Age Canaan (see also Coote 1990: 1).

A second assumption which has continued from Mendenhall/Gottwald is that the Israelite peoples were not ethnically related, but were, rather, circumstantially related. Finkelstein saw the Israelites as simply those "hill country" residents who were living there during 1rl and were in the process of changing their lifestyle. He wrote,

"Israelites in Iron I are those people who were in a process of sedentarization in those parts of the country that were part of Saul's monarchy, and in Galilee" (1988: 28). They were not related and, only a generation or two earlier, would not have seen themselves as Israelites. He continued:

Accordingly, an Israelite during the Iron I period was anyone whose descendant—as early as the days of Shiloh (first half of the 11th century BCE) or as late as the beginning of the Monarchy—described themselves as Israelites. These were, by and large, the people who resided in the territorial framework of the early Israelite monarchy, before its expansion began. Thus even a person who may have considered himself a Hivite, Gibeonite, Kenizzite, etc., in the early 12th century, but whose descendants in the same village a few generations later thought of themselves as Israelites will, in like manner, also be considered here as an Israelite. (1988: 27-28)
Whereas Albright saw in the new material culture of Irl a shadow of the newly arrived Israelites, Finkelstein saw those differences as evidence of the Israelites being transformed by their environment.

The transition from Late Bronze to Iron I in the hill country was, in fact, characterized by an unmistakable change in material culture—in both pottery and architecture—as well as by a wholly new pattern of settlement. Archaeological data debunk all claims of a direct connection between the Late Bronze centers of the lowlying regions and the Iron I architecture in the hill country were pillared buildings, mostly of the four-room house type, and a special site plan in which the peripheral houses formed a defensive belt around the settlement (e.g., Ai, Tell en-Nasbeh). This site layout has no antecedents whatsoever at any of the Late Bronze sites excavated throughout the country, and pillared buildings were practically unknown there as well. The reasons are simple: Israelite architecture was rooted in the pastoral mode of existence preceding sedentarization, and it developed by adapting to the environmental conditions of the hill country. It is particularly significant that the influences of both the tent and the encampment are perceptible in the plans of several early Israelite sites. (1988: 312, 313, emphasis in the original)

For Finkelstein, then, the Israelites were actually the lost population of MBIIC.

Population estimates have suggested that the sedentary population of LBI was about one-half the size of the MBIIC population. Finkelstein concludes that the number of people did not diminish, they became transhumant and, thus, invisible.

During the transition from the Middle Bronze to Late Bronze periods, the number of people in the country did not actually shrink in half. Rather, there was a change in the proportion of sedentary dwellers to pastoralist groups, but only the reduced ranks of the former category are reflected in archaeological field work and, consequently, in population estimates. (1988: 343)

Then, in Irl, Israel reemerged from the MBIIC remnant, who had lived as pastoral groups during the Late Bronze Age (Finkelstein 1993b: 124). In Irl they became sedentary again and, thus, became visible to archaeologists.

It would appear that the theory of Finkelstein owes to Alt/Noth its dependence on transhumant populations (1988: 302-306). The significant difference between Noth's nomads and Finkelstein's nomads is that Noth's were desert dwellers who migrated into Canaan, while Finkelstein's nomads were indigenous dwellers of Canaan, who were in symbiotic relationship with the sedentary peoples (Finkelstein 1988: 307; in Finkelstein
1991: 52 he has moderated his views to allow the possibility of new-to-the-area settlers in his equation). However, Nomads were credited with styles of architecture:

From our hypothesis that the elliptical site originated in the nomadic encampment, it follows that the individual unit of construction—a broadroom or "casemate"—reflected the individual desert tent. In this connection, it should be stressed that the tradition of the tent shape was apparently even stronger than stone construction, for it was deeply rooted in centuries of an unchanging lifestyle and consistent geographical setting (Faegre 1979: 3). It is therefore unlikely that the shape of the desert tent in our region was altered over the course of time. It remained a broad "structure" that generally opened to the east, because the wind blows from the west. The dimensions, especially the length, varied according to the size and means of the family: 2.5-4.5 X 6-12 m. The main supporting poles were set in a row through the long axis of the tent. (Finkelstein 1988: 248)

The very existence of the Israelites has to do with the changes nomads experienced during IrI.

During the 12th and 11th centuries, the hilly regions of the Land of Israel were the scene of the gradual transition by groups of pastoralists to a sedentary mode of existence. Although the cumulative results of archaeological field work all over the country support the view of the Alt school regarding the manner in which Israelite Settlement came about, the origin of the new settlers must be sought within the cultivated areas and the desert fringe, rather than in the adjacent deserts. The process itself was complex, variegated and complicated. Initially, the chief foes were natural obstacles; later, the Israelites came into conflict with the Canaanites living nearby and in the lowlands.

As the Israelites became stronger and consolidated into tribal units, they also established inter-regional institutions, the most important being cultic centers such as Shiloh. The need to join forces in the face of common adversaries—other expanding entities, mainly the Philistines—gradually created a sense of national, religious and ethnic awareness among the Israelite population, culminating in the inauguration of the Monarchy and the unification of most of the regions of the land of Israel into a single sovereign state—for the first time in history. (1988: 351)

Thus for Finkelstein, the creator of the Israelites was not YHWH who called them from Egypt as the Bible writers declare, but rather the pressures exerted on the pastoral peoples of the Canaanite hill country during IrI.

Finkelstein has suggested that the Transition Theories have become the normative theories, saying that research on the origins of Israel "shows more lines of consensus today than in any time in the past" (1991: 56). This "consensus" is expressed by the Transition Theories. Finkelstein suggested that this "mainstream" view includes five points: that a political force named Israel was not known before the late 11th-century,
that those who became Israel came from different social and economic backgrounds, that the process by which Israel gained the land was peaceful, that the people were not ethnically related (their relationship came together as their political needs grew), and that the Bible tells the story as the late monarchical force understood the story rather than how it really occurred (1991: 56).

**Israel Gained the Land as the Result of Imagination**

Related to the Transition Theories is what has been called the "deconstructionist" school of biblical studies (Thompson 1994: 112; also "positivist," Provan 1995: 601, 602; Thompson 1995: 696 also refers to this working model as "neo-Albrightean"). The deconstructionists' primary activity has been to "deconstruct" any association between the biblical text and history. While a number of scholars (especially from Scandinavia) have been placed in this school (Ahlström 1986, 1993; Davies 1992, 1995; Lemche 1990, 1993; Thompson 1987, 1994), I focus on the recent book of Thomas L. Thompson (Early History of the Israelite People From the Written & Archaeological Sources) as the model for the Imagination Theory (see Dever 1995 and Provan 1995 for recent broader reviews). (I have selected this work as a representative view because of its recent date of publication, its holistic approach in treating the issues and because within the support structure of the Imagination Theory there exists the difficulty of assessment of shared ideas. Thompson wrote, "There is no reason to assume a priori that Lemche agrees with any statement of mine on any single issue—or vice versa. And there is similarly no a priori reason to assume uncritically that either would agree with what Davies has argued" 1995: 695. There is even the problematic situation that the definition of words is unique from work to work, 1995: 695).

Thompson wrote that, whereas many of Wellhausen's ideas have not been sustained, historical-critical research has "benefited" scholarship by undermining "any theological enterprise" that sought its basis in a "normative" past (Thompson 1994: 4).
He believed that the one fundamental error that historical-critical scholars made was when they uncritically accepted the premise "from fundamentalism" that the Bible contained history (Thompson 1994: 9).

According to Thompson, scholars became distracted by the Near Eastern texts discovered in the late 19th century and early 20th century and began searching for comparisons between the Near Eastern literature and the Bible. This caused scholars to believe that if there was some historical core in the Bible stories, as emphasized by O. Eissfeldt (Thompson 1994: 9), they could rediscover history in the Bible. Although Albright was more conservative than Alt, they both accepted this concept and in their own ways fostered investigations into comparisons of the Bible and the ancient Near East, finding many parallels that were assumed to be history. Thompson argued that, in recent times, the presupposition that the Bible contained history has been challenged.

Thompson summarizes well the dilemma faced by critical scholars:

Work on literary analysis and tradition history of Old Testament narrative had long since made clear the disparate origins and nature of the traditions that were brought together as a relatively coherent whole only by the shell of their secondary literary frameworks. The awareness of these literary and redactional structures caused many, who like Noth, wished to argue on behalf of the primacy of biblical sources for Israel's history, to appear highly skeptical and even nihilistic by the more positivistic supporters of extrabiblical approaches. The problem was that once the acceptance of the biblical historiography had been called into question, every historical construction that held the biblical historiography as integral to its view of history must of necessity collapse. (1994: 82)

Thompson's own reconstruction of Israel's development is provocative, to say the least. For him, regional climatic change is the underlying explanation of change in settlement patterns. For example, he wrote of the Middle Bronze Age,

A primary cause of the changes in the economy and settlement patterns in Palestine during the Middle Bronze period was the radical changes in climate and the chain of effects that followed. These seem to have pertained throughout the Levant. There is considerable evidence today for understanding a positive climatic change after ca. 2100-2000 B.C. with a rainfall regime somewhat wetter than today's norm obtaining in Palestine from approximately 1900-1700 B.C. that corresponds with evidence in Egypt for higher than normal Nile floods from ca. 1840-1770 B.C. From the sixteenth-century B.C., however, the climate of Palestine was much drier, approximately the same as today or perhaps slightly more arid. While these fluctuations in climate are relatively moderate, their
effects on the economy of Palestine and on patterns of agricultural exploitation in a region so close to the limits of the Mediterranean zone can be great, demarcating periods of prosperity and expansion of land use as well as of famine and abandonment of marginal lands. (1994: 204)

More specific to the point of this work, he described the influences of weather on Ir1:

From the period of approximately 1200 to 1000 B.C. (which was a tumultuous two-century long period that witnessed many radical changes throughout the territories bordering on the eastern Mediterranean) there is abundant evidence in support of a long period of drought and recurrent famine that capped the long economic and political decline of the Late Bronze Age. (1994: 215)

His dependence on weather for his theories is wide-ranging (Thompson 1994: 175-177, 181, 183, 204, 205, 215-219).

Thompson countered the idea of migrating Israelites by declaring that the populations of Canaan remained constant from prehistoric times. "However speculative such reconstructions may be, they clearly suggest that the indigenous population of Palestine has not substantially changed since the neolithic period" (1994: 177). He has in mind not only the Israelites, but also believes that the Philistines were essentially indigenous (1994: 270-272). According to Thompson, the biblical traditions' concentration on ethnicity is responsible for our misunderstanding of the Philistines. "The term 'Philistine' refers primarily to a geographical reality. In biblical narrative it achieves a fictional ethnicity specifically as the central antagonist to the emergence of the 'people' Israel in the stories of Judges and 1-2 Samuel. The Philistines do not exist as a people apart from the biblical tradition's late ethnocentric perspective" (Thompson 1994: 272).

This means that the new settlements scattered around Canaan during iri, etc., were not new populations entering the land, but simply settlers from nearby regions expanding their settlements in an attempt to survive drought conditions (1994: 236). While Thompson allows that some settlers did arrive from outside the region, he thinks they were insignificant elements that were quickly amalgamated into the dominant local population.
In Thompson's reconstruction, the Israelites arose from unrelated groups in the northern hill country and developed into a political power in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.

Given the relatively consistent picture of a well established core of settlement in the hill country of Samaria and in the Jezreel during Iron I, along with a process of settlement that did not reach its *floruit* until Iron II is well established, one might do well to suggest that no kingdom of Israel yet existed. There is, moreover, little basis for affirming the existence of a kingdom of Judah in the South. Not until well after the time that tradition marks out for the "United Monarchy" was the population of Judah sufficiently stable to support a comprehensive regional political entity. This must have occurred at the earliest sometime during the course of the ninth century. (1994: 312)

Whereas Thompson saw Israel as emerging in the ninth century B.C., he determined that Judah, as an independent kingdom, did not develop until after the demise of Israel. "It was not until the last quarter of the eighth century and especially in the second half of the seventh, that Jerusalem began to take on some of the trappings of a dominant regional state power" (1994: 333; also 410, 411).

Even at this late time (seventh century B.C.) the "Israelites" did not exist, according to Thompson's reconstruction. He saw their ethnicity as "Israelites" as a theological innovation of Persian times rather than a genealogical relationship. Their identity arose from a collection of folk traditions.

The development of the tradition reflects the historically significant formative process by which "Israel" was created out of the fragments of Palestinian folk traditions and literature that survived the political and historical disasters of the Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods. The formation of biblical narrative—the ethno-creative theologically motivated originating process that rendered Israel—had its earliest roots in the period of Assyria's domination of Palestine. At the latest, the Israel we know from the tradition came to be during the prehellenistic period. In the aftermath of the destructions of the states of Samaria and Jerusalem, and in the renaissance born of the Persian restructuring of its conquered territories, the Israel of tradition first presented itself to history, like the phoenix, specifically in the form of an Israel *redivivus*, whose true essence and significance—and implicitly its future glory—was traced in the tales of the patriarchs, the stories of the wilderness and of the judges, and the great legends about the golden age of the united monarchy. . . .

Biblical tradition is related to Israelite history when we use it teleologically and understand Israel as the end result of a literary trajectory. (1994: 384, 386)
In other words, it was in the process of writing Israel's history that Israel was
developed. Even then, Thompson doubts whether the biblical text was intended to be
read as an interacting unit (1994: 358) or contained important ideology ("Ideology does
not seem to have been the sole or dominant motivating factor in the formation of the
tradition as a whole" [1994: 369]). It was compiled to give meaning to the dysfunc­tional world in which the inhabitants of Palestine, living during Persian times, found

Summary and Conclusions

Scholars have developed five primary models to explain Israel's emergence in the
hill-country of Canaan. Albright suggested that there was more to the biblical account
than critical scholars before his time had detected. Specifically, he saw in the nearly
universal destructions at the end of the Late Bronze Age archaeological evidence of a
military conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, much along the lines of the biblical
stories. Wright was careful to note a more limited picture of the conquest as presented
in the Book of Joshua, but those who held to the Conquest Theory still saw conquest as
a primary feature of the Israelite's acquisition of Canaan. In addition, the Israelites
were seen, by adherents to this theory, as an external force that superimposed them­selves on previous residents of the hill country.

Alt/Noth saw the Israelites as a peaceful people who migrated into Canaan. The
land they moved to, the hill country, was virtually empty. Those who came to this
land were loosely banded peoples who arrived in many groups over a long time.
When, at last, their numbers had increased to significant proportions, they took politi­
cal control of the hill country.

Mendenhall/Gottwald saw in the emergence of the Israelites a reflection of events
of more recent times: as it were, a sociological explanation. Mendenhall believed that
the people who took part in the covenant event at Sinai sparked a revolt when they
arrived in Canaan. This Moses group, because of the new ethnic awareness, was iso-
lated from all external political help. While their ethical concerns kept them from
making alliances with neighboring powers, it was significantly attractive to the dis-
enfranchised of Canaan, who joined this newly formed religious group in droves. The
peasants revolted.

Gottwald saw little importance at Sinai and saw the real covenant Sinai experi-
ence as occurring in Canaan. The Sinai story was written only later to explain their
Canaanite experience.

Those who have supported the Transition Theories have seen in the archaeologi-
cal evidence natural pressures that produced the Israelites. Advocates of these theories
assume that those who became the Israelites were from a variety of social and ethnic
backgrounds. They were not ethnically or socially related. The environmental and/or
political pressures of the LBII/Irl transitions forced those who became Israelites to
bond into one people.

The deconstructionists' school represented by Thompson consider the biblical
stories merely a created tradition. They have no basis in history. There were no
Israelites until those destitute from Persian exile gathered stories of Canaanite heroes.
This collection of unconnected stories has been misinterpreted to be an organized his-
tory, when they were not intended to be such.

To some extent all of these models have used the Book of Joshua in their re-
creation of Israel's early history. Without the Book of Joshua there would be few ques-
tions about the ethnicity of the Canaanite hill-country inhabitants or discussions about
the origins of the Israelites and the nature of their settlements.

Before we can look at the role of the Book of Joshua in creating an understanding
of the Israelites in Canaan, we need to examine the archaeological setting of the
Israelite settlement and look at the objections so far voiced about each theory. As for
the theories discussed in this chapter, none have received majority support. The
Transition Theories and the Imagination Theory presently have the advantage in that, while the other theories have been current long enough to receive an adequate critique, these two theories are in their "honeymoon" period. Scholars always seem enamored with the new. It may take some time before scholars gain the courage to investigate these theories more thoroughly. Nevertheless, it is true that no theory has gained a consensus. In the past, each theory in turn, after receiving initial support, further divided the scholarly community. Chapter 2 addresses the reasons for this.
The Conquest, Peaceful Migration, and Revolt models have, each in its own time, received a large following among scholars. Upon close investigation and/or additional archaeological research, each, however, has silently drifted to the "back burner" of scholarly consensus with only a few determined advocates supporting these theories. The LBII/Ir1 Transition and Conquest by Imagination theories, on the other hand, have been introduced only recently and are, thus, too new to have been examined adequately. All five theories, however, have weaknesses that limit their usefulness in explaining how the Israelites gained their promised land. The weaknesses are fundamentally the same among all the theories: their inadequate and incomplete use of archaeology and the Bible.

The Conquest Theory

The Conquest Theory and Archaeology

The Conquest Theory is based on the premise that the Israelites gained their homeland in Canaan as the result of war. Evidence of this military struggle has been produced from the destructions of the LBII/Ir1 transition period. One criticism of the Conquest Theory is that, while it has been supported by archaeological evidence, its proponents have selectively chosen that evidence.

Miller questioned the process whereby sites that fit Albright's plan were readily used to support the Conquest Theory, whereas those that did not were explained away.
As time has progressed he said, "More archaeological evidence must be explained away in order to maintain Albright's position than can be called upon to support it" (1977: 87).

Gottwald also doubted whether the early Irl1 destructions, which Albright saw as the basic conquest and settlement period, can be proven to be the work of the Israelites (1985: 199). Gottwald suggested that such wide-ranging destructions more accurately support other conclusions than a one-nation conquest. "The proposal that Canaanites may have destroyed one another's cities, or that they may have been ruined in civil wars and revolts, is altogether consonant with the archaeological evidence" (1985: 200). Callaway agreed with Gottwald. He wrote, "The evidence of the sites will hardly bear the historical burden imposed upon it by the Albright theory" (1985a: 32).

Paul Lapp, while acknowledging some of the criticisms of Albright's conquest model, defended Albright's overall interpretation (as did Yadin 1979). To Noth's claim that there is not enough archaeological evidence to be specific about the early Irl, Lapp marshalled evidence from both Glueck's and Mittmann's surveys of Transjordan, the Jordan valley (Deir 'Alla and Tell es-Sa'idiyyeh), Northern Palestine (Razor, Beth-shan, Megiddo, and Taanach), Central Palestine (Shechem and Shiloh), Southern Palestine (Ai, Bethel, Tell en-Nasbeh, El-Jib, Tell el-Ful, Khirbet Mefjar, Gezer, Eltekeh, Zorah, Beth-shemesh, Malhah, Beth-zur, Tell Beit Mirsim, Lachish, Tell es-Safi, and Tell el-Hesi), as well as the Palestine Coast (Tell el-Far'ah S, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Aphek, Tell Abu Hawam, and Qasile) to demonstrate his point (1967: 283-300). All of these sites, Lapp reported, are supportive of either destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age or beginning of the Iron Age. Wrote Lapp,

In summary, it can be said that the Late Bronze—Iron I division is marked by the destruction of Late Bronze sites and their reestablishment in Iron I, as well as by the occupation of new sites in Iron I. Destructsions occurred frequently in the period, two of them near the third quarter of the 11th century in the towns excavated. The source of the new culture in these sites can be implied from the new pottery. (1967: 294)
Lapp has missed the point of the criticism. No one has yet denied that there were LBII/Irl destructions, and many of them. The question is, What evidence is there that these destructions were the results of an Israelite invasion? The entire Mediterranean Near East experienced similar destructions during the same period (Ward and Joukowsky 1992). While it has been assumed that these destructions were the result of an Israelite conquest, to this time, no one has provided convincing arguments that demonstrate the "Israelite" character of the LBII/Irl destructions of Canaan that differentiates them from the "non-Israelite" destructions.

It seems more likely that the destruction of LBII/Irl Canaan were caused by the same forces that plagued much of the Near East: intercity rivalry and the arrival of the Sea Peoples. City rivalry was a common problem in all early archaeological periods of this region. Wrote Lemche.

Thus the "natural" situation in Palestine was inevitably characterized by internal rivalries among the various mini-states, each of which attempted to advance its interests at the expense of its neighbours'. For this reason we may assume that hostilities between the various states were common occurrences, perhaps to such a degree that this situation may be regarded as the "normal" picture, except in those periods in which either internal political circumstances or external political pressures kept the many petty kings in check. (1990: 82)

If Lemche's description is accurate, archaeologists should expect to find destruction layers in every period, with the LBII-Irl transition period providing only somewhat more evidence of this phenomenon than usual. In other words, we could say a period without destruction might be more unusual than one with evidence of destruction. That there were a large number of city destructions in the LBII/Irl is, therefore, not necessarily evidence for an Israelite invasion; it is only evidence that there were a larger number of destructions at that time.

Thompson saw the wide-spread LBII/Irl destructions throughout the Near East and Canaan as the end of the Albrightian conquest model and wrote, "Finkelstein's survey makes it abundantly clear that the conquest theory is dead" (1994: 158). This point should not be missed. The many destructions of LBII/Irl transition are not so much
evidence of Israelite people as they are evidence of a regional upheaval and the movements of many peoples. Na'aman would go so far as to say that the destructions of the LBII/Irl transition period were "entirely different from the biblical conquest tradition" (1994: 223).

Until proponents of the Conquest Theory are able to clearly differentiate Israelite destructions from those of other peoples and other causes, destruction evidence is mute to support that or any other theory. This is especially true during the LBII/Irl transition period, that saw destructions throughout the Near East.

The Conquest Theory and the Bible

Since Albright's theory was a blended form of archaeological and biblical data, it should not be surprising that the criticisms of his biblical usage parallel criticisms of his use of archaeology. In other words, the Conquest Theory is seen as not only selective in its use of archaeology but also its choice of biblical evidence.

The case for the conquest model seems sound enough, almost overpowering, but only as long as we select our evidence with suitable discrimination. When the whole body of biblical and extrabiblical data is examined, far-reaching objections to the conquest model arise. (Finkelstein 1985: 196)

Chaney agreed, "The biblical narratives of conquest have been treated selectively" (1983: 46).

What bothered Miller most about the Conquest Theory was "that a surprisingly high percentage of the cities which the Bible mentions in connection with the conquest, including Jericho and Ai, have yielded little or no LB remains" (1977: 88). Gottwald pointed out that the archaeological evidence from Ai, Jericho, and Gibeon contradicts the biblical narrative (1985: 199). At Jericho, Late Bronze materials have been found, but there is no evidence that Jericho had a defensive wall during that time, which seems to contradict the biblical account (Josh 6:5: Jericho, Tell es-Sultan, below). Weippert wrote.
In the case of the narrative about the conquest and destruction of the town of Ai (Josh. 8:1-19) the judgment concerning historicity here must even be totally negative since the excavations of the ruins which are definitely to be identified with this place, et-Tell, have revealed a gap in occupation between the Early Bronze Age and Iron Age I, so that the saga which linked the great heap of ruins with the Israelite settlement and therefore with the destruction of a Late Bronze Age settlement is wrong by more than a thousand years. (1971: 24-25)

As stated, the excavators at Ai (et-Tell) found that, after the MBII period, it lay fallow until the Iron Age, which is also difficult to associate with the Bible stories about Ai (Joshua 8, see Ai, et-Tell, below). The results of excavations at Gibeon (el-Jib) have paralleled those of Ai. While settlements of the Early and Middle Bronze Ages were found at Gibeon, nothing of significance was found that could be assigned to the time of Joshua.

Since Gibeon is described as "a great city" at this time [time of Joshua], one would expect to find city walls and houses if the tradition preserved in the Book of Joshua is historically trustworthy. Yet traces of this city of the latter part of the Late Bronze period have not come to light in the four seasons of excavations. (Pritchard 1962: 157)

This means that if the Conquest Theory is based on the Bible, it needs to explain why sites the Bible says were destroyed have given up no evidence of those destructions.

There is the added problem of those sites where LBII/Ir1 destructions have been found that are not mentioned in the Book of Joshua (e.g., Jaffa, Ashdod, Beth Shan, Deir ‘Allā, Shechem, Tell Yoqneam). This is a phenomenon that Gottwald suggested is not accounted for in the biblical text (1985: 199).

Gottwald’s criticisms were directed at two biblical weaknesses he saw in Albright’s Conquest Theory. First he noted that the Bible itself does not "monolithically support a conquest model" (1985: 197). He referred to those texts that specifically state that the whole land was not conquered (what he called the "negative conquest lists") and summaries of the narratives that obviously leave much of Canaan unconquered (1985: 197; e.g., Josh 13:1-6). Gottwald concluded,

If any further proof is needed of the incongruity between the centralized schema of total conquest and the substantive allusions to piecemeal conquest reflected in the traditions we need only consider the so-called negative conquest lists, i.e., the inventories of territories and cities which are specifically said not to have
been taken by Joshua. The utopian editorial frame dominates the accounts insofar as the overall form of the Book of Joshua assumes that the whole land was marked out for conquest and divided up for possession after victory, but the reality of a limited occupation obtrudes so starkly that it is amazing that so many Bible readers have managed to overlook the decided limits of the conquests actually described. (1985: 197)

Gottwald's criticism of the Conquest Theory has merit. There are specific biblical references that say the land was not wholly Israelite, even after Joshua's military campaigns. The question is, however, if the text that is supposed to be about total conquest actually describes a limited conquest, how is this information reconciled to the model of the Conquest Theory? Even though the proponents of this theory, as we saw above, did moderate their claims about the size of the Israelite Conquest, the model itself was not changed because its explanatory vehicle is that the Israelites gained the land by war. Were "war" as the explanatory vehicle to change, the theory would not be the Conquest Theory.

At best, many scholars assume that if the contrasting "fully conquered" and "incomplete conquest" themes are exhibited in the same book, there must be underlying editorial sources at work within that book (see quote from Gottwald above, 1985: 197). At worse the "negative conquest lists" are ignored by the Conquest Theory, or at least not comfortably accommodated within the theory of conquest. While source derivation in the Book of Joshua is theoretically possible, the too common response of suggesting "sources" for difficulties within a biblical book is an overworked, and most often, ineffectual technique. Source arguments always leave unsaid what the final biblical writers had in mind by allowing such incongruences to remain in the text. After all, the Book of Joshua is ultimately the message of its final biblical writers--regardless of what supposed "sources" are postulated for their use.

Ignoring the "negative conquest lists" (i.e., not allowing them their proper place in a conquest theory), on the other hand, is a worse problem than deferring to "sources" because it allows the interpreter to take only selected aspects of the biblical
information and create an explanatory model, as though that small selection could ade­quately represent the book. So it is that those who support the Conquest Theory take
the "fully conquered" portion of the message of the Book of Joshua and call it the message of the Book of Joshua.

At present the "negative conquest lists" are not given enough weight by those
who endorse a conquest model. Gottwald himself, on the other hand, while seeing the
inadequate nature of the conquest model did not recognize the importance of the "negative conquest lists." Implicitly, he suggested that the Conquest Theory is the message of the biblical writers and suggested that they worked in a "utopian editorial frame"
(1985: 197). Gottwald summarized his assessment of the conquest model by writing,

As a self-sufficient explanation of the Israelite occupation of the land, the conquest model is a failure. On the literary-historical side, the biblical traditions are too fragmentary and contradictory to bear the interpretation put upon them by the centralized cult and by the editorial framework of Joshua. On the archaeological side, the data are too fragmentary and ambiguous, even contradictory, to permit the extravagant conquest claims made by some archaeologists and historians using archaeological data. (Gottwald 1985: 203)

Note how Gottwald’s assessment of the Conquest Theory placed the blame on archaeol­ogy and the Bible for the failure of that model. That is because Gottwald assumed that the Conquest Theory is the biblical model and not the selective use of the Bible and archaeology.

For Gottwald, the "negative conquest lists" were inferior or less important to the biblical writers. It is as though Gottwald had written thusly: "The biblical writer's explanation for Israel's possession of the land was war, but somehow they left behind the 'negative conquest lists'." There is no reason to make that assumption, since the biblical tradition does not support such an interpretation. If the "negative conquest lists" were an embarrassment to the biblical writers, they could have been conveniently "lost" by the biblical writers. That two seemingly different messages are produced in the same book credits the biblical writers either with stupidity or it suggests that we have missed their point.
The Peaceful Infiltration Theory and Archaeology

The Peaceful Infiltration Theory has been attacked because it did not employ archaeology in its development. Gottwald disputed the Alt/Noth model by stressing the lack of archaeological information that helped to develop and support that model.

The Immigration model was developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries before significant technically accurate archaeological work was done in Palestine. As archaeological evidence has been accumulated, advocates of the immigration model, notably Martin Noth, have tended either to ignore it or to stress its muteness as a historical witness except as interpreted by literary materials. (1985: 204, 205)

In other words, Gottwald believed that those who supported the Peaceful Infiltration Theory ignored the ramifications of the LBII/Ir1 destructions. P. Lapp pointed to the same destructions and disallowed Noth's argument that the "'conquest' was a peaceful invasion by small groups living in isolated areas" (1967: 298) by listing the large number of cities destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Age. He concluded, "The most satisfying explanation of the problem of the destruction of Lachish, Hazor, and other towns similarly destroyed is a concerted effort on the part of a sizable group of Israelites" (1967: 298).

While Noth placed no emphasis on the LBII/Ir1 transition period, Callaway, as was noted above, suggested that the unwalled settlements of Ir1 are evidence of large population movements. His suggestion did not allow that the small villages may simply be seasonal homes for herdsmen. (He even noted the high content of small animals in the diets of the Ir1 inhabitants, which he thought implied a nomadic diet [1985a: 41].) According to Callaway, the destructions of the LBII/Ir1 transition period, limiting the controlling power of city/villages, would certainly allow room for the expansion of transhumancy—whether new populations were arriving or not.

In truth, the Peaceful Infiltration Theory did not integrate well with archaeology because the theory itself was developed with presuppositions that were not derived from
archaeology. Unfortunately for the theory, one of the chief explanatory models is no longer considered to be true.

An unspoken, but significant, aspect of the Infiltration Model, as Chaney has pointed out, is its dependence on outdated "19th century concepts" (Chaney 1983: 42). One of these concepts was Noth's concept of pastoral nomads, which were seen as an intermediate stage in development from hunter/gatherers to agriculturalists. This was a founding principle of the Peaceful Infiltration Theory. Ethnographic studies have revealed that nomadization was not a beginning level in development. Chaney noted that

modern prehistorians and anthropologists no longer regard pastoral nomadism as an evolutionary interval between hunting and gathering and plant cultivation. Instead, it is viewed as a marginal specialization from the animal husbandry which came to be associated with horticulture and agriculture. (Chaney 1983: 42; and De Geus 1976: 125, 126)

As Gottwald stated, pastoral nomadism is now actually considered "culturally and socio-economically a late marginal development" (1978b: 3). Pastoralists existed (and still exist) alongside every form of government and cycle in Near Eastern history in a "symbiotic" relationship (Chaney 1983: 43; Gottwald 1978b: 3). This evolutionary influence that undergirded the Peaceful Infiltration Model is no longer viable.

The Peaceful Infiltration Theory and the Bible

At the same time that Gottwald accused Alt/Noth of ignoring archaeological data, he accused the adherents of this theory, like those of the conquest model, of ignoring the biblical accounts (1985: 208). He said they relied "on bits and pieces of materials drawn randomly from the text without regard to the overall biblical perspective" (1985: 208). Thompson wrote,

That Noth's arguments regarding the peaceful settlement of Israel in the central hills of Palestine are still viable today should not distract us from the fact that this positive construction of Israel's origins is not based on the biblical traditions as primary evidence. Quite the contrary, this particular theory has developed out of and carries conviction to the extent that it adheres closely to observation of extra biblical data, above all Egyptian geographical texts and archaeological remains in
Palestine and views the biblical traditions only as a point of orientation and as a conceptual context. To the extent that Noth has depended on a synthesis with the biblical tradition, he has failed. (1994: 80; see also Weippert 1971: 7)

In one sense the theories of Albright and Alt/Noth differ along the question of which is more dependable: archaeology (the Conquest Theory) or the text (the Peaceful Infiltration Theory). In truth, however, those who support the Peaceful Infiltration model are not supporting the Bible over archaeology, but rather their interpretation of the Bible as based on extrabiblical documents.

Noth supported a theory of Israelite conquest/settlement, which has little in common with what the Bible says about how the Israelites gained possession of the land. Where the Bible disagrees with the theory (which is in most particulars), the proponents dismiss it as etiological. Where archaeology disagrees with the theory it, likewise, is disregarded. Alt and Noth’s Peaceful Infiltration Theory is more about the theory than about history.

Alt/Noth have brought their own story to the biblical text. Then, when some sections of the text did not agree with their theory, they disregarded those sections. If the biblical information is rejected where it disagrees with a theory, and if archaeology is likewise ignored, when can scholars gain information about biblical events? Even Thompson agreed that where Alt/Noth tried to use the Bible they failed (1994: 80).

Bright concluded that “not only is Noth unable to rely on the Hexateuch traditions for the writing of Israel’s early history, he is unable to fill the void thus created by appeal to archaeological evidence” (1956: 87, emphasis in the original).

The Peasants’ Revolt Theory

The Peasants’ Revolt Theory and Archaeology

From the outset Mendenhall admitted that the basis of the Peasants’ Revolt Theory was not archaeological data but rather modern political trends (as discussed above). Even though the foundation of the Peasants’ Revolt Theory was not
archaeology, still, support from archaeology was sought. The complex model of social upheaval used to explain Israel’s development is, in its most fundamental structures, overtly dependent on archaeological definitions.

While some earlier scholars used the biblical text to define the meaning of *Apiru, Mendenhall and Gottwald used the wider ancient Near East usage of *Apiru to define the Hebrews of the Bible. Mendenhall reasoned that since the *Apiru were drop-outs from society and, since he concluded that the name "Hebrew" was etymologically related to *Apiru, then the Hebrews were societal drop-outs (i.e., peasants who revolted) (Mendenhall 1976b: 127-130). To Mendenhall and Gottwald this meant that like all other *Apirus, the Israelites must have arisen from within Canaan, from those who had revolted from the local "legitimate" government (Canaanite city-states). In other words, for Mendenhall, the very use of the name "Hebrew," as an appellation for the Israelites, linked the Israelites to the *Apiru and also limited them by the definition of *Apiru.

In earlier times scholars were divided on the issue of how the *Apiru (Akkad. Ḥabiru) and the Hebrews were related. Many knew of the Hebrews from the Bible, and when the name *Apiru appeared in the Tell Amarna tablets, as characters interacting in Late Bronze Age Canaan, it was automatically assumed that the *Apiru mentioned in those texts were the Hebrews. For example, in 1925 J. Jack wrote, Who were these invaders of southern and central Palestine? We hope to deal with the SA-GAZ later, but meantime let us consider who the Ḥabiru were. Who else could they be but the Hebrews of the Exodus, and have we not here the native version of their entry into the land? The subject has been a vexata quæstio, the centre of one of the keenest discussions in Biblical archaeology, and the best scholars, it must be said are divided on the matter. But taking into consideration the Biblical, chronological, and other aspects of the case there is good ground for believing that in these letters from Palestine, dating from between 1400 and 1370 B.C., we have the tribes of Israel entering on the Promised Land. This important and far-reaching conclusion, treated with some distrust at first, or at least with utmost caution, is now admitted by numerous competent scholars to be the only sound one. Many who at first doubted it have now come to accept it. (Jack 1925: 128, 129)
Later, scholars discovered that "Apiru were scattered all over the Near East and the name was not a specific ethnic appellation but was, in general, a social class of outsiders (Weippert 1971: 65). Scholars thus concluded that although the Israelites were sometimes called "Hebrews," not all "Apiru were Hebrews (Cazelles 1975: 23, 24). Weippert would go so far as to deny that there was any etymological connection between the names "Apiru and Hebrew (Weippert 1971: 74-84).

Mendenhall's and Gottwald's interpretation of "Apiru was not very different from Noth's, who saw the "Apiru as a "special legal" class and whose "social status" did not belong to the "old-established population . . . who had no roots in the soil" (1960: 34). Where Mendenhall and Gottwald differed from Noth was how they used their definition. Both Mendenhall and Gottwald allowed their definition of "Apiru to define the essence of the Israelites. In some ways, they were not too removed from the logic of Jack (quoted above). While Jack saw the Hebrews in the activities of the Amarna "Apiru, Mendenhall and Gottwald saw the Hebrews in the "Apiru of the Near East.

The importance of Mendenhall's and Gottwald's definition of "Apiru to their theories can hardly be overstated. Weippert wrote,

Mendenhall's bold counter-suggestion to the prevailing settlement theories hangs, on closer inspection, by a slender thread, namely his identification, taken by him as self-evident and basically presupposed, of the "hab/piru" attested in ancient Near Eastern texts since the days of the old Assyrian trading colonies in Asia Minor with the biblical "Hebrews" ('ibrim) who, for their part, are equated just as questionably with the "Israelites" (benê yišrâ'êl). (1971: 63)

It is their definition and the connection they made between "Apiru and the Israelites that were basic building blocks in their overall theory. They did not allow for the possibility that the name "Apiru/Hebrew might have been used by the biblical writers in different ways at different times, such as a name of derision (1 Sam 4:6, 9; 14:11; 29:3), or a badge of honor (Gen 14:13), or a term of self-identification (Gen 40:15; Exod 4:18; see also Noth 1960: 34). Nor did they recognize that "Apiru were "Apiru, often not by choice (Weippert 1971: 66, 67). Their identity as outsiders is somewhat
incorrect, since they could even serve in government service as an ḪApiru (Weippert 1971: 67-69). Mendenhall and Gottwald likewise did not acknowledge that some in the Amarna tablets called ḪApiru were kings, which, as Weippert said, "shows us beyond all shadow of a doubt that the ḪApiru revolt in the Amarna period was not an uprising on the part of the oppressed population of the plains against the ruling feudal classes of the cities" (Weippert 1971: 74; De Geus 1976: 183).

Both Mendenhall and Gottwald have simplified the relationship between the ḪApiru and "Hebrew" without acknowledging other dimensions involved in the argument. That the ḪApiru were rebels is sure and that the label ḪApiru was used as a negative appellation by one enemy against his adversary is clear (Gottwald 1985: 401). But this explanation does not make clear why later Israelites proudly call their most important forefather a "Hebrew" (i.e., outlaw, Gen 14:13), their land the land of "Hebrews" (i.e., rebels, Gen 40:15).

Mendenhall and Gottwald were stretching their definition when they concluded that the term ḪApiru, as used in the ancient Near East, was not a nomadic ethnically related people, so, therefore, the "Hebrews" could not be a migrating group ethnically related to each other. Stiebing, in a corpus intended to support an Israelite origin from the Canaanite indigenous populations, concluded, "While some of Israel's ancestors may have come from the ḪApiru class, it is unlikely that the activities of the marauding groups of the Amarna period can be equated with any portion of the Israelite conquest of the Holy Land" (1983: 9). The basis of his conclusion is the absence of any reference in the Amarna tablets to any organized activities among the ḪApiru. Such a lacuna might be significant if the Canaanite pleas for help came from a unified source, instead of rivaling city-states. Although Egypt was the suzerain power, we learn from the Amarna tablets that there was significant inter-city strife (Na'aman 1992: 176). Would one expect the ḪApiru to be united, if the city-states under Egypt's watch were less so?
The references to the "Apiru" in the Amarna tablets are unilateral pleas for assistance, not descriptions of the "Apiru" in Canaan. In addition, the term "Apiru" was used in a derisive manner against enemies, in general, whether the enemies fit any predetermined definition.

The extension of the term "Apiru" in order to denigrate these elements that opposed the authors of the letters is the result of the political nature of the Amarna correspondence, in which every ruler tried to justify his deeds before the Pharaoh and to slander his opponents. This must be taken into consideration when trying to determine the role of the authentic bands, brigands, and mercenaries in the Amarna period. (Na'aman 1992: 178)

Mendenhall and Gottwald have allowed their definition of "Apiru" to so control their theories that they have not considered other evidences of migrating peoples.

There were many other groups of outlaws and/or nontraditional groups of "outsiders" within the ancient Near East besides the "Apiru." In both Mesopotamia and Egypt, defensive walls were constructed as barriers to help keep migratory peoples at bay. As late as the seventh century Nebuchadrezzar constructed a wall (the Median Wall of which a ten-mile section is still visible) to slow the approach of northern nomadic peoples (Wiseman 1991: 60, 61). Nebuchadrezzar was only following a pattern set 1500 years previously by Shu-Sin, the next to the last king of the Ur III dynasty, who built a defensive wall system to block migrating groups of militant Amorites (Saggs 1962: 73). The situation at that time was critical and the migration was ultimately unstoppable. Roux summarizes the status of the invading Amorites,

The "Amorites" as we call them—they had in mind those people with whom they were in particularly close contact: the nomadic tribes who roamed the Syrian desert and often crossed the rivers to graze their flocks in the steppes of Mesopotamia. Since Early Dynastic times these wandering Amorites were well known to the Sumerians, either as individuals who had abandoned their tribe to live and work in the cities or as bedouins whose uncouth way of life was considered with disgust and contempt: "The MAR.TU (Amorites) who know no grain. . . . The MAR.TU who know no house nor town, the boors of the mountains. . . . The MAR.TU who digs up truffles. . . who does not bend his knees (to cultivate the land), who eats raw meat, who has no house during his lifetime. who is not buried after his death." (1982: 166)
Mesopotamia was not the only region plagued by migrating intruders. Egypt faced the same dilemma. To slow down the progress of its nomadic invaders, Amenemhet I, early in the second millennium, built the “Walls of the Ruler” as a prohibitory barrier, similar to Shu-Sin’s wall (Gardiner 1980: 36).

A graphic Egyptian image of tribal peoples from these early times can be deduced from the story of Sinuhe (Pritchard 1969: 18-22). This classic tale relates the story of a high Egyptian official, who for fear of being punished (for a crime, which is not clear in the story, involving the death of Amenemhet I) fled to Upper Retenu, a country called “Yaa” (somewhere in northern Syria-Canaan). Sinuhe settled with a militaristic (lines 100-105) tribal group (lines 93-94), that had need of wells and pasturage (line 104), and who lived in tents (lines 145, 294). If nothing else, the story of Sinuhe reveals the hostility between migrating peoples and local governments. It also highlights the differences between life in sedentary Egypt and among tented people.

There is also the evidence of the migrating Mardu of the Ur III dynasty, the Arameans, and the Phrygians and others who are mentioned by contemporaries. These groups all moved from one geographic region to another, affecting history as they went (Na’aman 1994: 236-239, 241).

Granted, scholars have too readily defaulted to the explanation of new ethnic groups to explain innovations in building styles, as Frick observed (1985: 14, 17-18; he called this idea “unjustified baggage,” 48), but that, in and of itself, does not remove the reality that people groups were moving around the ancient Near East. Migrating peoples should not be the only answer to new forms or discoveries, but that explanation should be considered as one possibility. Such groups have always been part of Near Eastern history. Even in relatively recent times, walls have been constructed to keep transhumant peoples away from the sedentary population (e.g., Barnett 1963: 6, 7 wrote about Al-mutabbaq, the late Abassid period wall, used to repel the “threat of the Bedouin invading the fertile area along the Tigris bank by the river Dujail”). Even
Gottwald allowed that migrating peoples were a distinctive class of ancient peoples (1978b: 4, 5).

About the same time the Israelites were settling in Canaan, and also, probably a factor in their settlement, the Sea Peoples arrived on the coast. The Sea Peoples came against Egypt in two distinct waves. In both cases they were not able to gain land in Egypt proper, but eventually at least three groups (Tjeker at Dor, Pritchard 1969: 25-29; Philistines on southern coast; Sherden, area unknown) settled along coastal Canaan (Gardiner: 1947; Dothan 1982: 3-4). In one sense the Philistines themselves were "Apiru—they were a lawless anti-establishment element who fought against the established order (Egypt), until they themselves took control and became the dominant power in their newly settled area.

The point of this excursus is that historians are aware of many ancient sojourning peoples who wandered the Near East—this despite the disclaimers of both Mendenhall and Gottwald about the Israelites being a wandering people. They could only make such claims by narrowly defining the "Apiru by the Tell el-Amarna tablets and other earlier documents and forcing the Israelites into that narrow definition. There were migrating peoples, whether camels were domesticated in the second millennium B.C. or not (contra Gottwald 1985: 293; Finkelstein 1988: 307). These migrating peoples lived in tents and gave little respect to city-dwelling kings. There is no compelling reason why the Israelites could not have been like one of those groups, even if they were sometimes called "Apiru.

Finkelstein supported Mendenhall's and Gottwald's understanding of the relationship between city and village by suggesting that "coexistence, rather than ongoing confrontation, characterized the relationship" (1988: 307), but in reality there was probably much of both. Liverani suggested that the Amorite village dwellers certainly had a cooperative relationship with their herdsmen relatives (1975: 106, 107), but cooperation between some people at one time does not disprove that "confrontations" also took
place. They did. No doubt the unlanded peoples functioned just like nearby cities, as balancing powers, lending support to whatever served their own best interests, and leveling the local power structures.

Tribal, lawless, and wandering people were and always have been part of the Near Eastern milieu. To reject the possibility of a seasonal nomadic nature for early Israelites, simply because in their later history they were called "Hebrews," allows no possibility for names or meanings to change. This is an unwarranted assumption.

Another weakness in Mendenhall's and Gottwald's theory of Peasants' Revolt is its understanding of ethnicity, especially of the Israelites. Wrote Mendenhall,

It is also quite clear from Late Bronze Age documents that no culture of the ancient world that yields written documents is ethnically homogeneous. From the beginnings of writing, almost by definition, the city has been a cosmopolitan community. From the beginning of writing, the identification of all sorts of social terms as "pure" ethnic groups is the sort of modern (or late antique) myth that needs to be given up as soon as possible. (1976b: 10, 11)

Mendenhall's point is, no society is absolutely pure, therefore, the Israelites were not absolutely pure; thus, the Israelites had no familial relationship. The text agrees with Mendenhall on the major point that the Israelites were not entirely a pure family unit (Exod 12:38), but it does not follow that a core unit of the Israelites could not have had blood ties. The text claims the opposite (e.g., Gen 15:13-16; 46:26-27; Exod 12:40-41, etc.). The fact that Mendenhall saw ethnic labels among ancient peoples is to acknowledge that ancient peoples were composed of ethnic subdivisions.

If we talk of the Hittites, cannot we assume that the core leadership identified themselves as "Hittite" even if some of the "Hittites" originally had been Hattians? This argument of Israel's purity cannot be supported unless there were also no Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hittites, Hurrians, or Canaanites. None of these people were pure anything, but they could still identify themselves and each other within ethnic parameters. As Kamp and Yoffee noted, "It is clear that ethnic groups did exist in the past" (1980: 89). When the Israelites identified themselves, they saw their core
families as having risen from one common father. De Geus has correctly observed "that Israelite unity was primarily of an ethnic nature, as indeed their own earliest traditions represent it to be" (1976: 164).

