
**ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE REALITY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL:
CONVERGENCES BETWEEN BIBLICAL AND
EXTRA-BIBLICAL SOURCES FOR THE
MONARCHIC PERIOD**

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Problem

Many scholars cast doubt on the historicity of the events in the Pentateuch and this skepticism has now been extended to the period of the judges, the united monarchy of Solomon and David, and sometimes beyond. There is a group of academics that maintain that the entire Hebrew Bible is a creation of the Late Persian-Hellenistic period in which no reliable history can be found. However, very few of these have seriously taken the archaeological evidence (including relevant material culture and ancient Near Eastern texts) into account. Does this evidence support such a late date for the composition of the Hebrew Bible or an early date, as traditionally believed? Does the text better reflect the social, cultural, and historical reality of pre- or post-exilic Israel? Can the Hebrew Bible be used as a reliable source for the history of Israel and Judah during the pre-exilic period?

Method

This study approaches the subject by looking at the material culture and ancient Near Eastern texts independently from the Bible and at the Bible independently of extra-biblical evidence, focusing specifically on the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. Within each chapter, an analysis of selected biblical texts relevant to the pre-exilic period was made, then tested, by comparing them with the archaeological correlates pertaining to the pre- and post-exilic periods to determine convergences between biblical and extra-biblical sources.

Conclusions

This study has shown that in a variety of aspects, the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings reflect the social, cultural, and historical reality of the period it professes to describe, that is, the Iron Age I and II, pertaining to the pre-exilic period. Therefore, it would seem that Samuel and Kings can be used as a reliable source concerning the social history of Israel and Judah during the pre-exilic period.