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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

Biblical Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future

written by

John (JT) Thompson

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for completion of the
Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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Biblical Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future

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Carl Goodson Honors Program
Ouachita Baptist University
Senior Thesis

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I. Introduction

This following thesis will examine the past, present, and future state of affairs in Biblical Archaeology. I will attempt to examine the field of Biblical Archaeology by examining the history of the discipline leading up to its present state, as well as examining a current problem with future ramifications. In the Section 1 I will examine past figures in Biblical Archaeology that contributed to its growth into its modern form. I also will compare past archaeological methods to the recent methods employed by Biblical archaeologists. Next, after giving an introduction to the discipline, in Section 2 I will examine a particular site where current archaeological methods are used, Hazor. Hazor is an important site in any discussion of Biblical Archaeology because of its rich history, its connection to biblical events, and its importance to biblical archaeologists (Hazor is one of the most excavated tels in all of Israel; it has been excavated by past archaeologists [Yigael Yadin] and current ones [Amnon Ben-Tor]). Also in this section, I will examine the career of current archaeologist Amnon Ben-Tor. Dr. Ben-Tor's career is important to this discussion because he is connected with the past of the discipline (studied and worked under Yigael Yadin), to the present of the discipline (his current work at Hazor), and the future (his views against the minimalist idea of the Bible). Finally, in the Section 3 of this thesis, I will examine a current issue in archaeological writings and discussions which will have effects on the future of Biblical Archaeology, the minimalist vs. maximalist debate.

The introduction section to Biblical Archaeology is for the purpose of informing the reader of the past of the discipline, major figures, terms, and excavation methods past and present. The next section on Hazor and Amnon Ben-Tor attempts to present to the

reader a current site in the field of Biblical Archaeology, demonstrating methods used in excavation, finds, and current argued connections with archaeology and the Bible. The final section introduces the reader to a heated topic relevant to the future of Biblical Archaeology. This topic is relevant to Biblical Archaeology because of its imbedded proposal that Biblical Archaeology is essentially a worthless enterprise.

These four issues work together in this thesis in order to give the reader a basic understanding of Biblical Archaeology both past and present. The goal of this thesis is to engage the conversation of Biblical Archaeology with the hopes of laying the foundation for future research, as well as to become familiar with a field important to the biblical studies enterprise.

A. Introduction: What is Archaeology?

In this section I will examine the past history of Biblical Archaeology with particular emphasis on historical figures in the discipline. What exactly is archaeology? To some it implies romantic adventure: the search for long-lost civilizations, for the definitive interpretation of the Shroud of Turin, and for the location of Noah's ark. Others see archaeology as a thing of the past. It evokes images of khaki-clad Westerners donning a pith helmet and examining dry and dusty remains. To still others it suggests grinning skeletons, missing links, poisonous snakes, and Indiana Jones fighting off Nazis. None of these ideas come close to the truth, and they do no justice to the practice of archaeology today. One hundred and fifty years ago the notion of archaeology as adventure and glamour may have been more accurate; even serious work then was no more than mere treasure hunting. The *modus operandi* at that time was "to recover as many valuables as possible in the shortest time."¹ But what about today? What is archaeology all about?

The term *archaeology* comes from two Greek words: *αρχαιος*, which means "beginning" and *λογος*, "a word." Etymologically, therefore, it signifies a word about or study of antiquity, and this is how it was employed by ancient writers such as Plato and Thucydides.² However, the modern sense of the word "archaeology" is much different. Archaeology is the study of the material remains of the past. It is concerned with the physical, the material side of life.³ The aim of archaeology is to discover, rescue, observe, and preserve buried fragments of antiquity and to use them to help reconstruct

¹ John Currid, *Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 15.

² Currid, 16.

