

## About Israel's Origins

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## 1. Introduction

“If Jericho be not razed, is our faith in vain?”<sup>1</sup> Kaiser’s question challenges those who firmly hold that the Bible is the holy Word of God, especially since the ‘Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics’ defines the doctrine of inerrancy to imply “that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings ... corresponds to historical fact.”<sup>2</sup> While the believer adheres to the doctrine he at the same time finds himself confronted with remarkable scholarly statements:

Many biblical stories are like *Animal Farm*. They are true, though not historically accurate or factual. They are concerned with proclaiming a message, not with providing us with a chronology of events from the history of Israel...<sup>3</sup>

I propose that we decline to be led by the Biblical account and instead regard it, like other legendary materials, as *essentially ahistorical*, that is, as a source which only exceptionally can be verified by other information (emphasis mine).<sup>4</sup>

We frequently find statements such as these related to our subject of ancient Israel’s origins. The majority denies the Old Testament biblical traditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1987), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus, eds., *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 884; quoted in Garnett H. Reid, “Minimalism and Biblical History,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (October 1998): 406, n. 64.

<sup>3</sup> David R. Ord and Robert B. Coote, *Is the Bible really true?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 33; quoted in Garnett H. Reid, “Minimalism and Biblical History,” 397, n. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Niels P. Lemche, *Early Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 415.

Bimson pinpoints the two main groups of biblical scholarship: “those which assume that Israel entered the land of Canaan from outside, and those (now the majority) which assume that Israel was to a great extent indigenous to Canaan.”<sup>5</sup> The first comprises the infiltration theory as well as the biblical conquest theory; the latter will be described below under ‘Indigenous People.’ In chapter three we try to work out an assessment of the basic arguments in light of what is commonly called evidence, hereby focusing on the Bible as a historical source and on the nature and value of archaeological studies. Our last words at the end of this work will combine the chapters to a rather definite conclusion.

## **2. Theories about Israel’s Origins**

### **a. Infiltration Theory**

“States are the end-product of a development process.”<sup>6</sup> Such a general assumption leads to theories about Israel’s origins from the viewpoint of social science. Anthropologists like Hauer base their position on Robert Carneiro’s ‘circumscription theory’ about state origins in general. *Hauer* further promotes *Alt*’s position who says that nomadic clans infiltrated Canaan over a period of centuries.

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<sup>5</sup> John J. Bimson, “The Origins of Israel in Canaan: An Examination of Recent Theories,” *Themelios* 15 (October 1989): 4.

<sup>6</sup> Christian E. Hauer Jr., “From Alt to Anthropology: The Rise of the Israelite State,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36 (October 1986): 6.

They gradually settled in Palestine and found themselves socially circumscribed by the Philistines. After initially invading the less occupied highlands, expansion to the plains confronted them with the city-states which eventually led to the formation of the Israel state in the time of Saul (~1000 BC).<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, Alt claims as a general accepted fact that the Joshua narrative is not in line with the historical reality.<sup>8</sup> *Noth* follows Alt and rejects the biblical account by way of literary criticism. He also proposes that the Israelites were semi-nomads hungry for land. In his view the formation of the state began in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until about 1100 BC.<sup>9</sup>

#### **b. Indigenous People**

The theories in which Israel is indigenous to Canaan can be roughly divided into the peasant's revolt theory (Mendenhall, Gottwald<sup>10</sup>) and those models that see Israel's origins in semi-nomadic groups of the highlands (Finkelstein, Lemche). Other theories are more complex and include further aspects like economic developments

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<sup>7</sup> See Albrecht Alt, "Die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina," *Grundfragen der Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (München: Beck, 1970): 134; Christian E. Hauer Jr., "From Alt to Anthropology," 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> See Albrecht Alt, "Erwägungen über die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina," *Grundfragen der Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (München: Beck, 1970): 140.

<sup>9</sup> See Martin Noth, *Geschichte Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986): 68, 79.

<sup>10</sup> Gottwald supports and modifies Mendenhall's theory; see Norman K. Gottwald, "The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel: A Response to Hauser and Thompson," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7 (May 1978): 37-52.

(Coote, Whitelam). Similar to Alt and Noth, they all neglect the biblical viewpoint and date the final emergence of Israel to around 1000 BC.

For *Mendenhall* the early Israelites were tribal villagers who rebelled against the oppressive regime of the city-states. The person who withdrew from society and banded together with others to revolt Mendenhall denotes as Hebrew ('Apiru') in view of the Amarna letters. He includes the Exodus narrative into his theory and posits that a rather small group of slave-labour captives escaped from Egypt and brought the Yahwistic faith to Canaan. Loyalty to Yahweh, common identification as oppressed people in need of deliverance and finally the religious bond of the covenant united the tribal groups and exodus people into the one community of Israel.<sup>11</sup> Overall, Mendenhall summarizes that "there was no real conquest of Palestine at all; what happened instead may be termed, from the point of view of the secular historian interested only in socio-political processes, a peasant's revolt against the network of interlocking Canaanite city-states."<sup>12</sup> In his view, the Israel state was finally established with Saul and David.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See George E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *Biblical Archaeologist* 25 (September 1962): 66-87; contra Alan J. Hauser, "Israel's Conquest of Palestine: A Peasant's Rebellion?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7 (May 1978): 10; Hauser rightly emphasises that "there is no trace in the biblical traditions of a massive conversion"; *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> George E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," 73.

<sup>13</sup> See *ibid.*, 75.

