History or Myth? An Archaeological Evaluation of the Israelite Conquest during the periods of Joshua and the Judges

By Titus Michael Kennedy

The thesis examines the archaeological and epigraphic data from Canaan during the Late Bronze Age in order to evaluate the historicity of the Israelite Conquest accounts in the books of Joshua and Judges. The specific sites examined in detail include Jericho, Ai, Hazor, Shechem, and Dan. Additionally, the chronology and setting for the period of the alleged Israelite Conquest is explained through both textual and archaeological sources, and several ancient documentary sources are examined which demonstrate the presence of Israel in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age. The thesis concludes that a vast amount of archaeological evidence indicates that the sites of Jericho, Hazor, Shechem, and Dan were occupied, destroyed, and resettled at the specific times and in the manner consistent with the records from the books of Joshua and Judges, and that ancient documents indicate that the Israelites had appeared in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age.

Key terms:
Israelite Conquest; Joshua; Judges; Late Bronze Age; Canaan; Israel; Hazor; Jericho; Ai; Archaeology.

THE ISRAELITE CONQUEST: HISTORY OR MYTH? AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF THE ISRAELITE CONQUEST DURING THE PERIODS OF JOSHUA AND THE JUDGES

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The era of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan, from the crossing of the Jordan and entrance into the Promised Land until the end of the Judges period, was a critically decisive time in the history of the nation of Israel according to the books of Joshua and Judges. Recorded in the book of Numbers is an instruction to Moses and the Israelites which says, “When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places; and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it” (Numbers 33:51-53, NASB). This conquest, according to the ancient texts of Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges, was an attempt at driving out the Canaanites and establishing a cohesive Israelite nation in the Promised Land. Although, according to the book of Joshua, many areas were conquered and taken in the initial attacks led by Joshua, the Israelites continued to battle for control of the land against the Canaanites for centuries. In the beginning of the book of Judges, commenting on the period at the end of Joshua’s command, the text lists off the many places that the Israelites were not able to conquer. These cities and areas included: Beth-shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, Gezer, Kitron, Nahalol, Akko, Sidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, Rehob, Beth-shemesh, Beth-anath, the area of Mount Heres, Aijalon, Shaalbim, and the lowland coastal plain around Gaza and Ashkelon (Judges 1:19,27-35, NASB). Thus, not until the Monarchy period is the land completely conquered—and even then the Philistines had to be dealt with.

1.1 Research Question

Regarding the series of events called the Israelite Conquest, there are three main views: the conquest began at the end of the 15th century BCE, the conquest began at the end of the 13th century BCE, or the “conquest” never really occurred, but the

emergence and settlement of the Israelites began in the early Iron Age. For those who do take the Israelite Conquest narratives as reliable history, according to a literal chronological reading, this era of continual conquest lasted approximately 350 years.[1] Another historical view, which asserts a figurative reading of the chronological data, suggests this time period was much shorter—less than 200 years. The alternative hypotheses assert that no Israelite Conquest occurred, and offer various explanations of the textual and archaeological data from Late Bronze Age and Iron I Canaan and the origins of the narratives in the books of Joshua and Judges.

The books of Joshua and Judges may appear to be written in the historical genre because names of real places mentioned, names of people are mentioned, events are arranged in a chronological order, the content is mostly about battles and land grants, and the "now it came about" phrase claiming the following events took place (Joshua 1:1; Judges 1:1). However, following in the tradition of Noth and Fritz, many current scholars propose that the conquest narratives of Joshua and Judges are not actual history, but invented history and etiologies from a much later period that are important theologically but not historically (Noort 1998: 127-28; McConville and Williams 2010: 4; Pressler 2002: 3-6). Because the books of Joshua and Judges mention specific, locatable regions and cities, mention specific events at these places, and give a chronological framework, some of the historical claims are scientifically testable through an analysis of archaeological data. The question to be researched, analyzed, and evaluated is whether or not the archaeological data from Canaan agrees with an historical Israelite Conquest, and if so, in which period or periods is this agreement situated.

If the books of Joshua and Judges are to be read as historical records, a possible solution to apparent discrepancies between the books of Joshua and Judges regarding the extent of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites must be proposed. The book of Judges makes it very clear that certain tribes did not initially take possession of some of the areas in Canaan (Judges 1:27-35). In the book of Joshua, some of these same

[1] Approximate absolute dates associated with the ca. 1400 BCE Israelite Conquest view can be determined using the established date for the beginning of King Solomon's reign, ca. 970 BCE and passages describing the lengths of time in between Solomon and the Exodus, the time between the Exodus and the initial entry into the land under Joshua, and a chronological statement made by Jephthah during his reign that Israel had been in the land 300 years (cf. 1 Kings 6:1; Joshua 14:10; Judges 11:26).

places are mentioned as being granted to certain tribes of Israel. For example, the land of Manasseh is said to encompass the area of Beth-Shean, Ibleam, Dor, En-dor, Taanach, and Megiddo, while the book of Judges records that the tribe of Manasseh did not take possession of these same aforementioned places (Joshua 17:11; Judges 1:27). However, following this demarcation of land in the book of Joshua is a note that the tribe of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities because the Canaanites persisted living in that land, just as the book of Judges also specifies (Joshua 17:12-13; Judges 1:27-28). Another apparent discrepancy along these lines appears in a comparison of the list of defeated kings in the book of Joshua and the list of cities not possessed by the Israelites at the beginning of the Judges period (Joshua 12:7-24; Judges 1:27-35). However, the book of Joshua merely claims that the kings of these cities were “defeated” or “smote,” and not that the Israelites took possession and moved into all of the cities of these kings (Joshua 12:7). In fact, the book of Joshua even specifies that much of the land remains to be possessed, then lists various areas (Joshua 13:1-6). Similarly, a claim is made that Joshua and the Israelites captured the kings and lands of southern Canaan, but then all of Israel returns to the camp at Gilgal rather than occupying those lands (Joshua 10:42-43). Yet, perhaps the most problematic passage in the book of Joshua concerning the claimed extent of the land conquered by the Israelites appears to state at that Joshua conquered the entire land of Canaan, which disagrees with aforementioned statements made in both the books of Joshua and Judgs (Joshua 11:23). However, closer analysis of this passage reveals that it states Joshua took “all the land” which the Israelites had conquered and “gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes” (Joshua 11:23, NASB). The passage does not state that all of Canaan was conquered by the Israelites under the campaigns of Joshua, nor does it state that the various tribes were even able to occupy the lands allotted to them, which other passages in both Joshua and Judges clearly show was not the case. Thus, it is possible to resolve the the apparent textual disagreement between total and partial conquest of the land of Canaan by examining and comparing particular conquest and land grant claims found in various narratives of the books of Joshua and Judges.

1.2 Hypothesis

A problem of conflict between the archaeological data and the Israelite Conquest narratives may be a result of the assumption that the Israelite Conquest never occurred, or if it did, it began in the 13th century BCE. Thus, archaeological evidence relevant to this conquest may have been ignored or interpreted in a different context. Archaeologists such as Yigael Yadin, among many others, believe that if any sort of conquest occurred, it took place in the 13th century BCE (Yadin 1982:16-23). The excavator of Gezer, Steve Ortiz, and the excavator of Hazor, Amnon Ben-Tor, both regard the Israelite conquest as an historical event, but follow the theory put forth by Albright and others that it was an event began in the 13th century BCE (Ben-Tor 1998: 456-67).[2] Even some Egyptologists and archaeologists who regard the Bible as historically accurate, such as Kenneth Kitchen and James Hoffmeier, prefer the 13th century BCE date for the Conquest (Kitchen 2002: 310; Hoffmeier 2007: 225-47).[3]

Those who have completely discounted the historicity of the Israelite Conquest, such as Finkelstein, state that "archaeology has uncovered a dramatic discrepancy between the Bible and the situation within Canaan at the suggested date of the conquest, between 1230 and 1220 BCE" (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 76). This may be entirely correct—that the account of the Israelite Conquest under Joshua is quite different than the archaeological picture of Canaan near the end of the 13th century BCE. The reason for this is that if a series of events is considered to be partially historical, and the search for supporting evidence is sought in the wrong time period or geographic location, then the correct data will not be discovered. As a result, this lack of evidence or incorrect data will then be added, as it has been, to the argument that the events are unhistorical or partially historical at best. If a series of events is assumed to be unhistorical because of earlier interpretation errors, then any data that may relate to it will not be associated with the supposed mythical event. Thus, when possibly applicable new data is discovered, it has little chance of being evaluated as relevant to

[2] Interview of Steve Ortiz by Joel Kramer, 2009.
[3] Kitchen and Hoffmeier are Egyptologists, and as a result, place more emphasis on Egyptian related material. Specifically, both of these scholars stress the importance of the city name Ramses in Exodus 1:11 as a chronological marker for Ramses II in the early 13th century BCE.

the Israelite Conquest because of the an a priori assumption that any possible data must fit a 13th century BCE Conquest theory or a no Conquest theory. Conversely, if a series of events written of in antiquity and passed on is examined at face value and allowed the possibility of being historically accurate, relevant archaeological and historical data may be discovered and applied.

On the other side of the argument, the number of archaeologists who regard the Israelite Conquest as an historical event beginning in ca. 1400 BCE has dwindled since the 1950s. John Garstang, one of the early excavators of Jericho, believed the evidence pointed to an Israelite Conquest beginning in ca. 1400 BCE (Garstang 1941: 368-72). More recently, Bryant Wood, who did ceramic research with the material from Jericho and now searches for an alternative location of Ai and evidence of its destruction in the Late Bronze Age, is one of the few currently excavating archaeologists in Israel and Palestine arguing for an historical Israelite Conquest beginning in ca. 1400 BCE (Wood 1990a: 44-58). This is a view that has not sufficiently been addressed with the hoards of new archaeological evidence uncovered in recent decades. Finkelstein, though stating that the evidence for the historical conquest of Canaan by the Israelites is weak, does importantly note that archaeological data can clarify history.

> Did the conquest of Canaan really happen? Is this central saga of the Bible—and of the subsequent history of Israel—history, or myth? Despite the fact that the ancient cities of Jericho, Ai, Gibeon, Lachish, Hazor, and nearly all the others mentioned in the conquest story have been located and excavated, the evidence for a historical conquest of Canaan by the Israelites is, as we will see, weak. Here too, archaeological evidence can help disentangle the events of history from the powerful images of an enduring biblical tale (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 73).

This question of whether or not the conquest of Canaan really happened must be addressed, and to do this the archaeological evidence that may relate to conquest must be investigated thoroughly. However, a slight change of perspective is necessary since the 13th century BCE Conquest model has been shown to be problematic on many levels. Instead, the archaeological evidence aligning with an Israelite Conquest beginning in ca. 1400 BCE at the end of the Late Bronze I will be evaluated to see if any data relates to the ancient text.

1.3 Research Methodology

The study will be primarily archaeological, although attention will be given to various ancient texts whenever they may have a bearing upon the period and events of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan. The claims of the texts describing the Israelite Conquest will be tested for historical accuracy by comparing the events and locations recorded primarily in the books of Joshua and Judges with archaeological evidence from specific sites and periods. Thus, the study will be based upon physical archaeological and ancient historical evidence compared to sections of the books of Joshua and Judges which can be tested historically and archaeologically. The methods of research include: the examination of the relevant Biblical texts, especially the books of Joshua and Judges, an analysis of site excavation reports from Jericho, Hazor, candidates for Ai, Shechem, Dan, and any other sites that may have a major impact on the understanding of the Israelite Conquest, ancient documentary evidence such as Egyptian topographical lists, campaign records, the Amarna Letters, and other Late Bronze Age letters and historical documents, data from site surveys will also be used, in addition to site plans, maps, and photographs, and finally numerous scholarly articles and specialists books on the relevant Conquest sites, the Israelite Conquest itself, ancient documents from the period, and any other necessary material that will enhance the archaeological analysis of the Israelite Conquest.

1.4 Aim of the Study

This study seeks to evaluate and clarify the archaeological and textual data surrounding and possibly relevant to an Israelite Conquest of Canaan beginning ca. 1400 BCE, at the end of Late Bronze I. This is a series of events which is hotly debated in both academic and religious circles, and critical to the historicity of the narratives of early Israel. It also seeks to bring to light possible evidence for certain events recorded in the books of Joshua and Judges, regarded by some as historical. This will be done through the examination of the relevant Biblical texts, primarily in the books of Joshua and Judges, excavation reports, ancient documentary evidence of the Late Bronze and

Iron Ages, site surveys, articles and books on the subject, and the overall setting of the geography and time period according to the archaeological data. Clarifying some of the archaeological data related to the Israelite Conquest is another goal of the study.

Since the current consensus is that there was no Israelite Conquest, or if anything happened, it began in the 13th century BCE, the debate is generally considered closed and the search for and evaluation of evidence is stifled. Yet, another reading of the Biblical texts concerning the chronology of the events of the Israelite Conquest date the beginnings of these events to the end of the 15th century BCE. This is the chronological scheme which will be adopted in this study, and the reasons for adopting this scheme will be detailed in a following chapter.

1.5 Layout of the Study

Chapter 1 introduces the topic and discusses various general views of the Israelite Conquest—no conquest, a 13th century BCE conquest, or a 15th century BCE conquest—with a focus on the views and arguments against the historicity of the Israelite Conquest.

Chapter 2 will first address the chronology of the Israelite Conquest, focusing on the reasons for a possible conquest of Canaan beginning at the end of the 15th century BCE. The general consensus in academia currently states that the Israelite Conquest is a myth, full of anachronisms and at least partially invented history. An earlier view, which is still held by some, asserts that the Conquest occurred, but it began in the 13th century BCE. The minority view, or “Early Conquest” view, unpopular since the beginning of the 20th century, but recently being reinvestigated, argues that the Conquest was an actual series of historical events that began at the end of the 15th century BCE. The “No Conquest” view argues that there is no evidence for the Conquest, and the picture of Canaan described in the Bible does not agree with the archaeological and historical picture. The “Late Conquest” view argues that there is some evidence for an Israelite Conquest, but the destruction of sites in the 13th century BCE relates to the Israelites. The “Early Conquest” view argues that the destruction of sites in Canaan by the Israelites began ca. 1400 BCE, in agreement with the Biblical

chronology, but that this view has lost credibility. This may be partially due to a tendency to assume early Biblical narratives are mostly mythological, and because archaeologists have often been looking for evidence in the wrong time period, occasionally the wrong locations, and at times have ignored or misinterpreted evidence. A summary of the narratives indicates destruction by fire of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor under Joshua and in that order. The conquest and destruction of Shechem, Dan, and Shiloh follow, in that order, after the death of Joshua. The chronology given within the text of the Bible indicates a Conquest under Joshua beginning ca. 1404 BCE, ending ca. 1370 BCE, and continuing as an Israelite Conquest under the various Judges from ca. 1370 BCE to ca. 1050 BCE when the Monarchy Period begins. This spans the end of Late Bronze I through Iron Age I. Following a chronological discussion, the overall setting of the period will be analyzed by comparing descriptions of Canaanite city fortifications from the Joshua narrative with the general setting of Late Bronze I Canaan derived from archaeological excavations. The books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and 1 Samuel describe Canaan as a territory of city-states under the rulership of local “kings.” Deuteronomy and Joshua describe Canaan as a land with many walled and fortified cities. Textual evidence, such as the Amarna Letters, has confirmed the city-state configuration. David Hansen’s survey of Late Bronze I cities in Canaan has confirmed the walled and fortified cities described in Deuteronomy and Joshua. Further, the Amarna Letters record nearly all of the same cities in Canaan as the book of Joshua, strongly suggesting an historical account and a similar time period. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of how a small force such as the Israelites may have been able to conquer individual cities in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age.

Chapter 3 contains an analysis of ancient texts from the Late Bronze Age which may contain information relevant to Israel and the Conquest of Canaan will be presented and analyzed. The books of Deuteronomy and Joshua state that “The Hornet” had been sent before, which was possibly the Egyptian army under Pharaoh Thutmose III and one campaign of Pharaoh Amenhotep II. The Amarna letters describe a period of turmoil in Late Bronze Age Canaan in which bands of Hapiru are attacking Canaanite cities and taking over the land. Ancient texts such as the Merneptah Stele

mention Israel in Canaan in the 13th century BCE. This ancient textual evidence may relate to the events described in the Israelite Conquest narratives.

The following chapters will include an archaeological evaluation of the major sites with relevant destruction data—Jericho, Hazor, and Ai primarily—and Shechem and Dan to a lesser extent. Chapter 4 will cover Jericho and how the archaeological evidence there may relate to the book of Joshua and the book of Judges. The chapter on Jericho will contain an analysis of the archaeological data from the various excavations over the past 100 years on the destroyed, final Bronze Age city and a comparison of the data to the narrative in the book of Joshua. The chapter will discuss various conclusions and the impact on the archaeology of Jericho, and the subsequent studies that have discovered new evidence or re-examined the data.

Chapter 5 will evaluate the claims of two conquests of Hazor found in the books of Joshua and Judges by an analysis of the archaeological data excavated at the site. At Hazor, the Joshua narrative indicates that the conquest of Hazor occurs near the end of Joshua's time as commander, that the city was burned, and that the populace was killed. These parameters, along with an Israelite destruction, should help narrow the search on the archaeological record. Yadin and Ben-Tor believe 13th century Conquest, and have promoted the Late Bronze II city as the one destroyed by the Israelites (Ben-Tor 1998: 456-67; Yadin 1982: 16-23). Zuckerman, the current co-director of the site argues that there was no conquest, but instead an internal rebellion of the lower classes (Zuckerman 2006: 37). A discussion and evaluation of the evidence for a 15th century Late Bronze I destruction will be presented, along with possible explanations for the Late Bronze II destruction or destructions.

Chapter 6 will present a survey of the problem of Ai and its location, and the various excavations that have been carried out at several proposed sites. Although the location of Ai is not known with certainty, Albright's theory came to be accepted by nearly all, almost without question. Yet, numerous problems with associating Et-Tell with Ai of the Israelite Conquest have been put forth by various archaeologists. Others have suggested different sites as Ai, and two excavations have been carried out in recent years. These sites are Khirbet Nisya and Khirbet Maqatir. The positives and

negatives of each possible site for Ai will be discussed, and if possible, a temporary conclusion drawn for the site that is currently the most likely option.

Chapter 7 examines the sites of Shechem and Dan in relation to the Israelite Conquest. Shechem, like Hazor, has two periods of interest. In the Late Bronze Age, textual sources such as Joshua and the Amarna Letters claim no destruction of the city. The archaeological record seems to confirm this, and an examination of the text of Joshua and the Amarna Letters mentioning Shechem are important to evaluating the events. Later, however, the book of Judges claims a destruction by Abimelek at the beginning of the Iron I period. Excavations at Shechem appear to reveal a destruction from this time period, so the data should be examined and evaluated in light of the textual evidence. The site of Dan, formerly Laish, has two relevant destruction layers. The first comes at the end of the Late Bronze Age, while the second comes in the Iron Age I. According to the book of Judges, the Israelites attacked, conquered, and subsequently settled the city around the end of the Late Bronze Age. The destruction and settlement evidence from this site should be examined and evaluated to discover if there are any correlations between the claims of the text and the archaeological record.

Chapter 8 will conclude the study by assessing the historical reliability of the specific conquest accounts after being compared with the archaeological evidence from the Late Bronze Age and limited material from Iron Age I. A summation of the evidence analyzed in relation to the Israelite Conquest of Canaan can be presented, and a conclusion about the historicity of the narratives drawn based on the correlations between the Israelite Conquest accounts and the archaeological data.

1.6 Literature Review

In the early 20th century, the Israelite Conquest was generally viewed as an historical event, although debate existed over when exactly it began. William Albright had a major impact upon the way that scholars viewed the Conquest, and his excavations throughout the land of ancient Israel, especially those he related to the Conquest, were highly influential. Albright believed that an Israelite Conquest occurred, and he dated it to the 13th century BCE. He stated, partially based on reading

generations rather than years into the chronological passage of 1 Kings 6:1 and a reference to the city of Ramses in the book of Exodus, that “we come to a point somewhere in the thirteenth century for the principal phase of the Conquest” (Albright 1939: 22). This 13th century BCE view has continued on into the present day, although it is more in a form of if the Conquest had happened, it should have been in the 13th century BCE, but archaeological data suggests the Israelite Conquest did not begin in the 13th century BCE (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 76). Albright’s belief in a 13th century BCE Conquest ultimately highly influenced by his archaeological findings, both at Bethel and Tell Beit Mirsim, along with the findings of Starkey at Lachish, which showed destruction layers that initially were all dated to the late 13th century BCE (Albright 1939: 17,23; 1935: 10-18). This view championed by Albright does regard the texts of Joshua and Judges as generally historical, but it is buttressed by an interpretive outlook that bent the ancient accounts to fit the initial archaeological findings. Although this view was prevalent for many years, it suffered a major blow when Kathleen Kenyon undertook excavations at Jericho and published her conclusions which contradicted a historical view of the Israelite Conquest. Kenyon asserted that the last Bronze Age city was from the Middle Bronze Age, not the Late Bronze Age, and thus the Israelite Conquest narratives must be merely legends (Kenyon 1957: 213-18, 257-58). Since Kenyon believed Jericho was unoccupied during the Israelite Conquest, and that the destruction layer should be attributed to another group, this gave those who were already skeptical of the Israelite Conquest tangible archaeological evidence that seemed to indicate the narratives were merely myth.

The first major skeptical views on the historicity of the Israelite Conquest surfaced in academia during the formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis in nineteenth century Germany (Wellhausen 1882). However, there was almost no archaeological work other than exploration carried out in the southern Levant with which to evaluate this theory, and thus the conclusions reached were tentative and limited in reliability. The proposals that the Israelite Conquest was not an historical event has had lasting impact, and the basic ideas of this view continue to be held by many in the present day. According to Finkelstein, this higher criticism school of the nineteenth century “pointed out the inner inconsistencies of the biblical text, which contains at least

two distinct and mutually contradictory versions of the conquest of Canaan" (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 91). This view contends that the books of Joshua and Judges are essentially narrating the same events in the same time period, but by different authors and different emphases. Instead of recording historical events accurately, the two accounts would be mythical and legendary, and attempt to in some way explain the origin of the Israelites. These criticisms were based on an internal analysis of the text, and initially early archaeological work instead seemed to vindicate the reliability of the Conquest accounts. Excavations in the early 20th century by archaeologists such as John Garstang and William Albright appeared to confirm the historicity of the accounts with discoveries of destructions attributed to the invading Israelite army (Albright 1923: 141-49).

Soon, however, Kenyon's conclusions about Jericho and the conquest became the accepted theory throughout scholarship, and combined with errors on the part of Albright, Starkey and others in dating destruction layers and identifying them with the Israelite Conquest under Joshua, most publications on the subject since then have leaned toward the assertion that there was no Israelite Conquest (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 107, 118). The skepticism of the historicity of the Israelite Conquest resulted in formulating multiple alternate explanations for the archaeological and textual discoveries once thought to be related to the Israelite Conquest.

Several scholars have presented multiple interpretations of the conquest accounts in Joshua and Judges and events in Late Bronze Age Canaan that may or may not relate to early Israelites. The main models are: a historical conquest by the Israelites under Joshua and the Judges, a gradual and peaceful infiltration of nomads from outside Canaan eventually causing some later destruction, a peasant revolt against the elite of Canaan resulting in both violence and a new culture, and a population displacement model which posits a forced movement to the highland region of Canaan.

The model promoting conquest by the Israelites has several variants, but generally this model suggests that the conquest narratives are basically historical, and that a group called the Israelites, from outside of Canaan, did destroy several Canaanite cities while taking over the land (Albright 1957: 273-89; Bright 1981: 129-43). This

historical conquest model grants the possibility that the Israelite Conquest narratives contain historical events and correlates archaeological and epigraphic data with some of the events. This model would be rendered invalid if the archaeological and ancient textual data from Late Bronze and Iron Age Canaan disagrees with historical claims of the conquest of specific cities and the existence of a group called Israel in the latter half of the Late Bronze Age.

The infiltration model suggests that there was a gradual and peaceful infiltration into the unoccupied highland region of Canaan by nomads and pastoralists from outside the region who eventually merged with some Canaanites into a tribal confederation by ca. 1100 BCE, became known as Israel, and only in the later period did clashes between this new group and the local Canaanite city-states occur (Alt 1968: 175-221; Noth 1960: 68-86). Like the historical conquest model, the infiltration model advocates an entry into Canaan from an outside population. This model may agree with some of the trends of archaeological data, but it fails to directly address the possibility of the changes and destructions in Canaan at the Late Bronze I/Late Bronze II transition.

The “peasant’s revolt” theory, which was originally advocated by Mendenhall, argued that:

> there was no statistically important invasion of Palestine at the beginning of the twelve tribe system of Israel. There was no radical displacement of population, there was no genocide, there was no large scale driving out of population, only of royal administrators (of necessity!). In summary, 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…the earliest Israelites actually had been under the domination of the Canaanite cities, and had successfully withdrawn (Mendenhall 1962: 73, 77).

The peasant revolt model seeks to explain the emergence of Israel as a result of a Marxist style rebellion of the lower classes against the elites in Canaanite society who held the political and religious power, leading to a withdrawl of the lower classes and eventual formation of a separate culture (Mendenhall 1962: 66-87). A later variant of this theory explains some of the destruction evidence in Late Bronze Age Canaan as a result of violent revolt by the peasants against their overlords controlling the city-states (Gottwald 1979: 406-09). This theory reads a Marxist political ideology into the culture of

Late Bronze Age Canaan in order to explain the emergence of a new culture and the destruction of some of the city-states.

The popularity of many of these models has waned in recent years, and scholars have sought other, but similar, ways to explain the emergence of the Israelites and destruction in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I. The common tie binding these various theories together, excepting the historical conquest model, is that they all discount an actual Israelite Conquest and attempt to come up with an alternative explanation. In a critique of the three most popular of the earlier proposed models attempting to explain the "Israelite Conquest" or emergence of Israel, Fritz argues that:

> the invasion hypothesis, with its naive adoption of the traditional interpretation of the book of Joshua, does not take into account the critical analysis of biblical books since the Enlightenment. The infiltration hypothesis fails to explain the fall of the Canaanite city-states, especially since the collapse of the Late Bronze Age culture presents no precondition for the settlement process. And the revolution hypothesis is forced into a laborious explanation of the conditions conducive to revolt and reorganization, without being able to give sufficient reasons for this development. In addition, none has thus far satisfactorily taken note of recent archaeological findings (Fritz 1987: 84).

The population displacement model, proposed as an alternative to these three models, hypothesizes that the emergence of Israel was due to environmental and economic factors that caused the movement of many people in Canaan to the highlands, close contact and cultural exchange, and the eventual formation of the separate culture of Israel (Fritz 1987: 84-100; Callaway 1988: 53-84). Finkelstein promotes a variant of this view that the Israelites were formerly Canaanites, and that the new, distinct culture emerging archaeologically as new settlements in Iron I was a result of the resettlement of the highland region by the same people that had lived there in the Middle Bronze Age (Finkelstein and Mazar 2007: 83). While archaeologically this model builds off of settlement patterns, there is no ancient textual evidence which reinforces the theory. Of all of the proposed models, the invasion hypothesis or historical conquest model is the most scientifically testable because of the ability to compare textual claims in the books of Joshua and Judges to archaeological data and texts from Late Bronze Age Canaan in order to see if there is a match in specific data, or conversely, a conflict between the conquest narratives and the archaeological data.

Today, much more so than in the mid-twentieth century, the Israelite Conquest is dismissed as a mythical account, and thus largely ignored in the fields of archaeology and history. There are exceptions, such as Hazor director Amnon Ben-Tor, who still believes in some sort of partially historical Conquest, although the prevailing view has changed (Ben-Tor 1998: 456-67). Even Ben-Tor's co-director at the site of Hazor argues that no Israelite Conquest took place (Zuckerman 2006: 37). William Dever, former excavator of Gezer, takes a somewhat mediate position between Ben-Tor and those who regard the Israelite Conquest as completely unhistorical. Dever, in regard to the record of a Conquest and Israelite origins, wrote:

> I can only suggest that we must presuppose a complex, multi-faceted process for the formation of the later literary tradition of the "origin stories." Thus we are dealing here with literature, which does not reflect "real" life directly or even necessarily accurately—especially ancient literature, which never claims to be historical in the modern sense. Literature reflects life imaginatively. The biblical writers and editors are therefore interpreting events; seeing the past through 'the eyes of faith'; looking at monarchical Israel after its history is finished, trying to make sense of it all (Dever 1995: 211).

He appears to suggest that the stories of Israelite origins, in which the Conquest narratives are included, are literature that does reflect past events, but not in the same way that history is currently recorded. About the military campaigns of the early Israelites, Dever contends that:

> …the newer archaeological evidence does not mean that there were *no* military conflicts that accompanied Israel's emergence in Canaan. And the fact that we now know that the biblical conquest stories are partly later literary inventions certainly does not mean that the *entire story* of ancient Israel was "invented" by the biblical writers (Dever 2003: 72).

Thus, Dever allows for some sort of historical memory associated with the Israelite Conquest accounts, although there was some emergence of the Israelites in Canaan based on actual events, and there could have been military action associated with some of this process.

Other current archaeologists, however, take a more definitive position. The current Italian-Palestinian excavators consider the conquest of Jericho by the Israelites to be a dead issue and the archaeological findings to be a blatant contradiction of the

account in the book of Joshua.[4] Killebrew states bluntly that "scholars agree" the book of Joshua contains little historical value, and most likely reflects a later time period (Killebrew 2005: 152). This is similar to the view elaborated by Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar, who both promote the view that Israelites emerged from the Canaanites, and thus there could not have been any military invasion by the Israelites to displace the Canaanites—rendering the book of Joshua essentially devoid of any real historical value. Mazar argues that:

> investigations have shown that many of the sites mentioned in these conquest stories turned out to be uninhabited during the assumed time of the Conquest, ca. 1200 B.C.E. This is the case with Arad, Heshbon, 'Ai, and Yarmuth. At other sites, there was only a small and unimportant settlement at the time, as at Jericho, and perhaps Hebron. Others, like Lachish and Hazor, were indeed important Canaanite cities, yet they were not destroyed as part of the same military undertaking since approximately one hundred years separate the destruction of Hazor (in the mid-thirteenth century B.C.E.) from that of Lachish (in the mid-twelfth century B.C.E.)…It is thus now accepted by all that archaeology in fact contradicts the biblical account of the Israelite Conquest (Finkelstein and Mazar 2007: 61-62).

Although Mazar claims that all accept the view that archaeology contradicts the accounts of the Israelite Conquest, this is not quite the case, as there are dissenting voices in the archaeological community. He does make an important point, however, in highlighting that the Israelite Conquest narratives do not fit with what he calls "the assumed" time of the Conquest, ca. 1200 BCE.

Finkelstein rejects the Israeilte Conquest, proposing instead an alternative mechanism to explain the collapse of the Canaanite city-state system and the emergence of a new "Israelite" ethnicity in Canaan.

> The settlement processes that took place in the highlands of Canaan in the Iron I had much in common with two preceding waves of occupation in these areas. These analogies reinforce the hypothesis that much of the Iron I settlement activity was part of a long-term, cyclic mechanism of alternating processes of sedentarization and nomadization of indigenous groups in response to changing political, economic, and social circumstances. Translating these words into simple language, one can say that the early Israelites were, in fact, Canaanites. The outcome of the Iron I settlement

[4] The new Tell es-Sultan Jericho official brochure available at the archaeological site, from the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, states that the excavations indicate "a contradiction between the biblical narratives and the archaeological evidence."

> activity—the emergence of the Israelite and Judahite territorial states—resembles in some features the formation in the hill country of large territorial polities during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, and possibly the Early Bronze Age (Finkelstein and Mazar 2007: 83).

The mechanism suggested by Finkelstein to explain upheaval and culture change and the emergence of Israel, is a hypothetical repeating cycle of sedentary and nomadic life in Canaan based on a data from a transition to sedentary life in the Early Bronze Age, semi-nomadic culture in the Late Bronze Age, and another major period of sedentary settlement in the Iron Age. The hypothesis rejects the claims of the ancient text, and in its place invokes an alterative theory based on general archaeological settlement data over an 800 year span. The ancestors of the Israelites, according to Finkelstein, lived as pastoral nomads in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age, then adopted a sedentary life in Middle Bronze II according to the discovery of some Middle Bronze II sites in the central hill country of Canaan which are similar to the settlement of this area in Iron I; allegedly, it was all motivated by economic and political conditions (Finkelstein 1988: 41).

Although focusing more on a literary study of the text and a critique of the early narratives, Biblical textual scholars such Thomas Thompson and John Van Seters regard the Israelite Conquest as mythological (Thompson 1987; Van Seters 2001). Lemche asserts that the accounts of Israel prior to settlement in Canaan are simply fiction, and that “it is no longer possible to offer even a reasonable defense of the Conquest narratives" (Lemche 1985: 409, 413). Lemche, like Finkelstein, also argues for a Canaanite origin of the Israelites—that they were runaways from the lower tier of Canaanite city-state society, called the Hapiru in the Amarna letters, and had left an agricultural existence to be semi-nomadic for a time and then resettle in the highlands at the beginning of the Iron Age (Lemche 1985: 427-29). Lemche says in summary of his rejection of the Israelite Conquest narrratives that “Jericho demonstrably contains no sign of occupation in the Late Bronze Age II of Albright’s proposed conquest, and et-Tell (traditional Ai) was uninhabited for 1000 years before Joshua arrived (Lemche 1985: 56). These are clearly problems to be addressed in an archaeological evaluation of the Israelite Conquest.

The opinions of these and other scholars have filtered down into academia, forming a general consensus in most circles that the Israelite Conquest is not historical because of the alleged lack of archaeological evidence agreeing with the narratives. The question that must be asked is whether or not the archaeological and ancient textual evidence clearly supports or refutes the ancient narratives of the Israelite Conquest, primarily found in the books of Joshua and Judges.

Chapter 2

Chronology and Setting of the Israelite Conquest

In order to properly evaluate any archaeological remains possibly associated with the accounts of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan found primarily in the books of Joshua and Judges, the first step must be to establish a chronology for these narrative events. Once a chronology is in place, it then becomes possible to do a reliable general archaeological survey of the fortifications status for Canaan and specific cities mentioned in the Conquest narratives can be utilized to see if the general archaeological finds agree with the parameters of the text. Finally, the question must be answered as to whether or not it would have been possible for a group like the Israelites to have conquered many cities and areas in Canaan. These archaeological and textual investigations then become the basis upon which to evaluate the individual accounts of the Israelite Conquest period in the books of Joshua and Judges as either historical or mythological.

2.1 An Absolute Chronology for the Reign of Solomon from Hebrew, Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman Sources.

Within and surrounding the Israelite accounts of the Conquest of Canaan are multiple pieces of chronological information that can be used to pinpoint dates and time periods in which the events described in the Israelite Conquest narratives are supposed to have occurred. To acquire a date for the beginning of the Israelite Conquest under Joshua, a date for the reign of Solomon must first be established. Regnal dates for the kings of Israel and Judah, which have been developed into a relative chronology because of detailed reign length information in the books of Kings and Chronicles, are synchronized with Assyrian and Babylonian kings mentioned in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah, that also appear on Assyrian and Babylonian king lists. Lists of these Assyrian and Babylonian kings were in turn expanded during the Hellenistic and Roman eras, and continue into the 2nd century CE, allowing a backwards

calculation into an absolute chronology of king lists all the way to Solomon by the use of parallel lists.

Using the reign lengths recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles allows the establishment of a detailed relative chronology for the rulers of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Combining this relative chronology with an absolute chronology for parallel Egyptian Pharaohs, and especially Assyrian and Babylonian kings of the 1st millennium BCE, the beginning of the reign of Solomon is acquired. A hallmark work, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, correlated the regnal data from the books of Kings and Chronicles with parallel Assyrian and Babylonian sources to arrive at absolute dates for the Israelite kings (Thiele 1983). Subsequent chronological studies have built upon and slightly refined this work, but essentially the chronology has remained intact and continues to be a useful and reliable tool.

Important works from antiquity that are useful in calculating absolute dates for rulers of the Egyptian Third Intermediate and Late Periods, and the Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian empires, include Ptolemy's Canon covering the reign of Nabonassar to the Roman Emperor Aelius Antoninus, the Neo-Assyrian Eponym List covering Shalmaneser III to Sennacherib, Manetho's King List, especially the section covering Dynasties XX to XXX, and the Uruk King List covering Assurbanipal to Seleucus II (Depuydt 1995: 97-99). The most important of these lists is Ptolemy's Royal Canon, but the others serve to fill in gaps and correct possible errors. This data, combined with the Roman practice of naming consuls for each year and the work of Dionysius Exiguus, who in 525 CE began the now commonly used BC and AD (or BCE and CE) year system, allows the establishment of an absolute chronology in years BCE for rulers of the 1st millennium BCE.[5] When this chronological data is correlated with the regnal lists of the kings of Israel and Judah, it results in the first year of the reign of Solomon placed at ca. 970 BCE—a date for Solomon that in recent scholarship is almost universally acknowledged (Green 1978: 355). Once an absolute date for the beginning of the reign of Solomon is established, an absolute date for the beginning of the Israelite Conquest

[5] The abbreviations BC and AD stand for "before Christ" and "Anno Domini," which use the approximate time of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth as the center point for the calculation of years. The abbreviations BCE and CE stand for "before common era" and "common era," which also use the same event as a center point, but the abbreviation is considered neutral. Another scholarly designation for calculating years is BP, which stands for years "before present" and is connected to radiocarbon dating using 1950 as the base year.

can be calculated, based upon chronological data recorded in the books of Kings, Judges, Joshua, and Exodus.

2.2 An Absolute Chronology for the Beginning of the Israelite Conquest Under Joshua

1 Kings 6:1 records the time from the fourth year of Solomon's reign as the 480th year after the Israelite Exodus from Egypt. "Now it came about in the 480th year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of Yahweh" (1 Kings 6:1). If Solomon's reign began in ca. 970 BCE, then the fourth year of his reign would begin ca. 967 BCE, and 479 years prior to that would be ca. 1446 BCE.[6] The book of Exodus records the time in between the exit from Egypt and the entrance into Canaan as approximately forty years. "The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan" (Exodus 16:35, NASB). The book of Joshua reiterates this period, recording that:

> For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, were finished because they did not listen to the voice of Yahweh, to whom Yahweh had sworn that He would not let them see the land which Yahweh had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey (Joshua 5:6).

The initial Conquest campaign under Joshua was rather quick in comparison to the extended period of the Judges in which Israel slowly gained dominance over most of Canaan. The book of Joshua specifies that Caleb was sent to spy out the land of Canaan 45 years ago, meaning that when combined with the 40 years of wandering following the time he spied out the land, the initial stage of the Israelite Conquest led by Joshua lasted only approximately 5 years.

[6] The 480th year prior would be 479 full years prior.

> I was forty years old when Moses the servant of Yahweh sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as it was in my heart. Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed Yahweh my God fully. So Moses swore on that day, saying, “Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed Yahweh my God fully.” Now behold, Yahweh has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that Yahweh spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today (Joshua 14:7-10).

The time that Caleb and the other men went to spy out the land of Canaan, however, was not immediately after they had left Egypt. The book of Numbers specifies that the Israelites left the wilderness of Sinai near the end of the second month, in the second year after they left Egypt.

> Now in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth of the month, the cloud was lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony; and the sons of Israel set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai. Then the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran” (Numbers 10:11-12; cf. Numbers 9:1).

Some months after that, the Israelites are cursed with 40 years of wandering in the wilderness because the spies, who were gone for a period of 40 days, gave a false report and a punishment of one year per day was enacted (Numbers 14:33-34). The time between the exit of the Israelites from Egypt and the beginning of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness can be approximated as two years. This approximate time is calculated because it was already at least one year and four months from leaving Egypt until the reprimanding off the spies, but Passover of the second year had already occurred, while Passover was celebrated just after crossing the Jordan River into the land of Canaan, prior to attacking Jericho (Joshua 5:10-11). Thus, the total time between leaving Egypt and entering Canaan to attack Jericho was approximately 42 years. After subtracting the 42 years between Egypt and Canaan from the ca. 1446 BCE date for the Israelites leaving Egypt, the entrance into the land of Canaan by the Israelites under Joshua and the beginning of the Conquest should have occurred ca. 1404 BCE. This places the beginning of the Israelite Conquest period at the close of the Late Bronze IB period in the Levant.

The end of the initial attacks under the command of Joshua in which many cities were conquered and local Canaanite kings slain, and the three major destructions and burnings of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor, came approximately five years after the entrance into the land of Canaan (cf. Joshua 14:10). This would place the destructions of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor in the period of ca. 1404-1399 BCE, all at the end of the Late Bronze IB period in the Levant. According to the Egyptian High Chronology, this coincides with the reign of Amenhotep III, who probably began his reign around ca. 1412 BCE in the 18th Dynasty of New Kingdom of Egypt (Van der Steen 1996: 51; Dever 1992: 3; Redford 1966: 124; Gardiner 1961: 443).[7] This date is in accord with the Egyptian High Chronology, which although in recent years has been less favored, a new and thorough chronological study places Egyptian dates from this period slightly earlier, more in line with the High Chronology. A series of 211 radiocarbon samples from plants found in funerary contexts associated with a particular Pharaoh or within a specific, known section of the Egyptian chronology were taken. The results place events in the New Kingdom, and specifically the 18th Dynasty, approximately 20 years earlier (Bronk Ramsey et al 2010: 1554-1557). This data can move the reign of Amenhotep III back to ca. 1412 BCE and suggests the High Chronology models are actually more accurate.

2.3 An Approximate Chronology for the Israelite Conquest Under the Judges

The subsequent period of the Israelite Conquest, which encompassed the time after the death of Joshua until the beginning of the Israelite Monarchy period, was much longer. The start of the reign of various Judges following the death of Joshua at 110 years of age and a brief period of elder rule, although one cannot give an exact date, may have begun around ca. 1374 BCE (Judges 2:8). Although no specific year of Joshua is tied into a specific date, the years of Caleb are directly correlated to the beginning of the wandering period and the beginning of the Conquest. Caleb and Joshua were approximately the same age, were closely associated as spies, and were part of the young military generation during the wandering period.

[7] According to Kitchen, an Egyptologist who often specializes in the chronology of Egypt but has been a critic of the High Chronology, there is an error margin of up to 20 years in the early New Kingdom anyhow, making past reconstructions within that 20 year window tentative (Kitchen 1991: 205).

> Your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun (Numbers 14:29-30, NASB).

Joshua, therefore, is over 20 years old at this time, but also not an old man, and likely about the same age as Caleb (cf. Exodus 33:11). Since Caleb was 40 at the time of the spying out of Canaan, and 85 at the conclusion of the early Conquest period, and Joshua was close to the same age as Caleb, then Joshua was probably also about 85, plus or minus 10 years, at the conclusion of the early Conquest period (cf. Joshua 14:10). However, because Joshua is mentioned much earlier in the chronological scheme of the book of Exodus than Caleb, and in a leadership position at that time (cf. Exodus 17:9), Joshua is perhaps the eldest of the two men. A conservative estimate would suggest Joshua as about 10 years older than Caleb, which would place the year of Joshua's death at 110 years old tentatively in ca. 1384 BCE, with a margin of error of several years on each side (Joshua 14:10; Numbers 8:25; Judges 2:8). Flavius Josephus claims that Joshua died at the age of 110, and 25 years after the death of Moses (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 5.117-118). This estimate, which has no evidence cited but obviously was dependent upon Jewish tradition of the time or early historical sources that were not preserved, would place the death of Joshua at ca. 1379 BCE. Thus, a date in the 1380's or 1370's BCE for the death of Joshua is entirely plausible, and a date of ca. 1374 BCE will be used as the approximate beginning for the first Judge of Israel.