³ Currid, 16.

ancient life.⁴ People are the main interest of archaeology, and the objects they have created are the means through which archaeology seeks to learn about them. It is therefore clear that the beginning focus of archaeology is the period of earliest human existence.⁵ Modern, real-life archaeology is not treasure hunting; it is simply another kind of historical research. Archaeology may thus be thought of simply as a way of making inferences about “how it was in the past” by examining material culture remains.⁶

Modern archaeology might be said to have begun as early as the 17th-18th century, with the accidental discoveries of exciting relics in Europe and elsewhere. The large-scale exploration and mapping of sites and the first attempts at systematic excavation began, however, only in the late 19th century.⁷

The study of archaeology has four basic divisions: Prehistoric, Preclassical, Classical, and Historical. The archaeology of the Bible is generally understood to fall under the category of Preclassical archaeology, and to be a sub-division of Syro-Palestinian archaeology. Whereas the latter covers prehistoric times through medieval period in Syria Palestine, biblical archaeology focuses primarily on the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, and the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods in that land. Most events recorded in the Bible occurred within that temporal setting.⁸

⁴ Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 8-16.

⁵ When humans emerged is a matter of debate among scholars, as the definition of the first species that can be called human. It may therefore suffice to use a relative date for the beginning focus of archaeology, stating that it begins when tool-using and—more important—tool-using humans first emerge (Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 1).

⁶ W.G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know? And When Did they Know It?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 53.

⁷ Dever, 54.

⁸ Currid, 18-20; the chart below summarizes Currid’s analysis of the archaeological time periods.

<i>Ancient Palestine</i>
Neolithic (8500-4300 B.C.E.)
Chalcolithic (4300-3300 B.C.E.)
Early Bronze Age EB I (3300-3050 B.C.E.) EB II (3050-2600 B.C.E.) EB III (2600-2300 B.C.E.)
Middle Bronze Age MB I (2300-2000 B.C.E.) MB II (2000-1550 B.C.E.)
Late Bronze Age LB I (1550-1400 B.C.E.) LB II (1400-1200 B.C.E.)
Iron Age Iron I (1200-1000 B.C.E.) Iron II (1000-586 B.C.E.)
Persian (539-332 B.C.E.)
Hellenistic (323-37 B.C.E.)
Roman (37-A.D. 324 B.C.E.)

B. What is the Archaeology of the Bible?

In order for this introduction to be complete, we must address the issue of biblical archaeology. The relation of the Bible to archaeology is a major ingredient in the interaction of the archaeologist and the lay public, and the clarification of this issue is therefore of central importance.

As is well known, the results of excavations at “biblical” sites (mounds in the Land of Israel or Syria occupied from some time in the second millennium to the mid first millennium) arouse much public interest in the western world and in Israel in particular. Because of the special position of the Bible in our culture, the intense interest, and, at times, fervent emotions, shown by the general public far exceed the attention usually

accorded to sites in other lands or of different periods. This general interest in anything that appears to have a relation to the Bible leads to demands that are often archaeologically unacceptable.⁹ Tendencies in biblical studies sometimes appear to overshadow objectivity in interpretation.¹⁰

C. Biblical Archaeology: A Time Table

1. Beginnings

The modern archaeology of the “Holy Land,” can be said to have begun with the pioneering visits of the American biblical scholar Edward Robinson in 1838 and 1852, published as *Biblical Researches in Palestine and Adjacent Regions*. Robinson and his traveling companion Eli Smith correctly identified dozens of long lost ancient sites. The first modern maps, however, are those of Napoleon’s cartographers in 1798-99, were those created by C.R. Conder and H.H. Kitchener for the great Survey of Western Palestine, sponsored by the British Palestine Exploration Society, which also undertook the first actual field work.¹¹

In Egypt and Mesopotamia, dramatic archaeological discoveries beginning in the late 1840s soon drew attention to Palestine, largely because of the Bible. Despite the mounting interest, however, true excavations did not begin in Palestine until the brief campaign of the legendary Sir William Flinders Petrie at Tel el-Hesi in the Gaza area in 1890, followed by American work there under F.J. Bliss in 1893. It was Petrie who laid the foundations of all subsequent fieldwork and research by demonstrating, however

⁹ Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 7-8.

¹⁰ Mazar, 31.