To demand an absolute ethnic purity from the Israelites or to deny them any unique ethnicity is too stringent. While they were probably composed of several ethnic groups, they claimed to be composed of a core majority who were kin. Absolute purity was never their claim, nor a requirement.

The Peasants' Revolt Theory and the Bible

It is surprising, since the word †Apiru is so important to both Mendenhall and Gottwald, that they have not argued for a very old biblical text, at least in those passages where the word "Hebrew" is found, since the term †Apiru is not used in the ancient Near East after the second millennium (Cazelles 1975: 16). One of the weaknesses of their theories is that they assume a static use of the name †Apiru as a vehicle in interpreting the Israelites, while missing the ramifications for the ancientness of the text that uses that term.

Mendenhall saw David as the best Old Testament example of an †Apiru (1976b: 133, 135-136) and I agree. His activities as a bandit and alien from his own people are clear from many biblical passages. What is not so clear is how David fits Mendenhall's pattern of †Apiru. For him, the Israelite society was an †Apiru group of outsiders living in Canaan. As Halligan has described such a defection during the Amarna period, "the recurrent phrase that 'so and so' has joined the SA.GAZ in all probability signifies that they have defected their political allegiance by joining the 'out-party'" (1983: 17). During the early portion of David's life the Philistines were the establishment; they were the "lawful" (dominant) society (1 Sam 14:1, 11) that controlled everyday life (Judg 13:1: 14:4; 1 Sam 4:1, 9; 13:19-23; 14:1, 11, etc.). For David to be an †Apiru (after Mendenhall's and Gottwald's model) we should expect that Saul...
would call David an *Apiru. because David left Israelite society and joined the Philistines. From the point of view of Saul, David was an *Apiru because David abandoned his society. At the same time, the Philistine society should have recognized David as an adoptee because David had joined the (Philistine) establishment. On the contrary, it is David's Philistine allies who call him a Hebrew (1 Sam 29:3). Even though the question "What are these Hebrews doing here?" expressed by the Philistine commanders has a pejorative ring, it does not diminish the fact that David, although an ally of the Philistines, was seen as a Hebrew. In other words, David, by leaving the people of Saul, was actually joining the establishment, not leaving it. The only reference to David being called a Hebrew is in this story where he is represented as settled in a city supposedly giving allegiance to the Philistine establishment. Still, he is called a "Hebrew." This story that Mendenhall himself refers to as evidence for connecting the Israelites to the *Apiru seems to be evidence that by David's time there was an ethnic connection between the Israelites and the term *Apiru.

On the other hand, for Mendenhall and Gottwald to conclude that the "Hebrews" were identical to the *Apiru because they shared a label is too simplistic an explanation. As Thompson reminded both, three and one-half centuries separated the Amarna period and the time of David (1994: 60). It is most likely that the name *Apiru changed in meaning and usage under different circumstances and through the centuries.

If "biblical research is subject to the social forces" as Gottwald has said (1985: 9-10), then the diminishing of those forces would likewise certainly reduce the value of any hypotheses based on them. In other words, if the work of the biblical scholar is merely to paint past biblical stories in the colors of present realities, then theories developed in the A.D. 1960s and 1970s, from a limited Western European point of view, no longer have value in the vastly changed A.D. 1990s. Since the value of Gottwald's ideas is based on the experiences of A.D. 1960s-1970s, he must routinely demonstrate that the present is static. For if the present experiences are not static, then
his theses have become passé. That is to say, if Gottwald’s political setting of Late Bronze Age Canaan, based on the A.D. 1960s-1970s, has a continuous value, it is his obligation to demonstrate that his paradigm is still viable for the past when it seems to have become obsolete in the present.

Since he recognized the transitory nature of scholarly assumptions, one wonders how Gottwald would rate his own theories of the past, now that present realities (the passing and general acceptance of the Vietnam war, the fall of the communism block and the near disappearance of student radicalism) have greatly changed the flavor of popular politics from large social issues to personal pet concerns. Mendenhall saw Gottwald as engulfed in his own political concerns and probably not able to see the changing times. As such, Mendenhall saw Gottwald as a political fundamentalist:

"Gottwald’s imprisonment in nineteenth century ideology prevents him from seeing that his own ideology is religion, just as much dedicated to promoting a social structure as that which he is allegedly combating" (1983: 101).

Gottwald’s method is exactly that of any latter day fundamentalist. The procedure is first to place a blind faith in the absolute inerrancy of the nineteenth century ideological system, so that nothing in the Bible can possibly disagree with that system. Next, explicate the Bible to show how that system "explains" everything that needs to be explained. Finally, use the results and the authority of the Bible to clobber the opposition, and save mankind from whatever demonic malevolent social forces the scholar happens to dislike. In the process, of course, anything that doesn’t fit the system is either explained away, or more often quietly ignored. (1983: 91, 92)

Developing social models based on experiences thousands of years after biblical events is tenuous at best. Finkelstein dismissed the large body of Gottwald’s work because of Mendenhall’s and Gottwald’s ignorance of closer paradigms.

An additional failing of quite a few of the scholars who have dealt with the Iron I period in recent years is their strictly superficial acquaintance with the region. This has affected their research adversely, because the process of Settlement was intimately connected with the nature of the land itself—the landscape, climate, and economic potential. While examples of this superficiality abound in fairly current publications, they are especially blatant in the works of members of the “sociological” school of settlement study, since they even more than others, are in need of a direct familiarity with environmental data. Gottwald, for example, resorted to distant parallels to shore up his opinions (1979: 445 [Finkelstein’s...

The model of Israelite Settlement constructed by Mendenhall and Gottwald is utterly divorced from the socio-ecological reality of its environment. Mendenhall's article could just as easily concern some other geographical—and perhaps even historical—setting, while Gottwald's work never comes "down to earth," as it were, and the few examples he adduced are essentially irrelevant to our region. (1988: 308)

Even in later articles where Gottwald (1983; 1989) distanced himself from feudalism for another of Marx's concepts, Thompson still saw that Gottwald's use of Marx was incomplete:

Indeed Marx's concept of the "Asiatic mode of production" is his explanation why revolution in such an economy is there largely unthinkable, in contrast to the riper feudal-capitalistic structures of Europe: "This simplicity supplies the key to the secret of the unchangeableness of Asiatic societies, an unchangeableness in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic States, and the never ceasing changes of dynasty. The structure of the economical element of society remains untouched by the storm clouds of the political sky." Gottwald's misrepresentation of Marx comes from his concentration on the despotic and oppressive nature of some Asiatic states. For Marx, however, despotism is neither constant nor unique to Asia. It comes and goes. It is the village which establishes the norm. (1994: 57-58)

Mendenhall had himself voiced a similar concern and wrote that any thought of egalitarianism in biblical times, a key idea for Gottwald's synthesis, is totally outside reality (1983: 93, 98). He concluded his comments by calling Gottwald's work "a tragic comedy of errors" (1983: 102).

As to the key issue of peasants revolting, there is nothing in the biblical story that would support that idea. According to Miller, "one is hard-pressed to find anything at all in the biblical materials which can pass as even a hint that the Israelite tribes might have emerged from an internal Canaanite peasants' revolt" (1982: 215).

In short, the Peasants' Revolt Theory exhibits serious flaws. First, it receives its basic structure from the sociological context of the A.D. mid-20th-century Cold War period (especially Gottwald) that no longer exists at the end of the century (much less 3500 years before). The relatively short history of communism and the weaknesses of Marxism seriously challenge the plausibility of any revolt model and discourage any
attempt at forcing such a weak model on any ancient people. It, likewise, depends on the narrow definition of, and restricted use of, the term 'Apiru and ethnicity that does not stand the test of scrutiny. Moreover its suggestions of the binding force of Israel (the Sinai covenant for Mendenhall and the Canaanite revolt for Gottwald) are not consistent with any existing documentation or other evidence. Finally, the one written source of Israel's origins in Canaan makes no mention of a peasants' revolt.

The LBII/Ir Transition Theory

The LBII/IrI Transition Theory and Archaeology

The LBII/IrI Transition Theory is one of the more recent attempts to explain how the Israelites came to control a portion of Canaan. Its unique contribution, as noted above, was its suggestion that the Israelites developed from the MBII populations and emerged due to the cultural and/or environmental pressures of the LBII/IrI transition period (although, a more recent article by Finkelstein clouds the issue of origins of the Israelites, since he said that he would now "be more flexible today regarding the issue of the origin of the Iron I highlands population, leaving more room for some outside elements alongside the sedentarizing local pastoralists," 1991: 53). Its short history has not allowed much time for discussion, but there are some flaws in this story.

Like the Conquest Theory, Finkelstein's paradigm does not explain the IrI settlement of all of Canaan, of which the hill country is only a part. Such a limited explanation is not fully productive. Some of the IrI sites in these outer regions had silos/pits (e.g., Tel Beersheba, Tel Haror, Tell Masos, Tel Qasile, Tel Sera') and were unwalled (e.g., Acco, Arad, Tell Hesban). At the same time that the IrI hill-country sites were being settled, archaeological sites, well-removed from Canaan's hill country (e.g., Buseirah, Tel Harashim, Tell Jawa, Sahab, and Tell el-∗Umeiri, Herr 1989: 310; 1991: 241; Finkelstein 1992: 161), were using collared-rim store jars, a type of pottery associated with the Israelites (Finkelstein 1988: 275-285). It is not explained how the
Israelites, developing in the hill country, exhibited these characteristics, while those who share these same characteristics, but were living outside the hill country, did not also become Israelites.

Finkelstein acknowledged that not every site that produced collared-rim store jars was inhabited by Israelites, but according to him, those in the hill country produced a higher percentage of that ceramic type, which he found significant (1988: 29). Finkelstein also suggested that collared-rim store jars found outside the hill country were there as the result of trade (1988: 285).

Finkelstein has attempted to develop objective data from material culture to determine Israelite settlement sites, but his theory exhibits a serious lack of objective control. If Irl sites that had silos/pits and/or were unwalled and/or used collared-rim store jars were not Israelite, unless they were located in the hill country, of what help are the other diagnostics? For example, Irl Tel Masos was unfortified, had pits/silos, and pillared four-room houses, but lacked collared-rim store jars and was located in the northern Negev; thus, Finkelstein rejected the idea that Tel Masos was an Israelite site (Finkelstein 1988: 45; 1995: 103; see also Kempinski 1992b: 2-4). On the other hand, Giloh, according to its excavators, while possessing collared-rim store jars and a pillared building, also had a defensive wall and had no silos/pits (Finkelstein 1988: 48-50, 262). Still it is considered to be an Israelite site because it is located in the hill country (Finkelstein 1988: 356). Other sites that had pillared buildings and collared-rim store jars would probably be dismissed as Israelite, since they are not in the hill country (e.g., Tell el-'Umeiri). Yet, Tel Dan, where a large number of collared-rim store jars have been found (Biran 1989: 71), would probably be seen as Israelite by most scholars because of its connections to biblical stories, even though it is far from the hill country (Frankel 1994: 30, 31). Dever referred to such differentiation as "quite arbitrary" (Dever 1991: 87).
The LBII/Irl Transition Theory assumes that the Israelites and other ancient peoples tended to be isolationistic, developing regional traditions not shared with their neighbors. On the other hand, archaeology has suggested that popular styles were readily traded (e.g., Philistine pottery has been found well outside of traditional Philistine territory, T. Dothan 1982: 25-26), while ethnoarchaeological research has confirmed that ceramics is an important part of village life (Wood 1990c: 54-57).

Finkelstein is selective in development of a ceramic corps. Dever wrote,

Finkelstein exaggerates the significance of ceramic variation. Of course cooking pots, short-lived and produced locally in great quantities, do show more variation in rims than most pottery forms. Finkelstein, however, fails to see behind ephemeral and inconsequential variants to the "ideal form," which is what one must always use for proper typological comparisons. The error prompts him to select a few individual forms from the above site to illustrate their disparity. I can just as easily select other forms to show their near-identity. (1991: 84)

Collared-rim store jars have been associated with Israelite settlements since at least the early A.D. 1920s (Albright 1924c: 10). M. Ibrahim, however, shocked biblical archaeologists with his discovery of collared-rim jars at Sahab, Jordan (1978: 117-126). These jars were likewise associated with destruction layers and were numerous (Ibrahim 1978: 117). While the form of the jars is short-necked (which would indicate a later phase for the collared-rim jar [see Rast 1978: 9]), Ibrahim suggested that, stratigraphically, the jars belong to the early part of Irl (1978: 121). Since Ibrahim’s report, collared-rim store jars have been found in an ever-widening range, including examples at Transjordanian sites like Tell Jalul (Younker 1994), Biraya, and dozens of whole jars at Tell ed-Duweiri (Herr 1995: 237-239).

Such finds would lead one to disqualify the collared-rim store jars as a diagnostic indicator for Israelite sites. (On the other hand, one could conclude that these sites were Israelite. That suggestion, however, has not, to this time, received wide discussion.) Finkelstein, however, has attempted to undermine the importance of collared-rim jars outside the hill country by subdividing collared-rim store jars into regional
types and to interject the issue of "quantitative distribution" (1988: 182). He has also opened the door for other considerations.

Only in northern Transjordan and in the central hill country of the Land of Israel were collared-rim store jars widely used. The geographical distribution must therefore be connected either to the function of these jars or to the identity of the people who manufactured them and used them extensively. (1988: 182)

G. London has looked at the issue of collared-rim store jars from a lifestyle perspective (1989: 37-56). She noted that recent research has concluded that ethnicity is not a permanent status, but it fluctuates sometimes due to changing allegiances (1989: 38). She observed:

Pastoral nomads today often share social and cultural features with settled people within their contact zone more than with other pastoralists. . . . Therefore the social structure of pastoral nomads, villagers, and even urbanites is interwoven. . . . The study of pastoral nomads in isolation from the larger social milieu in which they function seems unrealistic. (1989: 40, 41)

This means that a cultural heritage is often shared between transhumant and sedentarized peoples. Since sharing of cultural heritage has been found to be true among existing seasonal nomads and urban dwellers, it seems probable that there was a similar symbiotic relationship between seasonal nomads and urban dwellers in ancient times. This probably would have included the stylistic similarities evidenced in ceramic finds. Concerning the large number of collared-rim store jars found in the Canaanite hill country, London concluded that their presence in the hill country may have to do more with the differences between rural and urban settlements than ethnicity.

Large collar rim store jars thus may be said to symbolize a system of storage and economics, not an ethnic entity. The economic network in cities and housing facilities could not accommodate large containers, in sharp contrast to the self-sufficient subsistence strategies in rural economies, both Israelite and non-Israelite. (1989: 44; also Brandfon 1987: 18)

Even Finkelstein acknowledges that the "function" of the collared-rim jars may be the key to understanding their location (1988: 282, 283).
Finding only an occasional collared-rim store jar in an urban site, which has been thought to be Canaanite, may only imply a greater need in the hill-country sites for a specific ceramic corpus and says nothing about whether Israelites or Canaanites occupied that site. Or as Sharon concluded, "From this information it can be seen that this material culture does not characterize 'a people' in the ethnic sense, but a certain way of life" (1994: 127). The corpus that is represented at each site, then, would have been brought together by form, function, and trade. Thus, hill-country sites in Cisjordanian and in Transjordan could be expected to exhibit similar and specific forms of pottery whenever their social-environmental needs matched. The most likely explanation for the presence of collared-rim store jars in both the Transjordanian hill-country sites and in Cisjordan hill-country sites is not related ethnicity, but economic need.

London also suggested that the "unique" four-room houses likewise identified with an Israelite site might be nothing more than special needs of rural sites (1989: 47, 48). Such a situation would help to explain why a growing number of sites (well outside of the Cisjordanian hill country) have been found to contain four-room houses. After looking at the environmental settings of the Canaanite highlands IrI sites, Hopkins concluded:

The diversity of their locations with respect not only to agricultural conditions but also defensive possibilities and communications routes compels the conclusion that no set of equally weighted agricultural challenges and possibilities characterized the life of these villages. In this respect the closer inspection of settlement sites does not produce results that deviate from those expected on the basis of the gross cataloging of the geomorphological features and soil distribution in the Highlands presented above. (1985: 167)

This would mean that when David switched allegiance from the Israelites to the Philistines, he did not necessarily throw his dishes away. His hill-country hideouts probably still continued to use hill-country ceramics because of the needs and customs of the hill country, while his Philistine hideouts probably remained "Philistine" because of the needs and customs of the coastal areas. Even Finkelstein acknowledged the unique juxtaposition of lowland and hill-country sites when he wrote.
There was a distinct dichotomy in the settlement and demographic developments between lowlands and highlands throughout history. This dichotomy was an outcome of the different ecological background: the fertile, sedentary lowlands on the one hand, and the topographical-lithological frontier of the highlands on the other hand. (1994b: 151)

I agree with Coote (although not with the same vehemence) that the Israelites will probably not be seen archaeologically as unique.

Not surprisingly, these features (pillared houses, storage pits, collared-rim jars, etc.) do not distinguish Israelite from non-Israelite sites in greater Palestine, since Israel was primarily a political and not a cultural identification. There exists no cultural artifact that is a consistent indicator of the presence of Israelites. (Coote 1990: 131)

London saw in the data of ethnoarchaeological research that variations in pottery and architecture do not necessarily reflect diversity in ethnicity, but rather in lifestyles and in the needs of each community. Ethnographic studies provide evidence that individual ethnic groups comprise people of diverse lifestyles, both sedentary and migratory. If archaeologists understand variation in material culture as evidence of daily life rather than ethnicity, the "inconsistencies" between biblical texts and the archaeological finds become less problematic. (1989: 51, 52)

As Hess wrote, "The important point is that the material culture is distinctive to a particular region (i.e., the hill country), not necessarily to a particular ethnic group (e.g., Israelite rather than Canaanite)” (1994b: 129; also Stager 1985: 86). Dever, in his conclusions, assumed that there was no more than one ethnic group in each geographic region (Dever 1995b: 203). Such an assumption is dubious and is contrary to the biblical account (Jud 19:1, 11, 12). Archaeologists will be able to claim the identification of ethnic groups when they can clearly identify them within regions, which is not the case at present.

Ethnicity is not so much expressed in physical material culture but depends on self-recognition.

Because ethnic identity rests on the conscious awareness of group members, it is possible that even when major socioeconomic distinctions are lacking ethnic distinctions may occur. Furthermore, both the factors which delineate ethnic boundaries and the populations within which boundaries are delineated can change through time. Membership in an ethnic group may be obtained through ascription or recruitment. Even ascriptively assigned membership may retain elements of choice, so that ethnic membership may at times be viewed as part of a voluntary adaptive strategy. People may live in the same environment and face
the same problems of subsistence, yet their values and material culture may reflect quite different ethnic traditions. (Kamp and Yoffee 1980: 88)

And some would even deny that ethnicity can be found via material culture (Kamp and Yoffee 1980: 94, 95). In any case, "the technologies attributed to the Israelite culture were not novel" (Sharon 1994: 127).

Finkelstein's attempted reconstruction is not too far removed from the tactics of the Conquest Theory, which uses those sites thought to be mentioned in the Book of Joshua, while ignoring the many not mentioned in the Book of Joshua. Finkelstein eliminates those sites he wishes and retains those sites that support the LBII/Irl Transition Theory.

An additional problem with the LBII/Irl Transition Theory is its assumption that Israel was formed as the result of ordinary causes. It has not taken into consideration that the process of movement from sedentarism to seasonal nomadism was not something that began during the LBII/Irl transition, but has been a constant part of Near Eastern life from the beginning of history (see LaBianca 1992 for a description of the repetitious process sedentarism-nomadism in one region). The suggestion that the move to sedentarism created a people called Israel explains nothing. If sedentarism had the power to create ethnic groups, there would have been hundreds of "Israelis," which could be pointed to as evidence for such a process, yet no such examples have been provided. The biblical writers who arose from "Israel" have had worldwide and millennia-long impact declaring their singularity of experience. Lemche captures this uniqueness when he writes, "The historical Israel was the single society which more than any other left its mark on the southwestern part of the 'Fertile Crescent' in the first millennium BCE" (1990: 12). What Lemche does not acknowledge, as he should, is the broader range of influence that those same people have had to modern times, even though he does recognize that where they lived was an "insignificant geographical area" (1990: 12).
Instead of an explanation of Israel's genesis, Finkelstein provided a description of the hill-country material culture, as though the presence of identifiable features explains the causes of the beginnings of a culture. Wrote Finkelstein,

The transition from Late Bronze to Iron I in the hill country was, in fact, characterized by an unmistakable change in material culture— in both pottery and architecture—as well as by a wholly new pattern of settlement. Archaeological data debunk all claims of a direct connection between the Late Bronze centers of the low lying regions and the Iron I sites in the hill country. (Finkelstein 1988: 312)

This descriptive answer does not explain why similar transitional periods (e.g., EBIV) have not produced "new" peoples from indigenous ones. In other words, clearly defined features describe only the new features and say nothing of ethnicity or the causes of the culture or events that produced those features or whether the new features can, in any case, be associated with the new peoples.

Thompson pointedly noted the LBII/Irl Transition Theory's lack of explanatory ability in Finkelstein's work.

In evaluating Finkelstein's study, the issue of the identification of what is to be included under the concept of Israel within any given chronological horizon, becomes most critical, for Finkelstein's own criterion seems wholly arbitrary. One is even driven to question the confidence of Finkelstein's title for his book: The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement. Is he not rather and perhaps better dealing with the archaeology of the early Iron Age settlements of central Palestine, leaving for others the question of Israel's origin? What Finkelstein describes of these new settlements, however, might be mistaken as vicariously answering the question of Israel's origins. The circularity of Finkelstein's argument easily escapes the unwary reader. (1994: 160)

As Sharon noted, "Finkelstein rejects the role of new technologies in the settlement process but does not offer an alternate causative connection between the different processes taking place at the time" (1994: 125; also Dever 1991: 86). Frick spoke to the same issue when he wrote,

Even if such a correlation could be established, it must be admitted that such archaeological features are scarcely thereby "explained" with respect to the issues of why they appeared precisely when and where they did and what were the functions which they filled that led to their initial selection and continued use. (1985: 14)
Why Israel appeared has evaded Finkelstein and other supporters of the LBII/Irl Transition Theory. Even the "how" of Israel's emergence is not answered by a description of the transition from one lifestyle to another (from transhumant to sedentarism or vice versa). Such a transition was a typical feature of the ancient Near East and no other people have been offered as evidence of the creative power of such a lifestyle transition.

Even Finkelstein acknowledges that the Irl transition was not that unique.

In the hill country there was a cyclic process that took place three times in the 3rd-2nd millennia BC; each time it included the following steps; a wave of settlement, the emergence of fortified centers that possibly were organized into larger political entities and finally a collapse prompting a severe settlement crisis. (Finkelstein 1991: 56)

Yet, neither Finkelstein nor any other supporter of the LBII/Irl Transition Theory has demonstrated that a people like Israel arose from this "cyclic process."

Finkelstein (and Coote 1990: 115-119) has succeeded in clearly identifying the material features of the Canaanite hill-country residents. These people lived through the process of metamorphosis from transhumance to sedentarism, but there is nothing to say that this process created a people. The transitional process has never been known to produce a new ethnic people with the uniqueness of Israel.

A number of scholars have sought to speak to this question. Weippert’s suggestion that overcrowding produced the Israelites is undermined by the work of Hopkins, which demonstrated that overcrowding was more likely to produce migration and social upset than cohesiveness (1985: 46-50). Others, like Chaney, saw "technological factors," like terracing, as opening the hill country for Israelite settlement (1983: 50). On the other hand, it is most likely that terracing (and other innovations) followed settlement rather than the other way around and developed from the need of additional land (Hopkins 1985: 181).

The development of terracing and plastered cisterns has also been suggested as significant in the emergence of Israel (Coote and Whitelam 1987: 123, 124). Those
technological advances seem to have developed later or for different reasons than previously thought. (At Ai, for example, the Irl cisterns were not plastered, Callaway 1970: 18.) Iron has even been suggested as one of the changes that revolutionized Irl settlements (De Geus 1976: 168). On the contrary, iron replaced bronze because copper became difficult to find and, therefore, expensive to acquire. There is even question as to whether iron implements, when first introduced, were any better than the bronze ones (Hopkins 1985: 217-223). Hopkins concluded,

There is no single set of environmental challenges that confronted all Israel. Recognition of this fact casts serious doubts upon claims for a single innovation in agricultural technology as the key for explaining the transformation of the settlement map. The locations of the dispersed sites of the early Iron Age with respect to agricultural resources only cement this restriction. No blanket term can serve to characterize the agricultural feasibility of these settlement sites: they nestle in both marginal and quite favorable locations. (1985: 267)

Even if environmental pressures influenced the LBII transhumant population towards sedentarism, that transition is still an inadequate explanation for an alternative ethnicity. In other words, exterior pressures may have led people to settle in villages and, therefore, become visible to archaeologists, but those same pressures did not necessarily create in them ethnicity.

Mendenhall's criticism of Gottwald is just as well applied to those who offer environmental explanations for the development of Israel.

His cultural-material ideology demands technological innovation to explain change, so he finds it in iron tools (a Philistine monopoly according to the biblical text), in terracing, and in waterproof cisterns. Since there is every reason to believe that these technological changes were constants, then all of the Near East from Greece to Yemen should have become Yahwist. (1983: 92)

While the LBII/Irl Transition Theory does not explain how the dynamics of the LBII/Irl transition produced the Israelites or provide examples of similar peoples that were likewise produced, the biblical writers did offer their own explanation. Their explanation was that Israel arose as the result of a religious covenant. Even within our modern world we have graphic evidence of the power of religion to cause unrelated peoples to migrate and form a close-knit community (e.g., Mormons), to travel thou-
sands of miles to fight and die for heavenly gain (e.g., Crusades), wage war for
decades on end (e.g., Northern Ireland), and put to death hundreds of thousands (e.g.,
Medieval Church). Can supporters of the MBII/Irl Transition Theory provide any bet­
ter motivation for the power of their theory? If they can, they have not.

The LBII/Irl Transition
Theory and the Bible

The role of the Bible in the LBII/Irl Transition Theory is said to be limited. In
most cases, those who support the LBII/Irl Transition Theory see the Bible as unreli­
able. For Finkelstein, the biblical text is an accurate geographical guide for locating
the home of the Israelites, but not accurate in any other means. Finkelstein admitted
that the reason he had to use the Bible was that it was the only source he had in locating
the Israelites (1985: 28, 30). At the same time he also admitted that he had little con­
fidence in the Bible because of its convoluted history and because attempts to use the
Bible on questions about the Israelite settlement “have been notoriously unsuccessful”
(1985: 22). For these reasons the Bible, except as a locator of the Israelite territory,
the hill country, is not used by Finkelstein.

Coote and Whitelam propose that they can create a sociological environment
theory about the Israelites without the use of the Bible. Miller finds such claims
invalid.

Coote and Whitelam’s recent book, *The Emergence of Early Israel*, is perhaps the
best example. Pointing out the inadequacies of histories of Israel that rely on the
Hebrew Bible and old-time literary-critical methodologies, they proposed “an
alternative approach . . . which assigns priority to interpreting archaeological data
within a broad interdisciplinary framework” (p. 8). Thereupon, without involv­
ing themselves with the biblical materials in any direct way, they set about
clarifying the socioeconomic circumstances in Palestine during the early Iron
Age, explaining how the Israelite tribes emerged under these circumstances and
then describing the process by which the tribes were transformed into a cen­
tralized, Davidic state. How do they know that Israel’s origins are to be associ­
atied with the early Iron Age in the first place, or that the tribes were soon trans­
formed into a centralized Davidic state? They appeal to scholarly consensus:
“The most commonly agreed datum to mark the emergence of Israel is the exten­
sion of village and agricultural settlement in the central highland of Palestine
from the thirteenth to the eleventh centuries BCE” (pp. 27-28). And this is the
pattern throughout: either they assume information that can only have come from
the Hebrew Bible, or they appeal to scholarly consensus, which itself rests on the Bible. In short, their study does not bypass the Hebrew Bible, it only bypasses any critical evaluation of it. While remaining aloof from the Bible of literary analysis, they assume the essential historicity of the Bible story as they hear it in Sunday school. (Miller 1991: 95-96)

Miller also said that Dever and Finkelstein have fallen into the same trap. They say they are developing independent-of-the-Bible theories, then unknowingly use the Bible to frame their theories (Miller 1991: 97-99).

As with the archaeological data, those who support the LBII/Irl Transition Theory have been caught by a circular argument. A text that is as useless as Finkelstein considers the Bible, useful only for a geographical locator, should also be doubted for location. It seems that Finkelstein wanted to use the Bible for an Israelite locator, so he did. He offered no evidence to support his usage or to exclude that use of the Bible. He also excluded the rest of the Bible because he wanted to, without any evidence for or against that decision. This seems like a flawed and circular process.

The Conquest by Imagination Theory

The Conquest by Imagination Theory and Archaeology

A critique of the Conquest by Imagination Theory is not easy. Among the difficulties is Thompson's insinuation that the proponents of this theory use a specialized, pliable vocabulary. That, according to Thompson, means one cannot read any one supporter of this theory to understand its intents or use past works as a guide for more recent explanations (1995: 695).

Thompson himself serves as a leading voice of the Conquest by Imagination Theory. Like others who support this theory, Thompson is uncomfortable with archaeology. He saw archaeology as "tainted" (1994: 138), its chronology "wholly inadequate" (1994: 93), and its pottery typology "uncertain" (1994: 162) and "notoriously undependable" (1994: 183). He was "painfully aware of the extreme fragility of Syro-Palestinian archaeology's absolute datings" (1994: 164). He dismissed
the archaeological evidence that Dever presented about the Irl period because "Dever's excessive dependence on pottery typology as an indicator of historical and ethnic change in Palestine seems inadequate, and we have no reason to follow him here" (1994: 201; also p. 325).

In a review of Thompson's book (1994), Dever underscored Thompson's dilemma: "In any case, the denigration or outright rejection of archaeology as a source of history writing leaves most biblical scholars as historians with no historical facts" (Dever 1995: 63). Where can Thompson turn, since he has found archaeology unreliable? What were the bases for his hypotheses? The answer is, a selective use and acceptance of archaeology! Thompson praised Finkelstein's book The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement as a "very honest" and "landmark" book (1994: 161). Yet, the heart of Finkelstein's book is the ceramic typologies used in archaeological surveys! How could Thompson have found so much good in Finkelstein's book, the foundation of which is ceramic chronology and a methodology Thompson rejected, when used by Dever? It appears that Thompson's primary objection to archaeology was that it often disagreed with his hypotheses.

Since Merneptah's Stele is an independent reference to "Israel," and Thompson is interested in developing an independent history, one would expect that it would play an important role in Thompson's theories. Instead this is how he used Merneptah's Stele:

They [the Israelites] are rather a specific group among the population of Palestine which bears a name that occurs here for the first time that at a much later stage in Palestine's history bears a substantially different signification. (1994: 275, 276)

It seems all the more necessary to point out that historians have not established a continuity between the "group" called "Israel" that Merneptah claims to have destroyed and the proto-ethnic population of the ninth century political state of Samaria that is known to us in both biblical and extrabiblical texts as "Israel." (1994: 306)

References to the Merneptah stele are not really helpful. This text renders for us only the earliest known usage of the name "Israel." This gentilic in Merneptah's list, however, does not correspond with the usage of the name in reference to the Assyrian period state of that name, to the clan of shr'î of the Samaria Ostraca or
to any biblical use of the term. One cannot thus affirm the existence of the Israel of the Bible solely on the strength of the Israel stele. (1994: 311)

In short, Thompson’s theories made no use of Merneptah’s Stele. Thompson made it the responsibility of other "historians" to figure out why his theory and Merneptah’s Stele do not mesh (1994: 306).

Other examples show Thompson to be clearly uncomfortable with archaeology. For example, he saw the Negev Iron II forts as constructed to "force" the pastoral-nomads into sedentarization (1994: 330). Only one who has never visited the Negev forts and seen how small they are in size and number (compared to the size of the Negev) or who has not taken the time to locate them on a map (most are in the northern reaches of the Negev) could think they would be used to control nomadic peoples. (As evidenced by the 19th-century United States government’s plan to exterminate the Apache [a Native American nomadic people], and 20th-century Russians in Afghanistan, who sought to control the mobilized Afghans, and wherever sedentarized people have sought to annihilate nomads, masses of armies and tremendous supplies cannot predict the outcome.) In any case, there is the possibility that these "forts" may not have been built by a central government and may have been built by, and used for, civilian purposes (Finkelstein 1984: 189, 190; 1995: 104).

Thompson also saw the food system cycles of the Madaba Plains Project as supporting his hypotheses, especially his suggestion that no new major people groups entered Canaan (1994: 296, 297, 326). What he missed was that cyclic swings from sedentarization to nomadization (a conclusion based on ceramic typology!) say nothing about the ethnicity of populations or group movements. These cycles are only observations of changes in living style and describe nothing more than that the ancient population was living differently at one time than another. Those cycles are not explanations, nor are they predictive, nor do they identify the ethnicity of those populations. They are even mute on the subject of whether new populations have arrived. The food
system cycles of the Madaba Plains Project are merely observations based on intensifications and abatements of settlements. In other words, the "why" is not provided by the "what."

Likewise, he also wanted to use the more recent consensus that the cities of EBIV were abandoned instead of destroyed as a standard for all other intermediate periods (1994: 324-326). He thought the arguments about EBIV have been about the nature of the lifestyle of the peoples of EBIV, while the core of the discussions has had to do with whether or not the cities of EBIII were destroyed or abandoned. Consider the summary of Amihai Mazar:

The final annihilation or abandonment of these cities was one of the most fateful cultural crises in the history of Palestine: the entire Early Bronze Age urban culture in western Palestine collapsed within a short time, to be replaced by a totally different nonurban pattern which lasted for about three hundred years. The exact date, nature, and causes of this crisis are among the major questions concerning the period. (1990: 141)

Whether the EBIII cities were destroyed or not is the key issue. Disagreement about this point is why archaeologists disagree about the nature of the following period. Naturally those discussions have been affected by the assumed lifestyle of the EBIV people, but the issue of lifestyle is attached to the archaeological evidence that few cities were destroyed at the end of EBIII. If it could be demonstrated that a significant number of EBIII cities were destroyed, then it could be a reasonable assumption that the EBIV population was new to the area. On the other hand, if it is, as it appears to be, that the EBIII cities were not destroyed, but simply abandoned, then it is reasonable to assume that the EBIII people simply deserted their cities, for whatever reason, and assumed the EBIV seasonal nomadic lifestyle. The identity of the EBIV peoples turns on the archaeological and historical questions unique to that period. Wrote Gophna,

All the suggestions regarding the origin and ethnic identification of the people of the Land of Israel during the Intermediate Bronze Age have confronted the archaeological record of the Near East and tried to relate the archaeological finds to Akkadian historical documents from Mesopotamia. (1992: 156)
Whether or not the people of EBIV were new to the area or the remnant of the
EBIII people is still not certain, but whatever the outcome of that discussion it will
have nothing to do with the nature of other transitional periods. EBIV cannot be
assumed to be a pattern for Irl or any other transitional period, even if there are pat-
terns in the growth and demise of civilizations (Finkelstein 1994: 153). All evidence,
from each of the transitional periods, must be sorted, synthesized, and allowed its own
interpretation. To make EBIV the paradigm for all other intermediate periods, espe-
cially the LBII-Irl transition period with its many destructions, given that EBIII gives
no clear evidence of such destructions, is to misuse the discussion about EBIV. Dis-
similar transitional periods should allow dissimilar conclusions.

Thompson also suggested that since Neolithic times populations have not
migrated but remained static (1994: 177). He likewise saw the various regions of
Canaan as largely independent from each other, with very little influence from one
region to another (1994: 191). His definition of ethnicity is a shared common language
(1994: 322, 323, 338). In summary, Thompson imagined several regionally independ-
ent conclaves of peoples. occasionally assimilating a few new peoples into the
aboriginal groups without ever modifying, in any significant way, the original group.

Looking at the more recent history of Palestine, it is clear that numerous popula-
tions have been introduced into Palestine (e.g., European and Ethiopian Jews) along
with many cultural variations that have produced significant changes in the lifestyle,
culture, and ethnicity of the inhabitants of Palestine. While the magnitude of the 20th-
century changes may differ and may have unique causes, these changes in population
demonstrate that ethnic populations can and do change. It is Thompson's responsibility
to show that similar changes could not have occurred in earlier times, especially when
archaeologically verifiable aspects (city defenses, ceramic pottery, and architectural
features) changed through time. His argument that these changes cannot be used to
demonstrate changes in ethnicity, even if valid. says only that ethnicity cannot be
determined by material culture and says nothing about ethnicity per se (Thompson 1994: 301, 303, 304).

It is only on rare occasions that anthropologists announce the discovery of people unaffected by the "modern" world. All ethnic groups are influenced by others. Thompson's comments about Israel must be kept within the parameters of the discussion. His interpretation was that they "only rarely . . . marched together along a cultural continuum" (1994: 191). Such a view is not only irrational, but ethnographically disputed.

Other regions of the world have been studied with regard to the diffusion of culture and artifacts. Bryant Wood in a discussion of the "Diffusion of Ceramic Style" wrote,

Note that the distance from Dan to Beersheba is 153 airline miles (245 Km), so that in a small geographical region such as Palestine it would not be difficult for pottery from any one production center to be traded almost anywhere in the country. (1990c: 62. n. 1)

His conclusion is based on studies from around the world (Egypt, Guatemala, Spain, Morocco, etc.) focusing on the pottery and the process by which it was traded across regions. These studies reveal that there were several ways in which pottery was dispersed to a broad area. Wrote Wood,

Ethnographic studies of preindustrial pottery-using cultures are unanimous in demonstrating that the primary means by which ordinary household pottery is diffused is by direct commercial sale by itinerant merchants. A secondary means is by relocating consumers. Additional modes of diffusion for vessels containing goods, at least in antiquity (documented ethnographic examples are lacking), were by commercial trading and state provisioning. (1990c: 59, 60)

Even Thompson acknowledged that the people living on the Palestinian coast (according to him, not the Philistines 1994: 272) developed their distinctive pottery because of the influences of "economic and trade associations" (1994: 264). T. Dothan goes so far as to say that their pottery reflected their "meandering migration from their Aegean homeland" (1982: 217). While there is no doubt that the Philistines were thus influenced, there is also no doubt that all of the Palestinian regions had similar inter-
connections and were similarly influenced by others. Philistine pottery was, likewise, distributed throughout much of Palestine (T. Dothan 1982: 26, Map 2). While sites such as Ashdod used only locally made pottery (Wood 1990c: 60), this unique situation may well reflect the expansion of the Philistines into the Shephelah and hill country and the antagonism that that intrusion signifies (what Wood called "an apparent hostile proclivity toward the indigenous population," 1990c: 60-61, n. 1). This atypical antagonism and isolationism are reflected in stories of the Book of Judges (e.g., Judg 14:3). Even a purely locally made ceramic corpus does not, however, require total isolation.

Thompson saw the commonality of the Sea Coast communities' (Philistine) pottery repertoire with that of Canaan, at large, as evidence of similarity and continuity of ethnicity (1994: 140, 141). His conclusion is surprising because it opposed what he implied elsewhere. that ethnicity is not revealed in material culture (1994: 303). What this similarity of ceramic materials really reveals is the usual broad-ranging trade and the itinerant traders serving distant communities. Consider the ceramic corpus of Bé, a Fulani community in northern Cameroon.

They (David and Hennig) found that 25 percent of the pots were made in the village of Bé itself. 45 percent came from hamlets within a radius of 3 km and 25 percent were purchased at three larger markets within a radius of 22 km, although the pottery may have travelled a similar distance between its place of manufacture and the market. Five percent of the pots in the sample came from distances greater than 22 km. (Wood 1990c: 56)

Even the potters of the Bé community were diverse, coming from many different areas.

Of the seven Fulani potters, two were trained at Bé, left, and subsequently returned, two were trained at a village 10 km away, one came from a village 30 km away, and two moved to Bé from 40 km distant. Of the ten potters active at Bé in 1969-1970, only three were resident there in 1966, and three had already left by November 1971. Presumably, a similar pattern obtained in other pottery-producing villages in the region. (Wood 1990c: 57)

Wood acknowledged that mobility among the Bé community members may be greater than among the ancient Palestinians but still concluded.

The Bé example illustrates the diverse cultural and regional influences that can be present in the ceramic population of a small peasant village and also how these
influences will tend to amalgamate and form a homogeneous style over a large region. (1990c: 57)

So it was that Palestinian pottery in all the archaeological periods was traded and dispersed thus "harmoniz(ing)" the pottery of all the regions (Wood 1990c: 59). Wood's work suggested that it was the itinerant merchants and the regional markets that brought uniformity to the pottery (1990c: 59-70).

Thompson's belief that ethnicity can be achieved by dishes and buildings ("Material cultural provides the foundation for ethnic formation" 1994: 303) remains for him to demonstrate. It is often difficult for social anthropologists to determine ethnicity among living groups, much less from material cultural items from thousands of years ago (Kramer 1977: 95). Ethnicity is based on self-perception, not possessions (Kelly and Kelly 1980: 134). Thompson is only slightly incorrect when he wrote that "physical remains . . . are not ethnic markers" (1994: 303) and greatly mistaken when he concluded his thought that "they may provide the material cultural foundation for ethnic formation" (1994: 303). Cultural effects may have been cultural markers, but whether the part of the markers that denoted ethnic identity is perceivable to latter-day researchers is unusual. (One such case where ancient ethnicity seems clear from material culture is the Philistines, where we find their unique pottery concentrated in textually specified areas.) Even language, which Thompson has postulated produced or at least identified ethnicity, is not likely (Thompson 1994: 322, 323, 338; Kamp and Yoffee 1980: 95, 96). In most cases, the populations of Palestine were clearly ethnically diverse, but also fairly evenly interspersed with other peoples, as Palestine is to this day. Separating such groups in later times by material culture is difficult, if not impossible.

That the Philistines were more than a "gradual integration of newcomers" into an already existing community, as Thompson thinks (1994: 270), is clear not only from biblical stories but also from Assyrian records that speak about the "land of the
Philistines" and "district of the Philistines" (Pritchard 1969: 534). Certainly these ancient references speak to the dominance of the Philistines on Palestine’s southern coast.

While interesting, his propositions exhibit many questionable aspects. Thompson has also fallen into the trap of accounting for every historical change as resulting from one cause. He saw weather as the primary influence on social change, even when those changes were vastly different. While at times he seems to allow other causes to challenge history (1994: 220, 309), the standing of his central suppositions is precariously balanced on the very limited evidence of ancient weather. Thompson has suggested that the LBII/Ir1 transition was the result of changes in the weather patterns, which have been the primary influence in settlement patterns (1994: 215). This dependence forces Thompson to accept uncritically the limited information available concerning weather millennia past (Thompson 1994: 204, n. 103; 218, n. 13). Not only are those data extremely minute, they have also not been fully discussed in the archaeological literature. The question is, How many biblical scholars or archaeologists are able adequately to evaluate that evidence? Most archaeologists, like Finkelstein, probably believe “there is, at present, no evidence of any climatic change at the time under discussion” (Ir1, Finkelstein 1988: 345).

It is difficult to believe that Thompson’s suppositions will be taken seriously until the issue of weather has been more fully discussed. If, in the future, a consensus should arise about ancient weather patterns different from the one Thompson has assumed, all of his reconstructions will be suspect. This association with ancient weather places Thompson’s theory in a weaker position than all other theories of Israel’s origins. No other theory is dependent on ancient weather and each of the other theories could be argued no matter what consensus of the weather patterns may develop. Thompson’s surmisings must, however, be held in question until a better picture of ancient weather patterns can be settled. Thompson’s uneasiness with
archaeology and his dependence on weather as a motivating factor has resulted, in the end, in examining his own summation. He said that much of his work is speculative, and I agree (1994: 171).

The Conquest by Imagination and the Bible

Thompson, one of the foremost proponents of the Conquest by Imagination Theory, has suggested that the history of the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and much of Kings was really a late work used to encourage those in the Persian period who sought solace in the collection of the myths of Canaan (1994: 354, 384, 398; Lemche 1993 saw the biblical stories as created during the Hellenistic period). This collection has been misunderstood as being a history, when the editors had no such plan in mind (1994: 358, 374, 378).

Thompson believed that an independent history of Israel (i.e., without the influence of the Bible) was needed (1994: 108). He wrote, "We must be ready to radically alter and consciously distance ourselves from all presuppositions that have been imposed on us by the biblical account" (Thompson 1994: 169). His starting point for biblical history, then, was with the Israelite king Omri, allowing Saul, David, and Solomon no link in a dynastic chain (1994: 111). Thompson, then, is left with little data from early Israelite history. He is suspicious of both archaeology and the biblical text, which Dever has noted is a common problem among biblical historians (1995: 63).

The problem with Thompson’s assumptions is that new archaeological finds put his hypotheses in jeopardy. His entire reconstruction would be muted if external evidence of a dynasty of Saul, David, or Solomon surfaced.

In the summer of 1993, a basalt stele was uncovered during the excavation at Tel Dan (Biran and Naveh 1993; Biran and Shanks 1994). The 13 lines of this Aramaic inscription recorded a previously unknown battle between the Israelites and the
Arameans. The most interesting feature of this find is the mention of the "house of David" (דרת וו) in line nine of the inscription, implying the dynasty of David (see 2 Sam 7:26, 1 Kgs 2:24). (Two additional fragments of the stele were found in 1994, Biran 1994b.)

According to its discoverers, "the language of the inscription is Early Aramaic, and its script may be dated to the ninth century B.C.E." (Biran and Naveh 1993: 87). While Biran and Naveh opted for the early ninth century, Halpern has made a strong case for the late ninth century (1994: 74). Whichever date holds, this stele is an independent extrabiblical (i.e., archaeological) reference to the dynasty of biblical David from the ninth century B.C., something not previously obtained, and certainly undermining Thompson's Omride beginning for Israel's history (1994: 412). According to the Conquest by Imagination Theory, the finding of the Tel Dan inscription was impossible because

the existence of the Bible's "United Monarchy" during the tenth-century is not only impossible because Judah had not yet a sedentary population, but also because there was no transregional political or economic base of power in Palestine prior to the expansion of Assyrian imperial influence into the southern Levant. (Thompson 1994: 412)

While some attempt has been made to undermine the initial interpretation of the Tel Dan inscription (Davies 1994), this find clearly refers to the dynasty of David (Ahituv 1993; Freedman and Geoghegan 1995; Halpern 1994; Rendsburg 1995). This stele not only announced the finding of "house" or dynasty of David, but also announced the demise of the Conquest by Imagination Theory.

Dever has properly summed up the status of the Conquest by Imagination Theory, especially of Thompson's place in it. He wrote, "In the final analysis, Thompson's History is not innovative at all, but a throwback to Wellhausen, Alt, Noth, and others. It is apt to mislead more than inform, especially when used by unwary biblical scholars or historians in other fields" (Dever 1995: 65).
Summary and Conclusion

An explanation of the presence of the Israelites in Canaan is a serious problem that has invited many suggestions. Albright, based largely on his interpretation of the Book of Joshua and the archaeological evidence of Ir1, suggested that the Israelites successfully stormed Canaan, taking the land by conquest. Unfortunately, there are a few lacunae in Albright’s conquest theory. Little allowance was made for the biblical passages in which the writers acknowledged that large sections of the country were not conquered by the Israelites. Even the modifications of Wright and others do not solve this problem, in that the conquest theory is still an explanatory paradigm that suggests that the primary method by which Israel gained the land was a conquest, which neither the archaeological nor biblical data support.