Chronologically, the first Judge of Israel ruled sometime soon after the death of Joshua. He was one from the main generation of those who had entered the land under the leadership of Joshua and Caleb, the last surviving members of the generation that lived through the entire wandering period (Judges 2:10; Numbers 14:30). This first Judge was Othniel, son of Kenaz, the younger brother of Caleb (Judges 3:9). According to the chronological data previously discussed, this subjugation of the Israelites by Kushan Rishathaim, king of Aram would have occurred somewhere in the middle of the 14th century BCE. Because of the slight ambiguity in time between the end of the initial conquests under Joshua and the beginning of the Judges period conquests, only rough

approximate dates can be established for the beginning and middle of the Judges period.

Assuming as correct the generally accepted date for the commencement of Solomon's rule in ca. 970 BCE, and the record claiming that David ruled for 40 years before the transition of power to his son Solomon (7 years in Hebron and 33 years in Jerusalem over all Israel), then David began his partial rule in ca. 1010 BCE (2 Samuel 5:4-5). The reign length of Saul is problematic, since 1 Samuel 13:1 in the Masoretic Text either contains errors or is not meant to supply data about Saul's entire reign, while the LXX omits the passage and the Dead Sea Scrolls have a lacuna in the passage. However, the 1st century CE book of Acts and the writings of Josephus give 40 years as the length of Saul's reign (Acts 13:21; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 6.378). Thus, a 40 year reign, beginning ca. 1050 BCE is the most plausible for Saul based on the currently available evidence.

In between the end of Joshua's campaign and the beginning of the reign of Saul, ca. 1399 BCE to ca. 1050 BCE, the chronology of the Judges is somewhat murky, but some careful and logical approximate reconstructions have been made by Merrill and other scholars (Merrill 1987: 146-88). The book of Judges specifies the length of oppressions, peace, and reigns, but not in as clear a chronological framework as the records pertaining to the Monarchy period. One key verse for estimating the length of the Judges period and also giving a somewhat discernable date to the reign of Jephthah claims that during his time the Israelites had been in the area of Canaan, specifically Transjordan where some had settled at the time of the entrance into Canaan, for three hundred years (Judges 11:26). This would place the time of Jephthah at ca. 1100 BCE, perhaps as early as ca. 1104 BCE if the 300 hundred years is meant to be taken exactly rather than as a round approximation.

The period of the Judges may then be divided according to the indicators given in the text for the reigns, oppressions, and periods of peace. This construction would place both the Ammonite and the Philistine oppression, which began at the same time, 18 years prior to Jephthah in ca. 1122 BCE (Judges 10:7-8). The period of Samson, which is set in the 40 year Philistine oppression period, would have been sometime between ca. 1122 BCE and ca. 1082 BCE (Judges 13:1, 15:20). The date of the recovery of the

Ark of the Covenant by the Israelites under Samuel at the battle of Mizpah, then, would have been ca. 1082 BCE at the end of the Philistine oppression, while the loss of the Ark took place 20 years before at Aphek at the end of the Judgeship of Eli, ca. 1102 BCE (1 Samuel 7:2-13). Other important chronological periods for the continuing Israelite Conquest of Canaan during the rule of the Judges include Eglon at Jericho, Deborah and Barak at Hazor, Abimelek at Shekem, and the tribe of Dan taking the city of Laish. All of these events fall within the middle period of the Judges, and thus assigning a very precise date is difficult.

The assassination of Eglon of Moab, by Ehud at Jericho, occurs after the death of Joshua (ca. 1384 BCE +/- 10 years?), eight years of oppression by Kushan (Judges 3:8), 40 years of rest under Othniel (Judges 3:11), and 18 years of oppression by Moab (Judges 3:14), for a total of 66 years. After the death of Joshua, the writer of Judges seems to indicate that the older generation, that of Joshua, Caleb, and the elders who lived slightly after Joshua, died out soon and immediately after them the worship of Canaanite gods and the oppressions began (Judges 2:10-14). Allowing about 10 years for the death of the remnants of that generation, then going 66 years further, a date around the period ca. 1326-1308 BCE is suggested for the time that Ehud assassinated Eglon at Jericho, which would be archaeologically at the end of the Late Bronze IIA period.

Deborah and Barak leading the Israelites to victory in the second conquest of Hazor is narrated in Judges 4 and 5. This comes after the death of Joshua and his generation (ca. 1374 BCE?), after eight years of oppression by Kushan (Judges 3:8), 40 years of rest under Othniel (Judges 3:11), 18 years of oppression by Moab (Judges 3:14), 80 years of rest after Ehud assassinated Eglon (Judges 3:30), an unspecified amount of time, perhaps only a singular event not spanning years, when Shamgar killed 600 Philistines (Judges 3:31), and finally, 20 years of oppression by the king of Hazor (Judges 4:3). The total years given between the start of the oppression by Kushan and the battle which frees Israel from the oppression by Jabin (which appear to be actual successive years) amount to 166 years. This would place the conquest of Hazor under Barak at ca. 1208 BCE, or perhaps slightly earlier, at the end of the Late Bronze IIB and the final phase of the Canaanite city at Hazor.

Judges 9 narrates the short rule of Abimelek at Shekem and the eventual destruction and burning of the city. One detailed chronological reconstruction places Abimelek reigning at Shekem from ca. 1120-1117 BCE, with the destruction coming just before the end of his reign and his death (Merrill 1987: 170).

The tribe of Dan attacks and conquers the city of Laish according to Judges 18, but this is one of the most difficult Israelite Conquest events to date with precision. During the time of Deborah and Barak, the writer of Judges reveals that the tribe of Dan was still sojourning or living in ships, and thus they had not yet taken the city of Laish and inhabited that area (Judges 5:17). At the end of the narrative about Dan conquering and inhabiting the city of Laish, it is noted that the "house of God" was at Shiloh (Judges 18:31). Since the attack on Hazor by Deborah and Barak occurred ca. 1208 BCE and the Ark of the Covenant was removed from Shiloh and fell into Philistine hands ca. 1102 BCE, the removal or destruction of the "house of God" at Shiloh likely occurred at the same time of this Philistine victory, which probably resulted in the destruction of the city (1 Samuel 4:10-11; 1 Samuel 7:2; Jeremiah 26:6-9). Thus, the conquest of Laish by the tribe of Dan would have occurred sometime between the end of the 13th century BCE and the end of the 12th century BCE.

An archaeologically testable chronology has been established for the major destructions of the Israelite Conquest from the brief period under Joshua, all the way through the drawn out Judges period. However, before proceeding to the details of each site, a general survey of Canaan during this proposed period, the Late Bronze Age, should be analyzed in order to indicate if further inquiry is warranted.

2.4 Fortified Cities of the Late Bronze Age and the Israelite Conquest Accounts

The span of archaeological periods for the Israelite Conquest is proposed as the close of Late Bronze IB to the middle of Iron I, which encompasses the early conquests led by Joshua and the subsequent conquests led by various people during the Judges period. Some of the most important Israelite Conquest data and the bulk of the city descriptions are set in the early part of the Israelite Conquest period, during the era in which Joshua is leading the Israelite tribes. This period, according to the chronology set

out above, falls into the Late Bronze IB period of the southern Levant. One scholar calls the Late Bronze I period “a very confusing period in the archaeological record, marked by destructions and partial abandonments” (Leonard 1989: 5). The record of destructions and partial abandonments is to be expected if the Israelite Conquest period began at the end of the Late Bronze I. The first question to answer, however, is whether or not the description of many of the cities as fortified during this period is even accurate.

2.5 Reports of Fortified Cities

According to descriptions of the Late Bronze I southern Levantine cities in the books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, many had fortifications. Before being sent out to scout sections of Canaan, the Israelites were instructed to determine “how are the cities in which they live? Are they in camps or with fortifications?” (Numbers 13:19). The scouts reported generally that “The cities are fortified,” (Numbers 13:28), particularly that there are “cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars” (Deuteronomy 3:5), and that “the survivors who remained of them had entered the fortified cities” (Joshua 10:20). This appears contrary to a general archaeological evaluation of Late Bronze Age Canaan by Amihai Mazar, who claims that in the Late Bronze Age, there is an “almost total lack of fortifications. At most sites excavated, none have been found, although at some sites the mighty Middle Bronze Age defenses may have continued in use during the Late Bronze period” (Mazar 1992: 243). As Mazar goes on to discuss this issue, however, it becomes clear that the lack of fortifications was more characteristic of Late Bronze II than Late Bronze I. He writes that “only at a few other sites—Ashdod, Tell Abu Hawam, and Tell Beit Mirsim—is there evidence of fortification walls constructed during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C.E.” (Mazar 1992: 243). Thus, the archaeological data suggests that the percentage of fortified cities in Late Bronze II was low, but in the Middle Bronze Age many of these cities were fortified, and their fortifications often continued into the Late Bronze I. Supporting this proposition, Burke demonstrates from both textual and archaeological sources of the Late Bronze Age that several watchtower fortification cities existed in Canaan (Burke

2007: 33). The fortification status of southern Levantine cities in the Late Bronze I period is a major issue, since Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, recording events in the Late Bronze I period, claim many fortified cities present in Canaan during this period. In contrast, during the later stories of conquest in the period when the Judges ruled, only Shekem and some of the Philistine cities are mentioned as having fortifications (Judges 9:35; 1 Samuel 6:18). As Mazar has noted, in the Late Bronze II, fewer cities were fortified—a state which is also portrayed throughout the book of Judges. Yet, in a survey of archaeological literature, David Hansen found that the prevailing view among archaeologists is that in the Late Bronze Age as a whole, there were very few towns with walls or fortifications (Hansen 2003: 82). This is exemplified by the assertion that the whole Late Bronze period in Canaan was essentially devoid of fortified cities, and explanations of wall reliefs such as the "Merenptah reliefs" at Karnak which show Egyptians storming walled cities in 13th century BCE, Late Bronze IIB Canaan, specifically some likely in the region of Philistia, as artistic rather than realistic (Gonen 1992: 243).

2.6 A Survey of Late Bronze I Fortifications in Canaan

In order to answer the question as to whether or not fortifications were present at many cities during the Late Bronze I in the southern Levant, and thus either demonstrate these fortification claims from the early Israelite Conquest narratives to be mythological or factual, a survey of the archaeological publications dealing with cities in Canaan occupied during the Late Bronze I period was undertaken by David Hansen.[8]

The sites in the survey encompassed the area from Zin in the south to Rehob in the north (a location near the source of the Jordan River), and the Mediterranean coast in the west to both banks of the Jordan River in the east. Hansen concluded that 51 excavated cities within this geographical area were occupied during Late Bronze I, 27 of which were fortified during the Late Bronze I, 24 were not fortified, and 6 of the 24 unfortified were labeled uncertain because of confusing stratigraphic context for the

[8] Cf. Hansen, David. *Evidence for Fortifications at Late Bronze I and IIA Locations in Palestine*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Trinity College and Theological Seminary (Newburgh, IN), 2000.

fortifications found there. Three others in the unfortified section—Lachish, Tell Jokneam, and Beth-Shean—may have formed fortifications with a continuous line of buildings around the site or with natural barriers (Hansen 2003: 83). At least 27 of 51 (52.9%), and possibly an additional 9 cities—up to 36 out of 51 for 70.6%—were fortified in Late Bronze I. This means that the general claim of fortified cities present in Late Bronze I Canaan just prior to and during the beginning of the Israelite Conquest, according to the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua, is in agreement with the archaeological data. Examination of specific sites reveals further agreement between the claims of the Conquest narratives and the results of archaeological investigations of Late Bronze I Canaan.

Chart of Proposed Sites Mentioned in the book of Joshua and occupied during the Late Bronze Age, along with geographical zone and fortification status. After Hansen 2003: Table II, 84.

Site Name	**Ref #**	**Location**[a]	**Zone**[b]	**Status**[c]	**Walls**	**Gates**	**Glacis/ Rampart**	**Comment**
Abu Hawam, Tell	1	1521.2452	C	F	X		Rampart	
Acco, Tel	2	1585.2585	C	F	X		Rampart	
Achzib	3	1598.2727	C	F	X		Rampart & Glacis	
‘Ajjul, Tell el-	4	0934.0976	C	F	X		Rampart & Fosse	
Aphek	5	143.168	C	N				

Ashdod	6	1180.1290	C	F	X	X	Fosse	
Ashkelon	7	107.119	C	N				
Batash, Tel	8	1410.1320	S	F	X			
Beit Mirsim, Tell	9	1415.0960	H	F	X			
Beitin	10	172.148	H	F	X	X	Rampart	
Beth-Shean	11	1977.2124	J	N				Egyptian Ctr
Beth Shemesh	12	1477.1286	S	F	X	X		
Beth Zur	13	1590.1108	H	F	X			
Dan	14	2112.2949	G	F	X	X	Rampart	
Dothan	15	173.202	H	F	X			
Far’ah, Tell el- (N)	16	1823.1882	H	F	X	X	Glacis & Fosse	
Gerisa, Tel	17	1319.1665	C	F	X		Glacis	
Gezer	18	1425.1407	C	F	X	X		
Hadar, Tell	19	2112.2507	G	F	X	X		
Halif, Tell	20	1373.0879	N	N				

Haror, Tel	21	0879.1125	N	N				
Hazor	22	2032.2691	G	F	X	X	Fosse	
Hefer, Tel	23	1976.1415	C	N				
Hesi, Tel el-	24	1240.1060	S	U	X			
Jaffa	25	162.127	C	U	X			
Jemmeh, Tel	26	097.088	N	U	X			
Jericho	27	1925.1420	J	F	X		Rampart & Glacis	
Jokneam, Tel	28	1604.2289	H	N				Egyptian Cir
Keisan, Tell	29	164.235	C	U	X			
Kitan, Tel	30	2043.2270	J	N				Cultic Site
Lachish	31	1357.1083	C	N				Egyptian Cir
Megiddo	32	1675.2212	H	F	X	X	Glacis	
Mevorakh, Tel	33	1441.2156	C	N				Cultic Site
Michal, Tel	34	131.174	C	F	X	X	Rampart	

Miqne, Tel	35	1356.1315	C	F				
Maqatir, Kh. el-	36	1738.1469	H	F	X	X		
Mor, Tel	37	1175.1368	C	U	X			
Nagila, Tel	38	127.101	C	N				
Nisya, Khirbet	39	1718.1449	H	N				Rural Village
Qashish, Tel	40	160.232	C	N				
Rabud, Khirbet	41	1515.0933	H	F	X			
Regev, Tel	42	158.241	C	F	X			
Sera', Tel	43	119.088	N	U	X			
Shechem	44	177.179	H	F	X	X		
Shiloh	45	1775.1626	H	N				Cultic Site
Shiqmona	46	1462.2478	C	N				
Taanach	47	171.214	H	F	X			
Wawiyat, Tell el-	48	178.244	G	N				Rural Village

Yavnch-Yam	49	1212.1479	C	F	X	Rampart & Glacis	
Zeror, Tel	50	1476.2038	C	N			
‘Ein Zippori, Tel	51	1761.2374	G	N			Rural Village

Legend:

a= *Location:* Survey of Israel identification

b= *Zone:* C (Coastal); S (Shephelah); H (Hill Country); G (Galilee Region); J (Jordan Valley); N (Sinai/Negev)

c= *Status in LB 1:* F (Fortified); U (Uncertain); N (Not Fortified)

After analysis of the 30 sites listed as proposed locations mentioned in the book of Joshua, it is apparent that 22 of the locations are generally agreed upon as locations mentioned in the book of Joshua, while the remaining eight are tentative or unknown. Out of these 22 positively identified sites, 14 are mentioned in the books of Joshua and Deuteronomy as having fortifications, and the archaeological survey demonstrated that Late Bronze fortifications have been discovered at all 14 of these sites (Hansen 2003: 85). Three others are described as fortified—the Egyptian administrative cities of Lachish, Jokneam, and Beth-Shean. These three were discussed earlier as possibly having a slightly different type of fortification system—one that is non-traditional, but nevertheless appears and functions like a normal wall system would. Thus, the archaeological fortification evidence indicates that not only does the general presence of fortified cities in Late Bronze I Canaan correlate with the early Israelite Conquest narratives, but as a result of archaeological excavations even most of the specific cities that are claimed to have been fortified during this period in the book of Joshua have been found with fortifications.

2.7 How Could the Tribes of Israel Conquer Canaan? Military Strategy

A legitimate objection about the historical plausibility of the Israelite Conquest is the question of how the Israelites could have possibly defeated many Canaanite armies and conquered such a large region. This is a question that requires an examination of the Conquest narratives in relation to military strategy and the political and military status of Canaan at the time of the Israelite Conquest in the Late Bronze Age.

Although the various city-states of Late Bronze Age Canaan are often grouped together in a geographical entity, during this period there was no "nation" of Canaan, no unified political structure, and no "Canaanite army" that could defend the region as a whole. Instead, the:

> Canaanite populace west of the Jordan had no unified, overall military organization with which to confront the invaders. Their absence of political cohesion was matched by the lack of any Canaanite national consciousness. This political fragmentation in Canaan is demonstrated by the situation depicted in the Amarna Letters…as well as in the list of 31 Canaanite kings allegedly defeated by Joshua (Joshua 12:9-24). Because the Canaanites lacked a broad territorial defense system, they made no attempt to stop the Israelites from fording the Jordan, even though the river was surely a potential impediment for the Israelites and could have provided the Canaanites with a fine means of forestalling the invasion (Malamat 1982: 28).

In addition to no unified nation, the individual Canaanite city-states had already endured a period of military campaigns, tributes, and subjugation by powerful Pharaohs such as Thutmose III.[9] This had weakened the Canaanites both militarily and economically, since their resources had been expended in battling the Egyptians and then further crippled economically by tributes. It is also probable that the Egyptians instituted some sort of policy that removed or limited the weapons of the Canaanites so as to safeguard against possible rebellion. This is alluded to in requests of a military nature in the Amarna Letters, especially EA 333 in which Shipti-Balu requests 11 bows, 3 daggers, and 3 swords from Zimredda for a proposed military campaign (Moran 1992: EA 333:4-18). Further, the small number of troops requested in various Amarna Letters shows the small size and weakness of the individual Canaanite city-state militias during the

[9] The military campaigns of Egyptian Pharaohs prior to the beginning of the Israelite Conquest is discussed in the section on 15th century BCE military campaigns of Canaan by the Egyptians, as "the hornet" sent before.

Conquest period. For example, Rib-Hadda requests “50 pairs of horses and 200 infantry that I may resist him in Šigata until the coming forth of the archers” (Moran 1992: EA 71:23-27) and Bieri requests the Pharaoh to “give archers that we may (re)gain the citi[es] of the king, my lord” because various Canaanite city-states were apparently without substantial military forces (Moran 1992: EA 174:18-26). A similar request comes from Biriawaza who asks that “the king, [my] lord, send me 200 men to guard «to guard» the cities of the king, [my] lord” until Egyptian military relief comes (Moran 1992: EA 196:33-43). Thus, the Amarna Letters demonstrate that around the time of the Israelite Conquest, Canaanite city-states typically lacked military forces or weapons. An attack on Canaan in this period would have often only faced unorganized, untrained, and poorly equipped militias. There were, however, some more powerful city-states that had better resources and equipment, such as the chariot. This included the Hazor alliance (Joshua 11:4), the army of Hazor under the command of Sisera during the period of Deborah and Barak (Judges 4:7), and some of the Canaanite city-states in the lowland regions such as Beth-Shean and cities in the Jezreel valley (Joshua 17:16, Judges 1:19).

> However, the chariot was least effective in the mountainous areas. That is why, in the first stages of the Israelite settlement, military operations were confined to the hill-country of Canaan and its western slopes. Indeed, the Israelites inability to capture the plains was a consequence of the Canaanites effectively deploying their chariots on flat terrain (Malamat 1982: 29).

The avoidance of terrain useful for chariots was apparently an effective strategy employed by the Israelite forces, which lacked equivalent military hardware.

Instead of battling the Canaanites with brute force or superior technology, the Israelite forces used brilliant military tactics and intelligence to overcome a disjointed and weakened Canaan. According to one study of Israelite military strategy in the Conquest period, “no other literature of the ancient Near East equals the books of Joshua and Judges in the number and variety of battle stratagems described” (Malamat 1982: 32). Another study of this topic argues that the Israelites used a famous strategy similar to that known as the Clausewitz trinity:

> (1) the military power of the enemy must be destroyed so that the enemy army cannot take the field again; (2) the territory of the enemy must be conquered and occupied to

> prevent the government from forming a new enemy army; and (3) the people's will to fight must be subdued. The Old Testament account in Joshua operationalized those objectives into a twofold military policy of conquest which is recorded in Deuteronomy 20:10–20. The second part of this strategy required that when the Israelites attacked cities in the Promised Land, the cities were to be besieged and after they had fallen, all living creatures were to be put to death. The effectiveness of these policies insured that no army could emerge, the will of the enemy would be mortally subdued, and the territory occupied. Thus, all three of the objectives (Hansen 1996: 123).

Therefore, the narratives recording the Israelite Conquest contain military tactical data that helps explain how a relatively small force of nomads could have defeated several individual Canaanite militias.

Some of the strategies used by the Israelite army include the use of spies for intelligence gathering and the acquisition of insider aid, exploitation of disunity amongst the Canaanite city-states, psychological warfare, indirect attacks, use of deception tactics, ambushes, surprise attacks, night attacks, a strategically located operational base, and general avoidance of the open plains.

In order to gain a tactical advantage, the "Israelites made maximum use of intelligence and reconnaissance operations" by the dispatching of spies (Malamat 1982: 29). The use of spies and intelligence gathering is recorded multiple times during the Israelite Conquest period, and included not only reconnaissance, but also infiltration at the cities of Jericho and Bethel (cf. Numbers 13:17-20, 21:32; Joshua 2:1, 7:2; Judges 1:23-25, 18:2). The "Israelites resorted to broad strategic intelligence, and obtained a comprehensive picture when their objective was settlement of the land," such as in Numbers 13, but when "destruction of a specific location was their objective, they resorted to a more limited collection of information called tactical or battlefield intelligence," such as in Joshua 2 (Hansen 1996: 121). The intelligence requirements of the Israelite commanders was "similar to what any modern commander would need before conducting an invasion," and great military strategists such as Sun Tzu, Hannibal, and Napoleon, all utilized agents to gather detailed information about the country their armies were about to enter (Hansen 1996: 121).

During the Conquest, especially in the earlier period, political maneuvering was "able to exploit the disunity among the city-states within Canaan. These compromised a veritable mosaic of ethnic groups…The Israelites skillfully manipulated local animosities

as well as political and social differences" (Malamat 1982: 29). Examples include the treaty forged with the people of Gibeon (Joshua 9:15), which resulted in a small war between Canaanite city-states (Joshua 10:2-10), and the apparent treaty with the city-state of Shekem which provided the Israelites with a safe zone (Joshua 8:33, 24:1).

The Israelites crossed the Jordan into Canaan at an opportune time, in the early spring, "when crops, especially barely, had already begun to ripen in the hot climate of the Jordan Valley" (Malamat 1982: 31). They established an operational base at Gilgal during the initial campaigns led by Joshua (Joshua 4:19, 5:10, 9:6, 10:6, 10:43, 14:6), which strategically located and allowed for better organization and planning (Malamat 1982: 31). To offset their lack of chariots and siege equipment, the Israelites used the military strategy termed "the indirect approach," used successfully throughout history by many armies. This included the Israelite avoidance of "frontal assault, siege warfare, as well as straightforward encounters with enemy forces, especially chariotry, in the open field. To achieve this the Israelites resorted to tactics based on deception—feints, decoys, ambushes, and diversionary maneuvers" (Malamat 1982: 31). In addition to the aforementioned tactic of avoiding open field chariot battle by attacking cities in the mountains and occupying this area, the conquest of the highlands of Canaan ultimately meant that "Joshua secured the Israelites' presence in Canaan. History confirms that no sovereign state has been able to exist in Palestine without occupying the central ridge" (Hansen 1996: 117). When engaging the enemy in the open field was unavoidable, tactics at places such as Gibeon and the Waters of Merom were adjusted to battle chariots by using cover of darkness to enable a swift and surprising attack (Malamat 1982: 34; cf. Joshua 10 and 11). Another strategy used by the Israelite army during the Conquest was "a diversionary movement intended to decoy the defending forces away from their fortifications" onto open ground in the attack on Ai, then a feint, and an ambush outflanking the pursuing military force of Ai and Bethel (Malamat 1982: 33; cf. Joshua 8). At Jericho, the Israelites employed distraction, psychological warfare, and a surprise tactic of marching around the city and blowing horns, a technique mirrored in the strategy of Frontinus, a Roman general and strategist of the 1st century CE (Malamat 1982: 33).[10] Thus, besides entering Canaan at a period opportune for military

[10] *Strategemata* III, 2.1

takeover, the Israelites utilized a variety of complex and advanced tactics in order to gain an advantage over weakened and disjointed city-statues, eventually leading to several victories and a position of dominance in Canaan by the beginning of the Iron Age.

Chapter 3

Ancient Documents and the Israelite Conquest of Canaan

Numerous ancient documents, most of which are Egyptian, may relate indirectly and even directly to the period and events of the Israelite Conquest during the second half of the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. Some of the ancient documents establish the presence of Israel in Canaan prior to ca. 1200 BCE and the Iron Age, others describe how Canaan was weakened by earlier Egyptian military activity, tributes, and slavery, some texts show a match between the cities in existence at the time of the early Israelite Conquest and documents from the end of the 15th century and beginning of the 14th century BCE, and some may even provide insight into the events of the early Israelite Conquest led by Joshua. These documents include the Merneptah Stele, the Amarna Letters, New Kingdom Egyptian military campaign accounts, New Kingdom Egyptian topographical lists, Papyrus Anastasi I, Ugaritic lists, and an Assyrian military text.

3.1 The Amarna Letters: Chronology of the Canaanite Correspondence

The Amarna Letters, set in the second half of the Late Bronze Age, may illuminate conditions and events recorded in the Israelite Conquest narratives. Although the Amarna Letters are associated with the site of Amarna and thus Akhenaten, at least some of the letters are considered to be from the reign of Amenhotep III—particularly many of the Canaanite vassal letters which describe rebellious vassals and Hapiru invasions that may be relevant to the Israelite Conquest period (Horowitz 1997: 97; Moran 1992: Chronology). Akhenaten moved the royal archive to Akhetaten (Amarna) when he moved the capital there, explaining why letters from the reign of Amenhotep III, and possibly even Thutmose IV, are included in the Amarna archive. “Material inscribed for Amenhotep III, consisting of diplomatic correspondence, jar sealings, faience and precious jewellery, and sculpture of various types, has been excavated throughout Akhenaten's city at Amarna” (Johnson 1996: 65). Even though Akhenaten broke off

from the traditional religious practices of ancient Egypt, he may have brought over a variety of materials from the reigns of Amenhotep III and Thutmose IV because of theological kinship, as it appears that the artistic and theological changes so typical of the reign of Akhenaten had their beginnings in the reign of Thutmose IV.

> Already students have suggested that the religious and artistic revolution of Akhenaten had its roots in the reign of Tuthmosis IV…Objects bearing the name of Tuthmosis IV have been found at El-'Amarnah. Now, however, we have in this scarab definite proof, not only that the Aten was already regarded as a separate and distinct form of the sun-god by Tuthmosis IV, but that he was actually worshipped as a god of battles who gave victory to Pharaoh and ensured his pre-eminence over the rest of the world, making all mankind the subjects of the Disk" (Shorter 1931: 24).

Thus, not only is it understandable that the archive at Amarna contains correspondence brought over in the move from Memphis, but various letters and materials from prior to the reign of Akhenaten have been found at Amarna.

Internal evidence from the Amarna letters themselves demonstrates that many of the letters were written to Amenhotep III. EA 20 establishes a link between Nimmureya (Amenhotep III) and the "Sun" title used throughout the Amarna Letters to address the Pharaoh.

> Say [to Nim]mureya, the king of [Egypt], my brother, my son-inlaw, [whom I l]ove and who love[s me: Thus T]ušratta, the king of Mitt[ani], your father-in-law, [who l]oves you, your brother…Forever will I do what my brother wants, and my brother shall do what I want. Just as men love the Sun, so may we as now—may the gods grant us!—forever maintain love [in] our [heart]s (Moran 1992: EA 20:1-7, 71-79).

In Ancient Egypt, especially in the 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom, but prior to the time of Akhenaten, the Pharaoh was strongly associated with the sun-god Ra and was said to be one who shines like the sun, sometimes even being called Ra or the sun-disc (Redford 1976: 49-50). Particularly from "the time of Amenhotep II onwards, the king is often depicted in private tombs enshrined and wearing these accoutrements, referred to as the god Re, and accompanied by the goddess Hathor" (Johnson 1996: 70). In fact, during the reign of Amenhotep III, the Pharaoh was "officially considered to be a living manifestation of the creator god Re, particularly in his manifestation as the sun's disk, Aten" (Johnson 1996: 68). Yet, during the time of Akhenaten, the Aten, the disk, was

worshipped by the Pharaoh as a god and his heavenly father. Although Akhenaten is identified in texts as the son of the Aten, he definitely was not considered the embodiment of the Aten, and this Pharaoh never identified himself with the Aten (Redford 1980: 25; Redford 1976: 56). Thus, for anyone to call Akhenaten "the Sun" and claim the Pharaoh was the same as the Aten would have been blasphemy.

EA 45 and 49 are both addressed to the "Sun," are from Ugarit, and are attributed to the reign of Amenhotep III (Moran 1992: EA 45). This demonstrates that Amenhotep III clearly had correspondence with Canaan. EA 45 and 49 are both from Ugarit and addressed to the Pharaoh in the same way, but by different authors. This probably indicates that time had passed between the letters and the next ruler was reigning in Ugarit. If they are addressed in the same way and to the same king, Amenhotep III, then he may have begun his correspondence with city-states in Canaan early in his reign.

Several letters to the Pharaoh from vassal Canaanite rulers address him in divine terms and phraseology. EA 60 is a message from the Canaanite ruler Abdi-Ashirta to the king, the Sun, and in this letter the phrase "I fall at the feet of the king, my lord, 7 times and 7 times" is again used in connection with the king who is the Sun. The repetition of this greeting in certain other letters suggests that those specific letters were all addressed to the same Pharaoh, and perhaps around the same time. EA 53 and 55 clearly establish that the address of the Pharaoh as the Sun, and the falling at the feet 7 times, is directly associated with Amenhotep III, implying that EA 60, from a Canaanite vassal, was written to Amenhotep III. EA 68, from the Canaanite vassal Rib-Hadda at Byblos, is addressed to the Pharaoh with the same phrases, and thus it was probably written to Amenhotep III. From EA 73 there is further indication that a king other than Akhenaten is the pharaoh being addressed in the Rib-Hadda letters. The letter begins as "To Amanappa, my father: Message of Rib-Hadda, your son. I fall at the feet of my father. May the Lady of Gubla establish your honor in the presence of the king, your lord" (Moran 1992: EA 73:1-5). At the very least, this reference to Amun places the letter outside of the reign of Akhenaten, and likely in the reign of Amenhotep III, which other letters from Rib-Hadda also indicate. However, the name Amanappa in the letter can be identified with the Egyptian name Amāna-Ḥātpa, translated as Amun is Satisfied (Griffith

1926: 197). This was the personal name of both Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, prior to the Amarna Revolution. Since the addressee is not referred to as king, it is possible that this particular letter could be addressed to Amenhotep III or Akhenaten, during the reign of either Thutmose IV or Amenhotep III. However, it may simply be addressed to an official during the reign of Amenhotep III. Either way, it was definitely written prior to the reign of Akhenaten.

EA 86 and 87 are more letters in the continuing saga of Rib-Hadda, but EA 86 is a letter in which Amun is named as the god of the king and in EA 87 Amun is also called upon (Moran 1992: EA 86: 1-5; EA 87: 1-7).[11] Late in the Rib-Hadda correspondence, he entreats the Pharaoh to "Let us put the case before Aman-…" (EA 105:33-45). The second part of the name is missing, but this is an Egyptian official with the Amun element in his name or title—an unlikely name or title during the period of Akenaten, but perfectly normal during the reign of Amenhotep III. Obviously, this would not be during the time of Atenism in Egypt. Already at least by year 3 of his reign, the final stage of the iconography of the Aten took place (Redford 1976: 55). Worship of Aten had existed during the reigns of previous Pharaohs, at least as far back as Thutmose IV (Shorter 1931: 24). Only Akenaten, however, had made Aten the god of the Pharaoh and the chief god of Egypt. The invoking of Amun in EA 87:1-7 is yet another indicator that these letters were not written during the reign of Akhenaten.

Examples from the southern Canaanite correspondence also argue strongly for an address to Amenhotep III under the worship of Amun. The first is EA 369, which states "Aman has indeed put the Upper Land, the Lower Land, where the sun rises, where the sun sets, under the feet of the king" (Moran 1992: EA 369: 24-32). This demonstrates that Amun is the chief god of Egypt during the period of this letter. The second comes from EA 155, which says "the king is the Etern[al] Sun," and as noted earlier, would be heresy under Akhenaten, thus indicating Amenhotep III would be the Pharaoh being addressed. The third mentions the Egyptian god Amun again and invokes him, saying "thus are you to be put under oath to my gods and to Aman (Moran 1992: EA 164:35-42).

[11] Amun is also named as the god of the king in EA 77:1-6.

If indeed the letters in the southern Canaanite correspondence are generally addressed to Amenhotep III as demonstrated by the link between Amenhotep III and the "king, the Sun" address and the references to and invoking of Amun, additional investigation may narrow the period of some Canaanite vassal correspondence during the reign of Amenhotep III further. That evidence may be found in a reference to a specific year contained in a note from one of the letters within the Canaanite correspondence. The hieratic docket on EA 254, which is a letter from Labayu who addresses the king as the "Sun," reads year 12, or perhaps, less likely, year 32 (Moran 1992: Chronology). Year 12 of Amenhotep III would be right around 1400 BCE.[12] Thus, some of the letters from the Egyptian administration to the Canaanite vassals were written during the reign of Amenhotep III, and very likely began in the early part of his reign. This time, consequently, is the proposed period for the beginning of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan. Within the Canaanite correspondence, groups of Hapiru are mentioned as attacking the land and conquering cities—actions that mirror those of the Israelites during the Conquest period, especially in the book of Joshua.

3.2 Is the Term Hapiru Compatible with the Israelites in the Conquest?

The Hapiru are first mentioned in the 18th century BCE, and then disappear from the record in the 11th century BCE (Na'aman 1986: 272). Throughout the Amarna Letters, the term Hapiru appears again and again in reference to enemies of the Canaanite cities states who are continually raiding and conquering parts of Canaan. Although studies still continue about the exact nature of the Hapiru and the reason for their emergence and disappearance from the ancient records, it is now understood as a socioeconomic term referring to a group of people who were "uprooted from their original political and social framework and forced to adapt to a new environment," and who were an intermediary between urban and tribal, consisting of formed bands led by

[12] EA 51and EA 59 mention Thutmose III as the "grandfather" of the Pharaoh being addressed (probably Thutmose IV). EA 23, part of the international correspondence unrelated to the Canaanite letters, ends with a hieratic docket that dates the reception of the letter in the thirty sixth year of Amenhotep III. EA 27, part of the international correspondence, also contains a hieratic docket that places it in year 2, or more unlikely, year 12 of Akhenaten. EA 53 is probably addressed to Tutankhamun (Nebkheperure). EA 16 appears to be written to Aya. Thus, the archive spans many reigns and should not be restricted to a short period within the end of the reign of Amenhotep III and the beginning of the reign of Akhenaten. Cf. Moran 1992: Chronology.

a prominent leader, often becoming dangerous to sedentary society because they lacked lands of their own (Na'aman 1986: 272-273). Similar explanations of the term indicate that Hapiru referred to fugitives or refugees living outside of mainstream society (Lemche 1992: 1-6; Negev 1990: Habiru; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 102-103).

Fig 1: The Tikunani Prism from northern Mesopotamia ca. 1550 BCE lists the names of 438 Habiru soldiers in Akkadian script. Most of the names are Hurrian, while the rest are Semitic except for one Kassite name. http://members.bib-arch.org/image.asp?PubID=BSAO&Volume=02&Issue=02&ImageID=02700&SourcePage=publication.asp&UserID=0&

Although it is obvious that Hapiru was not an ethnic term, and thus not equivalent with Hebrew, the socioeconomic designation of Hapiru does appear to fit the status of the

Hebrews in the narratives about the Israelite Conquest. As Mendenhall stated, “The similarity of the Amarna Habiru to the Israelite Hebrews has been known for a long time” (Mendenhall 1962: 72). For example, the Hebrews, or Israelites, during the early conquest of Canaan are not yet city dwellers, but live in tents (Joshua 7:21, 22:6; Judges 7:8), while the Amarna Hapiru generally appear to have no headquarters and move from city to city and region to region, in a semi-nomadic fashion. Later in the Judges period a large scale Israelite transition to sedentary life begins, as some live in tents and others live in houses (Judges 20:8), but this is after the period of the Amarna Hapiru and is evident on the archaeological record with the rise of a distinctly different Israelite material culture. The Israelites, while attempting to conquer Canaan, are living like refugees and do not fit into the same society as Canaan, which is mainly due to religious and ethnic distinction. Finally, in terms of interaction with other groups, the Israelites during the Conquest especially share similarities with the Hapiru of the Amarna Letters—both groups are attacking cities in Canaan, neither group encounters the Egyptians, and both groups are loathed by the majority of the local Canaanites. Since several general similarities exist between many of the Hapiru of the Amarna Letters and the Israelite tribes during the Conquest, a closer examination of the possible correlation is warranted.

3.3 The Amarna Letters and the Israelite Conquest

In the southern Levant, in the region where the Israelites focused their attacks, several Canaanite city-state rulers wrote letters to the Egyptian administration. In the letters from Biridiya of Megiddo, he writes to the Pharaoh using the same “my Sun, 7 times and 7 times” opening as has been previously seen and associated with Amenhotep III (Moran 1992: EA 242:1-8). In EA 243, Biridiya informs the king that “the warring of the Hapiru in the land is severe, may the king, my lord, take cognizance of his land” (Moran 1992: EA 243:8-22). This could be a reference to the Israelites conducting war in the general area of central Canaan. In another letter from Biridiya, the ruler of Megiddo claims that two sons of Labayu, the leader of Shekem, have supposedly given their money to the Hapiru to wage war against him (Moran 1992: EA 246: Rev. 1-11). In

both the books of Joshua and Judges, Megiddo is specifically noted among a list of Canaanite cities as one that the Israelites did not take possession of because the Canaanites continued to live in that area (Joshua 17:11; Judges 1:27). However, it is clear that Megiddo was attacked, and even defeated at least briefly, according to one of the lists in the book of Joshua which records the king of Megiddo as having been defeated (Joshua 12:21). This impending attack upon Megiddo by the Hapiru that Biridiya refers to may be related to the Israelite attack led by Joshua, and the deal struck by Labayu with the Hapiru for possession of Megiddo may explain why the city of Megiddo was defeated by the Israelites, but continued to be occupied by Canaanites well into the future.

Fig 2: Amarna Letter from Biridiya of Megiddo mentioning the Hapiru and Labayu. The British Museum, London. Photo: Titus Kennedy.

When the ruler of Hazor writes to the Pharaoh, he actually refers to himself as "the king of Hazor," unlike the other Canaanite vassals who refer to themselves as servants, and at best as rulers (Moran 1992: EA 227).[13] The ruler of Hazor is mentioned

[13] In EA 228, in contrast to EA 227, Abdi-Tirshi of Hazor has a slightly more humble tone and uses the typical address of "7 times and 7 times," that has been seen in association with Amenhotep III, but without including the longer version with the "Sun" title (EA 228:1-9).

in a letter by Ayyab as having taken 3 cities from him (Moran 1992: EA 364:17-28). This may be connected to the great amount of power and influence that the king of Hazor had during the Late Bronze I, as revealed by archaeological excavations and the note in the book of Joshua that "Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms," which helps explain why Abdi-Tirshi calls himself "king of Hazor" (Joshua 11:10; Moran 1992: EA 227). The claim of "king of Hazor" is further indication of the prominent position of Hazor during the Late Bronze IB. The taking of 3 cities from Ayyab could also be in connection with what is referred to in a letter from Abi-Milku, ruler of Tyre, in which he claims that "the king of Hazor has abandoned his house and has aligned himself with the Hapiru…He has taken over the land of the king of the Hapiru. May the king ask his commissioner, who is familiar with Canaan" (Moran 1992: EA 148:41-47). In EA 148, which mentions Hazor and the Hapiru, the Pharaoh is addressed as "my Sun" and the "7 times and 7 times" opening is used, indicating that the Pharaoh being written to at this time is Amenhotep III. These mentions of the Hapiru and taking of cities in the Hazor area may be directly associated with the Israelite Conquest, and specifically with the taking of the city of Hazor in the book of Joshua (Joshua 11:1-13). If the early Israelite Conquest led by Joshua occurred ca. 1400 BCE, Amenhotep III would have been the Pharaoh during this time.[14] Many of the Canaanite letters, especially EA 148 dealing with Hazor and the Hapiru, appear to be written to Amenhotep III, and Hazor is one of the cities explicitly conquered by the Israelites in the book of Joshua. Therefore, these correlations in chronology, geography, and action, suggest that these specific texts could be referring to the same event.

Shekem, as noted earlier, is also mentioned in the Amarna Letters, and in particular in association with a leader named Labayu. EA 253 is a letter from Labayu to the Pharaoh, and once more the familiar address "7 times and 7 times" and the title "my Sun" is used (Moran 1992: EA 253: 1-10). Again, this implies that the Pharaoh being addressed is Amenhotep III, not Akhenaten. In the next letter, Labayu addresses the Pharaoh with the same title, and then claims that he did not know his son had been consorting with the Hapiru, but will hand him over for justice to be served (Moran 1992:

[14] See the chapter on chronology, in which the ca. 1400 BCE date for Joshua is explained and the new radiocarbon testing that suggests the reign of Amenhotep III began prior to 1400 BCE.

EA 254: 1-5, 30-37). Since in other (presumably later) letters the sons of Labayu are accused of allying with the Hapiru, it is unlikely that Labayu was ignorant of this or that he really handed over his son. Perhaps the most important Amarna Letter for the Israelite Conquest that mentions Labayu is a letter from Abdi-Heba, which records that Labayu had given the land of Shekem to the Hapiru (Moran 1992: EA 289: 18-24). Not only is this event placed in the reign of Amenhotep III because of information contained in other letters, and thus possibly at the time of the early Israelite Conquest under Joshua, but the situation with Shekem and the Israelites during the Conquest is quite unique. In the book of Joshua, the area of Shekem, situated in the valley between Mount Ebal in the north and Mount Gerzim in the south, is first mentioned as the gathering place of the entire Israelite nation just after the destruction of Ai, when the words of the Law are read to the people (Joshua 8:33-34). This is a peaceful gathering, and no previous attack on the area of Shekem is mentioned, which distinguishes Shekem from every other city mentioned in the conquest narratives of the book of Joshua. Later in the book, “Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers” (Joshua 24:1) for another meeting. Yet again no prior attack is mentioned. Finally, even though the Israelites are camping in the area of Shekem with no resistance, the city of Shekem is curiously missing from the extensive list of 31 cities that the Israelites attacked and conquered under the leadership of Joshua (Joshua 12:9-24). Thus, some type of peaceful agreement must have been made between the Israelite tribes and the people of Shekem. This may be explained by the Amarna Letter which claims that Labayu gave the land of Shekem to the Hapiru (Moran 1992: EA 289).

