

RATIO CHRISTI

Welcome to Ratio Christi



at Texas A&M

Welcome!

Ratio Christi, meaning “reason for Christ” in Latin, serves to defend the Christian faith in honest dialogue with both our skeptical & believing friends.

Weekly Meetings: Thursday @ 7:30pm

in person + via ZOOM

RC-TAMU.org



RATIO CHRISTI

Thomistic Institute

The Thomistic Institute exists to promote Catholic truth in our contemporary world by strengthening the intellectual formation of Christians at Texas A&M University, in the Church, and in the wider public square. The thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Universal Doctor of the Church, is our touchstone.

Weekly Meetings: Wednesdays @ 8:45pm, ZOOM

thomisticinstitute.org/texas-am



Secular Students Alliance

The Secular Student Alliance seeks to provide a support network for the atheists, agnostics, and otherwise secular peoples of Texas A&M University.

SSA brings together people from a wide range of religious and ideological backgrounds in order to foster deeper levels of understanding through discussion and dialogue.

Weekly Meetings: Wednesdays @ 8:30pm, ZOOM

facebook.com/groups/TAMUSecularStudentAlliance



Fall 2020: Confronting Old Testament Controversy

How well do you know your Old Testament?

This fall Ratio Christi at Texas A&M is *Confronting Old Testament Controversy*.

Despite being the majority of the Bible, the Old Testament remains a difficult and sometime perplexing group of writings. With ancient laws, long histories, and confusing prophecies, we are often left wondering... ***what do we do with the Old Testament?*** Each week we will look at the toughest questions surrounding the Hebrew Bible:

- Is the God of the Old Testament evil?
- Did the Exodus really happen? If so, when?
- Were the Israelites polytheists?
- Did Moses write the Torah?

Join us each **Thursday at 7:30pm** to learn a little bit more about the old testament.

Recap of the semester so far

1. Week 1: Text of the Tanakh

- The text of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) consists primarily of the Greek LXX and Hebrew MT. Inspiration is a process, not an event.

2. Week 2: Interpreting Genesis 1-11

- Genre widely considered Proto-History: historical events and personages are cloaked in the mythological language of exalted prose.

3. Week 3: Integrating Genesis with science

- Only the Literal Calendar Day view and "Fixity of the Species" views are in any serious conflict with ancient universe and common ancestry. Darwinism is dead: Evolution is way more than random mutation + natural selection

4. Week 4: Historical Adam & Eve

- There is a range of views; genetic bottleneck at 500 kya, genealogical bottleneck at 10 kya. Secondary theology more influential than raw data.

The Question of Israelite Origins

Did the Israelites Exit Egypt?

Did the Israelites Conquer Canaan?

Did God Command Genocide?

The Question of Israelite Origins

Did the Israelites Exit Egypt?

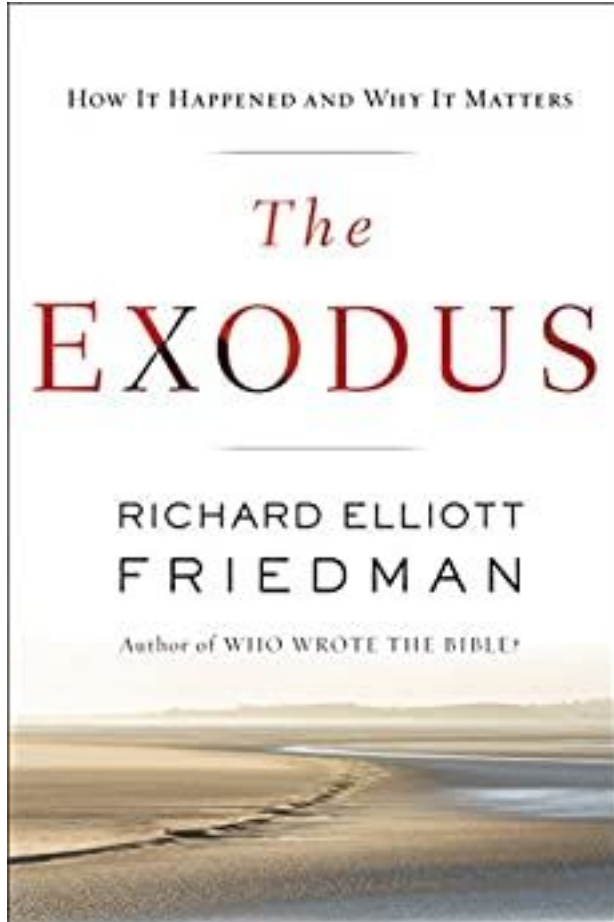
Did the Israelites Conquer Canaan?

Did God Command Genocide?

- 1. The exodus from Egypt is a central historical touchpoint in the theology of ancient Israel.**
- 2. There is no direct evidence of the exodus. While unnerving, we must resist the urge to resort to sensationalistic apologetics.**
- 3. There is strong *a priori* reason to take the broad outline at face value (Kuzari principle).**
- 4. What little of the broad outlines of the story that can be corroborated by the archaeological data fits nicely in the overall scheme.**
- 5. The Egyptian influence on the text is inexorable - "There's little evidence of Israel in Egypt, but much evidence of Egypt in Israel".**

1. Why is there no direct evidence?
2. The Merneptah Stele
3. Asiatic slaves during the Middle Kingdom
4. Ecological reality of the plagues
5. Egyptianisms in the Hebrew text

- Levite exodus vs House of Joseph exodus
 - Some scholars have suggested the exodus group consisted of a smaller subset of proto-Israelites and that the story later came to include all of the tribes.
 - *The Exodus: How it Happened and Why it Matters* (2017) by Richard Elliott Friedman argues that the smaller group was the Levites, in part based on the Egyptian names present in (and only in) the tribe of Levi.
 - *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (2003) by William G. Dever suggests that the exodus group came from the House of Joseph, in part based on the extensive amount of attention given in the Book of Genesis.
- Merneptah Stele pronunciation: *mare-en-tah* or *mer-nep-tah*



Hophni

Only Levites have Egyptian names in the Bible; not one person from any of the rest of Israel has an Egyptian name. We must ask if perhaps the Bible's authors invented these Egyptian names precisely to help make the story of Egypt and the exodus look believable. But (a) this still begs the question of why all the named figures are Levites; nobody invented an Egyptian name for a non-Levite. (b) The Egyptian names appear in texts from at least 20 different authors and editors, spread out over 500 years.

Hur

Phinehas

Merari

Mushi

Pashur

Moses

- Richard Elliott Friedman *The Exodus* (2017)

The Question of Israelite Origins

Did the Israelites Exit Egypt?

Did the Israelites Conquer Canaan?