The destructions of the early Ir1, which Albright used to support his conquest model, are better seen and interpreted in the much larger arena of the wide-spread (coastal cities of Asia Minor, Phoenicia, as well as the nearly total group of Canaanite cities) destructions of the Ir1, including the many sites destroyed, even in areas the text says the Israelites did not conquer. The most vexing problem of all is the evidence of Jericho and Ai, which appears to contradict the biblical account. These weaknesses in the Conquest Theory have caused many archaeologists to disassociate themselves from this hypothesis.

Noth’s alternate explanation, an elaboration of Alt’s position, was that the Israelites came into the land in a long, slow, peaceful migration. This Alt/Noth interpretation has had its supporters, but many scholars found its presuppositions suspicious. Chief among it weaknesses was its lack of interaction with the archaeological data. This theory exists despite archaeology rather than in collaboration with its data. The Peaceful Infiltration Theory likewise ignores the biblical record, making little use of the Book of Joshua, selecting only those few passages that Alt/Noth interpreted to support their conclusions. It depended largely on the activities of other peoples, like the
Hyksos, as a model for explaining the Israelite settlement. Using neither the Bible nor archaeology as its basis has made this theory less than satisfying.

Mendenhall and Gottwald started from the exact opposite point from Alt/Noth. While Alt/Noth founded their models based on their understanding of social dynamics in the ancient past, Mendenhall and Gottwald derived their hypotheses, incorporated in the peasant revolt model, from the recent present. Their theories, mixing Medieval European feudalism with "peoples revolutions" (i.e., Marxism) of the 20th century (at least Gottwald, while Mendenhall had no particular paradigm in mind), saw reflected in the Israelite experience of the Late Bronze Age Canaan the student unrest of the A.D. 1960s and 1970s, as well as the class struggles predicted in Marxist dogma. Gottwald, as Mendenhall attested, had to force the history of the Late Bronze Age Canaan into a strained socio-political mold. They have had to narrowly define words (like בָּני עֵבֶר and ethnicity), largely ignore the biblical text, and create a new identity for the Israelites. Therefore, for Mendenhall and Gottwald, the Israelites were merely Canaanites who rebelled against their overlords and assumed a new identity. Mendenhall's and Gottwald's peasant revolt model, while popular for a time, has been largely abandoned.

A more recent theory, led by Finkelstein, has understood the Israelites to have arisen from the remnant of the MBIIC peoples. Like the Peasants' Revolt Theory, this MBIIC remnant theory saw the biblical material as unreliable, except where needed. In this theory the archaeological data are carefully selected by choosing only Irl sites in the Canaanite hill country. The homogeneous characteristics are labeled "Israelite." Since these characteristics are new to Irl, they are presumed to have belonged to those inhabitants of Late Bronze Age Canaan who became the Israelites in the process of the transition. Like the Peasants' Revolt Theory, neither the archaeology of the Late Bronze Age nor the biblical stories support this conclusion. The real conceptional weakness, however, is its inability to explain how the Late Bronze Age-Iron Age
transition produced the Israelites, while no such creation that is known occurred during other transitional periods.

Thompson has returned, albeit along a circular path, to the hypercritical road of the 19th century. He concluded that no history is to be found in the Bible and that the beginning of Palestinian history is to be found in the neo-Assyrian period. With that as his basis, he suggested that the "Israelites" were born from the painful experience of the indigenous Canaanite peoples with the Assyrians and Babylonians during the Persian period as a literary creation in the process of collecting their history. The "Israelites" were the remnant left in Palestine who assumed and developed an identity from the collected (and then expanded) folk traditions of their Canaanite predecessors. Since Thompson's suppositions are relatively new, one can expect them to be popular for some time, even though, as we have seen, his suggestions are not based on the Bible, history, or archaeology.

The settlement models we have examined have flaws. Additional evidence is that the issue of the origin of the Israelites continues to be one of the hottest archaeological topics. New theories and revised older theories are regularly being published. This continued agitation shows that no theory of the Israelite's settlement, to this time, has been seen as convincing. This is reason enough to suggest that a different approach is needed. The words of Mendenhall still hold true (speaking of the vast differences between Albright's Conquest Theory and Noth's Peaceful Infiltration Theory):

These radically different views of Israelite origins are the best indication of unfinished scholarly business: the impossibility of harmonizing the accounts of modern scholars which are based upon the same evidence makes it necessary to re-examine fundamental assumptions which underlie both reconstructions of early biblical history. (1962: 67)

While, as noted, Mendenhall was speaking about the differences between Albright and Alt/Noth, his words also underscore the purpose of this thesis. The issue of the Israelite settlement is far from settled. Scholars are far from agreement; thus, we must continue to probe other approaches to the difficult questions of this subject.
With this in mind, I have reexamined the Book of Joshua to see what might have been missed by earlier scholars. Much like Gottwald's reevaluation of Genesis 34 for the sake of argument alone, I have ignored the "enormous difficulties in identifying the sources and clarifying the circumstances" (1985: 311) of the text and allowed the text its own unique message, however edited. My purpose was to let the biblical writers speak for themselves, seeing through their eyes the origins of the Israelites in Canaan. I have brought as little to the text as possible and allowed an outline of issues and purposes to arise from the text.
CHAPTER 3


The Book of Joshua: Seen as a Book Describing the Israelite Conquest

The Book of Joshua presents itself as a compilation of the earliest events of the Israelites in Canaan. It tells about the battles the Israelites fought and how they were led before the time of the Judges. Those who have interpreted the Book of Joshua have seen in its stories a depiction of Israel’s mighty army, destroying every city it attacked and massacring all the people, thus, leaving the land empty for the Israelites, who peacefully lived thereafter. The A.D. 20th-century version of this story is called the Conquest Theory, which I discussed above.

The Conquest Theory is widely considered the Bible’s theory of how the Israelites gained their homeland. Isserlin reports that Albright “accepted the basic biblical tradition of invasion and conquest” (1983: 85). Gottwald wrote,

A cursory reading of the Bible supports the conquest theory to such an extent that generations of readers never even considered another possibility. . . . Nothing could seem more conclusive. Thus the solidest piece of evidence for the conquest model is its great antiquity, deeply rooted in the old Israelite traditions. (1985: 192)

Butler viewed the Book of Joshua as brought together by a "compiler," who emphasized the "conquest of the land in which Israel conquered and maintained control until the days of the compiler" (1983: xxiii). Sharon stated, "Israel’s tradition . . . sees its own origin as a process of conquest by tribes of nomads coming from the desert and
their settlement in place of the urban Canaanite culture" (1994: 123; see also Dever 1990: 40, 41).

Even those who doubt the historicity of the biblical accounts assume that the Book of Joshua is a story of universal conquest. For example, Finkelstein rejected the "biblical narratives" (as he referred to the Book of Joshua) since he saw it as the primary source of the biblical narratives supporting the conquest paradigm, which he concluded does not measure with the archaeological record (1988: 22; see also Dever 1992: 103; Butler 1983: xxxvi; Lemche 1993: 174; Na’aman 1994: 223). (For a survey of recent attempts to decipher the Book of Joshua see Hess 1995.)

The belief in an all-encompassing, bloodthirsty conquest is not only an accepted theorem but provides theologians with soul-tearing guilt. Consider Gladson’s concern first expressed by a description of the "wholesale violence against the Canaanites."

"From the Christian perspective, how do we account for such brutality? How does it affect our contemporary attitude toward war?" (Gladson 1995: 16). "The problem of holy war continues to challenge our thinking" (Gladson 1995: 18; also Herr 1995b: 14, 15).

I suggest that any assumed theory needs to be cautiously reconsidered from time to time. A major inadequacy of the Conquest Theory is that it has no room in its explanatory process for the major theme of the biblical writers, that is, YHWH. It was the biblical writer’s contention that whatever happened in the events they recorded was due to His presence and power.

YHWH Was Present

The primary historiological concern of the biblical writers of the Book of Joshua is the belief in the supremacy of YHWH (יְהוָה) and His control over all events (Freedman 1967: 37-38). The omnipresence of YHWH is the theme of every phase of biblical writing. Writes Lemche,
The central and thoroughgoing theme is not that of, for example, the fate of the Israelites in relation to that of one of Israel's neighbours; rather, the narratives have to do with the relationship between Israel and the god, Yahweh, who elected them to be his own. In the Old Testament the fortunes of the Israelite people are always depicted in terms of varying relationships to Yahweh. (1990: 30)

That YHWH, in particular, is denoted, is clear because that specific name is used in the Book of Joshua 224 times, and at no time is either יהוה or יהושע used without the presence of יהוה for clarification.

In the Book of Joshua, the importance of YHWH to the Israelites is emphasized from the beginning (Josh 1:1). It is as though the biblical writers wanted to make certain everyone knew the "living" God was with them (Josh 3:10). It was He who was in control (Josh 3:15-17). When the feet of His priests touched the waters of the Jordan River, the river bed became dry. The battle for Jericho was not a battle; it was a miracle (Josh 6:1-5). And it was not a miracle elevating their leader Joshua, but rather a miracle of YHWH. Joshua himself was humbled with his face to the ground before the real leader of Israel (Josh 5:15). It was YHWH's priests who blew the trumpets and carried the ark of the Lord (Josh 6:8) and it was He who conquered Jericho. As Stern correctly states, "Joshua 6 expresses in a powerful way the belief that YHWH's power alone was ultimately responsible for the Israelite occupation of the land" (1991: 145).

Besides the battles for Jericho and Ai, the Israelites had only two campaigns during their conquest of the land. Both of the operations were defensive maneuvers, responding to the aggressive plans of others. Likewise, in their accounts of both campaigns, the biblical writers take great pains to declare YHWH the victor. The defeat of five kings and subsequent cities on the Southern Campaign (Joshua 10) was not because of military stratagem; more enemy soldiers died by the hailstones sent by YHWH than by human weapons (Josh 10:11). To make this point absolutely clear, the biblical writers report that the victory was accompanied by an event no human could control--a sign from the heavens (Josh 10:13). This was the most singular day in his-
tory because God stopped the sun on the word of a man (Josh 10:14). It is implied
that, without YHWH’s intercession, victory would not have occurred. The biblical
writers claimed YHWH Himself fought for Israel (Josh 10:42).

The final war against Hazor and its allies, like the campaign against the Amorite
kings, began as a reaction to the hostile intentions of the inhabitants of Canaan. The
biblical writers wrote that God appeared to Joshua and told him not to worry; the vic­
tory was sure (Josh 11:6). The Israelites’ surprise attack caused a panic among the
gathered Canaanites. The victory of the Israelites, begun “by the waters of Merom”
(Josh 11:7), initiated a long period of warfare (Josh 11:18). In all these battles, Joshua
followed YHWH’s instructions (Josh 11:15) and was, therefore, victorious.

The testimony recorded in Joshua 23 is that the victories the Israelites experi­
enced were miraculous and undeserved. God had been fighting for the Israelites (Josh
23:3, 9) as He promised (Josh 23:5). More credit was given to stinging hornets than to
Israel’s sword and bow, because it was God who directed the hornets (Josh 24:12).
Since no specific story is related that includes the presence of “hornets” in battle, we
can assume only that these “hornets” serve as a metaphorical symbol of God’s power,
outside of Israel’s expected military capability, to make Israel the dominant force in
Canaan (Harrison 1982: 757). In other words, the biblical writers implied that the out­
come of Israel’s military invasion went well beyond martial expectations, all because
YHWH fought for Israel. Not only was Israel’s control of the land credited to God’s
power, even the division of the land among the Israelites was to be accomplished by the
direct involvement of God (Num 26:55; Josh 14:1, 2). The biblical writers recorded
that each tribe was to be allotted its portion by God, not based on the size of a tribe or
conquest rights or military capability.

The Israelites were to divide the land by the casting of lots (נְזָרָה). According to
W. Dommershausen, the specific process of נְזָרָה is not known for certain, but proba­
bly involved small stones shaken out of some type of vessel (1977: 450; and Aune
1986: 172-173; cf. Mendelsohn 1962: 164, "The character and form of the lot in ancient Israel are not known"). At any rate, the casting of lots was a holy act and seen by the Israelites as a clear "answer and final decision of Yahweh, against which there is no appeal" (Dommershausen 1977: 452). Aune would see God’s involvement as evidence that the land "could not be alienated" from its recipient (1986: 172-173; note Josh 17:12-15 in which the tribe of Manasseh fruitlessly complains about its portion of land).

Hallo has found a good illustration for understanding the nature of the biblical lots of Joshua and other Old Testament books. He has republished a photograph of the "die of Iahali" first published in 1937 by Ferris J. Stephens (Hallo 1983: 27, with a short summary of its initial publication, an interpretation by Albright, and a news release of April 21, 1934, which first heralded this Yale University acquisition).

Hallo also provides a description of the "lots" used in Assyria and Babylonia with a translation into English of von Soden’s original translation of the Epic of Atrahasis describing dice being shaken from a bottle (1983: 21). In this story the order of their being cast from the bottle determined the die’s importance. With the Epic of Atrahasis in mind, one can better envision the Israelites shaking the dice of the eleven tribes (the Levities did not get an allotment). Each die was, perhaps, inscribed with the name or symbol of its tribe. They were expectant of which tribal die would first emerge from the cultic vessel and, thus, claim the first and, presumably more significant, allotment. The genius of this process was that it was outside the control of humans. Supposedly only YHWH could influence the die and, therefore, the land allotments. Not only did YHWH fight for Israel, as the victor, He also decided which tribe got what portion of the promised land.

The overriding belief in YHWH’s omnipresence in history is present in all the biblical books, but nowhere more forceful than in the Book of Joshua stories. In all its
stories, "there is one hero, and only one. It is God himself and to him Israel must give all praise and credit" (Wright 1984: 13).

The Conquest Theory looks for physical remains from events said to have been caused by the Divine. This in itself should give pause.

**The Relationship between the Book of Joshua and Archaeology**

One might expect that if the Book of Joshua accurately represents historical occurrences (even if caused or instigated by YHWH), archaeological investigations of sites said to be conquered by Joshua would yield evidences of that conquest. One problem faced by excavators is that the Book of Joshua provides very little specific information about the cities captured by the Israelites. Table 1, which summarizes the information about captured cities provided by the biblical writers, demonstrates the limited nature of the details of those incidents.

According to the Book of Joshua, the wall of Jericho fell and the city was burned. Ai was set on fire and left in ruin. Makkedah was utterly destroyed. Hebron was utterly destroyed and Hazor was burned. Nothing specific is said about Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, and Debir, except that whatever happened to the other cities happened to them.

As this summary suggests, the statements of what was done to these cities are in general terms with no specific, detailed descriptions provided. Regarding Jericho itself, about which the biblical writers provide the most comment, the biblical writers tell the readers nothing about what the city looked like after the destruction. Readers are left in a quandary: Should we expect that the Israelites dismantled Jericho stone by stone? What about Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Debir, and Hazor? Were all of their walls knocked down or was only one breach made in each of their walls, or is there some other possibility? Specifically, would a breech in Eglon's wall be
### TABLE 1

**SITES DESTROYED BY JOSHUA WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THEIR DESTRUCTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jericho</td>
<td>6:20</td>
<td>wall fell in its place (תָּהוֹם הָרְחַבִּים וַתֵּקָעֵדוּ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6:24</td>
<td>burned the city with fire (נָעֶשׂ אֵשׁ וַתַּכְּרֵס)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ai</td>
<td>8:19</td>
<td>set the city on fire (נָעֶשׂ אֵשׁ וַתַּכְּרֵס)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8:28</td>
<td>Joshua burned Ai; made it a heap forever (נָעֶשׂ אֵשׁ וַתַּכְּרֵס וַתַּרְגֹּשֶׁהֽוּ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makkedah</td>
<td>10:28</td>
<td>utterly destroyed it (them) (נָעֶשׂ אֵשׁ וַתַּכְּרֵס וַתַּרְגֹּשֶׁהֽוּ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libnah</td>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>nothing specific about city destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachish</td>
<td>10:32</td>
<td>nothing specific about city destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eglon</td>
<td>10:35</td>
<td>nothing specific about city destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebron</td>
<td>10:37</td>
<td>he utterly destroyed it (נָעֶשׂ אֵשׁ וַתַּכְּרֵס וַתַּרְגֹּשֶׁהֽוּ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debir</td>
<td>10:39</td>
<td>nothing specific about city destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazor</td>
<td>11:11</td>
<td>he burned Hazor with fire (נָעֶשׂ אֵשׁ וַתַּכְּרֵס וַתַּרְגֹּשֶׁהֽוּ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph (Josh 11:1) could conceivably be added to this list. It seems, however, that the pronoun "them" (Heb. נְחַלֶּהוֹ) of son לֹא לֵיתֶהוֹ (Josh 11:12) does not refer to these cities, but to the kings, since the "kings" are the closest antecedent to this pronoun and is in the masculine form of the pronoun. In any case, nothing specific in the text is said about the destruction of Madon, Shimron, or Achshaph.

2 Josh 10:37, 39 could be seen as implying the total destruction of Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Debir, but there is no specific statement in the text that describes the destruction of these cities.
considered by the biblical writers as constituting "utterly destroyed"? Unfortunately, we do not know. This lack of information is especially telling given the biblical writers' statement that the wars of Israel continued a long time (Josh 11:18). In other words, we have very little specific information about events that went on for a long time.

Of the 12 cities the biblical writers list as involved in conflict with the Israelites, only five are specifically noted as being destroyed (Jericho, Ai, Makkedah, Hebron, and Hazor). Even if we allow that the destruction of Libnah, Lachish, and Debir is included in summary statements, we have no biblical information about what specific acts the Israelites performed against them. Except in the case of Jericho, where we are told the wall fell "in its place," the biblical writers tell us nothing about the specific results of their conquest. In other words, did "utterly destroying them" (e.g., מַטְלָה סֵפֶר יִה, Josh 11:12) include the absolute leveling of all structures within a city, as well as the city walls and gates, or were some of the walls and buildings left standing? If מַטְלָה is to be understood in its most specific sense, as dedicated to YHWH, then we would expect that like Jericho and Ai all of the cities listed would remain empty, since מַטְלָה implies being given to YHWH, and would bar human use (see above for a discussion of the מַטְלָה). It seems highly unlikely that the biblical writers had this scenario in mind since—at the least in the case of Hebron—Caleb was allowed to live there (Josh 14:13). The מַטְלָה, then, in its most limited meaning was practiced only on Jericho and Ai.

From the description of the biblical writers, what specifically can we say about the cities the Israelites captured? We can say that the walls of Jericho fell (Josh 6:20) and that Jericho, Ai, and Hazor were burned (Josh 6:24; 8:19, 24; 11:11) and that the Israelites attacked and destroyed Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph. This is the totality of the information that the Book of Joshua provides about the physical results of the Israelite military successes. It is
Figure 3. Archaeological sites and the Book of Joshua.
also the information we have to compare with the archaeological data. (See Figure 3 for sites mentioned in the following discussion.)

Cities Conquered during the First Israelite Campaign: Jericho and Ai

Jericho (Tell es-Sultan)

Tell es-Sultan is a one-acre site located 10 km north of the Dead Sea. Given the flatness of the nearby surrounding area, its 21.5 m height is impressive. Across the modern Jericho-Galilee road lies 'Ein es-Sultan, the spring that waters the agricultural-based settlements of the area (Kenyon 1993a: 674). Tell es-Sultan is recognized as the oldest urban center so far discovered, with settlements that have been tentatively dated to the eighth millennium B.C. (Aharoni 1979: 5, 6, 133).

Modern research at the site began with C. Warren, who first excavated at Tell es-Sultan in 1867 for the Palestine Exploration Fund (Warren 1876:162-201; Kenyon 1978: 264; Bienkowski 1986: 1). Warren sank a number of shafts, some as deep as 40 feet (Warren 1876: 194) of which at least two were found in later excavations (Kenyon 1978: 264). Before excavation began, Warren dreamed of finding "colossal figures" like Layard at Nineveh (1876: 169), but in the end he concluded that not much was to be learned since whatever was excavated (mudbricks) turned to dust (1876: 170, 171).

E. Sellin and C. Watzinger formed an Austro-German team that excavated from 1907-1909 (1907 April 5-26; 1908, January 2-April 8; 1909 January 15-April 2; Sellin and Watzinger 1913: 3, 4). According to the excavators, they uncovered three superimposed civilizations: pre-Israelite (Vorisraelitische Periode; Sellin and Watzinger, 97-121), Israelite and Jewish (Die israelitische und jüdische Periode; Sellin and Watzinger, 122-159), and Byzantine (Die byzantinische Periode; Sellin and Watzinger, 160-168). Additionally, they gave a one-page report on their Arabic finds (Die muslimische Funde; Sellin and Watzinger, 169). While Sellin’s and Watzinger’s charts,
drawings, and plans look impressive, their excavations were conducted during the formative years of archaeological technique with an emphasis on exposing architecture and are of "limited" use (Kenyon 1993a: 674). Their primary deficiency was a lack of dating, since ceramic typology had yet to be honed to a useful state. Without a proper way of associating the evidence, their maps, drawings, and excellent plans are of little use (Mooney 1991: 64). Despite these problems, at least some writers saw these excavations as supporting the biblical account of Joshua (e.g., Kent 1918: 126-127).

J. Garstang organized the next series of Jericho excavations (1930-1936). Garstang was the first director of the newly created Department of Antiquities under British-mandate Palestine (Moorey 1991: 49). He served in that capacity for six years (1920-1926), accomplishing much in the way of organization. Garstang had had his initial training with Petrie in Egypt and had excavated numerous Palestinian sites.

What precipitated Garstang’s excavations at Jericho was an article by Watzinger stating that Jericho had been largely abandoned at the time of Joshua (Moorey 1991: 64; Watzinger 1926). From his six excavation seasons Garstang concluded that the history of Jericho had stretched from the Neolithic through the "Bronze Age" and, after a 100-year lacuna, resumed in the Iron Age (Garstang and Garstang 1948: 46, 77). Garstang’s reconstruction of Jericho’s history saw five superimposed cities, as illustrated in Table 2.

To the point of this discussion is Garstang’s conclusion that he had found substantiation for the conquest of Jericho recorded in the Book of Joshua.

The graphic description of Jericho in the Bible has now been amplified by an examination of the ruins themselves; for remains of a walled city have been found and traced beneath the debris of later times which corresponds in all its material remains with such descriptive details of the city as can be gleaned from the biblical narrative. (Garstang and Garstang 1948: 19)

This correlation with the Bible was based on the finding of what Garstang and "brother archaeologists" saw as a Late Bronze Age wall.

The visible effects of this catastrophe were summarized in a field report (dated March 2nd, 1930) endorsed by brother archaeologists from which we quote the
The main defenses of Jericho in the Late Bronze Age 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. . . . 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 and Garstang 1948: 136)

Garstang and Garstang believed that this city (his City IV) met its doom as a result of an earthquake that struck about 1400 B.C. Such an earthquake was consistent, according to them, with the story of Joshua's conquest (1948: 138-140).

Garstang and Garstang's claims fired the popular religious press and were seen as evidence not only of Joshua's conquest but as counterevidence against critical scholarship (e.g., Prescott 1933: 113-118, note the chapter title "Ancient Jericho Testifies"). For many this "provided dramatic confirmation of the essential historicity of the story in Joshua 6" (Coogan 1990: 19).

**TABLE 2**

**GARSTANG'S FIVE CITIES OF JERICHO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3000-2500 B.C.</td>
<td>City I:</td>
<td>Babylonian Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2500-2000 B.C.</td>
<td>City II:</td>
<td>Babylonian Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1750 B.C.</td>
<td>City III:</td>
<td>Canaanite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750-1600 B.C.</td>
<td>City III:</td>
<td>Hyksos Stronghold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1580-1480 B.C.</td>
<td>City IV:</td>
<td>Egyptian Domination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1480-1400 B.C.</td>
<td>City IV:</td>
<td>Egyptian Suzerainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900-700 B.C.</td>
<td>City V:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Based on Garstang and Garstang 1948: xvi.
In 1951 K. Kenyon wrote an article reviewing Garstang’s work at Jericho in preparation for renewed excavations at that site. She did this, she said, at Garstang’s request, since he acknowledged the growth in archaeological information since his excavations (Kenyon 1951: 101, 122). In Kenyon’s assessment of his Late Bronze Age city, she noted that Garstang’s conclusions were not unanimously accepted even when first proposed, specifically noting articles by Albright (1939) and Vincent (1935) (Kenyon 1951: 104). Albright had criticized Garstang’s too early date (1939: 18-20), while Vincent had disagreed with Garstang’s conclusions, saying his Late Bronze Age dates were "extremely too high" (by at least a century, 1935: 599, 600).

Kenyon’s evaluation, graciously allowing Garstang’s errors as a result of a lack of detailed ceramic information about LBI when he excavated, was that LBI materials were "completely lacking at Jericho both in the city and in the tombs" (1951: 115). She saw habitation at Jericho as ending at the end of MBII (somewhere between "1580-1550," 1951: 117) followed by an abandonment of 150 years (1951: 113). The Late Bronze Age city (City IV) had no walls, according to her, and what had been thought were the walls of this settlement really belonged to City II (1951: 119; Kenyon 1957: 261-262; "Of the defenses of the period, nothing survives. The double wall ascribed to the Late Bronze Age in the 1930-1936 excavations is composed in part of two successive walls from the Early Bronze Age" [Kenyon 1993a: 680]). According to Kenyon, the Late Bronze Age settlement existed for only a short time during the 14th century B.C., with no occupation at all during the 13th century B.C. (1951: 121-122).

Her concluding laudatory remark about Garstang’s work was that "each generation of excavators should leave for their successors records as full as those of Professor Garstang, which have alone made possible this discussion" (1951: 123; which contrasts significantly with N. Glueck’s assessment of Garstang: "An ideal example of how not to proceed" [King 1983: 91]).
Kenyon's own excavations were conducted from 1952-58 (see Kenyon 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1960 for preliminary reports). During those excavations she found little Late Bronze Age pottery (1978: 273). In her preliminary reports, Kenyon supported her former conclusions about Jericho in the Late Bronze Age, which she had based on Garstang's evidence. In other words, Kenyon's research found that the Middle Bronze Age city was followed by a gap between settlements of some 900 years, with the Middle Bronze Age city followed by an Iron Age settlement (Kenyon 1952: 71). In addition to the problem of lack of habitation, Kenyon found evidence of soil "quarrying" for sites off the tell. She suggested that this digging led to the eradication of earth layers, denuding much of the later materials, especially the Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age settlements (1952: 71; 1978: 265). What little evidence there was for the Late Bronze Age, she assigned to the 14th century B.C. (similar information is found in Kenyon 1953 where she discusses Jericho by period, but does not mention the missing Late Bronze Age materials [Kenyon 1957: 262]).

Not until 1954 did Kenyon herself discover any evidence of the Late Bronze Age (Kenyon 1954: 61). The evidence consisted of "foundations for a wall," a floor (about 1 m in area), a tabûn, and a juglet (Kenyon 1954: 61; 1957: 261). Kenyon concluded that, while the evidence was small, it did demonstrate that there was a settlement at Jericho in the 14th century, which Joshua might have attacked, but she wrote that the existence of such evidence does not "prove the date of the destruction of Jericho by the Israelites" (1954: 61). A later attempt by Kenyon to find more of the Late Bronze Age stratum was unsuccessful (Kenyon 1960: 107-108; see also Kenyon 1981: 371).

Bienkowski, who surveyed the available data on the Late Bronze Age Jericho, concluded that the Jericho settlement of that period fit well within the spectrum of Late Bronze Age villages. It was also his conclusion that the Late Bronze Age settlement probably did not have a defensive wall (1986: 124, 125; see also Coogan 1990: 21,
who seems to suggest that there were no Late Bronze Age materials found by Kenyon at Tell es-Sultan).

Kenyon's interpretation of the Late Bronze Age settlement at Jericho, that it was an unwalled village of the 14th century, probably reflects the present consensus of the archaeological community (Holland 1992: 736). Such an interpretation obviously runs counter to the expectations of readers of the Joshua stories with the walls of the city playing such a significant role in the account. Kenyon herself said that "it is impossible to associate the destruction of Jericho" with a 13th-century Exodus and suggested that archaeology cannot provide an answer to this problem (1978: 273).

**Ai (et-Tell)**

According to Callaway, the association of et-Tell with biblical Ai has been certain since at least 1924 (1993: 39). This conclusion was brought about by an article in which Albright discussed the identification of Ai and Beth-Aven (1924b). After briefly summarizing the earlier speculations and suggestions of Ai's identity, Albright provided what he called the "biblical evidence" for Ai (1924b: 142; of the earlier reports that made the et-Tell/Ai connection, C. Wilson's [1869] is most notable). This evidence consisted of two main points: (1) Ai remained a ruin from the conquest until the composition of the Book of Joshua, and (2) Ai was located close to Bethel and Beth-aven (1924b: 143-146).

These points plus Albright's own reconnoitering led him to conclude that et-Tell was the best candidate for biblical Ai. His sherdings of the site convinced him that settlement on et-Tell ceased after the "Middle Canaanite" period, with the later Israelite settlement of Ai to be located at "Ḥirbet Ḥaiyān" (1924b: 145, 146; in actuality, the pottery that Albright described as "Middle Canaanite [Middle Bronze]" would today be identified as Early Bronze Age, perhaps, specifically EBIV, i.e., "hand-modelled ... coarse texture ... incised bands and strokes ... pattern burnished ... net designs"
[1924b: 146], in which case we should understand Albright to mean MBI). Since he identified only "Middle Canaanite" pottery with none from later times, Albright assumed that the Israelite settlement of "Ai" was at another location (1924b: 146).

Albright himself was surprised that his inspection of the site, on many trips and with many colleagues, had failed to yield any Late Bronze Age pottery. This led him to conclude that "Ai was destroyed centuries before the invasion of Israel under Joshua" (1924b: 147). The 1928 excavations at et-Tell by John Garstang seemed to undermine Albright's conclusion.

Garstang was the first to excavate at et-Tell. No formal reports of these excavations were ever issued, but the general results of his work were reported as supportive of the biblical accounts.

Every identified site mentioned in the oldest sources (J,E and JE) of the Books of Joshua and Judges was revisited; while three selected cities, Jericho, Ai and Hazor, were examined more thoroughly with the spade. The impression now became positive. No radical flaw was found at all in the topography and archaeology of these documents. Moreover, a study of the subject-matter shows that these old portions of the Books contain after all the core of the historical narrative, and are relatively free from discrepancies, giving a straightforward and fairly continuous account of the sequence of events. (Garstang 1931: vii)

He wrote that the Late Bronze Age wall followed the Middle Bronze Age wall with a "considerable proportion of L.B.A.i [pottery] including (in the collection of the American School) a Cypriote wish-bone handle, but nothing of Mykenaean [sic] date or character, nor any local fabrics of a date later than 1400 B.C." (1931: 355-356).

According to Callaway, the supportive materials for Garstang's claims are missing (1993: 39).

J. Marquet-Krause next conducted a three-season campaign at et-Tell from 1933 to 1935. Due to an unfortunate illness, Marquet-Krause died before the excavations were completed (Marquet-Krause 1949a: 1), although an outline of the site's history was gained. (The final report of the project was prepared by the excavator's husband Yves Marquet and issued in two volumes in 1949 [Marquet-Krause 1949a, 1949b].)
Specific to this study, the Marquet-Krause excavations supported the earlier conclusions of Albright, that there were two major periods of habitation at et-Tell, Early Bronze Age and Iron Age.

That there were only two major settlement periods at et-Tell was again demonstrated during the third series of excavations conducted in the late 1960s and 1970s. Sponsored by American Schools of Oriental Research and directed by Joseph A. Callaway, this project launched five seasons of excavations (Callaway 1993: 40).

Table 3 summarizes the results of Callaway's team. According to them, Ai's largest settlement was during the various stages of the Early Bronze Age (Pre-Urban-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Dating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Urban</td>
<td>EB IB</td>
<td>3100-3000 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban A</td>
<td>EB IC</td>
<td>3000-2860 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban B</td>
<td>EB IIA</td>
<td>2860-2720 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EB IIIB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban C</td>
<td>EB IIIA</td>
<td>2720-2400 B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EB IIIB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>1220-1050 B.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Based on Callaway 1993: 40.

Urban A, B, C). The excavators found that the Iron Age settlement was placed directly on top of the Early Bronze Age with no settlement in between (Callaway 1993: 44).
Thus, the original suggestions of Albright, that there was no settlement at et-Tell during the Late Bronze Age, have been confirmed by the two most recent excavations.

The archaeological data, as interpreted by the excavators of both Ai and Jericho, provide no information about an Israelite conquest during the Late Bronze Age. While Jericho did have an ephemeral settlement, Ai (i.e., et-Tell) has not revealed any evidence of conquest or even settlement during that period.

Cities Conquered during the Second Israelite Campaign: Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir

Makkedah

The location of Makkedah is uncertain. Albright in the first quarter of the 20th century A.D. suggested that Makkedah was Deir-ed-dibbān (1921: 6; 1923: 14). He later changed his mind ("for various compelling reasons") and suggested that Makkedah was to be identified with Tell es-Safi (1924c: 9). Aharoni's cautious suggestion that Makkedah should be located near Lachish (1979: 278, n. 73) is safe, yet not specific enough to be helpful as a locator. Noth suggested a location south and east of Lachish near the northeast corner of the third district of the Book of Joshua's land division (Noth 1937: 35, 36). Still others have suggested other sites (Dorsey 1980: 185 lists six sites that have been suggested for Makkedah). Most of these suggested identifications are from earlier times. More recent writers are nonspecific. Gold following Albright considered Tell es-Safi as a likely site but acknowledged its identity is "uncertain" (Gold 1962: 228). W. LaSor also wrote that some suggest Tell es-Safi but was non-committal himself (1986: 226; Dorsey 1980: 185 adds five other scholars who acknowledge that Makkedah's present identity is unknown). While all of these suggestions have something to offer (i.e., a suggested location) none are geographically satisfactory (Kotter 1992: 478).
The primary problem of locating Makkedah is that it is mentioned only in the Book of Joshua (Josh 10: 10, 16, 17, 21, 28, 29; 12:16; 15:41) and none of the references provide much geographical help. The only biblical locator is that Makkedah was "in the lowland" (Josh 15:33: Heb. הָנָּב). When listed with other sites, on one list it is placed with Gederoth, Beth-dagon, and Naamah (Josh 15:41, none of which are presently identified) and in another list it is grouped with Libnah, Adullam, and Bethel (Josh 12:15, 16). Such inconsistency in grouping Makkedah with different sites does not help in locating it. Y. Aharoni noted that Makkedah is missing from Josh 15:41, a boundary statement where it would be expected (1979: 278, note 73), an additional non-helpful point.

Dorsey’s arguments in favor of Khirbet Beit Maqdûm for the site known by Eusebius as Makkedah (following Holzinger, Thomsen, Elliger, and Noth, as cited by Dorsey) seem plausible, even convincing (Dorsey 1980: 188-192). On the other hand, Khirbet Beit Maqdûm’s lack of significant pre-Byzantine archaeological evidence makes it unlikely that it had anything to do with the Book of Joshua’s stories. Dorsey has suggested that the Byzantine settlers of Khirbet Beit Maqdûm came from the nearby Khirbet el-Qom, a site located about midway between Hebron and Lachish which overlooks the Shephelah (Dorsey 1980: 190; Geraty 1972: 1). With them they brought a latent form of the name Makkedah to the new settlement (Dorsey 1980: 191). While this suggestion is, again, encouraging, it is also disingenuous, since Dorsey also admits that Khirbet el-Qom, likewise, lacks Late Bronze Age materials. (In salvage excavations, Khirbet el-Qom produced evidence of the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, Iron II, Persian, and Hellenistic [Holladay 1971; Geraty 1972: 2, 3]. Tombs found at the same site were Iron Age [Dever 1969-1970].)

Dorsey’s cautious attitude about the historical reliability of the stories casts doubts on his assertion that the geographical features of the conquest accounts must make sense (1980: 186). The historical and geographical reliability of a story are
related. If there are ancient examples of fictitious accounts being fastidious about geographical details, they should be produced not just assumed. On the other hand, Cross and Wright find the geographical information of Joshua 13-19 "the most important passages in the OT for the biblical topographer" (Cross and Wright 1956: 202). In any case, Khirbet el-Qom has produced no archaeological evidence that would help us better understand the stories of the Book of Joshua (see Dever 1993a: 1233-1235; 1969-1970 and Holladay 1971 for a report on salvage excavations and the limited survey conducted at Khirbet el-Qom).

In the end, despite Rainey's assumption that the question of Makkedah's identity is settled, and therefore, the issues revolving around site identification in the Shephelah are ended (1980: 194), the identity of Makkedah is unknown. From those sites that have been suggested, we have no archaeological data that would assist us in better understanding the biblical stories relating to Makkedah.

Libnah

Unlike Makkedah, the history of Libnah's interaction in Israel's history was long-spanned (assuming that the Libnah mentioned in the Book of Joshua is the same as noted in later stories, e.g., Josh 10: 29, 31, 32, 39; 12:15; 15:42; 21:13; 2 Kgs 8:22; 19:8; 23:31; 24:18; 1 Chr 6:57; 2 Chr 21:10; 1 Sam 37:8; Jer 52:1). If one were to read the list of conquered cities in Joshua 10 as an ordered list, it would seem likely that Libnah was located between Makkedah and Lachish, since Libnah was conquered after Makkedah and before Lachish (Josh 10: 29, 31).

Three main suggestions for the identification of Libnah have been made: Tell es-Safii (a.k.a. Tel Zafit), Tell Bornat, and Tell Judeideh. Albright popularized the association between Tell es-Safii and Libnah (1921:6). According to Stern, many have made the same connection on etymological grounds since there is commonality between the Arabic name Tell es-Safii, which means "the white mound," and Libnah, which is a

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Hebrew word that means "white" (Stern 1993: 1522). The western slopes of Tell eš-Šafi are white cliffs. Stern has concluded that since other sites in the region likewise have white cliffs (e.g., Tel 'Erani), this is a weak link between the two sites. Albright himself did not stress an etymological connection between Tell eš-Šafi and Libnah, stating only that "various scholars" had made the connection between the two sites (1923: 13). Albright's argument for Tell eš-Šafi as Libnah followed topographical considerations, primarily the campaigns of Joshua and Sennacherib (1923: 13-15; also Wright 1971). In the records of these military feats he saw topographical justification that Tell eš-Šafi fits the location of Libnah.

On the other hand, Stern followed the excavators of Tell eš-Šafi and suggested that it is actually biblical Gath (Stern 1993: 1522). In any case, the archaeology of Tell eš-Šafi is not any help in explaining the stories of the Book of Joshua.

The excavators (Bliss-Macalister) labelled the strata they discovered as "Early Pre-Israelite," "Late Pre-Israelite," "Jewish," and "Seleucid" (see Table 4). The pottery drawings of Bliss-Macalister demonstrate that they discovered material from several periods of Early Bronze, Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Ages (not important for this discussion but of interest is the later Philistine ware, the various Iron Age periods, Hellenistic, and Roman finds [Bliss and Macalister 1902: plates 23-63]; it should be noted that these plates reflect the findings of several sites in the area, including Tell Zakariya, Tell eš-Šafi, Tell Judeideh, and Tell Sandahannah among others, see Bliss and Macalister 1902: 1 for an explanation). Among the problems that limited Bliss and Macalister's finds was that, at the time of their excavations, Tell eš-Šafi was occupied by an Arab village and two cemeteries, which meant that Bliss's and Macalister's digging areas could not be connected and the amount of exposed area was limited (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 28, 29). While they found many interesting artifacts, Bliss and Macalister found nothing that could be directly associated with the Israelites of Joshua's
TABLE 4
TELL EŠ-SAFI: BLISS-MACALISTER AND ALBRIGHT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Bliss-Macalister</th>
<th>Albright</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Early Pre-Israelite&quot;</td>
<td>(?) - 1500 BC</td>
<td>3000-1800 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Late Pre-Israelite&quot;</td>
<td>1500-800 BC</td>
<td>1800-1000 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Jewish&quot;</td>
<td>800-300 BC</td>
<td>1000-587 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Seleucid&quot;</td>
<td>300-BC</td>
<td>400-100 BC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Based on Stern 1993: 1523.

time or the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan or the Israelite conquest of Tell eš-Safi (Libnah). An additional problem was that the excavations at Tell eš-Safi lasted only four months (Albright 1923: 15). The excavators themselves associated Tell eš-Safi with Gath (Bliss and Macalister 1902: 63-66). As noted, eventually Albright changed his mind about Tell eš-Safi and identified it with Makkedah. He then associated Tell Bornat with Libnah without explanation (1924c: 9), a suggestion followed by many (Noth 1937: 35; Elliger 1934: 60-63; Rainey 1980: 198; and J. Peterson who said that the evidence "strongly supports" associating biblical Libnah and Bornat, 1992: 323). Since Tell Bornat has not been excavated, no specific archaeological information has been obtained from that site either to validate, enhance, or repudiate its identification or its association with the Book of Joshua Israelites.

Tell Judeideh was excavated by Bliss and Macalister during the same archaeological campaign as Tell eš-Safi (Bliss 1900a; 1900b; Bliss and Macalister 1902: 44-51). Like all of the sites excavated during this period, the archaeological work, while significant, was historically unhelpful. Writes M. Broshi, "The report of the excavation, published in 1902, greatly advanced archaeological research, but as a pioneering work
is deficient in some respects" (1993b: 838). According to Broshi, most scholars would identify Tell Judeideh with Moresheth-Gath, not Libnah (1993b: 838). In any case, nothing in the excavations of Bliss-Macalister at Tell Judeideh helps in understanding the Book of Joshua story.

**Lachish**

The general consensus among archaeologists is that Tell ed-Duweir is to be equated with biblical Lachish. (This contrary to Ahlström [1980 and 1983] who suggested Tell ‘Ētūn as more likely. Ahlström’s objections to Tell ed-Duweir are answered by Davies [1982: 25-28; 1985: 92-96]. By Ahlström’s discussion [1993: 721-723] and his comment that Tell ed-Duweir is usually identified with Lachish [1993: 795] it seems he has been mostly convinced about the identity of Tell ed-Duweir with Lachish, although he still maintains some doubts [1993: 796, n. 3].) Wright (1971) provides the classic arguments for this identification.

The two main excavation phases at Tell ed-Duweir were conducted 40 years apart. From 1932-1938 a British team led by J. L. Starkey dug at Tell ed-Duweir to understand better the ceramic corpus of the region (Starkey 1933: 190-191). Their plan was a broad-ranging project that was cut short only by the untimely death of Starkey. That first season three major projects were begun: the excavation of the city’s defenses including the roadway and inner and outer gate, a Persian period governor’s residence, and a probe on the tell’s northeast corner (Starkey 1933). The second season continued along the lines of the initial season, during which time the Fosse temple (found by excavating the "Hyksos" fosse, Starkey 1935: 200) was discovered (Starkey 1934). The third season was a six months’ winter campaign (Starkey 1935: 198). The excavators found a "Judean Palace-Fort" under the Persian residency and an additional "Palace Fort" nearby (Starkey 1935: 203). The fourth season finished the excavation of the northeast "saddle," which then became the excavation dump (Starkey 1936: 178,
During that season, the workmen continued clearing the ancient road-way, and the excavation of the Fosse Temple complex. In addition, a tomb that contained 500 skeletons and the "Lachish Letters" was discovered (Starkey 1936: 179, 182-184, 188). The fifth season was Starkey's last. During that season a concerted effort was placed on finding tombs (especially Late Bronze Age), finding the bottom of an Iron Age tunnel, and continued work on several acropolis projects (Starkey 1937a). The final excavation report of the 1930s by the Wellcome Marston expedition team was penned by C. Inge (1938), who reported Starkey's murder, the final work on the Iron Age tunnel, and the final phase of cleaning the Fosse temple.

The second major excavation team began work in 1973, excavating primarily in areas previously dug by the Wellcome-Marston team (Ussishkin 1993: 898). The more recent excavations have not significantly changed the picture of the Late Bronze Age at Lachish. O. Tufnell calls the city associated with the LBI Fosse temple the "unknown city" (1958: 48), giving some idea of its size by that appellation, assuming that it existed by the presence of the temple. The findings of both of these teams suggest that Tell ed-Duweir was unfortified during the Late Bronze Age (Ussishkin 1993: 899; 1992: 118). While it did become a significant city during the Late Bronze Age, it was only in the later part of LBII that it reached its peak and even then it was unfortified, except for the possibility that houses along the ridge were built together forming a wall (Ussishkin 1993: 899; 1992: 118). In fact, Ussishkin acknowledges that the data available for Late Bronze Age Tell ed-Duweir are minimal (1993: 899). Table 5 summarizes the Late Bronze Age evidence provided by the excavators.

From Table 5 we can see that the destructions closest to the Late Bronze Age reveal that the city was destroyed at the end of Middle Bronze and Late Bronze Ages. As to direct connections between Joshua or the Israelites and the Late Bronze Age at Tell ed-Duweir, we have nothing satisfying. Tufnell has attempted to make general
TABLE 5
LATE BRONZE AGE DESTRUCTION LEVELS AT LACHISH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MB IIA</td>
<td>Fortified city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. 1500 B.C. DESTRUCTION BY FIRE-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBI-LBII</td>
<td>Unfortified city, Fosse Temple 1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. 1200 B.C. DESTRUCTION BY FIRE-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBII</td>
<td>Unfortified city, Acropolis Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. 1150-1130 B.C. DESTRUCTION BY FIRE-------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Based on Ussishkin 1993: 898.

connections between the Fosse temple and the Israelite cultus (1978: 300-302), but those influences are tenuous at best and provide no historical information.

Albright saw in the latest LBII destruction (Level VI city) evidence for the Israelite conquest (1937: 23-24). If that connection is accurate, it means, as Ussishkin has pointed out, that the Israelite conquest occurred during the middle to later part of the 12th century B.C. (1992: 120).

When Starkey presented a lecture on "Lachish as Illustrating the Bible" he focused on the finds from the time of Sennacherib and did not even mention Joshua or any early Israelites (Starkey 1937a). While that lecture was presented nearly 60 years ago, we have no more certain archaeological evidence that associates Lachish with the early Israelites.

Eglon

The identity of Eglon is uncertain. Its two most likely candidates (judging by supporters) are Tell el-Hesi (Wright 1971; Albright 1924c: 8) and Tell 'Aitun (Noth
1938: 95; Rainey 1980: 197; 1983: 3, 6, 9-10; see also C. Ehrlich 1992 for a summary of the history of Eglon's identification). Wright noted that the results of the Petrie-Bliss excavations and his own survey demonstrated that Tell el-Hesi had been a fortress "dating at least as early as the Late Bronze Age (ca. 15th-13th cents., B.C.) and ending in the Persian Period" which stood on earlier ruins (1971: 81). This status as a fort and an outpost of Lachish, combined with the geographical setting of the tells of the region, especially of the identity of Tell ed-Duweir as Lachish, convinced Wright that Tell el-Hesi was the Eglon of Joshua's time (1971: 85).

The excavations of Petrie in 1890 at Tell el-Hesi were foundational to Near Eastern archaeology (Albright 1971: 29; Matthers 1989: 62, 63). Tell el-Hesi became the first Near Eastern archaeological site to be excavated with "scientific archaeological methods" (Fargo 1993: 630). Petrie's work was continued by F. Bliss, who spent several weeks with Petrie at Meidum, Egypt, learning his methods (Matthers 1989: 49, 50). Bliss's own excavations consisted of five sessions conducted during 1891-1893 (Bliss 1898; Matthers 1989: 48-58). Petrie himself excavated Tell el-Hesi, thinking it was Lachish, thus the title of his book Tell el Hesy (Lachish) (Petrie 1891). While Bliss rehearsed Petrie's reasons for Petrie's association of Tell el-Hesi with Lachish, Bliss found no supporting evidence for such a conclusion (Bliss 1894:16-17, 139, also see Petrie 1891: 18-20).