Other attacks by the Hapiru on various cities in Canaan and the pleading of the Canaanite vassals for Egyptian support lest the land be lost to the Hapiru agree with the overall picture of the alleged Israelite Conquest during this period, recorded in the book of Joshua. One description from the king of Jerusalem says “I am at war. I am situated like a ship in the midst of the sea. The strong hand (arm) of the king took the land of Naḫrima and the land of Kasi, but now the ‘Apiru have taken the very cities of the king” (Moran 1992: EA 288: 29-40). In the book of Joshua, the king of Jerusalem is also

concerned with the attacks on the land, which eventually results in his formation of an alliance and an attack upon the Israelites.

> Now it came about when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured Ai, and had utterly destroyed it (just as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king), and that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were within their land, that he feared greatly…Therefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent word to Hoham king of Hebron and to Piram king of Jarmuth and to Japhia king of Lachish and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, "Come up to me and help me, and let us attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel" (Joshua 10:1–4, NASB).

Lachish and its king are said to have been defeated and killed by the Israelites (Joshua 10:31-32, 12:11), and at least one Amarna Letter indicates that Lachish has been defeated and its leader slain by the Hapiru. One tells of the slaying of the king, saying that "servants who were joined to the 'Api[r]u smote Zimredda of Lakisu" (Moran 1992: EA 288:41-47). Gezer is another city that sends a letter to the Egyptian administration, warning that the Hapiru will take the land of Canaan if the Pharaoh does not send military support. "May the king, my lord, know that the war against me and against Šuwardata is severe. So may the king, my lord, save his land from the power of the 'Apiru" (Moran 1992: EA 271: 9-16). The king of Gezer is involved in a battle with the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua, and is eventually defeated (Joshua 10:33, 12:12).

EA 68 tells of attacks by the Hapiru forces, that the war is severe, and requests that the Pharaoh would not neglect his cities in Canaan. EA 74, however, makes it clear that Byblos (Gubla) was not taken by the Hapiru, but that it is rather Abdi-Ashirta who wants to attack Gubla, and that his followers "are like Hapiru" (Moran 1992: EA 74). Joshua 13:5 mentions that "the land of the Gebalite, and all of Lebanon" i.e. the land of Gubla or Byblos, was not taken by the Israelites.

EA 75, another Byblos letter, informs this same Pharaoh that the Hapiru killed Aduna, king of Irquata, but that no one told Abdi-Ashirta, and the Hapiru continue to take territory for themselves. EA 79, from Rib-Hadda to the Pharaoh, is yet another request for Egyptian troops, specifically archers, or else "all lands will be joined to the Hapiru" (Moran 1992: EA 79). Rib-Hadda claims that Abdi-Ashirta has persuaded the

Hapiru to try to take over Byblos. “But i[f the k]ing, my lord, does [not give heed] to the words of [his] ser[vant], then Gubla will be joined to him, and all the lands of the king, as far as Egypt, will be joined to the Apiru” (Moran 1992: EA 88:28-39). Rib-Hadda, still holding Byblos, writes in EA 90 that “You yourself have been [neg]ligent of your cities so that the Apiru [*dog*] takes them” (Moran 1992: EA 90:19-28). The next letter again claims that the Hapiru are taking cities. “*W*]*hy* have you sat idly by [and] done nothing, so that the Apiru dog tak[es *you*]*r cities*?” [*When*] he took Ṣumur, [I wr]ote to you, “Why *do you* [*do noth*]*ing*?” (Then B[it]-ar*q*[*a*] was taken” (Moran 1992: EA 91:1-13). EA 100 is important because it indicates that Irqata, located in northern Lebanon, is out of the area that the Hapiru have invaded and taken land. “When a tablet from the king arrived (saying) to *ra*[*id*] the land that the *A*[*piru*] had taken [from] the king, *they wa*[*ged*] war with us against the enemy of our lord, the man whom you pla[ced] over us” (Moran 1992: EA 100:20-32). The Israelite Conquest narratives make it clear that northern Lebanon is taken or even attacked, and nowhere else is it mentioned that this area is part of the Conquest (Joshua 13:5).[15]

Other examples of the conquest of cities by Hapiru exist, including: “Biryawaza had allowed all of the cities of the king, my lord, to go over to the ‘Apiru in Tahši and Upu” (Moran 1992: EA 189:9-18), “Lost to the ‘Apiru: ḫa-[…] from [my] control are all the cities of the king” (Moran 1992: EA 207:15-24), “Should Yanḫamu not be here within this [year, a]ll the lands are [lo]st to the ‘Apiru” (Moran 1992: EA 215:9-17), and many others. A pattern is evident in these letters that Hapiru are attacking and conquering many cities throughout the land of Canaan. It appears that both the general situation of the Israelite Conquest, and some specific correlations are found in the Amarna Letters, thus strongly suggesting the possibility that the book of Joshua and the Amarna Letters describe some of the same events.

Of course, alternative explanations exist. One suggestion is that the Amarna Letters merely reflect the struggle of the Habiru class against the aristocracy for dominance of the land, and the warfare between city-states in Canaan, but are

[15] Rib-Hadda continues to write the Pharaoh, and in EA 102 it appears that not only has he been exaggerating his situation in Byblos, but that there are various factions and conspiracies going on in his area. “Now Ampi is at war with me. Know t‹hat› the magnate and the lords of the city are at peace with the sons of Abdi-Aširta, and accordingly I am unable to go. Know that all are traitors, and you must not inquire about me from my enemies. Now, because of the situation, I am afraid” (EA 102:20-28).

disconnected from the events of the Israelite Conquest accounts (Mendenhall 1962: 77-78). There is certainly a struggle between the Habiru and the Canaanite cities, and even rivalry and warfare between city states, but this view also appears to overlook several correlations between certain events and situations in the Amarna Letters and the record of the early Israelite Conquest in the book of Joshua.

3.4 Cities in the Amarna Letters, Joshua, and Judges

The inhabited cities listed in the books of Joshua and Judges, and the inhabited cities listed in the Amarna Letters are comparable and indicative of a shared period of events. If the majority of these documents are referring to roughly the same time period, the Late Bronze Age, and more specifically the end of the 15th century to the middle of the 14th century BCE, a parallel should exist between the cities mentioned as inhabited. Although some of these cities existed for centuries, there were occupational gaps in certain periods. The way in which so many of the cities coincide in both sets of sources is suggestive of the events recorded occurring around the same time period. At least 17 cities in Canaan are attested in both textual sources. Considering that neither the Amarna letters nor the books of Joshua and Judges were concerned with giving an exhaustive topographical list of Canaan, this high number of parallel cities found in both sets of documents is compelling evidence. Cities clearly attested in both sets of sources include: Acco (Judg 1.31) EA 232; Megiddo (Josh 12.21, Judg 1.27) EA 243; Gezer (Josh 10.33, Judg 1.29) EA 287; Gaza (Josh 10.41, Judg 16.1) EA 296; Ashkelon (Judg 1.18) EA 287; Jerusalem (Josh 10.1, Judg 1.7) EA 287; Hazor (Josh 11.1, Judg 4.2) EA 228; Lachish (Josh 10.3) EA 288; Aijalon (Josh 10.12, Judg 1.35) Ayyaluna EA 273; Beth-shean (Josh 17.11, Judg 1.27) EA 289; Taanach (Josh 12.21, Judg 1.27) EA 248; Zorah (Josh 15.33, Judg 13.2) Sarha EA 273; Shunem (Josh 19.18) Shunama EA 250; Shechem (Josh 17.2, Judges 8.31) EA 289; Gubla (Joshua 13:5) EA 98; Sidon (Joshua 11:8; Judges 1:31) EA 101; Tyre (Joshua 19:29) EA 101.

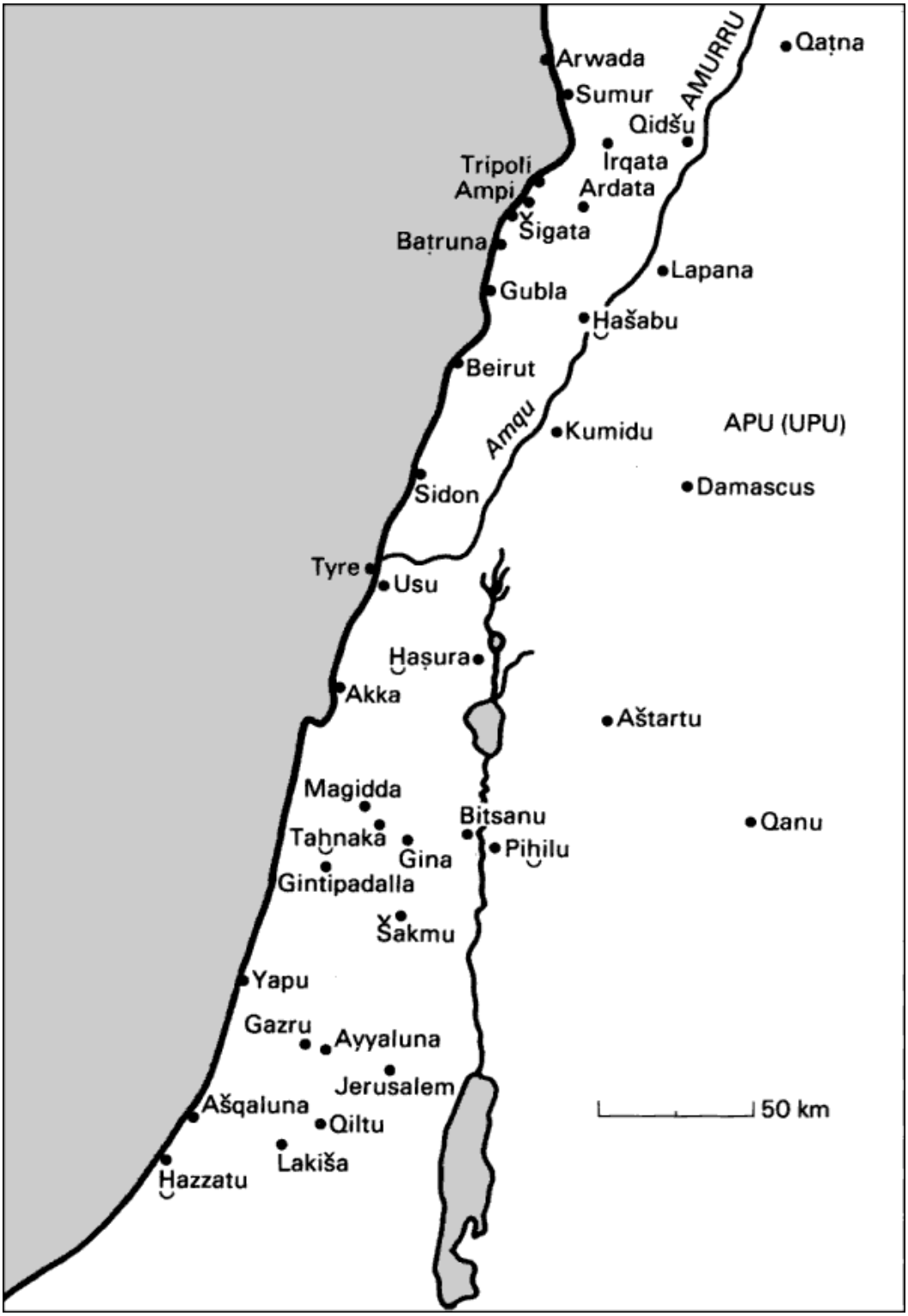

Fig 1: A map of cities in the Levant mentioned in the Amarna Letters. Moran 1992: EA 52

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3.5 The Hornet Sent Before

The books of Exodus and Deuteronomy record that “the hornet” will be sent before the Israelites against the people of Canaan in order to drive out and soften the military resistance there (Exodus 23:28; Deuteronomy 7:20). After these events, the book of Joshua records that “the hornet” was sent before the Israelites and drove out two kings of the Amorites (Joshua 24:12). What was this “hornet”? The hornet, wasp, or bee is a symbol for the land of Egypt—specifically in relation to the royal title. It is part of the title for the Pharaoh, translated as “King of Upper and Lower Egypt” from *nswt biti* in ancient Egyptian (Allen 2000: 461; Gardiner 1957: 575). The “hornet” found in the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua could be references to the Egyptians campaigning in Canaan and driving out and weakening the native Canaanites, enabling a much easier conquest for the Israelites (Garstang 1978: 112-15, 258-60).

Fig 3: The “Hornet” or bee of Egypt. Photo: Titus Kennedy.

These Egyptian military campaigns in Canaan, paving the way for the Israelite conquest, were likely those of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, who both campaigned through Canaan in the decades prior to the initial Israelite Conquest led by Joshua. Thutmose III led seventeen Egyptian campaigns into Western Asia, at times leaving a path of destruction, at other times damaging the economy with forced tribute, and at other times putting on a display of strength (Breasted 1906: 406; Pritchard 1969: 234-41). These incursions obviously weakened the residents of Canaan. The following Pharaoh, Amenhotep II, though ruling in a time of apparent Egyptian military weakness, conducted three campaigns into the Levant—one at the end of the reign of Thutmose III

(Aharoni 1960: 178; Rainey 1973: 71; Yeivin 1967: 120-21). The other two known campaigns of Amenhotep II took place during his sole reign, recorded on the Memphis Stele and Karnak Stele, and although these were military incursions, they appear to have been much more limited in scope and destruction than those of Thutmose III (Gardiner 1961: 202; Pritchard 1969: 245-46). During the year 7 campaign, Amenhotep II apparently attacked or suppressed rebellions at a few towns in Canaan, causing some death, havoc, and terror, but not conquering on the scale of his predecessor (Pritchard 1969: 245-46). His year 9 campaign, which appears to be more of a tribute and slavery campaign, may have weakened the cities of Canaan much more. At the end of the account of the year 9 campaign, Amenhotep II claims to have carried off a massive amount of materials, trophies, animals, and most importantly captives—supposedly numbering 89, 600 men[16] (Pritchard 1969: 247).If this number is anywhere near correct, the loss of these thousands of Canaanites would have been crippling to the economy and military of the city-states which were plundered.

The next Pharaoh, Thutmose IV, although he also had very limited military activity, still apparently conducted some small scale campaign into Canaan. On the topographical lists at Karnak, Takhsi was supposedly subdued by Thutmose IV (Pritchard 1969: 243). On a stele from the mortuary temple of Thutmose IV in Thebes, it is recorded that he captured the city of Gezer (Breasted 1906: 821; Pritchard 1969: 248). Although the military exploits of Thutmose IV were extremely limited according to recovered records, it is possible that his “subduing” of Takhsi could have disrupted at least one city in Canaan, the city of Gezer.

Amenhotep III, the successor of Thutmose IV, is not known from any texts or campaign records to have attacked Canaan or probably any other region (Gardiner 1961: 205). He does, however, place the names of some cities and regions in Canaan on his topographical list at Karnak (Pritchard 1969: 242-43). This incursion may have been nothing more than a series of demanded tributes, however, and the claims of conquering these cities are often thought of as fictional (Pritchard 1969: 242). The texts of the Amarna Letters make it clear in the Canaanite correspondence that the Egyptian administration is either unable or unwilling to send troops to Canaan, and this is

[16] The actual added total is 101, 128.

reflected in the lack of military texts from the reigns of Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III, and Akhenaten.

From the Egyptian military texts and topographical lists of Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, and Thutmose IV, one can clearly see that there were many military incursions by the Egyptians into Canaan in the decades prior to the beginning of the Israelite Conquest. These military campaigns, forced tributes, and the taking of slaves would have certainly weakened many of the Canaanite city-states. Thus, the claim in the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua that “the hornet” went before the Israelites into Canaan to make conquest easier appears to be in agreement with the Egyptian historical texts.

3.6 Ancient Texts Mentioning Israel in Canaan

The ancient texts contemporary with the alleged time of the Israelite Conquest clearly or tentatively mentioning Israel in the land of Canaan by the end of the Late Bronze Age must be investigated. If other nations mentioned Israel in Canaan during the period of the Judges, then it is likely that Israel had been established in the land by that time, and therefore Israel must have entered the land to begin conquest, or emerged as a distinct ethnic group, many years prior to their establishment as a prominent ethnic group in Canaan by conquest and settlement.

3.6.1 The Merneptah Stele

The Merneptah Stele, also called the Israel Stele, is the most famous of all ancient documents mentioning Israel. The stele was originally from the reign of Amenhotep III, but later re-used by Merneptah to commemorate victory. When Merneptah usurped the stele, he placed it in his mortuary temple and had the verso inscribed with an account of his victory over the Libyans in the fifth year of his reign, and an account of victory over part of Canaan (Lichtheim 1976: 73). The relevant portion of the text reads:

> The (foreign) chieftains lie prostrate, saying 'Peace.' Not one lifts his head among the Nine Bows. Libya is captured, while Hatti is pacified. Canaan is plundered, Ashkelon is carried off, and Gezer is captured. Yenoam is made into non-existence; Israel is wasted, its seed is not; and Hurru is become a widow because of Egypt. All lands united themselves in peace. Those who went about are subdued by the king of Upper and Lower Egypt…Merneptah (Hoffmeier 2000: 41).

Most scholars have identified the mention of Israel on the Mernetpah Stele as ancient Israel; however, one scholar in particular argued that it should be rendered Yezreel, the valley in north-central Israel (Margalith 1990: 229).

Fig 4: The people "Israel" on the Merneptah Stele, from the end of 13th century BCE. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/Israel_segment.jpg

Yet, this alternate reading of Yezreel has major philological difficulties, assumes a gross scribal error in relation to the determinative, and is an inferior fit within the context of the stele. Hasel conclusively establishes that the word should be translated as Israel (Hasel 1994: 46-47). Then, after closely examining the language and structure of the Merneptah Stele, the location of the mention of Israel in the stele establishes Israel as an identifiable sociopolitical ethnic entity in Canaan during the late 13th century BCE, and the "seed" is likely literally referring to the destruction of grain and not human descendants (Hasel 1994: 51-53). Whether the position of Israel in the poem indicates their dominance as an ethnic group in the region or not, they are certainly regarded as important by the Egyptians, who mention Israel as one of the Nine Bows, or main enemies of Egypt. Above all, the stele clearly demonstrates the existence and prominence of Israel in Canaan by the late 13th century BCE. Thus, Israel had already become an important and powerful ethnic group in Canaan at the end of the Late

Bronze Age. The stele does not comment on how Israel appeared in Canaan—but they were certainly there.

3.6.2 The Possible Mention of the Israelite Tribe of Asher on Lists of Amenhotep III, Seti I, Ramses II, and Papyrus Anastasi I

The Israelite tribe of Asher may have at least partially resided in the Galilee region, around Beth Shean and Rehov, which are approximately 5 km apart, just south of the Sea of Galilee. “From the tribe of Asher, they gave…Rehov with its pasture lands” (Joshua 21:30-31). This is geographical information that places the tribe of Asher in Rehov and the surrounding region. “In Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth Shean and its towns” (Joshua 17:11) seems to imply that Beth Shean was in the same area as the tribe of Asher. Beth Shean was one of the major Egyptian administrative centers in Canaan during the Late Bronze Age (Mazar 2010: 242). This Egyptian presence in the area would explain the Egyptian familiarity with the tribe of Asher, if this tribe resided nearby Beth Shean. The name “Asher,” perhaps the tribe of Asher, one of the tribes of the Israelites, appears once, as *ʿsr* on a list of conquered foes on a list of Seti I at Karnak (Spalinger 1979: 38; Kitchen 1969: 36.1-10). The name appears on the list in the region of Galilee. Alternatively, this could be the name of a city, since “Asher of Mikmethath” is mentioned like a city in the book of Joshua, located east of Shekem (Joshua 17:7).

Asher may also be part of a topographical list from the Temple of Amun at Soleb. Column X A.2 lists *iswr* Asher(?). Giveon argues that this toponym should be rendered Asher instead of Ashur based on the location of the names surrounding the proposed “Asher,” which are located in the region of Northern Israel (Giveon 1964: 250). The name “Asher” appears yet again on a topographical list of Ramses II in the temple of Abydos. However, this may be merely a copy of the Amenhotep III list from Soleb, and does not contribute any new information.

Finally, “Asher” may also be found in Papyrus Anastasi I, appearing as *’isr* in the text, with the throwstick sign, and even the chief of this “Asher tribe” is named, as Qedjerdi[17] (Gardiner 1911: 25; Pritchard 1969: 477).

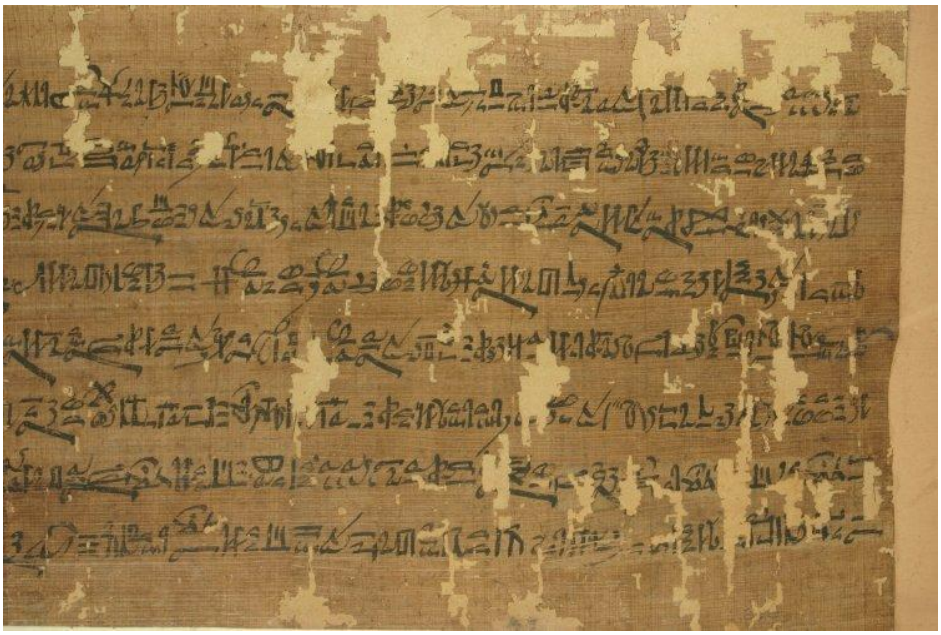

Fig 5: Papyrus Anastasi I. The British Museum, London. http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_image.aspx?objectId=3101636&partId=1&searchText=papyrus+anastasi+I&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx&numPages=10&currentPage=1&asset_id=434641

The throwstick indicates it is a foreign people, and the chieftain being mentioned indicates that it is a tribe. The personal name further emphasizes the historical rather than allegorical. This text probably dates to the time of Ramesses II, or possibly Seti II at the latest (Rendsburg 1992: 519). The group is identified in central Canaan, and appears to be a reference to the Israelite tribe of Asher and one of their leaders (Mazar 1981: 75). This is the most likely of all of the Egyptian texts mentioning “Asher” to be the actual Israelite tribe of Asher. Thus, the tribe of Asher, from the larger ethnic group of the Israelites, may be established as residing in the land of Canaan as early as the beginning of the 14th century BC and into the 13th century BC by Egyptian records.

[17] Anastasi I, column 23, line 6.26.

3.6.3 Hapiru of Yarmutu

"The 'Apiru of the mountain of Yarmutu, along with the Tayaru [folk, they] are arisen, attacking the Asiatics of Ruhma" (Hallo et al 2001: 28). The Hapiru, a socioethnic term that would apply perfectly to the Israelites during part of the Conquest period, prior to the time of widespread Israelite settlements, could be referring here specifically to Israelites living in the area of Yarmuth. The city and pasture lands of Yarmuth are said to be given from the tribe of Issachar to the tribe of Levi (Joshua 21:28-29). It would also be consistent with the Israelite Conquest that these Hapiru are attacking other Asiatics—those the Israelites are attempting to drive out of the land.

3.6.4 Egyptian Stone Relief Fragment

A nearly unknown stone fragment appearing to be part of another topographical list may also mention Israel. Three names are preserved on the fragment—Ashkelon, Canaan, and what appears to be Israel. The third name is partially broken, but it can still be read tentatively. Gorg's analysis suggests the fragment dates to the reign of Ramses in the first half of the 13th century BC or at least the late 18th Dynasty, while Giveon dated the fragment (without thought of the proposed "Israel" section) to the late 18th Dynasty, and the transliteration is suggested as *'I-š()r-'il* (Görg 2001: 21-27; Görg et al 2010: 15-25). This possible appearance of Israel on a fragment from the time of Ramses II or before would place Israel as an established group in Canaan prior to the Merneptah Stele, the beginning of the Iron Age, the "Late Conquest," and the period in which Israel is theorized to have emerged.

Fig 6: Egyptian stone fragment mentioning Ashkelon, Canaan, and Israel (?). Courtesy of Olivia Zorn, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

3.6.5 Ugaritic Texts Mentioning the Name Israel

The Ugartic tablets from the city of Ugarit date to the 14th and 13th centuries BCE (Gordon 1998: 1.2). It is nearly impossible to date most of the individual texts to a specific time within this approximately 200 year period unless some additional chronological information is contained in the tablet, but they belong to the era of the Late Bronze II. Two Ugaritic tablets contain the name “ysril” (UT 2069, 00-4.623:3, ysril, and UT 328, R1-4.50:6, ysril), or the name Israel. Both of these texts appear to be lists of names. UT 2069 begins with “mry[n]m,” which could be a name, although Cyrus Gordon suggests the title “maryannu” as a charioteer (Gordon 1998: 19.1551). The [n] is not visible in the text, but it was proposed as the identification of the missing letter. Thus, the word is uncertain. However, even if it is maryannu, the rank of maryannu appears to be hereditary, and is not restricted to operation of a chariot (Rainey 1965: 20). This would not require those listed on the tablet to actually be charioteers, but

descendents of that class. Conversely, it could be a name or another word. Following mry[n]m, there appear to be personal names, some which include “son of,” and then the name Israel, followed by additional names. The mention of “ysril” in the second text also appears to be in some type of name list. The insertion of Israel following certain names could indicate that these people were from the territory of Israel or the tribes of Israel. Since the texts would date to the 14th or 13th century BCE, they would be mentions of Israel as early or likely earlier than the Merneptah Stele, and in a context which suggests some sort of prominence for those people listed, further establishing Israel in the land of Canaan prior to the end of the 13th century BC.

3.6.6 An Assyrian Text Mentioning the Jairites

A text from the time of the Assyrian king Adad-Nirari I at the end of the 14th and beginning of the 13th century BCE mentions Adad-Nirari as a conqueror of “the Suti, the Iauri and their lands, who enlarges boundary and frontier” (Luckenbill 1926: 27-28). The people of Jair are mentioned in the book of Joshua, located in Bashan, in the area of Manasseh, east of the Jordan (Joshua 13:30). At least one scholar has made this connection, on the basis of both etymology and geographic location, since the names are essentially the same and the Iauri are mentioned along with the Ahlamu and the Suti, located west of the Euphrates and in the southern Levant (Yeivin 1971: 44).[18] The Jairites would have been continuing to expand in this area ca. 1300 BCE in the time of the Judges, when the conquest of Canaan was still incomplete, according to the Hebrew sources in the book of Judges. The identification of the Jairites with the Iauri is tentative, but nevertheless possible.

3.7 Conclusion about the Textual Evidence

The composite of this textual evidence strongly argues that a people called Israel were present in the land of Canaan prior to the 13th century BCE, and had established themselves as a dominant force by the time Merneptah campaigned in Canaan near the

[18] Cf. also Mazar, Benjamin. *Tarbiz* 15 (1933/4), 63-64.

end of the 13th century BCE. The comparisons between the general situation and certain specific events in the Canaanite Amarna Letters and the book of Joshua even suggest that parts of the two texts may be describing some of the same events. Because the ancient textual evidence indicates that Israel was present in Canaan prior to the beginning of the Iron Age and the “late date” of the Israelite Conquest, as the books of Joshua and Judges argue, a careful examination of the archaeological data possibly relevant to the Israelite Conquest is warranted and necessary.

Chapter 4

The Israelite Conquest and the City of Jericho

4.1 Views of the Jericho Conquest in Scholarship

The veracity of the conquest and destruction of Jericho as recorded in the book of Joshua had been accepted for centuries, but archaeological excavations in the twentieth century and interpretations of the data found have challenged the accuracy of the Joshua narrative and the entire Israelite Conquest. About Jericho, Finkelstein points out that "there was no trace of a settlement of any kind in the thirteenth century BCE, and the earlier Late Bronze settlement, dating to the fourteenth century BCE, was small and poor, almost insignificant, and unfortified. There was also no sign of a destruction. Thus the famous scene of the Israelite forces marching around the walled town with the Ark of the Covenant, causing Jericho's mighty walls to collapse by the blowing of their war trumpets, was, to put it simply, a romantic mirage" (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 81-82). There appears to be an obvious contradiction of the account in the book of Joshua when Jericho is examined at "the suggested date of the conquest, between 1230 and 1220 BCE." (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 76). However, as was argued previously, the conquest of Jericho by the Israelites under Joshua, if historical, would have occurred ca. 1400 BCE at the end of Late Bronze IB, not ca. 1220 BCE near the end of the Late Bronze IIB. Thus, an examination of Jericho in Late Bronze I is necessary in order to properly evaluate the Jericho narrative in the book of Joshua.

Recently, evidence that supports a destruction of Jericho in the Late Bronze I has been brought to light, and after a detailed examination of the artifacts and interpretation of the data from Jericho, some scholars suggest that the excavations at Jericho demonstrate the historicity of the Israelite Conquest of Jericho under the leadership of Joshua. Through an updated and comprehensive analysis of both local and exotic pottery, artifacts, walls, and radiocarbon dates, along with theories of the destruction of Jericho, a reasonable and compelling case can be formed to suggest that the account of the conquest of Jericho in Joshua 6 is indeed supported archaeologically, and the

date that archaeologists such as Bryant Wood and John Garstang assert the destruction took place does agree with the datable finds in the stratum known as Jericho IVc.[19]

In the book of Joshua, the most relevant account for an evaluation of the conquest of Jericho is as follows:

> The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to Yahweh…But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to Yahweh; they shall go into the treasury of Yahweh." So the people shouted, and they blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down below itself, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. They put under the ban all which was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword…They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of Yahweh (Joshua 6:17-24).

The book of Joshua states that the walls of Jericho fell down, the Israelites marched up into the city, and that the city was destroyed by fire. The tendency for most archaeologists and historians in the modern era has been to consider the conquest of Jericho as a myth, perhaps written to give a proud history to the nation of Israel. Yet, there are other scholars who would argue that the account is an historical narrative of conquest, not merely a story that is meant to be read as myth or etiological legend. The manner of the language in the passage—no poetry, no allegorical imagery—indicates that the writer was attempting to narrate an historical event in which the walls of Jericho fell and the city was burned. This indicates that the passage should be interpreted in as an attempt at historical narrative. Therefore, the question is whether or not this account of Jericho's destruction is supported by archaeological data.

Archaeologist Randall Price comments on the changing view of the historicity of the Jericho conquest by the Israelites. He notes that "only a generation or so ago, this account of conquest was accepted as historical by almost everyone (Price 1997: 143). Currently, however, most scholars do not believe the assertions that the Jericho

[19] Jericho IV is the final fortified Bronze Age city at the site of Jericho, and Jericho IVc is the final phase of this city that was destroyed and never rebuilt (Marchetti, Nigro, and Sarie 1998: 121).

conquest narrative is an accurate historical record, or that it was written any time near the events claimed to occur in the book of Joshua. In fact, most believe it was written several centuries or even a millennium after the event, and that the account contains an inaccurate and embellished history at best. The famous British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon clearly fits into this category. She wrote that "the books of the Pentateuch are quite late, perhaps not earlier than the seventh century B.C. But the authors certainly had earlier documents as their sources, some of them perhaps as early as the twelfth century B.C." (Kenyon 1957: 256). John Bimson, a scholar of the Israelite Exodus and Conquest, notes that several scholars are unconvinced or at least highly skeptical of the Joshua narrative. He states that according to the view of many, "the story of Jericho's fall is an aetiological legend, and that there never was an Israelite attack as described in Jos 6" (Bimson 1978: 121). If the Joshua narrative was written seven hundred years or more after the event, such a late composition would certainly make it difficult to write an accurate history. Thus, in this view, the destruction of Jericho by the Israelites is likely only a legend. However, if the present manuscripts or current account is actually based on earlier sources, it has at least the possibility of being historical. Kenyon considers the book of Joshua to be a traditional history passed down orally, and that this "traditional, verbal, history is incomplete…its chronological framework is very loose, for it must be remembered that the Israelites had no fixed calendar," and "we may take it in the first place that chronology based on the Biblical record cannot be taken literally" (Kenyon 1957: 257-58). From Kenyon's comments it seems obvious that she is predisposed to think the conquest narratives, found in chiefly in Joshua and Judges, are not only inaccurate, but that the chronology is somehow both real, but loose, yet it cannot be taken literally, so it must be allegorical. However, it is a known fact that the early Israelites had a calendar. A prime, early example of the early Israelite calendar is a clay document known as the Gezer Calendar, written in Hebrew, found at Gezer, Israel, from the 10th century BCE (Albright 1943: 16-26).

Fig 7: The Gezer Calendar, an ancient Hebrew tablet from the 10th century BCE. Museum of the Ancient Orient, Istanbul, Turkey. Photo: Titus Kennedy.

Kenyon's statements may lead one to believe that she entered into the excavations at Jericho with a biased perspective on the evidence, possibly impairing her objectivity in assessing and analyzing the evidence. Oddly, her conclusions about the site were published long before the archaeological data from her excavations was published. Although Jericho's previous excavator, John Garstang, believed the archaeological record there affirmed the account in Joshua, the consensus shifted to support Kenyon and her conclusion that the account in the book of Joshua was historically inaccurate and Jericho was not destroyed in the Late Bronze Age. Instead, Kenyon came to the conclusion that Jericho IV had been destroyed ca. 1550 BCE at the end of the Middle Bronze Age, and not by the Israelites (Kenyon 1957: 262). After a detailed study of the pottery and stratigraphy of Jericho IV, Wood concluded that "she [Kenyon] misdated her finds, resulting in what seemed to be a discrepancy between the discoveries of archaeology and the Bible. She concluded that the Bronze Age city of Jericho was destroyed about 1550 BC by the Egyptians" (Wood 1999a: 36). Wood, an expert in Canaanite pottery and director of the Khirbet el-Maqatir excavations, reanalyzed and interpreted the data from the three major excavations at Jericho, argues that though

Kenyon's work was meticulous, she failed in her interpretations and conclusions. Other archaeologists, too, have criticized Kenyon's techniques. Larry Herr wrote that "her [Kenyon's] insistence that excavation proceed in narrow trenches denies us, when we use the Jericho reports, the confidence that her loci, and the pottery assemblages that go with them, represent understandable human activity patterns over coherently connected living areas. The individual layers, insufficiently exposed horizontally, simply cannot be interpreted credibly in terms of function" (Herr 2002: 53). When one observes maps of Kenyon's excavations, it is obvious that she used extremely narrow trenches encompassing only very small areas of the site. At Jericho, she excavated only a very small percentage of the tell in comparison to Garstang, and yet her new conclusions are generally considered correct (Wood 1990b: 47). Now, after multiple excavations and research done, with a substantial amount of evidence available and archaeologists reanalyzing the data, the question of the accuracy of the conquest account in Joshua 6 may be more thoroughly evaluated.

The Jericho excavations, located at modern Tell es-Sultan, have been conducted by four different teams, although current scholarly consensus is in agreement with Kathleen Kenyon's conclusions. The first was the Austro-German expedition, led by Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger, from 1907-1909 and 1911. The next, using more sophisticated excavation techniques was John Garstang, a British archaeologist, who excavated large portions of the site from 1930-1936. Following Garstang and seeking to correct his findings was Kathleen Kenyon, a British archaeologist who helped develop the Wheeler-Kenyon method and led excavations at Jericho from 1950-1958. Finally, an Italian-Palestinian team led by Lorenzo Nigro and Hamdan Taha, who aim to correct all previous excavations, has been doing intermittent restoration and excavation on the site since 1997.

Jericho has been a famous city for centuries, mostly owing this reputation to it being frequently mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. However, until the early 1900s, Jericho had not been excavated by any major archaeological expeditions. The first large scaled excavation began in 1907 by Sellin and Watzinger. Unfortunately, "this was before pottery chronology was well developed, so their dating was far off the mark" (Wood 1990a: 47). Therefore, though some of their information and maps may be

useful, their pottery analysis and dating should not be used as a reference point. Next, John Garstang undertook an expedition there, and he "was the first investigator to use modern methods at the site…he dug from 1930 to 1936" (Wood 1990a: 49). After Garstang, Kathleen Kenyon undertook the task of excavating and interpreting the ruins of ancient Jericho. Until recently, her conclusions have been difficult to challenge based on the advances in excavation techniques between the time of Garstang and Kenyon. Recent analysis of the evidence, however, demonstrates a high probability that Kenyon was incorrect in her conclusions about the destruction date of the last Bronze Age city of Jericho, and that her proposal of the Egyptians for the Jericho IVc destroyers is unlikely.

To better analyze and interpret the evidence, an accurate date for the time of the alleged conquest of Jericho by the Israelites under Joshua must be established. As discussed in an earlier chapter, there are two main views for the date of the Israelite Conquest under Joshua. The "Late Date," which gained prominence through the endorsement of Albright, argues for the conquest sometime near the end of the 13th century BCE. However, as established in the chapter analyzing the chronology of the Israelite Conquest, a conquest of Canaan beginning ca. 1400 BCE is the date advocated by a literal chronological reading of the ancient Hebrew texts. Garstang interpreted the date of the destruction of Jericho to "fall about 440 years before 967 B.C., i.e. about 1407 B.C., not earlier than 1426 nor later than 1385 B.C." (Garstang 1948: 135). This approximate date of ca. 1400 BCE Garstang correlates with the date of the final destruction of Jericho City IV. He states that "the basic date for our purpose, that of Joshua's attack on Jericho, is indicated by the clear and simple statement of I Kings 6:1, from which that event may be readily computed to fall about 1400 B. C." (Garstang 1944: 380). From chronological data at Jericho IV, specifically the absence of 14th century BCE Mycenaean ware and the presence of certain 18th Dynasty Egyptian scarabs, Garstang dated the end of Jericho IV to sometime between the end of the 15th century BCE and the beginning of the 14th century BCE (Bartlett 1983: 32). Although one of his ceramic chronology methods was flawed—dating on the absence of an imported ware—this was one of the methods employed during that period of

archaeology. After an analysis of his data, Garstang found the textual and archaeological data about the conquest of Jericho to be generally in agreement.

4.2 Ceramic Analysis of Jericho City IV

The first question that must be addressed is whether or not Jericho was occupied during Late Bronze Age I, ca. 1550-1400 BCE. After the German excavations, but before those of Garstang, Watzinger revised his chronology and changed his view to argue that Jericho was in fact unoccupied during Late Bronze I (Watzinger 1926: 131-36). As far as pottery identification determining periods of occupation at the site, Kenyon also changed her mind over the course of her excavations. In an early article, Kenyon wrote about ceramic finds from both the “wash or the “streak” and a level above the ruins of the store room that “As a group, the pottery has connections with Megiddo Level VIII (1479 B.C.-1350 B.C.), but also definite links with VII. The closest Beth-shan parallels are to Stratum IX” (Kenyon 1951: 133). Thus, in an analysis of pottery from some slightly mixed Bronze Age layers, Kenyon found pottery that paralleled strata VII and VIII at Megiddo and stratum IX at Beth-Shean. At Megiddo, stratum VIII is dated to LB IB/LB IIA ca. 1479-1350 BCE according to the Chicago expedition, or ca. 1450-1350 BCE according to Aharoni, while stratum VII is divided up into A and B and dated LBII ca. 1350-1150 BCE (Shiloh 1993: 1023). At Beth-Shean, stratum IX is dated to LB IB/LB IIA, which would be roughly on either side of ca. 1400 BCE (Foerster 1993: 215). Thus, Kenyon cites Late Bronze pottery found in her excavations which she initially dated to the end of LB IB at Jericho. One of the staff members of the Jericho excavations under Kenyon mentioned Late Bronze I pottery in another area of the excavation. “The presence of Late Bronze Age pottery (called LB I in the report but on the basis of later ceramic dating changed by Miss Kenyon to LB II) in the upper part of the fill of the fosse (but below the chert) outside the latest Middle Bronze Age revetment would seem to bespeak Late Bronze occupation” (Tushingham 1953: 63). Kenyon’s excavations surely found Late Bronze pottery, apparently even Late Bronze I which she later assigned to Late Bronze II. Kenyon’s statement in her major book about excavations at Jericho that “This juglet is the only Late Bronze Age vessel we have

found," appears questionable in light of the earlier reported finds of her excavation (Kenyon 1957: 261). However, even if her excavations found extremely limited clear examples of Late Bronze I pottery, the fact that her excavation focused on deep rather than broad trenches suggests that there could have been more extensive habitation in Jericho during the Late Bronze I—the time in which some archaeologists assert that Joshua and the Israelites conquered Jericho. Eventually, however, Kenyon concluded that the "final Middle Bronze Age buildings at Jericho were violently destroyed by fire. Thereafter, the site was abandoned…The date of the burned buildings would seem to be the very end of the Middle Bronze Age" (Kenyon 1993: 680). Kenyon's conclusion of the ceramic chronology at Jericho claimed "a complete gap both on the tell and in the tombs between c. 1560 B.C. and c. 1400 B.C." (Kenyon 1970: 182). This is in contradiction to the reports of Jericho expeditions under Garstang, the Italian-Palestinian team, and an analysis of the available pottery from Jericho by Wood.

Ceramic typology is the primary dating method for sites in the ancient Levant because of the abundance of pottery and the quickly changing styles. Pottery analysis for the establishment of relative and absolute chronologies is the most important type of chronological evidence for the site of Jericho, and should be dealt with in detail. This is especially relevant to Jericho because of the differing views of various excavators and researchers over the past century on the occupational periods of the site. Bryant Wood undertook the task of reanalyzing and reinterpreting the evidence from the various archaeological excavations at Jericho. He began his work on this subject because, he writes, "I became intrigued by a considerable amount of what appeared to be Late Bronze I (c. 1550-1400 B.C.E.) pottery he [Garstang] had excavated" (Wood 1990a: 49). The pottery of this period was, of course, what Kenyon eventually claimed was absent in her excavations at Jericho. Yet, Wood explains that "Kenyon never published a definitive study of the pottery from the last phases of City IV, before its destruction. The final excavation reports published after her death reflect Kenyon's meticulous field work and contain a complete and detailed presentation of her excavation results. But they merely present the raw data, with no analysis or comment…it becomes clear that Kenyon based her opinion almost exclusively on the *absence* of pottery imported from Cyprus and common to the Late Bronze I period" (Wood 1990a: 50). By analyzing the

ceramic data and any other relevant chronological material from Jericho, it is possible to discover if Jericho City IV really was occupied in the Late Bronze I period.