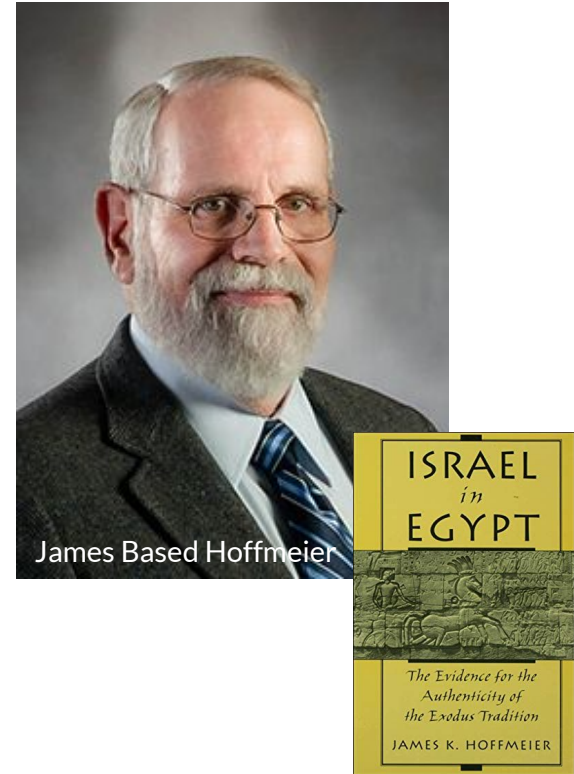
Did God Command Genocide?

- **Minimalism - "Guilty until proven innocent"**
 - The Bible is a theological work that is thoroughly unreliable source of historical information unless archaeological data proves otherwise
 - No direct evidence = event didn't happen
- **Maximalism - "Innocent until proven guilty"**
 - The Bible contains historically relevant accounts and should be given the benefit of the doubt when claiming to communicate historical events.
 - No direct evidence = event not ruled out

Our Approach: Responsible Maximalism

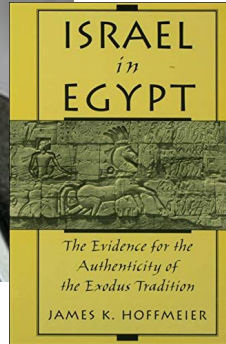
"The exodus is a **plausible historical event** preserved in a reliable textual account. The archaeological **data does not 'prove' the historicity of the exodus** and that the biblical account is a theological narrative that includes mythological language. The **indirect evidence from Egypt**, the witness of the biblical text, and prominence of the exodus tradition throughout the OT canon 'overwhelmingly supports' the historical authenticity of the event"

- Analyze the biblical text for its actual claims.
- Use archaeology to establish a plausible backdrop.



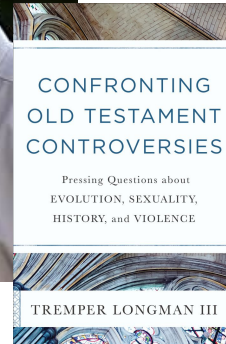
James Based Hoffmeier

Sources and Recommendations



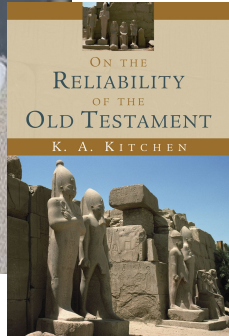
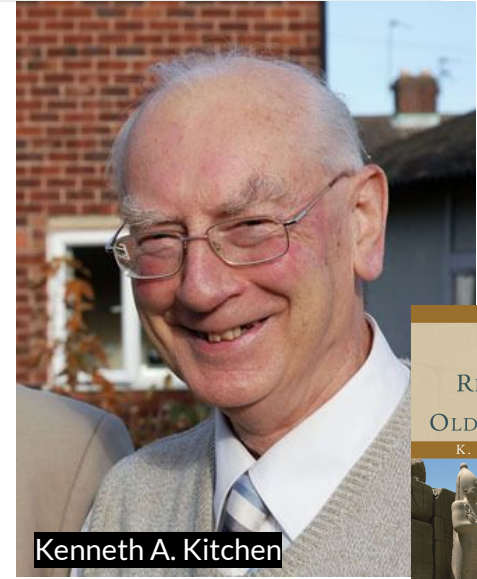
James K. Hoffmeier

James K. Hoffmeier
"Israel in Egypt" (1996),
Oxford



Tremper Longman III

Tremper Longman III
"Confronting Old
Testament
Controversies" (2019),
Baker



Kenneth A. Kitchen

Kenneth A. Kitchen
"On the Reliability of
the Old Testament"
(2003), Eerdmans

1

Intro + Overview

Historical background to the current archaeological crisis.

2

What Does the Bible Really Say?

A brief overview of the actual claims of the biblical text in Joshua-Judges

3

Archaeological Considerations

What unearthed specimens have shed light on the Israelite invasion of Canaan?

1

Intro + Overview

Historical background to the current archaeological crisis.

2

What Does the Bible Really Say?

A brief overview of the actual claims of the biblical text in Joshua-Judges

3

Archaeological Considerations

What unearthed specimens have shed light on the Israelite invasion of Canaan?

- Early 1940s, architect of "biblical archaeology" William F. Albright and his student promulgated the "conquest theory": an accounting of Israel's origins in Canaan as the result of a swift, unified military takeover in the space of a few years at the end of the 13th c. BC.
 - Based on destruction layers from Gezer, Lachish, and Hazor
- In the 1980s, the model began to crumble.
 - No evidence clearly tied the destructions to the Israelites.
 - Why aren't Egyptians mentioned in Joshua given their hegemony in Canaan 1550-1200 B.C.?
 - No clear break in material culture as would be expected from a mass invasion.
 - New theories emerged in the place of the Albright conquest, e.g. peaceful infiltration, peasant revolts, and resedenterized pastoralists.

Brief History of the Crisis of Israelite Origins

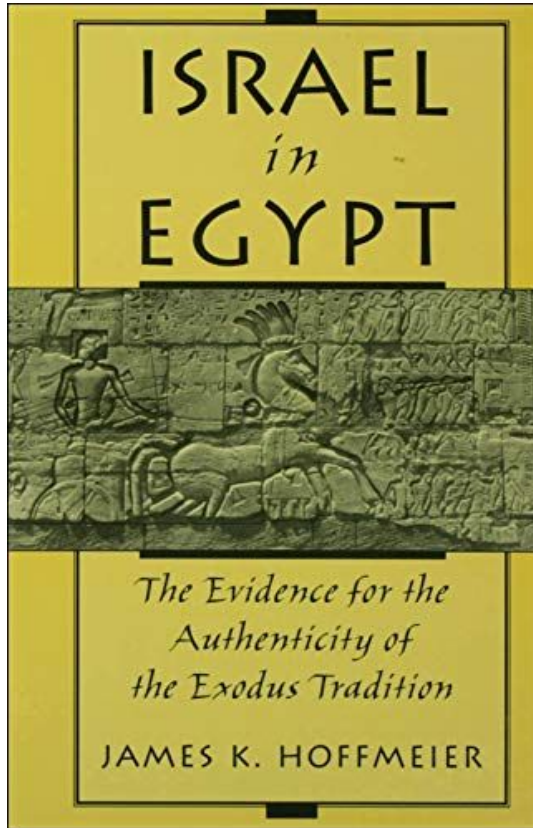
Early 1940s, architect of "biblical archaeology" William F. Albright and his student promulgated the "conquest theory": an accounting of Israel's origins in Canaan as the result of a swift, unified military takeover in the space of a few years at the end of the 13th c. BC.

"The books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel carry the story from triumph to triumph, until even the greatest of Canaanite walled fortresses were destroyed (Lachish about 1220 B.C., Megiddo, Beth-Shan, Jerusalem and finally Gezer shortly after 1000)"

- G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (1957), pg. 69.



