

The History and Archaeology of the Book of Joshua and the Conquest/Settlement Period

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There is a major debate raging in academia concerning the topic of this essay. New approaches to history, archaeology and biblical studies are all bringing into question the older interpretations of the Book of Joshua.

1. History

These new approaches focus especially on questions concerning the very definition of history, the materials that can be used in constructing a history, and the relationship between history and the actual events of the past. Further there are deep philosophical issues concerning whether one has a single history of the past, “what actually happened,” or many histories, the multifaceted interpretations of the past. An analogy to this history issue is the early history of our nation. I was taught in high school and college a traditional history:

that America was settled by Europeans, some seeking religious freedom, others seeking commercial gain, or just a chance to own their own land. After a series of conflicts, British colonies dominated America, pushed continually westward into the interior, the frontier, fought the Indians and established America. The colonists then fought the British to gain their independence. The issue of slavery became a major concern; it led to conflict between northern industrial states where slavery was not common and southern agricultural states where slave labor was crucial for plantation life. A major civil war was fought; slavery was abolished and the foundation of modern America was now secure. Basically the Indians were presented, consciously or unconsciously as uncivilized and barbaric, as were the African slaves.

Now multiple histories are provided. I give just two examples. Native Americans take great pride in their culture and history. I learn that Native American tribes had strong civilizations with long and varied histories. I learn of major cities, if not empires, built well before European settlers arrived. I also learn of numerous treaties imposed by European settlers on the Native Americans, always encroaching more and more on Native American “space,” only to be broken again and again by those same Europeans. I learn that many of the Native American cultures were decimated by diseases brought by Europeans for which the Native Americans had no immunity. Which is the correct history, the European or the Native American?

I also read of African-American history. I am made aware of ancient African empires, of tribal groups fighting, and some tribal groups cooperating with European merchants by selling their captured enemies as slaves. I learn of the horrendous conditions on slave ships, where a high percentage of slaves never survived the trip, of the slave markets, of families broken apart at the whim, or financial need, of the slave owner, of the many slave offspring sired by slaveowners, and especially of the slaves forced to repress all their cultural history, language and customs (including religion) to follow European culture.

Now which history is the correct one? The traditional Eurocentric history? The Native American history? or the African-American history? To press the issue slightly more, all three of these “histories” most likely reflect a male perspective. What of a feminist reading of history? Which history actually happened? Is history the recounting of the major political events, or the personal as well? Is history the record of the victorious, or of the defeated,

victimized and oppressed as well? Do we have to include all these views to have a true and full accounting of history? I take the position that multiple histories can be written, representing different perspectives, of the same events in the past, and that each may reflect truth.ⁱ

Even the definition of history and historiography is a matter of debate. One definition is provided by Edwin Yamauchi:

“History is the study of what people have done and said and thought in the past History involves primarily the interpretation of textual accounts supplemented by contemporary inscriptions and other materials recovered by archaeology.”ⁱⁱ

He makes clear in his discussion that textual accounts are primary in history. Furthermore, he acknowledges that “history revolves around two poles, the past and the writer’s present,”ⁱⁱⁱ citing John Dewey. While he acknowledges that many earlier historians were not conscious of the latter, he feels that many modern-day historians, and especially ones dealing with the biblical period, are weak on the former, “Unfortunately some scholars overemphasize the writer’s circumstances so as almost to eliminate the possibility of any meaningful recovery of the past.”^{iv}

As a positive example Yamauchi cites Hallo who says, “history begins where writing begins.”^v Now Hallo’s quote matches the common view that there can only be history where there are literary remains. (The title of a well-known book also shares that view--*History Begins at Sumer*.^{vi}) If we follow that view, then our history books must begin only at the time we have writing, and limit any earlier studies to pre-history. Further, this view assumes that there can be no history of a particular area until we have either literacy in the area, or reports about that area from another source.^{vii}

Regardless of the definition of history one adopts, all would agree that these literary remains in and of themselves are *some* of the artifacts of history. And unlike many other

artifacts, these have a literate voice, they tell a story or record an event, etc. However, like every other artifact, they must be interpreted. But even here the issue is not as simple as it might seem. If ancient cultures recorded their past not using the genre of historiography, but instead using the genres of myth or epic, are we to dismiss all the material as non-historical? Likewise, if an ancient culture records its past in a religious/theological narrative genre, are we to dismiss all the material as non-historical? I will take the position in this essay that one may indeed find historical material within a variety of genres whether they are historiography or not.^{viii}

2. Archaeology

When I entered seminary in 1965, Biblical Archaeology as a discipline was at its height. In reference to Joshua, there was still the feeling that archaeology could affirm the historical reliability of the Conquest narratives. Although I was made aware of problem sites such as Ai and Jericho where the archaeological evidence was negative, there was nevertheless strong feeling that archaeology for the most part had confirmed the biblical narrative. At the height of this positivistic approach, G. Ernest Wright could say :

The evidence for the destruction suffered by Bethel, Lachish, and other cities during the 13th century certainly suggests that a campaign such as that depicted in Josh. 10 was carried out. It was in this period that a portion at least of the later nation of Israel gained entrance to Palestine.^{ix}

And J. A. Thompson is even more positive in his comments:

Little will be said about the period of Israel's settlement in western Palestine. The Bible pictures two main phases of the operations carried out by Joshua during the conquest. There was one campaign in the south and one in the north. In the south such towns as Jericho, Ai, Lachish, Debir, Eglon, and Libnah were

taken and destroyed. Archaeological work has been done in nearly all of these, and insofar as there is a consistent picture anywhere, it would seem that there was considerable destruction in these towns about 1250 B.C. . . . ^x

Certainly one must be aware that the archaeological record is not as simple nor as straightforward as Wright might have thought,^{xi} and Thompson was clearly dealing with outdated evidence even in his 1972 revision. Nevertheless, the idea was clearly evident that archaeology was doing a great job of confirming the basic historicity of the biblical text to confute the proponents of the literary approaches.