The main problematic component of Kenyon's argument was her reliance on the absence of imported Cypriot pottery; a lack of a specific kind of evidence, an argument from silence, should not be used as the primary means of dating a site. A specialist in the ceramics of the Late Bronze Age southern Levant, Wood promotes the axiom that "the primary method of dating should be a thorough analysis of the *local* pottery" (Wood 1990b: 47). Absence of a particular type of exotic, imported ceramic, Cypriot pottery in this case, and the absence of it in what Kenyon indicates was an economically poor section of the city, does not conclusively indicate a date outside of the Late Bronze Age.[20] Instead, it merely demonstrates that the residents in this section of the city did not own Cypriot pottery, either because they could not afford it, or that Jericho did not import much or any of it during the Late Bronze Age. Jericho is not located on the major trade routes of the second millennium BCE and may not have had a large import market (Kenyon 1993: 674). On the other hand, recent excavations by the Italian-Palestinian team have discovered a Lower City as part of Jericho IV, and the new estimate for the size of the city is over 17 acres (Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie 1998: 141). Therefore, as a moderately sized city, some imports of exotic wares may be expected to be found in the more wealthy areas of the site, and in tombs in particular. Yet, Kenyon describes the area she excavated as the home of simple villagers, a place with no suggestion of luxury, and that Jericho was "something of a backwater, away from the contacts with richer areas provided by the coastal route" (Kenyon 1967: 271). Because of its location, exotic imported wares may not be abundant at Jericho—even more so in a poor residential quarter. However, Garstang actually found imported wares from the Late Bronze I—specifically the Cypriot ware that Kenyon did not find in her excavations (Wood 1990b: 48). An example is given of a Cypriot milk bowl found in the Jericho IV layer outside the Middle Building area, in the top layer of "house-room No. 60"

[20] Garstang fell into this same trap. However, in the time of Garstang, this was more acceptable because detailed studies had not yet established a reliable chronology for the local wares, but as archaeology developed, this method became inferior. By the time of Kenyon, distinction between MB III, LB I, and LB II on the basis of local wares was possible.

(Garstang 1941: 370, note 7). In discussing some of the finds of imported ware, Garstang reports about:

> two whole vessels of this class in the topmost levels of the palace storerooms—in spots, it should be noted, that lay outside the area of the Middle Building and were accordingly freer from disturbance. These vessels are similar to those from Tomb 5, where they seem to date their incidence to the age of Thuthmes III. Another type of painted wares—the last of our LB I series—is represented by a number of long-necked jugs found in Tomb 4; they appear to imitate in a way the larger type of Cypriote jugs of bil-bil fabric; and their introduction as a type into the repertory of Bronze Age Canaan seems to be dated both at Jericho and at Lachish by contemporary scarabs of Amenhetep III (Garstang 1941: 369-70).

Wood observes that much of the Cypriot pottery was found "in erosional layers on the east side of the tell. Evidently it originated in a large structure upslope, which Garstang referred to as the palace. Only a portion of the eastern wall of this building remained at the time of his excavation" (Wood 1990a: 50). Originally, Garstang did not know the significance of these Cypriot sherds or to which period they belonged, and thus his argument for the date of Jericho IV was more susceptible to attack. After he evaluated his excavations a few years later, Garstang argued that the Jericho "excavations, logically interpreted, point to the fall of the city in the reign of Amenhetep III (ca. 1400 B.C.)…before that of his successor Akhenaton, of whose period there is no trace—no royal signet, no influx of Early Mycenaean pottery, and no mention of Jericho in the Amarna Letters" (Gastang 1941: 370-71). Because of a lack of Mycenean ware, the presence of 15th century Egyptian Pharaoh scarabs, and some stratigraphy, Garstang was able to put forth a legitimate, albeit weaker argument for Jericho being occupied in the 15th century BCE. With the addition of knowledge about Cypriot ware and a more refined chronology of local pottery, the case becomes much stronger.

Bienkowski, however, disagreed with the date that Wood assigned to certain Cypriot sherds. Bienkowski agreed in the presence of the Cypriot ware at Jericho, but claimed that they dated to Late Bronze II and thus the sherds were not part of Jericho IV. Bienkowski disputed that the alleged Cypriot bichrome ware was actually Late Bronze II painted ware, which Bienkowski dated ca. 1425-1275 BCE (Bienkowski 1990:

46).[21] Wood responded with a thorough analysis of the ceramics, demonstrating that the Cypriot bichrome sherds discovered by Garstang which he cited were markedly different than the local painted ware.

> The fabric of the Jericho bichrome pottery is much different than the local Late Bronze II wares. The fabric of Late Bronze II pottery…has large grits and is not fired all the way through. The Jericho bichrome pottery…is the pinkish-buff, well-levigated fabric common to Cypriote bichrome ware. It has a finely ground temper all but invisible to the naked eye and is well fired with no core. Garstang published a considerable amount of this pottery, which he referred to as "red ware." Among the sherds he published are several with classic Cypriote bichrome ware motifs" (Wood 1990b: 48).[22]

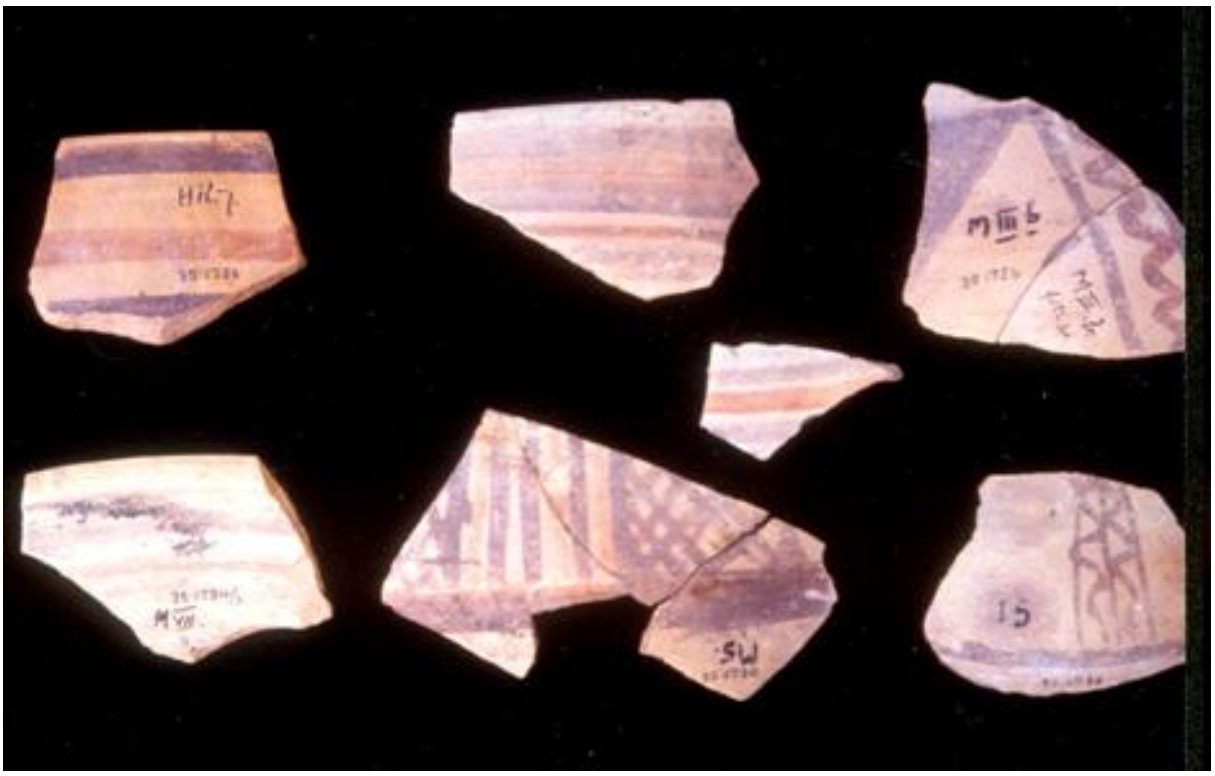

Fig 8: Cypriot Bichrome sherds found by John Garstang at Jericho IV. From Wood 1999a: 37. Cf. also Wood 1990a: 53.

[21]Cf. also Bienkowski, *Jericho in the Late Bronze Age* figs. 52:8, 53:10 and pgs. 118–120.
[22] Examples of these sherds are found in John Garstang, "Jericho: City and Necropolis, Fourth Report," *University of Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 21 (1934), pls. 29: 4, 7, 12; 34:3; 36:12; 39:5.

At least one of the bichrome sherds in Garstang's report, a bowl fragment, is noted as being burnt and found in a burnt layer that eroded down to the floor of the Hilani room 7 (Wood 1990b: 49; Garstang 1934: 111, pl. 34: 10). Another important bichrome fragment, a biconical jug fragment, came from part of the Jericho IV destruction layer called "lower area 57," just below the floor layer of the Late Bronze II Middle Building, indicating it would be from a Late Bronze I strata (Wood 1990b: 49; Garstang 1934: 111, pl. 31:8). The presence of imported Cypriot bichrome ware dated to Late Bronze I, although not prolific, was discovered at least in the excavations of Garstang, and is an indicator of Late Bronze I occupation at the site. However, an examination of the local pottery is more important, and conclusively indicative of the occupational period for the final, destroyed city of Jericho IVc.

Careful examination of the local pottery would not be sufficiently done and explained until Wood researched the ceramic data from the various Jericho excavations (Price 1997: 152). In relation to the local pottery, Wood emphasizes what he asserts was an error on Kenyon's part. "That she did not focus more on the local pottery is especially strange because considerable stratified local daily-use pottery from the Late Bronze I period had been excavated and was available" (Wood 1990a: 50). Instead, she focused on the fact that her trenches at Jericho did not find Cypriot or Mycenaean wares, even though "dating habitation levels at Jericho on the absence of exotic imported wares…is methodologically unsound, and indeed, unacceptable" (Wood 1990a: 50). One can only hypothesize the reasons Kenyon neglected to focus on the local pottery; it may have been because she believed the imported ceramics would be a better indicator of the date. After Wood originally published an article claiming the existence of local Late Bronze I pottery at Jericho IV, but giving limited examples for the sake of brevity, Bienkowski responded by arguing that some of the local Canaanite pottery forms that Wood cited as Late Bronze I actually have parallels from Middle Bronze II at nearby Gibeon, citing material from a tomb (Bienkowski 1990: 46).[23] Even if it was correct, this would be a weak parallel, however, since tomb pottery is not stratified and could generally come from a number of periods.

[23]The tomb pottery came from James B. Pritchard, *The Bronze Age Cemetery at Gibeon* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1963), figs. 16:2, 32:11, 69:8.

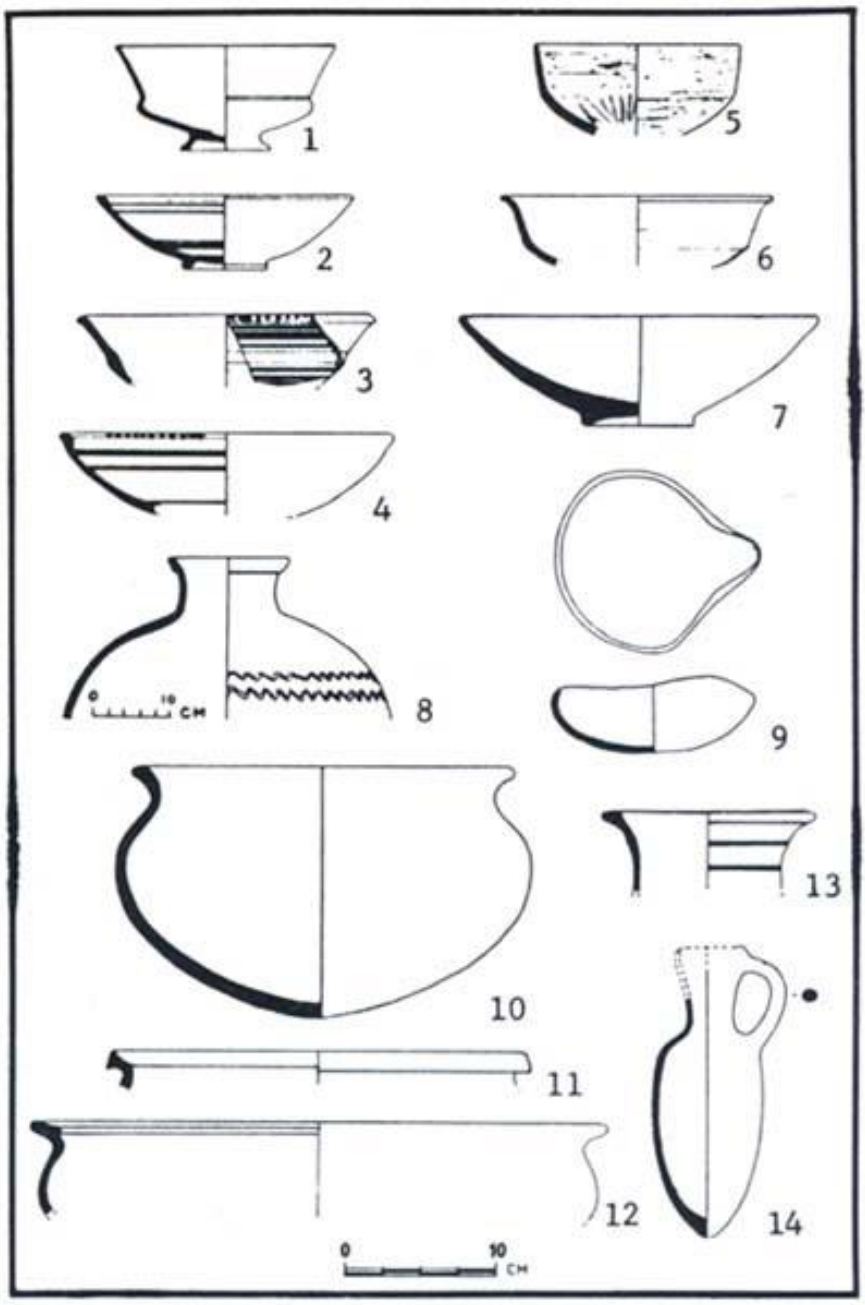

Fig 9: From Wood 1990b: 47. 1. flaring carinated bowl (*Jericho 4*, fig. 110:1); 2 4. bowls decorated with internal concentric circles (*Jericho 5*, fig. 206:2; *Jericho 4*, fig. 110:8 and *Jericho 5*, fig. 206:1); 5–7. bowls (*Jericho 5*, fig. 191:16, *Jericho 4*, fig. 109:34 and *Jericho 5*, fig. 189:2); 8. storage jar (*Jericho 5*, fig. 199:6); 9. lamp (*Jericho 5*, fig. 197:2); 1012. cooking pots (*Jericho 5*, fig. 198:10; *Jericho 4*, figs. 150:22 and 121:11); 13. decorated water jar (*Jericho 5*, fig. 206:11); 14. dipper juglet (*Jericho 5*, fig. 196:5).

Yet, the example in question, “the flaring carinated bowl with slight crimp…[has] parallels from well-dated stratified Late Bronze I contexts such as Lachish Fosse Temple 1,[24] Megiddo IX,[25] Hazor 2,[26] Hazor cistern 9024, level 3,[27] and Hazor cistern 7021, level C.[28]” (Wood 1990b: 47).

The next ceramic types on the plate, 2, 3, and 4, are conical bowls with painted interior concentric circles, and are a major Late Bronze I ceramic found all over the southern Levant, typically “in the latter half of Late Bronze I,” and Garstang even found and identified this bowl type as Late Bronze I in his excavations[29] Examples come from Ashdod XVII,[30] Hazor 2,[31] Lachish Fosse Temple 1,[32] Shechem XIV,[33] Mevorakh XI[34] and Megiddo VIII.[35] The next local pottery type on the plate is a type of a bowl more typical of Late Bronze I than Middle Bronze II or III (Wood 1990b: 48).[36] Parallels from other Late Bronze I strata in the southern Levant include Rabud LB4[37] and Shechem XIV[38] for number 5, Lachish Fosse Temple 1[39] for number 6, and Lachish Fosse Temple 1,[40] Mevorakh XI,[41] Megiddo VIII[42] and Hazor 2[43] for number 7 (Wood 1990b:

[24] Olga Tufnell, Charles H. Inge and Lankester Harding, *Lachish 2: The Fosse Temple* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1940), pl. 42: 129.
[25] Gordon Loud, *Megiddo 2: Seasons of 1935–39*, Oriental Institute Publications, Vol. 42 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1948), pl. 53: 19.
[26] Yigael Yadin et al., *Hazor 3–4: An Account of the Third and Fourth Seasons of Excavations, 1957–1958* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), pl. 263: 3–16.
[27] Yadin et al., *Hazor 1: An Account of the First Season of Excavations, 1955* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1958), pl. 123: 1–9.
[28] Yadin et al., *Hazor 1*, pl. 136: 1–7.
[29] Wood, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?” Cf. Garstang, "Jericho: City and Necropolis," *LAAA* 21, p. 121
[30] Moshe Dothan, *Ashdod 2-3: The Second and Third Seasons of Excavations, 1963, 1965*, *Antiqot* 9-10 [English Series, 1971], p. 81
[31] Yadin et al., *Hazor 2: An Account of the Second Season of Excavations, 1956* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960], p. 94; Yadin, *Hazor: The Head of All Those Kingdoms*, Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1970 [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972], p. 32
[32] Tufnell et al., *Lachish 2*, pl. 37: 1.
[33] Lawrence E. Toombs and G. Ernest Wright, “The Fourth Campaign at Balatah (Shechem),” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (*BASOR*) 169 (1963), fig. 23:2.
[34] Ephraim Stern, *Excavations at Tel Mevorakh (1973–1976), Part Two: The Bronze Age*, *Qedem* 18 Jerusalem: Hebrew Univ., 1984), fig. 5:7.
[35] Loud, *Megiddo 2*, pl. 61: 18.
[36] Wood, “Bienkowski Is Wrong on All Counts.”
[37] Moshe Kochavi, “Khirbet Rabud Debir,” *Tel Aviv* 1 (1974), fig. 4: 3.
[38] Toombs and Wright, “The Fourth Campaign,” fig. 23: 1.
[39] Tufnell et al., *Lachish 2*, pls. 41: 98, 104, 105; pls. 42:127.
[40] Tufnell et al., *Lachish 2*, pls. 37: 3, 4, 7 and 38: 32, 33.
[41] Stern, *Mevorakh 2*. fig. 5: 11–14.
[42] Loud, *Megiddo 2*, pl. 61: 13, 14.
[43] Yadin et al., *Hazor 3–4*, pl. 288: 3.

48). Number 8 shows a storage jar, and Late Bronze I parallels for this are found at Lachish Fosse Temple 1,[44] Rabud LB4,[45] Shechem XIV[46] and Hazor cistern 7021, level C.[47] Wood identifies figure 9 as "a saucer lamp with a slight pinching to form a spout," and a Late Bronze I parallel can be yet again found at Lachish Fosse Temple 1[48] (Wood 1990b: 48). Numbers 10, 11, and 12 on the plate are identified as "round-bottomed, everted-rim cooking pots" which have Late Bronze I parallels for 10 number at Lachish Fosse Temple I,[49] Shechem XIV,[50] Michal XVI,[51] Mevorakh XI[52] and Hazor 2,[53] for number 11 at Lachish Fosse Temple 1[54] and other Late Bronze I deposits such as Rabud LB4,[55] Ashdod XVII,[56] Michal XVI[57] and Hazor XV/2,[58] and for number 12 at Hazor 2.[59] Figure 13, "a water jar decorated with painted stripes," unique to the Late Bronze Age, has parallels from Late Bronze I strata at Ashdod XVII,[60] Hazor 2[61] and Hazor cistern 7021, level C[62] (Wood 1990b: 48). Finally, figure 14 is a dipper juglet "transitional between the long dipper juglet of the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze II short dipper juglet, and is the common form for Late Bronze I," with parallels from Lachish Fosse Temple 1[63] (Wood 1990b: 48). The most recent excavations at Jericho have even affirmed Late Bronze IB pottery at the site. In a building "in between the limit of the palace and the main terrace-wall, a labyrinth structure was excavated by

[44] Tufnell et al., *Lachish 2*, pl. 57: 389.
[45] Kochavi, "Khirbet Rabud," fig. 4: 10.
[46] Toombs and Wright, "The Fourth Campaign," fig. 23: 14.
[47] Yadin et al., *Hazor 1*, pl. 141: 2.
[48] Tufnell et al., *Lachish 2*, pl. 45 186, 187.
[49] Tufnell et al., *Lachish 2*, pl. 355: 361.
[50] Toombs and Wright, "The Fourth Campaign," fig. 23: 19, 20.
[51] Ze'ev Herzag, George Rapp, Jr., and Ora Negbi, ed., *Excavations at Tel Michal, Israel* (*Michal*), Publ. of Tel Aviv University Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology No. 8 (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989), fig. 5.6: 3.
[52] Stern, *Mevorakh 2*, fig. 7: 9.
[53] Yadin et al., *Hazor 1*, pl. 138: 4.
[54] Tufnell et al., *Lachish 2*, pl. 55 : 354.
[55] Kochavi, "Khirbet Rabud," fig. 4:6.
[56] Moshe Dothan, *Ashdod 2–3: The Second and Third Seasons of Excavations, 1963, 1965, Soundings in 1967*, '*Atiqot* English series, vols. 9–10 (Jerusalem: Dept. of Antiquities and Museums, 1971), fig. 33: 7.
[57] Herzog et al., *Michal*, fig. 5.6: 8.
[58] Yadin et al, *Hazor 3–4*, pls. 199: 19 and 289: 7.
[59] Yadin et al., *Hazor 1*, pl. 139: 1–4.
[60] Dothan, *Ashdod 2–3*, fig. 33: 13.
[61] Yadin et al., *Hazor 3–4*, pl. 266:15.
[62] Yadin et al., *Hazor 1*, pl. 141: 12.
[63] Tufnell et al., *Lachish 2*, pl. 52: 297, 303.

Garstang,", in which "Later LB I vessels were found, but from an upper and probably reused level of the building" (Nigro 2009: 362).

Surely with this detailed ceramic analysis from a variety of sources and excavation teams at Jericho demonstratively shows that Late Bronze I pottery is present at Jericho, and the matter for occupation of the site during that period can be settled. Therefore, one sees that though Kenyon meticulously excavated the site, it appears that her methods of interpretation and analysis were flawed. This caused her to come to a faulty conclusion that Jericho was not occupied during the Late Bronze I, while according to ceramic data found in publications of the Garstang, Kenyon, and Italian-Palestinian excavations, the site was definitely inhabited during the Late Bronze I.

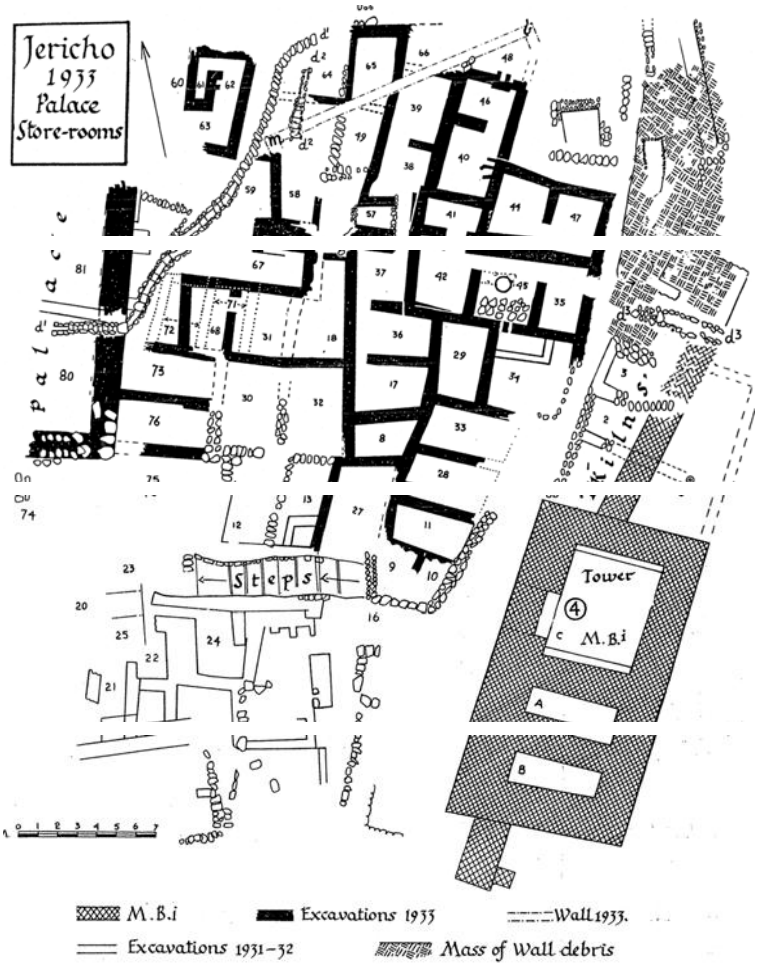

Fig 10: Palace area excavated by Garstang. The labyrinth structure where pottery from Late Bronze IB was found (Area 60) is just east of the Palace, but well within the city. From Nigro 2009: 365, after Garstang 1934: pl. 15.

4.3 Scarabs and Seals from Jericho

As a secondary form of establishing dates of occupation for Jericho, artifact finds from the tombs, such as the numerous Egyptian scarabs and one seal in particular, are accurate indicators. The scarabs to focus on at Jericho are standard Egyptian amulets, imported from Egypt, which were made out of ceramic, shaped like the dung beetle, and on the flat side inscribed with the name of a Pharaoh in a cartouche. In excavations at Jericho, Garstang recovered a near continuous series of Egyptian scarabs from the 13th Dynasty to the middle of the 18th Dynasty, a span encompassing the Second Intermediate Period, the Hyksos Period, and the beginning of the New Kingdom. In terms of absolute dates, the scarabs begin in the 18th century BCE and cease somewhere around the end of the 15th century BCE or the beginning of the 14th century BCE.

There 18th Dynasty scarabs and seal which are particularly relevant to the discussion of Late Bronze Age Jericho include one of the Pharaoh Queen Hatshepsut, one scarab and one seal of her co-regent and later successor Thutmose III, and two scarabs of Amenhotep III (Garstang 1948: 126). The two Pharaohs in between Thutmose III and Amenhotep III, Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV, are not found attested in scarabs yet recovered at the site of Jericho. However, the nearly continuous nature of the scarab series suggests that the cemetery was in active use up to the end of Late Bronze I, sometime during the reign of Amenhotep III.

In reference to the scarabs indicating contemporary occupation at Jericho, Bienkowski argues that “scarabs of well-known XVIIIth-Dynasty kings were very common, and could remain in circulation (or even be made) long after the kings themselves had died” (Bienkowski 1990: 46). He emphasizes instead one Hyksos scarab of Maibre Sheshi of the 15th Dynasty, found in Middle Bronze Age tomb H13 (Group V) at Jericho (Bienkowski 1990: 46; Kirkhride 1965: 581-583). Bienkowski believes that the finding of a Hyksos Dynasty scarab is more important and more

indicative of an earlier date of destruction, since “scarabs of obscure Hyksos kings are not known to have been kept as heirlooms or manufactured later, and thus are a better guide to the absolute date” (Bienkowski 1990: 46). While it appears to be true that Hyksos scarabs were not kept as heirlooms or manufactured later in Egypt, this also applies to two of the 18th Dynasty finds at Jericho. The scarab of Hatshepsut is a very rare find and an artifact that is essentially limited to her reign because of her unpopularity following her death. Hatshepsut is not a candidate for scarab seals being made and circulated after her reign; in fact this situation is totally improbable. For reasons not completely known, following her reign, especially during the time of Amenhotep II, the ancient Egyptians attempted to remove her name and status of Pharaoh from the records and monuments of Egypt (Gardiner 1964: 182, 198). Because of this unique situation, the Hatshepsut scarab at Jericho can be considered contemporary with her reign in the early 15th century BCE. Another artifact of note is a two sided seal, not a scarab, of Thutmose III (Garstang 1948: 126). This seal, unlike the scarabs of Thutmose III, is a rare artifact and one restricted to the years of his reign in the early to middle 15th century BCE (http://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=1108). Thus, these two artifacts further suggest occupation at the site and use of the tombs during Late Bronze I, specifically the 15th century BCE. They further indicate that the Amenhotep III and Thutmose III scarabs come from the time contemporary with their respective reigns.

Fig 11: Scarabs of Thutmose III (top left), Amenhotep II (top right), Hatshepsut (bottom right), and a seal of Thutmose III (bottom left). http://www.biblearchaeology.org/image.axd?picture=Three-Scarabs-WEB.jpg

Fig 12: Thutmose III seal from Jericho (displaying the praenomen/throne name). Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem. Photo: Titus Kennedy

As the Amenhotep III scarabs are the latest Egyptian Pharaoh attested at Jericho, this would suggest that the end of the Late Bronze I occupation there ceased during his reign. Garstang comments about the lack of Egyptian material from after the reign of Amenhotep III. "Our excavations, logically interpreted, point to the fall of the city in the reign of Amenhetep III (c. 1400 B.C.)…but before that of his successor Akhenaton, of whose period there is no trace—no royal signet, no influx of Early Mycenaean pottery, and no mention of Jericho in the Amarna letters" (Garstang 1948: 179). This lack of discovery suggests that Jericho was not reestablished as a city during the 14th or 13th centuries BCE, directly after Jericho would have been destroyed by the Israelites, according to the book of Joshua. Since the reign of Amenhotep III is variously dated from the end of the 15th century BCE to the early 14th century BCE, a date of ca. 1400 BCE is a plausible hypothesis based additionally on the ceramic data from the end of the Late Bronze I in City IVc. Late Bronze II ceramics are only found in the Middle Building, which was disassociated from the earlier settlement and tombs. This apparent evidence of constant occupation during the Late Bronze Age I is, of course, directly in contradiction to Kenyon's conclusions.

Although it is true that Jericho is not mentioned in any of the recovered Amarna Letters, unless it was called by an unknown alternate name, this does not necessarily require that Jericho was uninhabited during the entire period of the Amarna Letters. As mentioned earlier, Jericho during the Late Bronze Age, and even the Middle Bronze Age, was far from any major trade routes. Since the scarab of Amenhotep III indicates habitation during his reign, and some of the Amarna Letters are from his reign, it is more likely that the city is not mentioned because it was unimportant to the Egyptians. There are other cities in the southern Levant that were occupied at the time of the Amarna Letters that are not mentioned, or at least tablets have not yet been recovered which

mention some of those cities. Thus, the lack of mention in currently recovered Amarna Letters is not definitive in terms of dating the occupation or destruction of the site, but instead may be more indicative of the lack of status of the city in the Egyptian court. The scarab evidence, along with the aforementioned ceramic evidence, does however strongly demonstrate that Jericho was occupied during the 15th century BCE. Collectively, the discovery of scarabs dating to the 15th century BCE, pottery from Late Bronze I in Jericho IV, no scarabs or other Egyptian materials dating after the reign of Amenhotep III, and only a small residence from Late Bronze II indicates that there was occupation up the time of the conquest of Jericho by the Israelites under Joshua, indicating that Jericho could have been destroyed by the Israelites at the end of Late Bronze I, ca. 1400 BCE.

4.4 Stratigraphy of Jericho IV

Although the ceramic data and the Egyptian seal and scarabs demonstrate habitation at Jericho during the Late Bronze I, and specifically the 15th century BCE, the stratigraphy must be examined in order to determine which stratum of Jericho could be associated with the period of Late Bronze I. Jericho City IV was determined by both Garstang and Kenyon to be the last Bronze Age "city" on the tell. Garstang's excavations of the Middle Building and later inquiries on this structure demonstrate that although this building was inhabited during the end of Late Bronze IIA, there was no actual city at Jericho during that period or at anytime during Late Bronze II.

Kenyon divided up the stratigraphy of Jericho into phases. When Wood examined the pottery associated with each of the Bronze Age phases, he noticed that the ceramic data, such as Chocolate on White ware and the flat-bottomed cooking pot, "attest[s] to the Middle Bronze III nature of Phases 32–36 at Jericho," "securely places Jericho Phase 32 at the beginning of the Middle Bronze III period," and Phase 52 was the final, destroyed Bronze Age city (Wood 1990b: 49, 68). If Phase 32 is the beginning of the Middle Bronze III, then in Kenyon's chronology, Phase 52 at the end of the Middle Bronze Age only occurs 100 years later, making the average phase during this period only 5 years. Within this set of 20 phases, according to Kenyon, there were 15

destructions of varying intensity and scope, and structures such as houses were rebuilt several times (Kenyon 1981: 354-370). This scenario of 20 phases in the space of 100 years is unlikely, but if Phases 44 to 52 are actually in Late Bronze I, which the ceramic evidence indicates, then it becomes a total of 250 years and a more plausible average of 25 years per phase (Wood 1990a: 52).

The stratigraphy at Jericho, though, is not as straightforward as many sites because of the considerable amount of erosion that has taken place on the tell during periods of vacancy. After the destruction of Jericho IVc, the final Bronze Age city, Jericho was completely vacant for over 50 years. Dirt, pottery, and other material washed down from the higher areas of the tell. Garstang called this a streak, and Kenyon used the more familiar terminology of a wash. "During this period, material from the top of the tell washed down the slopes, forming a thick layer of erosional debris (Garstang's "streak," Kenyon's "wash")" (Wood 1990b: 49). When the Middle Building in Area H on the east side of the tell was built, there was a layer of wash underneath its foundations. After the Middle Building was abandoned, along with the rest of the site, erosion again formed a wash layer over the stratum of the Middle Building. Because of this, the Late Bronze IIA material of the Middle Building was both above and below some Late Bronze I material (Wood 1990b: 49; Garstang 1934: 106, 111; Bienkowski 1986: 112; Kenyon 1951: 120-21). In the Iron Age, the Hilani structure was built over the Middle Building, but after its abandonment, erosion from the top of the tell again washed down and covered the stratum of the Hilani. Thus, material from the top of the tell, especially from the final Bronze Age city, is found in various strata because of erosion. However, the most important stratigraphic relationship to note is that the Late Bronze IIA Middle Building is over the stratum of Jericho IVc, except where erosion has washed materials from Jericho IV, and thus there is indication of a short period of an occupational hiatus in between the two layers. Ignoring the later erosional layers which are not in their original context but focusing on the previously mentioned ceramic data, this means that the last phase of Jericho City IVc precedes Late Bronze IIA, but not by an extremely long period. Once the ceramic evidence from the end of Jericho IV is factored in—pottery from Late Bronze I—it becomes clear that the end of Jericho IVc is placed at the end of Late Bronze I by both ceramic and stratigraphic evidence.

4.5 The Walls of Jericho IVc

Jericho, during the Bronze Age, like many other Bronze Age cities of the southern Levant, was fortified by a massive rampart made of earth and held in place by a stone retaining wall which surrounded the city. At Jericho, above the stone retaining wall was an upper wall made of mud bricks. According to the early German excavations, when less damage had been done to the site, the stone retaining wall was approximately 4 to 5 meters high, and the upper mudbrick wall on top of the retaining wall was approximately 6 to 8 meters high and 2 meters thick (Sellin and Watzinger 1973: 58; Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie 1998: 141). Inside this was another wall, made of mudbrick, according to the Italian-Palestinian team reached to a height of 12.11 meters above the ground level outside of the fortifications (Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie 1998: 142). Both a stone retaining wall and a rampart of debris piled on the MB I and MB II fortifications were built in MB III, ca. 1650-1550 BCE (Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie 1998: 131, 138, 141). The wall of the final Bronze Age city, Jericho IVc, is referred to as a Cyclopean Wall which encapsulates the city, and its construction dates to Middle Bronze III (Nigro and Taha 2009: 731). Besides the ceramic typology indicating the date of the construction in Middle Bronze III, recent excavations have demonstrated that the Cyclopean Wall cuts through Tower A1, which was in use during Middle Bronze I and II (Nigro and Taha 2009: 734).

Although Garstang thought he had identified Late Bronze Age walls, Kenyon stated that “no fragment of the walls of the Late Bronze Age city, that of the period within which the attack by the Israelites under Joshua must fall, survives” (Kenyon 1957: 170). She corrected a mistake of Garstang’s stratigraphy, adding that “the material associated with [the double wall] is entirely of the Early Bronze Age. Moreover, the latest of the walls on the outer line is securely sealed by levels of the Intermediate Early Bronze-Middle Bronze period” (Kenyon 1957: 181). About the date that the double wall fortifications that Garstang identified as Late Bronze, Wood agrees with Kenyon. He states that “there is little doubt that Kenyon was correct in dating the double wall on top of the tell…In this she was right and Garstang was wrong” (Wood 1990a: 50). Kenyon

correctly dated the construction of the massive double wall to the Early Bronze Age, but was flawed in her dating of the final phase of the city because of her focus on a specific type of imported pottery (Waltke 1990: 192). For the Cyclopean Wall surrounding the tell, which recent excavations dated the latest construction to Middle Bronze III, Kenyon's excavations reported that, a "*terminus ante quem* for these walls is provided by the patching and repairing carried out on the latest in the series during the transitional Early Bronze-Middle Bronze period, followed and overlaid by the three great revetments of Middle Bronze" (Tushingham 1952: 8).[64] According to a report about the 1952 excavations "the latest surviving defenses were M. B." and "an M. B. revetment rested against and covered all the walls lying below and within it. All of these walls must be earlier than M. B. Therefore, in this season's work, no walls which could be assigned to L. B. were discovered" (Tushingham 1952: 10). Therefore, these walls were clearly constructed in the Middle Bronze Age. Because of the date of the construction of these walls, and because Kenyon found no walls dating to the Late Bronze Age, she argued that the city of Jericho was neither fortified nor destroyed during the Late Bronze Age. Thus, the Jericho narrative in the book of Joshua must have been at least partially false. Although the Cyclopean Wall may not have been built or even repaired in Late Bronze I, the ceramic data and scarabs have shown that Kenyon was wrong in dating occupation of the final Bronze Age city to the end of the Middle Bronze Age. The walls of Jericho IVc, however, appear to have been built in Middle Bronze III.

The larger problem is correlating the occupational evidence, indicating occupation of the city in Late Bronze I, with the apparent lack of walls for the city during the Late Bronze Age. The existence of a wall from the end of the Middle Bronze Age and lack of a wall constructed in the Late Bronze Age does not prove that Jericho was unoccupied during the Late Bronze I, or even that the city was without fortification in that period. How could this wall from the Middle Bronze Age also be the wall around the Late Bronze Age city? Yadin made an especially relevant comment on the wall situation at Jericho. He wrote that:

[64] It should be noted that Kenyon's EB-MB transition is commonly referred to as MB I, and her MB revetments fall in the period commonly referred to as MB II.

> Evidence of a Late Bronze Age town was also found but Kenyon could not find even a trace of a Late Bronze Age wall. How could the walls of Jericho come tumbling down during the Late Bronze Age if there was no Late Bronze Age wall around the town. There may be an explanation. In many cases the Late Bronze Age people did not actually build new fortifications but, rather, reused Middle Bronze fortifications, strengthening them where necessary. Interpreters often overlook this fact, and it may have an important bearing on the case of Jericho. It may well be that the Late Bronze Age settlement at Jericho reused the city wall from the Middle Bronze Age (Yadin 1982: 22).

Yadin does not base this statement merely from theory. In his excavations at Hazor, a massive fortification wall:

> Under the Israelite fortification in area G, on the extreme eastern end of the tell, we found a well-built stone glacis, or battered wall, fronted by a narrow and deep moat. This glacis is actually a huge revetment wall for the platform on which the defensive brick wall was most probably built…quite similar in appearance and function to the famous battered-stone glacis at Jericho. This element of the fortifications may have been erected in stratum XVI (Yadin 1975a: 266-267).

This structure at Hazor was preserved to a massive height, and appears to be mostly intact. Since the remains on top of it were Israelite fortifications, and excavated gates at Hazor were built during the Late Bronze Age, it appears as if the wall built in the Middle Bronze Age was reused through the Late Bronze Age city, which, according to excavations and texts, was well fortified. Yadin's excavations also found this reuse of earlier walls near the area K gate, which was rebuilt throughout the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. "To carry both rampart and platform the Middle Bronze age engineers built a great revetment wall, strengthened by huge basalt boulders, to a height of twelve feet…We found this wall intact; it is a veritable feat of engineering" (Yadin 1959: 9; cf. Yadin 1959: 19). Visually, this wall is reminiscent of the revetment wall at Jericho, only higher. Gonen's research indicated that generally Late Bronze sites, including Gezer, were unfortified "except for sporadic reuse of the ruined Middle Bronze Age city walls" (Dever 1992: 17, footnote 24). Sukenik, reporting on his excavations at Tell Jerishe, explained that "there was no clear break or conflagration between this period [the Middle Bronze Age] and the following Late Bronze Age, during which the Middle Bronze fortification system continued in use" (Sukenik 1944: 199). Thus, throughout the southern Levant there is ample evidence of walls from the Middle Bronze Age being

reused as fortifications through the Late Bronze Age. The fortifications at Jericho IVc, which had a massive stone retaining wall around the tell with a mud brick wall on top of that, were built in Middle Bronze III. Since at Jericho no city wall was built at any time in the Late Bronze Age but finds there demonstrate habitation through Late Bronze I, based on the evidence from other sites it is extremely likely that the Middle Bronze Age III wall at Jericho was also reused until the end of Late Bronze I, when the city was destroyed and abandoned.

An unusual and interesting observation about the relationship between the Jericho conquest narrative in the book of Joshua and the archaeological findings at Jericho IV concerning the walls is their apparent agreement in the manner of destruction. The book of Joshua states that the Israelites went up into the city after the walls fell down, and the archaeological observations show that "the collapsed mud bricks themselves formed a ready ramp for an attacker to surmount the revetment wall" (Wood 1990a: 56). Kenyon "found *a heap of bricks from the fallen city walls*! An Italian team excavating at the southern end of the mound in 1997 found exactly the same thing" (Wood 1999a: 37). Kenyon describes the wall collapse in detail. "Above the fill associated with the kerb wall, during which the final MB bank remained in use, was a series of tip lines against the face of the revetment. The first was a heavy fill of fallen red bricks piling nearly to the top of the revetment. These probably came from the wall on the summit of the bank…[or] the brickwork above the revetment" (Kenyon 1981: 110). At the top of the stone retaining wall, it appears that a mudbrick wall once surrounded the site until it fell forward in front of the retaining wall. Remains of this toppled wall from Jericho IVc have been excavated in a few areas, but some of this material still remains on the site. It appears as if "the pile of bricks resting against the outer face of the revetment wall came from the collapsed city wall. Here is impressive evidence that the walls of Jericho did indeed topple" (Wood 1990a: 54). The Italian-Palestinian excavations also noticed this material, referring to it as a sloping layer, different from the main fill, in front of the stone retaining wall which was probably a type of ramp, and possibly the mudbrick ramp also identified by Sellin and Watzinger (Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie 1998: 143). Therefore, it appears that the pile of toppled mudbricks which came down in front of the stone retaining wall probably composed the

upper mudbrick portion of the outer wall of the final Bronze Age city. Because the ceramic and scarab evidence demonstrates that the final Bronze Age city was inhabited until the end of Late Bronze I, although the wall was constructed in Middle Bronze III, it would have been toppled and left in ruins when that city was abandoned at the end of Late Bronze I, ca. 1400 BCE. Thus, it may be the wall referred to in the book of Joshua during the Israelite conquest of Jericho. Multiple archaeological expeditions at Jericho found mudbricks from the fallen city walls directly in front of the stone retaining wall, creating a “ramp” out of the fallen mud brick wall. These finds are in agreement with the description in the book of Joshua about the fallen walls of Jericho and the Israelites going up into the city (Joshua 6:20).