George Ernest Wright



"The Albright-Wright synthesis has been rightly challenged by virtually every recent scholarly investigation concerned with the origins of Israel debate. Because the Baltimore School took a moderately conservative maximalist position relative to the biblical narratives, its critics have widely assumed that the "conquest" theory of Albright-Wright and their followers is one and the same as the "biblical" description. Therefore, the repudiation of the former has resulted in the abrogation of the latter. Before the connection between the two is accepted uncritically, an examination of the biblical text *vis a vis* the Albright-Wright synthesis is in order."

- James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, pg. 33

1

Intro + Overview

Historical background to the current archaeological crisis.

2

What Does the Bible Really Say?

A brief overview of the actual claims of the biblical text in Joshua-Judges

3

Archaeological Considerations

What unearthed specimens have shed light on the Israelite invasion of Canaan?

What Does the Bible Say?

What does the Bible actually say? - Joshua's Account

- "So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings; **he left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded... Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time,** because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel - Jos 10:40-42 (NRSV)
- "When Joshua and the Israelites had finished inflicting a very great slaughter on them, **until they were wiped out,** and when **the survivors** had entered into the fortified towns, all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah; no one dared to speak against any of the Israelites." - Josh 10:20-21 (NRSV)
- "He took **all their kings, struck them down, and put them to death. Joshua made war a long time** with all those kings. There was not a town that made peace with the Israelites, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all were taken in battle. For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Israel in battle, **in order that they might be utterly destroyed,** and might receive no mercy, but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. " - Josh 11:17-20 (NRSV)
- "Now Joshua was old and advanced in years; and the LORD said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, **and very much of the land still remains to be possessed.**" - Josh 13:1 (NRSV)



BIBLICALHISTORICALCONTEXT.COM

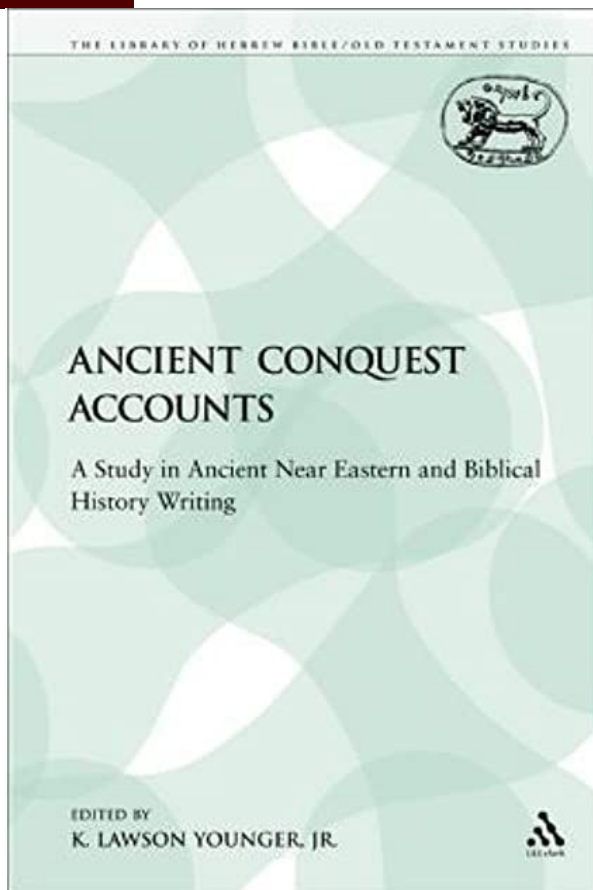
This is a *blog* run by a *hobbyist*; his summary of the genre analysis of Joshua 10 & 11 is quite good.

SERIES OVERVIEW

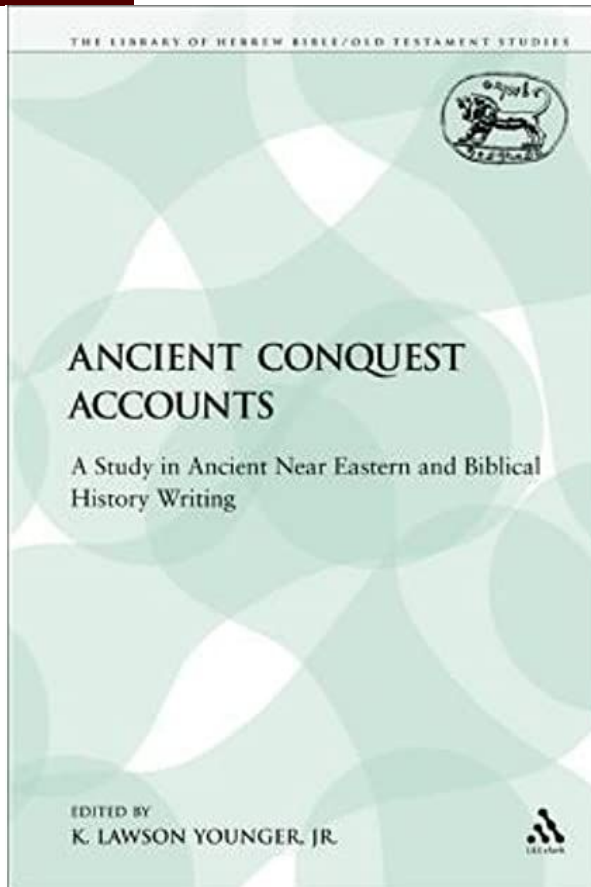
Joshua 10 and 11

Joshua 10 and 11 make for exciting reading but they don't fit with the rest of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, or the archaeological evidence. In this series we take a look at the genre these texts employ, and what that tells us about the historicity of the events they appear to document.

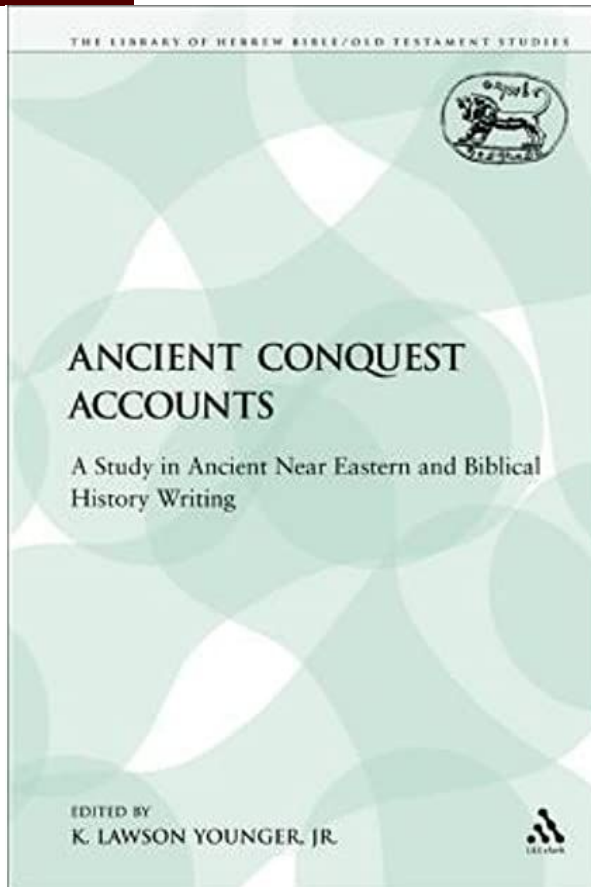
1. Joshua 10 and 11: The Problem
2. [Joshua 10 and 11: A closer look](#)
3. [Joshua 10 and 11: Genre and Annihilation](#)
4. [Joshua 10 and 11: Genre, repetition, and redundancy](#)
5. [Joshua 10 and 11: Genre and hyperbole](#)
6. [Joshua 10 and 11: Genre and the common narrative structure](#)
7. [Joshua 10 and 11: Genre and the focus on the leader](#)
8. [Joshua 10 and 11: Conclusion](#)



- Repetitive Language
 - “utterly destroyed” x10
 - “with the edge of the sword” x8
 - “left no survivors/no one remaining” x7
 - “just as he had done to” x8
- Annihilation Language
 - So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings; **he left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed,** as the LORD God of Israel commanded.