Dr. Joseph A. Callaway of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary became involved in Biblical Archaeology as a practitioner in 1960, training under both G. Ernest Wright and Kathleen Kenyon, the leading American and British archaeologists respectively. When he undertook his own excavation beginning in 1964, he chose Ai in part because the earlier excavation there had not been published well due to the untimely death of Judith Marquet-Krause, the original excavator.^{xii} But he also hoped to find the evidence at Ai to support the biblical narrative:

I came on the scene in May 1964 when the site was given a third time to archaeologists [the two earlier being John Garstang's soundings in 1928, and secondly Judith Marquet-Krause's excavations from 1933 to 1936], and I must admit that I entertained notions of bridging the widening gulf between the biblical accounts in Joshua 7-8 and the actual evidence of the ruin itself ^{xiii}

However, his excavations only supported Marquet-Krause's earlier conclusions that Ai had been uninhabited at the dates proposed for Joshua's conquest--both the generally accepted date of 1250-1200 B.C. and the earlier date of 1400 B.C.:

"The village appears from present evidence to have been unfortified, and occupation seems to have been interrupted by periodic abandonment, not violent destruction. Nothing in the present evidence warrants an identification of the village with the city of `Ai captured by Joshua as described in Joshua 8:1-29."^{xiv}

In his faculty address at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary given the same year I entered seminary, Dr. Callaway spoke of “the Emerging Role of Biblical Archaeology.”^{xv} In that address he called Biblical Archaeology, “probably the most exciting new development in the study of the Bible since World War II.”^{xvi} Matters have changed drastically since 1965. Today many would discount Biblical Archaeology as a discipline, preferring completely to separate the discipline of archaeology from biblical studies. Even in Israel, a former bastion of the Biblical Archaeology movement, one sees this separation. Hear these words from a standard textbook on the archaeology of ancient Israel:

The origin of the people of Israel is one of the most controversial subjects in the field of biblical history. Highly divergent views have been expressed, from fundamentalist views that remain faithful to biblical tradition, seeing the stories of the patriarchs, the bondage in Egypt, the deliverance from Egypt, and the conquest of Canaan as reflections of true historical developments, to diametrically opposed views that deny the historicity of those narratives, seeing them as late literary traditions, and prefer alternative reconstructions of the beginnings of Israel . . .

The subject as a whole is fraught with methodological difficulties, for the silent archaeological evidence may always be interpreted in more ways than one. The destruction layer of a Canaanite town mentioned in the conquest cycle in the book of Joshua may be considered illustrative of the story told in those chapters, but it may also be explained in a different manner.^{xvii}

A major concern in both archaeological and historical studies has been and continues to be how well and accurately textual or literary remains record the past events they describe. Specifically, how accurately does the biblical account in Joshua and Judges record the actual events. Archaeology is relatively mute on the specifics; it certainly has not, and probably cannot, uncover for us evidence of Joshua or Sisera or Barak. History claims to have more evidence on past events. But how accurately did ancient historians record events from prior times, or even from their own times? And were the biblical writers trying to produce a history

or a theological account or some other genre?

I would argue that archaeology is a legitimate component of history. I would further argue that it has a place alongside of literary remains—a distinct place, but not necessarily a lesser place. Further I would remind us that the archaeological record, the evidences of the material culture, is often the only data we have on which to base our understanding.

3. Archaeological and Historical “Readings” of the Book of Joshua

Back to the topic of this essay, the Book of Joshua has been the topic of discussion for over a century based on the historical issues it poses. The traditional view of the book as a straightforward account of the actual events of conquest have been called into question both on literary and on archaeological/historical grounds.

A. The Biblical Account

The simplest interpretation (and a standard traditional view) of the Book of Joshua had assumed that the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua crossed over the Jordan River (Joshua 3:1-4:13), set up a camp at Gilgal (Josh 4:19-24), and from there launched a series of concentrated attacks that resulted in the complete and total conquest of all the land of Canaan (Josh 6-11). All the land was taken by the forces of All Israel (Josh 10:40-43; 11:16-23). The Canaanites were all destroyed (except for the Gibeonites who by a ruse entered into a covenant arrangement with Israel and became perpetual slaves of Israel—drawers of water and hewers of wood). The war was conducted by means of a series of nearly blitzkrieg type attacks, and was

swiftly concluded. Chapter 11 indicates that Israel's victory was total and complete: All the land was conquered.

However, even a close reading of the text indicates that this simplistic understanding is not the only one known by ancient Israel. The Book of Judges indicates clearly that Israel did not capture and occupy *all* the land (Judg. 1:1-3:6). Furthermore, Judges seems to indicate that much of the land taken was not captured in a single series of campaigns in a blitzkrieg fashion. The battles were undertaken instead by individual tribes, or smaller groups of tribes. As one example, Judges 1 specifically says Judah and Simeon went up against the Canaanites in Judah's territory (1:3-20). Clearly, the Book of Judges depicts Canaanites still living in the land, and even offers a theological understanding for this fact: God left the Canaanites in the land; Israel was unable to expel or destroy all the Canaanites because of Israel's sin. (Judg. 2:1-6; 3:1-6)

Even the Book of Joshua indicates something of the same scenario. Despite such statements as Joshua 11 that all the land had been conquered, other passages in Joshua show that the land was *NOT* all conquered. Joshua 13:1-6; 15:63; 16:10; 17:11-18, etc., relate that the coastal plain was not taken; nor was the lowland heartland of Canaan around the Jezreel valley—the region of Megiddo, Taanach, Beth-Shean, etc. Even more telling is the statement that Jerusalem was not taken at that time (Josh. 15:63)

So what are we to make of the Joshua account of conquest? What does the archaeological and historical record suggest? What models are suggested today in the study of Joshua? Let's consider several of these issues, and attempt to draw some conclusions.