There is no doubt that both Petrie and Bliss found evidence of a Late Bronze settlement (see Petrie 1891:plate 1:4.viii where Bucchero ware, "milk bowls," Mycenaean ware and bilbils are exhibited; Bliss also found the first Amarna tablet found in Palestine [Bliss 1894: 52-60; Pritchard 1969 490; Albright 1942]). The Late Bronze Age is what both Petrie and Bliss called "Phoenician" (Matthers 1989: 47). What is unusual is that these Late Bronze materials included bichrome ware and other ceramics from the early part of that period (LBI). The problem is that little archaeologically-specific, much less biblically-specific, can be determined from either
of their finds. They found buildings and walls, but it is difficult to determine what they found outside a general picture of the levels they uncovered (see Matthers's summary Table 1, which he labels a "Tentative Interpretation" of Petrie's and Bliss's findings, 1989: 59, 60). Outside of the general recognition that together "they laid solid foundations for future archaeological work at Tell el-Hesi and throughout the Near East" (Matthers 1989: 63), nothing Petrie or Bliss found concretely helps us identify Tell el-Hesi with the stories of the Book of Joshua. We can say there was some type of settlement at Tell el-Hesi during the entire Late Bronze Age and, thus, it could be a city involved in one of its stories, but nothing found by Petrie/Bliss suggested which city it was or how it might have been involved.

The second series of excavations was conducted by the Joint Archaeological Expedition (Fargo 1993: 630). These excavations continued through eight seasons between 1970-1983 and were affiliated with American Schools of Oriental Research.

Unfortunately, these later and more sophisticated excavations did not reach Late Bronze Age strata, as Petrie/Bliss had, although sherds from that time were uncovered (Fargo 1993: 632). What conclusions we reach about Tell el-Hesi's Late Bronze Age history must be based, then, on Petrie's and Bliss's work.

The most recent excavators remain unsure of Tell el-Hesi's ancient identity (Fargo 1993: 630). As to its association with Eglon, they think it unlikely. Fargo recently wrote, "No conclusive evidence for this has yet come to light. Biblical accounts place Eglon in the Shephelah, and Hesi's location several kilometers west of these foothills makes the identification unlikely" (Fargo 1993: 630).

As stated, the chief argument against the association of Tell el-Hesi with Eglon is its location to the west of, and, thus, outside of, the Shephelah. If, as Elliger argued, Josh 10:34-37 is an exact logical itinerary, then Tell el-Hesi's location in the coastal plain would virtually eliminate it from the possibility of being Eglon (Elliger 1934: 54). Rainey agreed with Elliger and thought Tell Aitun a more likely candidate for
Eglon: "Tell 'Aitūn (Tel 'Eton) which would be on a more natural route [for the attacking Israelites] from Lachish to Hebron via Wāḍī el-Jizā'ir (Nahal Adorayim)" (Rainey 1983: 10). The question that arises is whether the Israelites were following a logical itinerary. The picture, as painted in Joshua 10, is that the Israelites launched an unplanned preemptive strike against five Amorite kings (Josh 10:3-9). Is it necessary that these five kings lived along a logical itinerary for war or that they were fought in that order? They needed only to be five in-leagued kings. Hoffmeier finds an intended itinerary problematic (1994: 167).

Nothing in the text insists that Eglon be in the Shephelah. One could see even in Adonizedek's call-to-arms (Josh 10:3) a petition to the dominant forces of the hill country (Jerusalem and Hebron), the Shephelah (Jarmuth and Lachish), and the nearest power of the coastal plain (Eglon, if it were Tell el-Hesi).

In addition, while it is agreed that Tell el-Hesi's location is out of the Shephelah and out of the way of a logical itinerary, such disjointed actions are not unknown in war. Consider that according to the biblical account Gezer's king and army were defeated at Lachish (Josh 10: 32, 33). This is militarily plausible, if we grant the story's message that the army of Gezer went to help Lachish and was defeated at Lachish, but not logical or sequential, if we remember that Gezer's army is not said to have helped those previously defeated at Makkedah or Libnah, both sites assumably closer to Gezer than was Lachish. Elliger's arguments are persuasive, but granting them too much weight only adds to the likelihood that we are being misled by arguments that are based on information the text does not provide.

If Tell 'Aitun is Eglon, its history provides little help for the conquest stories. Tell 'Aitun, on the natural route between Lachish and Hebron (Rainey 1976a: 252), has not been excavated or, to my knowledge, even properly surveyed. Tombs near Tell 'Aitun have been excavated (Department of Antiquities 1968; Tsaferis and Edelstein 1969). While Rainey saw the discovery of these 12th-century Late Bronze Age tombs
(which lie several hundred meters from the Tell 'Aitun, Department of Antiquities 1968: 194) as additional evidence for its identity as Eglon (Rainey 1976: 252), actual excavation at Tell 'Aitun is needed before its history can be evaluated. Such evidence is not now available.

**Hebron**

The most likely candidate for the Hebron stories of the Book of Joshua is Tel Hebron. Tel Hebron was first excavated by P. Hammond and more recently by A. Ofer (Ofer 1993: 607). Only a summary of the results of these excavations has been published (Ofer 1993). Tel Hebron has archaeological materials from the Early Bronze Ages through the Iron Ages. Throughout that long period only during EBIV and the Late Bronze Age was occupation possibly lacking on the tell. Ofer suggested that it is possible that a residential area remained during the Late Bronze Age, since tombs from that period were found nearby, but he thinks it was a small, and probably, temporary settlement (1993: 608, 609).

In truth, we know little about either Tel Hebron or the Hebron area. Our information is limited even more, due to lack of any excavation within the city of Hebron itself. At present we know nothing about Hebron during the Late Bronze Age that could help us better understand the stories of the Book of Joshua.

**Debir**

Because of the influence of Albright, Tell Beit Mirsim has been the prime candidate for Debir for much of the 20th century A.D. The pervasiveness of his suggestion can be seen in the book edited by D.W. Thomas, *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, where the archaeology and history of Tell Beit Mirsim are discussed under the title "Debir" (Thomas 1978; Albright 1978: 207-220).

Albright’s initial identification of Debir with Tell Beit Mirsim was based on three points (Albright 1978: 207). First, Albright read the biblical stories to imply that
Debir should be located at the intersection of the Shephelah and the Negev, which Tell Beit Mirsim is. Second, Tell Beit Mirsim was the largest, then unidentified, site in the region south and west of Hebron. Third, the surface pottery Albright found (and subsequently in excavation) paralleled Albright’s interpretation of the biblical stories.

Furthermore, the "upper springs" and "lower springs" (Josh 15:19; Heb. הָרָמוּת הַגֹּאָלָה; Albright "gullôh") were interpreted by Albright to be the cisterns or "underground basins fed by springs under the accumulated alluvium" (Albright 1978: 208; Dever 1993c: 648). His discovery of these "basins" and destruction layers immediately below Philistine layers suggested to Albright that in this particular aspect of the Joshua account "we are dealing . . . with authentic oral tradition going back to the period when western Judah was conquered by the Israelites" (Albright 1978: 208).

The Late Bronze Age at Tell Beit Mirsim was represented by strata C₁ and C₂ (Albright 1932: 37). According to Albright, MBIIC (Stratum D) was followed by an undetermined period of abandonment before city C₁ was built (1932: 37). City C₁ was itself destroyed and was followed, without a break in time, by C₂. By Albright’s reckoning Tell Beit Mirsim’s second Late Bronze Age city C₂ was established by 1380 B.C. Wrote Albright,

The beginning of the occupation of C₂ can hardly be placed after the time of Amenophis III (cir. 1415-1380), to judge from the evidence of a broken ring, containing a fine steatite scarab of that monarch, which was discovered in 1930 just under the C₂ conflagration level and which has excellent Egyptian and Palestinian parallels. (1932: 37-38; the 1380 date was subsequently lowered to 1350 B. C., Albright 1938: 79)

Further excavation confirmed to Albright his conclusion about the break between C₁ and C₂, although the nature of that break was irregular and difficult to interpret (Albright 1933: 89). It was not the destruction of the LBI city, however, that gave impetus to his identification of Tell Beit Mirsim with Debir but the destruction of C₂, where he saw the work of the Israelites. For Albright, Tell Beit Mirsim’s Stratum B (Early Iron I) was the beginning of the "Israelite period" (Albright 1932: 53).
TABLE 6
LATE BRONZE AGE STRATA AT TELL BEIT MIRSIM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strata</th>
<th>Dating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>1450-1350 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DESTRUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>1350-(1250) 1230 BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DESTRUCTION</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Based on Albright 1938: 79.

The assumption that the Stratum B settlers were Israelite demonstrated to Albright that that site was indeed Debir (see Albright 1943: 1-38 for a complete description of Stratum B). Albright thus concluded, "No other unidentified site in the whole region occupied by the sixth district of Judah, to which Debir belonged, could possibly compete with it in size and location" (Albright 1978: 207). He also wrote, "Whether Tell Beit Mirsim is Debir or not, it must be emphasized that there is not a single other suitable site within the entire area required for the location of Debir by our geographical and topographical data" (Albright 1978: 209). The Late Bronze Age destructions found at Tell Beit Mirsim can be plausibly associated with the destructions of Debir, as sketched in Josh 10:38-39 and Josh 15:15-19. The problem is the limited information about those destructions. Nothing found in the excavations assures us that it is Debir or explicitly associates the Israelites with either of those destructions. Even Albright acknowledged that the association of Tell Beit Mirsim with Debir is only probable (Albright 1978: 218).

In more recent times, the very nature of Tell Beit Mirsim as an Israelite site has been questioned. R. Greenberg, after sorting through Albright's excavation notes for
Tell Beit Mirsim and the remaining collection of its sherds, has suggested that some of
the pits that Albright has assigned to Irl were really used in LBII (e.g., Silo 3, 1987:
63, 64). While there was a catastrophic end to Tell Beit Mirsim's Bronze Age,
according to Greenberg, there was no cultural change (i.e., no ethnic change). The
Canaanites who lived at the site in the Late Bronze Age continued to live there in Irl.

The stratigraphic review at the beginning of this article has shown that no
architectural innovations accompanied the resettlement of Tell Beit Mirsim fol­
lowing the catastrophe that overtook the LBII settlement there. On the contrary,
the main outline of the southeast part of the site remained the same: the central
structure was reoccupied, the silo areas continued to serve. New silo areas,
replacing former built-up areas, testify only to a decline in urban population.
The kind of change that would seem to indicate a significant political and social
upheaval occurred only later, in Stratum B3, when fortifications were con­
structed, buildings were put up around the periphery, and the silos were
abandoned. (Greenberg 1987: 76)

If Greenberg's reevaluation were to be sustained by the archaeological community, it
would be extremely unlikely that Tell Beit Mirsim was biblical Debir.

The primary reason why some have rejected the identification of Tell Beit Mirsim
as Debir, however, is its location in the Shephelah (Kochavi 1974: 27, 28). According
to Kochavi, "analysis of the biblical sources leaves no room for doubt that Debir was
located in the southern Judaean Hill Country [sic]" (1974: 26). Presumably, Kochavi,
following Gallung (1954: 137), had in mind the association of Hebron and Debir (Josh
10:36-38) and that Joshua "went up" (Heb. "עָלָה") to fight Hebron before going to Debir
(Josh 10:36), as Caleb likewise "went up" to fight Debir (Heb. "עָלָה"; Josh 15:15) and
even more specifically Josh 11:21: "Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the
Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the
hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed
them with their cities." From this verse Gallung even deduced that Debir should be
south of Hebron (1954: 137). Gallung rejected Noth's suggestion that Tell Tarrame
was Debir because, as he wrote, it was only a theoretical suggestion that the surface
sherds denied, while Galling himself suggested that Tell (Khirbet) Rabûd was ancient Debir (Galling 1954: 140, 141).

Kochavi saw in Khirbet Rabûd's walled LBII city the perfect picture of a strong Late Bronze Age city that would be highly notable for the conquering Israelites. He also saw in nearby springs the "Upper and Lower springs" of Josh 15:19 and Judg 1:15.

In the late 1960s A.D. Kochavi conducted two seasons of excavations at Khirbet Rabûd (Kochavi 1993b: 1252). During those seasons only two small areas of excavation were opened.

Table 7 summarizes the results of those excavations. One reason that so limited an area was excavated is that the entire acropolis is denuded to bedrock with the modern village crowding nearby (Kochavi 1974: 4, 5). The limited exposure of the excavations should caution archaeologists from reaching too strong a conclusion about Khirbet Rabûd's possible role in the Book of Joshua's stories.

About the Late Bronze Age wall, Kochavi admits his suggestions were "only determined by a logical deduction" and that "it is difficult to date the Late Bronze Age strata" (Kochavi 1974: 10). Some hint that there may be some correlation between the names Debir and Rabud, since the names have the same letters in reverse order (Geraty 1995; Shea 1995). In short, we know that the Late Bronze and Iron Ages were recovered at Khirbet Rabûd and that the names Debir and Rabud share the same radical letters. On the other hand, such imprecise information tells us nothing about inter-period activities or the ethnicity of settlers.

Khirbet Rabûd may be Debir, but without further excavation and more specific data such a conclusion is only conjecture. The excavations at Khirbet Rabûd provide nothing specific with which we can interpret the stories of the Book of Joshua.
### TABLE 7
THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY OF KHIRBET RABÜD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EBI</td>
<td>Proto-Urban settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBII-III</td>
<td>Abandoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBIV</td>
<td>Semi-nomadic encampment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBII</td>
<td>Walled settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ir1</td>
<td>Continued settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ir2</td>
<td>Destroyed 7th-6th century B.C.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Based on Kochavi 1974: 28, 29.*

Whether, then, one holds to Albright's claim that Tell Beit Mirsim is Debir or follows Kochavi and Galling, who have suggested Khirbet Rabūd, little help is forthcoming for Bible interpreters. In my view, Debir's identity is uncertain with no site providing any specific clues for its identity.

**Cities Conquered during the Third Israelite Campaign: Hazor, Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph**

The third Israelite campaign began, according to the Book of Joshua, like the second campaign, as a reaction of settled populations to the arrival of the Israelites and their initial successes. Josh 11:1 says that it was Jabin king of Hazor who led the resistance and rallied the residences of Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph against the Israelites. Later the four sites are listed together again in defeat (Josh 12:19-20). It was against the city Hazor that Israelite punishment is more fully specified; it was burned (Josh 11:11; see Malamat 1960 for a review of Hazor's historic leadership posi-
tion in the region). It was most likely its location at the intersection of several crossroads that gave Hazor its prominence (Gray 1966: 27, 28).

**Hazor**

The scholarly community agrees that Hazor is to be identified with Tell el-Qedah/Tell Waqqas. The primary excavations at Hazor (Tell el-Qedah/Tell Waqqas) were conducted by Y. Yadin in four seasons 1955-1958 (Yadin 1993: 595), with a fifth season added in 1968-1969 (Ben-Tor 1993a: 604-605). These excavations revealed that Hazor's history spanned the Early Bronze through Hellenistic periods (see Table 8). The city itself was composed of two settings, an Upper and a Lower City. The Lower City was an expansion to the north of the traditional tell (the Upper City) during MBII and continued in use through the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1750-1250 B.C.; dates deduced from Yadin 1993: 606). In all other periods the Lower City seems to have been unoccupied (see Table 9).

The excavators saw the handiwork of the invading Israelites in the destruction of the final Late Bronze Age city, with the destruction occurring "in the second third of the thirteenth century BCE" (Yadin 1993: 603; also Gray 1966: 39). The destruction (Stratum XIII/1A) occurred in both the Upper and Lower Cities (Yadin 1975: 252).

The settlement immediately above Stratum XIII, Stratum XII, exhibited the typical Irib settlement characteristics that have been associated with the Israelites, and Yadin made the Israelite connection with Hazor (e.g., pits/silos, ceramics, etc., Yadin 1993: 601; Yadin et al. 1989: 76-80; Yadin 1975: 254). One unique characteristic of this destruction is that Hazor was burned, making its attribution to the Joshua story appear certain (Yadin 1993: 603). Wrote Yadin, "This destruction is doubtless to be ascribed to the Israelite tribes, as related to the Book of Joshua" (1993: 603; Yadin et al. 1960: 160). While a conflagration ended the LBII city and that destruction was followed by a
TABLE 8
A SUMMARY OF HAZOR'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL HISTORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Bronze Age</td>
<td>An unclearly defined &quot;Khirbet Kerak culture&quot; settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Bronze Age</td>
<td>Walled settlement with expansion to Lower City in latest phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Bronze Age</td>
<td>Hazor on both Upper and Lower Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron I</td>
<td>Limited settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron II</td>
<td>Major rebuilding by Solomon followed by several destructions/rebuildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By the eighth century Hazor continued as an unwalled settlement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Based on Yadin 1993: 606.

material culture that some have associated with the Israelites, and it is appealing to associate these circumstances with the biblical account in the Book of Joshua, nothing in the archaeological finds specifically attaches itself to the biblical story of the Book of Joshua. Due to the tentative nature of this association, it should not be surprising that this destruction has been credited to others (i.e., the Sea Peoples, Fritz 1973; the events of Judges 4, Aharoni 1970; the general Near Eastern cultural upheaval, Ward and Joukowsky 1992).
TABLE 9  
THE LATE BRONZE AGE AT HAZOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Upper City</th>
<th>Lower City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LBIIIB</td>
<td>Strata</td>
<td>XIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBIIA</td>
<td></td>
<td>XIV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBI</td>
<td></td>
<td>XV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Based on Yadin 1975: 252.

Madon

The identity of Madon is not known (Gal 1994: 43). Some of the difficulty in identifying it lies with the LXX which calls Madon (Heb. מָרְאִים), Maron (LXX Josh 11:1, Μαρών), but the major problem is that there is no reference to a site with either name, outside of the Book of Joshua, either in the Bible or from other ancient Near Eastern literature. Aharoni prefers the LXX version of the name since the MT version (Madon) is unknown outside the Book of Joshua (1979: 231, 232). He would see Maron as a corruption of Merom by whose waters the battle took place (Josh 11:7; "waters of Merom"; LXX τὰ ὕδατα Μαρόνων).

It has been suggested that Madon/Maron be identified with the Late Bronze and Iron Age materials found at Tel Qarnei Ḥiṣṭin (Gal 1993a: 452; 1994: 44; Qurn Ḥaṭṭīn, Gray 1966: 26; Aharoni calls this identification, based only on the similarity of names, "suspect," 1979: 118). Qurn Ḥaṭṭīn was probed by Z. Gal in 1976. A Late Bronze Age fortress existed in the 14th-13th centuries (Gal 1993: 452; 1994: 44). In the middle of the 13th century it was destroyed (Gal 1992: 44). The Iron Age materials were from the tenth to eighth centuries (Gal 1992: 44). Nothing specific to Ir1 or the Israelites was found in this probe.
Shimron

The identity of Shimron is problematic. It seems likely that the Shimron of Josh 11:1 and 19:15 is the same place as the Shimron-Meron referred to in Josh 12:20. That Shimron-Meron is listed with Madon, Hazor, and Achshaph in Josh 12:20 makes this identity likely. The suffix "Meron" most likely is the last part of Shimron's full appellation. As Kutsko concludes, Shimron and Shimron-Meron must be "interchangeable referents" (Kutsko 1992: 1219). Beyond that problem Rainey has surveyed the linguistic problems and suggestions that have identified this site in the Egyptian Execration and Amarna texts and among the cities conquered by Thutmose III (1976b: 59-60).

Josephus has set the stage for Shimron's modern identification by saying that "simōniyah [is] on the frontier of Galilee" (Khirbet Sammuniyeh, i.e., Tell Shimron; Life 24.115). Tell Shimron lies north of Megiddo and 8 km west of Nazareth (Benjamin 1992b: 1219; Aharoni 1979: 118). No excavations have been conducted at Tell Shimron but surface sherdings indicates that the site was significant beginning in the Early Bronze Age and continued so until at least Byzantine times (Rainey 1976b: 62, 63). Nothing specifically related to the Israelites has been found so far at Tell Shimron.

Achshaph

The mention of Achshaph as a city-foe during the third Israelite campaign suggests the early tradition that underlies this story. Achshaph is mentioned in the Egyptian Execration Texts (Pritchard 1969 329, note 8), in the list of cities conquered by Thutmose III during his first campaign (Pritchard 1969 242), and in the Amarna Letters as a friend of Pharaoh and a foe of the "Apíru (EA 366:23, EA 367:1, Moran 1987: 364, 365). Its place in later history is limited. In the Bible, Achshaph is mentioned only in the Book of Joshua. Even then, as noted above, its role in the biblical story is limited.
By its association with Akko in the Egyptian sources, as noted above, its location cannot be far from that site. P. Benjamin has observed that both Tell Keisan and Khirbet el-Harbaj have been suggested as possible candidates for Achshaph (Benjamin 1992a: 57). Khirbet el-Harbaj is an unexcavated site.

Tell Keisan is 5 kms east of the Mediterranean Sea and 7 kms southeast of Acco. Its importance as a city can be seen by its large size, "the largest artificial mound on the plain" (15 acres, Seton-Williams 1980: 381). Its close distance to Acco and its position on trade routes put Tell Keisan in a symbiotic relationship with that site. From the port city Acco, Tell Keisan received foreign goods, while Tell Keisan served as the granary for Acco (Humbert 1993: 862). The large size and relationship with and closeness to Acco imply that the ancient identity of Tell Keisan was Achshaph.

Tell Keisan has experienced two periods of excavation. In November/December 1935, J. Garstang/A. Rowe made a preliminary sounding at the site, slicing a 6m x 6m cut in the southeast slope (Rowe 1936: 207). Rowe identified, in extremely brief form, the 16 strata he found with no added interpretation. Seton-Williams (1980) and Ben-Dor (1980) have expanded on Rowe's explanation. Besides the original probe, a few days' additional work was performed by Garstang/Rowe in April 1936 but political problems stopped the excavations for good (Seton-Williams 1980: 389).

The major excavations at Tell Keisan were sponsored by the École Biblique et Archéologique Française in Jerusalem. Their work was conducted from 1971-1980 and was directed by R. de Vaux in 1971 and P. Briend and J. Humbert 1972-1980 (Humbert 1993: 863).

From the archaeological materials it has been discovered that Tell Keisan's history was the proudest in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages, when it was a fortified city of some importance (Humbert 1993: 863). The exact nature of the Late Bronze Age is not clear, but Late Bronze Age sherds and strata were uncovered in the earlier excavations. The École Biblique excavations did not reach Late Bronze Age layers.
École Biblique team found clearly defined Irl strata that contained Mycenean ceramics consistent with the presence of Sea Peoples (Briend and Humbert 1980: 213, 214; Humbert 1993: 864). Tell Keisan was reoccupied in Irl immediately after its destruction (Humbert 1993: 864).

Nothing from either excavation team implied the presence of the Israelites. A destruction layer was found above the Late Bronze strata (XIII-XI) but, judging from the ceramics, it seems most likely that that destruction was caused by the Sea Peoples and not the Israelites (Humbert 1993: 864).

Revisionists' Interpretations

As can be seen from the foregoing discussion, archaeological sites have been difficult to coordinate with the stories of the Book of Joshua. Beyond the general destructions found throughout the Near East in the 13th-12th centuries, whose counterparts have often been associated with the Israelite conquest, no specific information has been found to substantiate the stories of the Book of Joshua. This problem has been seen (speaking specifically of Jericho) as "an embarrassing puzzle for many" (Wolf 1966: 50) and a variety of alternative solutions has been suggested.

The lack of defensive walls at Late Bronze Age Jericho seems to contradict the biblical story that speaks of the wall falling flat (Josh 6:5). Helms and Wood have argued that there was a wall at Jericho during the Late Bronze Age. According to Bienkowski, S. Helms, in a paper given at a scholarly conference, argued for a Late Bronze Age mudbrick wall built on top of the Middle Bronze Age wall on the western edge of the tell, found on the north section of Kenyon's Trench I (Bienkowski 1986: 122; during a later paper Helms is said to have amended his conclusions to say that the "wall is actually undatable, although it remains possible that it could be LBA," Bienkowski 1986: 122). Bienkowski notes that the wall Helms has used in his reinter-
pretation is represented in the final report as one course of brickwork and is best dated to the Middle Bronze Age (Bienkowski 1986: 122-124).

B. Wood has restudied the Late Bronze Jericho evidence and has concluded that Garstang's original interpretation (i.e., that there was a wall during that period) is correct. His interest in the topic was piqued when, while reviewing Garstang's preliminary reports, he noted "a considerable amount of what appeared to be Late Bronze I (c. 1550-1400 B.C.) pottery" (1990a: 49). He agreed that Kenyon was right by redating the double wall on the top of the tell to the Early Bronze Age but thought her wrong when she likewise redated the residential area (1990a: 50). Her mistake, said Wood, was that she focused on what was absent from Jericho (imported Cypriot forms) paying "little attention to the(se) common domestic forms" (1990a: 50). Wood said that what compounded the problem was that the area where Kenyon reached Late Bronze Age strata was a poor residential area, where one would not expect to find exotic imported ware (1990a: 50).

Wood produced four lines of evidence that supported his contention. First he noted that Garstang had found a considerable amount of Bichrome ware (1990a: 52), known to be a diagnostic form of the LBI period (Epstein 1966). Kenyon found none of this distinctive pottery, probably, according to Wood, because her nearest trench (Area H) was too far north of where Garstang had found his Bichrome ware (Wood 1990a: 52). Garstang's own interest in this unique ceramic indicator was limited, since its importance was unknown when he dug; thus, he made little of its presence (Wood 1990a: 52). Second, Wood noted that Kenyon had attempted to squeeze 20 phases, which included three major and 12 minor destructions, into the 100-year-period of Jericho's MBII period (Wood 1990a: 52). He found that unlikely. Third, Wood observed that Garstang found in the tombs northwest of Jericho a chronologically continuous series of scarabs that ended in the early 14th century. Wood saw the continuous nature of the scarabs as evidence of continuous use of the site, until at least the
end of the LBI period (Wood 1990a: 52, 53). Wood’s final point was that a Carbon-14 sample taken by Kenyon was dated 1410 B.C., plus or minus 40 years. This sample, taken from destruction debris from the last Bronze Age city, Wood saw as evidence of a city destruction about that time (Wood 1990a: 53).

Wood’s reinterpretation of Jericho’s history was critiqued by Bienkowski, who said that "each of Wood’s arguments is flawed" (Bienkowski 1990: 45). According to Bienkowski, the primary problem with Wood’s ceramic analysis was that he used long-lasting pottery forms as diagnostic pieces of the LBI period, meaning that what Wood thought was LBI was really MBII pottery (1990: 46). Bienkowski also did not think that Wood compensated for a change in pottery technology that occurred in the Late Bronze Age; these changes are not found in the forms Wood exhibited (1990: 46). Finally, Bienkowski said that what Wood thought was LBI Bichrome ware was really typical LBII painted ware.

The response of Wood to Bienkowski was more complete and exacting (1990b). He responded to each of Bienkowski’s criticisms in kind and to my mind has provided the stronger case for his conclusions. On the other hand, the archaeological community has been slow to warm to Wood’s reinterpretation of Kenyon’s work at Jericho. This slowness has been exhibited by the nearly total lack of discussion Wood’s arguments should have generated, especially by those who could best evaluate the technical points of the ceramic evidence, which is so crucial to Wood’s hypothesis. Recently, Herr has tentatively supported Wood’s ceramic reevaluation, suggesting that Jericho’s Late Bronze Age ceramics were not previously interpreted correctly but also stating that an exact date within LBI is not possible (Herr 1995b: 10). In addition, Wood’s suggestions regarding Jericho have been seen by some in the secondary literature as hope for the biblical story of Jericho (e.g., Free 1992: 110; Davidson 1995: 66-71).

C. Wolf (1966) has approached the problems of the association of the biblical text and the archaeological evidence of Tell es-Sultan from an entirely different angle. He
has suggested that Tell es-Sultan is not Old Testament Jericho, but instead is Gilgal. His evidence is Eusebius' *Onomasticon* and the stated distances in that text. He concluded that, according to the *Onomasticon*, Tulul Abu el-'Alayiq is the Jericho of Josephus and Tell es-Sultan is Gilgal (Wolf 1966: 47, 48). From this point Wolf argued that Tell es-Sultan is too large to be Joshua's Jericho (1966: 49), but large enough to inspire "awe" of the local inhabitants and be a cult center (1966: 50). Others have likewise suggested that Tell es-Sultan may possibly not be Old Testament Jericho (e.g., R. North 1953: 5, hinted that Tell es-Samarat might be it), but no convincing evidence has been offered that any other site is Jericho.

The Late Bronze Age gap in the history of et-Tell also seems difficult to associate with the stories of the Book of Joshua about Ai, which sees the city as destroyed and burned by Joshua and the invading Israelites. Albright's conclusion was that the biblical account was "highly schematized" with events from many centuries placed together in one story (1924b: 147). He saw many Israelite invasions such as one by Abraham and his clans, another by Jacob and his clans, Joseph and his clans, Joshua and the Israelites, Caleb and the Judahites. For Albright, there was no way to know to which of these invasions the story of Ai, or for that matter, Jericho, belonged (1924b: 147). In any case, he believed the events of Jericho and Ai occurred centuries apart (1924b: 149). In the end, Albright saw Bethel and Ai as sites whose populations could not, for long, co-exist, due to the limited resources of the region (Albright 1971: 117). He suggested that the history of Bethel, which has Late Bronze Age materials, and Ai have been reversed, or in Albright's words there was a "shifting of scene from Bethel" to Ai (1939: 16).

J. Bimson and D. Livingston (1987; and Livingston 1970; 1971; 1974; 1989) have argued that Ai has been misidentified. Their proposal was that the Khirbet Nisya better fits the biblical and geographical parameters (1987: 48-51). The difficulty with this suggestion is that though carefully reasoned, it has not been confirmed by excava-
tions. The excavation of Khirbet Nisya was preceded by a surface survey that took 300 man-hours and 22 students (Blizzard 1974: 224). The methods used in this survey were described by its director as "the most scientific and accurate known today" (Blizzard 1974: 225). Not one rim or other diagnostic sherd was found that could be dated before the Iron Age, causing Blizzard, although sympathetic to Livingston's suggestion about Khirbet Nisya, to conclude,

> On the basis of the results of the survey which indicated a complete lack of sherds from the Middle Bronze-Late Bronze periods I believe we can conclude that there is a high degree of probability that the site was not occupied during the period 2000-1200 B.C. and is not Biblical [sic] Ai. It seems on the surface to be nothing more than an Iron Age site first settled about 1200 B.C. (Blizzard 1974: 224, 225)

Livingston's response was appreciation for Blizzard's work and a recognition of the difficulties that his survey brought to the possibility of Khirbet Nisya being biblical Ai (1974: 231, 232). Despite Livingston's best case (Livingston 1989) his own excavations have not produced any better evidence for a Late Bronze Age at Khirbet Nisya than one might make for et-Tell. There was no stratified material from either the Middle Bronze Age or Late Bronze Age (1989: 97-100) at his site or any other substantial evidence for occupation at Khirbet Nisya during those periods. Were Khirbet Nisya proven to be biblical Ai, it would be of little help in supporting the biblical account. In any case, to this time, Bimson and Livingston have found little academic support for their suggestions.

While Hazor has exhibited the LBII/Ir1 destruction that has been traditionally associated with the Israelites, an alternate suggestion has also been made for Hazor's history. It has been noted that, in addition to the LBII destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age, the excavators also found evidence that there was a sizable destruction at the end of LBI (Ben-Tor 1993a: 604). M. Pröbstle has noted that the focus of the LBI destructions seems to have been in the cult areas of the tell (see Table 10).
Pröbstle would see the Israelite invasion as occurring not at the end of LBII but at its beginning (1995: 25, 26; something suggested to me by W. Shea in 1988). Pröbstle would then link the LBII Hazor destruction to Deborah/Barak (Judges 4). The biblical stories would be twice-linked to Hazor's stratigraphy as illustrated in Table 11.

### TABLE 10

**THE LATE BRONZE AGE AT HAZOR AND ITS DESTRUCTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratum</th>
<th>Area C</th>
<th>Area F</th>
<th>Area H</th>
<th>Area A</th>
<th>Area K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LBI 2/XV</td>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>Temple</td>
<td>Broadroom</td>
<td>Royal Temple</td>
<td>Gate+ Casemate Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
<td>xxxxxxx</td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBIIA 1b/XIV</td>
<td>Stele</td>
<td>Stone Slab Temple Place</td>
<td>Gate+ Wall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stele</td>
<td>Stone Slab Temple Place</td>
<td>Gate+ Wall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBIIB 1a/XII</td>
<td>Stele</td>
<td>Stone Slab Temple Place</td>
<td>Gate+ Wall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
<td>xxxxxxx</td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Based on Pröbstle 1995: 17.

1 xxx indicates destruction.

Pröbstle has also noted the cult-centeredness of the LBI destructions that fits the biblical description of what the Israelites were to do when they came to Canaan (1995: 23). Shea (1995) has suggested a more complete reevaluation of Hazor's Late Bronze Age strata. He saw the Late Bronze Age strata as assigned to Joshua, Seti I, and Deborah (see Table 12). While it is possible that the Israelites should be considered as the attacker of Hazor in LBI, as Pröbstle and Shea have suggested, there is nothing
specific about either the LBI or LBII destructions that clearly identifies the Israelites as the perpetrators of either event. However one wants to reconstruct the events at Hazor, it should be remembered that such connections are at most hypotheses that demand additional support before being accepted as probable.

TABLE 11
PRÔBSTLE’S RECONSTRUCTION OF HAZOR’S LATE BRONZE AGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stratum</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Biblical Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/XVI</td>
<td>MBIIB</td>
<td>Pre-Israelite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/XV</td>
<td>LBI</td>
<td>Pre-Israelite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b/XIV</td>
<td>LBIIA</td>
<td>Israelites led by Joshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a/XIII</td>
<td>LBIIB</td>
<td>Israelites led by Deborah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^1\)xxxx indicates destruction.
TABLE 12
SHEA'S ALTERNATE ASSIGNMENT OF HAZOR'S LATE BRONZE AGE STRATA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Yadin's Interpretation</th>
<th>Shea's Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LBI</td>
<td>Thutmoses III</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBIIA</td>
<td>Seti I</td>
<td>Seti I (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBIIIB</td>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Deborah</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Based on Shea 1995: 3.

Summary and Conclusions about the Archaeological Evidence of the Israelite Conquest

Table 13 summarizes the archaeological data about the sites claimed to have been conquered by the Israelites in the Book of Joshua. Of the 17 sites listed, 12 had some kind of Late Bronze Age settlement. Of the sites with Late Bronze Age strata, only two sites (Hazor and Tell Beit Mirsim) had evidence of a destruction during LBI, as opposed to five (Jericho, Tell ed-Duweir, Tell Beit Mirsim, Hazor, Tel Qarnei Ḥiṭṭin, and Tell Keisan) with definite evidence of a LBII/Irl destruction. Jericho could be added to this group if Wood’s reevaluation of Jericho’s Late Bronze Age is sustained. Even at that, it must be evident that the number of LBI and LBII/Irl destructions is not outstanding, considering the 17 sites considered. The poignant fact is that we know very little, as a whole, about the archaeological sites thought to be cities involved in the conflicts of the Book of Joshua. By comparing Table 1 with Table 13 it becomes apparent that neither the Bible nor archaeology has produced much information about the conquest events of the Book of Joshua. Yet, our ignorance of the whole, and the specifics of what we do know, have driven the archaeological discussions.
TABLE 13
A SUMMARY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA
FOR THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>LB Sett.</th>
<th>LBI Des.</th>
<th>LBII Des.</th>
<th>Specific Mention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tes-Sultan</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ai (et-Tell)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makkedah (Tes-Safi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kh el-Qom)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libnah (Tes-Safi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T Bornat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(T Judeideb)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachish (Ted-Duweir)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eglon (Tel-Hesi)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tel Aitun)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebron (Tel Hebron)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debir (Tel Beit Mirsim)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Kh Rabudd)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazor (Tel el-Qedah)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madon (T Q Hittin)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimron (Tel Shimron)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achshaph (Tel Keisan)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wrote Albright, "The case of Ai has undoubtedly been responsible for a marked
tendency in certain quarters to depreciate the historical content of the narratives of
Joshua" (1939: 15). Finkelstein assumed the problem is the late redaction of the text
and declared that,

the principal historical source at our disposal for the period of Israelite Settlement
is, of course, the Bible. Without denigrating its overwhelming importance for
reconstructing the history of Israel, the fact remains that attempts to reconstruct
the course of Israelite Settlement on the basis of the biblical accounts have not
been successful. The main reason for their failure is that the biblical narratives
were redacted centuries after the events they purport to describe actually took
place. As a result, what they really reflect is the version that was current in
Jerusalem at the end of the period of the Monarchy. (1988: 337)

Malamat shared the same opinion ("For this tradition, which crystallized only after
generations of complex literary reworking, could only reflect the conceptions and
tendentiousness of later redactors and, therefore, might be devoid of any actual his­
torical value" 1979: 39). Noth was a bit kinder to the text, suggesting that it is not
necessarily wrong but that the Book of Joshua offers the reader a simplified view of
Israel’s early history (1960: 72). In general, the conclusion has been that the
archaeological evidence disputes the biblical record, even though some like Noth
acknowledged that the biblical record itself is complex. Those more friendly to the text
still hold to the view that somehow the Book of Joshua will, in the end, be confirmed
(Davidson 1995: 70, 71).

The Book of Joshua is commonly approached, then, in one of two ways: either as
more or less accurately describing Israel’s devastating all-encompassing conquest of
Canaan, or as a compilation of oral traditions, folk tales, and etiological explanations
with little historical value for the events they describe (e.g., Hamlin 1983: xxii, xxiii,
3; Noth 1960: 71). Both approaches, however, take for granted that the Book of
Joshua, itself, describes a glorious Israelite conquest.
As it were, this general conclusion leads to one of two assumptions: either the Book of Joshua is wrong (it does not contain history) or archaeology is incomplete or wrong or misunderstood. I suggest a third alternative.

The Book of Joshua and Confirmation

One of the hypotheses of this chapter is that the Book of Joshua was largely written as a book of "confirmation" and not a book about conquest. By "confirmation" I mean that the Book of Joshua is a treatise written with the primary goal of confirming or reconfirming the uniqueness of Israel, which is evidenced (as suggested by the biblical writers) by the presence and guidance of YHWH. While in the first 11 chapters of the Book of Joshua military actions are often described, those actions serve a more important role than providing combat details or to tell even which cities were destroyed or what path the Israelites took in destroying them.

The Book of Joshua is the confessional statement of the biblical writers proclaiming that YHWH brought the Israelites into the land and gave it to them. Only their lack of faith kept the Israelites from obtaining the land. The stories are used to demonstrate to the readers the truth of this confession (i.e., the stories are the evidence). The battles of Joshua 6, 8, 10, 11 are no more important to the biblical writers than any other part of their story. The details of those battles were related by the biblical writers as of minor importance, only of secondary interest. That is why there are so few details.

Although the Book of Joshua has been superficially assumed to describe an all-encompassing Canaanite conquest, the text of the Book of Joshua offers sufficient internal evidence to alter that interpretation. Specifically, the Book of Joshua highlights only three military campaigns (chaps. 6-8; 10; 11) and provides ample evidence that only a tenuous settlement was attained during the period covered by the book. The military victories described in the Book of Joshua have been interpreted in an overly
simplistic manner, thus making the Book of Joshua support a conclusion that is not inherent in the text.

It is acknowledged that the message of the Book of Joshua can be misunderstood, if only selected portions of the first 11 chapters are read, but it is the presuppositions of the reader that have created difficulties with the archaeological data, not the Book of Joshua. In another context Mendenhall wrote, "What the theologian dismisses is not the Old Testament, but his own erroneous ideas about it" (1976b: 5). His conclusion equally applies to interpreters of the Book of Joshua. In other words, the war stories of the Book of Joshua are rejected as history because of their supposed difficulties with the archaeological details, when in reality it is the inadequate scholarly interpretation of the Book of Joshua which has caused the dilemma.

R. Polzin (1993) has taken biblical studies to a new level by advocating the importance of literary analysis as a prelude to historical critical issues. He is absolutely correct that the present fractious conditions of biblical studies and the "disappointing and inadequate results" of past theories are the offspring of ignoring literary concerns (1993: 5). Polzin suggested that the understanding of any literary work requires an understanding of its selected outline and an appreciation of the place of its individual episodes in the whole (1993: 84).

Contrary to Polzin, I am not interested in the Book of Joshua as a pragmatic example of law as proposed in the Book of Deuteronomy (1993: 74; although I do not deny those interconnections). Rather, I am concerned with the historical, archaeological questions proposed by the presence of the Israelites in Canaan as presented in the Book of Joshua. Polzin looks at the larger picture that his "Deuteronomist" paints from Deuteronomy-Kings (1993: 18; 21-22). I am concerned with what the Book of Joshua says about the initial actions of the Israelites in Canaan, which Polzin acknowledges as "its obvious thematic content: the occupation of the land, the apportioning of the land among the tribes" (Polzin 1993: 73).
Polzin's point would be even better served if he allowed the individual books of the "Deuteronomist" their own independent or unique themes to be placed, after their isolation, into the larger scheme. In this weakness Polzin falls into the same trap as the documentary hypothesis devotees, who first identify a source, give the source characteristics derived from a limited portion of the text, then divide the text into increasingly more sources to explain the anomalies produced by the process of the creation of sources. In a similar way, Polzin's identification of the "Deuteronomist" and the purposes of the Book of Deuteronomy drive his understanding of all books within the "Deuteronomist" editorship. Such a process could miss and, I believe, has overlooked independent themes that are present within those books that may be included within the "Deuteronomist’s" corpus.

Unfortunately, Polzin undermined the clarity of the Book of Joshua's independent historical purposes by attempting to force it into the overall concerns of the Deuteronomist (1993: 85). More specifically, Polzin sees the interpretation of the law as a primary theme of the Book of Joshua because his interpretation of the "Deuteronomist" sees that theme as primary (see also Herr et al. 1995). While I do not deny that the interpretation of the law is important to the biblical writers of the Book of Joshua, I see this emphasis on the law, which Polzin rightly detects (1993: 74), as the legal-theological-homiletic stratum with which the biblical writers were concerned.

Noth followed the same track as Polzin by emphasizing the large goal of the "Deuteronomistic," which allowed Noth to ignore the point of the Book of Joshua (Noth 1981: 36-41). To reach his larger goal of understanding the "Deuteronomistic," Noth gave this advice:

To do this we had better ignore, to begin with, the usual division of this historical complex into "books," for this was undoubtedly a secondary process in the history of the tradition and closer investigation is required before we can decide whether it took place before or after Dtr. ["Deuteronomistic"]. (1981: 4, 5)
Yet, Noth isolates the characteristics of the "Deuternomistic" partly by his style, which includes "vocabulary, diction and sentence structure" (1981: 5). Noth's plan is circular.

In this work, we are probing historical-archaeological issues. As such, we are interested in the historical perception of biblical authors (i.e., what happened when the Israelites came to Canaan and why). If we allow the theme of "law," as it is threaded through those writings that are seen as the work of Deuteronomist, to determine the historical reality of the Book of Joshua, we may obscure the historical purposes of that book.

The following reconstruction allows the Book of Joshua its own outline, which fulfills Polzin's test that all individual episodes of a book should have their rightful place in the whole. When the overarching theme is discovered, each individual part will also have a role in that theme.

**An Outline of the Book of Joshua**

Like all books that are analyzed, the Book of Joshua has been outlined many times (see Appendices A-K for a compilation of Book of Joshua outlines). Most reviewers would follow Mitchell's lead in dividing the Book of Joshua into "two main sections . . . the conquest of Cisjordan" and "the division of Cisjordan" (1993: 31). The wording is often different (e.g., Soggin labels this duo-division as "the actual conquest" and "the division of the land," 1972: 2), but the intent by most commentators is a recognition that there are two main sections to the Book of Joshua (see Bratcher 1983: 6, Appendix C; Davidson 1995: 10, Appendix E; Garstang 1931: xi, xii, Appendix F; Noth 1938: 1; Appendix H; Soggin 1972: 2, 3, Appendix I; Waltke 1982: 1134, Appendix J; Woudstra 1981: 42-44, Appendix K).

Others have not dealt with the issue of themes by approaching the task of outlining the Book of Joshua as a descriptive process that seeks no overall themes (see Boling
1992: 1002, Appendix A; Boling and Wright 1984: vii-x, Appendix B; Butler 1983: xxv, Appendix D; Hamlin 1983: v, Appendix G). These outlines simply restate the obvious subdivisions of the Book of Joshua. Those who have taken the descriptive tack have certainly placed themselves in the stronger position of not prejudging the path of the book, but they have also placed themselves on the road to missing any continuous or overall theme that may run through the writer's stories—as though a writer, especially the biblical writers, would compose without a theme or point that Polzin would remind us not to forget (1993: 84). (Those who provide only a segmentary descriptive outline lead the readers astray, as do those who assume incomplete or incorrect themes.) The reader is left to believe that the biblical writers had no purposes in mind. No doubt this lack of connective theme (especially by Boling and Wright) is due to the recognition of the inadequacy of the more common dual division of conquest and settlement in summing up the Book of Joshua. Boling obliquely referred to this problem:

While mere mention of Joshua may evoke mental images of massive invasion by a unified national army, proceeding to victories of something like genocidal proportions (an image which indeed seems to be mirrored in a number of editorial passages of Joshua), the arrangement of the book and close reading evoke a different image; but one not so quick to come to sharp focus. (Boling 1992: 1003)

Boling (1992, Boling and Wright 1984) has provided the best of the descriptive outlines of the Book of Joshua, yet, he has not provided the overall theme for the Book of Joshua that would bind the book together. At the same time, I suggest that the commonly provided outlines of the book, which place conquest juxtaposed with settlement, do not account for the "different image" that runs current in the book, which Boling acknowledged. While Boling (1992, Boling and Wright 1994) lacks continuity of theme, most authors do not account for those portions of the text that do not meet the conquest/settlement theme.

The military narratives of a few chapters in the Book of Joshua have been allowed to overshadow the entire book, forcing the whole book into too narrow a role. Thus, the major thematic point of the entire Book of Joshua has been missed and the
book, as a result, misunderstood. In other words, to correctly understand the story of the Book of Joshua we need first to discern the writers' theme and apply that theme to the whole of the book.

The primary message of the Book of Joshua is not conquest and settlement, but rather a "confirmation" message of YHWH's presence with the Israelites when they came to the land and the results of that presence (i.e., confirmation and results). The connective theme that holds the Book of Joshua together is confirmation, the confirmation that YHWH was with Israel providing powerful demonstrations of His presence.

The biblical writers are trying to convince the reader that when Israel came to Canaan YHWH was with them. The arrival of the Israelites was not an event that Moses or Joshua produced. It was something YHWH did. The events described in the Book of Joshua were not accidental or arbitrary. According to the biblical writers, YHWH controlled those events and He controlled the events so that Israel would know He was with them and so the reader of the Book of Joshua would believe YHWH was with Israel in those events. Confirmation is the thematic key in understanding the Book of Joshua.