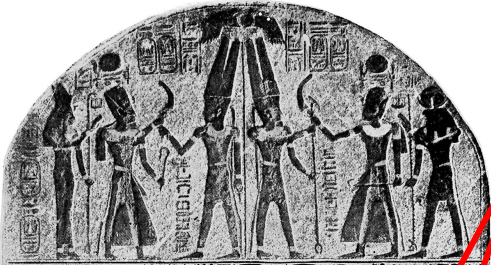


- **Hyperbole**
 - All Israel took the whole land at one time and killed every last Canaanite, and there wasn't a single casualty amongst the Israelite army.
- **Common Structure**
 - Despite the Northern & Southern campaigns being radically different (e.g. geography, motivation, tactics, etc), the recounting follows the same basic structure: Enemies organize, Divine assistance promised, Josh's surprise attack, enemies defeated, etc.



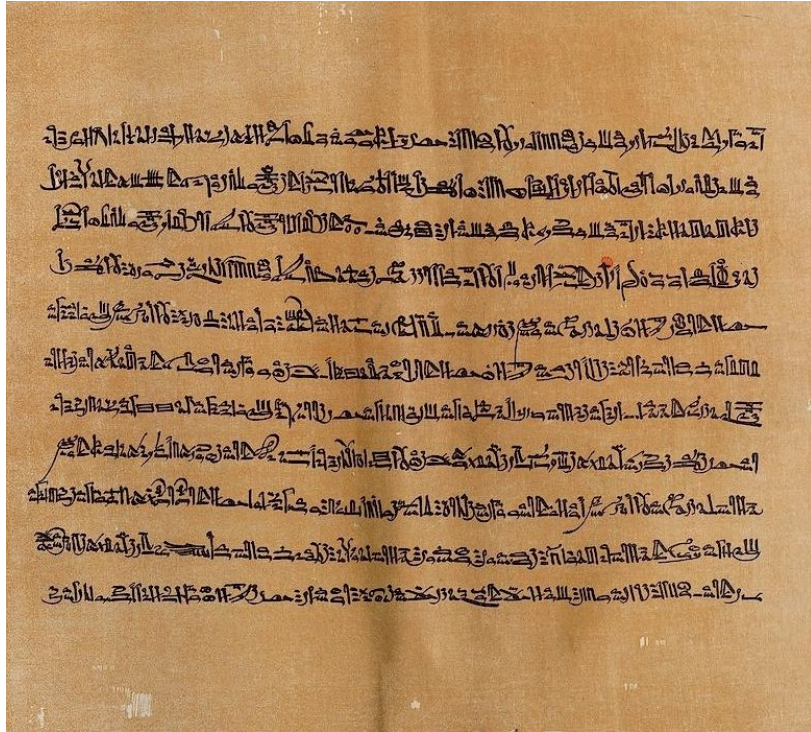
- **Unique Focus on Military Leader (Joshua)**
 - Between Joshua 10 & 11, there are only nine verses that do not reference Joshua.
 - There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded a human voice; for the Lord fought for Israel. - Joshua 10:14
- **Summary**
 - Repetitive language
 - Language of annihilation
 - Hyperbole
 - Common narrative structure
 - Unique focus on the human military leader

Annihilation Language - Merneptah Stele (1208 BC)



The princes are prostrate, saying: "Mercy!"
 Not one raises his head among the Nine Bows.
 Desolation is for Tehenu; Hatti is pacified;
 Plundered is the Canaan with every evil;
 Carried off is Ashkelon; seized upon is Gezer;
 Yanoam is made as that which does not exist;
Israel is laid waste, his seed is not;
 All lands together, they are pacified;
 Everyone who was restless, he has been bound by the King of
 Upper and Lower Egypt

Annihilation Language - Papyrus Harris I



I slew the Denyen in their islands, while the Tjeker and the Philistines were made ashes. The Sherden and the Weshesh of the Sea were made nonexistent, captured all together and brought in captivity to Egypt like the sands of the shore. I settled them in strongholds, bound in my name. Their military classes were as numerous as hundred-thousands. I assigned portions for them all with clothing and provisions from the treasuries and granaries every year.

Papyrus Harris I (Wikimedia)

account from Ramesses III ca. 1150 BC

Why is genre analysis so important?

What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?

“**Inspiration:** The process by which God worked through the human authors of the Bible... and refers to God as the ultimate source of the Scriptures.”

“**Organic inspiration:** The process by which God guided the human authors of Scripture, working in and through their particular styles and life experiences, so that what they produced was exactly what He wanted them to produce. **The text is truly the work of the human authors**—God did not typically dictate to them as to a stenographer—and yet the Lord stands behind it as the ultimate source.”



R.C. Sproul

-Ligonier Ministries

NOTE: Islamic inspiration is based on a “dictation” model, Christianity has historically not taken this view

Reminder: Inerrancy

Inerrancy:

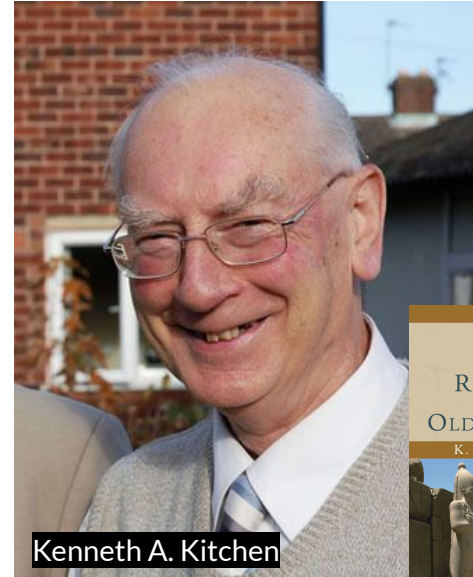
- Being wholly and verbally God-given, **Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching**, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
- We affirm that **God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers** whom He had chosen and prepared.
- We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

What does the Bible actually say? - Joshua's Account

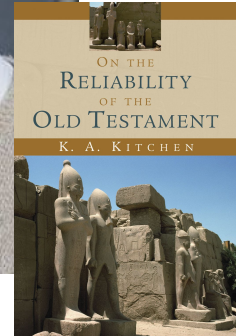
"Its narratives describe an entry (from over Jordan), **full destruction of two minor centers (Jericho, Ai; burned)**, then defeat of local kings and raids through south Canaan. Towns are attacked, taken, and damaged, kings and subjects killed and then left behind, not held on to.