B. The Date of Exodus-Conquest/Settlement.

The first issue to consider is the date of Exodus-Conquest/Settlement. An older

traditional date for Exodus was 1440 B.C. This date was derived largely by dating backwards from the date ascribed to the building of the Solomonic temple (dated to ca. 960 B.C.) as recorded in 1 Kings 6:1. That text states that the temple was built in the 480th year after the Exodus. Simple math would place the Exodus at ca. 1440 B.C. The conquest then would have taken place about 1400 B.C. Several pieces of evidence seemed to fit with this date relatively well. The rise of Joseph to prominence in Egypt could be explained as related to the Hyksos rule, a period when foreigners dominated Egypt, and ruled from Lower Egypt—a relative rarity in Egyptian history. The Hyksos ruled Egypt for 150-200 years until ca. 1550 B.C. Likewise the new king who knew not Joseph (Exod. 1: 8) could be fitted into the expulsion of the Hyksos about 1550 B.C. and the restoration of native Egyptian rule. Oppression of the Hebrews would fit quite well into a pattern of retribution on a group of foreigners who had been powerful under the hated foreign rulers. Even early 20th century archaeological data seemed to support this date. John Garstang in his excavation of Jericho in the 1930s dated a particularly impressive destruction level to ca. 1400 B.C. and described this as evidence of Joshua's conquest.

But the older date for Exodus was challenged, especially beginning in the 1930s. W.F. Albright, the leading American Biblical Archaeologist proposed a new dating scheme which placed the Exodus at ca. 1290 B.C. and Conquest at 1250-1200 B.C. His dating was based on the archaeological evidence he was unearthing from Palestine and a better understanding of the archaeology of the region. Several of the sites excavated showed a destruction level at the 1250-1200 B.C. time frame. This destruction also seemed consistently to mark the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Albright, Wright, Bright and others who adopted this dating scheme, saw this transition as an indicator of the entry of the Hebrews into the land under Joshua's leadership.^{xviii} In addition they began to note certain features they associated

with the appearance of the Israelites in Canaan: a distinctive new architectural structure, the four room house, and a distinctive new pottery form, the collar rim jar.^{xix} The archaeological and historical evidence all seemed to support this later date, and the 1290 B.C. date virtually eclipsed the 1440 B.C. date for the Exodus..

Today, both these dates are still proposed in the literature. Most scholars who place any historical and archaeological reliability on the text of Joshua prefer the Albright dates for conquest. But in the past decade or so, there has been some resurgence of the earlier date. John Bimson is one of the major proponents of the earlier date. To make his approach work, Bimson redates the end of Middle Bronze Age from ca.1550 B.C. to ca. 1400 B.C.^{xx} However Bimson provides little archaeological evidence for his approach, and he has convinced relatively few people. Other scholars, mainly among evangelical Protestants, support the earlier date without agreeing with Bimson's redating.^{xxi} But most American and Israeli archaeologists and historians who speak of a historical conquest support the 1290 B.C. date for the Exodus. As Bill Dever says:

Only one thing is certain, and that is that the scant Egyptian evidence at least points unanimously to a 13th century B.C. *date* for an Israelite "exodus," if any.^{xxii}

C. Archaeological and Historical Issues.

What are the archaeological and historical issues? Put in a nutshell, the archaeological evidence has produced some evidence that seems to support the Conquest model, but has conflicting evidence at several key sites. The Book of Joshua describes the capture and destruction of key sites such as Jericho, Ai, Debir, Lachish, Hazor, etc. by the Israelites. Excavations at Lachish in the 1930s produced strong evidence for a destruction in the general time frame of 1250-1200 B.C.^{xxiii} Albright, excavating at Tell Beit Mirsim (which he identified

as biblical Debir) likewise found a major destruction layer at that time period. The prime evidence, used as a textbook case study is Hazor. First excavated by Yigael Yadin in the 1950s and reexcavated in an on-going work by Amnon Ben-Tor, this site has produced clear evidence of a massive destruction and subsequent burning at the end of the 13th century B.C., just at the time suggested by the Albright model and in agreement with the biblical description in Joshua 10. Ben-Tor adduces additional evidence, especially the absence of any evidence of Philistine presence at Hazor and destruction of Egyptian and Canaanite figurines, to argue that only the Israelites could have destroyed Hazor.^{xxiv}