*Finkelstein* similarly advocates that mostly settlements of semi-nomads indigenous to Canaan formed Israel. He for the most part argues with the semi-nomadic status of the Israelites preceding the sudden emergence of numerous settlements in the Iron Age I period and combines his claims with a ‘low chronology’ model that sets the period later than conventionally. Most significantly, Finkelstein rejects the Bible as historical document not only in regard to the Patriarch, Exodus and Conquest narratives but even discounts the biblical portrait of the united monarchy under Saul and David as ‘mythical memory of a Golden Age.’ In his view, the emergence of the Israel state is to be dated within Iron Age I or even later.<sup>14</sup> Like Finkelstein *Lemche* sees Israel developing from the semi-nomadic groups in the highlands. He equals them with the ‘Apiru’ of the Amarna letters. Israel was eventually the end-product of a long, evolutionary political process. Lemche particularly claims that the Bible is useless for argumentation.<sup>15</sup>

*Coote* and *Whitelam* synthesize the above described theories. In addition they see a causal connection between a wider movement of economic decline that affected

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<sup>14</sup> See Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Soc., 1988); Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001); a critical evaluation of the latter work is William G. Dever, “Excavating the Hebrew Bible, or Burying It Again?”, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 322 (May 2001): 67-77.

<sup>15</sup> See Niels P. Lemche, *Early Israel*, 411-435.

not only Palestine but also the Mycenaean and Hittite empires as well as Egypt. The decline of inter-regional trade weakened the urban elite and provided the conditions for the emergence of the Israelite community in the hills. Thus in their view Israel's ancestors are mostly rural groups of people indigenous to Canaan who moved from the lowlands to the highlands. A loose confederation of peasants, nomads and bandit groups for economic reasons formed independent villages based on agriculture. The reestablishment of trade and economic revival strengthened their position and eventually led to a closer fusion that culminated in the rise of the Israel state.<sup>16</sup> This approach likewise rejects the biblical record. For them, "the unity of early Israel as seen in the Bible is the invention of state propaganda from a later period."<sup>17</sup>

### **c. Biblical Conquest**

The above presented 'liberal' theories are contrasted by the 'conservative' understanding about the origins of Israel that revolves around the historicity of the biblical narratives and upholds the exodus of Israel out of Egypt as well as the succeeding military conquest of Palestine. While conservative scholars are undivided about the reality of the exodus and conquest, they are split into groups teaching different dates of the events. As we will see, the exodus date also affects the

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<sup>16</sup> See Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitlam, "The Emergence of Israel: Social Transformation and State Formation Following the Decline in Late Bronze Age Trade," *Semeia* 37 (1986): 116-125.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

interpretation of archaeological material and thus the line of argumentation varies. The subject becomes even more complex when the Egyptian chronology is in question, since Israel's history is tightly connected to Egypt's.

*Early date exodus (18<sup>th</sup> dynasty).* The crucial formula for dating the exodus into the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC is found in 1 Kings 6:1 which says about Solomon: "In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, ... he began to build the temple of the LORD." Since Solomon reigned from 971-931 BC and started to build the temple in his fourth year (967 BC), the 480 years minus formula equals a 1447 BC exodus.<sup>18</sup> In addition, 1 Kings 6:1 is complemented by Judges 11:26. Here the judge Jephthah says that Israel occupied the land for three hundred years. A late date exodus (~1290 BC) would impossibly place Jephthah the judge within the united kingdom period.<sup>19</sup> Besides, scholars argue that the time span covered from Exodus to 1 Kings (united monarchy) is longer than just the 300 years implied by a late exodus date. They moreover refer to the generations recorded in 1 Chronicles 6 and say that it fits the early date better than the late date.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Contrary, late date exodus advocates insist that the 480 years are to be interpreted as generations that would equal less than 300 years; see Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Conquest," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (Fall 1990): 197.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 179.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Conquest," 190.

Accordingly, the time for the early exodus is placed in reliance upon the conventional Egyptian chronology within the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty reign of Amenhotep II, successor of Thutmose III. After a 40 years journey through the Sinai desert (cf. Numb 32:13; Deut 2:14), Joshua and his people went for conquest into Palestine around 1400 BC which conventionally is the beginning of the Late Bronze II period. The classification is important to identify the relevant archaeological levels.

*Late date exodus (19<sup>th</sup> dynasty).* A popular scholar who maintains a late date for the exodus is *Kitchen*.<sup>21</sup> His argumentation starts with the relatively late dating of Abraham since in his view Genesis 14 fits best the period 2000-1700 BC.<sup>22</sup> The chaotic circumstances there described point to the time after the Ur III dynasty when the region was broken up into city-states. Kitchen further argues that archaeological studies in Transjordan show a sharp population decline during this period and that the names of the four Eastern kings mentioned in Gen 14:1 would match as well.

If Abraham is dated late, Joseph can well be placed into the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC, since the period of the patriarchs lasted about 215 years. (cf. Gen 12:4; 21:5; 25:26; 47:9) Another 430 years for Israel's sojourn in Egypt carries us to the late exodus date that is set around 1290 BC. (cf. Ex 12:40; Gen 15:13) Following the conventional

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<sup>21</sup> See Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (London: InterVarsity Press, 1966), 57-69.

<sup>22</sup> See *ibid.*, 41ff.

Egyptian chronology, the exodus took place right after the death of Ramesses II who reigned in the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty. After 40 years in the Sinai desert, Joshua's conquest then took place during the Bronze/Iron Age Transition period.