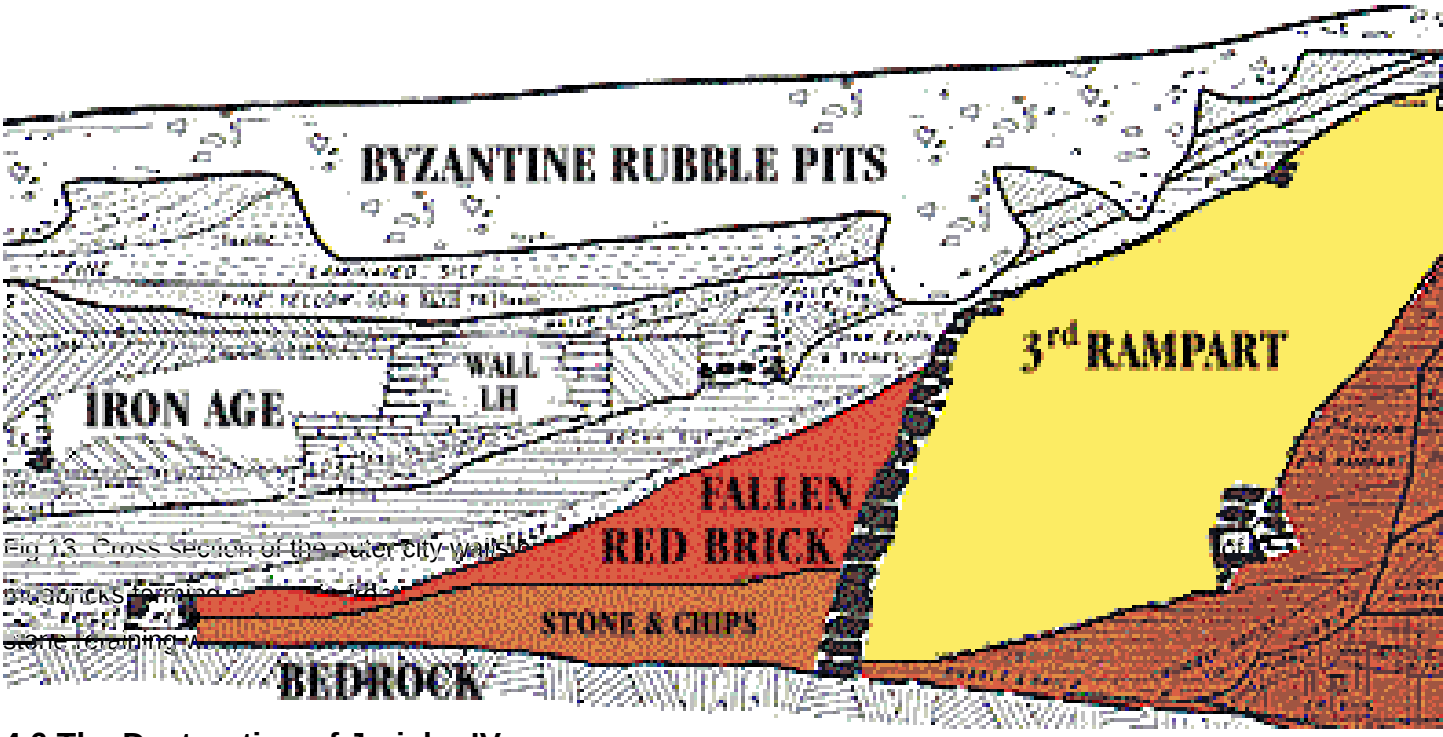

Fig 13. Cross Section of the outer city walls

4.6 The Destruction of Jericho IVc

In addition to the evidence that demonstrates Jericho was inhabited during Joshua’s conquest of Canaan, there is important and conclusive evidence that Jericho was intentionally destroyed and burned at the end of Jericho IVc, which the ceramic and scarab chronology indicates was at the end of Late Bronze IB, ca. 1400 BCE. That

Jericho was burned, specifically Jericho IV, is not disputed. Kenyon describes in detail that Jericho IV was destroyed by fire.

> The destruction was complete. Walls and floors were blackened or reddened by fire, and every room was filled with fallen bricks, timbers, and household utensils; in most rooms the fallen debris was heavily burnt, but the collapse of the walls of the eastern rooms seems to have taken place before they were affected by the fire (Kenyon 1981: 370).

Kenyon also observed that "the grain is completely carbonized, which has preserved it, and in one season we collected some six bushels," and "in the bricks and debris which piled the ground-floor were charred beams" (Kenyon 1957: 261). In the excavations of both Garstang and Kenyon:

> Remnants of the final phase of City IV were also found on the southeast slope, just above the spring…Garstang dug a large area, about 115 feet by 165 feet, which he called the 'palace storeroom area'; Kenyon found remains from the final phase of City IV only in two excavation squares (H II and H III). The results reveal that City IV was massively destroyed in a violent conflagration that left a layer of destruction debris a yard or more thick across the entire excavation area (Wood 1990a: 56).

From the results of her excavation at Jericho, Kenyon saw an earthquake followed by a fire destruction of the city. "The first two phases may, from the way the bricks fell bodily outwards, have been destroyed by earthquake, and one phase was destroyed by fire" (Kenyon 1957: 179). Although Kenyon saw the falling of the walls followed by the fire in the city as two separate events, the sequence is the same as that recorded in the book of Joshua—fallen city walls, then the burning of the city by the Israelites (Joshua 6:20-24). Garstang also noticed signs of both an earthquake and a massive fire that destroyed the city, but in a connected sequence. He mentions that "in the excavation of the Palace and its adjoining store-rooms we noted at two different levels the effects of earthquake and extensive burning" (Garstang 1948: 118). Garstang describes in detail some of the finds from the destroyed city. "Traces of intense fire are plain to see, including reddened masses of brick, cracked stones, charred timbers and ashes. Houses alongside the wall were found burnt to the ground, their roofs fallen upon the domestic pottery within" (Garstang 1948: 136). The evidence that the city was burned in a sudden and complete fashion seems clear, and the evidence points to an intentional

burning by an invading army. Garstang writes that “The layer of ashes was so thick and the signs of intense heat so vivid, that it gave the impression of having been contrived, that fuel had been added to the fire” (Garstang 1948: 142). The more recent Italian-Palestinian excavations also found evidence of massive fire destruction in Jericho IV. In Area E, adjacent to Area A, next to the:

> easternmost section of the wall, appearing at the south-western edge of Kenyon’s Trench III, is a massive stone corner called Wall W.5…From this structure southwards up to the northern inner side of Cyclopean Wall W.4, a 7-10 m wide layer of destruction extended, with thick accumulations of ash, charcoal and carbonized beams at the foot of the curving stone wall (Nigro and Taha 2009: 735).

Since the Cyclopean Wall was built in Middle Bronze III, this massive destruction must have taken place during or after Middle Bronze III. According to the recent Italian-Palestinian excavations:

> A violent destruction brought to a sudden end the city of Period IVc, around 1550 BC or some years later. There is no available evidence for attributing this event to some enemy, even though one has to stress the strategic importance of the site, the southern gate of the Jordan Valley. The intervention of a strong foreign power seems, thus, historically possible (Jericho 1997-2000 Seasons Report: http://www.lasapienzatojericho.it/Results%201997-2000/res_sulIVc.htm).

These descriptions make it obvious that Jericho City IVc suffered massive fire destruction, probably by a foreign enemy, no earlier than ca. 1550 BCE at the transition between the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze. The ceramic and scarab evidence, however, shows continuous occupation until the end of Late Bronze IB, when the final destruction must have occurred.

Excavation evidence at Jericho also suggests the mudbrick wall above the stone retaining wall fell down in front of the retaining wall. Because battering rams would cause the walls to fall into the city rather than out, this facet of the destruction has generally been attributed to an earthquake. Being situated nearby the fault line between the Arabian and African plates, Jericho is in a geologically unstable area, often plagued by earthquakes. “Jericho is located in the Rift Valley, an unstable region where earthquakes are frequent. Geophysicist Amos Nur of Stanford University has studied

the well-documented earthquakes of this area," and "has noted several earthquakes that caused phenomena quite similar to what is described in the Book of Joshua" (Wood 1990a: 54). Garstang also knew that there is a "volcanic rift in which Jericho was situated. Now this is but the northern end of a well-known geological fault" (Garstang 1948: 159). In relation to the destruction of Jericho, the excavations of both Garstang and Kenyon uncovered evidence indicating a massive earthquake near the end of the final Bronze Age city (Wood 1999a: 40). Observations about the remains of the fallen walls at the destroyed Jericho City IV appear similar to the results of an earthquake or tectonic activity.

> Wherever the walls of the Fourth City have been disclosed, they are found to be deeply fissured and as it were dislocated…that the walls should have fallen mostly outwards, down the slope, was the natural consequence of their situation and of the defects already described in the foundations of the inner one on that side (Garstang 1948: 138-39).

Because of these findings, Garstang hypothesized some of the destruction in Jericho City IV to geologic activity. It appeared as if Jericho "had in very early times suffered the consequence of its dangerous position in the Rift. In this case there had evidently been two severe shocks separated by no great lapse of time, both falling within the period of Egyptian domination" (Garstang 1948: 118). According to Garstang, an "earthquake is the one and only known agent capable of the demonstration of force indicated by the observed facts" (Garstang 1948: 138). Kenyon found similar destruction evidence and came to the conclusion that the most likely possibility for the explanation of the destruction of Jericho is "an earthquake, which the excavations have shown to have destroyed a number of the earlier walls, but this is only conjecture" (Kenyon 1957: 262). Thus, according to archaeological observations, the walls of Jericho City IV suffered a powerful destruction that caused them to fall down the slopes of the retaining wall in front of the city, not into the city as if a battering ram had been used to penetrate the fortifications. This situation is similar to what is described at Jericho in the book of Joshua; the walls were dislodged and fell to the ground, outward, by some great force of activity, and formed a ramp into the city.

4.7 Houses on the Wall, Grain, and Time of Attack

When Israelite spies first gain access to the city of Jericho and establish a covert base of operations inside the walls, they are welcomed by Rahab the harlot. The book of Joshua makes it clear that Rahab's house, and probably others, were built immediately inside the city walls, even using the city wall as one of the walls of the house. "Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall" (Joshua 2:15). During the German excavations led by Sellin and Watzinger, on the north side of the city, archaeologists found several houses from the final, destroyed phase of Bronze Age Jericho IV. The houses had been built above the outer stone retaining wall, just behind the outer mud brick wall, integrating their houses into the wall of the city (Wood 1999a: 36-37; Sellin and Watzinger 1973: Plan III). This is a small detail of the city plan that the writer of the book of Joshua correctly records, suggesting the recording of actual events at Jericho.

Fig 14: A photo of mudbrick houses at Jericho, built up against the outer wall. Photo from the Sellin and Watzinger excavations. Wood 1990a: 46.

When Garstang and Kenyon were excavating the destruction layer of the final Bronze Age city, they both found large amounts of grain stored in pottery vessels. The vessels and the grain in them had been left and burned, as if the attackers were unconcerned with looting the food supply. Garstang found “a grain jar still partly filled with wheat…all charred and some of it was spread over the floor of the room, where also were found the remains of cooking pots and domestic objects blackened and cracked with fire” (Garstang 1948: 141; cf. Garstang 1931: 193-94). Kenyon pointed out that “the grain is completely carbonized, which has preserved it,” and her excavation team one season “collected some six bushels” of grain, even though they only

excavated a very small area in the stratum of the final, destroyed Bronze Age city (Kenyon 1957: 230, 261).

Fig 15: Storage jars full of grain uncovered in the fire destruction layer of Jericho IVc. Found and photographed in the excavations under Garstang. Wood 1999a: 42.

These finds clearly demonstrate that massive amounts of grain were just left in storage when the city was conquered and burned, indicating a quick attack by an invading force soon after harvest time, and by an army that was not concerned with looting the food supplies of the city. When comparing this to the conquest of Jericho account in the book of Joshua, there is agreement between the text and the archaeological finds. In the book of Joshua, the Israelites are forbidden to plunder the city, and to take only metals such as the gold, silver, bronze, and iron to the treasury of Yahweh (Joshua 6:17-19). Earlier segments of the book of Joshua and the book of Deuteronomy, prior to crossing

the Jordan River and attacking Jericho, indicate that the attack on Jericho occurred soon after Passover and after the spring harvest time. This includes such information as Rahab stacking stalks of flax that had been recently harvested, the Jordan River flooding because it was springtime, and observing the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month (Joshua 2:6, 3:15, 5:10). This would partially explain why there was so much grain in the city at the time of the attack, as the residents would not have used much of their grain such a short time from the harvest. The instruction to not plunder the city would explain why there was so much grain left there after the destruction, to be discovered by archaeologists. Overall, the destruction evidence at Jericho City IV is in agreement with the Jericho conquest narrative in the book of Joshua—an outward fallen wall forming a ramp indicative of no battering rams used, a massive and intentional destructive fire upon the city, no looting of the grain stores of the city, and massive amounts of grain indicating a springtime destruction. The archaeological data, in agreement with the textual claims, indicates this final Bronze Age destruction, the Jericho IVc burn layer, could have been destroyed and burned by the Israelites as the book of Joshua records.

4.8 The Destroyers of Jericho IVc

Kenyon hypothesized that the destruction of Jericho City IV was the result of the Hyksos' expulsion from Egypt and a subsequent attack upon Jericho. Chronologically, this would correlate with a Jericho City IV destruction ca. 1550 BCE, after the Hyksos were ejected from Egypt—approximately the date Kenyon concluded for the fall of Jericho (Kenyon 1993: 680). Chronology aside, this hypothesis seems illogical, since the Hyksos were fleeing back into Canaan from where they came, in order to protect themselves from Egyptian pursuit. For example, the Hyksos retreat to Sharuhen in southwestern Canaan was forced upon the Hyksos by the pursuing Egyptians. The Hyksos garrisoned themselves in the friendly city for defense—they did not attack and destroy the city. Ahmose son of Abana writes a contemporary account of the pursuit of the Hyksos. "Then Avaris was despoiled, and I brought spoil from there…Then Sharuhen was besieged for three years. His majesty despoiled it and I brought spoil

from it... Now when his majesty had slain the nomads of Asia, he sailed south to Khent-hen-nefer, to destroy the Nubian Bowmen" (Lichtheim 1973: 13). After the siege and taking of Sharuhen, no more battles with the Hyksos are mentioned. Instead, the Egyptians sail south and fight the Nubians in the next campaign. There are no textual sources which mention the Egyptians going any farther into Canaan to battle the expelled Hyksos. Kenyon offered an alternate explanation that the Egyptians could have destroyed Jericho City IV in some campaign against the fleeing Hyksos (Kenyon 1957: 229). However, no textual evidence exists for this suggested Egyptian campaign. Granting that the Egyptians could have conducted a later campaign against Jericho, in the Late Bronze I, perhaps under the command of the great conqueror Thutmose III, this theory is still flawed. Besides the fact that Jericho is nowhere mentioned in the many campaign annals of Thutmose III, the findings of full jars of grain all over the site indicate that the city was conquered while food stores were still abundant. The attack had been launched after the harvest, and it was an extremely quick siege. This is contrary to the tactics of the Egyptian military, which usually initiated campaigns in spring, just before the harvest, when the city under siege would have the lowest amount of resources. The sieges were usually quite long, such as the 3 year siege of Sharuhen and the 7 month siege of Megiddo (Pritchard 1969: 246; Cline 2002: 21). The strategy of besieging a city in the spring season would also allow the Egyptian army to harvest the grain in the field once it was ready, thus providing additional food for the military as they camped around the city—a practice which is described at the siege of Megiddo (Lichtheim 1973: 34).

This strategy was extremely advantageous and desirable for the besieging army in the ancient world, especially against a strongly fortified city like Jericho. Yet, this was not the tactic employed at the final destruction of Jericho. For the Egyptians to begin their siege directly after harvest time would not only have been in contradiction to their customary military tactics, it would have been a foolish and costly decision. In addition to this, the food supply was found left in the city and burned, along with nearly everything else. This indicates that the attacking force chose not to loot the food supply of the city, a decision that would have been irrational and abnormal for an attacking Egyptian army. Yet, it agrees with the description in the book of Joshua that the

Israelites were commanded to leave the food supply intact. In fact, not only is the discovery of an abundant food supply contrary to Egyptian military tactics and in agreement with the Joshua narrative, it is apparently "unique in the annals of Palestinian archaeology. Perhaps a jar or two might be found, but to find such an extensive amount of grain is exceptional" because "successful attackers normally plundered valuable grain" (Wood 1990a: 56). The implications of this discovery, that the archaeological evidence again agrees with the descriptions of the Jericho conquest found in the book of Joshua, are suggestive of a recording of historical events.

It may be argued that it would have been impossible for a relatively small and unorganized military force to take a city such as Jericho, especially since it was in a region generally under Egyptian control. However, letters in the Amarna archives from the Canaanite vassals demonstrate that the Egyptian military had not been in the area for many years, and that the Egyptians were not concerned with or even able to send troops to cities in the region at the end of the 15th century and beginning of the 14th century BCE. Additionally, Garstang argues that from "about 1478 B.C., each successive Pharaoh until Amenhetep III is shown by the records to have kept his hand firmly on the country," then after Akhenaton's death "the authority of the Pharaohs was immediately and vigorously re-established" (Garstang 1948: 143-44). Jericho does appear to have had links with Middle Kingdom Egypt and strong links with the later Hyksos during the 2nd Intermediate Period (Nigro 2009: 373-74). Near the end of the 15th century BCE, however, the loss of Egyptian military influence in Canaan created a different situation for the entire region—a lack of centralized power and outside military support. This leaves a small window of time open in which an invading Israelite army would have been able to conquer Jericho without Egyptian interference. Garstang concludes from this that it would be "impossible to place the episode of the fall of Jericho elsewhere than in the interlude of military inactivity on the part of Amenhetep III" (Garstang 1948: 146). With the final Egyptian pharaoh attested at Jericho being Amenhotep III, along with the ceramic evidence and indications of Egyptian weakness in Canaan during the period, the fall of Jericho appears to fit precisely into the reign of Amenhotep III.

4.9 Carbon-14 Samples

In an article on the destruction of Jericho, a carbon sample was presented that "was dated to 1410 B.C.E., plus or minus 40 years, lending further support that the destruction of City IV occurred around the end of the Late Bronze I period, about 1400 B.C.E." (Wood 1990: 53). This carbon-14 sample taken at Jericho had been analyzed by the laboratory at the British Museum for the publications of the excavations under Kathleen Kenyon, and the laboratory initially found a date of 1410 BC +/- 40 (Kenyon and Holland 1983: 763). However, it was discovered years later that the result of this sample testing was incorrect, and was later reissued on a list of erroneous dates due to a problem with equipment calibration at the laboratory for the years 1980-1984. The dates for BM-1790 were corrected to 3300 +/- 110 BP, (Bowman, Ambers, Leese 1990: 74). This calibrates to approximately 1883-1324 BCE, rendering the resulting C-14 date useless for settling the debate between a destruction in ca. 1550 BCE or ca. 1400 BCE (http://calib.qub.ac.uk/calib/calib.html). Bienkowski, who thought the date of the destruction was approximately 150 years earlier than what this C-14 sample originally indicated, had argued that this sample was irrelevant because it came from a pit digging into an earlier stratum (Bienkowski 1990: 46). Yet, even if it clearly came from the Jericho IVc destruction layer in question, the currently given date range is so wide that the C-14 sample becomes essentially useless.

Another C-14 sample from this same destruction layer at Jericho gave results of 3300 +/- 7 BP, which calibrates to approximately 1618-1530 BCE (Bruins and van der Plicht 1995: 213–220). This sample gave results surrounding either side of the date of destruction advocated by Kathleen Kenyon, although predominantly earlier, but was only one of many samples taken from the Jericho destruction. In 2000, the Italian-Palestinian excavation team under Lorenzo Nigro and Nicolo Marchetti tested two samples that were excavated from a building appearing to contain debris from the final destruction of the Bronze Age city that had washed down to the bottom of the tell. The dates given from the two samples were 1347 BCE +/-85 and 1597 BCE +/-91, giving an overall range for these two C-14 dates as 1688-1262 BCE (Marchetti and Nigro 2000: 206-207, 330, 332). The first of these dates fits roughly around the proposed Late

Bronze IB ca. 1400 BCE destruction, while the other is closer to the proposed Middle Bronze III ca. 1550 BCE destruction. Yet, again these dates are so broad that they are useless in contributing to solving the problem for the date of destruction.

Overall, the C-14 dates from the destruction of the Bronze Age city of Jericho range from as high as 1883 BCE to as low as 1262 BCE—a range of over 600 years. The archaeological dispute is only divided by about 150 years. It is acknowledged that there are serious problems in relating C-14 dates in ancient Israel to the established ceramic, epigraphic, and historical chronologies (Mazar and Bronk Ramsey 2008: 159-180; Levy and Higham 2005). This is why dating by means of pottery is still the primary and most trusted method in the archaeology of this time and region. Even if there were no issues with C-14 dating, the samples coming from charcoal in a burn layer may be from burned wooden beams cut from trees that were harvested over 100 years prior to their destruction. Quality wood in ancient Israel was rare and expensive, usually imported from the forests of Lebanon, and thus often reused again and again, sometimes for hundreds of years, until it was rotten, broken, or destroyed (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 36). With perfect C-14 dating, this could still result in a date more than 100 years before the destruction occurred. Grain samples should be much more reliable in terms of their harvest date, but as one can see from the Jericho samples, the ranges given are not specific enough to settle a debate between a destruction layer dated to either ca. 1550 BCE or ca. 1400 BCE. Instead, ceramic typology and various forms of epigraphic evidence should be the primary methods of dating a particular layer of a site from the Bronze and Iron Ages, which is the norm in the archaeology of ancient Israel and the entire Levant. Thus, the C-14 dates so far published from Jericho are all currently irrelevant in terms of establishing a destruction date. The data from the ceramic chronology, which is considered much more reliable and precise, and the Egyptian scarabs and seal from the site, indicate that Jericho was occupied in the 15th century BCE and that the stratum known as Jericho IVc came to an end through destruction by fire at the end of Late Bronze IB, ca. 1400 BCE.

4.10 Garstang's Middle Building and Eglon of Moab

According to the books of Joshua and Judges, in the century following the conquest of Jericho, an Israelite Judge named Ehud interacts with a Moabite ruler named Eglon at Jericho (Judges 3). In the course of the excavations directed by John Garstang, a large residence or villa was discovered on the Jericho tell, and Garstang identified it as the palace of Eglon (Garstang 1948: 177-80). Eglon of Moab is first mentioned as oppressing the Israelites and living in the city of the palm trees 48 years after the first oppression of the Judges period, which occurred soon after the death of Joshua (Judges 3:7-13). If Joshua died in the early 14th century BCE, this would place Eglon in the late 14th century BCE. The town of residence of Eglon of Moab can be ascertained by comparing the information in Judges 3:13 with that of Deuteronomy 34:3 and 2 Chronicles 28:15, which both record that Jericho is the city of palm trees. The narrative about Eglon in Judges 3 indicates that it was a residence of a king or ruler, that he received tributes there, that the building was large enough to warrant servants, and that it had multiple rooms (Judges 3:17-26). There is also no mention of fortifications or other buildings in the area during that period.

When Garstang excavated this structure, he called it the Middle Building, "because it stood in apparent isolation, stratified between the so-called Hilani above and the older palace storerooms below." (Garstang 1941: 369). It was in between the Iron I stratum above and the Late Bronze I stratum below. Over the ruins of the store rooms in Areas H-I 6 was the mudbrick Middle Building, and above that was the Hilani structure from the Iron Age, originally excavated by the German expedition under Sellin and Watzinger. Pottery discovered in the Middle Building, both by Garstang and the previous German excavation, Garstang eventually dated "to LB II. So far as I am aware, none of this distinctive pottery was found by either expedition elsewhere on this site. Certainly, none was found in association with the main walls of City IV, and, as already stated, none was found in any of the tombs. The evidence for dating the occupation and destruction of the Fourth City remains thus unchanged by this revision: the Middle Building is simply dissociated from the period when that city was in being." (Garstang 1941: 370).

Fig 16: The “Middle Building” at Jericho, excavated by Garstang and dated to the Late Bronze IIA. http://www.aiarch.org.au/Buried%20History/BH45/ab4.jpg

This “distinctive” pottery found in and around the building was imported and thus expensive, which is one of the reasons the building is thought to have been owned and inhabited by someone wealthy. The other significant find associated with the Middle Building suggesting a wealthy and powerful inhabitant was an inscribed clay tablet (Bienkowski 1986: 118). Tablets in the Bronze Age southern Levant are extremely rare, with very few examples coming from any city south of Ugarit. At Hazor, Lachish, and Jerusalem, combined, only a few tablets from the Late Bronze Age have been discovered. These were prominent cities during that era, and yet only very few tablets have been recovered. Thus, the discovery of a tablet in the Middle Building at Jericho is extremely significant. The size of the building itself also suggests a wealthy and powerful inhabitant, as it measured approximately 14.5 meters by 12 meters. This is

quite large for a Bronze Age building, and especially one that sat in isolation. The collective evidence strongly suggests that the owner and resident of the Middle Building at Jericho was a wealthy and powerful individual, which would be expected if it was identified with a ruler such as Eglon of Moab.

Garstang, Kenyon, and Bienkowski all dated the Middle Building to the Late Bronze II, and approximately the late 14th century BCE or possibly the early 13th century BCE. (Garstang 1948: 180; Kenyon 1957: 261; Bienkowski 1986: 120). Wright argues that a phase existed between the end of the Bronze Age city and the Late Bronze II Middle Building because of a layer of debris found between the two aforementioned strata.

> The existence of this phase of occupation between the C Palace and the "Middle Building" was inferred mainly from the fact that the latter was built in a layer of debris which contained sherds from the period between the end of the C Palace ("Lower Building") and the latest occupation of the Middle Building as deducible from the painted sherds which were found above its floor-level. Under the circumstances it is clear that nothing can be deduced from this situation except the fact that the Middle Building was constructed after the reoccupation had been in process for some time, and perhaps after a partial destruction (Wright 1942: 32).

What Wright refers to here is actually a short period of an occupational hiatus on the site between the final Bronze Age city and the Middle Building, when nothing was built on the site, but some debris washed down and collected over the top of the stratum of City IVc. This indicates a short period between the destruction of the final Bronze Age city and the building and occupation of the Middle Building. Because of the Late Bronze IIA pottery and the indication of an occupational hiatus after the destruction of Jericho IVc, the date of this residence would likely be in the middle to late 14th century BCE. After the short term occupation of the Middle Building, the site of Jericho was abandoned until sometime in Iron I. Following the chronology of the Israelite Conquest previously discussed, Eglon of Moab would have lived at the beginning of the reigns of the Judges, not long after Joshua died. A calculation of absolute chronology indicates that Eglon would have resided at Jericho sometime during the middle and late 14th century BCE. The mid to late 14th century BCE occupation for the building, the short term habitation of the Middle Building followed by a long abandonment of the site, and

the indicated wealth and influence of the resident all agree with the narrative of Eglon found in the book of Judges. This is further archaeological corroboration that suggests the Israelite Conquest narratives dealing with the site of Jericho in the books of Joshua and Judges are historically accurate.

4.11 Conclusion about the Conquest of Jericho

The argument for an uninhabited Jericho that could not have been occupied or destroyed around the proposed time of the Israelite conquest of Jericho, approximately 1400 BCE, appears to be an argument contrary to the current evidence. Scholars have often made claims such as "there is no archaeological evidence for the existence of a city at Tell es-Sultan in either the 15th or the 13th-12th centuries BC" (Bartlett 1983: 34). However, the claim that Jericho was unoccupied in the 15th century BCE has been shown as incorrect from the most current analyses of the archaeological data from Jericho City IV. Additionally, the final destruction of Jericho IVc would coincide with this last occupational phase of the Bronze Age city at the end of the 15th century BCE.

Further, the discovery of the Middle Building as an isolated residence of a wealthy and powerful individual around the late 14th century BCE correlates with the account of Eglon of Moab living in Jericho in the century after the Israelites under Joshua destroy the city, before he is assassinated and Israel is freed from the domination of Moab, as recorded in the book of Judges.

Currently, the archaeological data from Jericho strongly suggests that the Israelite Conquest period accounts associated with the city of Jericho—both the destruction of Jericho at the end of the 15th century BCE in the book of Joshua and the short occupation of the site by Eglon of Moab in the 14th century BCE in the book of Judges—are historical. First, the discovery of Late Bronze I pottery and Egyptian scarabs presents a strong argument for habitation at the city during this time period, but not after ca. 1400 BCE. Second, the discovery of a burned layer in Jericho City IVc, a layer which demonstrates quick and intentional burning, proves that the city was intentionally destroyed by fire. Third, numerous, small details in the text that match the archaeological findings, such as the walls falling outward and forming a ramp rather

than inward, no plundering of the city's grain stores, houses built up against the wall, and destruction of the city soon after harvest all indicate that the book of Joshua gives an accurate rendition of the destruction of Jericho. The discovery of a late 14th century BCE residence inhabited for a short time by a wealthy and influential individual suggests the Eglon account in the book of Judges is historically valuable. Since the archaeological data so closely corresponds to the accounts in the books of Joshua and Judges, and no other ancient texts give an alternate account, there is a high probability that the Israelites destroyed and burned an inhabited Jericho ca. 1400 BCE, followed by a short occupation in the late 14th century BCE by Eglon of Moab, until his assassination by the Israelite Ehud.

Chapter 5

The Late Bronze Age Conquests at Hazor According to the Books of Joshua and Judges

According to the book of Joshua, the city of Hazor is the third and final city to be burned by the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua during their initial conquest of Canaan. “Then Joshua turned back at that time, and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms. They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them; there was no one left who breathed. And he burned Hazor with fire” (Joshua 11:10–11). In the book of Judges, accounts of the period following the death of Joshua, Hazor is the home of the Canaanite king Yabin whose coalition army suffers defeat at the hand of the Israelites. The coalition military commander of Hazor, Sisera, flees battle and is killed by a woman named Jael, and finally the king himself is pursued and eventually destroyed by Barak (Judges 4-5). In the Amarna Letters, Hazor is mentioned five times: EA 22, 148, 227, 228, and 364, generally portrayed as a powerful and influential Canaanite city ruled by the most powerful king in Canaan.

The ancient city of Hazor is located at Tel Hazor, also called Tell el-Qedah, northwest of the Sea of Galilee. The city is located on the southwestern edge of the Hulah Valley, and in ancient times it was situated south of the powerful city of Kadesh and controlled a major trade route of the ancient Near East. The city was the largest in southern Canaan during the Late Bronze Age, and it is currently the largest archaeological site in Israel besides Jerusalem (Ben-Tor 1993: 595). The city of Hazor was actually the target of two separate Israelite attacks; the first was under the leadership of Joshua, and the second was under the leadership of Deborah and Barak. In the alleged attack by Barak, which will be addressed below, the text of Judges is unclear as to whether the entire city of Hazor was burned or not.

The site of Canaanite Hazor, located in upper Galilee, consists of a 30 acre upper city, plus an adjacent plateau, at a lower level, of about 200 acres. The upper city, unlike the plateau, was occupied almost continuously from the 27th century BCE to the

2nd century BCE. By contrast, the plateau, usually called the lower city, was a part of Hazor only during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. (Yadin: 1975). According to Yadin, "The area of the lower city, including its eastern spur, is 200 acres, ten or twenty times the size of the largest of the *tells*" (Yadin 1975b: 143). Later excavations revealed that the city was even larger than this.

> In excavations conducted east of the tel, it would seem that a community existed outside the fortified city in the Israelite period, and that a Canaanite community had also existed earlier in the same area. This would indicate that the area of Hazor - the largest of the ancient cities in the land of Israel - was even larger than thought earlier (1991 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1991.htm).

Thus, when one adds together the size of the acropolis, plus the more recently discovered parts of the lower city, Hazor during the Bronze Age was actually larger than 230 acres.[65]

5.1 Theories for the Israelites and the Conquest of Hazor

For the past several decades, most scholars have either assumed that there was no true Israelite Conquest, or that if one occurred, it was near the end of the 13th century BCE. In the case of Hazor, both the books of Joshua and Judges record battles with Hazor and record a destruction in at least one of these narratives. Because of this, various explanations have been given to fit these stories into the context of 13th century BCE and later Hazor. One of the popular theories is a conflation of the Joshua and Judges accounts. The first major excavator of Hazor, and renowned archaeologist, Yadin, wrote that the "narrative in the Book of Joshua is therefore the true historical nucleus, while the mention of Jabin in Judges 4 must have been a later editorial interpolation" (Yadin 1975b: 255). The attacks upon Hazor in the books of Joshua and Judges are clearly differentiated, however, by chronology (Petrovich 2008: 495-497; Judges 1-4). Additionally, names of the characters involved, a conquest by the Israelite nation in contrast to only two tribes, and specific mention of fire destruction of Hazor in contrast to a general defeat of the army and killing of Hazor's king all demonstrate that

[65] An acre is approximately 0.405 hectares or 4.05 dunams

the interactions with Hazor in the books of Joshua and Judges are two separate events (Joshua 11; Judges 4-5). Recognizing this, Aharoni suggests that the battle between Barak and Sisera may have taken place, but after the 13th century BCE destruction of Hazor, and that it likely did not involve the city. He proposes that:

> This thirteenth century destruction of Hazor undoubtedly represents the Israelite conquest of the great Canaanite center of the north. If the battle of Deborah and Barak described in Judges 4 (in prose) and in Judges 5 (in poetry) occurred after this destruction of Hazor, obviously Sisera and his army could not have been fighting on behalf of Jabin, king of Hazor, for Hazor was *ex hypothesi* then in ruins (Aharoni 1975).

This is logical only if the conquest of Hazor under Joshua dates to the 13th century BCE, and if the Judges narrative is assumed to be falsifying the status of Hazor as a living city. Various hypotheses have been proposed to explain the origin of the Israelite Conquest accounts, resulting in a general lack of agreement and even confusion about the stories and the archaeology of Hazor. Yadin blames the confusion on Garstang's earlier work and the associated theory for a late 15th century and early 14th century BCE date for the Israelite Conquest as one of the causes for difficulty in the archaeological interpretation of the Israelite Conquest. Yadin writes that "one of the stumbling blocks concerning the whole theory of the Conquest has been Garstang's conclusion that the city was destroyed about 1400 B.C." (Yadin 1956: 9-10). Garstang, who actually carried out some brief excavations at Hazor, found a fire destruction at the site, both on the acropolis and in the Lower City (Garstang 1978: 197-98). Although Garstang was unable to assign a date to the destruction he found on the acropolis, he concluded that the destruction layer he excavated in the lower city dated to ca. 1400 BCE (Garstang 1978: 198). Garstang may have dug a small section that only contained Late Bronze IB remains, but when Yadin excavated the Lower City, he first found Late Bronze IIB. Future excavations would reveal that at least Garstang's claim that there was a Late Bronze IB destruction at Hazor was correct, but since Garstang connected this destruction with the Israelite Conquest under Joshua and Yadin was committed to a late 13th century BCE Israelite Conquest, Yadin opposed Garstang's claims.

More recent publications of explanations for the origin of the conquests of Hazor by the Israelites tend to favor a mythical or etiological view. Pertaining to Hazor, this view:

> would explain the biblical description as a reflection of historical memories about the traumatic event that put an end to Hazor, the largest city in Canaan. Such memories could have been retained among the Canaanite population that remained in the country during the twelfth to eleventh centuries and eventually were incorporated into Israelite tradition in the late-monarchic period, when the conquest was attributed to Joshua (Finkelstein and Mazar 2007: 63).

This view asserts that the archaeological findings at Hazor do not agree with the narratives of conquest in the books of Joshua and Judges, and assumes that the stories were invented hundreds of years later, in the Iron Age II, from memories about the end of Canaanite Hazor.

When looking at the possible evidence for an Israelite Conquest at Hazor, the excavators only discuss the destruction in the second half of the 13th century BCE. However, both Yadin's and Ben-Tor's excavations have revealed that there were at least two important Late Bronze Age destructions of Hazor—one in the 15th century BCE and one in the 13th century BCE (Yadin 1975b: 115; http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/2001.htm). Knowing about the multiple destruction layers at Late Bronze Hazor is vital to a correct understanding of the archaeology of the Israelite Conquest. Yet, the Late Bronze I destruction is rarely discussed in terms of its possible relation to the Israelite Conquest narratives as it is generally thought to be the result of a campaign of Pharaoh Thutmose III, and even fewer people ever discuss it in relation to the Israelite Conquest account found in the book of Joshua (Ben-Tor 2001: 238).[66]

Almost twenty years after beginning excavations at Hazor, Yadin discussed four options for interpreting Joshua 11 and Judges 4 and 5 in relation to the destruction of

[66] Wood and Petrovich are two scholars that have recently argued the 15th century BCE destruction at Hazor could be connected to the Israelite Conquest under Joshua. Cf. Wood, Bryant. "From Ramesses to Shiloh: Archaeological Discoveries Bearing on the Exodus–Judges Period," 256–82 in *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts*, ed. David M. Howard, Jr., and Michael A. Grisanti. Grand Rapids: Kregal, 2003. Petrovich, Douglas. "The Dating of Hazor's Destruction in Joshua 11," JETS 51:3 (2008): 489-512

Hazor. 1) Jabin in both accounts is the same king, but he is no longer alive and only serves as a reference that Sisera had at one time been under his command. This places the Deborah and Barak battle after the Joshua battle, but very close in time. 2) The book of Joshua is myth, there was only a peaceful infiltration of Canaan and no actual Israelite Conquest, but there may have been a battle between Jabin and the Israelites later on. 3) The book of Joshua has a historical core, the Song of Deborah is the most ancient source for the Judges account, and the mention of Hazor and Jabin in Judges is not historical, but a later editorial error influenced by the events in the book of Joshua. 4) There was a peaceful infiltration by the Israelites into the land of Canaan in the 13th century BCE and later, and the battle with Jabin at Hazor occurred near the end of the 12th century BCE (Yadin 1975b: 250-251). None of the four interpretations he discusses consider a plain, literal reading of the text in which no assumptions or theories are forced to even be a possibility. Instead, each view presupposes that the stories should be reversed, do not mean what they say, or are fables. This is a common theme found in both textual and archaeological discussions of the Israelite Conquest, and especially in relation to Hazor. Instead of presupposing that the destruction under Joshua must be from the 13th century BCE, which is the last destruction of a Canaanite city at Hazor, and thus create the problem of what to do with the struggle between Jabin of Hazor and his commander Sisera in Judges 4 and 5, the most logical approach would be to first take a plain reading of the text and test it against the archaeological data. This approach would yield two separate Israelite attacks on Hazor and its region—the first led by Joshua, and the second led by Barak. The texts of Joshua, Judges, Kings, and Exodus also give chronological data that allows one to place the Joshua attack on Hazor in ca. 1400 BCE, at the end of Late Bronze IB, and the Barak battle and subsequent attack on Hazor in ca. 1240 BCE, near the end of Late Bronze IIB.

An analysis of the archaeological strata at Hazor reveals three separate city phases in the Late Bronze Age. The first phase encompassed Late Bronze I, the second Late Bronze IIA, and the third Late Bronze IIB, roughly corresponding to the 15th, 14th, and 13th centuries BCE (Ben-Tor 1993: 606). Further investigation reveals that at least the 15th century BCE and 13th century BCE cities suffered destruction by fire, and then the later cities were built up over the top (Yadin 1975b: 115;

http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/2001.htm). Since the view according to Hazor directors Yadin and Ben-Tor, heavily influenced by the 13th century BCE Israelite Conquest theory of Albright, argues that the late 13th century BCE, or Late Bronze IIB destruction, was the result of the Israelite Conquest under Joshua, this is the stratum and data that is generally interpreted as the Joshua destruction (Albright 1939: 23; Ben-Tor 1993: 594). Thus, not only the actual destruction of this stratum, but also the details of the findings in this destruction layer have been focused on.

5.2 The 13th Century BCE Destruction

On the acropolis in area A, a building measuring over 30x20 meters has been undergoing excavation and restoration for many years.[67] Here excavators discovered that "The palace walls, preserved in some places to a height of more than two metres, were built of mudbrick on a stone foundation, with wooden cedar beams placed in the walls at irregular intervals. The plan of the palace, as well as many of the elements of construction, clearly show a Syrian influence on the local architecture. The palace was destroyed by fire, the intensity of which was augmented by the extensive use of timber in the walls. (1994 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1994.html). Photos or a visitation to the site enable one to see the inner wall of the main room of this building, lined with basalt orthostats that were cracked by an extremely intense fire. Because of this type of destruction, the fire was estimated to exceed 2350 degrees Fahrenheit (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 22, 27). The scope and intense heat of this fire and the overall destruction layer to which it belongs indicates a purposeful, destructive burning of the building.

The 1995 season report discusses the destruction of this monumental Canaanite building. "As indicated by finds from previous seasons, the palace was destroyed in a huge fire in which its mud-brick walls melted and its basalt foundations underwent

[67] Ben-Tor calls this building a ceremonial palace, while Zuckerman argues it is a temple. Ben-Tor, Amnon. "Ceremonial Palace, Not a Temple," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32 (2006): 8, 78–79; Zuckerman, Sharon. "' "The City, Its Gods Will Return There …": Toward an Alternative Interpretation of Hazor's Acropolis in the Late Bronze Age," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 69:2 (2010): 172.

extensive cracking. Decorated ivories found among the fire debris indicate that the palace occupants were wealthy." (1995 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1995.htm). Obviously, this monumental building, whether it was a ceremonial palace or a temple, underwent an intense destruction by fire at the end of the Canaanite city in the 13th century BCE (Ben-Tor 2006a: 8, 78-79). Ben-Tor, writing about the finds in this building, notes that:

> Whoever burned the city also deliberately destroyed statuary in the palace. Among the ashes, we discovered the largest Canaanite statue of human form ever found in Israel. Carved from a basalt block that must have weighed more than a ton, the 3-foot-tall statue had been smashed into nearly a hundred pieces, which were scattered in a 6-foot-wide circle. The head and hands of this statue, and of several others, were missing, apparently cut off by the city's conquerors (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 22).

