guiding principles in regard to keeping the Sabbath, which in turn are based on three general principles: (1) “Sabbath is a special vacation” (2) during which “we strengthen our ties with God” and (3) “strengthen our ties with God’s family and with ours” (160). The first of Colón’s fifteen guiding principles describes Sabbath preparation. The Personhood of God is grounded on God as Preparer. He prepared, for example, the home of Eden and the Plan of Salvation. Sanctifying, remembering, worshiping, basking, responding, and trusting are based on the second general principle: strengthening our ties with God on the Sabbath day. Fellowshipping, affirming, serving, and caring are based on the third general principle: strengthening our ties with one another during the Sabbath.

In chapter 4, Colón describes a three-part “Test of Truth” for establishing guidelines for Sabbath activities. She notes two important points in regard to Sabbath-keeping practices: they are not chosen at random, and they are based on the character of God. Posed in this way, the guiding principles function as filters, moving from the character of God to specific guidelines for Sabbath-keeping.

Having established the ground upon which Sabbath-keeping principles are built, Colón shares “practical” ideas on how to apply the principles (51). In chapter 11, for example, she applies the principles to situations that could possibly pose a difficulty for biblical Sabbath-keeping and tries to find a solution that best fits with the true meaning of keeping the Sabbath holy. She reminds the reader that it may not always be possible to reduce a Sabbath-keeping situation to an equation of rational principles to be solved. Certain situations essentially revolve around trusting God against all common sense, leaving the consequences to him.

Although this book contains refreshing insights that contribute to positive Sabbath-keeping experiences for both the beginning and experienced Sabbath-keeper, it seems that Colón attempts too large an agenda for one book—partly scholarly, partly Bible study, and partly a practical guidebook filled with detailed metaphors and personal stories. These varying writing styles lend a somewhat repetitive character to the content of the book. Nevertheless, the essential points and differing perspectives invite reflection about the why and how of one’s own Sabbath-keeping practices and the guiding principles behind them. This criticism aside, How to Keep the Sabbath adds a positive contribution to the discussion concerning the keeping of the Sabbath. Due to its partly storytelling character, this book lends itself well to the seminar-type setting.

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*The Quest for the Historical Israel* is the result of a series of lectures delivered in 2005 at the Sixth Biennial Colloquium of the International Institute for
Secular Humanistic Judaism by two leading archaeologists, Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar. In many respects, these scholars share many similarities: they are professors in the most important Israeli institutes of archaeology (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem); both have excavated many sites and are now supervising strategic digs (Megiddo, the Beth-Shean Valley Archaeological Project); the former is renowned for the book he coauthored with Neil Silbermann (The Bible Unearthed [New York: Touchstone, 2002]); the latter published a classic handbook for students in archaeology (Archaeology of the Land of the Bible [New York: Doubleday, 1992]). In spite of these similarities, they have, nevertheless, been strong opponents during the last decade in one of the most important debates in Syro-Palestinian archaeology. The argument began when Finkelstein made a new proposal regarding Iron Age chronology. It is against this background that they were asked to deliver their own historical syntheses in this colloquium.

After a general introduction concerning the relationship between archaeology and the Bible when writing history (Part 1), this series of lectures addresses most of the periods in the history of Israel: the Patriarchs, the Exodus, and the Conquest (Part 2); the origins of Israel (Part 3); the tenth century (Part 4); and the Divided Monarchy (Part 5). The last section (Part 6) consists of conclusions. Each part follows the same threefold pattern: a brief summary of the section by Brian B. Schmidt, followed by Finkelstein’s and Mazar’s respective chapters. The scope of the book is obviously ambitious and provides a unique opportunity to hear from competent archaeologists in a vivid and clear manner about a large range of subjects. In this respect, the present volume knows no equivalent.

With regard to the second millennium B.C.E., Finkelstein dates the composition of the narratives on the Patriarchs and on the Exodus, devoid of historical value, to the late monarchic period, while Mazar admits that they retain (very) limited memories of actual practices and events. Although both dismiss the historicity of an Israelite Conquest, the former explains the origins of Israel by a process of sedentarization, whereas the latter tries to combine various theories. The most interesting chapters deal with the epoch of David and Solomon, in which Finkelstein and Mazar respectively advocate a “low chronology” and a “conventional modified chronology.” In particular, Mazar still adheres to the concept of a United Monarchy and believes that Yigael Yadin was correct about the Solomonic architecture at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer. Despite a strong disagreement on the development of Judah in the ninth century, the differences diminish between the two scholars concerning the Divided Monarchy. Their contributions on it are interestingly complementary.

Overall, the contributions are well written, and the reading proves to be flowing and fascinating. One admires the clarity with which the authors succeed in presenting so many subjects in short chapters (especially Finkelstein, who is always brilliant in explaining his ideas for a general public). The flip side of the coin, however, is that there are some inherent limits to this book, so that readers should not expect to find in it what it does not offer.
First, strictly speaking and contrary to the subtitle, this book does not provide a real debate. This is rather a juxtaposition of parallel personal syntheses on similar subjects. Ideally, it would have been extremely interesting to provoke an interactive discussion, or to let the two scholars write rejoinders. At the least, the short chapters written by Brian B. Schmidt could have provided the opportunity to compare their lines of argument, but he is content to sum up their lectures, which is not really indispensable since the contributions are themselves short and clear. Moreover, due to their original context, the chapters contain no technical details or apparatus (there are neither foot- nor endnotes, but only a general bibliography).