Traditionally the relation of the exodus to the reign of Ramesses II is the standard argument for the late exodus date, assuming that the Israelites built the city Ra'amses for this Pharaoh.<sup>23</sup> (cf. Ex 1:11) The two basic arguments against this interpretation are: (1) According to the Exodus account, the Israelites built the city before Moses was born; Moses was 80 years old at the exodus (cf. Deut 34:7; Numb 32:13), thus they built the city before Ramesses' reign. (2) In Gen 47:11 it is recorded that Joseph's family was settled in the 'district of Rameses' at the beginning of the sojourn. Both points propose that the city or region at that time had another name but was edited into 'Rameses' after the city was named so later. Wilson states that some city names in the Bible are "...such as may well have been substituted for older names in order to make the narration intelligible to the readers of later times."<sup>24</sup> Rameses is now identified with Tell ed-Daba and was called Avaris when it was founded earlier.<sup>25</sup> It should be noted here that the argumentation for the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 57f.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Dick Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Company, 1929), 171; cf. *ibid.*, 174, no.5.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 166, n.1.

exodus is problematic since Avaris was not occupied during the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>26</sup>

*Early date exodus (13<sup>th</sup> dynasty).* Since the three timelines of Egypt, Israel and Archaeology are inevitably interwoven, the whole line of argumentation changes radically once the Egyptian chronology appears to be false. Whereas critical revisions of the conventional theories have already been proposed<sup>27</sup>, *Rohl* pursues this way most consistently in his book 'A Test of Time.'<sup>28</sup> So far the present author did not find compelling arguments to exclude him from discussion.<sup>29</sup>

Like other scholars who defend an early exodus date<sup>30</sup>, *Rohl* first of all argues that the 430 years Israelite sojourn includes the stay in Canaan. He refers to the Septuagint and Samaritan version of Ex 12:40 and also to the historical account of Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XV.2). All include Canaan into the timespan.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> John J. Bimson, "Exodus and Conquest – Myth or Reality? Can Archaeology Provide the Answer?" *Journal of the Ancient Chronology Forum*, vol. 2 (1988): 29; Bimson says the evidence awaits discovery.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. I. Velikovskiy, D. Courville and to some extent J. J. Bimson; Courville is refuted by Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Conquest," 193f.; in regard to Bimson's view see *ibid.*, 194f. and John J. Bimson and David Livingston, "Redating the Exodus," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (September/October 1987), 45ff.; *Rohl* adds to Bimson his radical New Chronology theory.

<sup>28</sup> See David Rohl, *A Test of Time. Volume I: The Bible – From Myth to History* (London: Arrow Books, 1995).

<sup>29</sup> A basic line of argumentation is introduced in the *Appendix*; a useful discussion about the issue is provided by *Bible, History and Archaeology* found at <<http://www.bga.nl/en/discussion/>>.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> David Rohl, *A Test of Time*, 397ff.

Moreover, even Paul the apostle writes that the Law came 430 years after the promise given to Abraham long before Israel's stay in Egypt. (cf. Gal 3:17) Accordingly, if the 430 years sojourn includes Abraham's stay in Canaan, the early exodus date goes also well with Kitchen's late dating of Abraham.

Rohl's differing Egyptian chronology affects the setting of Israel's origins insofar as the early 15<sup>th</sup> century BC date falls into a 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty reign. The time period is represented by the Asiatic culture level known as Middle Bronze II Age. This assumption differs radically from all other theories that search for artefacts in the Late Bronze Age or even Iron Age level and thus has much impact on the argumentation about Israel's origins in regard to biblical archaeology. Above all, however, the Bible itself opposes the liberal viewpoint and speaks with its own voice about the emergence of the Israel state.

### **3. Facts and Interpretation**

#### **a. Biblical Narrative**

As a matter of fact the Bible records events that relate to the origins of Israel. Scholars are divided, however, on how to weight and interpret these writings. Coote and Whitelam's words serve well as an introduction to this chapter:

The problem of the origin of Israel as it has previously been formulated has been heavily influenced by the issue of literary interpretation. The beginning and end have been the biblical text. The chief question has been, how are the biblical texts pertaining to the origin of Israel to be understood?<sup>32</sup>

In other words, the discussion revolves around the question: What is the Bible?

Whereas conservatives claim historical reliability based on inspiration, liberals deny such claims. The latter provoke the conservative question: “Since Christianity is so inseparably related to redemptive events, what basis is there for the Christian faith if the historic events of the Old Testament are not authentic and reliably recorded?”<sup>33</sup>

The issue dealt with at this point is a crucial one in the realms of biblical theology.

Most of the liberal scholars can nowadays be designated as ‘minimalists.’ *Minimalism* reduces the elements of a discipline to the most basic level. Though liberal scholars treat the Bible with scepticism, they nonetheless admit a ‘minimum’ of historical credibility. They appeal first to social science and archaeology and then include such historical ‘minimum’ of the Bible into their considerations.<sup>34</sup> One immediately recognizes the danger of false classification into historical elements and what liberals discount as ‘fiction’: as long as their theory is confirmed, the biblical data is accepted; in those cases that contradict the theory, the data is neglected.

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<sup>32</sup> Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitlam, “The Emergence of Israel,” 108.

<sup>33</sup> G. Van Groningen, “Joshua – II Kings: Deuteronomistic? Priestly? Or Prophetic Writing?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 12 (Winter 1969): 5.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Garnett H. Reid, “Minimalism and Biblical History,” 394.

Following such approach, the historical value of the Holy Writ comes to nothing, and so minimalism paves the way to the nonconquest theories of chapter two. Above we read the quotations of the minimalists who degrade the Bible as propaganda material. It is striking that just these liberals indeed use the Bible to support their theories.<sup>35</sup>

Minimalism originally derives from nineteenth-century higher criticism<sup>36</sup> that in regard to the first books of the Bible – the relevant account about Israel’s origins – invented the so-called *Documentary Hypothesis*. By way of summary Wilson in his preface aptly contrasts this view with the conservative position. The former believes:

That the first six books, that is, the Pentateuch and Joshua, were composed by at least a dozen redactors out of five or more other books (J, E, D, H, and P), which were written from 900 to 450 B.C.; although, with the exception of Ezra, the authors and redactors of these five books are alike unknown to history, either to as name, time or provenance. The sources of their information are also unknown to history, and consequently no one can rely upon the veracity of any statement in the Hexateuch. The books of Moses are simply a mythical and confused account of the origin of the people and institutions of Israel.<sup>37</sup>