Fig. 17: Desecrated statue of Ba'al Hadad from Late Bronze Hazor. The Hazor Museum, Israel. Photo: Titus Kennedy

The date of this destruction has been the focus of many years of inquiry, but after extensive excavation, Ben-Tor says of the temple or palace that "We now date the building to the 14th century B.C.E." and there are "two carbon 14 dates that seem to point to the 13th century B.C.E." for the destruction (Ben-Tor Rubiato 1999: 27, 36). It was continually in use through much of the 14th century BCE and not destroyed until the late 13th century BCE, which is also apparent since the next stratum above the final phase of the palace is from ca. 12th century BCE in the Israelite Period. "Excavations at the Canaanite palace, which is a huge building, began several seasons ago when it was uncovered beneath structures from the Israelite period" (1995 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1995.htm). As a result of more recent studies of Mycenaean ware chronology, research indicates "Hazor stratum XIII must have been destroyed at the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the twelfth century" (Fritz 1987: 88). All around the acropolis, stratum XIII, which is the stratum containing the previously mentioned palace or temple, is the last Canaanite city, and its corresponding stratum in the lower city is 1A, the final phase of the Canaanite lower city whose final destruction has been dated to the end of the 13th century BCE. Following the upper city stratum XIII, semi-nomadic settlements and a distinctly different, Israelite type of pottery appears in strata XII and XI (Ben-Tor 1993: 601). According to the chronology discussed earlier, this late 13th century BCE destruction would actually correlate to the time of Deborah and Barak defeating both Sisera and Jabin, King of Hazor ca. 1208 BCE. Both the textual chronology and the stratigraphy of the site logically necessitates that stratum XIII of the acropolis and stratum 1A of the lower city be the Hazor associated with Deborah and Barak if the Hazor conquest account in the book of Judges is historical, since the strata following this occupation were small, unfortified Israelite settlements of Iron Age I. Excavations in the 1990's exploring the period following the final, 13th century BCE Canaanite period, showed that "Remnants of the 11th-12th [*sic*: 12th -11th] centuries B.C.E., known also as the 'Israelite period', are of a poor nature and consist mainly of shallow pits and a limited ceramic assemblage" (1995 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1995.htm). This was merely confirmation of earlier excavations, which showed that Hazor following

the 13th century BCE destruction was no city of note, but merely a settlement. Yadin confirms the crude Israelite settlements of Iron Age I Hazor, following the end of the Late Bronze IIB city. According to the excavations under Yadin:

> it was quite clear that the destruction of the Late Bronze city was not followed immediately by the establishment of another city proper but by tentative efforts at settlement by semi-nomadic people…More important is the fact that the pottery found in stratum XII is practically the same as that found in the small Iron Age hamlets in Galilee explored by Aharoni. There can be no doubt that these hamlets, as well as the occupation on the mound of Hazor, represent the earliest efforts of the nomadic Israelite tribes…Clearly it was after the destruction of the Canaanite city (Yadin 1975b: 254).

Since the text of Judges 4 (verses 2 and 17) explicitly mentions the Canaanite city of Hazor, Deborah and Barak must be linked to a time in which a Canaanite city existed at Hazor and was soon followed by an Israelite settlement. Other than placing Judges 4 in the context of 13th century BC Canaanite Hazor, the only other valid option is to simply say the book of Judges account is completely falsified, mythological, or conflated with the attack led by Joshua.[68] However, if the archaeological data supports the ancient account in the book of Judges, that Israelites under the leadership of Deborah and Barak interacted with and conquered the 13th century BCE city of Hazor, then the more viable option would be to accept the ancient Hazor conquest account in the book of Judges.

5.3 Statues of Stratum XIII

One of the important things that Ben-Tor emphasizes in the stratum XIII, Late Bronze IIB destruction is that many of the statues were deliberately mutilated in such a way as to exhibit religious desecration (Ben-Tor 1998: 465). Yadin's excavations had earlier found the same phenomenon. Zuckerman refers to the findings as "a systematic annihilation campaign, against the very physical symbols of the royal ideology and its loci of ritual legitimation" (Zuckerman 2007: 24). The desecration of these statues is significant because in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, the Israelites are

[68] These views have been advocated by Alt, Dever, Finkelstein, Noth, and others. See the introductory chapter for varying views on the historicity of the Israelite Conquest accounts.

commanded to destroy pagan religious installations, and even specifically idols or statues. In Deuteronomy, the command is written that “You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place (Deuteronomy 12:2–3, NASB). Numbers instructs that “you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places (Numbers 33:52, NASB). In both of these passages, a clear command is given to cut down engraved images of gods, destroy figured stones, and destroy molten images. These commands are obviously applicable to statues and images of gods and kings—Canaanite, Egyptian, or those of any other group. The area C stelae temple statue is thought to represent a deity, and Yadin remarked “This find taught us…that the head was decapitated deliberately by a blow at the small of the neck with a sharp instrument” (Yadin 1975b: 43). Excavations reveal that this desecration was widespread across multiple portions of the acropolis and in various areas of the lower city. Yadin comments about the 13th century BCE destruction, the fire associated with it, and yet another decapitated statue, possibly of a Canaanite king. In the northern section of the lower city, at the area H temple, stratum 1A, 13th century BCE, Late Bronze IIB, “amidst a thick layer of ashes, lay a little statue of a seated male; his chopped-off head rested nearby, surrounded by a number of broken bowls. The figure bears no emblems on its chest and is identical with another, though cruder, statue found headless on the surface in area F. I believe that they represent a king” (Yadin 1975b: 94; cf. Yadin 1957: 37). From the finds at Hazor in at least the late 13th century BCE destruction layer, and possibly the late 15th century BCE destruction layer also, it can be seen that this practice was not merely restricted to the Canaanite statuary of gods and kings, but also extended out to the Egyptian statuary. “The Hazor excavations have revealed the largest number of Egyptian statues ever found at one site in Israel: six or seven in all. None is intact, however, and three of them bear chisel marks, indicating that someone deliberately chopped off their arms and perhaps their heads” (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 35). This indicates that it was

probably not the Egyptians who destroyed the city of Hazor in the late 13th century BCE, stratum XIII, and likely not the 15th century BCE, stratum XV, if this same phenomenon is present during the Late Bronze IB. In another article, Ben-Tor details the mutilated objects.

> Eleven objects seem to have been mutilated…the torso of an Egyptian statue (no. 7) and the head of an Egyptian royal statue (no. 8), both found in the destruction debris in the "throne room"; the large standing statue (no. 10) also found in the "throne room"; the head of the ivory statue (no. 11) found in the destruction debris of one of the side rooms of the palace; the seated figure (no. 14) from the Area C Stratum IA temple; and the seated figure (no. 17) from the Area H Stratum IA temple—were all most likely mutilated by those who brought about the final destruction of Late Bronze Age Hazor.
>
> Of the four Egyptian statues, one is clearly a royal statue, while the others may have represented either kings or dignitaries. Of the locally made anthropomorphic statues, four are of kings or dignitaries: one (no. 12) of the two bronze statues from Area A, the seated statue (no. 15) from Area F, and the two seated basalt statues (nos. 17-18) from Area H. Four statues apparently represent deities: one (no. 13) of the two bronze statues and the large standing basalt statue (no. 10) from Area A, the seated basalt statue (no. 14) from the Area C temple, and the figure standing on a bull (no. 16) from the Area H temple" (Ben-Tor 2006b: 14).

Thus, a detailed list of the statues associated with the 13th century BCE destruction reveals mutilation of both Egyptian and Canaanite gods and kings—essentially ruling out both Canaanites and Egyptians as destroyers of the Late Bronze IIB city. There is, however, a possibility that some destruction at the end of the 14th century BCE stratum XIV may be attributed to the Egyptian Pharaoh Seti I, who is known from Egyptian documents to have campaigned in the region of Hazor. A text of Seti I, thought to date from his year 2 or later, records a campaign in western Asia. Part of the text claims that the people of this land will "find out about him whom they did not know — [the Ruler val]iant like a falcon *and* a strong bull wide-striding and sharp-horned, [spreading his wings (firm)] as flint, and every limb as iron, to hack up the [entire] land of Dja[hy]!" (Hallo and Younger 2000: 28). This comes from the second stele at Beth-Shean set up by Seti I in which he describes his campaigns against the region of Djahy, identified as part of Canaan and up into southern Lebanon. Yadin believed Seti may have attacked Hazor and caused some destruction in the stratum between the late 15th century BCE and late 13th century BCE massive destructions. "We can also assume that the IB city, that of the el-Amarna period, was destroyed by Pharaoh Seti I, or at any rate while

Mycenaean IIIA-B was still in use" (Yadin 1975b: 145). Ben-Tor agrees with this hypothesis, and claims that "From Egyptian records, however, we know that the city [Hazor] must still have existed in about 1290 B.C.E.: Pharaoh Seti I (1291-1278 B.C.E.) left an account of a campaign at that time against various Canaanite cities, including Hazor. Seti is the last pharaoh to leave such a reference" (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 36). Seti I did not actually leave a reference to Hazor specifically being attacked, although Seti I did campaign in the area as noted above, and Egyptian records of the time, or just after the reign of Seti I, do mention Hazor (Papyrus Anastasi I 21.2). There is a name which appears twice in the topographical lists of Seti I at Karnak (List XIII: 64A, List XIV: 69A) which some have suggested should be read as Hazor, but the interpretation of the name is not clear (Hasel 1998: 138-39). Thus, it is unknown at this time if Seti I specifically attacked Hazor.

In area M, at the entrance to the acropolis from the lower city, evidence of destruction and deliberate desecration from the 13th century BCE is also evident.

> A fragment of an Egyptian statue/offering table bearing the inscription of a certain vizier from the time of Ramses II was found in the destruction layer of the courtyard. The dedication of this object is probably connected to the highest level of Nineteenth Dynasty diplomatic activity in Asia. A fragment of a huge stone bowl, bearing an Akkadian cuneiform inscription, was found a few meters from the Egyptian fragment in the same destruction layer. The inscription refers to the dedication of a large basin by a certain high-ranking official to an unknown god. These finds attest to the importance of the Area M complex during the fourteenth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries B.C., until its final destruction (Zuckerman 2010: 171).[69]

This evidence also suggests that the Area M monumental entrance, which included some cultic installations and may have also included some administrative buildings, was destroyed in the 13th century BCE, but not the 14th century BCE, when Seti I may have campaigned against Hazor but did not destroy the entire city. Searching for the identity of the attackers who destroyed 13th century BCE Hazor, Ben-Tor takes into consideration the possibilities and concludes that four ethnic groups are candidates for the destroyer of the Late Bronze IIB city at Hazor.

[69] cf. J. P. Allen, "A Hieroglyphic Fragment from Hazor," *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 15 (2001): 13–15; K. A. Kitchen, "An Egyptian Inscribed Fragment from Late Bronze Hazor," *Israel Exploration Journal* 53 (2003): 20–28. W. Horowitz and T. Oshima, "Two More Cuneiform Finds from Hazor," *Israel Exploration Journal* 52 (2002): 179–83; Horowitz and Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan*, 85–86.

> Only four groups active at the time could have destroyed Hazor: (1) one of the Sea Peoples, such as the Philistines, (2) a rival Canaanite city, (3) the Egyptians or (4) the early Israelites. As noted above, the mutilated statues were Egyptian and Canaanite. It is extremely unlikely that Egyptian and Canaanite marauders would have destroyed statuary depicting their own kings and gods. In addition, as to another Canaanite city, the Bible tells us Hazor was "the head of all those kingdoms," and archaeology corroborates that the city was simply too wealthy and powerful to have fallen to a minor Canaanite rival city…As far as the Sea Peoples are concerned, Hazor is located too far inland to be of any interest to those maritime traders (Ben-Tor and Rubiato 1999: 38).

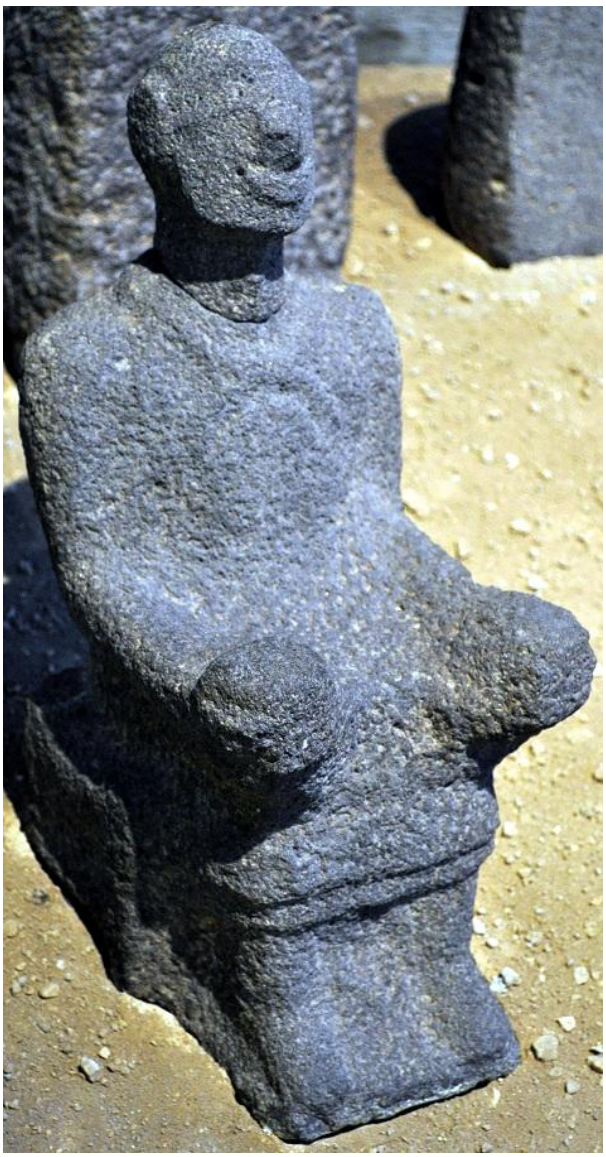

Fig 18: Another decapitated Canaanite statue, from the Area C Stelae Temple LB IIB destruction. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photo: Titus Kennedy.

Thus, at least as far as the 13th century BCE destruction goes, it appears as if the Israelites are the prime candidate. Kitchen, an Egyptologist, agrees that the Egyptians, Canaanites, and Sea Peoples are not candidates for the destroyers of Late Bronze IIB Hazor, but instead the Israelites are a viable option (Kitchen 2002: 313). This would correlate with the account in Judges 4 and 5 of the defeat of Sisera and Yabin of Hazor, by the Israelites under the leadership of Barak in ca. 1208 BCE.

5.4 Destruction of Lower City Areas in the 13th Century BCE

Evidence of this 13th century BCE destruction is also evident in the Lower City of Hazor, where temples and fortifications bear the signs of a burned city. In the Lower City, Yadin found Mycenaean, or Late Helladic, pottery indicating the dates of some of the strata. Excavations revealed that in respect to Mycenaean pottery, "there emerged quantities of the IIIB type (typical of the thirteenth century) on the floors of the top level (IA) and of the IIIA type in the lower stratum (IB)" (Yadin 1975b: 35). This, along with the local pottery and the sequence of the strata, allowed the strata of the Late Bronze Age Lower City, strata 2, 1A, and 1B, to be dated Late Bronze I, Late Bronze IIA, and Late Bronze IIB, respectively.

Concerning the destruction of the Lower City, Yadin's excavations revealed not only a destruction layer in area C at the Stelae Temple, but also a completely abandoned potter's storehouse in the destruction layer (Yadin 1975b: 52-53). Additionally, the area H temple of LB IIB "was destroyed by fire, as is testified by the charred beams found on the floor, it must have collapsed quickly and thus buried most of the implements" (Yadin 1957: 35). The temple in area H was also apparently one dedicated to the Canaanite god of weather and fertility, Ba'al Hadad (Mazar 1992: 248). According to excavations from the fourth season under Yadin, a broken statue in the temple was discovered "bearing on its breast the crossed sun disk identical with that of the altar…Another broken piece of basalt found in the vicinity and depicting a bull, proved to be the base of the god's statue. Thus again we have the sun-god associated with a bull which was the emblem of Hadad, the storm-god Baal." (Yadin 1959: 5-6). It is clear that the destroyers of the 13th century BCE city, besides on a quest for victory,

were also on a mission to deface and defile the Canaanite and Egyptian statues found in the Hazor temples. This type of data, especially that of the destruction and abandonment of the potter's workshop, is in opposition to the Peasant Revolt or Emergence theories in place of the Israelite Conquest as primarily recorded in the books of Joshua and Judges.[70] Instead, this data not only demonstrates a destructive pattern at cities that the Israelites supposedly conquered, but it also demonstrates both that the common people, those who would be involved in a supposed "Peasant Revolt" were victims of the destruction and that the various gods of the city were targeted and destroyed. The destructive pattern of the attackers found in stratum 1A in the lower city, that stratum of the late 13th century BCE destruction, appears to have been primarily focused on sites of Canaanite religion.

5.5 Forced Entry

Fortifications, such as the Area K gate, stratum 1A, 13th century BCE, also demonstrate an attack upon the city. Excavations discovered that the "floor was covered by a thick layer of ashes and rubble containing brick-work of the gate and towers. This was an obvious sign of the final destruction of the city gate by violent conflagration, similar to the fate of the temple in stratum IA of area H" (Yadin 1975b: 140). Thus, the actual gate to the lower city was attacked and destroyed, indicating an outside army had forced their way into Hazor and at least destroyed and burned fortifications in their way, in addition to the Canaanite temples and possibly some government buildings. Referring to this destruction, Yadin simply says it "was destroyed by the Israelites at the end of the Late Bronze Age II, in the second half of the 13th cent. B. C." (Yadin 1959: 4). On this point, the archaeological, textual, and chronological data appear to agree, converging on the conclusion that the Israelites under Barak attacked Hazor in the

[70] The Peasant Revolt theory argues that the lower classes rebelled against their rulers, destroying their oppressors. However, the abandonment and destruction of a lower class potter's workshop located in the Lower City of Hazor is in opposition to this theory, as the residents of the Lower City would not destroy themselves and leave Hazor in a rebellion against the ruling class. Any emergence theory must explain away the apparent agreement between the archaeological data at LB IIB Hazor and the ancient Judges narrative claiming the city was conquered by the Israelites.

second half of the 13th century BC, destroying gates where they penetrated into the city, and desecrating and burning Canaanite cultic sites.

5.6 The Amarna Letters and Hazor

Hazor is mentioned in Amarna Letters 22, 148, 227, 228, and 364. In these letters, the city is spelled Ḫaṣura, reflecting its actual spelling, which is also used in the Hebrew books of Joshua and Judges. These five letters not only give insight into Hazor of the Late Bronze Age, but in some cases there may be links between the content of the Amarna Letters, archaeological discoveries at Late Bronze Age Hazor, and the narrative about Hazor in the book of Joshua.

Fig 18: A cuneiform tablet from the king of Hazor, EA 228. The Metropolitan Museum, New York. Photo: Titus Kennedy

In Amarna Letter 22, Hazor is merely mentioned in passing as part of a list of gifts from Tushratta of Mitanni to Amenhotep III. Within the section of the list dealing with clothes, Hazor appears. “1 garment, Hazor-style. 1 pair of shirts, Hurrian-style, of

linen" (Moran 1992: EA 22: 41). It is unknown exactly what this Hazor-style garment is, and its only relevance here is to demonstrate that Hazor was a known city at this time, important enough to be exporting goods that will be used as royal gifts, and important enough to be mentioned as having a style, along side a Hurrian style for a shirt.

In Amarna Letter 148, Hazor is mentioned by the writer, Abi-Milku of Tyre. The letter is addressed to an unnamed Pharaoh, but based upon the chronology discussed earlier, this letter would likely have been written during the reign of Amenhotep III. The main complaint of the letter is actually against the king of Sidon, but Abi-Milku mentions Hazor in passing at the end of the letter, as an example of treachery and what may happen if the king does not send reinforcements. Lines 41-47 state:

> The king of Ḫaṣura has abandoned his house and has aligned himself with the 'Apiru. May the king be concerned about the *palace attendants*. These are treacherous fellows [the kings of Sidon and Hazor]. He has taken over the land of the king for the 'Apiru. May the king ask his commissioner, who is familiar with Canaan (Moran 1992: EA 148: 41-47).

This accusation against the king of Hazor abandoning his house and aligning himself with the Hapiru may be linked to the events recorded in the book of Joshua. Upon close examination of Joshua 11, one can see that the king of Hazor was not killed in the battle between the Israelite army under Joshua and the coalition of rulers under the king of Hazor.

> They came out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore, with very many horses and chariots. So all of these kings having agreed to meet, came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel. Then Yahweh said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." So Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly by the waters of Merom, and attacked them. Yahweh delivered them into the hand of Israel, so that they defeated them, and pursued them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and the valley of Mizpeh to the east; and they struck them until no survivor was left to them (Joshua 11:4-8).

The actual battle between the armies was by the waters of Merom, and though Israel was victorious, the king of Hazor was not defeated and killed there. Instead, he went back to Hazor where he met his final fate at the hands of Joshua and the Israelites.

"Then Joshua turned back at that time, and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms" (Joshua 11:10). Not until the actual city of Hazor is taken is the king of Hazor "struck with the sword." The rest of the Canaanites had been defeated and killed, so they had no idea what actually happened at Hazor. They only knew that the king of Hazor had made it back to Hazor. Perhaps they thought that the king of Hazor had allied himself with the Hapiru, who could be the Israelites in this case,[71] when actually he was defeated soon after the major battle and the Israelites took control of the Hazor area. Since no one other than the Israelites would have known exactly what transpired at Hazor, Abi-Milku of Tyre may have just put forth his best explanation of the events, assuming that the king of Hazor must have joined the Hapiru and betrayed his former allies and eventually his city. The text of Joshua 11 actually implies that the king of Hazor never met with the coalition by the waters of Merom, so it is plausible to theorize that the Canaanites thought the king of Hazor betrayed them. Then, after receiving news that the city of Hazor itself had fallen, which to the Canaanites would seem impossible unless the king had joined the Hapiru, it could have further reinforced that theory, which would explain the line about the king of Hazor "abandoning his house," the palace and the city, which were then conquered by the Hapiru that he supposedly allied himself with.

Amarna Letter 227 is a letter from the king of Hazor, who gives only his title as king, to the Egyptian Pharaoh. The first important thing to notice in this letter is that the writer actually refers to himself as "king," unlike the other Canaanite rulers. In EA 148 the ruler of Hazor was also referred to as "king," even though the writer was the local ruler Abi-Milku of Tyre, who, like other Canaanite rulers, did not refer to himself as a king. This indicates the power and importance of the ruler of Hazor, since not only does he use the title of king for himself when addressing the Pharoah, but other rulers in Canaan even refer to the ruler of Hazor as king. The letter also makes explicit that the king of Hazor presides over more than just one city. The letter says "I have the cities of the king, my lord, under guard…" (Moran 1992: EA 227: 5-13). In Joshua 11, the king of

[71] The suggestion that the words Hapiru and Hebrew are etymologically equivalent or even related is a debated issue, although more recent research appears to demonstrate that Hapiru is a socioeconomic term not restricted to one ethnic group. Some of the Hapiru in the Amarna Letters, however, may represent the Israelites because of the parallel actions of attacking and conquering cities in Canaan ca. 1400 BCE. For a more detailed assessment, see the chapter on Ancient Documents and the Israelite Conquest of Canaan.

Hazor is seen as a ruler of considerable influence who is able to amass a coalition of Canaanite rulers in the area, and that "Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms" (Joshua 11:10, NASB). Thus, there is agreement between Amarna Letter 228 and Joshua 11 which both indicate that the king of Hazor was sovereign over many of the city-states in the area. However, there is one more distinction of note. In EA 228, the ruler of Hazor is called simply "the king of Hazor," but not the king of Canaan or some other title. In Judges 4, the king of Hazor is actually called "king of Canaan" (Judges 4:2, 23, 24). Yet, in the book of Joshua, the ruler of Hazor is simply called "the king of Hazor," just as in the Amarna Letters (Joshua 11:1; 12:19). This is a possible link between the Amarna Letters and the book of Joshua, which are both describing events from the period of transition between the Late Bronze I and the Late Bronze II, in contrast to the much later period of Judges 4 at the end of the Late Bronze IIB.

The king of Hazor writes another letter to the Pharaoh in Amarna Letter 228. The content of this letter assures the Pharaoh that the king of Hazor is guarding the area, and includes the name of the king of Hazor, ending with a reminder about what has been done to Hazor, perhaps by the Egyptians, in the past. The king of Hazor is ruling not only the city itself, but the wider area of Hazor "together with its villages." This is further confirmation of the power and influence of Hazor at this time, a fact corroborated by the archaeological excavations at Hazor and the claim in the book of Joshua that Hazor was "the head of all these kingdoms." The name of the king of Hazor is given as Abdi-Tirshi, or Abdi-Irshi (Moran 1992: EA 228).[72] In its normal reading, the name means "servant of Tirshi," a deity (Yadin 1975b: 18). Although his name is Abdi-Tirshi, his title, like many rulers of Hazor, may have been Yabin.[73] Finally, the writer alludes to some event in the past that was negative for Hazor. It is unknown exactly what this event is, since no clue is given in the text. However, since the king of Hazor is writing to the Egyptians to remember some bad event from the past, and both Thutmose III and Amenhotep II claimed to have conquered Hazor, perhaps he is referring to one of or both of those conquests, and appealing to the Egyptians to show favor to Hazor in the future. Both EA 227 and EA 228 may have been written by Abdi-Tirshi, but since no

[72] M. Weippert, *ZDPV* 82 (1966), 322, proposed an alternative reading of ÌR-*dir*$_4$-*ši*, 'Abd(i)-Irši. Na'aman *UF* 20 (1988), 188 n. 38 concurred.
[73] The reasons for considering Yabin as a royal title at Hazor will be detailed in a following discussion.

specific name for the author of EA 227 is given, only a guess can be made based on similar content. Either way, both contain important information about the status of Hazor in the Late Bronze Age.

The fifth Amarna Letter that mentions Hazor is EA 364. In this letter, a leader in Canaan named Ayyab writes to an unidentified Pharaoh, and assures him that he is guarding the cities of the king. However, he reveals that he has somewhat failed in this mission, adding “note that it is the ruler of Ḫaṣura who has taken 3 cities from me. From the time I heard and verified this, there has been waging of war against him. Truly, may the king, my lord, take cognizance, and may the king, my lord, give thought to his servant.” (Moran 1992: EA 364: 17-28). This letter indicates a time of internal war within the land of Canaan, perhaps between city states, or perhaps due to a larger force at work. It also indicates at least that Hazor is powerful and has widespread influence, as Joshua 11 states. However, if written after EA 148, in which Abi-Milku of Tyre informs the Pharaoh that the king of Hazor has joined the Hapiru and is taking over the lands of the king in Canaan, the 3 cities of Ayyab that he reports were taken by the king of Hazor may be linked to the events in EA 148. And, perhaps Ayyab has mistakenly identified the king of Hazor as the ruler of some of these Hapiru, when according to the book of Joshua they may be the Israelites who have taken over Hazor and its land, and are actually under the leadership of Joshua, not the king of Hazor. Although these details are not given, because of the similar events in the Amarna Letters mentioning Hazor and the events in the book of Joshua, and both texts writing about events in Canaan during the Late Bronze I to Late Bronze II transition, it is plausible that both texts refer to the same events.

5.7 The Extensive 15th Century BCE Destruction

In addition to the Late Bronze IIB destruction, there is an important Late Bronze IB stratum at Hazor, both on the acropolis and in the Lower City, which underwent a massive and fiery destruction throughout all areas of the city. The question is not whether this destruction occurred, but when within the Late Bronze I did it occur, and to which group should the destruction be assigned. According to early excavations, Hazor

suffered a fiery destruction at the end of Late Bronze I (Yadin 1957: 44). The book of Joshua tells the reader that Hazor was the head of several kingdoms in northern Canaan ca. 1400 BCE at the end of the Late Bronze IB when it suffered a destruction by fire at the hands of the Israelites (Joshua 11). The Amarna letters also indicate the power and importance of Hazor at the period of transition between Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II, and thus finds at the site should support this. Besides the massive size of the city, which dwarfs others in the southern Levant, architecture and artifacts demonstrate the importance of Hazor.

At the area K gate in the lower city, stratum 2, LB I, hallmarks of massive fortifications were discovered, indicating a powerful, wealthy, and organized city state. "The gate of stratum 2 is identical in plan to that of the previous phase but is constructed of huge and well-dressed ashlar blocks, further testimony to the high culture and skill of Hazor in the Late Bronze I period" (Yadin 1975b: 139). Zuckerman, current co-director of the Hazor excavations, remarks that:

> The size and magnitude of the Area M complex and the Area A ceremonial precinct are unrivaled in other Canaanite cities of the Late Bronze Age, as might be expected from the largest Canaanite kingdom in the southern Levant…The Area M complex and the Area A ceremonial precinct went through several phases of existence. The last phase is one of gradual decline, consisting of meager walls and installations built inside the monumental buildings (Zuckerman 2010: 178).

Thus, although Hazor in the 13th century BCE was still large and powerful, the archaeology clearly indicates that Late Bronze I Hazor was the peak of the Canaanite city. From excavations, the plentiful finds of Syrian, Anatolian, and Mesopotamian iconography from Hazor in the Late Bronze I in contrast with the few Egyptian artifacts, in addition to the situation found in the Amarna Letters, suggests the city was powerful, influential, and relatively independent from the much greater influence that Egypt exerted on other cities of this time in the southern Levant (Bienkowski 1987: 53; Petrovich 2008: 499).

5.8 A Scarab of Thutmose IV

An important scarab discovery, when combined with various types of pottery and a study of the stratigraphy, shows that Hazor was inhabited during the reign of Thutmose IV, at least until near the end of the 15th century BCE in ca. 1413 BCE when his reign was over, according to a High Egyptian chronology.

Fig 19: A scarab of Thutmose IV, Menkheperure. National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, Netherlands. Photo: Titus Kennedy.

A scarab of this Pharaoh was found in Area F, cave 8144, which “was so well sealed in antiquity that when we discovered the cave it contained practically no earth.” This is important to note because being sealed assures that it was not contaminated. In the cave, excavators found “over 500 pottery vessels…a scarab bearing the name of Thutmose IV (Men-Kheperu-Re)” (Yadin 1975b: 64). The scarab of Thutmose IV is important because, according to Egyptologists, these scarabs were only in circulation during his short reign of about 8 years, and thus any finds only come from approximately the years of Thutmose IV on the throne. Unlike some other, more famous

and more desirable scarabs, those of Thutmose IV were not reproduced after his death and not widely circulated.[74] Thus, the find at Hazor demonstrates occupation of the site during his reign and possibly slightly after, to allow for the time to be transported from Egypt up to Hazor. Because nowhere on the site are two phases of Late Bronze I indicated, and thus only one destruction during the Late Bronze I, at the end of the period, this continuous habitation further demonstrates that the city was not destroyed either by Amenhotep II or Thutmose III. Although both of these Pharaohs included Hazor on their lists of conquered cities, neither list necessitates a destruction, and the habitation evidence at Hazor combined with the Egyptian textual evidence argues against a destruction of Hazor by either Thutmose III or Amenhotep II. Redford, an Egyptologist, comments in relation to the Egyptian conquest of Hazor that "The word 'destroy,' used with reference to this town, is not to be taken literally; Thutmose may have done no more than destroy its food supplies" (Redford 1992: 158; cf. Hoffmeier 1989: 187; ANET 239). In fact, the language used by Thutmose III in the Gebel Barkal Stele about some of his conquests in Mitanni does not mention massive destruction of cities, but refers to his enemies as having been bound and bowing down to him (Hallo 2000: 15). Amenhotep II also claimed that he conquered or destroyed Hazor on his Year 3 conquest list, yet textual and occupational evidence demonstrates that Hazor was continually inhabited during this period, until after the reign of Thutmose IV (Pritchard 1950: 242). Besides the continuity of stratum XV and stratum 2 until the end of Late Bronze IB, Papyrus Hermitage 1116A contains a list recording the allocation of beer and corn to messengers from Djahy, who are envoys to cities such as Megiddo, Chinnereth, Achshaph, Shimron, Taanach, Ashkelon, and Hazor. This papyrus is usually dated to year 18 of Amenhotep II, but at least one scholar has also contended it may date to the very end of the reign of Thutmose III (Pasquali 2007: 71-85). Either date, however, would fall subsequent to any conquest of Hazor by Thutmose III, and the generally accepted date would fall subsequent to the conquest by Amenhotep II.

[74] Dates of Thutmose IV scarabs from various museums all agree that these scarabs only come from the period of the reign of Thutmose IV, and not after. http://art.thewalters.org/viewwoa.aspx?id=34341; http://art.thewalters.org/viewwoa.aspx?id=34341; Email communication with Los Angeles County Museum of Art Egyptian Curator, Nancy Thomas, February 18, 2011.

5.9 Ceramic Analysis of the Late Bronze I City

In area F of the Late Bronze I city, excavators also found Cypriot bucchero ware juglets and tall-necked bilbils, and Mycenaean IIIA and IIIA-B pottery (Yadin 1975b: 65). Other graves in area F, located in former buildings of the end of the MB and beginning of LB I, contained pottery of "a black Cypriot juglet typical of the fifteenth century BC" and "Bichrome Ware" (Yadin 1975b: 66, 68). Ruth Amiran writes that Bichrome Ware "flourishes mainly in LB I" which dates to ca. 1550-1400 BCE (Amiran 1970: 154). She also discusses Base-Ring I and II Wares, explaining that the predominant type is the bilbil jug, which appears in LBI and IIA, and goes into LB IIB (Amiran 1970: 173). Finally, Bucchero Ware is said to be present in the Levant during LB IIA and IIB, while Mycenaean IIIA and IIIA-B pottery indicate the beginning of LB IIA and LB IIB, dating from ca. 1400 BCE to ca. 1230 BCE (Amiran 1970: 173, 179). Contrary to the argument of Petrovich, the exact date of the Late Bronze IB destruction cannot be determined on the basis of ceramic analysis (Petrovich 2008: 506). The exact chronology for Mycenean pottery is still debated because ceramic chronology from the Late Bronze Age cannot give extremely precise dates, since styles were in use over broad periods of time. However, it is apparent from the pottery that the site was occupied until around the end of Late Bronze IB, and then after an occupational gap resumed occupation in some part of Late Bronze IIA. With a combined analysis of the strata, pottery, and the Thutmose IV scarab, habitation evidence demonstrates that Hazor was occupied continuously from some point in the Late Bronze I until at least ca. 1410 BCE, near the end of Late Bronze I and the 15th century BCE when the reign of Thutmose IV ended. The ceramic typology indicates that after Stratum XV on the acropolis and Stratum 2 in the lower city was destroyed, there was an occupational gap at the beginning of the 14th century BCE, and finally resettlement sometime in the middle of the 14th century BCE during Late Bronze IIA in strata XIV and 1B (Yadin 1960: 153). Yadin wrote of this hiatus of settlement, saying, "In view of a considerable accumulation between Stratum 2 and Stratum 1B above it, it may be assumed perhaps that there was a gap in the history of Hazor" (Yadin 1975b: 32). Following this, there was yet another destruction, perhaps

limited in scope, another resettlement in strata XIII and 1A, and then the final destruction of the Canaanite city in the last half of the 13th century BCE.

Ceramic evidence of further destruction and abandonment comes from Area D, where pottery had been thrown or fallen into a cistern and abandoned. “In the lower part of that cistern, we found literally hundreds of vessels, and from the amount of the silt deposit and incrustations on them we could infer that they were thrown, or had fallen, into the cistern. All these vessels belonged to a single period, the Late Bronze I” (Yadin 1975b: 126-127). Area C in stratum 2, belonging to this same period of Late Bronze I, also revealed a destruction layer (Yadin 1958: 73; 1960: 92).

5.10 Statue Desecration in the 15th Century BCE?

Evidence of ritual desecration of Canaanite and Egyptian gods and kings had been mentioned in relation to the 13th century BCE destruction, but evidence also exists of the same practice from the 15th century BCE destruction. At the area H temple, in a pit dug from stratum 1B, a statue from an earlier stratum was discovered. Yadin remarks that:

> one very important object was discovered at the bottom: a basalt statue of a headless man (the head, broken in antiquity, was not found by us). Similar in general lines to the statue found in the stelae temple of area C, it was both larger and devoid of any emblem on its breast. It seemed that this statue had been thrown into the pit by the occupants of temple IB after it had been broken. It may have been an heirloom from a previous temple—perhaps the statue of an earlier king—stored there out of reverence” (Yadin 1975b: 102).

This statue, which clearly came before the 13th century BCE destruction, could have been a remnant of the earlier Late Bronze Age destruction at the end of the 15th century BCE. Instead of discarding the statue, the keepers of the temple apparently kept it and eventually buried it under the floor.

Fig 20: Headless statue found in a pit of the “holy of holies” in the Area H IB temple. Hazor Museum, Israel. Photo: Titus Kennedy

Yadin explains that in the area H temple, “the floor of stratum 2 was cut (no doubt in either the IA or IB periods, during the lifetime of the two upper temples)” (Yadin 1975b: 109). Thus, finds such as this headless statue and the lion orthostat likely originated in the Late Bronze I city but were re-used later because of their significance. This is likened to the statue of Idrimi, king of Alalakh who was found broken and deliberately buried in a higher, later strata of the temple at Alalakh (Yadin 1975b: 110-112).

There are other statues, also, which may have originally been mutilated during the Late Bronze IB destruction. Ben-Tor writes that:

> Two (nos. 5-6) of the three Egyptian statues and the sphinx (no. 9) that were found in Iron Age contexts bear signs of deliberate damage, but it cannot be determined when this was caused. The same applies to the seated figure from Area F (no. 15) and the statue of the deity standing on a bull from Area H (no. 16), although the latter does seem to belong to the group deliberately mutilated by those who destroyed Stratum IA” (Ben-Tor 2006b: 14).

These, of course, like the basalt statue with the missing head from Area H, could have also been from the Late Bronze IB destruction, although it is impossible to say for sure.

5.11 A Divination Tablet

Another artifact discovered in the ruins of the area H temple in stratum 2 was “a clay model of an animal's liver with inscribed omens for the use of the temple's diviners…one of the very few from this period, 15th cent. B. C.” (Yadin 1959: 7).

Fig 21: Animal liver divination tablet from ca. 15th century BCE Hazor. Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Photo: Titus Kennedy

The first fragment reads:

> One king will bend down another.
> An enemy will attack my country…
> Forgiveness [will be granted] by the god to the men.
> A servant will rebel against his lord.

The second fragment reads

> Istar [?] will eat the land
> Nergal will…
> The gods of the city will come back.
> (Yadin 1975b: 115).

This odd and eerie tablet was written not long before the destruction of Hazor at the end of the 15th century BCE by an outside force. The Amarna Letters suggest it was the Habiru, and the book of Joshua claims the Israelites destroyed Hazor. Although the tablet contains an ominous threat upon Hazor from a foreign attacker, just before the Late Bronze IB destruction, it is likely only an interesting coincidence that should not be read into, and not a specific historical text. Soon after, however, the city was destroyed.

5.12 The Area H Temple

Another relevant find in this stratum at the area H temple shows that the area H temple, “like the one in area C, had its own potter, who produced the votive vessels for sale to the worshippers. We found his kiln with twenty-two miniature votive bowls still resting on the floor. This find, like many others, obviously indicates that the temple of stratum 2 was destroyed by an enemy and the people abandoned it abruptly” (Yadin 1975b: 115). The pottery vessels mentioned were found intact, definitely indicating a quick abandonment and a foreign attacker upon 15th century BCE Hazor. This is in stark contrast to the expected finds if one was arguing for a “Peasant Revolt.” A potter, based in the lower city, was obviously not one of the elite, and yet his workshop was destroyed and abandoned, leaving all of the valuable items behind.

Abandonment, however, was not the only indication of destruction in Area H. Excavations actually uncovered a 15 cm thick layer of ash, specifically on the floor of the Area H Orthostat Temple in the Late Bronze IB stratum 2 (Yadin 1989: 228). Above the ash layer, fallen mud bricks and other building debris formed another segment of the destruction layer 70 cm thick (Yadin 1989: 227). The actual function of the area H temple appears to have been cultic sacrifice and ritual meals.

> In the Area H temple the finds in the courtyard, on and around the central podium, were interpreted as remains of ritualized slaughter held around the altars, followed by communal cultic meals. A similar interpretation was suggested by Lev-Tov and McGeough for the courtyard in front of Building 7050 in Area A based on the rich faunal debris found scattered and piled all around the well-built podium in the middle of this large open space (Zuckerman 2010: 176).

Thus, between the command to destroy the city, the pagan statues, masseboth, and remnants of sacrifice to pagan gods, a temple such as this would have been an obvious target for destruction by invading Israelites seeking to eradicate idols and other components of Canaanite religion; and the excavation data demonstrates a destruction by fire like that claimed in the Hazor destruction in the book of Joshua and a desecration of Canaanite religious installations commanded in Deuteronomy.

5.13 The Walls of Hazor

Fortifications in the lower city were also found to have been destroyed in the Late Bronze IB period. According to the official excavation report, the Area P gate was excavated and remnants of the Late Bronze IB destruction were uncovered (Ben-Tor 1997: 382). Yadin also details some of the finds of the destruction in this area. “It is interesting to note that in the top layers of the later gates, we discovered a considerable amount of broken basalt orthostats. This would indicate the lower parts of the earlier (Late Bronze I) gate were adorned by orthostats, and when the gate was destroyed these orthostats were converted into building material” (Yadin 1975b: 141).

. When Yadin excavated Area K, another major fortification of the Late Bronze I city, this gate area also revealed relevant data pertaining to a Late Bronze I destruction of Hazor (Yadin 1989: 287). Discussing the Late Bronze I gate of Area K, Yadin says that the:

> floor of fine cobbles was flanked on each side by three pairs of pilasters, the two extreme ones forming the jambs of the outer and inner entrances respectively. The middle ones served to support the ceiling. On either side of the entire gate structure was a two-roomed tower. This gate must have been destroyed in a violent conflagration, though the exterior walls still stand to a height of nine feet. Traces of the burnt bricks of its inner walls and the ashes of the burnt beams still cover the floors in thick heaps. The evidence suggests that this destruction occurred before the final destruction of Hazor by the Israelites” (Yadin 1959: 9).

The conclusion to be drawn from these analyses of excavations in the lower city stratum 2, from the Late Bronze I 15th century BCE, is that there is widespread fire destruction everywhere, fitting with the description of the book of Joshua which records Hazor being destroyed and burned by the Israelites at the end of the 15th century BCE.

The Late Bronze I city of Hazor was massive and well fortified, befitting of a city described as the head of the kingdoms in the north. Besides the impressive gates found at the lower city in area K and area P, the gate and stairs complex to the upper city in area M, and the rampart, even the inner city wall itself was massive. The inner city wall from the Middle and Late Bronze Age around the acropolis is described as:

> 25 feet wide, built of bricks on a stone foundation and covered with very fine plaster. It was built in three sections, the outer and inner ones very well and neatly laid out while the center one was rather crude. This city wall with a fine drainage system made of clay pipes, found nearby, was constructed sometime in the Middle Bronze II period and must have served as the innermost wall guarding the heart of the Acropolis. Its construction was so sturdy that it must also have been used in the Late Bronze Age, and it is even possible that in Solomon's time it served as a revetment to hold the terrace on which his walls were built (Yadin 1959: 19).

The city walls were so large and built so well that though constructed earlier, they not only continued to be used throughout the Late Bronze Age, but they even survived all the way into the Iron Age in some form.