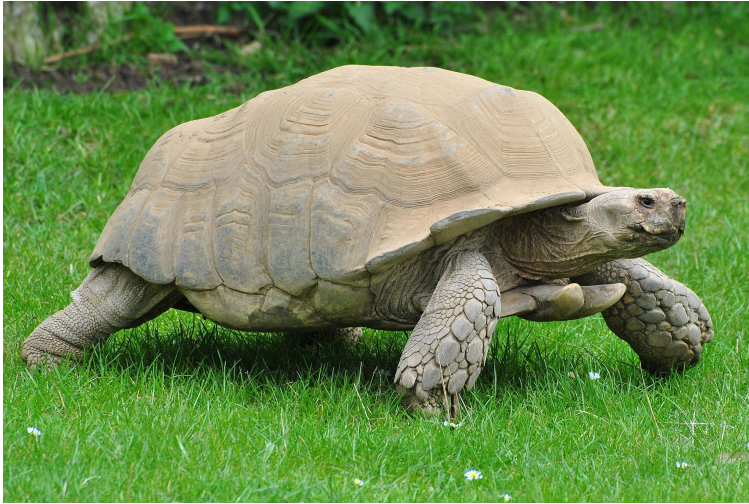
The same in north Canaan: strategic **Hazor is fully destroyed (burned), but no others**. The rest are treated like the southern towns, and again left, not held. Israel stayed based in Gilgal, then took over an inland strip from there up to Shechem and Tirzah. **These preliminary successes were celebrated with war rhetoric appropriate to the time, which should not be twisted to mean what it does not.**" (Kitchen, 2003)

Summary: Of all 40+ sites, only **three** are explicitly said to have been burned: Jericho, Hazor, and 'Ai.



Kenneth A. Kitchen





African spurred tortoise (Wikimedia)

"I will not drive them out from before you in one year, or the land would become desolate and the wild animals would multiply against you. **Little by little** I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land." – Ex 23:29–30

"The LORD your **God will clear away these nations before you little by little**; you will not be able to make a quick end of them, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you." – Dt 7:22 (NRSV)

- I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and towns that you had not built, and you live in them; you eat the fruit of vineyards and oliveyards that you did not plant. - Josh. 24:13 (NRSV)
- **"After the death of Joshua, the Israelites inquired of the Lord, "Who shall go up first for us against the Canaanites, to fight against them?" - Judges 1:1 (NRSV)**
- **"So the Israelites lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and they took their daughters as wives for themselves, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they worshiped their gods." - Jdg 3:5-6 (NRSV)**

- "The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed crowd also went up with them, and livestock in great numbers, both flocks and herds" – Ex 12:37–38
- "The word of the LORD came to me: Mortal, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite." – Ezek 16:1-3
- "When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous."" – Dt 26:4–5

- The full accounting of the text is variegated. Depending on your selectivity, one could argue
 - The fathers came from Ur and/OR they were Arameans.
 - The Israelites wiped out everyone in Canaan and then settled it OR most of the tribes failed miserably to take their inheritance.
 - The Israelites annihilated the Canaanites in one go OR the Canaanites were driven out over a period of generations.
 - The Israelites were commanded to annihilate the Canaanites OR they were Canaanites.
- Rather than being selective and pitting biblical authors against each other, we should let *all* of Scripture inform our understanding of Israelite Origins.

1

Intro + Overview

Historical background to the current archaeological crisis.

2

What Does the Bible Really Say?

A brief overview of the actual claims of the biblical text in Joshua-Judges

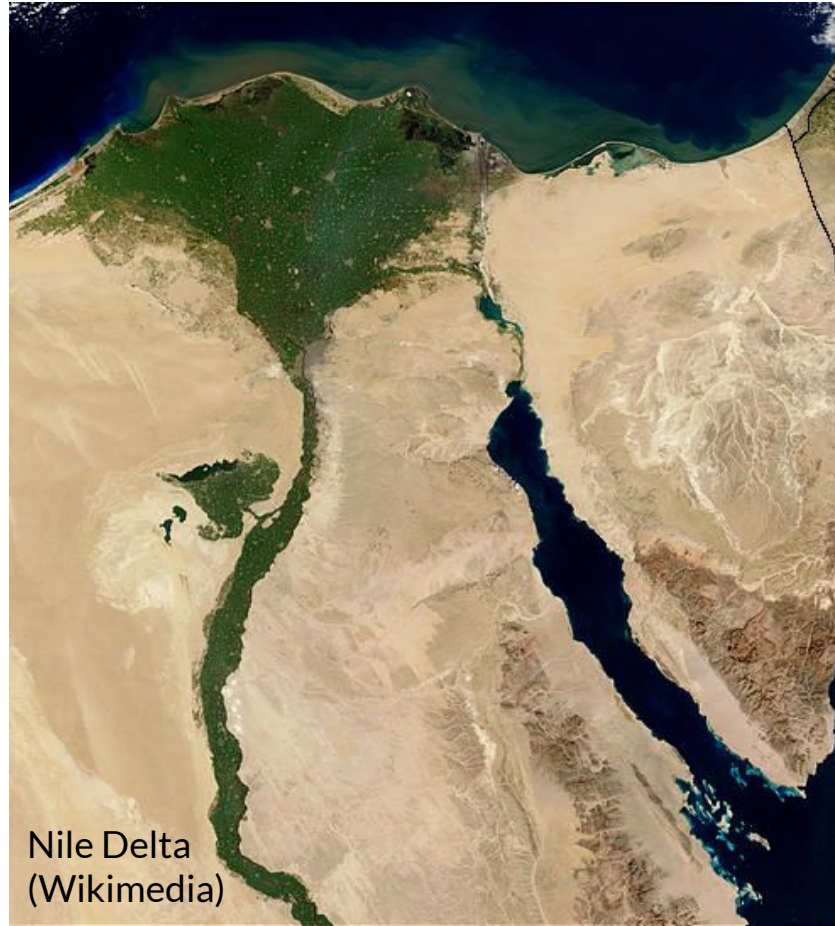
3

Archaeological Considerations

What unearthed specimens have shed light on the Israelite invasion of Canaan?

What does archaeology say?

Why is there no direct evidence? - Egypt



Nile Delta
(Wikimedia)

- Delta region is marshy, not many things expected to survive in the archaeological record.
 - Annual flooding with no source of stone
 - 99% of New Kingdom papyri estimated to be lost forever
- Monumental texts are minimal
 - Egyptian pharaohs not really inclined to memorialize their defeats
- Theological point of exodus narrative is to know who YHWH is, not pharaoh.