The conservative view lays the common emphasis on inerrancy with the position:

That the Pentateuch as it stands is historical and from the time of Moses; and that Moses was its real author, though it may have been revised and edited by later redactors, the additions being just as much inspired and as true as the rest.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> E.g. George E. Mendenhall, “The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine,” 79, 85; Christian E. Hauer Jr., “From Alt to Anthropology,” 5; Norman K. Gottwald, “The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel,” 41.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Garnett H. Reid, “Minimalism and Biblical History,” 397.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Dick Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation*, 9-10; the letters mentioned denote the claimed sources: (J)ahwist, (E)lohist, (D)euteronomist, (P)riestly Code and (H)oliness Laws; see *ibid.*, 219.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

The Documentary Hypothesis has been refuted by a variety of recognized scholars. Outstanding example is Robert Dick Wilson. He devoted his life to the study of the Old Testament, mastered forty-five languages and dialects and focused on the evidence that had a bearing upon the historical reliability of the Scriptures. After more than four decades of study, he concluded as an expert:

The general reliability of the Old Testament documents has not been impaired by recent discoveries outside the Old Testaments. The literary forms are in harmony with what comparative literature would lead us to expect.<sup>39</sup>

The Documentary Hypothesis has also been rejected by way of structural analysis of the biblical writings. William Green thoroughly examined the book of Genesis and proved its literary unity that in turn disproves the assumption of partition into different 'sources.' Green concludes:

The so-called anachronisms of the Book of Genesis have been examined, and nothing has been found to militate against its being the work of Moses. It is plainly designed to be introductory to the law. And if that law was given by Moses, as has always been believed, and as the Scripture abundantly declare, then Genesis, too, was his work.<sup>40</sup>

Wilson appeals to the reader's common sense: Why should the forger of a document which was designed to be accepted as genuine repeatedly use differing language that

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>40</sup> William H. Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 572.

would reveal the work as fake and help the critics to identify different sources?<sup>41</sup>

Another more recently published work statistically examined the Genesis account in regard to writing features that cannot be consciously manipulated. In conclusion, the authors made a strong case for the literary unity of Genesis since they did not find evidence to associate different kinds of Hebrew to J, D, E or P sources.<sup>42</sup>

Together with Genesis, the other four books of Moses as well as the former prophets have been both criticised but also defended. Block in his exegesis of Deuteronomy confirms the high level of literacy in ancient Israel and states that “there is no reason to doubt that compositions as extensive and complex as the individual speeches of Moses preserved in Deuteronomy could have been produced in the second half of the second millennium BC.”<sup>43</sup> Van Groningen in his article about Joshua and 2 Kings shows that the writings are not edited sources but prophetic revelation and therefore provide what he calls ‘sacred historiography.’ The historical facts in the Bible are vehicles for God’s self-revelation.<sup>44</sup> Wenham points to the close

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<sup>41</sup> See Robert Dick Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation*, 31.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Y.T. Radday et al., *Genesis: An Authorship Study in Computer-Assisted Statistical Linguistics* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1985); contra Stephen Portnoy and David L. Petersen, “Statistical Differences among Documentary Sources: Comments on ‘Genesis: An Authorship Study’,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 50 (June 1991): 3-14.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel I. Block, “The Burden of Leadership: The Mosaic Paradigm of Kingship (Deut 17:14-20),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162 (July-September 2005): 271.

<sup>44</sup> See G. Van Groningen, “Joshua – II Kings,” 8, 17.

theological unity between Joshua and Deuteronomy and so, though using his argument in favour of a ‘deuteronomistic history theory’, in effect disproves the idea of a ‘Hexateuch’ and the ‘Documentary Hypothesis’ of editors and sources.<sup>45</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this work to go deeper into more detailed argumentation. Beside Wilson and Green, Kitchen<sup>46</sup> provides more insight and the interested reader is referred to such literature. In sum, it remains to be emphasized that the Bible should be taken seriously as a historical document. Liberal scholars fail to recognize the significance of the biblical narratives. We agree that “the Old Testament witness must be sought first, and this witness can and should be studied with the aid of the various disciplines, but the latter should never be placed prior to, above or foundational to the Biblical text or message.”<sup>47</sup>

### **b. Archaeological Evidence**

Another introductory citation from Coote and Whitelam presents us the common position of modern Old Testament studies related to biblical archaeology:

The continued attempts to reconstruct the history of Israel from the starting point of minute literary study of the traditions of the Bible show little sign of real progress. ... The more archaeological evidence that becomes available, the more questions it raises about the nature of our sources.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Wenham, Gordon J., “The Deuteronomic Theology of the Book of Joshua,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (June 1971): 148.

<sup>46</sup> See Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 112-129.

<sup>47</sup> G. Van Groningen, “Joshua – II Kings,” 24.

<sup>48</sup> Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitelam, “The Emergence of Israel,” 111.

Within the present chapter we will try to meet this challenge. For the sake of clarity we will study along the following outline:

- (1) Nature of Archaeology
- (2) Excavation Sites
- (3) Iron Age I settlements
- (4) The Israel Stela
- (5) The Amarna Letters

(1) *Nature of Archaeology*. At the outset it cannot be overemphasised that in regard to archaeology, one has to be very clear what the archaeologist can prove and what he cannot prove. The scope of archaeological investigation is rather limited. Hoerth refers to Yamauchi who points out that (1) few ancient things survived to this day, (2) few ancient sites have been surveyed or found, (3) less than two percent (!) of the known sites have been excavated, (4) the excavated sites have only been scratched and (5) only ‘a fraction of the fraction’ that has been excavated has been published to be available for further studies.<sup>49</sup> As Bimson puts it, “the archaeologist is at the mercy of the surviving evidence.”<sup>50</sup> He also refers to Yadin who estimated that the excavation of the tell of Hazor in its entirety would take about eight hundred years.