5.14 Abandoned Houses

Discoveries in the lower city as part of the renewed excavations at Hazor have uncovered possible archaeological evidence related to the Late Bronze I, 15th century BCE attack on and destruction of Canaanite Hazor. At area S, excavated houses from stratum 2, Late Bronze I were found to have their entrances sealed up with stones and abandoned. Inside, finds were restricted to pithoi (very large ceramic storage jars) almost exclusively, indicating that the residents had taken all smaller pottery vessels, household items, and other belongings with them before sealing their houses.[75] The pithoi, being extremely large and heavy, were not practical to carry away from the house. In this scenario, it appears as if the residents took what they could carry and blocked up their houses to protect them from being looted or vandalized. Then, presumably they went up to the acropolis for additional protection from an approaching attacker. These houses are part of the stratum from the conquered and destroyed 15th century BCE Canaanite city, and thus their residents were in danger of being attacked, robbed, and killed. However, perhaps the oddest part of this find is that the houses were discovered abandoned and still blocked up, as if the residents never returned to them. This would only be the case if the residents of the city were killed or chased away, and the city was not resettled for some time. From analysis of the stratigraphy, it is known

[75] Lecture at Hazor by Sharon Zuckerman 2010 season at Hazor. A subsequent viewing of the area and review of photos was also done.

that there was an occupational gap at Hazor between the destroyed 15th century BCE city and the rebuilt 14th century BCE city. Why no one ever returned to their houses may be explained by the description of the attack on Hazor in the book of Joshua. “Then Joshua turned back at that time, and captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword; for Hazor formerly was the head of all these kingdoms. They struck every person who was in it with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them; there was no one left who breathed” (Joshua 11:10-11). The book of Joshua claims that all of the residents of Hazor were killed, thus leaving no population to return to their homes after the city was conquered. This odd bit of archaeological evidence, occurring at the time of the Late Bronze IB destruction at the end of the 15th century BCE, appears to be the result of a conquest which forced the abandonment of the houses in the Lower City of Hazor.

5.15 The Area M Entrance

At the entrance to the acropolis, in area M, destruction from both the Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II were discovered.

> Two fragmentary walls built on top of the paved street, which were found covered by the destruction layer marking the end of the entire architectural assemblage, indicate that the last phase of occupation here [Late Bronze II] was of a rather poor nature. This is also attested by a huge pit dug through the paved street…The pit cut into an earlier accumulation of fallen mud-bricks and ashes: this is the only clear indication found so far for an earlier destruction, still in the Late Bronze Age [specifically Late Bronze I], predating the final destruction of the city. That earlier phase extending beyond the excavated area, was apparently of a substantial nature, as indicated by an orthostat associated with it. The orthostats forming part of the paved open area in front of the podium adjacent to the citadel, some of them clearly in secondary use, may have originated in this earlier phase” (2000 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/2000.htm).

The 2001 season did further analysis on the monumental entrance to the acropolis in area M. Excavations revealed that “This earlier phase ended in a conflagration, similar to the one that brought an end to the later phase. The ceramic assemblage associated with this earlier phase, albeit meager, seems to place the date of this earlier destruction somewhere in the Late Bronze Age I (15th century B.C.)” (2001 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/2001.htm). Ben-Tor writes that “This

destruction is most probably contemporary with the end of Stratum 2 in the lower city, which may have been the result of the military campaign led by Thutmosis III" (Ben-Tor 2001: 238.) As discussed earlier, however, it is highly unlikely that Thutmose III destroyed the Late Bronze IB city.

As one can see, the earlier phase, in the Late Bronze I, was associated with the orthostats. These orthostats are found at various important areas of Hazor, originating in Late Bronze I, when the city was still near its peak. After the destruction at the end of the 15th century BCE, Hazor never was completely restored to its former glory. The 2004 season preliminary report agrees with the view that while Late Bronze I Hazor was influential and powerful, the final Canaanite city in Late Bronze II did not quite attain to the city's previous greatness in the preceding period. "This corresponds well with the findings in other parts of the excavations, as well as in the excavations of Yigael Yadin, which clearly indicate that Hazor is in decline towards the end of the Late Bronze Age" (2004 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/2004.htm). Yet, Moris argues that Hazor was perhaps the major city in Canaan according to the Amarna Letters (Morris 2006: 186). This may be explained by hypothesizing that at least one of the Amarna letters dealing with Hazor come from ca. 1400 BCE, during the reign of Amenhotep III, at the end of the great Late Bronze I city instead of the rebuilt, but not as powerful and influential city of the Late Bronze IIA, ca. 1350 BCE.

5.16 The Upper City Area A

The acropolis proper, too, contains abundant evidence of a widespread destruction by fire at the end of Late Bronze I. Of particular interest is a temple probably originally built at the beginning of Late Bronze I, stratum XV (Ben-Tor 1993: 604). This temple, sometimes called the Long Temple because of its layout, was destroyed in the Late Bronze I destruction of the city (Ben-Tor 1997: 102). This building, also referred to as the area A orthostat temple:

> was long and rectangular and measured 16.2 metres internally, from east to west, and 11.6 metres from north to south. Its thick walls were 2.35 metres on the average and were built of bricks on stone foundations. Opposite the entrance was a platform made of

> brick and plaster that measured nearly 5 metres from north to south and approximately 1.5 metres from east to west. A quantity of votive offerings and pottery, as well as remains of animals, were found on the platform around it…The entire area was covered with nearly 2 metres of debris composed of bricks that had fallen off the walls. The latest pottery found among this debris was of the Late Bronze I period (sixteenth—fifteenth centuries BC, i.e., stratum XV). No remains of the fourteenth—thirteenth centuries (i.e., of strata XIV—XIII, respectively) were found…The thick layer of brick debris covering the remains of the Late Bronze I temple also indicated that after its final destruction, this temple was never again reconstructed …Nevertheless we observed that the sanctity of the area and its immediate surroundings was maintained through the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries (strata XIV and XIII)" (Yadin 1975b: 260-261; cf. Yadin 1968: 52).

That this building was simply left in ruins and never rebuilt or cleared is an odd phenomenon that has puzzled archaeologists since it was first excavated. The reasons for it being kept in ruins and untouched are unclear, and may never be truly known. However, it likely has to do with how revered the area had become to the Canaanites. Yadin's excavations:

> discovered a group of stelae and offering vessels belonging to the final phase of Late Bronze (stratum XIII), which were erected after the temple's demolition. Now it became clear that the whole vicinity of the temple had cultic installations, including probably various temples. The area was littered with relics of cult vessels, bones, etc. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the area kept its cultic character, although, for reasons unknown to us, the temple itself was not restored…On the other hand, no relic was found that could be attributed to the two strata, XIV and XIII" (Yadin 1968: 53).

The other major Bronze Age building on the acropolis in area A is the ceremonial palace, or alternatively the temple, ascribed to stratum XIII (Ben-Tor 2006a: 8, 78-79). It is known that an earlier version of this building lies underneath, but has not been excavated because of restoration and preservation work done to the stratum XIII building. Underneath the Late Bronze II temple/palace, in "the foundation trench of the building, within which were found layers of ashes, mudbricks material, large amount of bones and pottery vessels dated to the MBIIC or LBI" (2007 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/2007.htm). Yet, excavations earlier had revealed something odd—nearly all of the artifacts recovered from this palace or temple were below the floor level of the Late Bronze II building. It was discovered that this building had "two sets of door sockets, on both sides of the main (so far the only known) eastern entrance, one higher than the other, indicate two architectural phases of the palace, a

conclusion also encountered elsewhere in the palace. One of the most striking features of the throne room is that nowhere can a floor be clearly identified, and that most of the artifacts (pottery and other) were found below the level of the base of the orthostats lining the walls. The thick ash layer encountered everywhere, and a few charred wooden planks scattered here and there, may perhaps indicate that the floor of the throne room was made of wood!" (1996 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1996.htm).

In fact, it appears that materials from throughout the Late Bronze Age were discovered in the palace, perhaps because of the lack of a regular floor. Ceramics from both Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II were found, demonstrating the building's use throughout the period.

> A very large assemblage of pottery was recovered, coming mostly from the northern end of the throne room and from the two rooms to the north of it. Various Late Bronze Age ceramic types are represented, the vast majority however belongs to bowls and pithoi. Dozens of complete bowls were found in the two northern rooms, as well as fragments of thousands (!) of bowls probably used as fill material (below the wooden floor?) The entire range of types of LB bowls is represented" (1996 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1996.htm).

Because of clear evidence elsewhere on the site, this building also likely underwent destructions both in Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II. Thus, at least some of the finds from this building may date to the Late Bronze I destruction—as indicated by the finds of Late Bronze I pottery. Finds of particular interest include the decapitated and mutilated statues, which in the case of this building, may have originated in either Late Bronze I or Late Bronze II. "Remnants of yet another stone made statue of an Egyptian king was also found. Just like the similar statues found previously, this statue too suffered intentional mutilation in antiquity" (1997 Season Excavation Report: http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/1997.htm). This would certainly not be due to an Egyptian destruction, so Thutmose III or Amenhotep II in the Late Bronze IB, and Seti I in the Late Bronze II are ruled out as potential candidates for the destroyer of Hazor. As discussed earlier, that essentially leaves the Israelites—Joshua in Late Bronze I, and perhaps Barak in Late Bronze II. If this artifact, or other mutilated statues found in the building, originally date to the Late Bronze I destruction, as some of the pottery

discovered in the building does, then some of these mutilated statues would be further evidence for a destruction in the Late Bronze I by a group other than the Egyptians or Canaanites.

5.17 The Name of Yabin, King of Hazor

The name or title “Yabin” is associated with the king of Hazor in both Joshua 11 and Judges 4. Are both texts to be taken as referring to the same person or is this just a coincidence? Or perhaps Yabin should be understood as being merely a royal title. “Scholars have suggested that the form of the name of the king of Hazor mentioned in the Bible—Yabin (Jabin being the Anglicized version)—is indeed short for the full theophoric formula. If this is true, then Yabin may have been a royal dynastic name of the kings of Hazor for quite a time” (Yadin 1975b: 250) At Mari in the 18th century BCE, another king of Hazor named Yabni-Adad is mentioned (ARM VI, 236), while at Hazor a tablet was found with the name Ibni (Kitchen 2003a: 175).

Fig 22: Cuneiform tablet from the Middle Bronze Age found at Hazor, containing the name Ibni (Yabin?). http://unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/ibni.htm

This Ibni tablet, found at Hazor in 1992, was written as a letter to a man named Ibni [Adad?] and was dated to the Middle Bronze Age. Since a king of Hazor named Yabni/Ibni-Adad is found in a commercial cuneiform document from Mari which dates to the 18th century BC, also in the Middle Bronze Age, both of these tablets may be referring to the same king of Hazor, or at least to a king of Hazor. Ibni-Adad is merely the Akkadian variant of Yabni-Adad, which is also directly related to Yabin—the name or title of the king of Hazor in Joshua 11:1 and Judges 4:2 (Janeway 2003: 93).[76] Because "Ibni" or "Yabin" has appeared in four separate documents spanning the Canaanite era of Hazor, and all refer to kings of Hazor, "Yabin" may indeed be a title for the king of Hazor preserved through the centuries, instead of a personal name.

5.18 Conclusion about the Late Bronze Age Conquests of Hazor

Although the accounts of Israelite Conquest associated with the great city of Hazor in the books of Joshua and Judges are often considered to be referring to the same story, a careful reading of the text makes it clear that the attack on and destruction of Hazor led by Joshua and the battle and attack on Hazor led by Barak are two separate events divided in time by around 150 years. Yet, why would Hazor be controlled by a Canaanite population in the Late Bronze II if the Israelites had conquered the city at the end of Late Bronze I? The book of Joshua records that the Israelites defeated the army of Hazor, killed the king and inhabitants, looted it, and then burned the city, but nowhere in either the books of Joshua or Judges is any mention of the Israelites rebuilding or occupying Hazor (Joshua 11:10-14). Thus, Canaanites were apparently able to reoccupy and rebuild Hazor during the Late Bronze II period. When the archaeological record is examined with this in mind, two destructions stand out as correlating with the two separate attacks on Hazor by the Israelites. The first, in the Late Bronze I near the end of the 15th century BCE is a massive, citywide destruction in which the entire city is burned, shops and houses are abandoned, temples are razed, administrative districts are burned down, and Canaanite symbols are defaced. This fiery

[76] cf. Malamat 1989:55–57; Ben-Tor 1997:125–26; Rabinovich and Silberman 1998:52

destruction, the period of which may also be referred to in the Amarna Letters, is most logically associated with the first segment of the Israelite Conquest led by Joshua when the entire city was burned and all the inhabitants killed ca. 1400 BCE. The next level of the city, reestablished after an occupational gap, was perhaps conquered by the Egyptian Pharaoh Seti I, but not completely destroyed. The final Canaanite city from the Late Bronze IIB, however, was found to be conquered by forced entry through the gate, Canaanite temples burned, statues of gods and kings desecrated, and then never resettled by the Cananites. This destruction, which took place in the second half of the 13th century BCE, was probably carried out by the Israelites during the Judges period, under the leadership of Barak in ca. 1208 BCE. The end of Canaanite Hazor had come, and the next settlement was a small, poor Israelite phase before the Monarchy period in which Solomon rebuilt the city as an Israelite stronghold. Thus, archaeologically, the 15th and 13th century BCE destructions appear to correlate with the two phases of Israelite Conquest against the city of Hazor recorded in the books of Joshua and Judges.

Chapter 6

The City of Ai and the Israelite Conquest

6.1 The Elusive Site of Ai

The conquest of the city of Ai, or Ha-'Ai, by the Israelites under Joshua is recorded in the book of Joshua, chapters 7 and 8.

> He [Joshua] commanded them, saying, "See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out to meet us as at the first, awe will flee before them. They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, 'They are fleeing before us as at the first.' So we will flee before them. And you shall rise from your ambush and take possession of the city, for Yahweh your God will deliver it into your hand. Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do it according to the word of Yahweh. See, I have commanded you"… Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of Yahweh which He had commanded Joshua. So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day (Joshua 8:4-8).

Despite detailed descriptions of the surrounding geography in both the books of Genesis and Joshua, and more text being dedicated to the conquest of Ai than any other city in the book of Joshua—chapter 7 and most of chapter 8—the ancient city of Ai is the most elusive and debated site in the book of Joshua. As a result, the conquest of Ai by the Israelites is not fully understood from an archaeological perspective. Instead, the issue of Ai has been both confusing and detrimental for the archaeological viability of the Israelite Conquest. One of the prominent excavators of Khirbet et-Tell, and an archaeologist who did much searching for the site of Ai, stated that "'Ai is simply an embarrassment to every view of the conquest that takes the biblical and archeological evidence seriously" (Callaway 1968: 312). This statement certainly reflects the outcome of archaeological expeditions searching for Ai, especially in view of the general conclusions about excavations at et-Tell. Finkelstein says "The site's modern Arabic name, et-Tell, means "the ruin," which is more or less equivalent to the meaning of the biblical Hebrew name Ai. And there was no alternative Late Bronze Age site anywhere

in the vicinity…Not a single pottery sherd or any other indication of settlement there in the Late Bronze Age was recovered. Renewed excavations at the site in the 1960s produced the same picture" (Finkelstein and Silberman 2002: 82). Finkelstein asserts that not only has there been not one pottery sherd indicating Late Bronze Age settlement at et-Tell, the most widely accepted candidate for the city of Ai, but he also asserts that there are no other Late Bronze Age sites in the area that could alternatively be Ai. An archaeological evaluation of both et-Tell and sites in the vicinity are necessary in order to investigate the narrative in the book of Joshua and the assertions of Finkelstein and others.

Over the years, multiple sites have been proposed for Ai, with the site of Khirbet et-Tell winning the majority selection due to an early endorsement by William Albright (Albright 1924: 141-49). Joseph Callaway, the last major excavator of et-Tell, also strongly endorsed the site as Ai (Callaway 1993: 39). Since Albright's endorsement of et-Tell in 1924, other proposed sites have been contended for and even excavated, but most of the other candidates seem to have no remote possibility as a potential site for Ai due to their problems in lack of occupation or geography. Other proposed sites include Khirbet Haiyan, Khirbet Khudriya, Khirbet el-Hay, Khirbet Nisya, and Khirbet el-Maqatir.

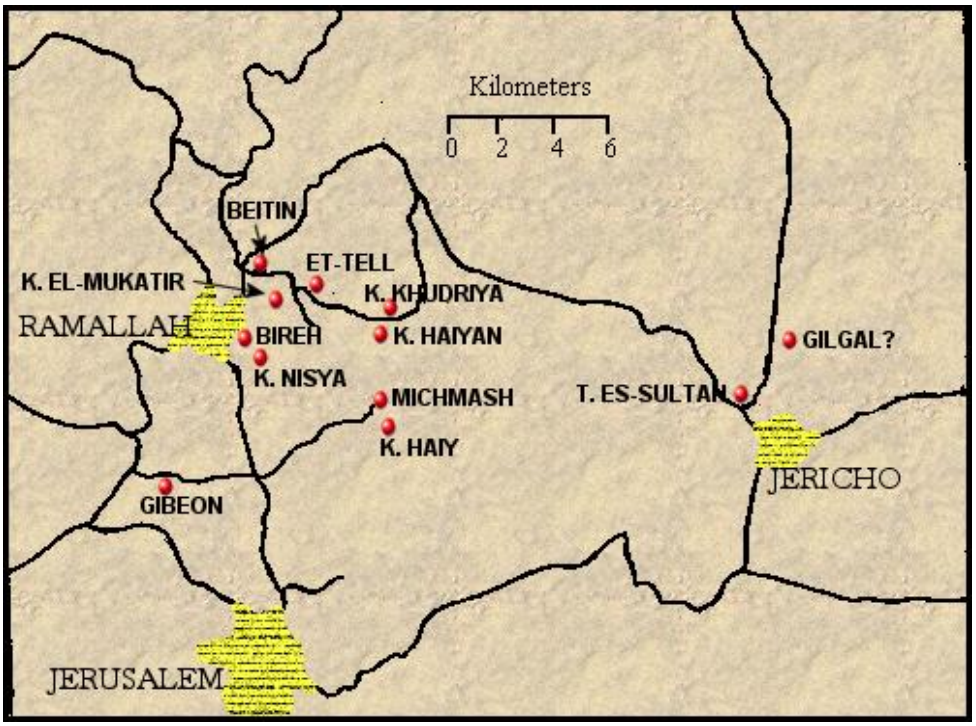

Fig 23: Map of sites in the area of ancient Ai.
http://www.drybohnz.com/archaeopages/ArchaeologyoftheCitiesofConquestfiles/image014.gif

The search for the correct site for the ancient city of Ai has been sought by applying the various geographical and archaeological data appearing primarily in the books of Joshua and Genesis. Since the Bible is the only ancient text that names the city of Ai, it is the only written source available to identify the site. Genesis 12 contains the first mention of Ai, and records that Ai is to the east of Bethel, and that there is a mountain or hill between the two cities (Genesis 12:8). Joshua 16 places Bethel west of and up into the hill country from Jericho (Joshua 16:1). It seems likely that Ai and Bethel are located in the same general area. Joshua 7 additionally records that Ai is near Beth-Aven and east of Bethel (Joshua 7:2, Masoretic Text).[77] Later in the book, Ai is also said to be in the vicinity of or beside Bethel (Joshua 12:9). In the narrative about the conquest of Ai, the men of Bethel pursue Israel along with the men of Ai (Joshua 8:17). Thus, the city of Ai is closely associated with the city of Bethel in several places, so the two cities must be relatively close to each other. Other geographical information that is more subjective, but which also may be useful for locating and identifying the site includes a valley north of Ai (Joshua 8:11), a place of ambush said to be west of the city between Bethel and Ai (Joshua 8:9), and a plain in the general area (Joshua 8:14).

Geographical data, however, is not the only useful information given for identifying the site of Ai. First, the city is supposed to have been inhabited during the time of Joshua (Joshua 7, 8). The city is also described as being fortified with a gate (Joshua 8:29). The book of Joshua indicates that Ai is smaller in size than the city of Gibeon. “Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty” (Joshua 10:2, NASB). If the approximate size of ancient Gibeon is known, then this can be a valuable piece of data with which to evaluate a potential site of Ai. Gibeon during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages is estimated at somewhere between 7 and 15 acres, with the higher value during Late

[77] The Masoretic text says that Ai is near Beth-Aven and east of Bethel, while the LXX makes no mention of Beth-Aven and simply says that Ai is down from Bethel. 4QJosha, the Dead Sea Scrolls text which contains part of Joshua 7, is missing verses 1-11.

Bronze I being preferable based on population and building expansion of the city over time, the note in the book of Joshua that it was a royal city and greater than Ai, and because the most recent survey records the site as encompassing up to approximately 15 acres (Broshi and Gophna 1986: 82; Finkelstein and Magen 1993: 46, 235). The city of Ai, like the cities of Jericho and Hazor, is specifically said to have been burned during its destruction by the Israelites (Joshua 8:28). Thus, a city occupied in the Late Bronze Age, smaller than Gibeon, fortified, and a destruction layer from the Late Bronze Age are all additional points of data that could be used to identify the site of Ai during the time of the Israelite Conquest, if the narrative about Ai is at least partially historical.

6.2 The Etymology of Ai

One of the reasons that Ai has been identified with a particular site, Khirbet et-Tell, is based on a supposed etymological link. Albright argued that Ha-ʻAi means "the ruin" or "the ruin par excellence," and thus connected it with the Arabic place name Et-Tell, which means "the mound" (Albright 1934: 11). However, subsequent studies argued against this association. One study pointed out that the use of the Hebrew definite article "ha" could be unique to the tribal area of Benjamin, since it is used in conjunction with several of the city or place names listed in the land allotted to the tribe of Benjamin, within which the area of Ai appears to be located (Grintz 1961: 210; Joshua 18:20-28). This study also argued that instead of "ruin," Ai means "pile or heap of stones" (Grintz 1961: 211). Zertal analyzes the Arabic and Hebrew words and concludes that the "Arabic term tell refers to a hill or mound on which there is a ruin. It is distinguished from khirba in that the latter refers to a deserted ruin, not necessarily on an elevated area," while the Hebrew Ai is often associated with the Hebrew word iy "ruin" and wrongly connected to the Arabic ʻwy "to bend" (Zertal 1983: 25). Instead, he explains, if a connection to Arabic is made, the one that the linguistics supports, based on the use of the Hebrew ayin and the rendering in the LXX of the city name with a gamma, is Arabic gyy "to hoist (a standard)" or gayat "extreme limit," suggesting a topographical or geographical feature of the site (Zertal 1983: 25). Thus, the small similarity between Et-Tell and Ha-Ai is merely coincidence. Further, "the Arabic name is

not unique. Six other sites with the same name [Et-Tell] occur in the areas of Jenin, Nablus (two sites), Jerusalem, Ramleh, and the Golan Heights" (Zertal 1983: 26). From this analysis, one can see that the etymology of Et-Tell does not support its identification as the site of ancient Ai. The geography and the settlement, however, must be evaluated in order to determine if Et-Tell is truly the most likely site for the city of Ai mentioned in the book of Joshua.

6.3 The Story of Ai as History or Myth?

Because of conflicting archaeological findings related to the conquest of Ai by the Israelites under Joshua, the Ai narrative has been relegated to the status of myth or etiological story, even by many who consider the Israelite Conquest an historical event. Yet, a comparison between the geographical details in the book of Joshua, and the actual geography of the area where Ai should be located, indicate that the narrative was recording a real location and real events. Zevit believes that in the Ai narrative of the book of Joshua, certain "factors suggest the antiquity of the topographical and tactical data, imply the authenticity of the specific conquest tradition with which they are associated, and appear to indicate the historicity of the battles themselves" (Zevit 1983: 24). He further argues that "The story [of the conquest of Ai] could not have originated as an etymological etiology for the name 'ay, since its pronunciation with a ghayin, gay, would have mitigated any association between it and the word for ruin, 'iy" (Zevit 1983: 32). In order to more thoroughly evaluate the historical value of the Ai conquest narrative in the book of Joshua, the suggested sites for Ai must be analyzed and compared with the textual claims to see if any matches occur.

6.4 Khirbet et-Tell as the Site of Ai

On the edge of the modern town of Deir Dibwan in the West Bank, Khirbet et-Tell stands out as an imposing mound. Because of its general location and prominence, it has been the major candidate for the site of ancient Ai. Promoted by Albright as a result of his exploration of the area east of Beitin, he bluntly stated that "there is no other

possible site for ‘Ai than et-Tell” (Albright 1936: 29). Khirbet et-Tell is east of Beitin, the site generally regarded to be Bethel. Factors in its favor as the site for Ai include its proximity to Beitin (Bethel?), there is a valley to the north of the site, a plain nearby, and there are ancient fortifications.

Khirbet et-Tell was surveyed by multiple explorers and archaeologists, but the first actual excavations were carried out by John Garstang in 1928. The excavations by Garstang, however, were only preliminary probes of the site. A few years later, “Judith Marquet-Krause did the first significant work at Ai in 1933-35 and discovered the great 27.5 acre walled city of the Early Bronze Age underlying the almost insignificant Israelite village of only 2.75 acres” (Callaway 1976: 19). Because of her findings, specifically that no Late Bronze city was discovered, Marquet-Krause concluded that the Israelite conquest account of Ai in Joshua chapters 7 and 8 was primarily legend (Marquet-Krause 1935: 341). Callaway’s excavations from 1964-1972 basically confirmed and clarified the findings of the 1930s excavations. The “earliest occupation evidence after the Early Bronze IIIA destruction of the site is Iron Age I, contemporary with Stratum BI at Tell Beit Mirsim. There is no evidence of Late Bronze occupation at et-Tell” (Callaway 1968: 314). The statements of these excavators has impacted archaeology for years, demonstrating that the city of et-Tell as Ai is an obvious problem in the Israelite Conquest narratives. A recent archaeological and historical book on ancient Israel makes this clear.

> Assuming the identification of ‘Ai with modern et-Tell, the only prominent site east of Bethel, is correct, the story of its conquest in Josh 8 is negated by the archaeological finds. No Late Bronze Canaanite city was found at this place or in its vicinity. Thus the conquest narrative in Josh 8 cannot be based on historical reality, despite its topographical and tactical plausibility (Finkelstein and Mazar 2007: 62).

The conclusion was that Khirbet et-Tell was occupied during most of the Early Bronze Age, had a long occupational gap through the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, and then was reoccupied during Iron Age I. Thus, during the period when the Israelite Conquest of Ai was supposed to have taken place—the Late Bronze Age—et-Tell appears to have been completely uninhabited.

Oddly, however, there are scattered reports of Late Bronze Age sherds found at Et-Tell. In an early article addressing the initial excavation season in 1964, Callaway noted that:

> Professor John Garstang excavated a number of soundings against the outer face of the lower city walls in 1928. His trenches were spaced across the south side of the tell between the Sanctuary and the southeastern extremity of the tell. The single wishbone handle of Cypriote ware that he mentioned in the report to the Department of Antiquities was found outside the city wall (Callaway 1965: 13).

Garstang reported some Late Bronze Age habitation from the site of et-Tell, although the majority of his eight soundings were actually on the side of the tell, outside the city walls (Callaway 1993: 39). As a result of his soundings at the site, he wrote that:

> a sherd of M.B.A.i [Middle Bronze I] technique was picked out of the bonding at the fourth course. The origins of the defences were not tested, but evidence was found of the occupation of the site in the E.B.A. [Early Bronze Age] While, as usual, M.B.A. wares were most abundant, there was found a considerable proportion of L.B.A.i, including (in the collection of the America School) a Cypriote wish-bone handle, but nothing of Mykenaean date or character, nor any local fabrics of a date later than 1400 B.C. (Garstang 1931: 356).

Thus, Garstang's soundings on the edge of the tell supposedly turned up ceramic evidence from Early Bronze, Middle Bronze, and Late Bronze. Initially, Garstang's findings were corroborated and endorsed by Albright. From a surface survey and study conducted by Albright, along with the data from Garstang's September 1928 soundings, Albright thought that et-Tell was occupied in the Early Bronze Age, at least parts of the Middle Bronze Age, and then into Late Bronze I when occupation ceased in the 15th century BCE, which he concluded by comparing the pottery found at et-Tell to that of Tell Beit Mirsim D and C (Albright 1929:11-12).[78] However, Garstang's Late Bronze findings and Albright's comparisons were not confirmed by the official publications of the Marquet-Krause expedition, which reported no Middle or Late Bronze occupation in the published report. Yet, one of the staff of the excavation who did not participate in the

[78] After comparing pottery between Tell Beit Mirsim and et-Tell, Albright thought that the latest Bronze Age sherds from et-Tell were later than the end of Tell Beit Mirsim D but earlier than C, and thus sometime near the end of Late Bronze I in the 15th century BCE.

publication mentions some definite Middle Bronze sherds and even a possible Late Bronze sherd found during excavations. Yeivin wrote that:

> there was among the large quantity of sherds recovered from the last burned phase of occupation of this settlement a certain number of rim sherds showing rows of round perforations immediately termed MC I [Middle Bronze I], but which should really be designated as 'Transitional period between EC [Early Bronze] and MC [Middle Bronze]'. Unfortunately, these for some reasons were not included in Mme. Krause-Marquet's publication, but that group had been carefully selected and put apart by the author because of its chronological implications. There was also with this group which originated from the layer of burned debris, a single large sherd of a buffish-green, medium sized, carinated bowl, picked up among the surface debris (i.e. within a depth of some 10-15 cm., definitely not on the actual surface of the ground), which he considered at the time as LC I [Late Bronze I], but which may after all have been of the same Intermediate period (Yeivin 1971: 51).

Yeivin reports that Middle Bronze I (or perhaps EB-MB transitional, depending upon one's terminology and chronology) existed at et-Tell, and that a Late Bronze I vessel was discovered near the surface. This appears to be confirmation of the findings from the earlier Garstang soundings. Additionally, Marquet-Krause herself actually reported (not those publishing the posthumous excavation report) that there were ceramic sherds from Middle Bronze I (Marquet-Krause 1949: 11). Callaway even mentions in passing a type of cooking pot of a Late Bronze Age style that was found in his excavations at et-Tell. "The everted rim cooking pot, which is found in Late Bronze, is absent in Phase I, but reappears in Phase II" (Callaway 1968: 316). Thus, there is reason, albeit small, to believe that a Middle Bronze (probably only the early part of Middle Bronze) and a Late Bronze I settlement existed at or around et-Tell, possibly on the side of the mound, but it has not been excavated except perhaps very minimally by the probes that Garstang dug in 1928, while the few other sherds that were found during the main expeditions were probably residual ceramic fragments.

Another piece of the puzzle involving et-Tell as Ai is the size of the city. Some archaeologists have argued that because the Early Bronze Age city of et-Tell is much larger than the (estimated) Late Bronze Age city of Gibeon, this failed criteria further disqualifies et-Tell as a candidate for Ai (Livingston 1970: 27; Simons 1947: 311; Wood 2008: 211). While these scholars would be correct if comparing the size of the Early Bronze Age settlement at et-Tell to the Late Bronze Age settlement at Gibeon, this is

not a valid comparison. The Early Bronze city at et-Tell was an estimated 27.5 acres, while the Iron I city at et-Tell was a mere 2.75 acres (Callaway 1976: 19). Obviously, even though the geography may have stayed the same over millennia, the size of the settlement changed through different periods. If there was a Late Bronze Age city at et-Tell, to assume it would have been exactly the same size as the Early Bronze Age city is fallacious, just as assuming it would have been the same size as the Iron Age I city. If the alleged ceramic evidence previously cited allows for a settlement at or around et-Tell during the Late Bronze Age, we still do not know what the size of the city during that period would have been. Actually, as a result of Garstang's soundings at et-Tell and his subsequent research, he estimated the Middle and Late Bronze Age city to be much smaller than the Early Bronze Age city, but larger than the Iron Age I city.

> Assuming the city of the L.B.A. to have followed the line of terraced scarp already protected by a stone wall in M.B.A. ii, its form would be roughly square, about 230 x 200 yards, with rounded corners, and an area of some 9 acres. Soundings made by the writer in 1928 showed the rampart wall to have been largely quarried away in Byzantine times, but traced its course along the southern slopes of the Tell for about 180 yards by following the line of stone chippings and the remains of its foundations, and on the west face exposed a stretch of walling (Garstang 1931: 355).

If the various claimed Late Bronze I sherds from et-Tell do date to that period, and if Garstang measured the walls and the size of the settlement somewhat correctly, then at a proposed 9 acres, et-Tell in the Late Bronze I actually fulfills the criteria of being smaller than Gibeon of the same period.[79] Thus, if it existed, the Late Bronze Age city at et-Tell is not in conflict with the statement in the book of Joshua that Gibeon was greater than Ai. Alternatively, the statement that Gibeon was "greater" than Ai may refer to something other than the physical size of the city, such as its importance as a royal city. The Hebrew word, *gadol*, means "great" or "important," and can carry a variety of nuanced meanings depending upon the context (Brown, Driver, and Briggs 2000: 152-53). The context does refer to the cities, and the interpretation that it refers to the physical size of the cities (rather than the population, which is usually connected to the

[79] Garstang dated the construction of part of the wall to MB I, due to a sherd removed from the bonding (cf. Garstang 1931: 356). This Middle Bronze Age wall is postulated to have been reused in the Late Bronze Age, like many other sites in Canaan, if there was a Late Bronze Age at et-Tell.

land area) is the most likely interpretation, as a royal and important city would also be large in size (cf. the massive size of the ancient city of Hazor).

If, as the majority of publications assume, et-Tell was uninhabited during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, then either the narrative about the Israelite conquest of Ai is unhistorical, or et-Tell is not the city of Ai recorded in the book of Joshua. Since the two other major sites that were destroyed and burned in the early phase of the Israelite conquest under Joshua, Jericho and Hazor, exhibit fire destruction layers at the end of Late Bronze I in addition to several other lines of evidence meshing with the Joshua conquest accounts, then the narrative about the conquest of Ai should be considered as possibly historical until conclusively demonstrated to be inaccurate. Alternative, plausible options outside of the already excavated et-Tell should be evaluated as potential candidates for the site of Ai. While et-Tell does appear to satisfy the general geographic requirements, it should be noted that multiple sites in the area also fulfill at least some of those same requirements, and thus several sites have been suggested as alternative candidates for Ai. Each of these should be reviewed in order to see if any were occupied during the Late Bronze Age.

6.5 Beth-Aven and et-Tell

Although et-Tell is generally thought to be Ai, some scholars have suggested the site as the location of Beth-Aven. This connection has been suggested as a possibility by numerous scholars (Sellin 1900: 1–3; Dussaud 1937: 134–41; Albright 1939: 16–17; Kaufmann 1959: 118; Grintz 1961: 213–16; Schmitt 1980: 51–58). Beth-Aven is mentioned in the book of Joshua, although no remark is made that specifies it was occupied at that time (Joshua 7:2; 18:12). It is next mentioned in 1 Samuel, which may indicate occupation during the end of Iron Age I, but again nothing is specifically noted in the text that indicates it was an occupied city (1 Samuel 13:5; 14:23). Finally, Beth-Aven is mentioned in Hosea, which would be Iron Age II, an unoccupied period at Et-Tell, but once again nothing in the book specifies that it was an inhabited site (Hosea 4:15; 5:8; 10:5). Because the actual nature of Beth-Aven—a city, region, or landmark—

and occupational periods of Beth-Aven are unclear, assigning Beth-Aven to any tell or using it as a marker to locate Ai is unwarranted.

6.6 Bethel and et-Tell

Although Albright endorsed et-Tell as the site of Ai during the conquest, after excavations at et-Tell showed no evidence of occupation and destruction in the 13th century BCE he slightly modified his theory and claimed that the story of the conquest of Ai in the book of Joshua was actually an account of the destruction of nearby Bethel. Albright theorized "that there has been a shifting of scene from Bethel, which was actually destroyed by the Israelites in the thirteenth century B. C., to the great neighboring ruin, ha-'Ai (literally, 'The ruin')"…interpreting the account not as the conquest of Ai, but instead that "Bethel was actually sacked and destroyed in the thirteenth century B. C., at the end of a long period of Canaanite occupation and before an equally long period of Israelite occupation" (Albright 1939: 16-17). By reinterpreting the narrative, Albright sought to solve the problem of Ai by reworking the story to reflect a Late Bronze II destruction at the nearby site of Beitin. Unfortunately, this is a stretch that goes beyond any of the archaeological or textual evidence. "Albright's notion that the story was originally told about the conquest of Bethel cannot be accepted; in any case, geographically it makes no sense" (Zevit 1983: 32). Alternative sites rather than drastic literary reinterpretation should first be examined.

One of the issues in locating the proper site for Ai is also locating the proper site for Bethel. Beitin, as mentioned above, is generally considered to be the ancient city of Bethel (Kelso 1993: 192). This is primarily based upon the general geographic area, a proposed link in etymology between Bethel and Beitin, and an early identification by the explorer Edward Robinson who used the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius in an attempt to locate ancient Bethel (Kelso 1993: 192). The association of Beitin with Bethel, however, has been argued against by some archaeologists, primarily Livingston, who proposed el-Bireh as a more likely candidate for ancient Bethel (Livingston 1970: 20-44; Livingston 1971: 39-50; Livingston 1994: 154-59). The crux of Livingston's argument is based upon three points—Beitin is too far away, actually more than 12 Roman miles

from Jerusalem (per the *Onomasticon*) while el-Bireh is located where the city should be, right around the position for the 12th mile marker, a location correlating well with the distance Eusebius specified.[80] Jeroboam's Bethel sanctuary has never been discovered at Beitin, nor has any tentative evidence for it been found (including no signs of Iron II occupation); and finally the conquest accounts in Joshua and Judges never say Bethel was burned, but on the contrary specify the cities which were burned (Livingston 1970: 34-39; Kelso 1958: 3-4). While Livingston's argument brings up relevant points and is fairly convincing, the fact that no excavations have been carried out at el-Bireh weakens his theory of identification based solely on geography and the problems with Beitin (Livingston 1970: 41). Surface surveys around el-Bireh, at the acropolis at Ras et-Tahuneh, have discovered pottery from the Early Bronze, Middle Bronze, Iron I, Iron II, Roman, and Byzantine periods, with the majority coming from the Iron II period—the same period when Jeroboam built the high place and Bethel was a religious center for the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Finkelstein, Lederman, and Bunimovitz 1997: 512–13). Livingston suggests that the Ras et-Tahuneh acropolis may actually have been the location of the high place built by Jeroboam (Livingston 1994: 159; Livingston 1998: 83). However, surveys have not yet indicated any pottery from the Late Bronze Age, so el-Bireh, at least as Late Bronze Age Bethel, is currently unlikely. Livingston's questioning of Beitin as Bethel was brought about primarily in an attempt to better locate the correct site for Ai. The hypothesis that Bethel was located at el-Bireh led Livingston to suggest and excavate an alternative site for Ai, Khirbet Nisya, that accorded better with el-Bireh as the location of ancient Bethel (Livingston 2003). Wood, who has also excavated in the area in an attempt to locate a better candidate for Ai, agrees with the proposed identification of el-Bireh as Bethel (Wood 2008: 230-31). Excavations at Khirbet Nisya have ceased and final reports are available, while Khirbet el-Maqatir, the site Wood proposes may be Ai, continues to be excavated.

[80] Rather than merely distance miles, el-Bireh is approximately 12 Roman miles following the roadway from the center of Roman and Byzantine era Jerusalem.

6.7 Khirbet Haiyan

The site of Khirbet Haiyan is a small ruin near et-Tell, at the southern edge of the modern town of Deir Dibwan. Several scholars have suggested that Khirbet Haiyan could be the site of ancient Ai, but excavations and surveys there have shown this to be unlikely, if not impossible. The only recent scholar to suggest this, however, made the argument a few years before any excavating was done at the site (Grinitz 1961: 201-16). Excavations by Callaway "at Khirbet Haiyan in 1964 near the tomb of Sheik Ahmed uncovered first century Roman coins and pottery on bedrock. Not one sherd earlier than Roman was found" (Callaway 1968: 315). This same expedition excavated the site again in 1969, but no architecture earlier than the Byzantine period was discovered and the earliest datable objects were coins from ca. 68 CE, found on the bedrock (Callaway 1970: 10; Callaway 1993: 40; Wood 2008: 207). Subsequent surveys of the site discovered sherds from various earlier periods, including Early Bronze III, Middle Bronze, Iron Age, and the Hellenistic Period, but the sherds were predominantly from the Byzantine period (Finkelstein and Magen 1993: 36, 183; Kallai 1972: 178-79; Wood 2008: 207; Zevit 1983: 24). Thus, excavations and surveys, in addition to geographic studies, have essentially ruled out Khirbet Haiyan as a possibility for the ancient city of Ai.

6.8 Khirbet Khudriya

The site of Khirbet Khudriya is located only about 750 meters east of the town of Deir Dibwan (Zevit 1983: 24). Callaway also briefly excavated this site in 1966 and 1968, and found another Byzantine settlement, possibly a monastery, with some pottery and artifacts from the 1st century CE (Callaway 1969: 4-5; 1970: 10-12; 1993: 40). In fact, Khirbet Khudriya may have only been considered a candidate for Ai based on an error made by Victor Guerin, which led to its brief excavation by Callaway (Wood 2008: 209). Again, this site appears to be disqualified as a possibility for Ai since it was not even inhabited prior to the end of the Hellenistic or beginning of the Early Roman period.

6.9 Khirbet el-Hay

Perhaps the most unlikely candidate for Ai that has been explored is Khirbet el-Hay. While the modern name appears to have an etymological link, nothing else about the site qualifies it as a candidate for Ai. The site is relatively quite far from the general area of where Ai and Beitin are believed to be—approximately 7.5 kilometers southest of Beitin (Wood 2008: 208). Surveys discovered only very late material here, specifically medieval and Ottoman sherds (Callaway 1968: 315; Finkelstein and Magen 1993: 38, 195; Kallai 1972: 182). The only ancient remains uncovered in the general area of Khirbet el-Hay was a Middle Bronze IIB tomb far down the valley to the east of the site (Callaway 1968: 315). Further, "even if LB or Iron Age sherds had been discovered here, its identification with Ai would be questionable for geographic reasons (Zevit 1983: 24). Thus, both occupational periods and geographic analysis disqualify Khirbet el-Hay as a candidate for Ai.

6.10 Khirbet Nisya

A somewhat recent suggestion for the site of Ai came about as a result of archaeological and textual work questioning the site of Beitin as ancient Bethel (Livingston 1970: 20-44). This site, called Khirbet Nisya, is located 2 kilometers southeast of el-Bireh. In subsequent studies and excavations, Livingston identified this site as the most likely location of the ancient city of Ai (Bimson and Livingston 1987: 48–51; Livingston 1994: 159; 1999; 2003: 203–22). After ten seasons of excavations at the site, Livingston argues that excavations:

> have clearly shown that the site was occupied during the biblical periods when Ai was in existence. Periods of significant occupation, determined by ceramic, artefactual and architectural evidence are: Early Bronze (possibly), Middle Bronze II, Late Bronze I, Late Bronze IIB, Iron Age I and II, Persian, Hellenistic, Early Roman, Byzantine and Early Arab…Furthermore, the topography around the site matches every detail given in the account of the destruction of Ai in Joshua 7-8 (Livingston 1994: 159).

In a later article, Livingston sums up the finds from the beginning of excavations at Khirbet Nisya in 1979. He writes that “there are pottery and objects for MB II, LB I, IA I and II, and Persian” (Livingston 1999: 17). Because of these occupational periods, he argues that Khirbet Nisya was the Ai of the period of Abraham, the Conquest under Joshua, the Divided Kingdom, and the return of the exiles during the Persian rule (Livingston 1999: 17). In associating all of these periods with Ai, Livingston is arguing that the various city names that have forms very similar to the Ai recorded in the book of Joshua are all the same city. A mere 17 sherds from all 16 seasons can be positively identified as Late Bronze Age I, specifically relating to the period of the early Israelite Conquest under Joshua in which the Israelites are supposed to have attacked and burned the city of Ai; while another 22 sherds are considered to be from the more general time frame of the end of the Middle Bronze through the Late Bronze (Livingston 2003: 36–43). All of these came from fill, not from floors, walls or other archaeologically useful contexts (Wood 2008: 213). The scarcity of Late Bronze Age sherds after extensive excavations, and their discovery in fill, calls into question the extent of occupation of Khirbet Nisya during the Late Bronze Age. While the sherds do indicate occupation during the period, the data also suggests that the site was possibly no more than an isolated home or a small collection of homes, instead of a fortified city. Since Khirbet Nisya appears to be occupied, although scarcely at points, during the required periods according to accounts in Genesis, Joshua, and perhaps some of the later books of the Divided Kingdom and Persian Period, evaluation should be made of its geography, fortifications, and specific site data.