Nevertheless, the more excavations that were undertaken, the more serious problems emerged from the evidence. Clearly, a number sites were destroyed at this time. But the sites give no evidence of being destroyed at the same time. Indeed the destruction layers seem to have been spread over at least half a century, perhaps even more. Certainly this is no evidence of a blitzkrieg assault. But even more disturbing were the sites that did NOT produce evidence of a 13th century destruction. While Garstang was excavating at Jericho, a French archaeologist, Judith Marquet-Krause excavated at the site of et-Tell, biblical Ai. She not only failed to find evidence of a 13th century destruction, she found that Ai lay abandoned from about 2400 B.C. until about 1200 B.C.^{xxv} Then when Kathleen Kenyon reexcavated Jericho in the 1950s using meticulous stratigraphic methodology, she found that Garstang's destruction layer was actually a Middle Bronze destruction dating to ca. 1560 B.C.^{xxvi} far too early for the time of Joshua, regardless of the dates proposed for the Conquest. She also found that Jericho lay abandoned through much of the Late Bronze Age, with only a small settlement existing from ca. 1400-1300 B.C., perhaps reusing Middle Bronze Age walls, but more likely an unwalled settlement. Only a few burials gave additional evidence of any permanent settlement at that time.^{xxvii}

So how does one explain the lack of evidence from Jericho, Ai and other sites? Well, some try to say we are simply excavating at the wrong sites or that the archaeologists simply goofed.^{xxviii}^{xxix} Later excavators have tried to say Kenyon missed the Late Bronze evidence, though they have found no more evidence than she did. Or they have suggested that the evidence should be lacking, because the destruction was so complete (however, they miss the point that other sites leave a good record of the destruction—see Hazor above), or that the evidence has eroded off the site.^{xxx} None of these explanations really works well. For Ai, the most common explanation has been that the wrong site was excavated.^{xxxi} Joseph A. Callaway reexcavated Ai in the late 1960s and 1970s, to try and find evidence of Joshua’s conquest. His work only reinforced the earlier work of Marquet-Krause. As part of his excavation project, Callaway conducted a survey of all the archaeological sites in the vicinity, conducting soundings at several likely ones, but found no other possible site for Ai. I must add at this juncture that a new excavation was begun in 1995 and continued this past summer (1997) by a team at a new site they propose as Ai, Tell el-Maqtar^{xxxii} They base their proposal for the location on the premise that we have misidentified Bethel as well as Ai. If we relocate Bethel, then we can also relocate Ai because the biblical text links the two, locating Ai as being “east of Bethel” (Josh. 7:2). The future acceptance of their work, even if they do locate a site with a destruction layer at the appropriate time frame, will depend on whether their relocation of Bethel provides positive archaeological evidence and is accepted among the scholarly community.

D. Other Models for the Conquest/Settlement Period.

In addition to the traditional model to describe the entry of the Israelites into Canaan, that of rapid conquest of the land, at least two other models with numerous variants have been

proposed.

1. Peaceful Settlement or Infiltration Model

At least as early as the 1920s, a different model to explain the books of Joshua and Judges was being proposed. Largely from the work of the German scholar Albrecht Alt^{xxxiii} and his student Martin Noth,^{xxxiv} a model of gradual settlement was developed. The model argues that the Hebrews settled alongside the Canaanites in a peaceful manner. Basically this model argues that the Hebrews settled where the Canaanites weren't. Since the Canaanites were chiefly agriculturalists, they preferred the fertile valleys and lowlands. The pastoralist Hebrews thus settled in the highlands, in areas less amenable for farming. And apart from minor skirmishes and occasional fights, the two co-existed peacefully for the earliest part of the period of Joshua/Judges. Only at later times, perhaps late in the period of the Judges would there have been conflict between the two groups.

Yohanan Aharoni, an Israeli archaeologist, also promoted this model, based chiefly on his excavations and surveys in the Negev region of Israel. He found here a number of new settlements emerging in the thirteenth B.C., primarily on previously uninhabited sites. These small villages he attributed to the Hebrew tribes gradually settling down.^{xxxv} He uses the term conquest settlements to describe them and states:

This was not a military conquest, but rather, . . . this is a clear picture of penetration into a previously unoccupied region..^{xxxvi}

The newer sociological studies which indicate a continuum between nomadization and sedentarization in this region over the last 5-6 millennia are often cited in support of this model.^{xxxvii} The argument is that during this period near the end of the Late Bronze Age there had been a series of disruptions to urban society. Much of the urban culture was destroyed. The precise cause of these phenomena is debated: some suggest a change in climate and famine,

others suggest an outbreak of pestilence like the Black Death in Europe in the Middle Ages, yet others suggest internal disruption of the urban culture. Nevertheless the result was an increase in nomadization—the abandonment of urban culture for a more rural setting. Then at the beginning of the Iron Age, throughout this region there was a shift toward more sedentarization—a movement back to villages and towns. But this shift began with the establishment of small, usually unwalled settlements in previously uninhabited areas. This model suggests that the Hebrews are among those settlers.

2. Peasant Revolt or Internal Relocation Model.

George Mendenhall^{xxxviii} and Norman Gottwald^{xxxix} are the major proponents of the peasant revolt or internal revolt model for the origins of Israel. According to this model Canaanite peasants disillusioned with the feudal system fled/abandoned the lowlands and settled in the highlands. There they established small villages based on agricultural techniques including terrace farming and plastered cisterns. This model is a sociological reconstruction based on a model of social revolution. Many critiques of this model note the Marxist theoretical basis, especially of Gottwald's approach. Yet others suggest little evidence exists for the social revolution of Mendenhall's model. Several more recent scholars, while rejecting the revolt aspect of this approach do favor an internal origin for Israel within Canaan.^{xl} This variant of the revolt model is often termed the emergence model. I would call it an internal relocation model.

Among the strengths of this model is that it fits aspects of the archaeological record suggesting the settlers in the highlanders were agriculturalists rather than primarily pastoralists. Their settlements were based on agriculture and they used innovative agricultural techniques: terrace farming and plastered cisterns. It is more likely ones already familiar with agriculture

would have developed or used these techniques. Also the basic continuity of pottery from Late Bronze to Iron I would well be explained if the same population were involved.