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, 18-22; he refers to Edwin Yamauchi, *Stones and the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

<sup>50</sup> John J. Bimson, “Exodus and Conquest,” 27.

Once the evidence is given, scholars do not always conclude with one voice. Van Groningen<sup>51</sup> refers to the case of the Jericho site where both Garstang and Kenyon excavated but brought out different results. Some identify the city of Ai with Et-Tell whereas some propose Beth-Aven.<sup>52</sup> Thus overall we claim that archaeology does not provide definite truths but rather tentative arguments.

(2) *Excavation Sites*. The following table lists some sites that have been conquered by Israel according to the Joshua account.<sup>53</sup> That Debir, Hazor, Jericho and Lachish and many other cities existed as fortifications during the Middle Bronze Age has been aptly documented by Burke in his dissertation.<sup>54</sup>

Excavation Site	Reference	Comments
Jericho (Tell es-Sultan)	Josh 6:20-26	The wall collapsed and the city was burnt; Jericho was not rebuilt until Ahab's time. (cf. 1 Ki 16:34)
Ai (Khirbet Nisya near Beth-Aven <sup>55</sup> )	Josh 8:18-29	The city was set on fire.

<sup>51</sup> See G. Van Groningen, "Joshua – II Kings," 22f.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 63.

<sup>53</sup> The sites are identified by Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 62ff. and David Rohl, *A Test of Time*, 368.

<sup>54</sup> See Aaron Alexander Burke, *The Architecture of Defense: Fortified Settlements of the Levant during the Middle Bronze Age* (Chicago, 2004), 378-679.

<sup>55</sup> Ai is traditionally identified with Et-Tell; see discussion below.

<u>Southern Campaign</u>  Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir)  Eglon (Tell el-Hesi)  Hebron (el-Khalil <sup>56</sup> )  Debir (Tell Beit Mirsim <sup>57</sup> )  and others	Josh 10:29ff.	The cities were destroyed but not explicitly burnt.
<u>Northern Campaign</u>  Hazor (Tell el-Qedah),  unnamed cities	Josh 11:10.21	(Only?) Hazor was destroyed and burnt.

As mentioned above, *Jericho* was excavated and studied by various scholars. Garstang said *Jericho* was destroyed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but Kenyon reworked the site and dated the wall about 1000 years earlier and concluded that the city was destroyed at the end of the MBA (~1550 BC).<sup>58</sup> Most significantly, Kenyon did not find a fortified city of *Jericho* in the Late Bronze Age level as had been expected according to the late date theory.<sup>59</sup> Rohl points out that the lack of an expected walled city of

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<sup>56</sup> Burke identifies Hebron with Jebel Rumeidah; see *ibid.*, 572.

<sup>57</sup> Possibly Khirbet Rabud; cf. John J. Bimson and David Livingston, "Redating the Exodus," 41.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. B.G. Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer *Jericho*?" A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeological Review* (March/April 1990): 49.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Conquest," 191; John J. Bimson, "The Origins of Israel in Canaan," 5.

Jericho during the LBA is “one of the principal reasons why biblical scholars and Levantine archaeologists have tended to abandon the view that the Old Testament, prior to the Monarchy period, is historically accurate.”<sup>60</sup>

Defending the late date model, however, Kitchen refers to positive evidence of 13<sup>th</sup> century type Mycenaean pottery.<sup>61</sup> Again differently, Wood speaks for the early date and rejects Kenyon’s work but confirms Garstang’s conclusion that Jericho was destroyed about 1400 BC.<sup>62</sup> In Rohl’s opinion, Kenyon’s finding of Jericho’s walls in the MBA level matches the New Chronology approach.<sup>63</sup> The excavated LBA IIB rebuilding would then also correspond with 1 Ki 16:34. Kitchen maintains his conventional opinion since ‘absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.’<sup>64</sup> Yadin argues “it may well be that the Late Bronze Age settlement at Jericho reused the city

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<sup>60</sup> David Rohl, *A Test of Time*, 358; cf. Yigael Yadin, “Biblical Archaeology Today: The Archaeological Aspect,” *Biblical Archaeology Today* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985): 24, who also refers to Hazor, Megiddo and Lachish.

<sup>61</sup> See Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 63, n.22; the pottery is linked to el-Armana and dated to the reign of Amenhopis IV, hence the New Chronology approach challenges its conventional dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC; cf. Yigael Yadin, “Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan Historically Reliable?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* (March/April 1982): 20.

<sup>62</sup> See B.G. Wood, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?” *A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence*, 50ff.; Bruce K. Waltke, “The Date of the Conquest,” 192.

<sup>63</sup> See David Rohl, *A Test of Time*, 362-65, 377f.; cf. John J. Bimson, “Exodus and Conquest,” 34f.

<sup>64</sup> See Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 64; cf. *ibid.*, 30; John J. Bimson, “The Origins of Israel in Canaan,” 5.

wall from the Middle Bronze Age.”<sup>65</sup> Scholars are divided at this point.

Beside Jericho, other cities were destroyed according to the Joshua account. The traditional identification of *Ai* with Et-Tell contradicts the Bible insofar as Et-Tell was destroyed long before the Israelites came into Canaan. However, some propose the site of Khirbet Nisya near Beth-Aven and reject Et-Tell to be *Ai*.<sup>66</sup> Khirbet Nisya was settled at the time of Israel’s conquest and its location near Beth-Aven corresponds with Joshua 7:2. The cities of *Lachish* and *Debir* (cf. Josh 10:31.38) are surveyed by Kitchen who concludes that they might have been conquered by Joshua though the major destruction took place at the second campaign led by Caleb.<sup>67</sup> (cf. Josh 15:15; Jdg 1:11) The city of *Hazor* (cf. Josh 11:10.13), finally, is another crucial site. Kitchen defends that the destruction site matches the biblical narrative, whereas others maintain that the findings relate to the time of the judges.<sup>68</sup> (cf. Jdg 4) Yadin excavated Hazor and based on Mycenaean pottery evidence states that the city was destroyed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>69</sup> Along with Bimson Rohl shows that Jericho,

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<sup>65</sup> Yigael Yadin, “Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan Historically Reliable?,” 22.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 63; John J. Bimson, “Exodus and Conquest,” 37f.; *Was Ai a ruin at the time of the Conquest?* (Dutch Foundation for Biblical Archaeology, 1999).