If Mitchell is correct in assuming that the Book of Joshua is about conquest and mass destruction (1993: 52), then stories about the crossing of the Jordan River, Rahab, and circumcision do not fit the biblical writers' main purposes. The incapability of purposes between Joshua 1-5 and 6-12 is artificially created by assuming that the military events of Joshua 6, 8, 10, and 11 are the heart of the book. In reality the stories about conquest are only one aspect of the larger overarching theme. The overarching theme of Joshua 1-13 is "confirmation," meaning that the events outlined in Joshua 1-13 were selected by the biblical writers to demonstrate to the reader that when Israel entered Canaan YHWH was leading and blessing her. Israel came and possessed, not by accident, but by YHWH's divine hand. This confirmation theme is the
TABLE 14
AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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core element in every story of Joshua 1-13. It is the single most consistent theme within the book.

While confirmation is the thematic key, the book itself does have two basic parts. The first half of the book describes the confirmation events (chaps. 1-13), while the second half displays the reality of those events (chaps. 14-24). This division can best be seen in outline form (see Table 14).

Part I: The Confirmation Events

The first half of the Book of Joshua is itself divided into two parts (A and B). Section A, "Confirmation by Symbolism," describes events before the battle for Jericho, found in chaps. 1-5. The events may seem unconnected to the Israelite armed conflict, but this section is intimately connected to what follows. In fact, the relationship between chaps. 1-5 and chaps. 6-13 is crucial to understanding the Book of Joshua but is often overlooked.

Chap. 1 begins the confirmation accounts by having YHWH Himself speak to Joshua. It should not be forgotten that the Deuteronomist has the Israelites trembling, fearful of death, when God spoke to them in the time of Moses. They begged Moses to ask God to speak first to him and he would report the message to them (Deut 5:22-27). In the Book of Joshua the role of spokesperson has been passed to Joshua. The reason Joshua is confirmed as another Moses is that his relationship with YHWH (one who could speak with YHWH) was seen by the biblical writers as a confirmation that what was happening (i.e., the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan) was no mere accident. They were being led by YHWH, who actually spoke to the leader of the Israelites and told him what he should do.

The connection between Joshua and YHWH was intensified even more when YHWH Himself appeared to Joshua. In the Book of Joshua this occurs immediately before the Israelites surrounded Jericho (Josh 5:13-15). The importance of Joshua’s
relationship with YHWH, as a confirmation act, assumes an even greater significance, when it is remembered that Joshua is the last of only two Israelite leaders ever to have had such a position as mediator between YHWH and the people. Later, prophets like Samuel did hear and speak with YHWH (1 Samuel 3) but their relationship to the people was different. They were more specifically spiritual leaders and not military directors as well. Moses and Joshua led the people where YHWH wanted them to go. Later prophets asked YHWH what to do when the people came to them for advice or on occasion went to the people with a message, but they did not regularly lead the people themselves.

The role of Rahab in Joshua 2 and 6 is more important to the aims of biblical writers than most commentators have realized. She serves as evidence, that is confirmation, that even those who were outside of the Israelite family were aware that the power of YHWH was with the Israelites and that the land had been given to them. For the biblical writers Rahab testifies,

> I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. (Josh 2:9-11, NASB)

In the words of this prostitute (חַנְתָּה; the location of Rahab’s house on the walls of Jericho [Josh 2:15] fits the pattern of other prostitutes [Bottéro 1992: 190, 194] underscoring the point that she was indeed a prostitute) the biblical writers repeat previous events that demonstrated YHWH’s mighty power, causing everyone to tremble. In the Book of Joshua, Rahab serves as direct evidence of the fear possessed by those opposed to the Israelites. She and her family were treated as though they were an independent city who sued for peace (Deut 20:10-11), ignoring the fact that she was not a “far city”
(Deut 10:15-17) but one who was going to live in close proximity (Josh 6:25). In effect, her words mark her as a convert to YHWH and she is allowed to live.

The epic of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9) serves a similar, albeit expanded, role of confirmation as the story of Rahab. The Gibeonites respond like Rahab, assuming like her that their only hope was to make a treaty with the Israelites. This conclusion, we are told, was based on what happened to Ai and Jericho (Josh 9:3) and what happened in Egypt and Transjordan (Josh 9:9, 10). The Gibeonites approached the Israelites at Gilgal and sued for peace, falsely telling the Israelites that they were from a distant country (Joshua 9). The biblical writers assumed that the Gibeonites would know that the Israelites were not supposed to make peace treaties with the inhabitants of Canaan, thus the ruse. This account, like the story of Rahab, serves the biblical writers as evidence (or, using the term I prefer, "confirmation") that the people of Canaan were terrified of the Israelites and knew their only hope was surrender. The Gibeonites were so terrified that they pretended to be inhabitants of a distant land. This story also confirms the right of the "leaders," including Joshua, to make peace with whomever they wished—even if it was against the counsel of YHWH or when they did not seek His counsel (Josh 9:14, 15; Mitchell 1993: 168, 175). In other words, the story of the Gibeonites serves as another elevation of Joshua's status. Thus, the confirmation theme is pushed on two fronts: first, the Gibeonites acknowledge that YHWH had divinely elected Israel, whom the Gibeonites would rather serve than fight, and Joshua (and other tribal leaders) is confirmed as superleaders whose oaths are reason enough to amend YHWH's laws.

The main difference between Rahab and the Gibeonites is time. She testifies before Jericho is conquered, while the Gibeonites confirm the point of the biblical writers after the fact. They both serve the same purpose: outside-of-Israel witnesses confirming the presence of YHWH with Israel and an acknowledgement that He had given Israel the land.
The crossing of the Jordan River (Joshua 3 and 4) serves a similar goal of confirming Israel's right to the land and Joshua as her leader. In fact, the entire process of crossing the Jordan River is presented to the reader like a marriage event joining the Israelites to the land. The procedure of joining the Israelites to the land is full and complete, including a three-day preparation period (Josh 1:11; 3:2). Since this union to the land was a spiritual one, the Israelites were told the day before the crossing to consecrate themselves (Heb נְסָפִּים, Josh 3:5). On the day when they crossed the Jordan River, there was a procession led by priests carrying the ark of the covenant (Josh 3:3-6). As the priests' feet touched the water, the water stopped flowing (Josh 3:15-17). After the crossing, a memorial service was conducted with stones left as witnesses to the event (Josh 4:9). All of these events were seen as exalting Joshua to the status of Moses (Josh 4:14). Since no enemy was present, even the 40 eleph of troops, who marched across the Jordan River ahead of the people, serve more a symbolic cultic purpose than those about to begin war (Josh 4:13).

Symbolism permeates the story of the Jordan River crossing. Every feature of that crossing was used by the biblical writers to confirm in the reader that YHWH was with Israel when they entered the land. If one sees the Book of Joshua as about the conquest of the land or the destruction of the inhabitants, one can question the amount of space spent on the details of the Jordan River crossing, but the true purpose of the first 13 chapters of the Book of Joshua is to confirm in the mind of the reader that YHWH had given the land to the Israelites. Their ownership of the land was demonstrated by the miraculous and ceremonial events that marked their first days in their new homeland.

Immediately after crossing the river, the Israelites were bonded to YHWH by a confirmation act—the renewing of their covenant. This bonding was accomplished via circumcision—again, an act tied directly to Moses because the biblical writers tell us this was the second time this corporate act had been done (Josh 5:2). Circumcision was
a physical confirmation performed on every male. This act was undoubtedly used by
the biblical writers to demonstrate that Israel was indeed YHWH's people on His mis-

sion. The Israelites were physically marked and made distinct from all others. While
readers of this story did not see this event, the biblical writers imply that a proof or
confirmation existed that YHWH had given Israel the land. It was evidenced in those
still circumcised.

Even the story of Achan and his thievery from YHWH (Joshua 7) is a confirma-
tion story. While Achan's story is in the shadow of the defeat at Ai, the purpose of the
story is broader than merely teaching a lesson about obedience, as Mitchell suggested
(1993:76, 77). The real message of the biblical writers confirms the truth that even
when Israel sins (Josh 7:11) YHWH will not forsake them, but will forgive them (Josh
7:26). The story of Achan confirms the Israelites as a people like no other. Others
who resist YHWH's purposes find no such forgiveness (e.g., Amalekites, Exod 17:8-
16; 1 Sam 15:2). The Israelites are unique, and the story of Achan confirms that
uniqueness in a way no other story does.

The military campaigns of the Book of Joshua (chaps. 6, 8, 9, 10) are also con-
firmation stories. The main emphasis of the Southern and Northern campaigns (Joshua
10, 11), which are the heart of the conquest accounts, is not that the Israelites
slaughtered the Canaanite population. Rather, the success of the Israelites in these
campaigns is used by the biblical writers as an illustration of how YHWH was with
Israel. No one could stand before them. As Joshua said, "For the Lord has driven out
great and strong nations from before you; and as for you, no man has stood before you
to this day. One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the Lord your God is He
who fights for you, just as He promised you" (Josh 23:9, 10). The Israelites were vic-
torious because "the Lord, God of Israel, fought for Israel" (Josh 10:42) and Joshua
gave the land to the Israelites as an inheritance (Josh 11:23). Not that these war stories
do not picture conflict, destruction, and slaughter. They do. But the purpose of the
war accounts is the same as the nonwar stories that precede them. The military successes of the Israelites against Jericho/Ai, the southern and northern coalitions, confirmed to the biblical writers that YHWH fought for the Israelites and gave them the land. The list of all the kings whom they defeated and the land that was under their dominion (Joshua 12, 13) confirmed that YHWH was with them.

The war stories are confirmation accounts, confirming YHWH’s presence with the Israelites and their right to the land. That the conquest accounts are used this way by the biblical writers and interpreted in the same way by the participants of these battles can be seen by the figurative act of having all of the warriors put their feet on the necks of the defeated Amorite kings (Josh 10:24). If the battle accounts were simply about conquest there would have been no reason for such a demonstration. The battles of Joshua 10 and 11 are about confirming Israel’s right to the land. At the same time these war stories have all the elements of real historical events (Younger 1990: 237).

The dividing of the land (Joshua 13) amounted to a claim by the biblical writers that YHWH had deeded the land to the Israelites. Thus, Hess compared the land allocation of Joshua 13-19 with the Hittites and concluded, "These descriptions serve to emphasize the role of Israel’s deity who, like the Hittite emperor, determines the boundaries" (1994b: 138). No doubt the boundary lists represent the ideal and there is no need to explain "discrepancies and inconsistencies" (Curtis 1994: 27).

Theories of Israelite conquest/settlement have assumed that a major theme of the Book of Joshua is the cities and land the Israelites conquered. Some even suppose that this theme of "land" is the only subject on which the Book of Joshua can be trusted. Finkelstein, for example, considers the Book of Joshua as historically unreliable, but accepts the book’s geographical territorial description. In fact, for Finkelstein, it is the Iron I settlement of the Canaanite hill country that explains the origins of Israel.

It is impossible to come to grips with the settlement episode without a thorough-going acquaintance with at least one region of the hill country—in which the
events took place. This means studying its archaeological and ecological components, as well as the patterns of occupation during the periods immediately preceding and succeeding the time of Israelite Settlement. (1988: 21)

Without disputing Finkelstein’s emphasis on the importance of grasping what happened on the land, defining the geographical boundaries of where early Israel settled was not a major theme of the biblical writers. The biblical writers assume that the readers are already aware of what was Israelite territory. Finkelstein, himself, acknowledges that the biblical writers had little interest in geographical boundaries by recognizing how few military battles are actually recorded about the central portion of Israelite territory in the Book of Joshua. “The central hill country, the heartland of Israelite Settlement, is hardly represented at all in the tradition of the unified campaign of conquest” (1988: 298). The location where the Israelites settled was not so important to the biblical writers of the Book of Joshua as the mechanism—by God’s power.

One should consider that, if any sections of the Book of Joshua were likely to be modified by later hands, territorial boundaries would be the most likely section to be corrupted. In other words, later redactors would always be tempted to update or modify the boundaries of the Book of Joshua with the more currently recognized or desirable tribal boundaries. The geological concerns of Joshua 15-21 fit, like other sections, into the overall theme of the biblical writers; the exact location of the boundaries is not as important as the theme the writers are attempting to convey to the readers (contrary to the usual past focus on the geography and attempts to assign sources to misunderstood sections, while ignoring the point of the final writers, e.g., Kallai 1986).

Among the geographical information are statements that allow Israel’s incomplete conquest (e.g., Josh 17:12). These acknowledgments are more significant than any geographical use of wide-ranging boundaries (Joshua 15-21). The inabilities of the Israelites suggest the reality of their struggles, while the grandiose boundaries speak of
promise and possibilities. While the Book of Joshua may be about the conquest of Canaan, it says almost nothing about the settling of Canaan.

The Book of Joshua is about how Israel gained the land—by God's power, not about the land itself or geographical boundaries. This point must not be forgotten when attempting to reconstruct Israel's history based on the Book of Joshua.

No one can possess land until the deed is clear and no one can apportion land to others until it is one's own. Joshua 13 (and in some ways Joshua 12 as well) ends the confirmation events and actuates the events to follow. The dividing of the land is the last piece of evidence provided by the biblical writers demonstrating Israel's right to the land and it is, thus, the precursor of the settlement. Joshua 1 is the promise of the land, while Joshua 13 is the last proof of the right to the land. (YHWH gave it to them, so it must be theirs.) Curtis would see the division of the land as the fulfilling of a prophecy to their ancestors (1994: 25). The division of the land was a promise to the Israelites themselves.

All of the events of Joshua 1-13, then, are confirmation events. These events are used by the biblical writers to press home their point. Seeing the Book of Joshua as a story about total conquest as Mitchell does (1993: 91, 99; with a "single-minded emphasis on destruction" 1993: 52) causes him to be "surprised" when unconquered people and territory are introduced into the story (1993: 111, 135). Hastily drawn conclusions are what really is the "surprise" in this story. One can only conclude that the Book of Joshua is about total conquest by reading only Joshua 6, 8, 10, 11 (the three military campaigns) while ignoring the rest of the book. Mitchell was closer to the truth when he said that the gift of the land by YHWH in Joshua 1 "has confessional character." That "confessional character," however, should be applied to the entire section of Joshua 1-13, especially the battle accounts. Each one of these stories is a confirmation event that proved to the biblical writers, and supposedly the Israelites, that they belonged in the land and the land belonged to them. That there remained
enemy agents in the land and that the territory under Israelite control was limited are readily acknowledged and even assumed by the story (e.g., Josh 14:12-14; 16:10; 17:12; 23:4, 5, 7, 12). On the whole the Book of Joshua provides a more balanced explanation of the extent of the Israelite conquest than readers have often perceived.

If, on the other hand, the major theme of the Book of Joshua is conquest, why are so few lines in the book about conquest and why are there so few details of the battles and destructions (chaps. 6, 8, 10, 11)? That these four chapters have been used to describe the whole is only evidence of hastily concluded interpretation and not necessarily the point of the biblical writers. The first half of the Book of Joshua is about the confirmation of the Israelites’ relationship with YHWH and their right to the land.

Part II: The Results of the Confirmation Events and a Comparison between the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges

The second half of the Book of Joshua is a record of how things took place after Israel had experienced the confirmation events. These events summarize the first attempts of the Israelites to possess (i.e., live in) the land they had claimed. Note that Caleb’s request for land comes to Joshua at Gilgal (Josh 14:6). That Joshua is still pictured as residing at Gilgal can imply only that the biblical writers assumed that Israel had not permanently possessed any land before this time. Also note that chaps. 14 and 15 are the stories associated with the tribe of Judah, the same tribe that Judges 1 says led out in the settlement.

The story of the Ephraimites is recorded in chap. 16 and the Manassehites in chap. 17. These two chapters mix Ephraimite tribal boundaries and the troubles of the Ephraimites in gaining their territory. The remaining tribes were not able to acquire any land on their own and were therefore given some land from Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh (chaps. 18-22).
Wright's seminal article (1946) on the relationship between Judges 1 and Joshua 10 argues for the reliability of Joshua 10. He speaks to the apparent conflict between the Book of Joshua's conquest stories and the conquest recorded in Judges 1, both seeming to describe the same conquest, both giving different details, while reporting many similar events. An example of this conflict is that, while Judg 1:1 implies that the events that follow happened after the death of Joshua, Judg 1:11 repeats an event that seems to occur before Joshua's death (Josh 15:16-19).

Wright correctly noted that in the Book of Joshua the biblical writers (his "Deuteronomic view") acknowledged the incompleteness of the conquest (1946: 106). Wright has starkly outlined that truth.

Undoubtedly it was an exaggeration to say that every single inhabitant was killed. Yet it is obvious that the writer knew that the coastal plain was not captured (Josh 11:22), since otherwise he would have mentioned it. Reduce the statement to geography, and all that it [Josh 10:40, 41] claims is that Joshua took the Judean hill country with the Negev and Shephelah. Gibeon is given as the northern limit because the campaign started there. (1946: 106, 107)

There is a parallel between the seeming conflict between Joshua 10 and Judges 1 and the Book of Joshua itself. As commonly interpreted, the Book of Joshua speaks of total conquest (Joshua 1-12), followed by acknowledged limitations to that conquest (Joshua 13-24). Judges 1 reflects no more than the struggle acknowledged by Joshua 13-24. Consider that Joshua 18 admits that only four tribes had received their inheritance, while Judges 1 involves six Israelite tribes in the conquest (Aharoni 1970: 260-262). Albright (and Wright also, 1946: 107) saw this tension as the result of sources and the purpose of Judges 1, which was an attempt by the biblical writers to fill in (i.e., complete) the story offered by the Book of Joshua (1924b: 147). The biblical writers, according to Albright, also omitted elements and other anomalies resulting from contradictory accounts or accounts that came from vastly different time periods (1924b: 148).
Where Wright's arguments in support of Joshua 10 fail is in their foundation, 
archaeology. It was Wright's opinion, and probably the consensus at the time, that the 
identity of the sites mentioned in Joshua 10 was known and that the archaeological 
excavation of those sites had produced evidence that substantiated the Joshua 10 
accounts. Wright wrote,

Today, however, all four of these sites [Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, and Debir] can 
be located with a high degree of probability. The only city named in the chapter 
the location of which is still unknown is Makkedah. As a result of this situation, 
we can now say that if Joshua were to lead a campaign against the territory later 
occupied by Judah with the purpose of reducing its strongest fortress cities, this 
chapter describes precisely the way he ought to do it. (1946: 110)

Wright, following Albright, identified the four sites as Libnah/Tell el-Sâfi or Tell 
Bornât (1946: 110); Lachish/ Tell ed-Duweir (1946: 111); Eglon/Tell el-Hezî (1946: 
111); and Debir/Tell Beit Mirsim (1946: 111, 112). As for archaeological evidence of 
the Israelite conquest, Wright looked to the LBII/IrI destructions found at those sites.

As we have seen above, any consensus that may have existed in the A.D. 1940s 
about these sites or their archaeological relationship to the Israelites does not exist 
today. Some have even argued, as we have seen in chapter 2, that the archaeological 
evidence is against the biblical record. In the same way that many in biblical studies 
have begun to shun sources as an answer for all difficulties in the text, in this issue it 
may be that archaeology has peaked in its use as a textual tool.

While archaeology has not settled and may never settle the difficulties between 
Joshua 10 and Judges 1, the similar problem that exists between this difficulty and the 
internal discontinuity within the Book of Joshua itself may offer a paradigm by which 
we may be able to grasp the clue to such an understanding. Such a paradigm should be 
true to the totality of the theme of the whole book without limiting independent themes 
within the book.

In the Book of Joshua the tension between the confirmation accounts and the 
results of the confirmation events are between the two sections of the book, in which
each has its own object which, though complementary, is unique. Again, Part I illustrates the Israelite’s right to the land by events that confirmed that right (because YHWH gave it to them). These confirmation events included three military campaigns that legitimize Israel’s claims that YHWH fought for them (Josh 24:12). Part II focuses on the struggle for specific regions and the tribes that struggled and admonitions to remain under God’s confirmation. From the accounts of Part II we gain a better look at the victories of Part I, which, in effect, were not a final victory. They were only the first stage. In other words, the conquest was a two-step process (Younger 1994: 227). The first step (and most important to the aims of the Book of Joshua) was the confirmation that YHWH was in league with Israel. The biblical writers saw that Presence in the events of Joshua 1-13. The second step of the conquest was the day-to-day contest of possessing the land—actually settling the land. While, for the biblical writers, the victories of Joshua 6, 8, 10, 11 were real, the results of those victories were limited, according to Joshua 13-24.

Likewise, the biblical writers of Judges 1 provided their own version of Joshua Part I, while reflecting the more day-to-day struggle of the later part of the Book of Joshua Part II, in chaps. 3-21. As Na‘aman observed, Judges 1 “can be considered as a complete conquest story, alternative and supplementary to the conquest stories of the Book of Joshua” (1994: 260).

Repetitions of sites conquered (e.g., Jerusalem, Judg 1:8, 21) and even stories previously recorded in Joshua (Judg 1:12-15; Josh 15:16-19) provide only further evidence of the difficult struggle Israel had for the land—the struggle that is first clearly stated in the Book of Joshua. Obviously, Judges 1 includes events that happened in earlier times. These events were convoluted simply because the Judges 1 writers selected what they needed to demonstrate their point, without consideration of time-frame. They were not arguing for timing—only a limited selection of the difficulties and experiences of the Israelite struggle. At that, they were providing a "south-to-
north geographical arrangement" to heighten the readers' awareness of the Israelites' moral decay (Younger 1994: 216, 217).

This juxtaposition of the events narrated in Judges 1 (and for that matter in the Assyrian summary inscriptions) neutralizes and reshapes our very sense of time and distance. It has the power, not only to bring together under one umbrella events that are remote chronologically, but even to clothe simultaneity in the guise of sequence. The use of this structuring pattern in Judges 1 enhances the downward moral-spiritual movement mentioned above. (Younger 1994: 219)

At the same time, Judges 1 implies that the tribe of Judah listened to the word of YHWH, while the other tribes did not (Na'aman 1994: 260).

That they were providing only the barest of reports is evidenced in the 26 verses it took to record it (Judg 1:1-26). That they reflected the latter half of the Book of Joshua says only that the experiences reflected there were the normative Israelite experience. That later readers have found conflicts between the accounts of the Book of Joshua and Judges 1 suggests only that interpreters have simplistically assumed that the 26 verses of Judges 1, comprising possibly several hundred years of events, and Joshua 6, 8, 10, 11 were both written as complete histories, written to be used for analysis. As it is, Judges 1 has a completely different purpose than the conflict accounts of the Book of Joshua.

Though his archaeological support for Joshua 10 may now be suspect, Wright was right in concluding that the Book of Joshua is a more detailed account than is Judges 1. He wrote: "Furthermore, it is now apparent that Judges 1 is not an old, unified account of the original Conquest. From the standpoint of territorial history it must be seen as a collection of miscellaneous fragments of varying dates and of varying reliability" (Wright 1979b: 69, 70). By "reliability" I would understand Wright to mean in comparison with the Book of Joshua. What I would suggest is that neither of them is more reliable than the other. They both serve the purposes for which they were written.
Judges 1 also seems to elevate the tribe of Judah and provides an "alternative and supplementary" account for the Book of Joshua (Na'aman 1994: 260). I agree. Judges 1 does have its own purposes.

There are three reasons for seeing Judges 1-2 as a unique summary of the events portrayed in the Book of Joshua. First there are similarities in the places conquered. In the Judges account, Jerusalem (Judg 1:5), Hebron (Judg 1:10), Debir (Judg 1:11), Jericho (City of Palms=Jericho, Deut 34:3; 2 Chr 28:15; Judg 1:11), Hormah (Judg 1:17), and Bethel (Judg 1:22) parallel the same defeated kings noted in the Book of Joshua (Jerusalem, Josh 12:10), Hebron (Josh 12:13); Jericho (Joshua 6); Hormah (Josh 12:14), and Bethel (Josh 12:16). Judges 1 and the Book of Joshua also agree that the city of Jerusalem could not be permanently held by the Israelites (Josh 15:63; Judg 1:21).

The two most notable differences in these accounts is that Judges 1 lists Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron as conquered cities while the Book of Joshua implies that they were not conquered (Judg 1:18; Josh 11:22; 13:3). Another difference is that Judg 1:5 begins its conquest narrative with the attack on Bezek, a place not even mentioned in the Book of Joshua. These differences, and even the differences in the presentations of the conquests (e.g., the expanded version of the conquest of Jericho in the Book of Joshua versus the minimal note about the conquest of the "city of palms" in Judges), can be explained by exchanging the "Conquest" ideal for the "conquest" reality. The Israelite "conquest" really only ended in the latter years of the reign of David. Until that time there were decades of constant warfare, servitude, and intertribal conflicts.

It should not be surprising that two books with unique purposes should present unequal accounts of Israel's victories. That the Book of Joshua does not mention a conquest of Bezek, Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron could mean that we have been left with two conflicting accounts, but I think the more reasonable interpretation is that neither account is complete nor were they intended to be. The biblical writers included in the
Book of Joshua and Judges 1 those events important for their purposes. That they are not exact replicas only states that the Book of Joshua and Judges 1 have different purposes.

A second reason for seeing Judges 1 and the conquest portions of the Book of Joshua as more or less expressing the same events is their general similarity of structure. Both accounts present a three-part outline of events. This outline can be expressed by the sequence: conquest (Joshua 1-12; Judg 1:1-26), incomplete conquest (Josh 13:1-13; Judg 1:27-36), and admonition (Joshua 23-24; Judges 2). The major distinctions between the two accounts is that the Book of Joshua speaks about land distribution among the tribes, provides a fairly extensive outline of certain "conquests" (Jericho and Ai), and does not relate itself in any extensive way to settlement problems.

Another similarity between the Book of Joshua and Judges 1-2 is that after the "conquest" and "incomplete conquest" sections, Joshua appears, speaks, and dies. Joshua's death in the Book of Joshua is its end, while the death of Joshua is really the beginning of Judges. In fact, Josh 24:31 and Judg 2:10 (which both essentially say that after the generation who knew Joshua died, the Israelites turned from worshiping YHWH) serve as an overlapping bridge that binds together the Book of Joshua and Judges 1-2. It could even be said that in some sense the Book of Judges is a response to the Book of Joshua. The Book of Joshua ostensibly pictures Israel's successes, the Book of Judges explains why Israel was not able to maintain either their land or control over their neighbors.

The last two chapters of the Book of Joshua (23 and 24) are a mix of both confirmation and true life. According to Joshua 23, after there was peace from all their enemies, Joshua reminded the people that not one of YHWH's promises had failed (Josh 23:14), but also acknowledged that their enemies still surrounded them (Josh 23:13). Joshua 24 repeats the same story: YHWH was faithful (Josh 24:3-13) followed by a renewal of their covenant (Josh 24:26). Thus, the second half of the Book of
Joshua ends as the first half began. The first act on entering the land was the renewal of the covenant (Joshua 5). The last act of Joshua, while still in the land, was a renewal of the same covenant. The assembly at Shechem has been seen as an attempt on Joshua’s part to cause Israel to renew once again its covenant with YHWH (Koopmans 1990: 419).

To see the Book of Joshua as a book designed primarily to describe a completed conquest is to miss the point of its story and produces conflicting realities within the same book. The real point of the biblical writers is the presence of YHWH with His people.

What demonstrates the plausibility of our outline is its continuity in explaining the story line of the entire Book of Joshua. Confirmation, as a thematic thread, holds the Book of Joshua together and presents to the reader the basic theme of the book.

To support our proposed outline and our thematic interpretation of the Book of Joshua we need to analyze more carefully the claims of Joshua 10 and 11. Do the biblical writers claim a completed conquest? Do they likewise claim that the Israelites possessed land? We also need to look carefully at the warfare accounts to see how the battles related to casualties and question the biblical writers as to their understanding of total annihilation. By asking these questions we can better explain the claims of the biblical writers regarding Israel’s conquest of Canaan.

The Conquest Accounts Are Limited

The Conquest: A Claim or Interpretation?

The belief that the Book of Joshua is a record of a completed conquest is largely due to those references that apparently state that Israel conquered all of the cities, killing every inhabitant in the land. According to this scenario, the culmination of this massacre was peace and safety. Josh 21:43, 44 reads,

So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side,
according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them: the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand.

Craigie, shortly after describing the 18th-century military stratagem of Carl von Clausewitz (military power of enemy must be destroyed; enemy's country must be conquered; enemy's will to fight must be subdued) said, "But more often than not, the laws of war seem to have been executed with considerable ruthlessness, as becomes evident from reading the Book of Joshua" (1978: 46, 47). Lind saw nothing unique about the Israelite mode of warfare, viewing its מלחמה as a war practice shared with the rest of the Near East (1980: 81). Before such conclusions are drawn, a better picture of the battles as described in the Book of Joshua is needed. Two considerations make a conclusion of total conquest ill-advised.

First, we must determine how the biblical writers viewed the results of the "annihilations" they describe. In other words, if the biblical writers saw the Israelite conquest as a total destruction of the Canaanite population and cities, did they view the result of such desolation of the land?

A number of scholars have noted that Israel's conquest, as presented in the Book of Joshua, is more complex than is often assumed. For example, Wright wrote that the Joshua conquest was told from a "foreshortened historical perspective" and "certain isolated passages" present a truer picture of the conquest dynamics (1940: 26; and the picture of "total conquest" is "overly enthusiastic," 1984: 70; also Malamat 1979: 36).

Other scholars have recognized in passing the mixed signals about the conquest that the Book of Joshua sends. For example, Harrison wrote,

If scholars had differentiated a little more closely in the past between occupation and subjugation, the picture of conquest as represented in Joshua would have emerged in far clearer focus than it did, and as a result there would have been no need to regard the initial narratives of Judges as historical at the expense of their counterparts in Joshua. (1973: 677)

Gottwald, in his critique of the conquest model, demonstrated well that the Book of Joshua does not support a universal conquest of Canaan (1985: 197-200), while
Aharoni noted that the concept of "the land that remains" developed due to the limited early Israelite settlement (1970: 261). On the other hand, few scholars have fully comprehended and applied the implications of those passages of the Book of Joshua that specifically state the Israelite conquest was not complete, to the entirety of the book. Even Harrison's understanding of "occupation" (noted above) should be accepted with caution.

The real problem lies in preconceived ideas about early Israelite conquest and warfare. Burrows warned the reader of the biblical text that since our society has been permeated with the Judeo-Christian heritage,

we must be especially on guard against the danger of reading our modern Western ideas—or theological conceptions derived from Greek philosophy—into the ancient Hebrew writings. The sources must be allowed to speak for themselves, and what they say must be understood, as far as possible, in terms of their own cultural background. (1983: 102)

Taken as a whole, the Book of Joshua provides a much more balanced view of the Israelite conquest. Scattered throughout the last section of the Book of Joshua are numerous acknowledgments of Israel's inability to conquer the land, (e.g., Josh 13:1: "Now Joshua was old and advanced in years when the Lord said to him, 'You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed'"). If the biblical writers thought the war was over, it seems unlikely they would admit that much was not conquered. It is true that the immediate context of this verse lists territory outside the hill country (e.g., the Canaanite coastal area, Josh 13:3-6; the territory of the Geshurites and Maacathites, Josh 13:13), but there are evidences that the hill country was also incompletely controlled.

Caleb's request for land was based on a tentative supposition, not certainty. "Perhaps the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the Lord has spoken" (Josh 14:12). His inheritance was the city of Hebron, which is in the heart of the Canaanite hill country. If the Israelites were controlling all of the hill country after the
conquest of Joshua 10-11, the biblical writers appear unaware of the fact. It is stated that after Caleb's conquest of Hebron, the land again "had rest from war" (Josh 14:15).

The biblical writers also make the point that the Jebusites controlled Jerusalem (15:63) and the Canaanites are said to be living at Gezer (Josh 16:10) in the midst of the Ephraimites. Beth-shean, Ibleam, Dor, Endor, Taanach, Megiddo, and Napheth, along with their vassal villages, were controlled by non-Israelites (Josh 17:11, 12).

In another account, presumably after the land had peace, the Manassites complained to Joshua about the smallness of their territory compared to the largeness of their tribe. They could not drive out the Canaanites of the Jezreel valley (17:11), so Joshua told them, "If you are a numerous people, go up to the forest and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you" (Josh 17:15). In other words, they were to remove the Perizzites and Raphaim if they could not remove the Canaanites (17:15). Still, the Peruzzites and Raphaim are projected as living in the hill country.

A war council, which met at Shiloh, is described in chap. 18. At that time seven tribes had not yet received their inheritance (Josh 18:2). This is stated, even though a total conquest and a resultant peace had been proclaimed; yet, only four tribes had attained a homeland! These tribes were asked the pointed question, "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?" (Josh 18:3).

These tribes were given land that belonged to their fellow tribesmen. The more interesting of these later tribal divisions are: Benjamin (which received along with other cities, Jericho, Gibeon, Ramah, Mizpeh, Jerusalem, and Gibeah, Josh 18:21, 25, 26, 28), Simeon (which received a portion of Judah's lot, Josh 19:9), and Dan (which the text states did not attempt to gain its land until it was apportioned to it, and then the tribe acquired only one town, Josh 19:40, 47). In other words, the allocation of land to Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan resulted in taking land from other Israelite tribes and
reapportioning it to them. This land division is set out as though it occurred after the land had "rest," that is, after the warring had ended!

That the Israelites eventually settled in the hill country says much about their military abilities. Israel settled, as all peoples do, where and when they felt safe. As Lemche noted,

Above all, political conditions have sometimes entailed that fertile regions have been abandoned as primary settlement zones, whereas the highly situated regions, even in the mountains, were able to provide shelter and protection only to a somewhat reduced population which attempted to survive a period of troubles. (1990: 18)

That they settled in hill country suggests that the Israelites were not strong enough to possess land more suitable for agriculture. The tribe of Dan's pilgrimage to northern Canaan, because it could not maintain a home territory in the shephelah, is a clear picture of Israel's struggle for territory (Judges 18).

Commonly, the juxtaposition of overwhelming conquest and the internal evidence that the land was, indeed, not totally conquered is seen as evidence for multiple sources. Other dynamics may be at work that are not easily recognized. If we allow the conflicting evidence of an incomplete conquest equal weight with verses that imply total conquest, we can at least say that, after the military campaigns of Joshua 10-11, Israel was still in the midst of antagonists.

In the days of Joshua, as portrayed by the Book of Joshua, Israel had no long-lasting conquest. The Israelites had only begun a contest to attain the land. The dilemma that some see between the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges is no greater than the tension between the two sections of the Book of Joshua. While such apparently conflicting stories are unsettling to some, reconciliation is not impossible if the Book of Joshua is allowed to speak for itself.
The Land: Claimed, Not Settled

It should not be forgotten that the Book of Joshua is about the Israelites' acquisition and right to the land, not the settlement of the land. The land was claimed in the Book of Joshua, but that does not mean it was necessarily entirely controlled. Wright suggested that "the only way Israel could have ascertained the will of God regarding the land distribution was to have carefully surveyed the land in advance and then to have seen what God wanted by the official 'dice,' the Urim and Thummim" (1984: 68). Malamat credited the land allotment to the "specific military qualities and skills of the Israelites" (1979: 40) and indirect assaults (1982: 31). Moreover, Aharoni went so far as to write,

One could scarcely deny that the original text of such a detailed geographical list did represent a real geographical-historical situation. It could hardly have served any other purpose than that ascribed to it in the Bible, viz. the exact delineation of the tribal boundaries within the covenant framework. (Aharoni 1979: 251)

The "will of God," as suggested by Wright, or great "military qualities and skills" employed, as assumed by Malamat, were not necessarily realized in order for the Book of Joshua to have been written. There was another purpose for the geographical boundaries that Aharoni has missed. That purpose is theological. Noth correctly asserts that the Israelite territory as outlined in the Book of Joshua

does not simply reproduce the tribal territories at a particular historical date but describes the areas to which the individual tribes laid claim, in accordance with the theory that the whole land of Palestine was to belong to the united tribes of Israel. (1960: 54, emphasis in the original)

Since YHWH had given the whole land to the Israelites, the whole land needed to be cataloged and divided among all of the tribes. The act of allotting the land is a confirmation act that pronounces Israel's right to possess it. It announces the totality of conquest and the conclusion of the conquest and the beginning of the possessing. It thus serves the same purpose as the military campaigns.

The stories in the later half of the Book of Joshua testify to the "prophetic" or promissory nature of the land division. This means that the Israelite tribes allotted the
land before they physically settled it rather than dividing it after they had control of it. (Because of the stories in the Books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel, I doubt that they controlled much of the land, for very long, before the Israelite monarchy; see Hess 1994a: 194.) One evidence of the "prophetic" nature of the land division is the many cites that are said to belong to the individual tribes, which the text specifically stated they did not possess, and in some cases never did possess (cf. Josh 15:63 with Josh 18:28; Josh 16:3 with Josh 16:10; Josh 17:11-12; see also Woudstra [1981: 8, 33] who wrote of the "not yet" of the land). Even the allotment itself is seen as a flexible tool, which is changeable (Josh 19:9; Josh 22:19).

The land allotment is said to be complete when Israel is at rest from its enemies (Josh 23:1), but at the same time enemy nations were still living among the Israelites (Josh 23:4, 7, 12). (It should not be forgotten that the Israelites were warned about being allured by false gods [Josh 23:16], which would have been unnecessary counsel if the non-Israelite population had been annihilated.) Even within the two land-allotment stories (Joshua 13 and 18), there are specific statements that show the tentative nature of the land allotments ("very much of the land remains to be possessed," Josh 13:1; "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of our fathers, has given you?" Josh 18:3).

The allotment of the tribe of Dan and that tribe's acquisition of only one city provides one of the limited windows through which the modern reader can view the difficulty the Israelites faced in the conquest process, even though the land was already claimed. According to the text, Dan's allotment was relatively substantial (Josh 19:40-46), while the portion they really conquered was the smallest of those delineated (Josh 19:47).

Wright called the conquest of the Book of Joshua a "foreshortened historical perspective" and noted that a few scattered passages in that book describe a more complex process (1940: 26), or as Hess described the boundary lists "idealistic" (1994a: 203).
If anything, Joshua 14-22 (like Judges and Samuel) reveals the difficulties of the Israelites in gaining a homeland. Lohfink saw this issue as evidence of later editors attempting to explain Israel's difficulties in light of earlier traditions of glorious conquest.

The exilic revision of the Deuteronomistic history was faced with the task of explaining the catastrophe. An important technique used by retrospective historical interpretation was the surrender of the notion that all the inhabitants of the land had been exterminated during the occupation. Indeed, their seductive influence on Israel's faith was a major cause of the great history of apostasy. . . . Thus the failure to carry out the herem is used by exilic Deuteronomists to account for the catastrophe and make it intellectually assimilable. (1986: 198)

Lohfink's opinion does not consider all of the Book of Joshua. War is most often complex. To imagine the Israelite conquest as a simple children's story—they came, they conquered, they lived happily ever after—is to impose simplistic unhistorical expectations that the Book of Joshua does not endorse. Part II of the Book of Joshua clearly states that the Israelite conquest was difficult and incomplete. It is evident that the biblical writers of the Book of Joshua did not produce a simplistic document.

On the contrary, these multiple messages are evidence of difficult and multi-faceted conquest and settlement processes. Bright concluded,

The Israelite "conquest" of Palestine was actually a long drawn-out affair; it began with the patriarchal migrations far back in the Bronze Age, and it was not finally completed until the time of David. The Israel that emerged drew together within its structure groups of the most heterogeneous origin. It is likely that many of these groups preserved traditions of conquests made by their ancestors as they came into the land, and it is conceivable that, as the normative conquest tradition took shape events that took place at widely separated times may have been combined within it—under the rubric of "conquest," one might say. (1981: 132, 133)

The Book of Joshua reflects this complicated process of conquest. It seems rather nearsighted for a later writer, or even a later collator or redactor (assuming they were working from an unique political perspective), to have included divergent materials if an editor was attempting to convey an all-encompassing conquest. It seems more likely that what are often seen as conflicting statements do not undermine the theme of the biblical writers. The theme of the Book of Joshua is promise, not fulfillment. The
allotment of the land was a promise of the land not a proof of the attainment of the land (see Harrison 1973: 677, who still credited too much to the conquest but at least makes a distinction between the occupation of the land and the subjugation of the people; 1973: 677). It is likely that Noth is correct that the land was "never occupied by a homogeneous population" (1960: 8), even when Joshua's conquest was complete. The fractious state is testified to in the Book of Joshua and is part of the Book of Joshua's overall message.

Because the Book of Joshua is a book of promise, individual statements of peace and even possession (e.g., Josh 21:43-44) must not be interpreted in isolation. Neither should such verses be used as a gauge for the entire book. Statements which seem to imply a completed peace are always rendered within the context of what YHWH had done for Israel, not the reality of what Israel had gained. These verses also serve as a reflection of the fulfillment of earlier promises, promises that acknowledged that the land would be possessed, while other peoples lived among them (Num 33:53).

The primary difficulty readers have in understanding the Book of Joshua, then, is that the stories of the conquest of Jericho, Ai, and the Southern and Northern campaigns (Joshua 6, 8, 10, 11) are assumed to be the major theme of the book. At the same time, those sections in chaps. 14-24 that acknowledge that the conquest was limited are, while sometimes acknowledged, not given a place in the overall purposes of the writers' theme. This has caused interpreters to misunderstand the purposes of the biblical writers. Chaps. 1-13 are a series of "confirmation" accounts that the biblical writers use to convince the reader that when Joshua led the people YHWH was with His people. If chaps. 1-13 are seen as confirmation accounts, then chaps. 14-24 will be allowed to fulfill their proper place in the Book of Joshua.
Forceful Bludgeoning or First Blood?

Much attention has been given to the meaning of "holy war" (e.g., Wright 1984: 27-37; Lind 1980). On the other hand, not enough consideration has been given to the pragmatic implications of the power of the deities in human conflicts. For people whose lives were controlled by signs and symbols, the first few minutes of battle could well predict its final outcome, revealing whose god was the stronger on any given day. A careful reading of the battles described in the stories of early Israel's history reveals that those conflicts were often determined by what I call the rule of "first blood." By "first blood" I mean that the initial events of a battle were seen in ancient times as a predictive indicator of its final outcome. In other words, whoever drew the first blood on the battlefield was considered likely to be the victor of the battle.

A possible example of "first blood" is the first battle for Ai. In this battle, even though only 36 of the 3,000 attacking Israelite men were killed, the Israelites were so surprised that they panicked and fled (Josh 7:4, 5). Similar panic attacks overcame Israel's enemies during the military campaigns of Joshua 10-11. In each of the three Israelite campaigns, the Israelites made a surprise attack that unsettled their opponents, which in turn caused them to give up before the battle had begun (Wright 1940: 27; 1979: 70). This phenomenon is also reflected in Josh 23:10 where Joshua reminds the Israelites that one of them has put 1,000 previous inhabitants to flight.

There are many biblical examples of "first blood" outside the Book of Joshua. For example, David slew a single Philistine warrior, which caused the Philistines to flee (1 Sam 17:51). Jonathan killed 20 Philistines at their garrison near Gibeah and the multitude "melted away" (1 Sam 14:16). Twelve young warriors of David defeated the 12 young warriors of Ish-bosheth, which led to Ish-bosheth's larger army fleeing from David's army (2 Sam 2:15-17). "First blood" panic was not uncommon to the biblical writers of other sections of Scripture.
The military maneuver of surprise was used by the Israelites to gain the advantage of "first blood." Surprise attack was the genius of Israelite warfare and remained an Israelite war technique well into the settlement process (e.g., 1 Sam 11:11). The element of surprise is what Malamat calls the "The Indirect Military Approach" (1979: 45).

This indirect approach sought to avoid frontal assault and siege warfare as well as straightforward encounters with enemy forces, especially chariots, in the open field. To achieve this, the Israelites resorted to tactics based on deception, feints, decoys, ambushes, and diversionary maneuvers—any guile to attain surprise in overcoming the enemy. (1979: 45)

The technique of surprise military maneuvers did not seem to affect the biblical writers' appreciation of the power of YHWH. Evidently, they assumed He approved of, and was working in, such tactics and that panic was evidence of the divine working.

The Israelites were not alone in using surprise as part of their military tactics. One of the most famous battles in ancient history involved the element of surprise. It occurred between the Hittites and Egyptians at Kadesh on the Orontes River. Although the armies were looking for each other, it was an ambush by the Hittites that precipitated the battle (Yadin 1963: 108-110). Surprise attacks were most helpful when an enemy was seen as too strong an enemy for open conflict. That Israel relied so heavily on ambushes and surprise attacks should tell us, if nothing else, that Israel was not militarily dominant to its neighbors.

The one major Israelite defeat recorded in the Book of Joshua was the first battle for control of the city of Ai (Joshua 7). Since the Israelites lost so few in the battle (36 of 3,000), the number of losses seems insignificant to the outcome. Their major concern was that other people would hear of their defeat. "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what wilt Thou do for Thy great name?" (Josh 7:8, 9). The posture of Israel was that YHWH was with them, which made them invincible. Their loss at Ai shook their confidence, causing Joshua to lament, "O Lord, what can I say since
Israel has turned their back before their enemies?" (Josh 7:8). The defeat at Ai threatened the entire Israelite invasion although only 36 died in the battle. These 36 causalities were the "first blood" of the battle. They died during the first minutes of combat, which caused the entire army to lose its composure and run. Such was the power of "first blood."

Every Person or Those Caught?

Another point that must be considered is that even though the Book of Joshua seems to say the Israelites killed "every person," leaving no survivors, the biblical writers seem to have used this phraseology for different purposes other than to detail the totality of the Israelite causalities.

The statements that imply that every enemy was killed (e.g., Josh 10: 28 [Joshua destroyed it] "and every person who was in it. He left no survivor" NASB; Heb. וַיָּמֹר יְהֹוָה מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ כֹּל חָיָה בָּהּ "and He destroyed every living thing."
) appear in 14 verses (6:21; 8:26; 10:28, 30, 32, 33, 35, 37, 39, 40; 11:8, 14, 17, 21; see Appendix K). The most specific of these statements is found in the story of Jericho, "And they utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword" (Josh 6:21, NASB). After the battles of Joshua 6, 8, 10, 11, in which these statements are recorded, chap. 11 ends with the words, "Thus the land had rest from war" (vs. 23; Heb. הָאָרֶץ מְסַלְּקֵהּ הַמָּלָכִים).

It is a seemingly obvious assumption that since all Israel’s enemies were dead they would then have peace, just as Josh 11:23 says. When this summary statement is combined with a list of all the kings Israel conquered (Joshua 12), it again appears obvious that the Israelites annihilated virtually every living person. The repetition of "every city" being taken and "every person" being slaughtered (termed "sledge-hammer assertions" by Gottwald 1985: 197), and the announcement of the land having peace, certainly could be interpreted to mean that the only people left in Canaan were the
Israelites—all others were dead. These verses could reflect the reality of events, without necessarily meaning that the Israelites exterminated every single person.

For one thing, the more detailed battle descriptions of the Book of Joshua specifically state that there were enemy survivors of the battles. In the stories of the second and third campaigns, the Israelites had to chase their fleeing enemies (e.g., Josh 10:11, 16, 20; 11:18). In other words, the picture of warfare in the Book of Joshua does not reveal two opposing sets of soldiers battling to the last person, but rather, it reveals that the losers ran for safety. By focusing on the "everyone who was in the city was killed" part of the story, readers have tended to overlook those parts of the stories that said there were those who survived and fled. This has led to the general belief that in Israeli warfare the contestants killed until there was no one left to kill. Such a view of warfare is so ill-conceived that Dever suggests that the Conquest Theory does not really deal with the issue of Canaanite population ("It was never explained just what happened to the predominantly Canaanite population, since evidently it was not annihilated, as even the Biblical accounts admit," 1992: 101, emphasis in the original).