What we see from these models is that in the arena of ancient Near Eastern history of the Late Bronze/Early Iron periods, the time frame set for Joshua, there are several competing positions. Granted the following is an oversimplification, but it basically summarizes polar positions. Minimalist historians^{xli} state that we know very little if anything of “Israel” during this period. They argue that the biblical account comes from a later period and reflects at worst an invention, at best a reconstruction, from that later period. The biblical account depicts how later, post-exilic Israel described its origin, but does not reflect what actually occurred. Since we have few texts existing from that period, the minimalists argue that we can rely only on archaeological data to reconstruct what actually happened. And because the archaeological record is fragmentary, theoretical models must be used to reconstruct the history. I note the minimalist position particularly in the work of Israelis such as Israel Finkelstein^{xlii}, British historians such as Philip Davies,^{xliii} Americans such as Tommy Thompson^{xliv} (now of the University of Copenhagen), and Scandinavians including Niels Peter Lemche.^{xlv} The maximalist position would hold that the biblical record is an accurate and reliable historical account of what actually occurred. Examples of ones holding a maximalist position include evangelical scholars such as V. Philips Long,^{xlvi} K. A. Kitchen,^{xlvii} and Eugene H. Merrill.^{xlviii} Basically maximalists fit the archaeological record into the biblical account. As one might expect, scholars are positioned all along the spectrum between these two poles of minimalists and maximalists.

4. Positive Biblical/Historical Evidences of the Conquest/Settlement Period

Literary studies, as seen in several essays in this issue of this journal, have indicated that the final compilation of the Deuteronomistic History can be no earlier than the mid-sixth century B.C., the latest date mentioned in 2 Kings.^{xlix} But must we take everything in the Deuteronomistic History as late, because the final compilation was late? I think not. Bill Dever argues the Bible contains many accurate remembrances of earlier times--as early as the Monarchy at least.¹ I agree, but would even argue that we could well have earlier remembrances as well. As mentioned above, the Book of Judges speaks of Philistines being in the land alongside the Canaanites and Hebrews. No scholars have doubts about that--in terms of its facticity for the period of the Judges. As noted above, the Book of Joshua speaks of the land that was not taken (Joshua 13:1-6; 15:63; 16:10; 17:11-18, etc.), and of assimilation of some groups into Israel (the Rahab family [Josh 2 and 6] and the Gibeonites [Josh 10]). And Judges also speaks of the Canaanites remaining in the land. The archaeological data that indicate some sites (such as Shechem and Jerusalem) continuing their Late Bronze culture right down into the Iron Age I basically agrees with this interpretation. So why do so many archaeologists and historians feel they must throw out all the biblical record as unreliable? Granted, there are definitely problems in interpreting the biblical material. Jericho and Ai especially present problems for interpretation. But the same is true of many other ancient historians. I would restate that the genre of historiography was not nearly so rigid during the biblical period as we consider it now. And we must also remember that even we interpret and select and order our histories. We have no such thing as unbiased reporting, even of current events--just listen to TV

anchors and Rush Limbaugh each “report” the same event. Often the difference is radical! The very selection of what is reported and what is not is a bias. Not even a photograph is free of the bias of selection. The framing of a picture, the choice of a wide-angle, normal, or telephoto lens, even the direction the camera points, all influence the final photo, and its “interpretation” of a fact or event. So also does the order of material, its placement, its nuance, and the inflection given in an oral report. Every history has its own bias or perspective or presuppositions.

There are many disputable data concerning the Conquest/Settlement period. And much may never be resolved fully. Nevertheless, I think we clearly have archaeological evidence related to the biblical report that takes us far beyond the minimalist position.

Frank Moore Cross has discussed the various models of the Conquest/Settlement period including the social revolution, settlement and military conquest. He states concerning the conquest model:

The biblical tradition of a systematic, all-encompassing military conquest is, no doubt, much overdrawn, and there are some contradictory elements even in the conquest tradition as we have it in the Bible. But I do not believe that Israel moved into the land without any conflict. Tribal people are almost always by definition warriors as well as keepers of small cattle (chiefly sheep and goats in mixed flocks in this period). And the rapid and aggressive formation of the league must have led to military confrontations.

I am bemused by the fact that, given the widespread evidence of destruction in Canaan at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age, some scholars are inclined to attribute the violence to various people, despite the lack of written records, to almost anyone--except Israel, for whom we have elaborate written records of warfare. The notion of conquest, largely discredited these days, and properly so in the stereotyped, Deuteronomistic version, is not without testimony, archaeological and literary. Israel's premonarchical hymns, “Songs of the Wars of Yahweh,” testify to early wars and conquests.ⁱⁱ

And that is the point. There is such a reticence today to accept the historicity, or facticity of the biblical accounts, precisely because they are biblical. The following are archaeological

evidences that support the biblical accounts of the Conquest/Settlement period:

1. The biblical record speaks of the Philistines in the land at this time. This is confirmed by Egyptian texts and by the archaeological record which clearly indicates evidence of Philistine culture. Especially noteworthy is Philistine pottery found at numerous sites in the southwest of Canaan. The Philistine presence in southwest Canaan, perhaps a part of the larger group known as the Sea Peoples, is indisputable. The biblical record accurately reflects the Philistines and their general location in the SW of Canaan at this time.