<sup>67</sup> See Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 66f.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 67; Eugene H. Merrill, “The Late Bronze/Early Iron Age Transition and the Emergence of Israel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (April 1995): 154; Bruce K. Waltke, “The Date of the Conquest,” 192.

<sup>69</sup> Yigael Yadin, “Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan

Debir, Lachish and Hazor were destroyed in MB IIB which would fit the biblical writings if framed by the New Chronology.<sup>70</sup>

In sum, scholars differently argue their case with the help of archaeology. Kitchen in support of his view writes about Lachish, Debir, Bethel, Eglon and Hazor that “all of these show traces of catastrophic destruction in the later part of the thirteenth century BC.”<sup>71</sup> Merrill and other early date exodus defenders counter that such data could as well relate to the times of Israel’s judges.<sup>72</sup> Liberals refer to other sites and argue with evidence from silence: “The fact that such cites as Jericho, Ai and Gibeon, key cities in the biblical account of the ‘conquest’, provide no archaeological evidence of occupation during this period undermines the conquest model.”<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the biblical witness requires signs of destruction at least in regard to cities like Jericho. Merrill’s point that the Israelites conquered but did not destroy the cities cannot be maintained consistently.<sup>74</sup> Rohl and Bimson with their redating approaches provide

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Historically Reliable?,” 19f.; Cooper challenges Yadin’s chronological dating of Hazor as linked to the Mari texts; cf. Elisabeth N. Cooper, *The Middle Bronze Age of the Euphrates Valley, Syria: Chronology, Regional Interaction and Cultural Exchange* (Toronto, 1997), 281ff.

<sup>70</sup> See David Rohl, *A Test of Time*, 368; cf. John J. Bimson, “Exodus and Conquest,” 34ff.; John J. Bimson and David Livingstone, “Redating the Exodus,” 53.

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 65; cf. John J. Bimson, “The Origins of Israel in Canaan,” 4.

<sup>72</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, “The Late Bronze/Early Iron Age Transition,” 158; Bruce K. Waltke, “The Date of the Conquest,” 193.

<sup>73</sup> Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitelam, “The Emergence of Israel,” 118.

<sup>74</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, “The Late Bronze/Early Iron Age Transition,” 152ff.;

new food for discussion, since many sites show signs of destruction in the late MBA levels, whereas “at six sites the Bible says the Israelites conquered, no occupation evidence was found dating to the time conventionally assigned to Joshua.”<sup>75</sup> However, in sum, scholars of biblical archaeology indeed do not speak with one voice.

(3) *Iron I settlements*. Another line of argumentation is provided by the discovery of numerous Iron Age settlements in the hill area of Palestine:

It is now well established that the beginning of the Iron Age saw a significant shift in settlement patterns, resulting in the proliferation of small sites in the highland regions. The total number discovered now exceeds 300... The great majority were new foundations, with no trace of occupation in Late Bronze.<sup>76</sup>

Scholars of all factions have used the evidence in favour of their theories. Liberals argue that the increase of settlements was caused either by immigration from outside or by indigenous people’s movement from the coast to the hills, possibly forced by Philistine invasion or economic troubles.<sup>77</sup> Similarly late date exodus theorists argue with the emergence of new – assumingly – Israelite settlements in the hill area at the

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Merrill merely admits the exceptions of Jericho, Ai and Hazor without comment.

<sup>75</sup> John J. Bimson and David Livingston, “Redating the Exodus,” 40; they refer to Jericho, Ai, Gibeon, Hebron, Hormah/Zephtah and Arad.

<sup>76</sup> John J. Bimson, “Merenptah’s Israel and Recent Theories of Israelite Origins,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 49 (February 1991): 4; cf. John J. Bimson, “The Origins of Israel in Canaan,” 7f.

<sup>77</sup> Waltke and Bimson refer to Callaway, Gottwald, Chaney, Coote, Whitlam, Aharoni, Kochavi and Finkelstein; cf. Bruce K. Waltke, “The Date of the Conquest,” 184; John J. Bimson, “Exodus and Conquest,” 31f.

beginning of the Iron Age. As noted by Kitchen above, some sites also show marks of destruction, in correspondence with the conquest narrative. Those destructions, however, cover a rather long time span<sup>78</sup> contrary to Joshua's short campaign and besides leave no room for the destructive phase of the judges period.

In regard to the nature of these settlements, the archaeological remains appear to be in continuity with the material culture of the preceding archaeological Late Bronze Age levels. Such evidence contradicts the immigration and the (late date) exodus theory.<sup>79</sup> In conclusion some might propose indigenous development. Contrary, others state that the Late Bronze and Iron Age cultures are *not* contemporaneous but – also opposing the infiltration theory – sequentially different.<sup>80</sup> It is further argued that the majority of the settlements were unfortified, which contradicts the idea of a peasant's revolt.<sup>81</sup> Thompson says that the sites show some aspects of gradual process and new technological developments which indicates that

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<sup>78</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, "The Date of the Conquest," 197; cf. Benjamin Mazar, "Biblical Archaeology Today: The Historical Aspect," *Biblical Archaeology Today* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985): 18.