¹¹ Dever, 54; Currid, 23-28; C.W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves and Scholars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 85-100.

briefly and intuitively, the importance of detailed stratigraphy of Palestine's complex, multi-layered tells or mounds; and the potential of comparative ceramic typology and chronology.¹²

2. Early 1900s

This first, formative era of archaeological exploration and discovery in Palestine in the 19th century was characterized by adventurism, nationalism, and competition among the colloquial powers, and growing expectations that archaeology would shed unique light upon the biblical world. Yet ancient Syria has scarcely been touched, although some archaeological exploration had begun as early as the 1860s under French scholars such as Ernest Renan.¹³

The first two decades of the twentieth century constituted a "golden age" in biblical archaeology, one that saw the first large-scale staffed and funded field projects. None of these excavations, however, demonstrated more than the rudiments of stratigraphy. Pottery chronology was off by centuries; and the publication volumes, although sometimes lavishly illustrated, are largely useless today; work marred by biblical or national biases.¹⁴

Archaeological projects were brought to a halt by the onset of World War I, but

¹² Dever, 55; Interesting as well is the fact that Petrie is also known as the father of Modern Egyptology.

¹³ Dever, 55.

¹⁴ For a more detailed critique of early work in Palestine, see W.G. Dever, "Syro-Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (Chicago: Scholars, 1985), 31-74.3.

the foundations of biblical archaeology had been laid. Nevertheless, neither an academic discipline nor a profession had yet emerged in this second, formative period.¹⁵

3. The Golden Age and William F. Albright

Following the corrupt bureaucracy of Ottoman Turkish rule, Palestine was turned over to a British mandate in 1918 at the close of World War I. The British government opened a Department of Antiquities, promulgated modern antiquities laws, and undertook the first systematic, comprehensive program of archaeological investigation of the entire area, including Transjordan.¹⁶ During the ensuing period the foreign schools in Jerusalem flourished. This was particularly true of the American School of Oriental Research (founded in 1900), which now dominated the field under the direction of William F. Albright.¹⁷

The American scholar W.F. Albright represents what may be regarded as the “Golden Age of Biblical Archaeology” (1925-1948). For almost 50 years after his first visit to Palestine in 1919, Albright produced an amazing corpus of writings touching on history, archaeology, ancient Near Eastern studies, epigraphy, and more that linked the general disciplines of archaeology and biblical research.¹⁸ In the years before Albright, the archaeology of Palestine played little or no part in the biblical/historical controversies

¹⁵ Thomas E. Levy, “Archaeology and the Bible,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 91-92; Dever, 56.

¹⁶ An expression derived from Hebrew *br hyrdn* (e.g., Josh. 12:1; Num. 34:14-15), variously translated “beyond the Jordan,” “the other side of the Jordan.” While technically the term refers to the opposite side of the Jordan River from the perspective of the observer, it has come to be associated almost exclusively with the region east of the Jordan Rift Valley from Mt. Hebron in the north to the Gulf of Aqabah/Elath in the south.

¹⁷ Dever, 56.

¹⁸ Levy, 92.

generated by Julius Wellhausen and the school of higher criticism.¹⁹ Albright became the most important archaeological player in the debate by enlisting new data, primarily from texts found in excavations in other Near Eastern countries. He used the broadest definition of “biblical archaeology,” encompassing all lands mentioned in the Bible and thus coextensive with the “cradle of civilization.” For Albright, excavations in every part of this broad region shed light, directly or indirectly, on the Bible.²⁰

Albright’s training was in Assyriology and historical/biblical studies rooted in German scholarship. As a self-taught archaeologist, he quickly linked this field with historical geography. During his formative years in Palestine he developed not as a biblical archaeologist but rather a cultural historian, seeking to transform biblical archaeology into the history of the Eastern Mediterranean, understanding biblical literature as belonging to an environment of cultures.²¹

The power of Albright’s intellect as reflected in his prolific writings had an enormous impact on scholarly discourse from the early 1920s until his death in 1971. Surprisingly, he had little archaeological field experience. His reputation as an archaeologist is based on his important excavations at Tel Beit Mirsim, a small tel²² in the southern Shephelah. His analysis of the pottery and stratigraphy from the site clarified the chronology of the Middle Bronze, Late Bronze and Iron Ages—those periods most closely linked with the Old Testament—and represents one of the pillars on which relative archaeological dating

¹⁹ L.E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 260 (1985): 1-35.

²⁰ Levy, 92.

²¹ Mazar, 12-13; Levy, 93.