2. The heartland of Israel as depicted in the conquest/settlement narratives is the central hill country of Canaan, the highlands west of the Jordan River, from south of Galilee and the Jezreel Valley to the Negev where arid conditions limit permanent settlement. Archaeological surveys have shown a dramatic increase in small villages settled in that region at that time suggesting an influx of new population. While not all the population increase need be related to the arrival of the Hebrews, we are certainly justified in seeing the Hebrews among this new population. Again, the biblical record describes the arrival of the Hebrews at this time, and the archaeological evidence indicates a significant population gain at this time.

3. Some of the Hebrews surely did come out of an Egyptian setting. The simplest explanation for the name “Moses” is of Egyptian derivation. The name contains the same element as the Egyptian *mose* or *meses* = “is born,” in Tutmose and Rameses—Thoth is born, Re/Ra is born.^{lii} “Moses” would be a shortened form of a fuller name or a nickname, like English, “Sonny”=son of. Other names indicating an Egyptian background include are especially noted in Levitical and Aaronite genealogies: “Phinehas,” the name of a grandson of Aaron, is from the Egyptian *Pi-nehase* = “the Nubian.”^{liii} Likewise the names Mereri and Putiel have Egyptian derivation^{liv} as well as expected names such as Joseph’s Egyptian name

(Zaphenath-paneah), and the names of his wife and father-in-law, Asenath and Potiphera (Gen. 41:45).

4. Further, there is the evidence of the Egyptian cities of Rameses [Pi-Ramese, or Pr-Ramese, “House of Rameses”] and Pithom [Pi-`atum, or Pr-`Atum, “House of Atum”] (Exod.1:11). Rameses is probably to be identified with Qantir or Tell ed-Daba` in the northeastern Nile delta region.^{lv} The site was quite extensive during the Ramesside period, including a palace complex, administrative quarters, military installations, and several temples.^{lvi} This site was clearly built/rebuilt at the time of Rameses II, and could match the biblical reference to one of the store cities built by the Hebrew slaves. The location of Pithom is less certain. The two sites most frequently cited are Tell er-Retabeh and Tell el-Maskhutah, both about 20 miles south of Qantir along the Wadi Tumilat. While both of these sites have produced remains from the time of Rameses II, neither has produced conclusive evidence identifying it as Pithom.^{lvii} Nevertheless, these sites, occupied only during limited time periods, were occupied in the 13th century B.C. Again archaeological data is in agreement with the biblical report.

5. Also the sites of Hazor, Lachish,^{lviii} Debir (Kh. Rabud^{lix}), Tell Beit Mirsim, and Bethel (Beitin) were all destroyed during this time [if we allow a half century or more for the destructions, from about 1230 B.C. to about 1175 B.C.]. Now certainly Egypt was trying to reassert some influence over Canaan at this time, and certainly the Philistines were present. But why should we discount the one record which attributes the destruction to a particular group, the Hebrews? We may especially ask that question since the report is our one literary account of the events, the Bible, even if this record is from a later time period. I would argue that we should attribute to the Hebrews the destructions specified by the Old Testament if there is no

conflicting evidence.

6. The Merneptah stele reports an entity, the people of Israel, being in the land of Canaan at the appropriate time, ca. 1207 B.C. This evidence does not necessarily support a conquest model for Israel's entry into the land. But the evidence does show that a recognizable entity "Israel" was in the land at this time. The evidence I refer to is the Merneptah Stele, a victory stele erected by Pharaoh Merneptah, son of and successor to Ramesses II. Merneptah staged a campaign into Canaan in the third year of his reign. Upon his successful completion of that campaign he erected a victory stele commemorating the campaign. Among other areas he destroyed, he reports:

Desolation is for Tehennu; 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;
Everyone who was restless, he has been bound
by the king of Upper and Lower Egypt^{lx}

For Merneptah to include Israel in the list along with the other cities and nations clearly indicates they were a quantity to be dealt with at that time. Further, one would assume that ones who read his stele would recognize some if not all these names. Merneptah probably selected the names he includes, not because it is a complete list, but because it is both a representative list and a recognizable list. Although scholars have debated whether the list represents an itinerary, or a geographical arranging of the names, no one seriously questions the authenticity of Israel among the names. So we can confidently say that at the time of Merneptah's reign, approximately 1207 B.C.^{lxi}, Israel was a recognizable entity in the land of Canaan. This date comports very well with the 1290 B.C. Exodus date, and a date of 1250-1200 B.C. for

conquest/settlement.

Scholars also note that the word Israel in the stele is preceded by a determinative^{lxii} indicating a people. The other place names in the Merneptah stele were preceded by a determinative indicating a land. Some would interpret this difference as indicating that Israel was a recognizable people but not yet possessing a definite land at the time of Merneptah. In any event, the Merneptah stele clearly indicates an entity Israel was present in the land by 1207 B.C. in accord with the biblical account.

5. Conclusion

We are best served by a model of the conquest/settlement period that incorporates the fullest spectra of the biblical, historical and archaeological data. Probably some of the Hebrews did come out of an Egyptian setting as Exodus-Joshua state. Others apparently were Canaanites who allied themselves with the Hebrews as indicated in Joshua 2, 9, etc. Clearly some of the Hebrews settled peaceably in areas previously unoccupied--thus the great increase in small villages in Iron I through much of the land. But just as surely there must have been conflict at times with the Canaanites. Destructions at Hazor, Bethel, Lachish, etc. may well have been at the hand of the Hebrews. Clearly by the time of the Merneptah stele there was an entity known as Israel in the land--I find no good reason to think that Israel was anything other than *our* Israel of the biblical account. In closing, I would concur with Cross' comment:

In short, I prefer a complex explanation of the origins of Israel in the land to any of the simple models now being offered^{lxiii}

ⁱ For an excellent discussion of the issues of historiography in reference to the Deuteronomistic History, the larger body in which the Book of Joshua is found, see Terence E. Fretheim, *Deuteronomistic History*, Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), pp. 26-35. Especially helpful is the non-technical nature of Fretheim's discussion.