<sup>79</sup> John J. Bimson, "The Origins of Israel in Canaan," 6 and 8, with reference to Pritchard, A. Mazar and Fritz; cf. John J. Bimson, "Merenptah's Israel," 4.

<sup>80</sup> Yigael Yadin, "Biblical Archaeology Today: The Archaeological Aspect," *Biblical Archaeology Today* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985): 23; Yigael Yadin, "Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan Historically Reliable?," 18ff.; Amihai Mazar, "The Israelite Settlement in Canaan in the Light of Archaeological Excavations," *Biblical Archaeology Today* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985): 63, 70.

<sup>81</sup> Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitelam, "The Emergence of Israel," 123.

indigenous agricultural people settled, excluding the immigration model.<sup>82</sup> The evidence of the Iron Age I settlements is used in different directions.

To sum up, the population increase might speak for immigration, whereas cultural continuity indicates indigenous development. Late date exodus scholars relate the settlements to the Israelite invasion; early date exodus scholars relate the destruction levels to the time of the judges and point to cultural continuity. The evidence is not conclusive. Finally, if the New Chronology approach is accurate, the Iron Age is dated later and the argument is then excluded from this discussion.

(4) *Israel Stela of Merenptah*. Whereas the Iron Age settlements gave reason to place the origins of Israel accordingly, the finding of the 'Israel Stela' provides evidence about an established nation recognized as 'Israel' even before this time and not later than 1210 BC.<sup>83</sup> The Pharaoh Merenptah conquered the Libyans and in his victory hymn among other nations also mentions Israel to be 'desolated.'<sup>84</sup> Interestingly, for the late date advocates the stele merely "establishes their *terminus*

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas L. Thompson, "Historical Notes on 'Israel's Conquest of Palestine: A Peasant's Rebellion?'" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7 (May 1978): 25.

<sup>83</sup> John J. Bimson, "Merenptah's Israel," 13; Roger Dalman, *Yahweh's Song: A Handbook for Understanding Old Testament Historical Theology* (Trinity Online Learning Center, 2006), 233.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest, vol. 3, The Nineteenth Dynasty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), 264, no. 617.

*ad quem* for the conquest.”<sup>85</sup> Also Coote and Whitelam openly admit that the ‘Israel Stela’ is from about 1200 BC while overall ignoring the significant implications.<sup>86</sup> Bimson concludes that the archaeology of the Iron Age is irrelevant to Israel’s origins, “because Israel already existed before the shift to new settlement patterns occurred at the beginning of Iron I.”<sup>87</sup> If Rohl’s chronological revision is followed, the Israel stele is dated much later and thus provides no evidence here. If one places the stele shortly after Israel’s (late date) conquest, the question remains how the inscribed ‘desolation’ of Israel can be harmonized with Joshua’s victories.

(5) *Amarna tablets*. About 378 Tell el-Amarna tablets were discovered in Egypt in 1887. They are mostly letters between Egypt and other rulers of the ancient Near East including Palestine.<sup>88</sup> They relate to Amenophis III and IV who lived around 1400-1350 BC according to the conventional chronology and thus are also brought into discussion about Israel’s origins. The texts witness about a time of great unrest when groups like the so-called ‘Habiru’ (= Hebrews) attacked the city-states that were under Egyptian control.

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<sup>85</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, “The Date of the Conquest,” 197; cf. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 59.

<sup>86</sup> Robert B. Coote and Keith W. Whitelam, “The Emergence of Israel,” 118.

<sup>87</sup> John J. Bimson, “Merenptah’s Israel,” 19; cf. John J. Bimson, “The Origins of Israel in Canaan,” 13; Benjamin Mazar, “Biblical Archaeology Today: The Historical Aspect,” 17; Mazar confirms the existence of a ‘unified national body.’

<sup>88</sup> Cf. James F. Ross, “Gezer in the Tell el-Amarna Letters,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 30 (May 1962): 62.

Again, it is noteworthy that both conservatives and liberals argue by using the same kind of evidence. Merrill supports the conservative viewpoint: “The integration of Egyptian and Amarna texts with contemporary sociological, ethnographic, and ecological-economic studies yields a satisfying framework within which the traditional understanding of the Old Testament narrative account of the Exodus, the conquest, and the emergence of Israel can be embraced.”<sup>89</sup> He elsewhere speaks of the texts as a non-Israelite perspective on the instable conditions at the time of the conquest.<sup>90</sup> (cf. Jdg 1-2) Liberals agree “that both the Amarna materials and the biblical events represent politically the same process.”<sup>91</sup> More precisely, in their view “the Amarna letters illustrate beautifully the internecine warfare of city-state against city-state, in which the peasant must inevitably have suffered.”<sup>92</sup> Revolt model advocates like Mendenhall tend to equal the Israelite ‘peasants’ with the Habiru of the Amarna letters to support their standpoint.<sup>93</sup> In contrast, most conservatives say the texts are irrelevant since the Habiru were ‘Hebrews’ but not necessarily the Israelites.<sup>94</sup> Rohl places the Amarna texts some centuries later.

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<sup>89</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, “The Late Bronze/Early Iron Age Transition,” 146.

<sup>90</sup> See *ibid.*, 161.

<sup>91</sup> George E. Mendenhall, “The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine,” 73.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>93</sup> Contra Alan J. Hauser, “Israel’s Conquest of Palestine,” 12f.

<sup>94</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 69f.; Roger Dalman, *Yahweh’s Song*, 243f.; contra B. Newgrosh, D. Rohl and P. van der Veen, “The el-Amarna Letters and Israelite History,” *Journal of the Ancient Chronology*

#### 4. Conclusion

After his examination of various theories about the origins of Israel, Bimson concludes that “both internal and external evidence requires that we treat with greater respect Israel’s traditions concerning her origins and early history.”<sup>95</sup> The present work comes to the same conclusion. Especially in comparison with the limited significance of few little artefacts the Bible gains considerable weight. The pillars of social science and archaeology are weak and liberals often cancel each other out.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, in view of the failure of literary criticism we can claim reliability of the biblical narratives with confidence. In fact, if the liberal view were true, it would be hard to imagine how the biblical record in its brilliance and unity ever came into existence. Therefore the Bible should not be degraded as secondary source of argumentation. The origins of Israel are preserved in written form.