Another difficulty, which is admittedly unavoidable, lies in the bipartite structure of the presentations, which could give the reader the impression that both Iron Age chronologies advocated here are on the same level with regard to their plausibility. The scholarly publications in the field indicate rather that a majority of archaeologists still reject the proposal made by Finkelstein, who faces what he himself labels as the “Finkelstein stands alone” argument (I. Finkelstein, “A Low Chronology Update,” in The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating, ed. T. E. Levy and T. Higham [London: Equinox, 2005], 38-39).

Moreover, while the authors are authorities in archaeology, their expertise on textual data is naturally limited, which is problematic since they make numerous decisions on the texts in their historical reconstruction. As for the Pentateuch, Finkelstein is still using the documentary hypothesis and speaking of the Elohist document (17, 47), which will look somewhat outdated to most scholars. He paradoxically repeats the “Albrightian” reading of the book of Joshua, according to which numerous cities are supposed to have been destroyed during the Settlement (61), whereas this biblical book mentions only three burned towns (Jericho, Ai, and Hazor). Furthermore, he considers 1 Kgs 9.15 as Dtr, although a majority of commentators treat it as a pre-Dtr, annalistic verse. His contention that the description of Goliath reflects Hoplite armor of the seventh century (19) is interesting, but debatable (see, e.g., A. Millard, “The Armor of Goliath,” in Exploring the Longue Durée, ed. J. D. Schloen [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009], 337-343).

More importantly, both authors reproduce the widely repeated statement that the real starting point of the compilation of biblical texts is the eighth century B.C.E. (more precisely, the end of it for Finkelstein, 19-20). As a result, the more one looks back in time from this period, the less the depiction of the events by the biblical authors can be accurate. According to Finkelstein, “archaeology demonstrates” (!) that neither “J,” “E,” nor the written sources of the Deuternomistic History can date from the tenth century (17). On one hand, to put into writing such large compositions would require an urban society with a high level of knowledge and the spread of literacy among the elite, in the capital and the countryside alike (17). On the other hand, “over a century of archaeological investigations in Judah has failed to reveal any meaningful scribal activity before the late-eighth century” (112). However, both points prove to be largely disputable. With regard to the former, as A. Lemaire proposes, “with the same arguments, one would demonstrate that
the El-Amarna letters sent from Jerusalem by Abdi-Hepa could not exist!”
("Review of T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi, and C. Nihan, eds., Introduction à l’Ancien Testament," RBL. September 2005 [www.bookreviews.org]; cf. N. Na’aman, “The Contribution of the Amarna Letters to the Debate on Jerusalem’s Political Position in the Tenth Century B.C.E.,” BASOR 304 [1996]: 21). As for the second argument, in addition to recently published inscriptions (Tel Zayit abecedary, Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracon) dated to the tenth century and stemming from the border region of Judah, the discovery of ten seals and 170 fragments of bullae, which sealed papyri in the city of David, assigned by the excavators to the beginning of the eighth century or even to the end of the ninth century, make it outdated (R. Reich, E. Shukron, and O. Lernau, “Recent Discoveries in the City of David,” IEJ 57 [2007], 153-169). Furthermore, as Mazar correctly points out (135), most of the writing materials (e.g., papyri) were perishable. He acknowledges the existence of archives in the early monarchy (35), but seems to exclude larger redactions for the very reason that he felt obliged, as “an outsider in textual research,” to choose between several current hypotheses among exegetes about the redactional history of the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History (29). Nevertheless, strictly speaking, we simply have no means to measure the extent and the nature of the documents that disappeared, so that the existence of books in the early monarchic period cannot be easily dismissed (cf. A. Millard, “Books in Ancient Israel,” in D’Ougarit à Jérusalem, ed. C. Roche [Paris: De Boccard, 2008], 255-264). Significantly, the last peer-reviewed article to date on the redaction of the books of Samuel assigned it a composition in the tenth century (M. Garshiel, “The Book of Samuel: Its Composition, Structure and Significance as a Historiographical Source,” Journal of Hebrew Scriptures 10 [2010] [www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article_133.pdf]). In any case, rather than taking into account the lack of knowledge on the material data, both Finkelstein and Mazar adopt a relatively precise terminus à quo for the biblical writings: the former on questionable archaeological presuppositions, and the latter because he feels obliged to take a stand on the issue of diachronic theories. This, it should be emphasized, largely determines the way they use the biblical texts as historiographical sources.

This book will no doubt be useful to various kinds of readers, providing they are aware of its limits. Scholars and students will enjoy reading the opinions of two distinguished archaeologists on many aspects of the history of ancient Israel. The general public will discover a pleasant, readable book summarizing what two specialists think on these subjects, but should be forewarned that they are authorities only on archaeological matters and that their historical reconstructions involve options about the textual sources that are debatable.

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