Another point considered more fully below, but worth mentioning here, is that the דִּינָה was practiced as a specific cultic act only on the inhabitants of Jericho and Ai. If every single inhabitant of all the cities had been intended for total annihilation, we would expect that every city would have been dedicated by the דִּינָה, like the citizens of Jericho and Ai. They were not. Perhaps, then, the other stories suggest something other than total annihilation.

That the Israelites and their Canaanite foes fought until the last soldier died is unrealistic and not supported by other ancient battles. Both the battle at Megiddo launched by Thutmose III and the later conflict between Ramesis II and the Hittites at Kadesh were incomplete victories because the pursuing armies stopped to collect booty.

The Egyptian army, instead of adhering to the principle of maintenance of aim and continuing to destroy the enemy and prevent his escape, fell upon his possessions left behind in the camps, collecting booty. As the royal scribe put it, with unadorned simplicity: "Now if only His Majesty's army had not given up their
hearts to capturing the possessions of the enemy, they would have captured Megiddo at this time." (Yadin 1963: 103)

Yadin also noted the irony that at the later battle at Kadesh the Egyptians themselves were saved by the Hittites' army who likewise stopped their pursuit in search of booty (1963: 103).

A more realistic model of warfare is found in Jer 4:29, "At the sound of the horseman and bowman every city flees; they go into the thickets and climb among the rocks; every city is forsaken, and no man dwells in them." Humans are not often known to stand in the face of certain death. Like all predatory animals, when survival is threatened, untrained or undisciplined humans run. Jer 4:29 reflects not only human reaction in the sixth century B.C., but human reaction at all times. Fleeing in the face of an overpowering adversary is a tactical strategy not uncommonly employed (e.g., 2 Sam 15:13-37; Luckenbill 1989 II: 141).

It is true that Jer 4:29 describes events in the sixth century B.C., while the events of the Book of Joshua are written as though they occurred centuries before. Nonetheless, there are reasons to suggest that the description of fleeing before a strong enemy would fit those earlier times. First, before the monarchical period, the physical welfare of the Israelites was maintained by a local unprofessional militia. With the "call for war" the premonarchical leader was dependent on the whim of those who heard the call (e.g., Judg 3:27; 5:16-18). After David became king, the Israelite monarchy had professional (i.e., full-time) soldiers to protect the nation (2 Sam 23:8-39). A similar situation is apparent in Canaan. It was not until the independent kingdoms of the Israelites, Philistines, Edomites, Amonites, and Moabites in Canaan emerge that professional armies could be supported. Given the limited population of Canaan, we cannot expect that the Late Bronze Age city-states of Canaan had free-standing professional armies, comparable to Egypt's. Most city defenders in Canaan had to be
unprofessional militia and, thus, just as likely, or more so, to flee in the face of a superior enemy.

The second reason that the description of Jer 4:29 probably fits warfare in earlier times is that warfare as described in the Book of Joshua was regional for regional purposes. According to the story, Israel did not fight one battle for the control of all Canaan, but was involved in numerous altercations. The most all-inclusive battle was the Northern campaign fought against a coalition led by Hazor (Joshua 11). Even then the events as described are a city-by-city struggle after an initial victory on the battlefield (Josh 11:18). In addition, the picture presented in the Book of Judges is a picture of regional conflicts. (The classic example is the oppressions at the time of Jephthah, which involved the inhabitants of Gilead who were protected only by their own volunteers; Judges 11, especially vs. 11.) Such regionally based conflicts suggest that the participants varied widely in interest and determination.

Third, early Israelite warfare is portrayed as spontaneous events for short-term goals (e.g., Judg 20:1-11). Warriors were gathered, the war fought, and the war was completed in a matter of days or weeks. (Note that in the Book of Joshua stories that the Israelites return to Gilgal after every conflict, demonstrate the individual nature of each battle, Josh 9:6; 10:6; 10:43; 14:6.) This spontaneous aspect contrasts to long-term crusades conducted by the larger empires of the Hittites, Egyptians, and the later Assyrians and Babylonians. About the time the Israelite monarchy developed, the city-state as a power in Canaan was over. Cities needed larger networks of support for survival. In Israel, even when the monarchy split, there were still two centers of power.

If citizens fled their cities in later times (Jer 4:29), when there was an organized professional army and an intrigue system of city leagues, which were supported by a developed bureaucracy and permanent national leaders, could earlier peoples with no standing army or long-term leadership do otherwise? I suggest that earlier fighters who did not have the benefits of the training and discipline of a standing army were just as
interested in self-preservation and (given the points noted) even more likely to run, when facing a superior army, than fight.

It should also not be forgotten that the lists of cities conquered (Josh 10:28-42; Josh 11:11-14) may reflect a contraction of the time-line of those events that may make the battles appear to have happened more quickly than they actually did. This could be so if they were composed along the lines of an Egyptian "Daybook" model (Hoffmeier 1994: 176, 177).

When the Israelites came to Canaan, they faced insecure home defenders. As the reputation of the Israelites grew, many of their enemies probably hid before the Israelites even arrived at their city and, when the battle began, they regularly fled in the face of their enemies (according to the biblical record).

If the first few casualties of a battle ("first-blood") were seen as often predictive of the eventual outcome of the battle (and remember that the foremost Israelite tactic mentioned in every battle in the Book of Joshua was surprise), we should not doubt that the Israelites were the victors in every contest (except the first battle at Ai where they did not surprise their enemy, Joshua 7). With the initial Israelite victory, both the opposing warriors on the field of battle and the population in the cities fled from the reach of the Israelites. Everyone (that is, the few) remaining in the city would indeed be killed due to their lack of submission. In other words, the Book of Joshua can be understood to mean that everyone in the cities was killed but the majority of the people were not killed. They had run away.

Any invading army that experienced quickly melting opposition, thereby finding virtually empty cities, was easily able to kill the few remaining city inhabitants, and could justly boast of its victorious might. The Israelites could also see in the endeavor the "hornets" of YHWH that were guiding them to complete mastery of an entire region (Josh 24:12). This conclusion could be reached without diminishing the reality
that a large hostile population was still in existence and that these people were destined
to slowly filter back to their cities and be confronted on another day.

It must not be forgotten that while the Book of Joshua pictured the Israelites as
united in their cause, the Canaanites were in no way unified militarily or otherwise
(Malamat 1979: 38). Contrary to the Israelites, the Canaanites shared no "national
consciousness" and came together as a united force in only rare circumstances.

Thus, for example, extreme political fragmentation in Canaan is the situation
depicted in the Amarna letters, of the mid-14th century B.C.E., as well as in the
list of thirty-one Canaanite kings allegedly defeated by Joshua (Josh 12:9-24).
Owing to the lack of a broad Canaanite territorial defense system, no attempt was
made to stop the Israelites from fording the Jordan. (Malamat 1979: 38)

The early Israelite conquest stories must not be judged or interpreted by Western
ideas or standards. When Westerners think of conquest they naturally assume events
on a scale common to their knowledge, like the Normandy beach landing of WWII, the
miles of foxholes of WWI (the "Great War"), or the more recent Desert Storm. The
Bible pictures the Israelites as a not-yet-settled tribal group. Niditch (1993: 14-16) per­
ceived the complexity of evaluating warfare with her summarization of the many dis­
tinctions of war and politics. According to Niditch these factors include dividing
societies into two groups, those that "lack centralized authority" and those that "have
centralized authority" (or the more pejorative terms "non-primitive" and "primitive"
cultures), and evaluating warfare on a "sliding scale" of conflict including national war,
revenge, raid, or feud. With Niditch's factors in mind, it seems best to compare
Israelite war tactics not with modern centralized governments and the way they conduct
war but with those that lack centralized authority.

The strategy of comparing similar groups across time and space is an accepted
principle of anthropological and sociological studies. While making such comparisons
can lead to pitfalls, analogous situations can lead to better understanding by studying
groups with homologous characteristics (Sahlins and Service 1960: 10; Glock 1983:
172, 173).
Certain Native American groups, before their annihilation by European settlers, shared some significant similarities with the way the Bible pictures the early Israelites. These similarities include tribalism, a seasonally influenced lifestyle, and their attitude toward warfare. Israelite warfare, as described in the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges, is uniquely similar to the practices of the Plains Indians. They, like the Israelites, were without permanent homes yet claimed specific territories, which were often the source of conflict. The Plains Indians fought defensive warfare, just like Israelite warfare (except for the three Israelite campaigns recorded in the Book of Joshua [chaps. 6, 8, 10, 11]). (Even the second and third offensive campaigns were really defensive movements, i.e., preemptive strikes, with only the attacks on Jericho and Ai being offensive undertakings.) Both groups also shared a religious aspect to their warfare (e.g., both made religious preparations before battle and often took a sacred object with them into battle, Mails 1991: 555; Josh 3:14; 6:8). A personal time of prayer and commitment was also performed before each conflict (Mails 1991: 555, 562; Josh 5:3-9). Leaders for combat were not by an appointed office, but were divinely selected through prayer and visions (Mails 1991: 552-554; e.g., Josh 3:7; 5:13-15).

Even the tactics of the Israelites and the Plains Indians were similar, using surprise, ruse, and ambush as their main weapon against their unsuspecting foes. Mails wrote about the Plains Indians:

Ambush was always preferred to an open encounter, and each body, as it approached, would be seeking just such a place and opportunity. Often defensive positions were taken in grass, bush, trees, or a washout. On many occasions rock breast works were built in preparation for a pitched battle. (1991: 571)

Also, like the inhabitants of Canaan and the early Israelites, the Plains Indians were superstitious, especially in time of battle. At the slightest negative sign, a battle would be disengaged.

If friends began to fall in unexpected numbers, they took it as a clear sign from above to quit and get away, even though they knew that panic reduced their strength and made them easier prey to pursuing tribesmen. After all, they had
done the same pursuing themselves. Yet they ran, because their medicine helpers had misfired somehow, or else they had misread their signs, and to stay would be to invite a worse tragedy still. (Mails 1991: 572)

This retreat would be carried out even if they had a clear numerical superiority (Mails 1991: 572). They assumed fate was against them and fate could be tempted only at a general peril.

I suggest that the Israelites and other Late Bronze Age settlers of Canaan had a war plan similar to the Plains Indians. The Israelites did attack and people did die, but probably not many. As Mails said about the Plains Indians, "Losses in even a prolonged engagement involving hundreds of men would be fairly light, with a few being killed and a few more wounded" (1991: 572).

The Amarna tablets provide a unique insight into the Canaanite unrest of the Late Bronze Age. They also help us see how dependent the inhabitants felt upon outside help. The repeated call for assistance by Canaanite city leaders during the Amarna period suggests that the city-states of that time were unable to protect themselves (e.g., EA 287). What is even more instructive is that the Canaanites wanted the Egyptians to send them troops to help defend Egyptian interests (i.e., protect their vassals and lands). However, the number of troops requested is very small by today's standards and these small numbers provide a scale of the Amarna conflicts (e.g., 300 soldiers to protect Gubla [EA 131, Moran 1992: 212]; 50-100 troops to protect Gubla [EA 132, Moran 1992: 214]; 80 for Abi-Milku to defend his city against Zimredda [EA 152, Moran 1992: 152]; 50 troops for Jerusalem "to protect the land" [EA 289, Moran 1992: 333]; Abi-Milku who requested 20 men "to guard the city" [EA 151, Moran 1992: 238]). Wrote Malamat,

The Egyptian policy of *divide et impera* intensified the incessant disputes among the Canaanite city-states, as evidenced by the Amarna letters (second quarter of the 14th century B.C.E.), which also inform us that the actual numbers of warriors kept by the Canaanite rulers were quite meager. Requests for military assistance from neighbors or Egypt often mention no more than ten to fifty men, while a force of fifty chariots was considered rather extraordinary. Thus, in a letter discovered in the southern part of the country, a prince of Lachish is asked for a consignment of six bows, three daggers and three swords—arms for, say,
twelve men at most. These insignificant numbers reveal the vulnerability of Canaan to even small bodies of invaders who, once they had penetrated, could threaten the city-states and sever communications between them. (1979: 40)

The problem facing the reader of the Book of Joshua is the false expectations of the military sorties of Joshua 10, 11, which were outside the realities of the Late Bronze Age ancient Near East. When the text says Joshua "utterly destroyed that day every person who was in it [Eglon]" (Josh 10:35), the natural meaning to the Western reader is "annihilation" of thousands. Such an interpretation was evidently not the intention of the biblical writers because the biblical writers had no problem acknowledging the lack of a complete conquest (Judg 1:21, 27-36) or casting blame on the earlier pioneers for later difficulties (Ps 106:34-43). Similar "conflicts" exhibit themselves in other areas of the Bible and the ancient Near East.

Saul is said to have "subdued" the Philistines "and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel" (1 Sam 7:13), but biblical writers seem to have no problem following that victory with many other activities of the Philistines within the hill country (1 Sam 14:52). This is not to mention other ancient Near Eastern persons who claim to have completely annihilated their enemies, which we know is not true in the sense of our usual understanding (e.g., Rameses III's claim that he utterly destroyed the Peleset, Breasted 1988 IV: 38, 39). While in past times such anomalies would quickly be assigned to different source documents, perhaps it is time to question such easy answers. Since the biblical writers did not seem to be concerned with such apparent disharmonies, other meanings may need to be attached to such statements. "Everyone killed" means only that everyone who was caught was killed. The majority escaped to fight another day. It should not be forgotten that in the Book of Joshua the first statement of YHWH to Joshua is not "You shall kill every living person" but "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life" (Josh 1:5).

To summarize, the Book of Joshua states that the land of Canaan was claimed as Israelite territory. The biblical writers justified that claim by describing three short
campaigns, the victories of which were dependent on surprise attacks. The nature of the surprise and the reputation of the Israelites caused most of the opposing people to run for their lives. The land was thus claimed (possessed), but not settled. Three tribes were the first to gain a toehold of land, which they had to divide with the other tribes. The record of that struggle is the Book of Joshua, which is divided into two parts: the first part is the biblical writers' evidence that YHWH gave the land to Israel, and the last part, which parallels the Book of Judges, is a more extended view of the difficulties they faced in that process.

הֵרֵם in Israelite Warfare

הֵרֵם is commonly understood as a thing devoted by destruction to a deity. According to Pope (1962: 838), הֵרֵם is common to all Semitic languages and has the meaning of holiness or taboo. Lohfink was much more cautious in his assessment of הֵרֵם, seeing its use as complex and dependent on sources and chronology. He characterized the use of הֵרֵם as ranging from a precise religious act to being synonymous with "destroy, kill" (1986: 186). Even within the hiphil verbal form of הֵרֵם, Lohfink found a variety of meanings (separate someone or thing for the sanctuary, select a city and/or a people for destruction, annihilate people in war, or kill; Lohfink 1986: 188). Lohfink admitted that his explanation was "vague," but argued that the available information was "obscure" (1986: 188). Despite this broader range of meaning, Lohfink thought the more general definition of הֵרֵם, as the putting to death of the population of conquered cities, is best (1986: 190).

Contrary to Pope, Lohfink saw the essence of הֵרֵם as unique to Israel and Moab. "The fact is that only in Hebrew and Moabite do we find in הֵרֵם the idea of separation combined with the idea of the destruction of what has been separated" (1986: 188). He also dismissed the translation "ban" as unacceptable (e.g., see the NASB).
In the context of warfare in the Book of Joshua, Stern, like many others, rejected an archaeological (i.e., Albrightian) approach to its stories (1991: 139). He saw the use of דִּינָו as a type of coordinated act between a people and their god.

The דִּינָו comes out of a type of ancient religious thought manifested in a type of warfare known as Holy War, although as appears from the Assyrian example, the דִּינָו is not integral to Holy War, but merely compatible with it. The דִּינָו is a religious practice in which the people and deity interact in a certain way; in the דִּינָו some or all of the spoils of the god's victory are are (sic) inviolably reserved to him. (1991: 143)

By Stern's definition, דִּינָו was practiced only at the conquest of Jericho (6:17) and Ai (8:2). Lohfink also saw the unique status of Jericho and Ai and maintained that the strength of the traditions of both events forced changes within the Deuteronomistic materials (1986: 196), in that both Jericho and Ai were declared as דִּינָו before they were attacked (Stern 1991: 149, also Lohfink 1986: 194). In the Book of Joshua, the Second and Third Campaigns are explained by the biblical writers as defensive maneuvers of the Israelites, which grew into large-scale Israelite victories. The word דִּינָו and its derivations are used throughout the Book of Joshua with a variety of meanings and its use is not consistent (e.g., Josh 10:35 and Lohfink 1986: 193, 194), but דִּינָו is not used outside the stories of Jericho and Ai in the same sense as it is in those stories.

The seeming overall intent of the biblical writers is to lay responsibility of the Israelite conquest upon YHWH. The Israelites did what they had to do. YHWH hardened the hearts of their foes, thus, the inhabitants fought hard and long for their land (Josh 11:20). Their stubbornness in not accepting the Israelites as their overlords was evidence that they were fighting God's Spirit. By emphasizing the killing of "every person who was in it" (10:30) and leaving "no survivor" (10:40, etc.) the biblical writers claim that no one could stand in YHWH's way. Since He was all-powerful, could it be any other way?

YHWH was the victor for His people. Stern said that
the military action of Israel, as expressed by above all the דּוֹחַ, went hand in hand with YHWH’s fighting for Israel. The land had to be brought into the sphere of YHWH’s world order to be made a fit abode for the people Israel to live. Such was the underlying conception that brought about the many reiterations of the דּוֹחַ theme in Joshua 10-11. (1991: 160)

The Israelites did not completely destroy the inhabitants, as was discussed above, but the use of the דּוֹחַ is a moral release for the Israelites, placing the responsibility of what deaths there were on YHWH. Shedding the guilt, as Niditch said, "is resolved by the ritualization of the kill" (1993: 24). This "ritualization" is especially pronounced because Israel sinned by not destroying the Canaanites. As Lohfink summarized, "The destruction that should have taken place, but did not, is viewed as Yahweh’s deliberate plan, prevented by Israel’s sin from being carried out" (1986: 198). At the same time, the biblical writers repeatedly claim YHWH’s sovereignty by showing Him as victor. That is the purpose of and why the statements of "every person was killed" are repeated so starkly, in acknowledgement of YHWH’s victorious might.

Contrary to those who see the Book of Joshua’s account as a blood-thirsty war account, the biblical writers wrote to make sure their readers knew that the Israelites were simply following YHWH’s instructions. Caleb directly links the removal of the Anakim to YHWH by petitioning Him before he (Caleb) drives them out (Josh 14:12).

The Confirmation Episodes Were Not about Land Acquisition

The Israelite Presence at Gilgal

Much of the confusion that has transpired in interpreting the Book of Joshua has to do with the assumption that conquest is the same thing as settlement. The Book of Joshua’s stories make it plain that the Israelites were not settling and were not able to settle in the land during the confirmation process. The most important location in the Book of Joshua is Gilgal, as noted by Malamat ("The ‘official’ tradition ascribes a central role to Gilgal," 1976: 43).
Many of the earliest and most sacred events in Israelite history occurred at Gilgal. At Gilgal the Israelites placed a monument to their Jordan River crossing (Josh 4:20). The Israelites renewed the covenant with YHWH by circumcision at Gilgal (Josh 5:2-9). The Israelites observed Passover for the first time in Canaan at Gilgal (Josh 5:10). They ate their first foods from Canaan at Gilgal (Josh 5:11), and the manna stopped at Gilgal (Josh 5:12). It was while Israel was camped at Gilgal that Joshua met the angel of God (Josh 5:13). Not only was Gilgal the setting of many "holy" events, it was also the home of the Israelites even after the conquest had begun.

Since Gilgal has such a prominent place in the early stories of the Book of Joshua, it is not surprising that many explanations of this importance have been offered. Malamat summarized,

So outstanding a fact has led to various ingenious explanations, for example, the assumption that Gilgal served as a cultic site to which numerous stories became accreted, or that there were several Gilgals, or that the name Gilgal (the Hebrew word conveys the sense of "cairn") was actually a generic term for a fortified campsite surrounded by a circle of stones, the camp being moved with the advance of the invaders. (1979: 44)

Malamat himself offered that Gilgal remained a base of operation because of its logistical and strategic location (1979: 44, and Mitchell 1993: 92). Although Malamat's suggestion is possible, it seems unlikely. Defensively, it suffers, like Jericho, from being low-lying land surrounded by mountains east and west (this is not to assume that we even know the exact location of Gilgal, which we do not, but it assumes from the stories of the Book of Joshua that Gilgal was in the Jordan valley near Jericho, Josh 15:7). At the same time, offensive maneuvers would have been disadvantaged by always having to fight uphill—not a good strategy. To highlight the biblical writers' use of Gilgal, I summarize Gilgal's status as presented in the Book of Joshua. What we learn is that Gilgal remained the home base, or the settlement area, throughout most of the Book of Joshua.
Wright has countered the arguments of Alt and Noth that the verses which state that Israel returned to Gilgal in Josh 10:15, 44 are source dividers, by noting that those verses are missing in the LXX (1946: 112). He then quotes S. Holmes as saying the only reason these verses are not in the LXX is because the MT "reviser" added them (1946: 112). The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls has changed the understanding of the LXX by biblical scholars. It is now believed that the MT and LXX have come from different traditions, rather than the LXX being a poor translation of the MT (Cross 1980: 180). On the other hand, E. Würthwein would remind us that the unevenness of the LXX text reflects its uneven history (1995: 66). Homes gave no reason why it would benefit the MT scribes to add that the Israelites returned to Gilgal; however, there is one good reason why the LXX might want to remove these verses. It is likely that the LXX translators, like many others to follow, misunderstood the true theme of the Book of Joshua and saw Josh 10:15, 44, where Israel is said to return to Gilgal, as contrary evidence of an Israelite people who were supposed to be conquering and settling, and thus, they removed the offending verses.

According to the Book of Joshua, the Israelites' first territorial trophy was Jericho, but they did not stay in Jericho after its capture; rather, they maintained their camp at Gilgal (Josh 9:6), even returning to Gilgal each night after their march around Jericho's walls (Josh 6:14). One reason they could not live at Jericho was the דָּרְדָּר, which prohibited settlement at that site, even after it was conquered (Josh 6:17). Likewise at Ai, it was captured, burned, and left in ruins (Josh 8:28), which implies no Israelite settlement was established there.

Even the story of the Gibeonites assumes that the Israelites were not yet living in the hill country. The geography of the hill country, especially its small size, would not have permitted the Gibeonites to convince the Israelites they had come from a far distance if the Gibeonites had approached the Israelites from villages only a few miles' distance from the general area of Gibeah. (To assume that communication in the
ancient world was so limited as not to be aware of the events in nearby communities, even by new residents, is ill-considered.) Besides, Josh 9:6 states specifically that the Gibeonites approached Joshua at Gilgal! Since the Gibeonites came to the Israelites at Gilgal, we can assume the Israelites had not yet encroached on Canaanite territory after the raids on Jericho and Ai. In addition, Josh 9:6 says that it took the Israelites three days to reach the Gibeonite cities, when the Gibeonites were threatened by the four Amorite kings (10:1, 2). This time frame is consistent with Gilgal’s location in the Jordan valley and is not consistent with a nearby settlement of Israelites in the hill country. Thus, at least through the stories of Jericho, Ai, and the Gibeonites, the Israelites are not said to be settling in Canaan.

The next phase of the Israelite conquest, which I have called their Second Campaign, is also known as the "Southern Campaign" (e.g., Lind 1980: 83). The battles that follow occur because the king of Jerusalem, Adonizedek, panicked when the Gibeonites established a treaty with the Israelites (Josh 10:1, 2). Adonizedek convinced three additional kings to attack the Gibeonites (Josh 10:4) because of their alliance with the Israelites. Such a reaction could be expected if the Gibeonites had broken an agreement with the Amorite kings by making a covenant with the Israelites. It is equally likely that the Israelites would have been seen as an unknown power infringing on the Amorites' territory. The Gibeonites had been left by themselves in the hill country after they had made a pact with a new, foreign, and evidently, dangerous foe.

The Gibeonites quickly sent word to Joshua at Gilgal (Josh 10:6) begging him for military support, as one would expect of a vassal to its suzerain. The Israelites and the four kings met in battle. The initial victory of the Israelites is credited to surprise (Josh 10:9), while the final victory went to God’s interference (Josh 10:12, 13). This victory spurs the Israelites to continue their conquest of the entire southern region of Canaan. Five specific cities are listed as destroyed and the population annihilated: Libnah (Josh
10:29, 30); Lachish (Josh 10:32); Eglon (Josh 10:34, 35); Hebron (Josh 10:36, 37); and Debir (Josh 10:38, 39). If this account, which is the heart of the conquest stories, is settlement, the biblical writers are unaware of "settlement," because twice they state that when the fighting was finished the Israelites returned to Gilgal (Josh 10:15, 43). The point is that the biblical writers state that there was no settlement at Jericho, Ai, or after the Second Campaign.

The Third Campaign was initiated by the cities in northern Canaan led by Hazor. Like the cities in southern Canaan, the cities of the north also feared the presence of a new people. These cities decided to forge an alliance against the growing Israelite menace (Josh 11:1-5). As in the "Southern Campaign," the Israelites surprised the Hazor-led forces (Josh 11:7) and accomplished an astounding initial defeat, which took "a long time" to complete (Josh 11:18). In the conquest of this northern territory no mention is made of settlement and only one battle is described that led to a long drawn-out dispute (Josh 11:18).

After these three campaigns (Jericho and Ai, the southern cities, and northern cities) a universal rest is proclaimed in the land (Josh 11:23), which could cause the reader to assume that the Israelites had "settled" the land. On the contrary, the Israelites are said to be camping still at Gilgal after they "possessed" the land and prophetically divided the land among themselves (Josh 14:6).

Settling (Heb. יֹשֵׁב) is not an important theme in the Book of Joshua. Most often, when it was used, יֹשֵׁב was used to describe non-Israelites (Josh 2:15; 6:25; 9:7, 16, 22; 17:12). When this word was used about Israelites it was something predicted in the past (Josh 21:2), or something anticipated for the future (Josh 20:4, 6). The exceptions are found in the last four chapters the Book of Joshua. Josh 21:41 described the Levites as living in the "midst of the possession of the sons of Israel." We are also told that Reuben and Gad, the Transjordanian tribes, were "living" there (Josh 22:33). In
Joshua’s last appeal for loyalty to YHWH, he reminded the Israelites that they were living in the land of Amorites (Josh 24:15).

One place where the word תָּןָה is a key word in the story is Josh 21:43. There was used as the fulfillment of the promise of Deut 12:10, which predicted rest from enemies and dwelling in peace (Görg 1990: 428). While תָּןָה is important at this point in the story, it was significant to the biblical writers because it was their claim that YHWH had fulfilled His promises, it was not a complete description of Israelite settlement.

The word that more consistently described what the Israelites did to the land was possess it (Heb. תָּכָּה). This was no simple annihilation and resettlement process. The biblical writers chose events, as recorded in Joshua 1-13, that demonstrated to their readers it was "Yahweh [who] 'destroy sch' (hiphil) the peoples when Israel attacks; but it is Israel, rather than Yahweh, that takes possession of (qal) their right of succession; the focus of attention is on sovereignty over their territory" (Lohfink 1990: 375). They did "away with someone (as owner)" and became the new owners (Lohfink 1990: 374). They became, by the power of YHWH, the legal owners of the land. It is ownership of the land that is key, not the settlement in the land. "yrs does not mean 'capture' in the comprehensive sense. Whether it denotes a juridically significant act (as in the story of Naboth) or confirms the outcome of the preceding battles remains an open question. There is no reference to settlement" (Lohfink 1990: 372).

The word תָּכָּה is also used to describe Israeliite acquisitions. The biblical writers tell us that the Transjordan tribes "took" their inheritance (Josh 13:8; 18:7). It is also stated that the Israelites did not make peace with any city, they "took" them in battle (Josh 11:19; as well as the land, 11:16, 23). On the other hand, תָּכָּה, though used to describe the Israelite’s efforts, does not provide a complete picture of the Book of Joshua’s overall thematic purposes. To simply conclude that the Israelites "took" the land misses the impact that תָּכָּה provides. תָּכָּה implies that the land had new legal owners,
no matter how many people had been killed or how many left alive. The land was not merely taken (נָתַן) in the same sense that others had taken it in the past or would take it in the future. The Israelites possessed the land because YHWH had given it to them. This greater dynamic is more apparent when שָנַח is used.

The Book of Joshua says very little about settlement. Its message is how the Israelites obtained the land—by the hand of YHWH. During the initial movements in the land, there is no hint that the Israelites were possessing the land; they were merely posturing before their neighbors. As YHWH had promised, no one was able to stand before them (Josh 1:5). During this period Israel remained camped at Gilgal. Two other places, however, are mentioned as camp sites.

Shiloh and Shechem: A Foothold of Promise

As stated, the Book of Joshua's stories have the Israelites camping at Gilgal throughout their military campaigns. As Curtis noted, it is not until Joshua 18 that "there is a geographical shift of focus" (1994: 24). Their actual possession of any other territory during their stay at Gilgal is not certain. Yet, Shiloh and Shechem are mentioned in a few stories.

It should be noted that no one place, even Gilgal, is emphasized or even associated with YHWH. The locations seem incidental to the themes of the biblical writers. It seems as though Gottwald is writing for the biblical writers when he says neither YHWH nor His priests are a god of a place (1985: 349).

Shiloh is introduced in Josh 18:1 without previously being mentioned in the Book of Joshua. As the passage reads, one is inclined to conclude that the Israelites were not long at Shiloh before the events that are portrayed: "Then the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them" (18:1, NASB). By this verse one would think that the setting up the tent and the assembly were related.
The context of Joshua 18 is a complaint brought to Joshua by seven Israelite tribes that had not yet gained their territorial inheritance (18:2). That this meeting occurred at Shiloh and that the tribes came to Joshua there certainly implies that Shiloh was an Israelite settlement. Joshua 18 reflects the first experience of settlement recorded in the Book of Joshua. In other words, it was around Shiloh that the Israelites first physically settled a corner of the hill country of Canaan. This small territorial enclave of Judah probably heightened expectations among the other tribes and they, too, wanted permanent land. That is what precipitated the complaint of the seven unfulfilled tribes.

The name Shiloh is built on the Hebrew root דָּלָּשׁ, to "be at ease, or at rest" (Brown 1981: 1017). If it is true, as I have suggested, that no settlement occurred until this time, no better name could have been nominated for the Israelite's first true settlement in the promised land. It was their first place of rest on their own land. The fact that Shiloh was the "first" of the Israelite settlement sites could also explain how Shiloh became a "holy place" (a place of worship, e.g., Judg 18:31; 21:12, 19; 1 Sam 1:3, 24, 3:21; 4:3, 14:3; and where God appeared 1 Sam 3:21), a place from which to begin war (Josh 22:12) and a general gathering place for the Israelites (Josh 18:1; 19:51; 21:2; Judg 21:12).

The only other significant place named in the Book of Joshua is Shechem, which is mentioned in its last story (Joshua 24). While Shiloh is ignored in the prophetic Israelite land divisions, Shechem is at least noted (Josh 17:2, 7; 20:7; 21:21). It seems strange that no story associating Shechem with the conquest is produced by the biblical writers, since Shechem was an important setting for stories before and afterwards (e.g., Genesis 34; Judges 9). Even the accounts of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim ignore Shechem, which lay between the two mountains (Josh 8:30-34). The lack of mention of Shechem in that account, or in later stories, may imply that Shechem was not settled until some time later after a settlement had been established at Shiloh.
In the Book of Joshua, except for the distribution of the land to the tribal units, tribal identity is seldom mentioned. One reason the Book of Joshua does not stress tribal concerns may be because the tribes never did fully possess their tribal lands (as opposed to Mendenhall, 1976b: 27, who believed the tribes did not exist in early history). I think there may have been 12 original tribes, but I doubt that the 12 tribes, as individual units, were ever able to fully and independently control their territories. Some succeeded and others did not (Joshua 15; Judges 18).

Therefore, in spite of what many have assumed, the Book of Joshua provides little evidence of settlement. Outside the camp at Gilgal, the Israelites probably first gained a permanent settlement at Shiloh, which later spread as far north as Shechem. Gilgal always remained a favorite place, even in later times. Wright noted that Gilgal maintained a place of importance in the biblical period until at least the eighth century B.C. and in the Byzantine period was not forgotten as a place of historical importance (1984: 26), although there is no way to connect the Byzantine site with the Book of Joshua.

The Book of Joshua: A Purposeful History

Some might conclude that I have argued against the reality of an Israelite conquest. However, that point is not among my conclusions. There was an Israelite conquest, although a limited one, after which a small limited settlement was begun in and around Shiloh. However, the tone and intention of the Joshua accounts are not about this conquest, but about the reality of the presence of YHWH in all the confirmation events. If the military sorties of Joshua 10 and 11 have been assumed to be larger than their true historical significance, that is not the fault of the biblical writers, even if they did write with what Woudstra calls a "joyful optimism" (1981:32).

The biblical writers, like all writers, were selective in the stories they chose to elucidate their message. They chose some stories and rejected others. What they did
choose highlighted the aims of their overall work. As Woudstra has noted,

Because of biblical history's unique aim, one cannot expect a complete and exhaustive record of all the major events that occurred during a given period. Instead, one may expect that selections and combinations of facts have been made. Moreover, certain events may be treated at great length for thematic purposes, while others are passed over quickly and in summary form. (1981: 20)

The writers of the Book of Joshua emphasized what was most important to their theme: "God gave us the land, so let's possess it. God was in charge all along." It should not be surprising, however, that Israelite movements within Canaanite territory received no international attention. Of this issue Malamat wrote that this could "probably be ascribed to the fact that the Israelite Conquest created no disturbance in the international political scene—in any event, nothing sufficient to make an impression upon contemporaneous records, especially those of Canaan's overlord, Egypt" (1979: 35).

Even within Canaan, itself, the Israelite conquest most probably was viewed differently than as presented in the Book of Joshua. Even if every event happened exactly as portrayed in the Bible, the Canaanites still would have recorded the stories with their own theological biases at work. The Book of Joshua records those events that underscore its theme. In other words, one should expect that the Israelite conquest, if recorded by a Canaanite reporter, would have been markedly different from the one recorded in the Book of Joshua. In fact, the stories of the conquest of Joshua 6, 8, 10, 11, and Judges 1 might have been considered by a Canaanite as little more than one of many similar events in Canaanite history. For example, the Amorite invasion of Moabite territory, mentioned in Num 21:26, would probably have been theologically significant to the Amorites. They would have seen their success as a blessing of their god and something worth recording. It is doubtful, however, whether the Moabites would have wanted to record the same event. Rather, they might rather have seen it as one of many similar disputes with invaders over Moabite territory.
While Malamat saw the Book of Joshua's conquest stories as the "official" or "canonical" version (1979: 36), it seems that the biblical writers were expressing their own simple views as to how God brought the Israelites into the land. Since the biblical writers believed it was YHWH who led the Israelites, they selected "confirmation" events, that is, events that they believed would demonstrate His presence to the readers. These events were symbolic, testimonial, and experiential in nature. As Joshua said to the people, "Now behold today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed" (Josh 23:14, emphasis supplied, NASB). On the other hand, the biblical writers did not refuse to include the reality (i.e., incompleteness) of their conquest, which admitted that all things did not go well.

Allowing for a diminished view of Israelite conquest and localized settlement in the Book of Joshua does not deny the reality of these stories. The issues discussed here do not even speak to the subject of reality, but rather allow the stories to be interpreted within a full range of objectivity, without forcing on the text the limitation of preconceived notion.

Summary and Conclusions

It has become an accepted theorem that the Book of Joshua presents a mighty conquest that paves the way for a peaceful settlement. The conquest is seen as the destruction of Canaanite cities and the annihilation of their populations. We have found, however, that the Book of Joshua is weak on destruction facts for most of the cities it mentions, most often using a summary statement that says the Israelites did to this city what they did to that city.

The Israelites are specifically said to have destroyed only Jericho, Ai, Makkedah, Hebron, and Hazor. Even among these cities, details are minimal. The Israelites are
said to have caused the wall of Jericho to fall and burned it, and also Ai and Hazor.

The archaeological evidence for the cities mentioned in the three Israelite campaigns is not much more helpful. The archaeological consensus about Jericho is that there was no Late Bronze Age walls for the Israelites or YHWH to have flattened. Even though Wood has made a strong case against this consensus, his evidence has not to this point been tested by other competent scholars. The excavations at Ai have found no Late Bronze Age settlement for the Israelites to have attacked. The locations of Makkedah, Eglon, Debir, Madon, and Shimron are unsure, while those sites supposed for Libnah, Lachish, Hebron, and Hazor have provided no help in interpreting the Book of Joshua, outside the general evidence that there were Late Bronze Age destructions at Lachish and possibly Debir (Tell Beit Mirsim), Hazor, Madon (Tell Qarnei Ḥiṭṭin), and Achshaph.

Looking for a theme by which I could better interpret the Book of Joshua, I have found that the biblical writers were convinced that YHWH was with Israel. In this book they recorded what they understood to be the evidences of that Presence. The Book of Joshua is not about conquest or settlement but about the confirmation of YHWH’s leadership and an attempt to convince the reader of that leadership. This confirmation was based on the belief that YHWH was in control of Israel’s fate. In their heady days long ago, no enemy was able to stand before the Israelites in battle.

The actual amount of land taken and controlled was limited to small areas and for short periods of time. The Israelites did divide the land but they did not control it for long; they only claimed it. Their battles had been decided quickly, launched by stratagem, frightening their enemies into fleeing. They killed as many inhabitants as they caught, but that was probably very few. In any case, it was YHWH who was responsible for the killing. Those who were killed were not true owners of the land. They (the Amorites) had taken the land themselves, and it was just as fair to take it back. Just as the Israelites conquered only the land of the Amorites in Transjordan, the
stories of Joshua picture the conquest of Cisjordan as also a conquest of the Amorites. One wonders whether perhaps peoples like the Perizzites, Hivites, Gergashites, and the Jebusites might have been in reality individual tribes of the Amorites that controlled the hill country of Canaan.

There is no specific information in the Book of Joshua about the Israelites settling in the land. We hear nothing about houses being built, nor cities being inhabited. During most of the period of which the Book of Joshua recounts, the Israelites simply camped at Gilgal, making raids to the south and north. There is a hint that they settled around Shechem and Shiloh, but the text nowhere specifically says they did. The Book of Joshua is intent on explaining their initial activities that confirmed YHWH's leadership in their initial entrance into Canaan and at the same time revealing the weakness of the Israelites in not following up on YHWH's work. Like the Book of Judges, the latter half of the Book of Joshua provides a picture of the problems involved in settlement. The first half of the Book of Joshua is about confidence and the confirmation of faith. The latter half is about faithlessness and failure.

According to the biblical writers, how then did the Israelites take the land? Not by their military might, not by people movements, not by a peasants' revolt, not by pressures of a transition period, not by imagination, but by the presence and power of YHWH. The Book of Joshua is the listing of events that the biblical writers put before their readers to prove this point and also to reveal to the reader the consequence of those events.
CHAPTER 4

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA AND ARCHAEOLOGY

ASSUMPTIONS AND MESSAGE

The Size of Israel

One issue that has imposed additional problems on the Book of Joshua and settlement issues is the assumption that the Israelites were a teeming mass of millions of people. This assumption has been drawn from passages like Numbers 1 and 26 (combined with Exod 38:25, 26), which seem to imply that Israel had over 600,000 fighting men. If 600,000 fighting men is a reliable estimate of Israel's strength, then the entire Israelite population was certainly in the millions (see Keil and Delitzsch 1991, vol. 1, section 4: 4-15; Archer 1982: 129-134 for support of this interpretation). While this is one interpretation of the biblical evidence, it is not the only interpretation or necessarily the most likely explanation.

Even if used unintentionally, overinflated numbers have made the events, which the Book of Joshua says occurred at Jericho and Ai (etc.), appear to be much larger than they might actually have been. Note how one writer responds to the assumption of large populations: "The very notion that a single family could in the course of a few centuries develop into a whole people, a nation, consisting of hundreds of thousands of individuals, is so fantastic that it deserves no credence from a historical point of view" (Lemche 1990: 109. emphasis in the original).

That numbers appear unrealistic may reflect on the reliability of the numbers or even a misunderstanding of the meaning of those numbers, while not necessarily impugning the historicity of the account with which they are associated. Unfortunately,
the difference between the numbers and the events has not always been noted. While I understand why Lemche gives "no credence" to the numbers involved in the Exodus (recent population estimates suggest the entire population of Canaan was never more than 150,000 as is seen below), I think he is being too skeptical to doubt the historicity of the event because of the numbers involved. As J. Segal wisely concluded, "Numerals are notoriously easy to confuse, whether accidentally or not" (1965: 3).

The possibility of confused or misunderstood numbers should be kept in mind when one attempts to interpret a biblical passage where the size of an event seems to be an important part of the story. Note how Lemche shifts from criticism of the large numbers of Israelites at the Exodus to criticism of the idea of the Exodus:

Naturally, this is not because the Egyptians wished to conceal such an event as the so-called "miracle at the Red sea" (Exodus 14), but because there was no massive emigration from Egypt under the eighteenth dynasty or later in the form described in the Old Testament. (Lemche 1990: 109, emphasis supplied)

The question is, Where do the biblical writers say the Exodus involved a massive number of people? The difficulty is that many uncritically assume a traditional interpretation of the Israelite population in the millions (based on Numbers 1 and 26), then systematically apply those numbers to biblical stories, making those stories appear unhistorical, thus, diminishing the "historical" value of the biblical story for an element that does not necessarily belong to the story itself.

It should not be forgotten that the biblical writers universally picture Israel as weak and defenseless, needing the help and protection of YHWH (e.g., Exod 14:10, 11; 23:29, 30; Deut 7:1, 7). The story of the Exodus itself is to show YHWH's power, which is only increased by Israel's need of redemption from the more powerful and, assumably, larger army of Pharaoh (e.g., Exod 9:16, 17).

In response to Lemche, nowhere in the Exodus accounts is the number of the Israelites a significant part of the story. Interpreters have only assumed otherwise.
Likewise, there is no archaeological support for massive numbers of peoples in any period in Palestine.

The subject of large numbers for the Israelites at the Exodus (and by extension in the Book of Joshua) is a problem introduced by the Book of Numbers. Suggestions have been made to resolve the inconsistencies that those numbers create, with no consensus developing (Petrie 1906; Clark 1955; Mendenhall 1958; Wenham 1967). In any case, the problems of the Book of Numbers should not automatically be forced on the Book of Joshua and the Israelite conquest and settlement.

Estimating populations of ancient societies is fraught with difficulties. Formulas have been proposed and widely discussed without arriving at a consensus (Biger and Grossman 1993; Brinkman 1984; Broshi 1993b; Frick 1985: 141-159; Zorn 1994). C. McCown’s suggestions about the density of ancient Palestine are interesting (1947: 425-436). McCown’s methodology consists of attempting to ascertain the relative productiveness of the land and the number of farmers it could support. His thesis was that since the Israelites and other inhabitants of Palestine were always primarily farmers and herdsmen, one should estimate population by determining the number of people the land could support. His conclusion was that 47 percent (nearly 1,800,000 acres) of the 6,000 square miles (3,840,000 acres) of the land of Israel is uncultivatable forest, pasture, and swamp land, while two million acres, nearly 40 percent, lie in the Negev where it receives less than 15 inches of rain per annum (1947: 433). Based on these estimates McCown suggested that in the best of times ancient Canaan could have supported about 1,472,000 people (1947: 433) or about 30 percent more people than the Roman-Byzantine periods (the period of greatest population) as estimated by Broshi (1979: 7). While McCown attempted to determine Canaan’s maximum population that the agricultural land would support, his estimate is unhelpful for comparisons between periods or even for specific information for any one period, since his figures describe
capacity and tell us nothing about the use taken of that capacity during the archaeologi­cal periods.

M. Broshi and R. Gophna, on the other hand, suggested population estimates
based on ethnoarchaeologically determined guidelines, and provide one of the few carefully calculated population estimates for Canaan in the Middle Bronze Age (Broshi and Gophna 1986: 73-90). They have tallied the area of all known MBIIA and MBIIB sites (130 and 337 sites) and have reached an estimate of the population of those periods. They conclude that their estimates are "maximal," since they have allowed for a 20 percent overestimate for undiscovered sites, which percentage of discovery they think is unlikely (1986: 73, 74).

Based on an estimated 250 people per hectare, Broshi and Gophna have reached this conclusion:

On the basis of the coefficient proposed here and other considerations, the authors believe the population during MBIIA was about 100,000 and in MBIIB, 140,000. In comparison, the population during EBII-III was 150,000 (Broshi and Gophna 1984) and 1,000,000 during the Roman-Byzantine periods (Broshi 1980 [sic]). (1986: 73)

While Broshi and Gophna have yet to release data for the Late Bronze Age (the time of Israel's appearance in Canaan), there is little doubt that population during that period would be one of the smallest of Canaan's history.

Gonen compared the settlement patterns of both the MBII period and the LBI period (1984: 61-73). The archaeological evidence shows that there was a drastic decrease in settled sites after the MBII period. Both the number and size of settlements were reduced and, even during the LBII period, the increase of settlement was limited.
Wrote Gonen.

Even in the 13th century B.C., when the number of settlements was nearly comparable to that of the MBII period, the total occupied area was only about 45 percent of the listed area of MBII period settlements, which actually means that it was much less. (1984: 68)
The drop in population from Middle Bronze Age to the Late Bronze Age in Cisjordan is remarkable. Both archaeological excavations and surveys have shown that "the decrease in number of settlements is drastic in the transition from the Middle Bronze period into the first half of the Late Bronze period" (Boling 1988: 22). Coote suggested that in the highlands of Late Bronze Age Canaan the population dropped "to about one-seventh the previous population" (1990: 64).

One might suppose, due to the limitations of archaeology, there are many sites that were not included in Gonen's study; however, the number and size of those undiscovered sites must be small, meaning they could not affect the study in any statistically significant way.

But even if we double the total area for each period to include settlements not yet discovered, not yet published, or for which no information is supplied, the total area of occupation in the Late Bronze period was nonetheless very small indeed. The proportion between the MB II settlements and those of Late Bronze, as well as between different phases during the Late Bronze period, would remain the same. (Gonen 1984: 68)

Robert Boling has compiled the evidence from three major surveys of Transjordan (Mittman 1970; Miller 1993; Ibrahim, Sauer, and Yassine 1976) and compared that evidence with the survey results of Cisjordan (1988: 14-24). Although the evidence of Transjordan suggests that there was an increase in sedentary population in the central plateau between Wadi Mujib and Wadi Hasa from MBII to the Late Bronze Age (Boling refers to it as a "significant explosion" 1988: 21), the overall picture of Transjordan is not so clear. The actual number of sites inhabited during Late Bronze Age dipped 0.7 percent from MBII period. (This figure was determined by averaging the percentages of MBII and Late Bronze Age sites as presented by Boling 1988: 16, fig. 2.)