One common basic conclusion of all the liberal approaches is about the dating of Israel’s formation. Thompson postulates that “scholars today are in nearly unanimous agreement about the chronology for the origin of Israel: the transition in Palestine from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age.”<sup>97</sup> Not only the biblical tradition but

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*Forum* 6 (1992/1993): 33-64.

<sup>95</sup> John J. Bimson, “The Origins of Israel in Canaan,” 13.

<sup>96</sup> One example is the discussion between Mendenhall, Gottwald, Hauser and Thompson about the peasant’s revolt theory; cf. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7 (May 1978).

<sup>97</sup> Thomas L. Thompson, “Historical Notes on ‘Israel’s Conquest of Palestine:

also the ‘Merenptah Stela’ contradicts this view. However, we repeatedly emphasize the weak nature of archaeological reasoning. Too often such ‘evidence’ eventually failed. We refer to the studies of Rohl with a call towards caution. If Rohl is right, many scholars are riding a dead horse.

Overall, we did not find any reason to abandon the view that the Bible is historically reliable. We follow Kaiser in his argumentation that a person is innocent until proven guilty.<sup>98</sup> Such presumption-of-innocence approach also well applies here. So far, in fact the Bible is not proven ‘guilty’ despite centuries of critical studies. We do find the account about Israel’s origins well preserved, so we conclude that Israel moved from Egypt to Palestine and conquered the land around 1400 BC.

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A Peasant’s Rebellion?’,” 20.

<sup>98</sup> See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*, 66; cf. Robert Dick Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation*, 6; Garnett H. Reid, “Minimalism and Biblical History,” 402.

## Appendix

The following citation from Edwin Thiele, the leading scholar in regard to biblical chronology, points to the significance of the issue of chronology in relation to (Old Testament) history:

Chronology is the backbone of history. Absolute chronology is the fixed central core around which the events of the nation must be correctly grouped before they may assume their exact positions in history and before their mutual relationships may be properly understood. Without exact chronology there can be no exact history.<sup>99</sup>

Traditionally the Egyptian pharaonic chronology pertaining to the exodus event is based on two assumptions: (1) the identification of Pharaoh Shishak (who is recorded in I Kings 14:25f. and II Chronicles 12:2-9 as having conquered Jerusalem when Rehoboam was king of Judah) with Pharaoh Shoshenk I of the 22nd Dynasty<sup>100</sup> and (2) the identification of Ramesses II (Ramesses the Great, a 19th Dynasty ruler) as the pharaoh of the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt. The latter point we already rejected as inconclusive in chapter two. The former is disputable because Shoshenk I actually did not conquer (or invade) Jerusalem according to the campaign list at the

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<sup>99</sup> Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1994), 33.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 28.

triumphal relief at Karnak.<sup>101</sup> On the contrary, Shoshenk did attack northern Israel though biblical Shishak protected Jeroboam king of the North. (1 Ki 11:40)

Rohl identifies Shishak with Ramesses II who is the only Pharaoh recorded to have conquered Jerusalem.<sup>102</sup> For more details, the interested reader is referred to his book. In sum, Rohl's new approach carries tremendous implications: (1) The Hyksos period is placed *after* the exodus. The devastating miracles that led to Israel's exodus weakened Egypt and provided the way for the Hyksos to invade and conquer the land. The influential and "numerous" (cf. Ex 1:7.9.12) Israelites in Egypt are no longer pressed beside the Hyksos people, even living in the same city (Avaris). (2) The Amarna tablets relating to Amenhotep III and IV (18<sup>th</sup> dynasty) now describe events pertaining to the chaotic times of Saul and David. Parallel to (1), the Israelites are no longer pressed beside the 'Habiru' of the Amarna letters at the time of the conquest. (3) Most significantly, archaeological evidence for Joshua's conquest and Solomon's reign are abundantly found in the new-dated archaeological strata.

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest, vol. 4, The Twentieth to the Twenty Sixth Dynasties* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), 354, no. 716.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt, vol. 3*, 159, no. 356; we do not agree with Breasted who translates 's-r-m' with 'Shalom' and not 'Salem' (= Jerusalem).

The present author takes Rohl's approach serious because he is convinced that the Bible is inerrant and therefore also historically reliable. The evangelical viewpoint allows for the question of priority: Do we trust artifacts more than the Holy Scriptures? If Jericho is recorded to be razed around 1400 BC, we have good reason to argue that the archaeological level with broken walls is to be dated accordingly. Why shall we trust in the biblical record about Shishak and equal him with Shoshenk but do not give equal credit to the Jericho account? We agree with Fulton:

The events recorded in the Bible are not small events but include the building and destruction of cities and the movement of nations, as well as wars and battles affecting thousands of people's lives. It details the rise and fall of empires as well as the parts played by individuals in that history. Although we may never come up with archaeological evidence for minor bit players in the story, major events should not be hard to find.<sup>103</sup>

The Jericho narrative provides the date for the archaeological remains, and in this sense Rohl does not confirm the Bible but the Bible confirms Rohl.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> John Fulton, *A New Chronology: Synopsis of David Rohl's book "A Test of Time,"* chap. Conclusion.

<sup>104</sup> Rohl did not initially want to discover the historical Bible; see David Rohl, *A Test of Time*, 452; for a more positive review of Rohl's work see Thomas S. McCall, "The Biblical Impact of the Revised Egyptian History," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 2 (June 1998): 157-174.

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