²² A mound consisting of debris from cities built on top of one another on the same site.

in Palestine rests.²³ Albright's command of so many disciplines gave his voice an authority which few questioned during his lifetime. His expertise in such diverse fields as Akkadian, Hebrew, the Old Testament, Near Eastern Studies, history, religion, historical geography, and archaeology provided a model for the first generation of Israeli and American scholars of what should constitute a thorough grounding in biblical archaeology.²⁴

It was Albright who became known as the "Father of Biblical Archaeology," through his unparalleled mastery of the pottery of Palestine, of the broad ancient Near Eastern context in which the results of Palestinian archaeology needed to be placed to illuminate them properly, and of the vast scope of biblical history with which individual discoveries often seemed to correlate. Through his genius, his towering status, his own excavations and his innumerable disciples, Albright dominated "biblical archaeology" from early 1920s through the 1960s. A transitional figure, Albright and his disciples were responsible for most of the older American generation still working in the field today.²⁵

4. 1930s-1970s

The third phase in the evolution of archaeology in Palestine began after the 1948 Israeli war of independence, when Palestine was divided between the states of Jordan and Israel. Subsequent developments in archaeological study did not run along parallel lines.²⁶

²³ Mazar, 12-13.

²⁴ Levy, 92.

²⁵ Dever, 57.

²⁶ Mazar, 14.

In Jordan, most of the initial work was carried out by foreign expeditions. There are three names to mention when discussing these years in the archaeological activity in Jordan: Nelson Glueck, George Ernest Wright, and Kathleen Kenyon.

Perhaps more than any other, Nelson Glueck represents the archetypal Biblical archaeologist. His view of archaeology in the Holy Land focused more narrowly on two sets of data—the Bible and surface surveys of sites in eastern and western Palestine. Nevertheless, Glueck's contribution to the field, particularly in the study of settlement patterns cannot be minimized. From 1932-1947 he undertook a series of incredible one-man archaeological surveys in Transjordan. He constructed maps of settlement distributions, period by period, based on characteristic types of pottery collected on the surface. He later conducted the same type of surveys in the Negeb desert. However, Glueck had relatively little experience as an excavator, working only at two significant sites, the Nabatean temple at Khirbet el-Tannur and Tel el-Kheleifeh.²⁷

Next, a student of W.F. Albright, George Ernest Wright, continued to carry the mantle of Biblical archaeologist from the early 1950s to the 1970s. Although his early work was rooted in archaeology, having written an important thesis offering the first systematic pottery typology for Palestine, Wright's greater interest in theology characterized his later career and made significant impact on American scholars' understanding of Palestinian archaeology. For Wright, the role of archaeology was to expose the historical basis of the Christian faith and to demonstrate how revelation had come through history. To this end, he founded the journal *Biblical Archaeologist*, in part to raise popular support for archaeology in Syro-Palestine. Wright's greatest contribution as an excavator was his work at Shechem (1956-1966), regarded as a watershed in

²⁷ Levy, 93.

American archaeology for introducing a pedagogic method of field school and data recording that influenced a generation of American archaeologists and subsequently Israeli scholars as well.²⁸

Finally, Kathleen Kenyon, “the first lady of archaeology,” excavated sites during this time period at Jericho (1952-1958) and in Jerusalem (1961-1967). At Jericho, Kenyon introduced the British methods developed by M. Wheeler and others; these methods eventually brought about a change in excavation techniques throughout the country.²⁹ Kenyon’s technique stressed the stratification of the site.³⁰ In other words, her methodology emphasized the vertical dimension by analyzing the various earth layers and their contents.³¹ Prior to her work, archaeologists utilized the architectural method, which aimed at wide-scale exposure of complete buildings. The consequences of what has come to be known as the Wheeler-Kenyon method were revolutionary. The leaving of a balk³², for example, provided a third dimension in an excavation area. That component allowed the archaeologist to view what had been excavated, and to see how the current level of excavation compared with what went before. This methodology also gave a great element of control over the excavation area.³³

For the Israelis, archaeological activity started just after the foundation of the state in 1948. The first excavation was directed by Benjamin Mazar at Tel Qasile (1948-1951,

²⁸ Levy, 93.

²⁹ Mazar, 14.

³⁰ Currid, 32.

³¹ Mazar, 23-24.