Beginning in 1 Ir the number of sites and the population increased. Finkelstein calculated the population at about 1000 B.C. (1988: 332) at a total of about 40,650 sedentary inhabitants for the known sites west of Jordan River. If we compensate for the fact that the data are, to varying degrees, incomplete... then the maximum number of Israelite inhabitants throughout the
country would be nearly 55,000 (1988: 334) with "21,000 sedentary Israelites living west of the Jordan River around the mid-late 12th century BCE." (1988: 334)

Stager would place his estimate of the number of Israelites at about twice Finkelstein's 21,000 (Stager 1985: 25).

Frick thought that "estimates based solely on site area (like those of Broshi, Gophna, Gonen, and others) are not reliable" (1985: 157). While there are inherent weaknesses in determining population based on site size (the primary one not accounting for transhumant populations), better models have yet to be formulated. In any case, whatever regional increase may be attested is not enough to account for the large numbers traditionally associated with the Israelites in Irl or Late Bronze Age or even in MBII. Even if the estimates of Broshi and Gopha, and Gonen and Boling and Finkelstein are underestimates by a factor of 50 (50,000 to 2,500,000), it does not explain problems introduced by the acceptance of the idea that there were millions of Israelites.

Finally, although the population estimates are carefully calculated, it should not be forgotten that there were invisible inhabitants of the Late Bronze Age. As an example of the large size of such an invisible population, Finkelstein reminds us of the estimated 200,000-250,000 bedouin of the A.D. 1920s-1930s (1988: 308), which without an on-hand estimate would have been invisible to later archaeologists. (This estimate of bedouin population runs counter to Na'aman's suggestion that the nomadic population is ever only 10-15 percent of the sedentary population, 1994: 235.)

The consensus is that the population of ancient Canaan could have been measured in all periods in the thousands, not millions. This is especially true during either the Late Bronze Age or Irl period. Such low population estimates do not fit well with a large-scale (i.e., millions or even hundreds of thousands of people) invasion by the Israelites. It is within the latter part of the Late Bronze Age that the Merneptah stele introduces the Israelites. It is, however, during this very period that the
archaeologically-observed sedentary population in Cisjordan dropped to one of the lowest levels in Canaan’s ancient history.

As previously stated, the Book of Joshua itself has had little to do with the discontinuity between the supposed large size of Israel and the limited population estimated by archaeologists, since it rarely, if ever, provides extraordinarily large numbers. The only two armies to which it assigns size are the 40 *eleph* that led the Israelites across the Jordan River (Josh 4:13) and the 30 *eleph* used in the second attack on Ai (Josh 8:3). It should be noted that these figures, if taken as meaning "thousands," would certainly fall far below the estimates of the numbers of bedouins occupying Israel in the A.D. 1920s-1930s (Finkelstein 1988: 308). The Book of Joshua’s other battles are based on surprise, lightning attacks, which imply that few in number were involved and no numbers are given.

Still, the Book of Joshua is tainted with the flavor of large numbers. Who reading a children’s story of the fall of Jericho would realize that Tell es-Sultan is only about an acre in size (Kenyon 1993a: 674)? The battle for Jericho has been universally perceived as the conquest of a large city, although nothing in the Book of Joshua so suggests. On the contrary, the Book of Joshua suggests that there were few Israelites. Millions certainly could not have lived at Gilgal and later at Shiloh. These sites are just too small. The biblical writers were aware that the two places most commonly inhabited by the Israelites in the Book of Joshua were small in size. The small size of Israel is likewise underscored, when the Israelites are said to have been unable to defeat the already settled inhabitants except by stratagem and the power of God. This is certainly not a picture of a massive number of people.

On the other hand, some feel strongly that the Book of Numbers provides an accurate census. They would say the Israelites did, indeed, have 603,550 fighting men and their entire population was measured into the millions (e.g., Davidson 1996: 4, 5). They see a harmonistic accounting of Israel’s population throughout the historic books.
My point is that, if it were not for the Book of Numbers, no one would assume that there were millions of Israelites at any event in the Book of Joshua. Even if millions of Israelites left Egypt at the Exodus, there is no biblical evidence that tells us how many Israelites arrived at Jericho. Even the Numbers 26 census does not suggest any time-frame between that census and the Israelite entrance into Canaan. The Book of Joshua does say that the entire generation of the Exodus died in the wilderness but it does not say how many Israelites crossed over the Jordan into Canaan (Josh 5:4).

On the other hand, it is easy to hypothesize that the Book of Numbers census figures have been for a long time misunderstood. It is well known that all of the books of the Bible were hand copied and repeatedly edited. Perhaps, in the process of recopying the Book of Numbers there was a misunderstanding of the variety of meanings of eleph by later copyists not familiar with earlier Israelite traditions.

After the stories of Exodus and Numbers had been collected, a cultural change transpired among the Israelites (from a transhumant lifestyle to a sedentary lifestyle, perhaps). This change of lifestyle would have affected many aspects of life, including military organization (e.g., terminology of leaders and units). Certain earlier tribal traditions and organizational structures would become outmoded. The earlier numbering system, originally clear to all, gradually lost its meaning. A changing culture, then, could have precipitated misunderstandings of numbers by later editors. These scribes were not aware of the earlier tribal organizations, the multiple use of specialized terms such as eleph, and were not part of the culture that recorded the stories. Because they did not understand the original and varied uses of eleph, later redactors made "clarifications" in the stories to make the numbers of one story better agree with the numbers of another. In so doing they accidentally garbled the numbers of the text. For example, by providing totals (Num 1:46 and Exod 38:25-26) later scribes created problems with other texts such as the number of firstborns in Numbers 3.
I agree with Nooratzy that "we can no longer determine how large the ancient ‘eleph’ was." We must look to archaeology and other considerations for an approximate size of Israel at its formulation. How many Israelite migrated into the land will probably never be known. On the other hand, it does not follow that one can automatically assume that the biblical writers of the Book of Joshua suggested that there were millions of Israelites because of Numbers 1 and 26.

The conclusion is that there is nothing in the Book of Joshua that suggests that the Israelite population was unusually large. Events described within the Book of Joshua were limited and would fit well within the population estimates suggested by current archaeologically-based calculations.

Archaeology: Ir1 and the Israelites

Another set of assumptions has affected the discussion regarding the Ir1 settlement of the Israelites. These assumptions arise from archaeology and affect the meaning of the Israelite settlement and the issue of their origins. It is clear that Israel settled during Ir1, but "settled" and presence and identity do not have the same meaning.

What Does the Ir1 Israelite Settlement Mean?

One of the positive effects of Egypt’s control of Canaan was intercity peace. In the Amarna period that peace was lost.

Clearly, if the Egyptian grasp on the country weakened, the results would speedily be intolerable. The Amarna letters tell us in fact that the situation in Palestine and its environs was one of perpetual intermecine strife. Also the reports which were sent from the Asiatic provinces to the Egyptian capital bear witness to the then-prevailing social unrest. (Lemche 1990: 83)

While Lemche wrote of the Amarna age, the strife he described was not uncommon in Canaan during periods when Egypt’s power waned.

The catalyst for the settlement in Ir1 was the demise of Egypt and other powers (Tadmor 1979). Evidently, the appearance of the Sea Peoples and their conflict with
the already weakened Egyptians set the stage for the loss of Egypt's Canaanite kingdom and even of their wider empire. The numerous destructions of the 13th century testify to the weakness of the Egyptians at that time, as do the Egyptians themselves.

Ramesses IV put these words into the mouth of his father Ramesses III:

Hear ye, that I may inform you of my benefactions which I did while I was king of the people (rḥy-t). The land of Egypt was overthrown from without, and every man was (thrown out) of his right; they had no chief mouth (r'-ḥr) for many years formerly until other times. The land of Egypt was in the hands of chiefs and of rulers of towns; one slew his neighbor, great and small. Other times having come after it, with empty years Yarsu, a certain Syrian (H'-nv) was with them as chief. He set the whole land tributary before him together; he united his companions and plundered their possessions. (Breasted 1988 IV: 199)

Such chaos could lend itself only to infighting and kingdom building in Canaan.

When Egypt's international dominion began to subside, local powers began a struggle for self-identity.

The Sea Peoples may not have been the only ones responsible for the devastation of the Egyptian garrisons (in Canaan). This view is based on the geographical distribution of the Egyptian sites; these cover a wide area, some being well inland of the territory controlled by the Sea Peoples. Also, the Egyptian centers at Beth-Shan, Tell esh-Sharîca, Lachish, and Megiddo were not replaced by settlements dominated by these foreigners. Thus, while the Sea Peoples may have been culpable for the end of Egyptian garrisons in southern and western Palestine, we must allow for the possibility that non-Sea Peoples' groups were responsible for the ruin of sites in other areas of the country. (Weinstein 1992: 147)

In other words, the vacuum caused by the withdrawal of Egyptian power produced internal chaos and allowed smaller petty kingdoms to emerge. As Weinstein said, "Military conflict in Western Asia was the direct cause of the collapse of the (Egyptian) empire" (1992: 147).

On the other hand, what Lemche (as quoted above) has missed is that the Amarna period was only a wrinkle on the page of Egyptian power, while what happened to Egypt's power as it moved a century or two closer to the first millennium B.C. was a removal of that page. The squabbles of Canaan during the Amarna period reflect the inattention of Egypt during a relatively short period, while the entire settlement process of the Philistines, Israelites, Ammonites, and Moabites largely resulted from the demise
of Egypt's influence at the end of the Late Bronze Age. That the Egyptians used Canaan as a "staging-ground" (Lemche 1990: 84) only underscores the presence of Egypt in Canaan during early Late Bronze Age.

There is a tendency to combine the Amarna period upheavals with the Canaanite Irl destructions, as though they were caused by a continuous problem. For example, Chaney wrote,

As the Amarna letters and an epigraphic archaeology both make clear, Palestine just prior to and during the emergence of Israel as a society, was embroiled in a chronic state of petty warfare, with none of the local dynasties able effectively to protect his peasants or their fields. (1983: 62)

Frankel made the same faulty assumption (1994: 19).

Late Bronze Age Canaan was nothing like Irl Canaan, nor were the Irl settlements the continuation of the Amarna period. The Amarna period was not a problem that grew in intensity until the settlements of Irl arose. There is nothing to suggest that the Amarna problems were anything but short-term. (It is possible that the Amarna letters may not even testify to a major upheaval at all, but rather to seasonal appeals by Canaanite rulers. Liverani 1990.) In addition, the internal problems of the Late Bronze Age Amarna period did not lead to a plethora of settlements as did Irl. Irl Canaan was a fully developed example of what could have happened in the Amarna period if things had not changed, but no one can imagine that a Ramesses II would allow the unrest of the Amarna age to continue. Irl Canaan experienced an increasing number of settlements, if not population.

That the Israelites settled in Canaan during Irl, while other peoples were settling, I have no doubt, but settlement does not necessarily imply a new presence or the genesis of the realization of identity. It should not be forgotten that while the destructions began in the 13th-century Late Bronze Age, the settlement process did not fully get underway until the 12th century. Most of the Irl villages, even those on previously inhabited sites, were built after a pause in settlement. A. Mazar wrote.
A close study of the pottery from the Settlement sites points to the conclusion that in fact none of these sites existed prior to Iron Age I. A number of them were founded during the twelfth century B.C.E., whilst most of them flourished during the eleventh century B.C.E. (1985: 64)

Thompson made a good point about Hazor that should be expanded (and modified as well) to explain the metamorphosis of the LBII/Irl transition period. He wrote that a “gap at the site(s) indicates that their land was not forcibly taken from them by enemy” (1994: 246). He thinks it indicates mere abandonment, but a gap between destruction and settlement more clearly indicates an upheaval of an entire society.

People leave their homes only when they are forced to leave them. Thompson believed that drought was a major cause of the upheaval of the Late Bronze Age-Irl. While drought may have been an initiator of abandonment, drought itself did not destroy the cities. The cause of the destructions was a total societal breakdown, whatever its root causes. As Muhly adeptly noted of Mycenae,

Invaders were present, invasions and destructions did take place, and one cannot simply discount later literary traditions any more than one can ignore the contemporary descriptions of the havoc caused by the Sea Peoples as recounted in texts from the reign of Ramesses III (Helck 1987). But invaders and destructions alone have not and probably never will translate into a convincing explanation for the transformation of Mycenaean Greece into the world of the Dark Ages. (1992: 20)

Obviously, the catastrophe of the end of Late Bronze Age was much larger than the appearance of Israel and more complex than a simple invasion of any one people. As Karageorghis suggested.

I would venture even further and suggest that the various political changes of the “crisis years” were not uniform and did not occur simultaneously, and that the reasons for their “crises” may vary. Some of these regional centers were abandoned. (1992: 79)

While this comment is directed specifically at the situation on Cyprus, Karageorghis drew a similar conclusion about Canaan (1992: 83). The events of the LBII/Irl transition period affected different places in different ways, while the variety of changes among all archaeological sites spelled disaster.

The continuity at some sites of certain facets of the local Canaanite culture, the signs at other sites of a temporarily intensified Egyptian presence, the appearance
and expansion in the hill country of Israelite settlements, and the establishment of Philistine and various other Sea Peoples' enclaves along the coast indicate that the cultural coherence of Late Bronze Age Canaanite society had broken down. (Dothan 1992: 93)

Dever is correct to argue that the evidence is such that a single paradigm for all of Canaan is useless; regional interpretations are necessary (Dever 1992).

I also agree with Thompson that

the assumption that the history of Israel's origin can be understood as a history of the chronological transition between Late Bronze Canaanite city-states and Irl Israeliite highland settlement stands as a hypothesis to be tested anew and not as a historical starting point from which we may proceed with confidence. (1994: 25)

While Thompson would push the dating of Israel's presence later (following his belief that their history did not begin until the ninth century [1994: 312]), the evidence allows for their existence much earlier.

The 13th-century Merneptah stele speaks of the Israelites as an entity identifying them as a tribal people at a time before any new serious or sustained settlements began. Coote was correct when he said, "It [the Merneptah stele] shows that in the thirteenth century B.C.E. Israel was a military force to be reckoned with, and that Israel was not named for a town" (1990: 72). The Merneptah stele also testifies that Merneptah saw Israel as a tribal peoples who had not yet clearly defined their territory, at least not enough for the Egyptian king to see them as a permanent regionally based force. By itself the Merneptah stele is evidence that at least some of the Israelites were in Canaan prior to, and had identity before, Irl. Coote went so far as to say, "Israel existed at least two or three generations, and probably much longer, before the end of the New Kingdom and the Late Bronze Age" (1990: 57). If they were in the land before the Iron Age, then the suggestion of the LBII/Irl transition theory that the transition itself produced Israel is wrong.

The Israelites and other peoples of Canaan are not detected by archaeology before the settlements of Irl simply because the powerful Egyptians forced the weaker, less structured inhabitants into a marginal existence. The pressure from the dominant Egyp-
tian war machine was so oppressive that much of the population of Canaan could do nothing less than hide, especially the unlanded populations.

During practically the entire three centuries of the Egyptian empire in Palestine, economic and political exploitation disrupted social relations and aggravated hostilities within the region. As a result, permanent settlement retreated from frontier zones and population declined. Only in the last half century of Egyptian rule did this trend reverse itself. (Coote 1990: 60)

Contrary to Coote, "permanent settlement retreated" does not necessarily mean that population declined, only that the countable population declined.

It was in the economic interest of Egypt to keep any malcontents at bay, since blockages of trade routes or internal strife would cost them much-needed funds for the empire.

From the fifteenth century BCE onwards, Palestine was part of Egypt's Asiatic empire. Naturally, the Egyptians were not interested in having their provinces decimated by internal strife, for this would doubtless have influenced the income they expected to derive from the region in the form of taxes and payments of tribute. Nor was it in the Egyptian interest that the trade routes leading to Syria and Mesopotamia should be interrupted by the petty feuds of Palestinian princes. (Lemche 1990: 83)

When Lemche said that the Egyptians did not intervene in the internal affairs of Canaan (1990: 83), he was obviously thinking of the unfulfilled pleas for help found in the Amarna tablets and not the presence of the many Egyptian evidences found in Palestine by excavation (e.g., Mazar 1990: 232-294). No known foreign military power of the past or present was, or is, able to maintain control of local inhabitants without a dominating presence. Thus, the Egyptian powers of the Late Bronze Age constricted "settlement, agriculture, and population growth" (Coote 1990: 69).

While the causes may or may not have been different, there is at least one observable parallel between the limited sedentary populations of the Late Bronze Age and EBIV. Both periods have provided archaeologists with many more tombs proportionally than they have settlements. This is evidence that, whether by circumstances or by choice, populations lived in Canaan that archaeologists have as of yet been unable to
detect. Such is the case in the Late Bronze Age when the influence of Egypt was strongest in Canaan. Gonen writes,

Burial caves such as those at Safed, Hanita, Damun, Gibeon, Jedur, and Hebron are not adjacent to any settlement site. The hill zones were virtually devoid of settlement during the Late Bronze Age; a review of the distribution of burial sites, however, reveals a denser pattern. This may comprise archaeological evidence of a non-sedentary population of the unstable kind exemplified by the 'Apiru of the El-Amarna letters and other texts, which harassed the settled population. This unsettled population, which may have been disenfranchised and therefore unable to maintain its own burial grounds, buried its dead wherever it could—in caves cut by earlier generations or natural caves in the hills—and preserved the traditional burial practices of the Middle Bronze Age, being unexposed to new influences. (1992: 241)

While the idea of "invisible" people in the Late Bronze Age has been proposed for a "remnant" of the MBII populations, it is just as likely that any new settlers who migrated into Canaan after MBII would, likewise, find it difficult to build houses or permanent settlements while Egypt hovered over Canaan. If a proposed "remnant" of the MBII population would have been coerced into remaining unsettled, due to the oppressive Egyptian control, thus being invisible to the archaeological record, a recently arrived Israelite population would have had to be invisible for the same reasons. An unsettled lifestyle may well be reflected in the biblical text as "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6). Cities and large-scale agricultural projects required centralized governments. The political life, if not domestic life of the Israelites as well as other invisible inhabitants, was most probably in chaos due to the oppressive presence of the Egyptians.

If the Israelites (as a newly arrived force) were part of the destructions of the 13th century, as the Conquest Theory suggested, why were those destroyed cities not rebuilt until a much later time (most in Ir2)? Assuming that the Israelites were involved in the 13th-century destructions, there would be a gap between the Israelite conquest (13th century) and their settlement (12th-11th century). This conclusion is opposed to Albright’s statement that the Israelites settled almost immediately.

The archaeologist with no knowledge of biblical tradition would have to acknowledge some binding and driving force in Israel which differentiated it from
ordinary nomadic invaders, like the tribes which overran Transjordan periodically and lived there in tents for centuries without settling down. (1971: 119)

Even those who support the Conquest Theory must acknowledge that conquest and settlement are distinct and separate, if the destructions of the 13th century are seen to be part of the phenomenon of the 12th-century settlements.

That the chaos of Irl forced the Israelites into metamorphosis is sure. It was not possible for Israel to survive without changing. One area where change was necessary was in leadership. Gottwald rightly concluded, "The Philistines posed a level of hostile state power and militarism which Israel could only combat by resorting to a strong military chieftain which culminated in the dynasty of David and Solomon" (1983: 31).

The 13th-12th-century destructions exhibit the regional struggle for new alliances and boundaries. On the other hand, the Israelites might have entered Canaan at any time before Merneptah's stele mentions them.

Even the argument, based on Exod 1:11, that the Israelites had to have come to Canaan during the latter part of the 13th century since the Israelites are associated with the name Ramesses (see chapter 1), is not compelling. Gen 47:11 associates the patriarch Jacob with the same name and few would assign him to the 13th century. If the biblical writers saw Moses sparring with the famous Ramesses II they could easily have used Ramesses's name throughout the Exodus stories. That the name Ramesses appears only as a place-name is suspicious. It seems best to assign both Exod 1:11 and Gen 47:11 to the hand of a later editor, who in updating the text, created an anachronism. That would easily explain this anomaly and why the biblical writers did not use the same name for the pharaoh who opposed Moses, when they provided so many other names for characters in the Egyptian stories (e.g., Potiphar, Shiphrah, Puah, Jethro, etc.).

The Israelites certainly do not need to be seen as hordes of bedouin-style nomadic people arising from the Syrian desert. They might just as easily have been a homeless
group who had migrated to Canaan and found refuge in uncontrolled areas, as Alt long ago suggested. The archaeology of the Irl period surely reflects their process of settling (and as well that of all the peoples of the region), but archaeology says nothing about when, or even if, they entered the land or anything about their ethnicity. The 13th- and 12th-century destructions were much bigger than the Israelite incursion in the land. These destructions reflect the upheavals experienced by the entire ancient Near East, not Israel alone. All peoples lived through, and were changed by, the LBII/Irl transition period, yet only one Israel emerged.

Israelite Culture

Mazar among others has noted, "There is not, however, a sharp dividing line between the periods, and the local material culture in many regions in Iron Age 1A was almost identical to that of LBII" (1990: 296). That Late Bronze pithoi developed "collars" in the Iron Age and that four-room houses were the descendants of Late Bronze Age houses are not a revolutionary innovation nor do they show a new material culture. The Iron Age culture certainly reflected the Late Bronze cultures.

Frick approached the problem of ethnic identity from another angle--Israel's change of government. Since Israel was being transformed by the environmental pressures of early Irl, this transformation should be reflected in more significant ways than stylistic changes in material culture. "By definition, the processes of state formation, both pristine and secondary, involve major institutional transformations, and it would thus, from this perspective, be illegitimate to postulate such transformation on stylistic or other energy-poor kinds of evidence" (Frick 1985: 35).

Israel, like other peoples of the region, was being transformed but not into a political state. A political state implies that a society no longer depends on family relationships (Renfrew and Bahn 1991: 156-157; LaBianca and Younker 1994: 403-405). The biblical writers continued to see, if only rarely noted, the importance of family
relationships. This dependence on family is noted even after the Babylonian Exile, which tells us something about the nature of the Israelite society (e.g., Neh 1:1; Neh 3:1).

What was happening to Israel in Irl was a move to consolidate its associated tribal members into a viable defense, and/or maintain its identity in the face of the devastating destructions and the encroachment of other peoples. If one were to trust the biblical picture, it is doubtful whether Israel was ever transformed into a political state during Irl or at any time before the Babylonian captivity.

"State" implies a development never exhibited in the biblical stories. Israel seems always to have functioned as a tribal society, even during monarchical times. Although stylistic changes in material culture have been used as hallmarks to identify Israelite sites, many researchers have begun to question such associations. It seems more likely that the Israelites shared a material culture with their neighbors, in the same way they essentially shared geographic areas.

One thing is clear, "Israel" was not derived from the settling process of Irl as Finkelstein suggested (1988: 28). According to Merneptah, Israel was visible and separable from its fellow Canaanite inhabitants before the settlement process of Irl began.

The Origins of Israel

Religion, for good or bad, is a powerful motivator. Some may suppose that much of YHWHism was a late development; even so, the peoples of earlier times had religion and it did affect their lives and history. Albright wrote,

Under no circumstances must we underestimate the power of the religious factor. Mosaic Yahwism was a missionary religion, still in its first and most active phase, when compromise between faith in the jealous God of Israel and pagan practices was unthinkable. (Albright 1965: 99)

Mendenhall tried to incorporate the seminal events of Israelite history within a sociological explanation. To answer a paraphrase of Mendenhall's question, Do a
people create a religion, or does the religion create a people? (1976b: 16), the biblical writers seem to say, "God creates/causes everything" (on the other hand, the existence of groups in current times such as the Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists, with their unique subcultures, is evidence that a religion can also "create" a people).

This attempt at combining religious experience and sociological observation as an explanatory model has largely been forsaken. Scholars are now focused mainly on environmental influences like land-use and agriculture, as though religious experience was ineffectual for change in the past, even though it is an observable phenomenon in the present. Theories of Israel's origin must also account for the uniqueness of Israel's religion and the possibility of religious experience as an aspect in their genesis as a distinct ethnic group.

Archaeology has provided no information as to the origins of Israel. Whether they were new settlers, as the Book of Joshua states, or whether they were indigenous to the region, as many recent authors speculate, is unimportant to this study. It does seem, however, that those who suggest that the Israelites were indigenous to the region, contrary to the Book of Joshua, are under the obligation to provide evidence of other indigenous peoples who have developed literary traditions in later times inventing conquest and arrival stories. To this time, such evidence has not been presented.

Until something more than unsubstantiated, hypothetical theories can be offered as a replacement, it seems more prudent to accept cautiously the biblical writers' explanations of Israel's origins. This conclusion has become even more acceptable, since a growing number of scholars have begun to recognize the limitations of archaeology by suggesting the "invisible" MBIIC populations, as noted above. Allowing the biblical writers a fair hearing may run counter to common biblical criticism, but given the limitations of archaeology at the present time, and the inherent weaknesses of settlement theories, it seems more viable than other options.
The biblical traditions of the Book of Joshua offer fewer problems and a better theoretical basis for explaining Israel's origins than anything so far suggested. As for the origins of the Israelites or how they came to Canaan, we have nothing but the biblical text from which to choose. Perhaps, then, as Finkelstein and others envisioned an invisible MBIIC population that became Israelites, we can visualize an Israelite population that entered the land sometime in the Late Bronze Age and settled along with the remnant of the MBII populations during 1IR. If such a group did arrive during the Late Bronze Age, what evidence would we expect to find? Perhaps, like the MBIIC population, due to the stress of the Egyptian overlords, they would leave no unique material cultural remains.

We know from the Amarna tablets that the ʿApiru were active during Late Bronze Age. Perhaps, as was suggested long ago (e.g., Barton 1946: 441), the problems in that period, among other things, reflect the arrival of the Israelites (and maybe others). Not that the ʿApiru of the Amarna tablets were specifically Israelites or even a significant number of them were Israelites, but perhaps the Israelites were one element of the ʿApiru in those troubled times. De Geus’s suggestion seems reasonable.

Taking as a starting-point the identity of the word Hebrews with the ʿApiru/Ḥabiru of the Amarna period—incapable of proof though it is—we must then conclude that within the Old Testament tradition the word changed from an appellative into an ethnic name. (1976: 185)

What Kenyon suggested concerning the ʿApiru of Bethshan may be true of all of Canaan:

The equation ʿApiru-Ḥabiru-Hebrew is accepted by many scholars, and thus we here have evidence of bands allied to the Ḥabiru of the Amarna Letters still causing trouble. Whether we have here the other side of the story of the biblical account that the tribe of Manasseh failed to capture Beth-shan there is not yet sufficient evidence to say, but it is not impossible that there is a connection. (1979: 204)

Living in Canaan during the Amarna period could explain how the Israelites acquired a derogatory name like "Hebrew." Any genealogical relationship among the Israelites would have been only incidental to such a name being applied to them. If they did
arrive as newcomers (i.e., usurpers) they would have been automatically outside the bounds of normative society, and thus, 'Apiru or outlaws. This would have been especially true, since they settled in the hill country among others out of reach of the Egyptian and Canaanite authorities. On the other hand, it would be difficult to imagine any unlanded people for whom family relationships would be unimportant.

They would have come as outsiders, whose cultically-based cohesiveness (as the Bible suggests) would have tended to maintain separateness (albeit not completely successful) from the neighboring peoples. Dever, among others, agreed that "the driving force behind the Israelite ethnic movement may well indeed have been Yahwism, as the later Biblical sources maintain" (1992: 104). Wright also reminded us that "the genius" of the Israelites was in the field of religion—the monotheistic worship of YHWH (1940: 28). Other religions and peoples were focused on the multiplicity of gods found in "nature." This religious aberration could also explain why the Israelites never completely assimilated into the Canaanite culture and why the biblical text testifies to internal religious tensions, even in its latest prophets.

Since the term 'Apiru (SA.GAZ) stretches into the third millennium B.C. and is used over a wide geographic area, the Israelites, obviously, did not invent the name. Sometime late in the use of "'Apiru," the name was attached to the Israelites. It seems that something about the behavior/lifestyle of the Israelites was 'Apiru-like. Rather than forcing the Israelites to fit into the preexisting mold of a definition of 'Apiru, it seems better to assume that the name was first applied to them early in their history, whereas the name 'Apiru was in vogue while the Israelites were unsettled and while the Israelites were acting like 'Apiru (unsettled outlaws). Late in the second millennium, when the name 'Apiru went out of vogue as a name of derision, it remained attached to the Israelites, eventually becoming an ethnic identifier (Boling 1988: 57). It seems that Halligan, despite his misguided references to feudalism, makes a valid point:

The Israelite movement was a radical rejection of the divinity of any human ruler. It proclaimed Yahweh as Lord of the land, as judge, and as warrior: all
functions claimed by the Canaanite aristocracy. At a certain moment, not yet well determined, the Canaanite peasant coalition was fired by the historical precedent of a people freed by Yahweh from the immediate control of the Pharaoh in Egypt. The new society replaced city-state feudalism with tribal confederacy, the privileged relationship of the king to the gods with each follower enjoying access to Yahweh, the monopoly of the land by the special few with each believer as a tenant of Yahweh, and the social stratification according to wealth with a society that depended entirely on its demonstrated value to human beings. (1983: 24)

Although some may cringe at the suggestion that true monotheism could develop in early times, that development could go far in explaining how the Israelites became Hebrews.

If nothing else, the unique monotheistic acknowledgement of YHWH as the only true God would certainly have made the Israelites distinct from the other peoples of Late Bronze Age Canaan. A monotheistic people would not have easily assimilated into Canaanite society and would have, in all likelihood, remained outsiders—different from all others. For sure, discontented peoples of the region would have had a difficult time joining with Israelites to combat the dominant society without first joining in worship of YHWH. This may be the key to understanding how the name ʾApiru became the Hebrews of the Bible and why failure to be faithful to YHWH was so repugnant to the biblical writers. YHWH was the basis of their identity. To repudiate Him was to repudiate their cultural identity as well. The Israelites, then, were the permanent outsiders in Canaan and, therefore, seen as the ʾApiru/Hebrews.

The lack of evidence for the name of YHWH in Near Eastern documents before the Iron Age (Hess 1991) or the worship of YHWH by any other people besides the Israelites, after that time, suggests that YHWH was particularly tied to the Israelites. It also implies that worship of YHWH and monotheism were cocreated.

It is not that the worshipers of YHWH were so compelled that they never worshipped other gods. Dever has clearly demonstrated via archaeological findings that there was a definite tension between what the biblical writers proposed as true YHWH worship versus how Iron Age Israelites honored those admonitions (1990: 119-172).
The biblical prophets themselves railed against the lack of cultic purity, accusing the Israelites of abandoning YHWH (e.g., Jer 2:11-14). On the other hand, archaeological evidence says nothing about the earliest of Israelites or their relationship to YHWH. In fact, it is the message of the earlier biblical writers that the generation of Joshua was faithful to YHWH (Josh 24:31; Judg 2:7), while the generations that followed were not faithful (Judg 2:10).

Still, the Israelites eventually became the "Hebrews," which says something about how the Israelites viewed themselves. The acceptance of the pejorative name *Apiru* by the Israelites as an acknowledgment of their outsider status would also explain how Abraham, portrayed as their forefather, was so accurately described as an *Apiru* (Gen 14. transient habitation, trained militia, and independent from settled leaders). He likewise was an outsider to the regular community leaders (e.g., Genesis 14).

Issues of the Formation of Israel

While the model of Mendenhall/Gottwald has been derived from recent cultural experiences, the word "revolt" is not too strong to describe the reality of an Israel juxtaposed with Canaan. Mendenhall and Gottwald disagree about what experience gave "Israel" its motivation for existence. For Mendenhall that motivation was a religious experience based on a covenant. He wrote,

The covenant form is essential not only for understanding certain highly unusual features of the Old Testament faith, but also for understanding the existence of the community itself and the interrelatedness of the different aspects of early Israel's social culture. Here we reach a clear watershed, so to speak, in historical research. Do the people create a religion, or does the religion create a people? Historically, when we are dealing with the formative period of Moses and the Judges, there can be no doubt that the latter is correct, for the historical, linguistic, and archaeological evidence is too powerful to deny. Religion furnished the foundation for a unity far beyond anything that had existed before, and the covenant appears to have been the only conceivable instrument through which the unity was brought about and expressed. (1976b: 16)

For Mendenhall the covenant was established at Sinai, while for Gottwald, a social upheaval exploded in Canaan. The question of where the experience occurred,
whether in the Sinai wilderness or in Canaan, misses the point of the biblical writers. Both Mendenhall and Gottwald see the "formative" (Mendenhall 1976b: 11) religious experience as occurring close in time to their first historical recognition. That is the account written down very soon after the event. While we should not deny the importance of the Sinai experience for the Israelites' cult, it undermines both Mendenhall's and Gottwald's suggestions that both—the group who met YHWH at Sinai and those who first arrived in Canaan—received unflattering reviews from the biblical writers. Those writers take pains to tell us that the Sinai Israelites were cowards (Exod 14), complainers (Exod 17), and unfaithful to both YHWH and Moses (Exodus 32). They were so unworthy that not one of them lived to see the promised land (Josh 5:4-5). On the other hand, the early Canaanite Israelites (those who, according to Gottwald, had a new covenant experience that led them to revolt against their elitist Canaanite overlords) do not fare any better (Judg 2:11-23). If either Mendenhall's or Gottwald's theories were correct, we should expect, at the least, that the pioneers of that movement would receive a good review. What movement does not find its pioneer(s) near sainthood? Yet the biblical writers ascribe faithlessness, idolatry, and cowardice to those very generations.

One factor helped to throw both Mendenhall and Gottwald off the mark. Both are working to explain the presence of a group based on a close-in-time hypothesis, while the biblical writers almost always emphasize a distant-in-time hypothesis. In other words, Mendenhall and Gottwald see the formation and identity-producing experience of Israel and Israel's presence in Canaan as nearly simultaneous events—meaning their generation as a people who had no prior existence. While the biblical writers emphasized the corporate Sinai experience beyond all others (which experience Mendenhall emphasizes) and did see the hand of YHWH in their possession of land under Joshua's leadership (which experience Gottwald finds formative), they attached their origins to earlier times.
While Moses himself is the most significant individual in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy, those books are not presented as an independent history. They are only one stop on the long journey of the biblical writers. Both the Exodus events and the Israelite presence in Canaan are made to turn on Abraham. The Exodus events, according to the biblical writers, had no meaning unless there was first an Abraham.

Mendenhall had a good point when he wrote,

In order to illustrate by means of a concrete historical problem, we turn to the form of the Sinai Covenant, which has been much discussed. The thesis presented here is that in the formative period of religious communities, if anything is to be communicated at all (either by actions or by words), forms are necessarily borrowed from the past. If this thesis is correct, then it follows that the borrowing takes place by some principle of selectivity that accepts some and rejects others. Furthermore, it seems a priori extremely improbable that at the formation of the community a comprehensive code of morals, doctrines, and liturgies could have been drawn up. One reason is that the community could hardly have been faced with the concrete situations that demanded decisions in all their variety during the first generation, and legislating for the future is a concept that historically does not commend itself. (1976b: 8)

If Mendenhall is correct, the Israelites could not have become a people at Sinai. They could only be reorganized there. Their origins must go back to much earlier times.

The biblical writers portray Abraham as the pivotal figure in Israel’s history. It was his profound conviction that produced Sinai. If one reads the Pentateuch as the biblical writers crafted it, the pivotal experience is the call of Abram to a land to which the biblical writers promise the Israelite (Gen 12:1-3). He has the "profound" experience, which changes the lives of his posterity. The primary function of the Book of Genesis is to explain how the Israelites came to be in Egypt and why they belonged in Canaan. While one may dispute the reality of Genesis’s claims, nonetheless it is those claims that focus the entire Hexateuch.

Mendenhall wrote that "it seems a priori extremely improbable that at the formation of the community a comprehensive code of morals, doctrines, and liturgies could have been drawn up" (1976b: 8), and his point is well taken. While he concluded that
Israel's legal system must have been crafted after the Sinai event, from the point of view of the biblical writers, the legal system was crafted long after the formation event—just as Mendenhall predicted. It was not until Sinai, generations after Abraham, that the cultic laws and structure were developed. The "formative period" (Mendenhall 1976b: 11), from the point of view of the biblical writers, was YHWH's covenant with Abram, not Moses, and the creation of the Israelite's laws and liturgies could only have occurred in the time of Moses, if there was a time of Abraham. The Exodus and settlement were the culmination of the faith of Abraham, the fruit of his experience.
CHAPTER 5

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE: THE BOOK OF JOSHUA, A CASE STUDY

Archaeology: What Does It Mean?

No other biblical book has been as thoroughly reviewed by archaeological evidence as the Book of Joshua. As we saw in chapter 3, virtually every city mentioned in the book has been excavated or at least sherded and the evidence used to either argue for, or eliminate, a suggested location in the Book of Joshua. The Conquest Theory was in the forefront of gathering information about "biblical" sites with the intention of supporting the theory that the Israelites took Canaan by military conquest. For the past 30 years, however, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with the Conquest Theory and, by extension, the explanation of the Book of Joshua as to how Israel gained its land. The primary problem has been that archaeologists have not found archaeological evidence to support the Conquest Theory.

Cities that are prominent in the stories of the Book of Joshua have consistently, when excavated, not yielded evidence of destructions, when destructions are noted in the biblical accounts. In many cases, no settlement at all was found during the time major stories supposedly occurred at the site (e.g., Heshbon, Jericho, Ai, Gibeon).

It seems only logical that reliably written documents should be verifiable by archaeology. As Kempinski said, written documents "invite" investigation. "Thus, reference to an identifiable site in one of the sources invites the archaeologist to identify the stratum and finds of that town and to correlate them chronologically with the written documents" (1992a: 159).

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With regard to this study, Miller asked the right question when he wrote, "What sort of conclusion is to be reached when carefully excavated archaeological evidence does not seem to meet the minimum requirements of the historical implications of the biblical texts?" (1977: 88). Since so many sites mentioned in the Book of Joshua seem to fit this description, it seems only right that we consider the implications of this question.

To state the problem as clearly as possible, I use Miller to frame the dilemma around et-Tell.

That biblical Ai is to be equated with present-day et-Tell is an obvious conclusion, therefore, and one which scholars were agreed upon before any excavations were undertaken at the site. According to Josh. 7-8, Ai was a fortified city at the time of the Israelite invasion (this is implied by the description of Joshua's military tactics and confirmed by the reference to the city gate in 7. 5); it was conquered and burned by Joshua; and it remained "forever a heap of ruins" (טֵל "אָלָם; 8. 28) from that day onward. However archaeological excavations at et-Tell have indicated rather conclusively that the site was virtually unoccupied following c. 2000 B.C.E. except for a small unfortified village which stood on the old ruins c. 1200-1050 B.C.E (Marquet-Krause, Callaway). Thus if the conquest occurred at any time during MB or LB, Ai/et-Tell would have been nothing more than a desolate ruin. (1977: 88-89)

In Miller's description one should not be confused by the facts. The central issue is not that something was found at et-Tell that disproves the account of the Book of Joshua, but rather, the archaeologists discovered nothing to substantiate it. The archaeologists expected to find a Late Bronze Age destruction at et-Tell, but might have been happy to have found at least a Late Bronze Age settlement, but their excavations found no settlement at all.

Miller's conclusion is that "the archaeological situation at et-Tell cannot be squared with the biblical claims" (1977: 89) and, "what archaeology does not confirm, indeed what archaeology denies, is the explanation provided by the narrative as to how the ruins came to be" (1977: 89). Since the evidence of archaeology and the stories of the Book of Joshua are in opposition on the issue of nonevidence, I confine my comments to that issue.
The Use of Nonevidence

The pragmatic reality is that archaeology has been allowed to produce two types of data: what is found and what is not found. What is surprising is that evidence (what was found) is no more weighty than nonevidence (what was not found). Although nonevidence has been used as methodologically sound evidence, archaeological data are really only what is found. What is not found is not found. In other words, data not collected or not found should not be part of an interpretive scheme.

Archaeology is dependent on the skill of the archaeologist, the serendipitous nature of the finds, the arbitrary and incomplete methods of selecting a tell’s excavation areas, and the limited information gathered. Dever has acknowledged that what archaeologists find is “pure luck” (1974: 41). Does it not follow that what they do not find is also luck?

It should be remembered that, unlike science, archaeological data cannot be collected the second time. While a site may be reexcavated, only new data can be found. It is an axiom that archaeology is a destructive science, because it destroys its evidence. The unique nature of archaeology (that it is destructive) makes the use of nonevidence even more problematic.

Those who discuss the Israelite presence in Cisjordan within the parameters of the Israelite conquest and settlement too often let non-data have as much weight as actual recovered data in determining their theories. For example, in the article previously cited (1939), Albright refers to interpretational problems of Ai and Jericho. Today, over 55 years after Albright’s article, those sites are problematic for the conquest model. It is not that the excavators actually found any concrete evidence that disputes the stories of the Book of Joshua, it is just that their excavators did not find at Ai and Jericho any substantiating archaeological evidence for the stories (although B. Wood has attempted to reinterpret Kenyon’s Jericho findings [1990b: 44-59; 1990a:45-49, 68-69]). The nonevidence has become evidence! Generally speaking, such archaeological
nonevidence (or as Mazar calls it, "silent" archaeological evidence, 1992: 281) is given the same weight as the collected data, as though they were of the same value. Miller writes,

An obvious danger with using negative archaeological evidence—absence of crucial sherds or occupational strata—in site identifications is that even the most thoroughly conducted archaeological surveys and excavations produce only samplings of evidence. Crucial sherds or occupational strata sometimes will be missed by accident. (1983: 121)

The essential difference between what is found and what is not found is that, although the interpretation of collected data may change, the data, whether a soil layer or artifact, always exist (i.e., a bowl that is found may be labeled "common" or "cultic," but the bowl, itself, never changes). On the other hand, nonevidence lasts only until something is found. For the sake of argument, if Wood's reinterpretation of Jericho's Late Bronze Age strata should be sustained (e.g., Herr 1995a) and a general consensus should arise that there was an LBI settlement at Jericho and there was a destruction at that site during that time, what would happen to the present nonevidence from that city and event? If it disappears, the obvious question is, Did it ever really exist? nonevidence does not exist it is the construct of an interpreter.

The presence of subjectivity in discovery should always make us cautious about interpreting nonevidence—what we did not find. Since there are no guidelines for interpreting nondata, their meaning is determined at the discretion of the interpreter. Mazar has likewise recognized that nondata are a key problem in explaining the Israelite conquest and settlement. He writes, "The subject as a whole is fraught with methodological difficulties, for the silent archaeological evidence may always be interpreted in more ways than one" (Mazar 1992: 281). Miller has called nonevidence "negative archaeological evidence" as though something found speaks in a negative way against something suggested by the Bible (1977: 89). The reality is, finding nothing is not negative evidence but nonevidence.

Kitchen was closer to the point when he wrote,
Absence of evidence is not, and should not be confused with, evidence of absence. The same criticism is to be leveled at the abuse of this concept in archaeology: "we did not find it, so it never existed!" instead of the more proper formulation: "evidence is currently lacking; we may have missed it or it may have left no trace"; particularly when 5 percent or less of a mound is dug, leaving 95 percent or more untouched, unknown, and so, not in evidence. (1993: 48)

It does no justice, either to the biblical text or to the archaeological data, to allow evidence not uncovered, which was not recovered from the excavation of a small percentage of a tell's area, to "establish" or "disprove" (Albright 1939: 13) a biblical event. Certainly, a small excavation area may reveal the broad picture of a tell's history. On the other hand, it makes no sense to suggest the unlikelihood of a specific event, which may have occurred in the span of a few hours or a few days—and that occurred thousands of years ago and was only a small portion of a tell's long history—because no evidence for that story was recovered.

Since the background of most of this discussion of the relationship between archaeology and the biblical stories centers on conclusions deduced from destruction layers, it should be helpful to consider the results of Isserlin's study of historically-documented invasions. Isserlin's study (1983) of three invasions demonstrates the difficulty of detecting invasions in the archaeological data, even when historical details are not disputed. Isserlin has compared the literary record of the Norman conquest, the Anglo-Saxon settlement in England, and the Muslim Arab conquest of the Levant with the archaeological evidence of those events. That is to say, he has selected five determinatives of those later invasions as a means of testing what evidences should be expected from the Israelite conquest.

Table 14 summarizes the findings of Isserlin's study. It can be seen that none of the three invaders (the Normans, Anglo-Saxons, or Muslim Arabs) has left any material evidence of their conquest that archaeologists have been able to detect. This is true even though, in the literature describing their invasions, destructions are described. No one disputes the "historicity" of the events; and based on the literary evidence one
would expect such destructions to be found (Isserlin 1983: 87). If the same
archaeological standard were applied to these invasions as is applied to Jericho and Ai,
the conclusion could be only that the Normans, Anglo-Saxons, and Muslims never con­
quered any territory via destructive conquests.

Among the three groups, only the Anglo-Saxons introduced new pottery forms.
Isserlin explains the uniqueness of the Anglo-Saxons, in this regard, as due to the status
of the Anglo-Saxons. They were a small number of ruling-class gentry and the pottery

### TABLE 15

**EVIDENTIAL REMAINS OF THE NORMAN, ANGLO-SAXON, AND MUSLIM CONQUESTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Norman Conquest</th>
<th>Anglo-Saxon Settlement</th>
<th>Muslim Conquest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attested destruction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. New pottery</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cult constructions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. New names</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. New languages</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"O" = no evidence; "X" = evidence

*Note.* Based on Isserlin 1983: 85-94.
styles introduced were unique pieces brought with them from their homelands. Isserlin concludes that only elitist populations are likely to impose new pottery styles on local populations.

From all this, one may deduce that invaders, especially perhaps if they are in the nature of élites rather than massive folk groups, may not register their arrival by new types of pottery (a point which has been noted by Le Patourel 1976, 170), and technical modification or decline in standards of pre-invasion ceramic types in an invaded country after conquest need not occur to a significant extent. (Isserlin 1983: 89)

While only the smallest of the groups (the Anglo-Saxons) introduced new and little-used pottery styles, all three of Isserlin’s invaders introduced unique cultic centers. The Normans created new styles of abbeys, cathedrals, and churches; the Anglo-Saxons built pagan temples; and the Muslims quickly developed the mosque (Isserlin 1983: 90).

Of all of the evidences for invasions, however, Isserlin sees the introduction of new names as the most clear. “Perhaps the strongest support for an invasion hypothesis comes, however, from the evidence supplied by the names of persons and places. Name evidence is in fact very valuable as an indicator of intrusive population elements who have settled down” (Isserlin 1983: 91). Along with new names, of course, would appear a new or modified language. All three of Isserlin’s conquest groups modified the language of their new territory in some way.

Isserlin’s article about the Norman, Anglo-Saxon, and Muslim invasions regarding destructions and new pottery styles is apropos to the discussion at hand. His study suggested that archaeological evidence for military invasions may not be as forthcoming as archaeologists would like. On the other hand, the three areas on which Isserlin placed the most weight (new religious structures, new names, and new or altered language) are in themselves difficult to assess, given the length of time since the stories of the Book of Joshua were written and also the difficulty of associating archaeology and the textual traditions of the Bible.
When Isserlin attempted to apply his findings to the cultic centers at Hazor, Lachish, and Arad as evidence of Israelite-introduced religious structures (1983: 90), his conclusions, although appealing, are problematic. While the cultic place he mentioned at Hazor is probably in the right time frame to be Israelite, nothing proves it to be so. Isserlin cites Yadin (1972) as his evidence for associating this temple with the Israelites, yet Yadin wrote, "It is difficult to say without reservations that it (the Hazor temple) was Israelite" (Yadin 1972: 134).