Additional Archaeological Considerations - Tells

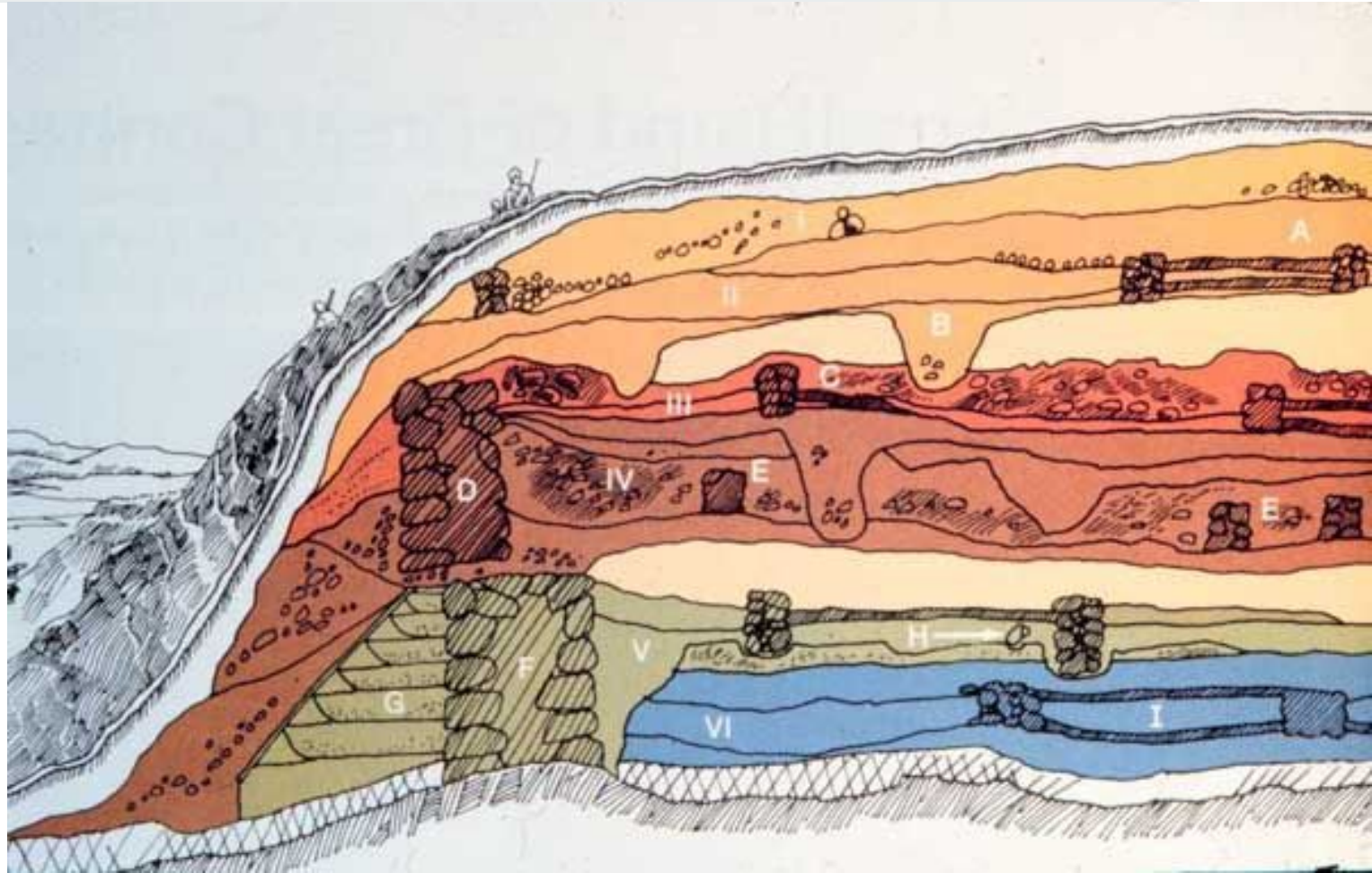


Image Source: "Staten Island Museum at CSI: Archaeology Study Collection for Ancient and Medieval Civilizations".
www.library.csi.cuny.edu/siias/webs.html, 2007.

- Erosion in abandoned cities often destroys any remnant of an era of occupation.
- Rarely does more than 5% of a mound get dug.
- The evidence of historically known conquests is relatively low
 - Three historically known invasions - the Norman conquest, the Anglo-Saxon settlement in England and the Muslim Arab conquest of the Levant, have been subjected below to fairly close study (Isserlin, 1983)

Preliminary comments

- Ancient chronology in general is a quagmire and biblical chronology in particular is no exception.
- There is NOT a single authoritative biblical chronology.
- There are no absolute dates given in ancient records, only relative.
 - Archaeologists must piece together records as best they can, sync them with each other, and attach them to known *astronomical* events.
- The Septuagint (LXX) chronology does not line up with the Masoretic Text (MT) chronology.

The Date of the Exodus - Biblical Summary

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 01 | Store Cities | ● 1270 BC |
| 02 | Septuagint Literal Chronology | ● 1406 BC |
| 03 | Masoretic Literal Chronology | ● 1446 BC |
| 04 | Pauline Summary | ● 1536 BC |
| 05 | Narrative Adding | ● 1596 BC |

Hoffmeier, J. K. (2007). What is the Biblical date for the exodus? a response to Bryant Wood. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 50(2), 225.

Geraty, L.T. "Exodus Dates and Theories" in Levy, T. E., Schneider, T., & Propp, W. H. (eds.) 2015. *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience, Cham-Heidelberg-New York: Springer.*

When Was the Exodus?

Approximate date (+/-50 to +/-100 years)

ca. 2100 BC

ca. 1700 BC

ca. 1600 BC

ca. 1500–1450 BC

ca. 1550 BC

ca. 1350 BC

ca. 1500 BC

ca. 1450 BC

ca. 1400 BC (1840s dating of Ramses II
Dyn.19—current dating ca. 1250 BC)

ca. 1300 BC

ca. 1250 BC (Ramses II and/or Merneptah)

ca. 1170 BC ca. 650 BC

Theory/pharaoh identification

MB I/EB IV (IBA) Exodus

-

Thera eruption

Thera eruption

Hyksos expulsion as Exodus

Leper expulsion as Exodus Ramses II as pharaoh of oppression

Traditional early date Exodus (Thutmose III or Amenhotep II)

Ramses II as pharaoh of oppression

Traditional Jewish date (ca. 1313 BC)

Late date Exodus

Sea Peoples-Philistine era Exodus

Egyptian Saite period Exodus

Geraty, L.T. "Exodus Dates and Theories" in
Levy, T. E., Schneider, T., & Propp, W. H.
(eds.) 2015. *Israel's Exodus in
Transdisciplinary Perspective. Text,
Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience,
Cham-Heidelberg-New York: Springer.*

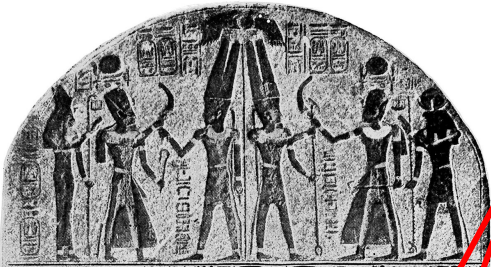
Date of the Exodus - Two Standard Solutions



Hoffmeier, J. K. (2007). What is the Biblical date for the exodus? a response to Bryant Wood. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 50(2), 225.
 Geraty, L.T. "Exodus Dates and Theories" in Levy, T. E., Schneider, T., & Propp, W. H. (eds.) 2015. *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience, Cham-Heidelberg-New York: Springer.*

What archaeological data are there?