³² An unexcavated section left standing between the squares of an archaeological dig to record the relationship of soil layers.

³³ Currid, 32-33.

1956) on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. Thenceforth, the field developed rapidly, mainly due to the work of Israeli archaeologists, but also under the impetus of foreign excavations. The Israeli founders of biblical archaeology—scholars such as B. Mazar, Sh. Yeivin, Y. Yadin, N. Avigad, and Y. Aharoni—were to a great extent followers of Albright in their approach to the role of archaeology in relation to biblical history and historical geography as integrated disciplines. The extensive excavations at Hazor between 1955 and 1958 by Yadin were a workshop for a whole generation of young Israeli archaeologists. Dozens of major projects have been carried out by archaeologists working in five universities in Israel, in Department of Antiquities, in the Israel Museum, and in other local museums and institutions. Aside from the Israeli expeditions, various foreign scholars conducted excavations in ancient sites of Israel. Among these excavations, the expedition at Gezer gained a particular importance as the field school for a group of American archaeologists, some of whom later developed projects of their own. Cooperation between Israelis and foreign scholars in joint projects became a common feature, leading to the merging of different traditions in the methodology of fieldwork.³⁴

5. Modern Archaeology

By the 1970s, the initial efforts to excavate mounds in the Middle East with proper stratigraphic (or “three dimensional”) methods were being supplemented by newer field and analytical methods. Perhaps the most typical aspect of modern biblical archaeology in practice was interdisciplinary in character.³⁵ This approach, now commonplace on almost all modern excavations, includes such disciplines as geomorphology and geology, paleo-botany and paleo-zoology, climatology and paleo-ecology, hydrology, physical and

³⁴ Mazar, 26-27; Currid, 33; Levy, 93.

³⁵ Dever, 59.

cultural anthropology, the history of technology, and any number of other specialized branches of the natural and social sciences.³⁶

Newer techniques for analyzing excavated materials include the following: radiocarbon and other chronometric means of dating; neutron activation analysis to “fingerprint” the sources of clays for pottery making and thus to trace trade patterns; gas chromatography analysis to determine residues present; “use-wear” analysis of objects using high powered electron microscopes to define manufacturing techniques, function and reuse; and, more recently, DNA analysis to identify the relationships between ancient populations and possibly even their long-distance migrations. Technical devices that aid immensely in field excavation and in the examination of materials for publication now include: aerial photography and mapping; geographical information systems which can model ancient landscapes in detail; electrical-resistivity surveying and ground-penetrating radar; laser transits, which greatly simplify surveying; a whole range of photographic techniques, including digital systems; and a vast array of computer-based systems of recording, data-retrieval, manipulating models, preparing graphics, and even final publication.³⁷

Recent years have also seen joint cooperation between archaeologists from different countries. Joint projects between Israeli and American scholars are common. For example, the excavation at Tel Michal was directed by Ze’ev Herzog of Tel Aviv University and James Muhly of the University of Pennsylvania (1977-1980).³⁸

³⁶ The excavations at Gezer (1964-1973) under G.E. Wright, William Dever and Joe D. Seger were the first in Palestine to involve multicultural studies. The multicultural approach adopted there was soon emulated by the excavations at Beersheba (1969-1975), Tel el-Hesi (1970-), Caesarea (1971-), Lachish (1972-) and Ashkelon (1985-) (Curid, 33).

³⁷ Dever, 59-60.

Another direction of current archaeology is the regional approach. That is, archaeologists study not only a mound but also its surroundings and environment. This approach provides a comprehensive archaeological context for the site being excavated. Only then can a proper analysis of settlement be achieved. It is likely that the regional approach began with Aharoni's work at Beersheba.³⁹

Finally, archaeology in Palestine is more extensive and demanding today than it used to be. Many types of excavations occur nowadays. Not only tels are dug, but many small-scale excavations are undertaken. Salvage excavation is occurring at an unprecedented rate. Major surveys of the land continue. This has all led to information explosion. How the discipline of archaeology will deal with it is a question yet to be resolved.⁴⁰

The development of modern biblical archaeology since the early 1970s has radically transformed all branches of archaeology today. However, the rapid progress of archaeology—once called the “handmaiden of history”—toward independent professional and academic status, a full-fledged discipline of its own, has not been greeted with enthusiasm in all quarters. It had been assumed all along that archaeology had been an ancillary discipline (from Latin *ancillaries*, “maidservant”), or a sub-branch of history. Today, however, many archaeologists regard themselves primarily as anthropologists, or even as full-fledged scientists whose methods, aims, theory-testing and generation of knowledge scarcely differ from the “laws of behavior” of natural

³⁸ Currid, 34.