First, the geography should be addressed. Livingston begins from the point that Bethel is located at el-Bireh, according to his earlier work (Livingston 1970: 20-44; 1971: 39-50). He asserts several reasons for his choice: there is a mountain or hill between el-Bireh and Khirbet Nisya, called Jebel et-Tawil, there is a valley to the north of Khirbet Nisya, there is a ridge suitable for the ambush to the west and south of the site, and there is a descent leading down to Jericho through the Wadi Sheban and the Wadi Qelt (Livingston 1999: 15). Livingston argues that the LXX of Joshua 7:2—which makes no mention of Beth-Aven—is the correct reading, and therefore does not consider Beth-Aven to factor into the criteria for locating Ai (Livingston 1999: 16). Khirbet Nisya is in

the vicinity of el-Bireh (Bethel?), only 2 kilometers away, fitting that requirement adequately. However, Khirbet Nisya is southeast of el-Bireh rather than east, which poses a problem for its geographic identification as Ai even if el-Bireh is considered to be Bethel. If Beitin is Bethel, then Khirbet Nisya does not at all fit geographically as Ai, as it is mostly south and even slightly west from Beitin.

In addition to correlating with occupational and geographic criteria, a plausible candidate for the city of Ai during the Israelite Conquest period must also include site features such as fortifications, a size smaller than Gibeon, and a fire destruction from the Late Bronze I. Khirbet Nisya, estimated at 4 to 6 acres in size, is smaller than even lowest estimate for Gibeon during the Late Bronze Age (Livingston 2003: 12). However, as mentioned before, the Late Bronze Age finds at Khirbet Nisya were extremely limited. Therefore, it is doubtful the settlement in the Late Bronze Age was anywhere near the peak size of the site. Furthermore, there are no fortifications or a gate from the Late Bronze Age at Khirbet Nisya, and in fact there are no remnants of structures from that period at the site (Livingston 2003: 29). Livingston argues that there is no architecture earlier than the Hellenistic period at the site due to each subsequent occupational period robbing out the building stones, going down to bedrock to lay new foundations, and additionally the lack of soil accumulation means there would be very limited preservation of ancient ruins (Livingston 1999: 17-18). This is a rational explanation for smaller settlements of early time periods, yet this is not at all the norm for archaeological ruins of ancient, fortified cities in the Levant; one would expect some type of architectural remains from a city such as Ai. Since there is no in situ Late Bronze Age material and not even any architecture from the Late Bronze Age, no fire destruction could be seen at the site (Livingston 2003: 29). In fact, there are no reports of any of the Late Bronze Age pottery being burned after production.

The summary of archaeological evidence for Khirbet Nisya as a possibility for the city of Ai written of in the book of Joshua does not make the site a likely candidate. Although Khirbet Nisya is in the correct general area and some of the subjective geographical criteria can fit, the site is smaller than Gibeon, and it was occupied during the Israelite Conquest period. Under closer examination many problematic issues are revealed. First, the size of the Late Bronze settlement appears to be miniscule

according to the very few Late Bronze sherds discovered after many seasons of excavation. Second, the site may not even have a correct directional orientation to a Bethel located at el-Bireh. Third, there are no remains of fortifications or any architecture from the Late Bronze Age or even any time prior to the Hellenistic Period, which indicates that there was no fortified city at the site during the Israelite Conquest. Finally, there is no evidence of fire destruction at the site that could possibly relate to the conquest of Ai recorded in the book of Joshua. Thus, based on the lack of evidence for a Late Bronze Age city and its destruction at Khirbet Nisya, this site should also be removed from consideration as ancient Ai.

6.11 Khirbet el-Maqatir

The final site to be evaluated as a possible candidate for Ai is the only one of these sites at which excavations are presently being conducted. The site of Khirbet el-Maqatir is located approximately 1 kilometer west of et-Tell and approximately 1.5 kilometers southeast of Beitin, near the town of Deir Dibwan. The site occupies about 2.5 to 3 acres, but the Late Bronze Age settlement may be slightly smaller (Kennedy 2011: 17; Wood 2008: 230). The geography of Khirbet el-Maqatir fulfills the criteria for the city of Ai recorded in the books of Genesis and Joshua. The site is east of Beitin (Bethel?) or alternatively, according to arguments put forth by Livingston, it is east of el-Bireh (Bethel?). It is near or in the vicinity of the proposed sites for Bethel—both Beitin, 1.5 kilometers away, or el-Bireh, 3.5 kilometers away (Wood 2008: 230). Additionally there is a descent down to Jericho, a valley to the north of the site, a place for an ambush on the west side of the site, and a mountain or hill between Khirbet el-Maqatir and el-Bireh, but no mountain or hill between Maqatir and Beitin. Thus, Bethel could not be located at Beitin for Khirbet el-Maqatir to be Ai. However, as Wood suggests, the Ai of Abraham recorded in Genesis could have been located at et-Tell and then moved to Khirbet el-Maqatir in the next period (Wood 2008: 239).

The size of the site, as mentioned before, is a maximum of 3 acres. In comparison to Gibeon, Khirbet el-Maqatir is noticeably smaller, which fulfills the textual

criteria that Gibeon should be larger than Ai according to the book of Joshua. Gibeon, at a minimum of 7 acres is still over twice the size of Khirbet el-Maqatir.

Occupation of Khirbet el-Maqatir spans many different archaeological periods. The pottery sherds found at the site date to the Middle Bronze Age, the Late Bronze I, Iron Age I, Late Hellenistic, and Early Roman periods (Wood 2000b: 123-30).[81] The occupational requirements do fit for Khirbet el-Maqatir as the Ai of the Israelite Conquest under Joshua at the end of the Late Bronze I period, and possibly as the Ai of Abraham in the Middle Bronze Age.[82] However, the mentions of the city of Ai in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah indicate limited occupation during the Iron Age II and Persian period.[83] These periods have not been found at Khirbet el-Maqatir, but a general hypothesis is that the location of the city moved slightly during the Israelite Kingdom period. Et-Tell also lacks occupation during Iron Age II and the Persian Period, but the city may have relocated nearby when it was reestablished.

The finds at Khirbet el-Maqatir indicate that it was a small outpost, and not a village or large city (Wood 2000b: 123-30). The pottery consists mostly of typical day to day types such as cooking pots and storage jars, while no imported vessels have been found and only one possible cultic vessel has been discovered at the site (Kennedy 2011: 20; Wood 2008: 232-36). These ceramic finds indicate that Khirbet el-Maqatir was relatively small, poor, and off of major trade routes. One particularly interesting find was made during the 2009 season demonstrating that women lived at Khirbet el-Maqatir and it was not merely an all male military outpost, which relates to the women mentioned living at Ai (Joshua 8:25). This find was an infant jar burial, found buried beneath the floor of a building, and the cache of pottery located around the burial indicates a date of ca. 1500 BCE (Wood 2010: 14).

According to the book of Joshua, the city of Ai during the Israelite Conquest was a city with fortifications and a gate (Joshua 8:29). At Khirbet el-Maqatir, walls dating to the Late Bronze I period have been discovered on the western, eastern, and southern parts of the site, with one wall measuring up to 4 meters thick (Wood 2010: 10-12, 14-

[81] The author was a supervisor at Khirbet el-Maqatir for two seasons and has examined the various periods of pottery found at the site.
[82] Some scholars date Abraham to the end of the Early Bronze Age, while others, including the author, date Abraham to the Middle Bronze Age.
[83] The Ai mentioned in Jeremiah 49:3 is a city in Ammonite territory.

16; 2008: 230; 2000a: 68-69). The excavation director, Bryant Wood, also believes that the gate from the Late Bronze Age has been discovered, although the missing eastern half of the gate he suggests was robbed out in antiquity (Wood 2008: 230, 237; 2010: 12). However, after multiple seasons of excavations, no remnants of a wall that would have connected to the east side of the gate have been discovered, and other theories have been presented which suggest the alleged gate was not a gate.[84] Inside the chamber of the alleged gate were found 3 socket stones—two normal socket stones and an upper socket stone, and additionally two square pools lined with tesserae (Wood 2010: 11; Wood 1999b: 30). This proposed upper socket stone is a problem, as no upper socket stone for an ancient Bronze Age gate has ever been discovered in Israel, yet this piece would fit with the theory of a wine press, while the tesserae lined pools further suggest the structure was a wine press.[85] Therefore, the site appears to have fortifications from the Late Bronze Age, but it is likely that no gate has been discovered. Still, the presence of fortifications does fulfill the textual requirement of Ai as a fortified settlement.

The final criteria for the city of Ai is a fire destruction layer from the time of the Israelite Conquest under Joshua, according to the book of Joshua (Joshua 8:28). At Khirbet el-Maqatir, this is somewhat difficult to investigate because the site is not a layered tell, but a relatively flat site with a shallow layer of dirt overlaying the bedrock, and it has been exposed to weather and disturbed by agricultural activities over the centuries. Because of this, the site does not contain the same clear archaeological strata as is found at a large tell, and sherds from more than one archaeological period are often found in the same locus. However, according to the director of the site, there is some evidence of burning at the time of the end of the Late Bronze I city. This fire destruction evidence comes in the form of a few small patches of ash up to 10 cm in thickness in predominantly Late Bronze I contexts, and burned or re-fired Late Bronze I pottery (Wood 2010: 15-16; 2008: 231; 2000a: 68-69). To date, no well preserved stratigraphic layers have been discovered on the site that clearly show a fire destruction

[84] Multiple Israeli archaeologists who have visited the site all commented that they thought the gate was actually a Byzantine wine press, meaning that the Late Bronze pottery found inside the gate would be merely sherds from residual fill.

[85] This information was obtained by personal communication with Dr. Shimon Gibson while examining and discussing the site of Khirbet el-Maqatir.

from the Late Bronze Age, but at a site such as this, that type of layer should not be expected. However, the presence of burned or “re-fired” Late Bronze I pottery does allow for the possibility that the settlement was destroyed by fire in the Late Bronze I period. While there are alternative explanations for the burned pottery, such as fires from later periods and kitchen disposal pits, the exact cause is yet to be determined. To date, no thermoluminescence tests have been done.

Overall, Khirbet el-Maqatir fulfills the essential geographical requirements, occupational requirements, fortification requirements, the alleged size of the site being smaller than Gibeon, and presents some possible evidence for fire at the site from the Late Bronze I period. Briggs attempted a mathematical formula to determine the most likely site for Ai, and his results showed Khirbet el-Maqatir as the most likely candidate by far (Briggs 2005: 157-96). However, some of his excavation data about the site was incorrect and the equations were basic. One more thing should be noted about Khirbet el-Maqatir in relation to Ai. When the explorer Edward Robinson visited Khirbet el-Maqatir in 1838, the locals told him that it was the location of Ai, but he rejected this tradition because he saw only the remains of the Byzantine church and thought the site was too close to Beitin/Bethel (Robinson 1841: 126). In terms of candidate sites for Ai that have been surveyed and excavated as possible alternatives to et-Tell, Khirbet el-Maqatir is the only one that could possibly be the ancient city of Ai from the period of the Israelite Conquest.

6.12 A Solution for Ai or Site Still Unknown?

According to the textual requirements for the ancient city of Ai, found in the books of Genesis and Joshua, the only two sites that have been excavated that could possibly be Ai are Khirbet et-Tell and Khirbet el-Maqatir. These sites, however, both have their problems. While both fit the general geographical requirements, et-Tell agrees more with a Bethel located at Beitin and Maqatir agrees more with a Bethel at el-Bireh. The site of et-Tell is considered to be lacking any material from the Late Bronze Age, which poses an insurmountable problem, but there are various claimed attestations of Late Bronze Age pottery found at the site by multiple excavators and surveyors. Khirbet et-

Tell is also a large, well fortified city that would make more sense as a location in the central hill country to attack and conquer. However, since no definitive evidence of Late Bronze Age occupation and the necessary fire destruction layer has been discovered, future excavations and investigations must clarify the possibility of et-Tell as Ai. Khirbet el-Maqatir, while being occupied and fortified during the Late Bronze Age, has not revealed any definitive evidence for a fire destruction from the Israelite Conquest period. Further, the site during the Late Bronze Age may be too small to warrant an attack by invaders seeking to conquer the area. The fact remains that no ancient inscriptional evidence has been discovered anywhere in the region to illuminate which site may be the ancient city of Ai, and until that or other definitive archaeological evidence is discovered, the city of Ai and its conquest by the Israelites must remain an open question.

Chapter 7

Shechem and Dan During the Israelite Conquest Period

7.1 Shechem and Dan as Important Sites in the Israelite Conquest

Although the sites of Jericho, Hazor, and Ai are often the primary focus regarding the Israelite Conquest, the sites of Shechem and Dan also play a significant role in evaluating the historicity of the narratives in the books of Joshua and Judges. Shechem and its surrounding area are mentioned in the book of Joshua during the early part of the Israelite Conquest, but the Shechem narrative is unique because no attack on the city is mentioned, yet the Israelites are recorded as gathering there for significant events. In the period following the early Conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, the Israelite tribes were still attempting to conquer the remaining sections of the land during the period when Judges are said to have ruled the Israelites (Judges 1-21). According to the chronology put forth in a previous chapter, this period would encompass ca. 1370 to 1050 BCE—the Late Bronze II period and most of the Iron Age I period. During this time, fire destructions are recorded at Shechem and Dan. Abimelek, a self-appointed king seeks revenge on his rebellious city of Shechem. The tribe of Dan, while searching for a place to settle, destroys and rebuilds the city of Laish. Apparently a peaceful takeover by the Israelites occurred at Shechem at the end of the Late Bronze IB, in contrast to the destruction and burning of the city by Abimelek in Iron Age I; both periods at Shechem can be evaluated archaeologically. At Dan, the conquest of the city and subsequent settlement by the Israelites at the transition between the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age can be also be examined through the excavation results.

7.2 Shechem in the Book of Joshua

Although during the initial phase of the Israelite Conquest when Joshua led a campaign against many cities in Canaan, Shechem stands out not just because of its status as a major city in central Canaan, but because no mentioned is made in the book

of Joshua about an attempted attack carried out on it by the Israelites. Yet, in the book of Joshua, the Israelites are recorded as gathering at Shechem and in the area of the city-state in a peaceful manner.

> All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of Yahweh had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them (Joshua 8:33–35, NASB).

This passage in the book of Joshua claims that in the area of the Shechem city-state, which is positioned between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the Israelites and others assembled, “the stranger as well as the native (Joshua 8:33). Although Shechem is not specifically mentioned in this particular passage, the location, between the two mountains, is the area of Shechem. Albright proposed that the name Shechem originally came from a word meaning “the two shoulders,” which are the mountains Ebal and Gerizim on either side of the flat land where the city is located (Albright 1941: 18). This mention of newcomers and natives being assembled there indicates that both Israelites and at least some of the residents of the Shechem city-state gathered together in peaceful association. Later in the book of Joshua, the city of Shechem is mentioned specifically by name. “Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God…So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem” (Joshua 24:1, 25). Again there is a peaceful gathering at Shechem, as if the Israelites had either conquered the Shechem area or there had been some type of agreement made between the local rulers and the Israelites. Since Shechem is conspicuously missing from the exhaustive list of captured and conquered cities of Canaan in the book of Joshua, which includes not only narrative portions but an extensive list of thirty-one cities and kings that were supposedly conquered by the Israelites, the logical conclusion is that Shechem was not conquered by the Israelites, but an agreement for peaceful

takeover or residence was made (Joshua 12:9-24). The archaeological evidence must be examined to see if there are contradictions or points of agreement between the claims of the book of Joshua and the findings of archaeology.

Shechem has been excavated extensively enough to illuminate several archaeological periods, including those periods to which the conquests under Joshua and the Judges belong. The excavation data allows an informed look at the city of Shechem during the period that the Israelites arrived at Shechem under the leadership of Joshua. At the end of the Middle Bronze Age, prior to the Late Bronze Age period of the Israelite Conquest, Shechem was destroyed (Wright 1965: 75). There are no ancient texts that have been recovered which illuminate this destruction, although a common suggestion is that the Egyptians under Ahmose I were responsible. Following the Middle Bronze Age destruction, the fortifications at Shechem were rebuilt—specifically the East Gate, wall A, and wall B. According to the excavators, after an occupational gap of approximately a century determined by ceramic typology, the fortifications were in use from the Late Bronze I, specifically ca. 1450 BCE, until the middle of Iron Age I (Wright 1965: 76-77). About the occupation at Shechem during the Late Bronze Age to the middle of Iron Age I, Wright states that “the twelfth century witnesses the continued use and repair of the Late Bronze Age fortifications. Shechem has no evidence of a radical disturbance when Israel arrives in its area. Instead, at Shechem as at Megiddo, the end of the great Bronze Age city comes evidently during the second half of the twelfth century” (Wright 1965: 78). Instead of an attack and destruction at Shechem during the Late Bronze Age I—by Israelites, Canaanites, Egyptians, or any other group—there was building and consistent occupation. Building of Temenos 8, Fortress-temple 2a, a new brick altar, the first phase of the podium, repair and reuse of fortifications (originally built in the Middle Bronze Age), and possibly the erection of massebah 1 all occurred during the Late Bronze Age occupation at Shechem, encompassing the second half of Late Bronze I through the end of the Late Bronze Age, ca. 1450-1200 BCE (Wright 1965: 122; Campbell 1993: 1347). Just as at other Late Bronze cities in Canaan, such as Hazor and Jericho, the rebuilders of Shechem used the left over Middle Bronze fortifications. “The earliest, LB Phase 3C, represents the first steps at reclaiming the site, with the leveling and redistribution of MB

IIC destruction debris and the reuse of MB wall-lines and foundations" (Seger 1972: 23). Although there was a destruction sometime between ca. 1350 and 1300 BCE, no discovered text records what the cause may have been, and the city did not suffer an occupational gap (Campbell 1993: 1352). In a more recent survey of sites in Canaan, Dever affirms that Shechem in the Late Bronze Age had continuous occupation from ca. 1450 BCE through the rest of the period (Dever 1992: 15). This continuous occupation is in agreement with the narratives concerning Shechem in the books of Joshua and Judges—specifically that it was occupied in the Late Bronze Age to the beginning of Iron Age I, and there was no destruction in the Late Bronze I that caused a period of abandonment.

Fig 24: The massive fortress temple and walls at ancient Shechem. Photo: Titus Kennedy

Excavations indicate that Shechem during this period was quite powerful and strongly fortified. In ca. 1450 BCE "the northwest and east gates were both rebuilt, the latter with a new guard tower inside the position of the Middle Bronze Age IIC towers" (Campbell 1993: 1352). In general, finds at Shechem during the Late Bronze Age "are evidence of the strength and independence implicit in the Amarna letter portrayal of the ruler Lab'ayu" (Campbell 1993: 1352). Two important cuneiform tablets discovered at Shechem from the first half of the Late Bronze Age specifically demonstrate the power and organization of the city at the proposed time of the Israelite Conquest (Albright 1941: 18). The portrayal of Shechem in the books of Joshua and Judges is also one of

independence and power. In the book of Joshua, Shechem is not at war with the Israelites, unlike so many of the surrounding Canaanite city-states, and Joshua chooses that location as the place of assembly for the Israelite tribes. In the book of Judges, Abimelech uses Shechem as his royal city, and the city is also an important religious center.

The Israelites assembled at Shechem, but no mention of conquest of the city-state or its area by the Israelites in either Joshua or Judges is made. Wright notes that "although no mention is made of hostilities, the conquering Israelites hastened there to establish and ratify their presence in the land before the Lord their God" (Wright 1971: 575). The book of Joshua mentions no attack on Shechem, no destruction, but instead a peaceful occupation of the area. During the period into which this event would fit, ca. 1400 BCE according to the previously discussed chronology, there is no archaeological evidence of an attack or destruction at Shechem. This Late Bronze IB period corresponds to stratum XIV at Shechem (Campbell 1993: 1347). In fact, for approximately 50 years or more on each side of ca. 1400 BCE, the end of the Late Bronze I and the beginning of the Late Bronze II, archaeological data shows an undisturbed time of occupation at Shechem, which accords with the accounts in the book of Joshua (Dever 1992: 15; Joshua 8:33-35; 24:1, 25). Additionally, the Amarna Letters may affirm this time of peace at the city-state of Shechem. Amarna Letter 289 states that Lab'ayu, leader of the area of Shechem, gave territory to the Habiru. He is specifically accused of this in the letter to the Pharaoh. 'Abdi-Heba rhetorically asks, "Are we to act like Lab'ayu when he was giving the land of Šhakmu to the Ḫapiru?" (Moran 1992: EA 289: 18-24; cf. also EA 246, 254). This is affirmed in another letter, where 'Abdi-Heba reminds the Pharaoh of the wrongs of "the sons of Lab'ayu, who have given the land of the king ‹to› the 'Apiru" (Moran 1992: EA 287: 25-32). Since "Lab'ayu's own letters (252-54) are addressed to the Pharaoh Amenophis III," and EA 254 in particular is an attempt to explain away the association with the Hapiru, this indicates a time around 1400 BCE for the giving of Shechem to the Hapiru (Harrelson 1957: 6).

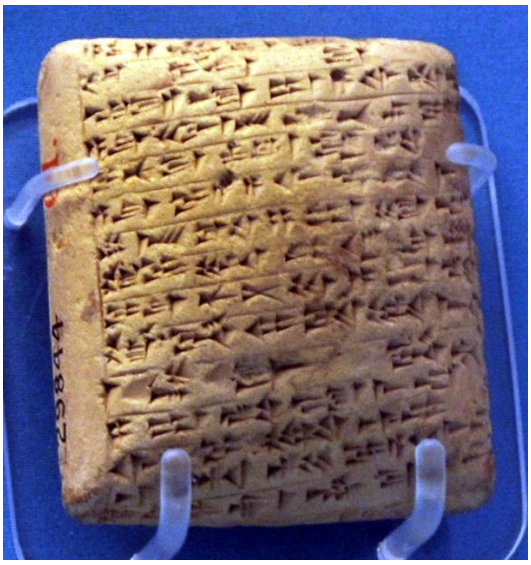

Fig 25: Amarna Letter 252 from Labayu of Shechem. The British Museum, London. Photo: Titus Kennedy

In the book of Joshua, the Israelites assemble at Shechem with natives of the area, and Joshua even appears to be in a leadership position at the city-state. Yet, there is no mention of any conquest or taking of Shechem anywhere in the book, implying an agreement or annexation of the city by the Israelites. The specific Amarna Letters recording events of the same place and time say that Shechem was given to the Hapiru, who have been linked to the Israelites in other letters that describe Hapiru who are attacking and conquering various cities and areas in Canaan at the time. Perhaps the Amarna Letters explain what the book of Joshua does not—that Shechem was peacefully given to the Israelites. At the time of the early Israelite Conquest under Joshua, at Shechem, there is recorded in the book of Joshua no hostilities and peaceful assemblies of the tribes, while the archaeological record attests to continuous occupation and no destructions at the time. The Amarna Letters record that the area of Shechem was not attacked or conquered, but instead given over to the Hapiru. Thus, there is apparent agreement between the narrative about Shechem during the early Israelite Conquest in the book of Joshua and the archaeological and ancient textual evidence.

7.3 Shechem Destroyed by Abimelech

Shechem also plays a role later on, in the period of the Judges, when the Israelites are still attempting to take unconquered parts of the land. According to the text of Judges and the archaeological data, the city-state of Shechem was still in existence. In the book of Judges, details of some architecture at Shechem are given and a destruction by a local ruler named Abimelech is recorded.

> So Gaal went out before the leaders of Shechem and fought with Abimelech. Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him; and many fell wounded up to the entrance of the gate. Then Abimelech remained at Arumah, but Zebul drove out Gaal and his relatives so that they could not remain in Shechem… Abimelech fought against the city all that day, and he captured the city and killed the people who were in it; then he razed the city and sowed it with salt. When all the leaders of the tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the inner chamber of the temple of El-berith…All the people also cut down each one his branch and followed Abimelech, and put them on the inner chamber and set the inner chamber on fire over those inside, so that all the men of the tower [fortress] of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women (Judges 9:39-49, NASB).

The book of Judges makes it clear that at Shechem, there was a temple, a fortress which may or may not be directly connected with the temple, a city gate, and then a destruction by Abimelech and his army. If the book of Judges is an historical text, and the structures actually existed and the fire destruction occurred, then these structures and the destruction layer could all be uncovered by archaeological excavation at Shechem.

One of the most obvious finds at an archaeological site is generally a destruction layer, since often the destruction layer is spread out over a large portion of the site and will be discovered almost anywhere that excavators choose to dig. At Shechem, stratum XI "suffered a massive destruction in about 1100 BCE; the artifacts representing the end of this stratum are clearly Iron Age I…Connecting stratum XI with the story underlying Judges 9 is plausible" (Campbell 1993: 1352; cf. Seger 1972: 22). Some of the specific finds from the destruction layer included "charcoal and quantities of twelfth-century pottery…from a twelfth-century destruction of the city" (Wright 1965: 102). According to one chronologist reconstructing absolute dates from the texts of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, the destruction of Shechem by Abimelek would have occurred in ca. 1117 BCE

(Merrill 1987: 170). This textual chronology agrees with the archaeological date of ca. 1100 BCE.

The city gate on the east side of the city, from the Iron I period at Shechem, has been excavated (Wright 1965: 71, 76, 78). The gate opens up to the fields of the Plain of Askar, where Abimelek may have launched his assault towards the gate (Wood 2003: 279). The temple at Shechem has been identified with the temple of El-Berith, has been designated a fortress temple, and appears to have been in use from the Middle Bronze II until the destruction of the city in Iron I (Stager 1999: 242, 245; Wright 1965: 80-102). According to the archaeological data that has been uncovered, the account of major architecture recorded in Judges 9 was accurate for Shechem of the Iron Age IA. Since both the architectural components and the destruction layer from Iron Age IA agree with the records in the book of Judges about Abimelek and Shechem in ca. 1100 BCE, and no archaeological data refutes it, this specific attack and destruction within the greater Israelite Conquest narratives appears to be an accurate historical account.

Fig 26: Remains of the gate at ancient Shechem. Photo: Titus Kennedy.

7.4 The Israelite Conquest of Dan

The city of Dan, formerly known as Laish, was located north of the Sea of Galilee in a fertile area (Judges 18:29). According to the book of Judges, the people of the tribe of Dan were still looking for a place to settle during the latter half of the Judges period, and after scouting, they decided that the city of Laish would be their best choice (Judges 18:1,9). Although this particular act of conquest against Laish is one of the most difficult to assign a date because of a lack of specific chronological data, information in the text of Judges places this event sometime between the end of the 13th century BCE and the end of the 12th century BCE.[86] Archaeologically, this encompasses the end of the Late Bronze IIB and the Iron IA. According to the book of Judges, "they [the tribe of Dan] took what Micah had made and the priest who had belonged to him, and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure, and struck them with the edge of the sword; and they burned the city with fire…And they rebuilt the city and lived in it" (Judges 18:27-28, NASB). The text of Judges claims a fire destruction of Laish, or Dan, and then a subsequent rebuilding and settlement by the tribe of Dan sometime between about 1200 and 1100 BCE.

The site of Tel Dan, located about 40 kilometers north of the Sea of Galilee, has been and continues to be excavated by Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. The site, Tell el-Qadi, was confirmed as the ancient city of Dan when an inscription naming the site was discovered in 1976 (Biran 1993: 232). In relation to the destruction of Laish recorded in the book of Judges, a fire destruction of the Late Bronze Age city in stratum VII has been discovered and dated to the early 12th century BCE (Biran 1993:326; 1994: 126). At Tel Dan, the Late Bronze Age continues into the 12th century BCE until the destruction of the city and resettlement ushers in the Iron Age and the pits, apparently used as silos, discovered in the Iron I stratum VI at the site (Martin and Ben-Dov 2007: 191; Biran 1993: 326).

However, additional archaeological data concerning the settlement following the destruction reveals additional details relevant to the claims of the book of Judges. The

[86] Cf. the earlier chapter on chronology, in which the reasons for placing the attack on Laish in this period are detailed.

Iron Age settlement was quite different from the previous Late Bronze city; it was a semi-nomadic settlement in which pits were dug throughout the site, much like Hazor in Iron Age I (Biran 1994: 126-35; 1980: 168-82). Further, ceramic evidence from this stratum, found in the pits, demonstrates that the settlers of the Iron Age city had brought large storage jars, or pithoi, from an outside area, including the collared rim type of storage jar that is typically associated with Iron Age Israelite settlement in the hill country (Biran 1989: 71-96; Yellin and Gunneweg 1989: 133-41).

Fig 27: Collared rim, Israelite storage jars from the 12th century BCE at Dan. Hebrew Union College Skirball Museum of Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem. Photo: Titus Kennedy.

This ceramic analysis indicates that the Iron Age city of Dan was settled by a new group, from another area, and that this new group was a part of the Israelite material culture. “The migration of the Danites from central Palestine is evidenced by the appearance of the large storage jars denoted Collared-Rim jars, which were common in

central Palestine but foreign to the Galilee" (Mazar 1992: 335). Thus, the destruction of Laish and the new settlement of the city by the Israelite tribe of Dan recorded in the book of Judges is attested archaeologically.

7.5 Conclusions about the Shechem and Dan Accounts

The peaceful annexation of the Late Bronze city-state of Shechem stands out as a unique event in the Israelite Conquest. The absence of any destruction during the period in which Joshua is said to have led the Israelites in their takeover of many regions of Canaan, along with the possible corroboration and insight of the Amarna Letters relating to Shechem, suggests that the account in the book of Joshua concerning Shechem agrees with the archaeological data. Although the Israelites apparently lived in the area peacefully during the time of Joshua, circumstances may have changed in the following period. The later destruction of Shechem by Abimelek opened up the site for a new era of settlement by the Israelites at the end of the Judges period. The conquest and subsequent settlement of Laish by the tribe of Dan is an important example of Israelite settlement following a site destruction during the later period of the Israelite Conquest of cities and regions in Canaan during the rule of the Judges. All three of these narratives in the books of Joshua and Judges agree with the archaeological data, and thus suggest that the accounts about the cities of Shechem and Dan are records of historical events.

Chapter 8

Conclusions Regarding the Israelite Conquest Accounts in Light of the Archaeological Data

Now that this study has evaluated the historically and archaeologically testable sections of the Israelite Conquest accounts, a conclusion about the general historical value of each of the separate accounts and the narrative as a whole may be drawn. A variety of hypotheses have been posed to explain the emergence of the Israelite culture at the end of the Late Bronze Age and beginning of the Iron Age, and as a result, various hypotheses about the origin of the Israelite Conquest narratives have also been suggested. In essence, the Israelite Conquest narratives are either mythological, etiological, or historical; that is to say, the narratives are either false, based upon some past events and geography then weaved into a fictitious story, or they record actual events at specific points in time. Since enough archaeological data at present is available, it is now possible to affirm the plausibility of the historical hypothesis and suggest it as both logical and the best explanation of the available data in the accounts examined in the books of Joshua and Judges, data that records historical events in particular places and times.

8.1 The Setting in Time and Place

In the study, the text of the Israelite Conquest narratives was read as an ancient historical text, without any presuppositions of hidden meaning or regarding the authors as attempting to promote a hidden agenda, but merely as the authors recording history from their perspective. This study began with a hypothesis asserting the accuracy of the chronological and geographical claims of the texts relevant to the Israelite Conquest period. Such a hypothesis was necessary in order to narrow the events into precise geological and chronological terms, so that the evaluations of situations and events could be bound by specific markers and the analysis could be objective. A plain, literal reading of chronological texts in the books of Joshua, Judges, and Kings, combined

with chronological data from Egypt and Assyria places the beginning of the Israelite Conquest under Joshua at the end of the Late Bronze I, in approximately 1400 BCE, and this period of conquest by the Israelites continued into the Iron Age I, in the early 11th century BCE. This chronology restricts the events of Joshua to the end of Late Bronze IB and the beginning of Late Bronze IIA, and the events of conquest under the Judges to the Late Bronze II and Iron IA periods. Geographically, the events were isolated within southern Canaan, and cities in the books of Joshua and Judges which were evaluated fit into the Late Bronze and Iron I periods of this area. Regarding the claims of the Conquest narratives that certain cities were fortified, the survey of excavations appearing in this study reveals that these cities were indeed occupied and fortified during the specified periods. It was also noted that during the proposed time in which the Israelites first began their conquest of Canaan, the city-states had been weakened by previous Egyptian incursions and domination, but that the Egyptian empire from the end of the 15th century BCE until the late 14th century BCE was uninterested in or unable to control and dominate Canaan. This weakening of Canaan prior to the Israelite Conquest is alluded to in the book of Joshua, when the author claims the "hornet," a symbol for Egypt, had been sent before. This following period was an opportune time for attacks upon the Canaanite city-states. An analysis of the plausibility of military conquest of cities and areas in Canaan suggested not only that it would have been possible for the Israelites to be successful, but that the Conquest narratives contain detailed and effective accounts of military strategy. Thus, the general setting of the narratives appears to coincide with the picture of Canaan at that time, known from archaeological excavations and ancient historical texts.

8.2 The Early Conquest under Joshua

During the initial years of the Israelite Conquest, the narratives record archaeologically significant assaults on the cities of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor, and a peaceful dominance of the Shechem area. These first three cities were supposedly burned in a destructive conflagration, which, if true, would appear in an archaeological stratum at the specific sites. However, at Shechem all was supposedly peaceful

according to the narrative in Joshua, so the analysis should show no archaeological signs of destruction or conflicts with the local population.

At Jericho, the problems addressed were the claims that the site was not occupied in the Late Bronze I, and that there were no fortifications in the Late Bronze Age. Studies of the pottery from Jericho IV instead revealed that both local and imported wares dated to the Late Bronze I. Additionally, a continuous line of Egyptian scarabs indicated occupation during the 15th century BCE. The walls rebuilt in Middle Bronze III at Jericho were argued to have been used continuously into the Late Bronze Age until the destruction and abandonment of the city. This usage of Middle Bronze Age walls in the Late Bronze Age was paralleled at several other sites in Canaan. The obvious fire destruction layer, in which Late Bronze I pottery was discovered, agreed with the fire destruction of the site ca. 1400 BCE claimed by the Jericho narrative in the book of Joshua, as did other specific details such as the mud brick wall falling outward rather than being battered inward, houses connected to the walls, and many storage jars full of grain left and burned in the destruction of the city just after the spring harvest. Thus, the archaeological findings at Jericho agree with both general and specific claims about the conquest of Jericho recorded in the book of Joshua.

The next city that the conquest narratives claim was attacked and burned was the city of Ai. Archeological evaluations of traditional Ai at et-Tell revealed that it may not have been the ancient Late Bronze Age site of Ai, or that excavations have not uncovered the Late Bronze Age city that is indicated to exist by a few findings from excavations and surveys. Alternatively, the site of Ai may be found at another location. Many have been suggested as candidates, but only one site that has been excavated in the area, Khirbet el-Maqatir, is a possibility according to the textual criteria. The question of Ai is therefore open and additional archaeological excavation and research is necessary before a more informed answer can be given.

The massive city of Hazor in the north is the third and final site that the conquest narrative in the book of Joshua claims to have been attacked and burned during the early Israelite Conquest. Archaeological excavations reveal an obvious and massive fire destruction at the end of the Late Bronze I. This destruction, however, is generally attributed to the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III because the excavators of Hazor have

attributed the late 13th century BCE destruction of Hazor to Joshua and the Israelites, and Thutmose III claims to have conquered Hazor and many other Canaanite cities during his campaigns in Canaan. The claims of Thutmose III and his son Amenhotep II to have conquered Hazor do not match up with what excavations have discovered at the site, if this conquering of Hazor implies a destruction of the city. Instead, the conquering of Hazor by the Egyptian Pharaohs is often understood to be an enforcement of subjection of a vassal to their king. Besides the fact that two successive destruction layers at the end of the Late Bronze I do not exist at the site, finds at Hazor, particularly the chronologically significant scarab of Thutmose IV, indicate that the site was continuously occupied until the end of the 15th century BCE, well after the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. Therefore, the time of the fire destruction coincides with the time that the Israelites under Joshua supposedly attacked and burned the site, but not when the Egyptians claimed to have conquered the city. Although other theories suggest the first destruction of Hazor by the Israelites occurred in the late 13th century BCE, or that the destructions on Hazor recorded in the books of Joshua and Judges are the same event, this is textually and archaeologically impossible. Joshua and Deborah are clearly separated in time by almost 200 years; two separate destructions are recorded in two separate books set in two separate historical contexts. Destructions at the end of the 15th century BCE and the end of the 13th century BCE are both attested archaeologically, and the next settlement after the destruction of the 13th century BCE final Late Bronze Age city of the Canaanites is a typical semi-nomadic silo pit Iron I type of settlement usually attributed to the Israelites—not a Canaanite city-state. Therefore, the conquest and destruction of Hazor by the Israelites under Joshua ca. 1400 BCE can only be the Late Bronze IB destruction. Additionally, information from the Amarna Letters about Hazor at this time indicates that the invaders known as the Hapiru had taken over Hazor. The best possible explanation of the available archaeological and textual data is that Hazor was conquered and burned around 1400 BCE by a group of outsiders, the Israelites, as recorded in the book of Joshua.

The occurrences at Shechem in the book of Joshua are unique in the Israelite Conquest narratives because there is no violent conquest of Shechem recorded, and yet the entirety of the Israelite tribes is said to have assembled there ca. 1400 BCE

without resistance. The excavations at Shechem demonstrate that the site was occupied and prominent in the Late Bronze IB, and that no destruction or occupational gap occurred from ca. 1450 BCE to ca. 1350 BCE or later. Letters from the Amarna archive also attest to the giving of the Shechem area to the invading group known as the Hapiru, during approximately the same time period that the Israelites would have been assembling at Shechem. Thus, the narrative about Shechem in the book of Joshua is in agreement with the archaeological and ancient textual data, suggesting that the peaceful takeover of Shechem by the Israelites was an historical event.

8.3 Later Conquests during the Rule of the Judges

According to the book of Judges, following the Joshua led conquest, much of Canaan lay unconquered, and during the following three centuries the Israelites attempted to continue their conquest of the land under the leadership of various Judges. The sites of Jericho, Hazor, Shechem, and Dan all play an important role for the archaeological evaluation of the later Israelite Conquest under the Judges.

After Jericho was destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze I, it remained unoccupied as a city until the Iron Age. However, there was a small settlement consisting of a large residence that was built at the site during the Late Bronze II period. The book of Judges narrates a story in which a man named Ehud goes to a palace of Eglon built at the site of Jericho. According to the textual chronology, this settlement at Jericho dates to the end of the 14th century BCE. Excavations at Jericho uncovered a villa, or large residence at Jericho in the late 14th century BCE, when the rest of the city was abandoned. The finds indicate that a wealthy inhabitant lived at the residence, but that it was abandoned after a relatively short period of time. This residence, because it appears to match the Judges account well, has been suggested as the palace of Eglon, indicating that the account about Ehud and Eglon in the book of Judges contains archaeologically attested material.

During the Late Bronze II period, Hazor still existed as a powerful Canaanite city. In the book of Judges, an attack and defeat of Hazor by some of the Israelites under the leadership of Deborah and Barak is recorded. The textual chronology places this event

at the end of the 13th century BCE, and archaeologically the final Canaanite city of Hazor is attacked and destroyed at this same time. Further, finds in the destruction layer such as desecrated statues of Canaanite and Egyptian gods and kings indicate that neither Canaanite or Egyptians destroyed the city, but in fact agree perfectly with commandments about the conquest of Canaan for the Israelites recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. Not only does the time and location of the late 13th century BCE Hazor destruction match the claims of the book of Judges, but the manner of destruction strongly suggests the attackers could only have been the Israelites.

During the rule of Abimelek at Shechem, in the Iron IA period, an attack and fire destruction of the city is recorded in the book of Judges. Details about the city such as a gate on the east side and a fortress temple are also recorded. The textually based chronology places this event near the end of the 12th century BCE. Excavations at Shechem revealed a city in Iron IA that had a gate on the east side, a massive fortress temple, and that this city was destroyed by fire near the end of the 12th century BCE. The details of the city and its destruction recorded in the book of Judges match with the archaeological findings, and indicate that the Abimelek destruction of Shechem was an historical event.

Sometime around the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age in Canaan, approximately during the 12th century BCE, the site of Laish, or Dan, was destroyed and resettled. In the book of Judges, the tribe of Dan is said to have migrated in search of a place to settle, investigated the city of Laish, attacked and destroyed it, and then rebuilt the city and settled there. The book of Judges places this event sometime between the end of the 13th century BCE and the end of the 12th century BCE, during the typical time when sites in Canaan were transitioning from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Besides the excavation of a Late Bronze Age city at Laish destroyed by fire and then resettled by an Iron Age I culture, the archaeological findings show that the new settlers were from another area and that their pottery was typical of the Iron Age Israelite material culture. At this site, not only does the destruction coincide with the period recorded in the book of Judges, but the archaeological data agrees with the claim in the book of Judges that the new settlers were Israelites who had migrated from another area in Canaan.

8.4 Ancient Texts Related to the Israelite Conquest

Several ancient texts from Egypt and Canaan illuminate the possibility of the appearance of Israel in Canaan and their conquest of the land during the Late Bronze Age. Egyptian texts, such as the Merneptah Stele and an undesignated stone base fragment attest to Israel as a power in Canaan in the 13th century BCE, during the end of the Late Bronze Age. Other Egyptian texts, such as Papyrus Anastasi and place name lists of Amenhotep III, Seti I, and Ramses II appear to mention Asher, one of the Israelite tribes, in Canaan. Two Ugaritic texts from the 14th century BCE even mention the name Israel, although they are unclear as to whether it is the name of an ethnic group, region, or person. Perhaps more importantly, many of the Amarna Letters relate that an invading group, designated Hapiru, is attacking and conquering many cities in Canaan, just like the Israelites. Some of these letters could even relate to specific events during the early Israelite Conquest under Joshua. These texts indicate not only that Israel was present in the land of Canaan prior to 1200 BCE, but that Canaan was invaded and partially conquered by a group of people outside of the general Canaanite culture.

8.5 Conclusion from the Composite Evidence

The record of events from the Israelite Conquest narratives match the archaeological evidence from excavations at Jericho in the Late Bronze IB, Hazor in the Late Bronze IB, Shechem in the Late Bronze IB, Jericho in the Late Bronze IA, Hazor in the Late Bronze IIB, Dan in the transition from Late Bronze IIB to Iron IA, and Shechem in Iron IA. The problem of Ai is open, and further archaeological work may reveal similar findings if the correct site is definitively located and excavated. Additionally, numerous texts from the Late Bronze Age and surveys of Canaan during the Late Bronze Age agree with the general picture of fortified cities, attacks on the Canaanite city-states, and the appearance of Israel. The agreements in frequency and detail between the conquest accounts in the books of Joshua and Judges and the archaeological data is

too extensive to be random chance or coincidence. The evidence indicates that these Israelite Conquest accounts recorded historical events, and were not merely propaganda myths or etiological legends.

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