ⁱⁱ Edwin Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," in *Faith, History and Tradition*, ed. by A.R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier, and David W. Baker (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), p. 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, p.2

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v *Ibid.* Cited from William A. Hallo, "Biblical History in its Near Eastern Setting," *Scripture in Context*, ed. by C.D. Evans, W.W. Hallo, and J.B. White, (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980), p. 10.

^{vi} Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

^{vii} Yamauchi continues his comments as follows:

"Hallo's numerous studies have shown that men have been interested in recording the past from the very beginning of literate societies. 'Together, they [letters] constitute impressive evidence that, already in Sumerian-speaking times, the great political, military and cultic events of the court were chronicled as they happened.'" Yamauchi, p. 2. Cited from Hallo, "Sumerian Historiography," in *History, Historiography and Interpretation*, eds. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld, (Jerusalem and Leiden: Magnes Press and Brill, 1983), p.20. But this statement does not follow from his quotation of Hallo to support it. Yamauchi says Hallo's studies show men have been interested in recording *the past* from the very beginning of literate societies. I assume Yamauchi really means that people have been interested in recording *their present* from the very beginning. But his statement certainly seems to say from the very beginning, writers were interested in recording *their past*. Here Yamauchi, whether consciously or not, mixes his two poles.

^{viii} This is also the position taken by Terence E. Fretheim, *Deuteronomistic History*, Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), pp. 26-35.

^{ix} G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, abridged ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1971), p.50.

^x J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1972), p. 74.

^{xi} Wright does acknowledge problems: "At the moment we must confess a complete inability to explain the origin of the Jericho tradition." G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, new and revised edn. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p.80.

^{xii} In addition to Judith Marquet-Krause's excavation, John Garstang had also undertaken soundings at et-Tell in the late 1920's. See Callaway, in next note.

^{xiii} Joseph A. Callaway, "Ai (et-Tell): Problem Site for Biblical Archaeologists," in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by Leo Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs, and Gary Lance Johnson (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), p. 90.

^{xiv} Joseph A. Callaway, "The 1964 'Ai (et-Tell) Excavations," *BASOR* 178 (1965), pp. 27-28.

^{xv} Joseph A. Callaway, "The Emerging Role of Biblical Archaeology," *Review and Expositor* 63 (1966), p.200. The address was delivered October 19, 1965.

^{xvi} *Ibid.*

^{xvii} Amihai Mazar, "Early Iron Age," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1992), p. 281. One must also acknowledge that a lot of pejorative language has been used by some writers. I cite Donald Redford as an example: "Such manhandling of the evidence smacks of prestidigitation and numerology; yet it has produced the shaky foundations on which a lamentable number of "histories" of Israel have been written. Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992), p. 260. A footnote on the same page reveals even more pejorative language: "Crypto-orthodox tendencies drive some scholars to ludicrous ends. . . . If some allusions in the Exodus account seem more in keeping with a *flight* of the Israelites, while others point to an *expulsion*, let's have two Exoduses or even more (cf. J.J.[sic] Rowley. . .). It all boggles the mind." *Ibid.*, footnote 11.

^{xviii} W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 109, 112-113; G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, new and revised edn., p. 84; and John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd edn, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 130-133.

^{xix} For example, see Hershel Shanks, "Defining the Problems: Where We Are in the Debate," in Hershel Shanks, William G. Dever, Bruce Halpern, and P. Kyle McCarter, *The Rise of Ancient Israel* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), pp. 8-10