Isserlin also refers to temples at Arad and Lachish (1983: 90). However, the temple he had in mind at Arad was dated to the 10th century B.C. (Aharoni 1968: 18, 19), which is not much help for discussions of Israelites in the 13th-11th centuries. Likewise, the temple at Lachish, as dated by the excavator Isserlin references, is from the same period or later than the Hazor temple (10th-9th centuries B.C.; "from the start of the Israelite settlement in the latter part of the 11th century," Aharoni 1975: 42). In any case, Aharoni writes, "Not enough is known about all these (sacred) places to justify comparisons" (Aharoni 1975: 32).

Isserlin also sees the introduction of new languages and names as significant evidence of invading armies that should be detectable in the archaeological record. Since the biblical record, however, describes the Israelites as originally being inhabitants of Canaan, who had been living in a foreign country for some years before returning to Canaan, any innovation in language they may have introduced in the 13th-11th centuries B.C. would be difficult, if not impossible, to detect at this time. In any case, new words that might be introduced to NW Semitic in those centuries—if the biblical stories are taken at face value—might better be expected to be Egyptian loan words borrowed by the Israelites and brought home. On the other hand, the Egyptians were the major political influence during the Late Bronze Age, meaning any innovations in language would most probably be covered by the Egyptians already present in Canaan.
Isserlin's attempt at using other invasion evidence to educate excavators regarding the remaining phenomenon from his test invasions should be applauded; however, his work is flawed in at least one area: he does not seem to know that the Islamic "conquest" had little to do with destructive military conquests (Lawlor 1993). It is interesting that, in the areas he finds the most helpful for identifying new settlers (the introduction of new religious structures, new names, and new language) are just those features that are the most difficult to apply to the Book of Joshua, while the areas that seem undemonstrative (archaeologically-attested destructions and the introduction of new pottery forms) are the areas that Near Eastern archaeology raises the most.

Isserlin's study should be a warning to those who would interpret the archaeological nonevidence as fully weighted evidence of something found. Dismissing a literary reference to a city's destruction simply because evidence of a destruction is not found in archaeological excavations may be a hastily drawn conclusion. Such a warning, however, runs counter to Albright's theorem of using archaeology to check literary statements, as noted above. For him, archaeology had the last word because he saw archaeology as neutral. Isserlin's article is evidence that the findings of archaeology are not unbiased. They may be biased by the expectations of the archaeological community, whether or not the expectations are based on substance. In any case, they are biased by the inherent limitations of the archaeological tool.

The biblical text is not the only ancient Near Eastern historical record that has problems reconciling its stories with the archaeological record. Thutmose III's first military campaign against Canaan is the most complete military account of any Egyptian pharaoh (Breasted 1988 II: 391). According to the account, the Egyptians and a coalition of Canaanite resisters met in a great battle on the plain near Megiddo. In the end, the rebel army fled to the safety of Megiddo (1988 II: 430). Because the defensive features of Megiddo were strong, Thutmose III was forced to construct a counterwall constructed of timbers (1988 II: 433). It is likely that this wall was made
of local fruit trees and was of significant size, since it was said to be a "thick wall" and even given a name (1988 II: 433). Megiddo's city wall is also mentioned in this account. Yet archaeological work has found no evidence of Megiddo's wall or Thutmoses's wall of this account. In fact, it has found no evidence of any Late Bronze Age fortifications at Megiddo, leaving archaeologists to ponder the "odd" anomaly and to question the Egyptian story (Gonen 1992: 213, 219). Carchemish is another city that an Egyptian pharaoh (Ramessis III) claims was destroyed (by the Sea Peoples) where no archaeological evidence has been found to substantiate that claim (Güterbock 1992: 55).

A similar problem, maybe even closer to Israelite settlement issues, is encountered in the search for the new population groups that were introduced by the Assyrians in Israel after the conquest of that land (Ezra 4:1-2). No such new groups have been identified by archaeology (Barkay 1992: 328).

According to biblical and Assyrian sources, thousands of deportees of various origins (Arameans, Babylonians, Iranians, Arabs, Elamites) were exiled to the country at that time. But these ethnic groups, which settled in various parts of the country, are not reflected in the material culture of the period.

But the best example is that of the Assyrian merchants who lived in Cappadocia in the nineteenth-early eighteenth centuries BCE. They dwelt in Anatolian houses, used local pottery and adopted other elements of the local material culture. It is only from the information provided in tablets and seals that their long presence in Anatolia can be clearly detected.

We may conclude that only written sources reliably disclose the migrating peoples of the late second millennium BCE and their origin. Material culture may also indicate their presence in the country, but no negative conclusions can be drawn from the lack of positive evidence. (Na'aman 1994: 242, 243)

Archaeology has some black holes that need to be accounted for when drawing conclusions, especially when those conclusions involve nonevidence. If we were to be consistent with the way the lack of evidence for Israel's conquest of Jericho and Ai has been interpreted, we would conclude that the story of Thutmoses III's wall at Megiddo was a late redaction and the Samaritans were a non-existent people!

Unlike real evidence, nonevidence does not originate from an archaeological site, but rather, comes from theories created by archaeologists. According to Brandfon,
archaeologists assume that what they are doing is objective science, when in effect their interpretation of the data makes the explanations of the archaeological data no more factual than written history. The very act of developing "typology" (used by Brandfon to mean the descriptive process) moves the architecture and objects found by archaeologists into the realm of theory (1987: 17).

Moreover, once the researcher begins the necessary task of grouping the evidence into typologies of artifacts on the one hand, or charts of comparative stratigraphy on the other, theoretical concerns begin to transform the archaeological evidence into an historical account. In this sense, archaeological evidence, despite its brute factuality, is no more objective than any other type of evidence. (Brandfon 1987: 30)

It is this "typology" created by biblical students that creates "nonevidence." What is not found, then, relates to the expectations of the seekers.

The Expectations of the Story and the Site

The generally accepted assumptions about archaeology and its relationship to the Bible affect the interpretation of the Book of Joshua as it relates to the Israelite entrance into Canaan. As an example of the tenuousness of such assumptions, consider Miller's conclusion that the archaeological site et-Tell is the Ai of Joshua 7-8. Writes Miller, "The name (hà ay, 'the ruin') and the topographical implications of Gen. 12. 8 indicate that Ai was a noticeable ruin situated east of Bethel and separated from the latter by a mountain" (1977: 88). I am surprised that Miller expresses no doubts about the reliability of Gen 12:8, given his tendency to doubt the reliability of the text in general (1977: 88). To his assumptions I raise issue.

In one sense, it is Miller's unquestioning acceptance of the reliability of Gen 12:8 that provides a basis for his disallowance of Joshua 8 as a historical account. If one were to guess the reliability of two passages, one in Genesis giving a location of a city and one in the Book of Joshua about an event of that city, it would be more likely that the directions to a city were altered by later hands than changes made to the details of...
the Israelite conquest of that city. This is not an unreasonable assumption, since in this case the issue is the conquest of Ai, not where it was located by the writer of Genesis. However, since there is no way to check the accuracy of the directions of Gen 12:8, archaeologists and biblical scholars have assumed by default that the Genesis location for the Ai of Joshua 7-8 is correct. The absence of a reliable check on Gen 12:8, then, makes it the datum of Joshua 8. To use unverifiable information from any text as a measurement for authenticity for another text is a poor scholarly procedure. Every biblical story should stand on its own merits. This point is especially important since, as we saw in chapter 1, biblical scholars have been unable to agree on a consistent, reliable manner for approaching the text. Since the information of Gen 12:8 is not verifiable, it is of no use as a datum of Joshua 8 and it only complicates issues of the Book of Joshua to address issues of the Book of Genesis.

Another hypothesis of Miller is that archaeologists are able to determine beforehand the nature of the settlement at Ai (1977: 88). What fosters this judgment is the reference to the "gate" in the biblical account (Josh 7:5). Since the text mentions "gate," Miller concludes Ai was a "fortified city." While this is one possible conclusion, it is not a necessary one. Miller's conclusion is based more on modern expectations than ancient realities. At Megiddo (Stratum IX), a free-standing gate has been found in Late Bronze Age strata. Writes Gonen, "Freestanding gates, though not a common phenomenon, are not inconceivable, for gates served more than a defensive function. The gate was the ceremonial entrance, the town showpiece, and the focus of trade, public gatherings, litigation, news reports, and even cult" (Gonen 1992: 219). Late Bronze Age Hazor likewise had a gate without a connecting wall (Gonen 1984: 69, 70). If the Book of Joshua's stories reflect Late Bronze Age realities, when city walls were probably prohibited by the Egyptians for military reasons, ceremonial gates could still be expected (Gonen 1992: 219). One could even argue that a ceremonial
gate is implied in the story of Ai, since at the end of the story the gate itself is used for illustrative purposes (Josh 8:29).

That there were ceremonial gates during the Late Bronze Age not associated with fortifications, does not, however, necessarily suggest that the Ai of Joshua 7 and 8 had a similar gate. The Megiddo gate only highlights the trap into which scholars, using unsupportable assumptions about the Bible and the finds of archaeology, can fall. One cannot, by the story of Ai, even conclude anything about the gate itself, whether large and imposing or small and tenuous. All that the biblical story tells us is that Ai had a gate. What we know from archaeology is that at et-Tell, no gate or city was found corresponding with the Late Bronze Age. A similar situation exists between the Book of Joshua's story of the conquest of Jericho and the archaeological finds.

The story of Jericho (Joshua 6) and the archaeological record also need to be reconsidered. To some, the biblical story of Jericho appears to be a contrived account of a battle that never occurred. The current understanding is that there were only a few settlers living at Jericho during most of the Late Bronze Age, although no walls from that time were discovered (Holland 1992: 736). Kenyon summarizes the finds from Late Bronze Age Jericho:

The evidence from the 1952-58 excavations at Jericho indicates that there was a LB town there in the 14th century which might have been that attacked by Joshua, but nothing survives to illustrate the biblical account. It also suggests that if this destruction, followed by some six hundred years of abandonment, was the work of the Israelite tribes under Joshua, it is not likely to have been later than c. 1300 B.C. (Kenyon 1979: 208)

The general details of the Jericho story (Joshua 6)—that the Israelites at some point in their formative history attacked Jericho, that the walls of the city were breached, and that one family from that city was allowed to live—do not necessarily disagree with the results of Kenyon’s excavations. The differences seen between Joshua’s conquest of Jericho and the archaeological findings are not due to Jericho’s lack of walls, but are due to the artificial expectations of those who interpret the Book of Joshua story. To
expect only one scenario from either the biblical story or the archaeological data happens only without reflection.

It is just as likely that a sequence of events, such as the invasion of Canaan first by Israelites and then by Philistines, would leave many different traces in the stratigraphic record all over the country. It is also possible that a sequence of historical events may leave no traces in the stratigraphic record at all. Or it may be the case that the stratigraphic traces which were originally left behind by events have been eroded by natural forces or destroyed by later stratigraphic processes. It seems most likely that, in excavating strata of the land of Israel at the time of the Conquest or settlement, all of these possibilities will be found as each site yields its own stratigraphic sequence. The archaeologists must therefore contend with the fact that the inference of historical events—invasion of Canaan first by Israelites, then by Philistines, for example—is far from self-evident or self-explanatory from a stratigraphic standpoint. Again, the archaeological evidence does not dictate the historical "story" that can be told from it. (Brandfon 1987: 27, 28, emphasis in the original)

A possible solution to the lack of Late Bronze Age walls is the one posited by Kenyon that the LBII inhabitants of Jericho may have the walls of the MBII city (1979: 208). While her suggestion is possible, it is equally possible that the Jericho that the Israelites attacked had walls that were a single line of unbaked mudbricks or were composed of a small circle of mud-brick houses built side to side for the purpose of containing animals. Such ephemeral appendages would almost surely have been lost to the ravages of time, especially with 600 years of open erosion before settlement of a new village in the Iron Age. Such modest works would be easily lost in time, if that village was inhabited for only a short time before it was attacked and abandoned.

Wright wrote.

The Jericho of Joshua's day may have been little more than a fort. It was the first victory in Western Palestine for the invaders, however, and the memory of the great city that once stood there undoubtedly influenced the manner in which the event was later related. (1979b: 80)

Note that even though Wright himself is suggesting some allowance for the Jericho story, he too wrote about the "great city." It is this very unsupportive assumption that makes the Jericho (and the other Book of Joshua) stories disagree with the archaeological record.
Just because Jericho (or Ai, etc.) is identified as a "city" does not imply more than what the ancient people called a city. Since we are part of A.D. 20th-century Western civilization, we cannot help but interpret the word "city" with certain assumptions. Note how Barkay places the emphasis on our (meaning modern readers) interpretation of city. "We tend to define cities as large sites, well fortified, where the building density is greater than in sites termed villages. In biblical times, however, any place built by royal initiative or housing a representative of the central authority, even a small site or isolated fort, was called a city ('ir)" (1992: 329). Although Barkay has reference to the Ir2-3 period, his words seem even more applicable for earlier, less politically structured periods, when a local power was not in control. A city (or king) was what the ancients considered a city/king, not what modern readers interpret.

Consider that Shishak referred to the Arad fortress as a "city" or "town" in his list of "cities" conquered (Breasted 1988 IV: 711, 716), while the Iron Age fortress at Arad was never larger than 50 X 55 m (Aharoni 1993: 82). Unless we can recreate with exactitude the meaning of the biblical writers' words, we must allow the widest possibility of meaning to the details of the stories of the Book of Joshua. Otherwise, we may be only transposing A.D. 20th-century expectations, while thinking we are interpreting the Book of Joshua.

The Limits of Archaeology

In the argument about which is more reliable—archaeology or the Bible—Miller did not overstate his case too much when he wrote,

Moreover, I am not at all convinced that analyzing an ancient text in terms of source, form and traditio-historical criticism is any more or less subjective than excavating a five-meter square on a tell. Both tasks involve carefully worked-out procedures designed to insure objectivity; yet both require judgmental decisions at almost every step of the way. Were it possible for different archaeological teams to re-excavate the same five-meter square again and again over the period of a century, and if the director did not always have the final word in the excavation reports, the pattern of general agreement with secondary differences probably would be about the same as it is with literary critical research. (1983: 124; 1982: 213)
While I am more sympathetic to archaeology than is Miller, one cannot overstress the point that archaeology, even if done in the most scientific manner, will always remain art. This "art" is limited by the amount of information. Schoville has estimated that only about 30 of over 5,000 archaeological sites have been excavated (1982: 157). Certainly, since "almost 98 percent of the major ruins of Palestine remain untouched by an expedition," archaeologists should be tentative about final conclusions (Schoville 1982: 157). Even with site identification, archaeologists and biblical scholars assume much more than the evidence dictates (Franken 1976: 6, 7).

Caution especially should be used when few reliable historical underpinnings are available. Of the Irl period Mazar concludes,

Yet, the archaeological record is anonymous, and its use to prove any historical theory must be accompanied by a rigorous critical approach to the archaeological material itself. Archaeologists tend to determine precise dates of destruction, for example, on relatively flimsy evidence. In the discussion of the Israelite conquest it would therefore be best to treat the archaeological evidence with circumspection and to avoid basing far-reaching conclusions on it. (1992: 285)

Miller also worried over accidental finds and how they relate to the archaeological process:

A basic problem with the second principle—correlation between the stratigraphy of a ruin and the history of an ancient city as confirming evidence for a site identification—is that such correlation may be accidental. Generally these correlations are rather loose, and of course two or more sites in the same general vicinity can have similar occupational patterns. (1983: 121)

Miller's comments are even more applicable to the issue of verifying specific events that are sought in excavation results.

The subjectivity to which he refers in most cases remains small; yet, there is some truth to Miller's comments. On the other hand, the greatest level of subjectivity arises within the levels of nonevidence.

In 1968, S. Horn began excavations at Tell Hesban. Although I believe that archaeologically he was well ahead of his time, reading his reports makes it clear that among the other goals of the project was discovering the city of Sihon the Amorite
After five seasons, no significant evidence of Late Bronze Age materials was found at Tell Hesban. As Geraty wrote,

The only substantive non-correlating data appear to be the biblical allusions to the date, nature, and location of Sihon’s Amorite capital, and the archaeological evidence that human occupation at Tell Hesban did not antedate ca. 1200 B.C. (Geraty 1983a: 242)

The unusual turn in Geraty’s article is that he is willing to probe a broad-ranging list of options as to what the nonevidence of Tell Hesban means. He lists eight possible explanations and ends by admitting that he is completely happy with none.

By reading through his suggestions it becomes apparent that critical biblical "schools" will favor one option: those who traditionally favor conservative trends will favor another, and so on. What Geraty has tried to do is introduce the reader to the spectrum of possibilities. The primary weakness of archaeology is not so much the skill of the archaeologist or the limited exposure of the tell. It is the inability of non-evidence to give us any direction. Archaeology stops with what an archaeologist finds. Beyond that lies speculation.

In the current archaeological paradigm, the Bible and all written records are on trial subject to disproving not only by evidence, but also by nonevidence. Such a methodology is untenable since, as noted above, archaeological data are incomplete, collected in various uncontrolled environments, and subject to accidental and unusual finds.

Does Archaeology Prove the Bible?

The real meaning of the dilemma, when archaeology and a Bible story do not seem to support each other, is that the archaeological evidence found, as interpreted, does not mesh with the biblical account, as interpreted (de Vaux 1970: 69, 70). Miller
wanted to conclude that the Book of Joshua is wrong in its story of Ai, and for one to
suggest that either or both sets of data be altered is to introduce a "looseness in objec-
tive controls" (1977: 90). Miller's conclusions are reasonable, but not necessarily cor-
correct. Most often one thinks of "proving" the Bible as an apologetic tool (de Vaux
1970: 68). On the other hand, the process of "proving" the Bible works in two direc-
tions. Miller would be surprised and vigorously deny this accusation but, in truth, he
has given voice to a generation of archaeologists determined to "prove" that the Bible
stories are true (or conversely, false). This endeavor has absolute confidence in the
unwritten premise that people thousands of years after an event can read a story of that
event, written by those who had absolutely no interest in, or intention of, providing
clues of discovery of that event, and clearly predict what kind and amount of artifactual
data will be recovered that will confirm or disprove the account.

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the ancient event for which evi-
dence is sought is not of some major architectural feature that took years to build, but
as in the case of Ai (Joshua 8), is an event that happened in one day, and of what
specific deed done, we have no knowledge. The problem is that there is a gap between
the historical text and the archaeological data (Herr 1983: 28). This gap is what
Franken called the missing "straight link" between the two (1976: 4).

As Brandfon described the situation, scholars have misunderstood the nature of
archaeological data, falsely assuming that archaeology is somehow more scientific than
biblical studies. This misunderstanding is based on the correspondence theory, which
supposes that there is no difference between what is found and the description of what
is found (1987: 36). When one comprehends that the description of the archaeological
data is a theory, then the dilemma between the Book of Joshua and archaeology is not
so severe. The correspondence theory confuses theory with fact and, thus, confuses
itself with "truthfulness." An alternative to the correspondence theory is the coherence
theory, which "defines truth not as the relationship of statements to facts but as the
relationship of statements to each other. . . . The criterion for truth becomes intelligibility and not verifiability through external checkpoints" (Brandfon 1987: 35). Such a change in philosophy puts the archaeological and biblical data in a clearer relationship.

A good many Syro-Palestinian archaeologists no longer claim that their excavations prove or disprove biblical events. Instead, archaeological evidence has been shown to have a wide variety of applications to the study of the past, none of which involve verifying biblical or other historical statements. Rather than claiming that the excavated evidence corresponds to biblical or other statements about the past, archaeologists have claimed that their discoveries may be understood as a context for biblical history, that is a matrix of data into which historical statements may fit. (Brandfon 1987: 36)

Archaeology is a helpful tool that can greatly help the biblical scholar better understand the background of the Bible stories (e.g., the Philistines, T. Dothan 1982). It can on occasion provide an external verification of individuals (e.g., Baruch, Avigad 1986: 28, 29; Mesha, ANET 320, 321; David, Biran and Naveh 1993: 93). Finally, archaeology can provide houses and temples and cities (including their defensive features) where biblical characters can live (Kempinski and Reich 1992; Biran 1981). On the other hand, as Miller himself has suggested, archaeologists think archaeology can do more than it really can (1989: 154; Franken 1976: 10).

The one area where archaeology is least helpful is with events. Events are usually short-lived and when described in the Bible, enough detailed information is never provided that would be of any help to the archaeologist (Geraty 1983b: 30). The reason for this is that the biblical writers used stories not for historical purposes, but for religious purposes. The biblical writers saw history as the working out of YHWH's plans and purposes. Even when events did not go as YHWH promised, the results were seen as the working out of His will. This "theological perspective" (Schовилле 1982: 154) caused the biblical writers to interpret historical events as theological events and to record them for theological purposes with theology as their primary emphasis.
"Theological perspective" says nothing about truthfulness. It only refers to viewpoint, selectivity, and detail.

The biblical writers were not writing so that centuries later modern researchers could prove or disprove what they wrote. They subjectively selected events and subjectively described those events to demonstrate their point of view. Even then, they only provided the barest of details, because they were uninterested in those details. They were interested in their message.

The biblical writers recorded "redemptive" history (what de Vaux called "sacred history," 1970: 69). This means that an event that may have had little political significance to a secular observer may be presented as extremely important in the Bible. Of course, the opposite is likewise true. Individuals who were very important politically or were involved in important events may receive little or no biblical press.

Ahab is a good example of the biblical religious bias that I am describing. W. Thiel presented a good illustration.

The portrait of Ahab and his dynasty (the "House of Ahab") has been negatively distorted in the OT tradition primarily because of his religious policies which were seen as a danger to the traditional worship of God in circles loyal to Yahweh. His skillful foreign policies, which provided Israel with strength, security and prosperity, which safeguarded peace and the balance of power, and which finally, contributed to the (temporary) containment of Assyrian expansionism, may be inferred from the few sources that yield reliable historical data.

However, his contributions in this regard were ignored in the decidedly theological perspective of the OT witnesses. (Thiel 1992: 103)

This is true even though, as Thiel argued, Ahab was not altogether in opposition to YHWH (he named his sons Ahaziah and Jehoram, which have "Ya" elements, and was "Ahab's way of demonstrating his attachment to the God of Israel," Thiel 1992: 102). Yet, the biblical writers for their purposes paint Ahab as the model for rebellion against YHWH.

As to events, the biblical writers chose not only those they deemed helpful for their message, they also limited their recording of the events to those parts that met their objective. The entire episode of the actual destruction of Ai is presented in three
Hebrew words: יָמַּס הָאִ־ו אָוֹרָו ("And Joshua burned Ai," Josh 8:28). This story does not tell us that the gate was destroyed. It does not tell us how much of the site was burned. It does not tell us that any specific building on the site was destroyed. It does not even inform us that there was a building on the site. For all we know, those living at יָמַּס were living among the ruins of the previous Middle Bronze Age city, and the fire set burned the grass that covered its surface. After all, its name "the ruin" (Heb. יָמַּס) might have been a literal description.

As Miller suggested about Coote and Whitelam (Miller 1991: 96), those who think archaeology has disproved any Bible story are wrong. What archaeology has really proven is that the Sunday-school picture of the Bible events is wrong. Biblical scholars can be thankful to archaeology that they have been forced to reevaluate the way they have interpreted the text. Were it not for archaeology, biblical scholars would still be mindlessly teaching that there were millions of Israelites, that they came into Canaan like the WWII Normandy Beach invasion, and captured cities the size of New York. Dever rightly called this process of archaeology bringing the Bible to the real world of the past (Dever 1974: 28). None of these concepts came from the Bible. They were brought to the Bible. Disproving any or all of these features does not hint at the reliability of the Bible.

On the other hand, even with the adjustments biblical scholars have already undertaken, the Bible is still the Sunday-school book. If we do not find what our Sunday schools suggested, we are tempted to assume that nothing occurred and we must turn to source-critical answers for the problems.

We should listen more closely to the biblical writers and give them greater leeway in telling their story. The theological elements of the early Israelite stories should be considered separately from the events themselves. Writes Kitchen,

In accepting the basic framework of the history in the transmitted image, we pass (or should pass) no judgment on the theological viewpoint of the ancient authors any more than on other ancient writers who also cite from their particular view-
points (as in Assyria, Egypt, and anywhere else in the biblical world). (1993: 49)

At the same time, scholars, whose duty it is to search for understanding, should not let personal biases dissuade them from all possible sources of information, even when thought to be based on scientific principles. Gottwald was correct when he said, "The very patterns of our thinking about Israel have been imbued with religiosity, or with its defensive counterpart, anti-religiosity" (1985: 5).

The biblical writers have provided a theological history. Archaeology cannot determine the trustworthiness of theology or, as Dever wrote, "create or destroy faith" (1974: 42). De Vaux made the same point this way: "This spiritual truth can neither be proven nor contradicted, nor can it be confirmed or invalidated by the material discoveries of archaeology" (1970: 68). It is precisely at this level where those who think archaeology has disproved the Bible live in a Sunday-school world. Where I would disagree with de Vaux is that I do not believe one can separate the spiritual message from the historical message, since the historical message was chosen by the spiritual message. They are inseparably linked by that selection process.

Kamp and Yoffee have spoken for the essence of this position.

All classes of archaeological data (including texts) are complementary; none may be examined as if explanations of the interrelations among sociocultural phenomena may be generated directly from materials that have been recovered in the present. Rather, the task is to model the behavior that produced these surviving remnants in a coherent pattern so that data that have not survived may also be logically deduced. (1980: 85, 86)

All evidence of archaeology and the Bible must be coalesced to arrive at any proximity of understanding of the past. To allow archaeology to rule over the biblical stories or textual criticism to rule over archaeology, or for either of them to ignore the thematic purposes of the biblical writers is to talk long and miss much (none of which are new problems, F. Kenyon 1940: 17).

Dever has placed the debate about the relationship of archaeology and the Bible in its proper perspective and has also spoken to the heart of the point I make in this work:
"The failure was that of those biblical scholars and historians who were asking the wrong questions of archaeology" (Dever 1995: 63). To ask archaeology the wrong questions (i.e., to prove or disprove events mentioned in the Bible) forces it to provide answers about the text that it cannot possibly provide. Neither archaeology nor the Bible are specific enough to provide answers about those questions.

One cannot disprove literary evidence by nonevidence (the not finding of archaeological support) and one cannot concretely support Bible stories with non-specific archaeological finds. The most one can say about archaeology and the Bible is that, if an excavation does not provide evidence of a building phase at the time a biblical story supposedly took place, one should not only reexamine the archaeological interpretation but also review the biblical story to see if unnecessary baggage (in the form of preconceived ideas) has unnecessarily burdened the story and archaeology.

The Story of Archaeology and the Bible

Archaeologists recover what they find, but they have no way of interpreting their finds as an ancient person might. In a sense they find "silent history," meaning that an object or architectural feature does not interpret itself. With a greater or lesser amount of correctness, archaeologists give it meaning. They have no way of knowing what, if any, religious meaning there was to the events that produced the discoveries. What this says is that modern archaeologists and ancient writers produce information in two different spheres of reality. These "spheres" may or may not cross, depending solely on accident. (In the rare times they do cross it should be considered a miracle.) So it is that an ancient writer might see a particular event as extremely important for his/her "redemptive history" purposes (e.g., the conquest of a city), but the actual physical evidence or the size of the city or the event itself, judged by an observer with different motives, might be so insignificant (e.g., the city might have given up with minimal resistance or the "city" might have been little more than a few houses linked together)
that archaeologists, if they found evidence of the event, might see no significance in the evidence. If remains were detected, the small amount of the evidence might still cause them to doubt the story's veracity. On the other hand, the truthfulness of a story is dependent on the aims and understandings of the ancient writers, not the quantity or quality of material remains. This is so because events seen as "redemptive history" have everything to do with the understanding of the event and nothing to do with the archaeological remnants (i.e., destruction layers) resulting from the event.

As was shown above, the Book of Joshua does not project universal conquest or settlement. The battles that it does describe are selected to demonstrate the purposes of the biblical writers. This means that they might not have been colossal events to a secular historian, but to the writers they were extremely important. As we have seen above, there is evidence that it is difficult to find corroborating conquest evidence, even when we know for certain that a conquest occurred. How much more difficult might it be to recover evidence, when those who recorded those events selectively recorded the information?

The problem from Albright's and Noth's time to the present is that those who have framed models have worked from a modern pattern of reality ("When was this passage really written? Where was it really written? What does the archaeology say about the settlement? Who were the Israelites?" etc., as determined by modern interpreters), while the ancient biblical writers worked from the basis of their belief. To come to some basic understanding of the Israelite conquest and settlement, we must go to the text first so we can see what they believed before we can begin to criticize their beliefs.

My suggestion is to allow the Book of Joshua the widest latitude in meaning, not forcing preconceived ideas upon its words, but allowing it to run its course in explanation. Unfortunately, a number of preconceived ideas hinder such a consideration. One of those ideas is that the "Deuteronomist History" was written late in an attempt to pro-
duce unity in the time of Josiah. There is nothing intrinsically improbable about an attempt to forge a religious and cultural unity by collecting stories under the threat of Philistine advance or other earlier threats.

In the past, readers of the Bible have expected too much from archaeology and too much from the biblical record. Archaeology is the scattered collection of what has been found, while the Bible is the scattered record of what fit the biblical writers' theological purposes. Rarely should one expect that these two agendas would intersect. When they do, scholars and the general public might applaud, but such intersections should not be expected often.

Some blame the Bible for its weakness, while others blame archaeology for its limitations. Real blame lies in false expectations. That archaeology and the Bible will regularly interact is based on an unrealistic "prove the Bible" expectation. Even those who discount the Bible stories because of archaeological data are still working in a "prove the Bible mode," except that they have maintained an equally improper activity from a different starting point and they may tend toward a "disprove the Bible" direction. They likewise have not realized that archaeology and the Bible provide different information, which is largely incomparable and most often elusive. Information from the Bible and archaeology is parallel, not perpendicular; it supplements/complements, but rarely intersects. We must go beyond a "prove the Bible" (or "disprove") synthesis in order for true understanding to emerge.

In the end the relationship between the Bible and archaeology is fluid, not static. Both can help us better understand the other, but neither can, nor should, be used as a guide to the other. They must live separately and be blended and amended together cautiously.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: ARCHAEOLOGY, THE BOOK OF JOSHUA, AND THE ISRAELITE CONQUEST AND SETTLEMENT

The Problem and Setting

One of the most controversial issues in archaeological and biblical studies is when and how Israel became a distinct people. Most scholars believe that Israel emerged around the end of LBII. This conclusion has been reached because the LBII/Ir1 transition witnessed wide-ranging destructions followed by an increased population that is evident in numerous newly founded settlements. In the area where most of the biblical stories of the early Israelites transpired, the hill country, sites exhibit several unique features. These features include a low level of planning with very few sites having fortifications. Ir1 sites also exhibit numerous cisterns and silos/pits and four-room houses. Their ceramics repertoire features a high percentage of collared-rim jars.

At the same time that these sites were being settled, the Philistines were also settling on the coast. Their arrival during Ir1 is testified to by both literary and archaeological evidence.

Many see that the most significant chronological locator of the Israelites, Merneptah's stele, also points to Ir1 as the time when Israel was recognized as an independent people. This is due to Merneptah's specific claim that he had conquered Israel. If he conquered them, they had to have been there.

Finally, some have pointed to the Bible, especially Exod 1:11, as evidence that Israel's Exodus from Egypt occurred from Egypt during the reign of Ramesses II. This
conclusion has been reached because of the mention of the city of Ramesses in that verse.

From these six lines of evidence (wide-ranging LBII/Irl destructions, new Irl settlements, unique characteristics of Irl hill-country sites, settlement of the Philistines, Merneptah’s stele, and Exod 1:11), five theories have been developed to explain the emergence of Israel during Irl. Each theory presents its own view of these evidences.

The Story of the Theories

Albright's Conquest Theory attempted to support the traditional Judeo-Christian interpretation of the Book of Joshua, that the Israelites came to Canaan and took the land by force. The destructions of the LBII/Irl transition period were associated with the Book of Joshua conquest. In time, scholars became aware that the LBII/Irl destructions occurred over a much wider arena than the Canaanite hill country. In addition, at some sites where the Bible said the Israelites brought destruction, no evidence was found for those destructions, while at other sites not mentioned in the text, destructions were found. The failure of the Conquest Theory to explain adequately both the biblical story and the archaeological data has undermined, in many minds, any historical claims of the Bible.

The theory of Alt/Noth that the Israelites came into the land over a long period of time, and quietly settled in areas outside normal Egyptian control, has been criticized because it made no accounting for the LBII/Irl transition destructions. Actually, neither archaeology nor the Bible was a significant foundation for the Peaceful Migration theory. Other ideas, like an Israelite tribal Amphictyony, have also been criticized as unsubstantiated by the text or archaeology. While Alt's/Noth's suggestions have been seen as innovative, they did not provide enough testable evidence since the theory was not produced by the data. The idea of a peaceful infiltration forces itself on both archaeology and the Bible.
Mendenhall and Gottwald suggested an innovative model that saw the Israelites as oppressed serfs who rebelled against their overlords. For them, the existence of the Israelites resulted from a localized social phenomenon. By drawing tight definitions from words like "Apiru, ethnicity, and nomads, Mendenhall/Gottwald attempted to redefine the definition of "Israelite." While interesting for a while, it has become apparent that the Peasants' Revolt Theory does not find significant support in the Bible or archaeology or the ancient Near East.

Finkelstein, Coote, Whitelam, and others have attempted to use archaeology to the fullest. They have seen the LBII/Irl transition period as the force that created the Israelites. Pressures from the loss of trade and/or the innovations of plastered cisterns, terracing, and the arrival of iron in Canaan have all been suggested as causal affects that produced the people of the Bible. Those who speak for the LBII/Irl Transition Theory have said that their theories were independent of the Bible and were seeking a more scientific way of explaining the emergence of the Israelites. Still the LBII/Irl Transition Theory owes more to the Bible than its proponents have either acknowledged or been aware. The major weakness of the LBII/Irl Transition Theory is, however, that it provides no serious mechanism for the creation of Israel. The pressures of a transition have never before or afterwards produced a people like Israel, which makes the suggestion that it happened this time doubtful.

The Imagination Theory, represented by Thompson, has returned the scholarly discussions to the 19th-century-style criticism (Dever 1995: 65). For this theory weather is the most dominant force affecting the archaeological data. The various transition periods, especially LBII/Irl, have suffered from drought. These drought conditions have resulted in the upsets seen in the archaeological patterns. The Israelites (and Philistines) were the invention of the hill-country residents of the Persian period. In an attempt to develop community, they collected a haphazard group of stories that have been mistaken as a chronological work of history. Since information about
ancient weather is difficult to assess and few archaeologists are competent to evaluate the data, the Imagination Theory waits to be judged more completely when that information has been more fully analyzed. Still Thompson's suspicions about archaeology and the Bible mean that his theory is built more on his own imagination than on any objective data, while evidence such as the Tell Dan inscription and Merneptah's stele falsifies its claims.

None of these theories has provided a satisfactory answer to the question of how Israel came into possession of the promised land. This has led me into new territories. I agreed with Lemche that "a fundamentally new approach to the study of Israelite history and religion is more needed now than at any time in the past" (1990: 7). I sought that approach by first revisiting the Book of Joshua.

The Book of Joshua

In this study we discovered that the traditional interpretation of the Book of Joshua suggests that it is about the Israelite conquest of Canaan. On the other hand, we discovered that the Book of Joshua provides very little information about the destruction of any of the cities mentioned in its stories. The most specific information it provides is that the walls of Jericho fell and the cities of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor were burned.

The archaeology of sites mentioned in the Book of Joshua also is not very helpful. Jericho has had several phases of excavations. Those considered the most seminal were those conducted by K. Kenyon. She found no Late Bronze Age walls or any destruction evidence from the Late Bronze Age period. Ai is generally assumed to be the archaeological site of et-Tell. The work there by Callaway found nothing from the Late Bronze Age settlement. The location of Makkedah is unknown. Deir-ed-Dibbân, Tell es-Šafi, and Khirbet Beit Maqdûm and Khirbet el-Qom have all been suggested as its location. None of them has produced any archaeological data that are story-specific
to the Book of Joshua. The modern identity of Libnah is thought to be Tell eš-Šafi, Tell Bornat, or Tell Judeideh. Nothing found at any of these sites helps one better understand the stories of the Book of Joshua.

There is a unanimous agreement that Tell ed-Duweir is Lachish. While it was destroyed about 1200 B.C., nothing found in that destruction or at any other level of the site can be specifically related to the Israelites. The identity of Eglon is uncertain. Both Tell el-Hesi and Tell ‘Aitun have been suggested as candidates. Tell el-Hesi did have some type of Late Bronze Age settlement, but its nature is unclear, since the more recent excavators did not reach those earlier periods. Tell ‘Aitun itself has not been excavated, but tombs nearby have produced Late Bronze Age materials. At neither Tell el-Hesi nor Tell ‘Aitun has any specific information been obtained relating to the Israelites in Canaan. Hebron (Tel Hebron) has produced very little information and nothing specific to the Book of Joshua. Tell Beit Mirsim, because of the suggestion by Albright, has been the leading candidate for Debir. A recent reevaluation has cast some doubt on that identification. A more recent suggestion has been Khirbet Rabûd. Tell Beit Mirsim did have a Late Bronze Age settlement with a destruction at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Tell Rabûd seems also to have had a Late Bronze Age settlement. At neither site was any specific information found that would identify the site or clarify anything about the early Israelites.

Hazor had a large settlement in its lower city during the Late Bronze Age. In addition, two levels of destruction were found. Both could be related to the Israelites, but nothing specific was found at Hazor that could be clearly identified with the Israelites. The identity of Madon and Shimron is uncertain. It is likely that Achshaph should be associated with Tell Keisan. Excavators found Late Bronze Age strata and sherds at Tell Keisan, but the nature of the site is not clear. Nothing specific to the Israelites or their settlement was found there.
In conclusion, there is nothing that specifically supports or disputes the stories of the Book of Joshua, except that at Tell es-Sultan and et-Tell no evidence of LBII destructions was found. This dilemma likewise suggests that we should return to the Book of Joshua to see if the assumption that the theme of the book is conquest is correct, or if, perhaps, there might be another message to the book.

A renewed reading of the book has convinced me that its true overarching theme answers many questions that are raised by the false theme of conquest. I have suggested that the Book of Joshua is not about conquest but really about confirmation of faith. The point of the biblical writers is that when Israel came to Canaan YHWH was with them.

The confirmation events are divided into two sections. Confirmations by symbolism are those episodes that demonstrated (to the biblical writers) in a symbolic way YHWH's presence. The war events that so many see as the theme of the Book of Joshua are really demonstrations of YHWH's presence by powerful acts (confirmations by power). This included the three military campaigns, the list of kings defeated, and the division of the land.

The latter half of the Book of Joshua (the results of the confirmation events) lets the reader know, in the briefest of ways, about how things went after the confirmation events. In other words, the readers are provided a picture of the earliest struggles of the Israelites to gain land. The basic message is that life was a struggle and did not go too well. The latter half of the Book of Joshua is a glimpse of the difficult, real process of settlement.

To establish the reliability of my proposed outline, I asked a series of questions of the Book of Joshua. Its answers supported my suggested outline. I discovered that the idea that the Book of Joshua is a report of an Israelite-completed conquest is not true. The Israelites claimed the land but did not possess it. Their battles against those already in the land were probably decided in the first few minutes: when the local
people found that they were losing, they ran away. Very few defenders were killed. Even at that, the biblical writers justified their activities of conquest by saying that they were doing only what YHWH ordered and also by suggesting that they conquered only illegitimate squatters.

I also discovered that the biblical writers make plain that the early Israelites actually took possession of very little land. During most of the Book of Joshua, they resided at Gilgal. Eventually, they gained a small territory centered on Shiloh, which spread to Shechem.

Besides archaeology, which has been said to disprove the Book of Joshua because evidence of LBII destructions was not found at Jericho and Ai (etc.), and the false assumption that the Book of Joshua is about conquest, a number of other issues have caused scholars to consider the Book of Joshua unreliable. I discovered that there is nothing in the Book of Joshua that suggests that the Israelites were "massive" in size. In fact, it gives no numerical suggestion as to what their population size might have been.

There is a difference between settlement and presence. That which caused Israel to settle were the forces that arose from the demise of Egypt as an international power. About the time the Philistines arrived the Egyptians began to seriously decline. With the absence of the Egyptians, local petty kingdoms could and did emerge. The Israelites were one of those powers, but that does not mean that they received their identity at the same time. They could only be visible then. The Merneptah stele is the strongest of evidences that the Israelites had identity before the end of the Late Bronze Age. The pressures of the Philistines moving into the unknown land of the hill country forced the Israelites to organize and fight back.

I think the most likely motivational force that kept the Israelites together was their monotheistic religion. It was probably that same religion that kept them as outsiders and eventually gave them the name of Hebrews (שָׁפִּיר). While a religion
focused on YHWH was their hub, the biblical writers pointed to distant ancestors as the origin of their belief and relationship.

These discoveries about the Book of Joshua caused me to question the relationship between archaeology and the Bible. One of the primary problems until this time is that, while archaeology has found nothing to discount any aspect of any story found in the Book of Joshua, it is nonevidence that has produced the façade of disagreement between archaeology and the Bible. By not finding something, archaeologists consider that they have proved something. Nonevidence is not the same as evidence. Other conquests, whose histories have never been questioned, have been investigated for evidence of destructions. The lack of evidence among those sites should cause all archaeologists to question the use of nonevidence.

Archaeologists have tended to bring to sites (thought to have biblical connections) Sunday-school assumptions about what should be there. These assumptions have caused archaeologists to expect huge cities, with major fortifications, when the biblical writers make no such claims.

Finally, I have suggested that while archaeology is helpful in gaining background information, it is not so helpful with information about events. The events of the Bible are recorded from a "redemptive" point of view, which means their significance was primarily in the mind of the biblical writer, and not necessarily significant to an unbiased observer. and certainly not to a modern investigator.

What then can be said about the Israelites according to the biblical writers and archaeology based on what has been learned? The following highlights what we have learned.

The Story of the Book of Joshua

Sometime before the end of the 13th century a loosely banded tribal group migrated into the Cisjordan hill country. The group became associated with the appel-
lation of ʿApiru (it may be that these people arrived during the upheavals of the Amarna period when the ʿApiru were especially active); in any case, their association with that name implies that they remained outsiders from a large part of Canaanite culture. These "Hebrew" people were also known as the "Israelites."

There is nothing in the Book of Joshua that suggests that the Israelites were more than to be numbered in the thousands. As new comers, they made a series of surprise attacks throughout Canaan. During those raids they did not directly acquire land, but they did chase many of the inhabitants from their cities and, more importantly to the biblical writers, they established YHWH as a superior God in the minds of the local inhabitants. These initial victories convinced the biblical writers that the land belonged to the Israelites and was given to them by God. At that time the hill country was mostly a "no man's land" outside of Egypt's direct control. It was in this region that the Israelites were able to carve out spotty settlements scattered throughout the territory. On the other hand, some of the hill country and all of the lowlands remained under the control of others. Most likely, many of these people were later adopted into Israel.

According to the Book of Judges, after the Israelites had gained a small portion of land, they fought as often among themselves as with others. Their historiographers saw their tenuous unity founded on their belief in a monotheistic religion, which they believed they gained from their forefathers.

Such are the stories of the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges. Nothing within the archaeological data so far collected discounts such a story.

The Book of Joshua's stories give the impression of historical reality. For example, while the theme of the book has been traditionally interpreted to be the conquest of the whole land, the Book of Joshua actually shows that the entire land was not conquered. Admissions that expressly limit the size of Israel's conquest, given the Book of Joshua's theme, suggest that its biblical writers maintained an accurate perspective in
their writing, while remaining true to their purposes of proclaiming the confirmation acts of YHWH. What benefit could authors of the Babylonian or Hellenistic periods receive by inventing the conquest story, then limiting the extent of that conquest? Other glitches in the conquest story (Joshua 7) only confirm suspicions of its reliability. True, there are divine supernatural elements that some scholars find objectionable (e.g., Josh 5:12-14), but these inclusions do not prove that the stories that contain them are contrived, only that those who recorded them believed that God was supernaturally working for the Israelites in their conquest of the land.

The text of the Book of Joshua, as we have received it, reveals that those who wrote it believed its stories and were willing to record even those stories that did not reach the ideal they were propounding.

Another too-seldom-considered aspect in this discussion is what the biblical writers of the Book of Joshua were not trying to do. They were not writing for 20th-century archaeologists or biblical scholars; they were writing for people of their own times. They did not write in such a way that later archaeologists could "prove" their stories true; they were writing about what they believed was true. In addition, they were not writing about the events as objective eyewitnesses; they recorded them as they saw them for their purposes. In other words, the biblical writers did not attempt to write "history"; they wrote what I have called "redemptive history."

Especially when it concerned warfare, ancient people saw in the results "divine" involvement. The war stories in the Book of Joshua are presented from the point of view that God always wins and His people cannot lose if they are faithful to Him. As with other peoples of ancient Near East, "warfare . . . is mostly presented in terms of religious ideology" (Garthoff 1988: 23). The purpose, then, of the Book of Joshua is not so much to reveal a sequence of causal events, as to bolster faith in YHWH.

I hope my study will redirect some of the discussions regarding the Israelite settlement and the Book of Joshua. If nothing else, I hope this work stimulates the
debate on the usefulness of the Book of Joshua in the consideration of the Israelite conquest and settlement.
APPENDIX A

BOLING'S OUTLINE OF THE

BOOK OF JOSHUA
APPENDIX A*

Boling’s Outline of the Book of Joshua


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   c. Crossing the Jordan (3:1-4:18)
   d. Encampment at Gilgal (4:19-5:12)
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*All outlines in APPENDICES A-J follow the original author's format and numbering.
APPENDIX B

BOLING & WRIGHT'S OUTLINE
OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

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APPENDIX B

Boling & Wright's Outline of the Book of Joshua


THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

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THE BOOK OF JOSHUA STATEMENTS ABOUT THE TOTALITY OF CANAANITE DESTRUCTIONS
Appendix L

The Book of Joshua Statements about the Totality of Canaanite Destrucions*

Josh 6:21 "And they utterly destroyed everything in the city [Jericho], both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword."

Josh 10:28 "He utterly destroyed it [Makkedah] and its king with the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it. He left no survivor."

Josh 10:30 "He struck it [Libnah] and every person who was in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor in it."

Josh 10:32 "And struck it [Lachish] and every person who was in it with the edge of the sword."

Josh 10:33 "And Joshua defeated him [Horam king of Gezer] and his people until he had left him no survivor."

Josh 10:35 "And struck it [Eglon] with the edge of the sword; and he utterly destroyed that day every person who was in it."

Josh 10:37 "And struck it [Hebron] and its king and all its cities and all the persons who were in it with the edge of the sword. He left no survivor... and he utterly destroyed it and every person who was in it."
Josh 10: 39 "The struck them [Debir] with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person who was in it. He left no survivor."

Josh 10:40 "Thus Joshua struck all the land . . . . He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed."

Josh 11:8 "They struck them [Hazor coalition] until no survivor was left to them."

Josh 11:14 "But they struck every man [Hazor coalition] with the edge of the sword, until they had destroyed them. They left no one who breathed."

Josh 11:17 "And he [Joshua] captured all their kings [Hazor coalition] and struck them down and put them to death."

Josh 11:21 "Joshua utterly destroyed them [Anakim] with their cities."

*English translation from the New American Standard Bible. Only the portion of the verses that speak to destruction is included in this summary.*
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