Merneptah Stele (1208 BC)



The princes are prostrate, saying: "Mercy!"
 Not one raises his head among the Nine Bows.
 Desolation is for Tehenu; Hatti is pacified;
 Plundered is the Canaan with every evil;
 Carried off is Ashkelon; seized upon is Gezer;
 Yanoam is made as that which does not exist;
Israel is laid waste, his seed is not;
 All lands together, they are pacified;
 Everyone who was restless, he has been bound by the King of
 Upper and Lower Egypt

- Jericho
- Ai
- Hazor

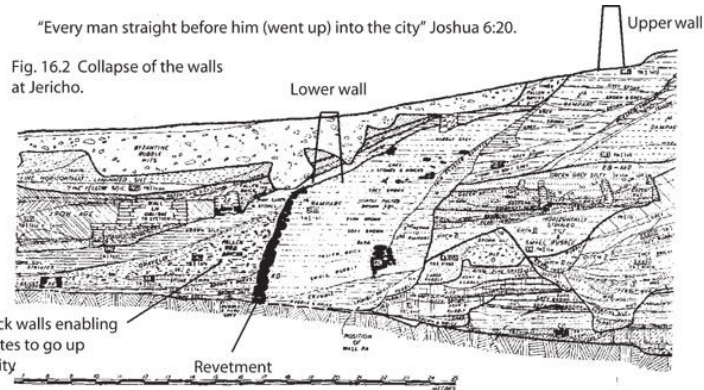
Jericho (Tell es-Sultan)

- First serious excavation by Sellin & Watzinger (1913) discovered a massive wall with residences embedded.
- John Garstang excavation (1930-36) followed the previous walls with additional destruction due to collapse.
 - Burned and charred grain
 - Collapsed walls in City IV
 - Destruction dated to 1406 B.C.!

1270 BC
"Late Date"

1446 BC
"Early Date"

"Every man straight before him (went up) into the city" Joshua 6:20.



Jericho (Tell es-Sultan)

- Garstang's dating was based on bichrome pottery dated to LB, early Iron I and put the destruction at **1406 B.C.**
- Dame Kathleen Kenyon returned to Tell es-Sultan to evaluate the site "without any Biblical baggage".
- Kenyon's newer stratigraphic methods yielded a City-IV destruction date closer to **1550 B.C.**
- Calibrated C14 dating places City-IV destruction layer at **1617–1530 B.C.**

1270 BC
"Late Date"

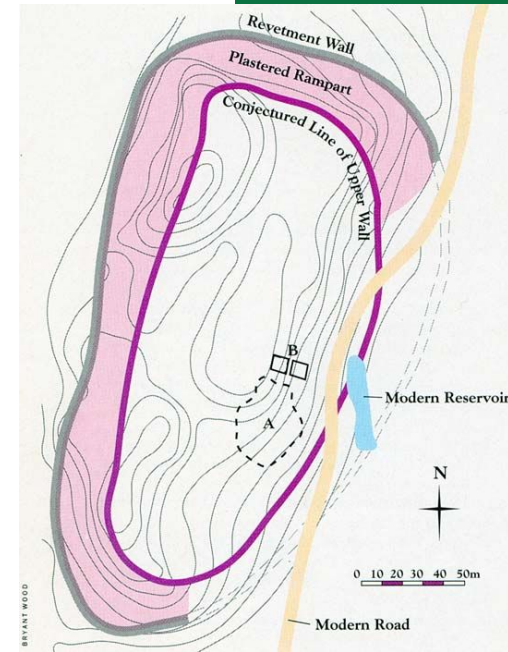
1446 BC
"Early Date"

Early Daters argue (i) Kenyon's arguments do not account for the Cypriote pottery and (ii) C-14 dating past 1400 B.C. is unreliable.

See: Bryant G. Wood, Ted Wright



Examples of locally-made bichrome pottery discovered by archaeologist John Garstang at Tell es-Sultan (ancient Jericho). Photo Credit: Associates for Biblical Research

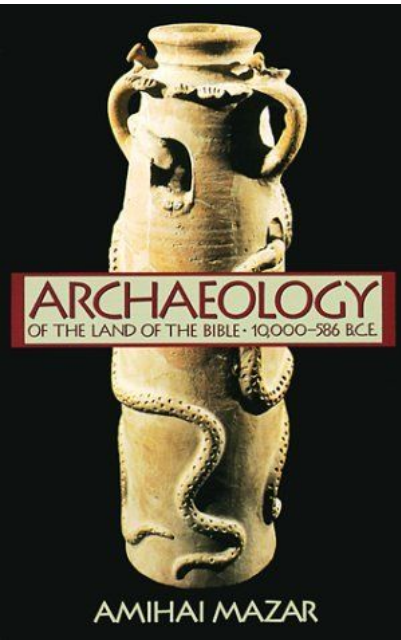


Jericho (Tell es-Sultan)

- Late Daters:** Argue a smaller reoccupation in the late 13th c. was the biblical Jericho. This remains at this layer are extremely scanty and mostly eroded due to a 400 year occupation gap.

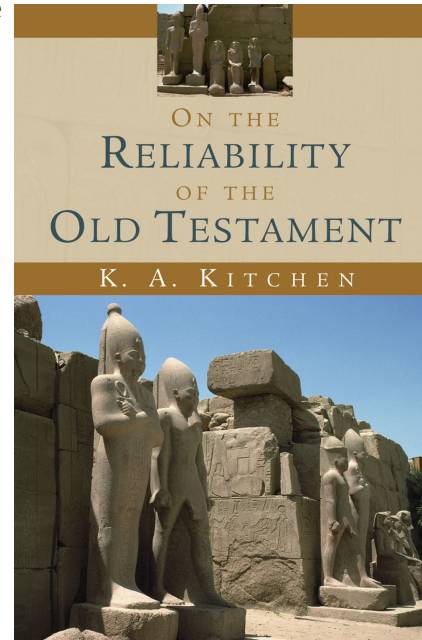
1270 BC
"Late Date"

1446 BC
"Early Date"



"There was a settlement during the Late Bronze Age, though most of its remains were eroded or removed by human activity. Perhaps, as at other sites, the massive Middle Bronze fortifications were reutilized in the Late Bronze Age. The Late Bronze Age settlement at Jericho was followed by an occupation gap in Iron Age I [reconstructed ca. 870 B.C.]. Thus, in the case of Jericho, the archaeological data cannot serve as decisive evidence to deny a historical nucleus in the Book of Joshua concerning the conquest of the city".

Mazar, A. (1992). *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 BCE*. Doubleday. page 331



"If 200 years of erosion sufficed to remove most of later Middle Bronze Jericho, it is almost a miracle that anything on the mound has survived at all from the 400 years of erosion between 1275 and the time of Ahab (875-853)...It is for this reason...that this factor must be given its due weight...We will never find "Joshua's Jericho" for that very reason"

Kitchen, K. A. (2006). *On the reliability of the Old Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. page 187-88

'Ai (et-Tell?)