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- ^{xx}J. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, 2nd ed., JSOT Supplement Series 5 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1981).
- ^{xxi} Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 158, and see especially his chapter 8; Bryant Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at Archaeological Evidence," *BAR* vol. xvi, no.2 (March/April 1990), pp. 44-59.
- ^{xxii} William Dever, "Israel, History of (Archaeology and the 'Conquest')," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol 3 H-J, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 547; henceforth *Anchor Bible Dictionary* will be referred to as *ABD*.
- ^{xxiii} The most recent dating of the destruction level at Lachish marking the transition from LB to Iron I is ca. 1150 B.C. too late to be associated with Joshua. See David Ussishkin, "Lachish," *ABD*, vol 4 K-N, , pp. 119-120.
- ^{xxiv} Ben-Tor most fervently argues this position in the video *Biblical Archaeology: From the Ground Down*, written, directed and hosted by Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1996). While Ben-Tor's argument is quite fervent, another scenario could just as well explain the destruction of the figurines. If Canaanites at Hazor are being attacked by Egyptians, they would certainly destroy any Egyptian figurines they possessed. If then the Egyptians defeated and destroyed Hazor, they would (as readily as the Israelites) destroy Canaanite figurines.
- ^{xxv} Joseph A. Callaway, "Ai," *ABD*, vol.1 (A-C), pp. 125-130.
- ^{xxvi} Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 5th edn., (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), p. 208.
- ^{xxvii} Kathleen Kenyon, *Digging Up Jericho* (London: ,1957); see also William G. Dever, "Jericho," *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Watson E. Mills (Macon, GA: Mercer U.P., 1990), p. 439.
- ^{xxviii} Kitchen or Merrill or
- ^{xxix}
- ^{xxx} See Kitchen, p. 63. Even Kenyon notes the heavy erosion at Jericho (*Archaeology in the Holy Land*, pp. 181-182; *Digging Up Jericho*, pp. 170-181).
- ^{xxxi} Kitchen, p. 63.
- ^{xxxii} This project is sponsored by Associates for Biblical Research and is called "The Bethel/Ai Project." The team is directed by Dr. David Livingstone. The project has as its purpose "to provide sponsorship, oversight and publication of research and field work related to the ongoing effort to identify the location of the Biblical cities of Bethel and Ai." This information is drawn from the Associates for Biblical Research website: <http://www.christiananswers.net/abr/abrhome.htm/>
- ^{xxxiii} Albrecht Alt, "The Settlement of the Israelites in Palestine," *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966), pp. 135-169.
- ^{xxxiv} Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 68-84, especially 79-83.
- ^{xxxv} Yohanan Aharoni, *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), pp. 162-172.
- ^{xxxvi} *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- ^{xxxvii} See for example, I. Finkelstein and A Perevolotsky, "Processes of Sedentarization and Nomadization in the History of Sinai and the Negev," *BASOR* 279 (1990), pp. 67-88; I. Finkelstein, "The Emergence of Israel: A Phase in the Cyclic History of Canaan in the Third and Second Millennia B.C.E.," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel*, ed. by Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), pp. 150-178; and I. Finkelstein, "Ethnicity and Origin of the Iron I Settlers in the Highlands of Canaan: Can the Real Israel Stand Up?" *BA* 59 No.4 (1996), pp. 203-209.
- ^{xxxviii} George Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *BA* 25 (1962), pp. 66-87.
- ^{xxxix} Norman Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979).
- ^{xl} Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective*, The Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series, 5 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987), pp. 116-138; Volkmar Fritz, "Conquest or Settlement," *BA* vol 50, no. 2 (June 1987), pp. 84-100. Fritz terms his model a symbiosis hypothesis (p. 98).
- ^{xli} I am unable to ascertain the origin of the terms "minimalist" and "maximalist" in this connection. I find the terms in articles such as Hershel Shanks, Niels Peter Lemche. Thomas Thompson, William Dever, and P. Kyle McCarter, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 23, No.4 (July-August 1977), pp. 26-42. The earliest reference I have found is in William Dever, "Palestine in the Second Millennium BCE: The Archaeological Picture," in *Israelite and Judean History*, ed. by John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 77.
- ^{xlii} Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988).

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- ^{xliii} Philip R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, JSOT Supplement Series 148 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992, 1995).
- ^{xliv} Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People*, Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East, vol. IV (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994).
- ^{xlv} Niels Peter Lemche, *Early Israel*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, vol. xxxvii (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985); and *Ancient Israel*, The Biblical Seminar, 5 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988, 1995).
- ^{xlvi} V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994);
- ^{xlvii} K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1966)
- ^{xlviii} Eugene H. Merrill, *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991).
- ^{xlix} Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOT Supplement Series, 15 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), p. 12. See similarly John Van Seters, *In Search of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale U P, 1983). Especially note Van Seters concluding sentence on p. 362: "Nevertheless, I hope I have demonstrated that the first Israelite historian, and the first known historian in Western civilization truly to deserve this designation was the Deuteronomistic historian."
- ¹ Dever in Shanks, Lemche Thompson, Dever, and McCarter, *BAR* 23, No.4, pp. 33, 36-37. (See fn. 32 for full info).
- ⁱⁱ Hershel Shanks, ed., *Frank Moore Cross: Conversations with a Biblical Scholar* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1994), pp. 23, 25. [Previously published in *Bible Review* 8 No. 4 (1992)].
- ⁱⁱⁱ Dewey M. Beegle, "Moses," *ABD*, vol 4, K-N, p. 911.
- ⁱⁱⁱⁱ William F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 2nd edn (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p.254.
- ^{lv} See Ronald J. Williams, "Egypt and Israel," in *The Legacy of Egypt*, 2nd edn., ed. J. R. Harris (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 262-263.
- ^{lv} See H.G. May, *Oxford Bible Atlas*, 3rd edn, rev. by John Day (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1984), pp. 58-59.
- ^{lvi} Edward F. Wente, "Rameses," *ABD*, vol 5, O-Sh, pp.617-618. See also Dever, "Israel, History of," p. 546.
- ^{lvii} LaMoine F. DeVries, *Cities of the Biblical World*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), p. 125. See also Dever, "Israel, History of," p. 546.
- ^{lviii} Lachish has a destruction level dated to ca. 1200 B.C. followed by a rapid rebuilding. The final Canaanite city was destroyed ca. 1150-1130 B.C and was followed by a gap in settlement of about a century. See David Ussishkin, "Lachish," *ABD*, vol. 4, K-N, pp. 114-126, especially 117-120.
- ^{lix} Moshe Kochavi, "Rabud, Khirbet," in *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, vol. IV, O-Z, ed. by Michael Avi-Yonah and Ephraim Stern (Jerusalem: Massada Press, 1978), p. 995.
- ^{lx} Quoted from John A. Wilson, "Hymn of Victory of Mer-ne-ptah (The 'Israel Stela')," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd edn., ed. by James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U P, 1969), p. 378.
- ^{lxi} Dever gives this date in "Israel, History of," p. 547.
- ^{lxii} A determinative is a sign in Egyptian, Akkadian and several other syllabary-based languages indicating the category of the name. Determinatives may indicate a personal name, deity name, land, river, people, mountain, etc.
- ^{lxiii} Hershel Shanks, ed., *Frank Moore Cross: Conversations with a Biblical Scholar* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1994), p. 25.