- Excavations at et-Tell show the site was unoccupied from 2400 B.C. to 1220 B.C.
- The name 'Ai means something akin to "ruin" or "mound of stones", thus many have suggested the account is Joshua is an etiological story for a long abandoned mound.
- Some Early Daters (e.g. Bryan Wood) have countered that this is not the biblical 'Ai and suggested other locations (e.g. Khirbet el-Maqatir)
- Some Late Daters (e.g. Kenneth Kitchen) have lumped in 'Ai with the attack on Bethel or suggested alternative locations.
 - *There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel; they left the city open, and pursued Israel.* - Jo. 8:17 (NRSV)

1270 BC
"Late Date"

1446 BC
"Early Date"

Hazor (Tell el-Qedah)

- Three significant destruction layers

- Transition from MB to LB I (1550)
- Seti I around 1300 B.C.
- Final destruction before 1200 B.C.*

- 1200 B.C. destruction layer

- Mud-brick walls turned orange from the heat of fire
- Cultic objects desecrated and destroyed, unlike any previous destruction in the archaeological record
- "But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire." - Dt. 7:5 (NRSV)

Excavated by Yigael Yadin (1955-58, '68) and Amnon Ben-Tor (1990-present).

Both concur in attributing the 1200 B.C. destruction layer to the Israelites!

1270 BC
"Late Date"

1446 BC
"Early Date"



Decapitated basalt statue found in the final destruction layer of Late Bronze Age Hazor. Ben-Tor, A. (2006). The sad fate of statues and the mutilated statues of Hazor. *Confronting the past: archaeological and historical essays on ancient Israel in honor of William G. Dever*, 3-16.

1270 BC

"Late Date"

Jericho

13th century occupation is small and largely eroded. Biblical text could be hyperbolic and the archaeological site is lost to history

'Ai

Could be et-Tell linked to Bethel destruction or could be located somewhere else entirely.

Hazor

Conflagration just before 1200 B.C. fits extremely well with the timing and method of a Late Date conquest.

1446 BC

"Early Date"

Jericho

Conflagration from MB fits well with text, but debates over the dating with Kenyon methods and C-14 leave this up in the air.

'Ai

Could be located Khirbet el-Maqatir or somewhere else entirely.

Hazor

Several destruction layers to choose from, but none really line up with 1400 B.C. Moreover, the rebuilding projects don't line up with the Biblical account.

Hoffmeier, J. K. (2007). What is the Biblical date for the exodus? a response to Bryant Wood. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 50(2), 225.

Geraty, L.T. "Exodus Dates and Theories" in Levy, T. E., Schneider, T., & Propp, W. H. (eds.) 2015. *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience, Cham-Heidelberg-New York: Springer.*

Bringing it all together

- **Biblical data**

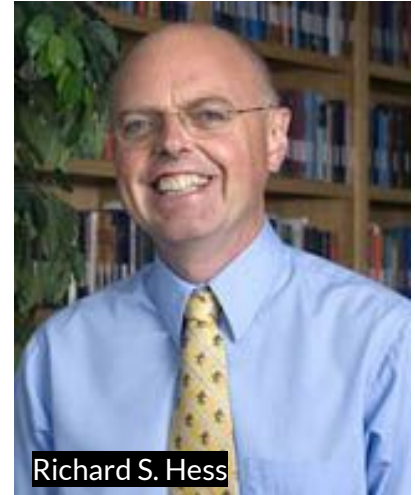
- Joshua's military campaigns are related via the Ancient Conquest Account genre that includes hyperbole, annihilation language, and many more features that mitigate a strictly literal reading. Only Jericho, 'Ai, and Hazor are burned.
- The full range of data (Joshua, Judges, Prophets, Exodus, etc) on Israelite origins paints a variegated portrait that includes violent and non-violent entry in the land.

- **Archaeological data**

- The three key sites all have destruction layers, but present a mixed picture with many unanswered questions related to dating, geography, etc.
- There is not a clear break in material culture between the indigenous Canaanites and the indisputably Israelite time period.

Leading Theories for the Origin of Israel

1. Conquest
2. Peaceful Infiltration
 - a. Mixed multitude (Ex. 12), Midianites (Nu. 22-25), Kenites (Jg. 4), Gibeonites (Jo. 9)
3. Resettled Pastoral Canaanites
4. Peasant Revolt



Richard S. Hess

"The conclusion which the evidence suggests is that **the biblical evidence does not perfectly coincide with any of the models proposed**. In itself this neither 'proves' nor 'disproves' these accounts. **The biblical material serves purposes other than those which the modern historian may seek**. Therefore, it is not surprising that coincidence is not perfect."

"Thus **to accept all the models to at least some degree** is not simply to opt for a 'middle of the road' position but to **affirm the diversity of human motivations and social action involved in the process of becoming a people**. Israel's (re)appearance in the thirteenth century or earlier may have led to the establishment of a religious faith which brought together other 'tribal' groups and so led to the formation of the people of Israel in Canaan."

Conclusion (Hess)

- **Aspects of the origins of Israel as suggested by the Bible are not disproven.**
 - (a) that a group of slaves could have escaped from Egypt and made their way to Canaan;
 - (b) that a group of nomadic tribal peoples could have entered and settled Canaan from east of the Jordan River;
 - (c) that people in the hill country could have found themselves involved in competition for natural resources, in rivalry with other migrating groups and with existing Canaanite 'city-states' and that this could have involved skirmishes and 'wars'; and
 - (d) that early Israel could have held to a faith in a deity known as Yahweh (cf. de Moor 1990).

- **Aspects of the origins of Israel as suggested by the interpretative models are not disproven.**
 - (a) that early Israelites could have entered the land and been involved in the destruction of such sites as Hazor (Yadin; Frendo);
 - (b) that nomadic and other peoples forced to flee for economic or political reasons, could have become Israelite at any time during its appearance and growth in Canaan (Alt);
 - (c) that dissatisfied elements from Canaanite city-states could have become Israelites (Mendenhall and Gottwald);
 - (d) that Egyptian 'buffer groups' in Northern Palestine (Coote) or habiru groups in Bashan, east of the Sea of Galilee (de Moor), could have become Israelite: and
 - (e) that Middle Bronze Age hill country settlers who had taken on an 'enclosed nomadic' existence during the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.) could have 're-sedentarized' in the subsequent period and have become Israelites (Finkelstein).

1. The exodus from Egypt is a central historical touchpoint in the theology of ancient Israel.
2. There is no direct evidence of the exodus. While unnerving, we must resist the urge to resort to sensationalistic apologetics.
3. There is strong *a priori* reason to take the broad outline at face value (Kuzari principle).
4. What little of the broad outlines of the story that can be corroborated by the archaeological data fits nicely in the overall scheme.
5. The Egyptian influence on the text is inexorable - "There's little evidence of Israel in Egypt, but much evidence of Egypt in Israel".

6. The Bible gives a variegated portrait of the origins of Israel; responsible interpreters should not minimize "dissenting voices".
7. The archaeological data are mixed at best, but show elements concomitant with the various factors at play in the biblical text.
8. Various theories have been suggested, none of which are comprehensive.
9. In sum, an exodus from Egypt followed by military skirmishes related by Ancient Conquest Accounts.
10. Additional Canaanite factions aligned with Israel (and vice versa) to produce a mixed population.

Connect



tx.ag/RCSlack



@RC_TAMU



tx.ag/RCEmail



@RC_TAMU



Ratio Christi
Texas A&M



RC-TAMU.org



Search: **“Think Theism”** in your podcast provider or go to **ThinkTheism.org**