³⁹ D. Ussishken, “Where is Israeli Archaeology Going?” *Biblical Archaeologist* Vol. 45, No. 2 (1982):93-95.

⁴⁰ Currid, 34.

scientists.⁴¹ Needless to say modern archaeology has come a long way since its “Bible-informed” years in the discipline’s beginning.⁴²

D. Archaeology and the Bible

The attitude of the public to the Bible is divided; at one end of the spectrum stand those who see the scriptures as the word of God. The Bible is thus divine creation and must be accepted literally. At the other end stand those who consider the Bible a human creation that suffers from the limitations of all human creations. It must therefore be considered and judged according to the same standards generally applied to other literary texts. Between the two extremes lie the points of view that attribute to the scriptures a greater or lesser measure of divine inspiration.⁴³

In any case, the broad consensus is that the Bible cannot be viewed in a monolithic manner; rather, it is made up of different literary genres such as prophecy, psalmody, wisdom literature, and historiography, originating in different periods and social backgrounds. The portions of biblical historiography of special interest to biblical archaeology (in the Bronze and Iron Ages) are the patriarchal narratives, the story of the conquest and settlement of Israel, and the history of the Israelite kingdoms.⁴⁴ It should in this context be emphasized that there is no objective history; written history always reflects the author’s point of view and is intended to convey or promote a certain message. The fundamental message of biblical historiography is that all events reflect

⁴¹ Dever, 60.

⁴² Amihai Mazar best states this trend in modern archaeology: “Current archaeological research in Palestine tends to be professional, secular and free from theological prejudices” (Mazar, 32).

⁴³ Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 8

⁴⁴ Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 8

God's will and that anything that befalls the individual or the community can only be the result of the relations between Israel and God; thus, Sennacherib fails to conquer Jerusalem because Hezekiah prays to God, and God answers his prayers (2 Kings 19:8-36). It is the angel of God who smites the Assyrian camp and causes the siege to be lifted. The version of this story told by the Assyrian annalist was quite different.⁴⁵

Next, to the attitude of archaeologists to the biblical text. One may take as an example two radically different approaches, as expressed in the statements of intent of two research institutions founded over a century ago; the first, the Palestine Exploration Fund, was founded in Great Britain in 1865. The aim of the Fund, in the words of its founders, was "the accurate and systematic investigation of the archaeology, topography, the geology and physical geography, the manners and the customs of the Holy Land, for biblical illustration."⁴⁶ In contrast, the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Society, founded in New York five years later, defined their aim as "the illustration and *defense* [emphasis added] of the Bible." "Modern skepticism," they added, "assails the Bible at the point of reality...Hence whatever goes to verify Bible history as real...is a refutation of unbelief...The Committee feels that they have in trust a sacred service for science and for religion."⁴⁷

The viewpoint here adopted by the founders of the American society is, in prestigious Israeli archaeologist Amnon Ben-Tor's opinion, the root of all evil as far as the discipline of biblical archaeology is concerned: terms such as "defense" and "verification" of the

⁴⁵ Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 8

⁴⁶ C. R. Conder and H. H. Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine: Memoirs of the Topography, Orography, Hydrography and Archaeology*, 3 Vols., 1970 reproduction (Jerusalem: Kedem Publishing): 3-34.

⁴⁷ W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 103-107.

Bible, all in the service of religion (although the founders of the P.E.F. stated that in no case was the fund to be administered as a religious institution), are completely out of place.⁴⁸ Does religion need to be defended? Can biblical truths be proven? What has all this to do with religious belief? In any event, this approach was adopted by not a few scholars, more important, it prescribed the level of public expectation from archaeological research.⁴⁹

Amnon Ben-Tor states, “It would be impossible to estimate the amounts of money and human energy wasted in such futile efforts as the searches for Noah’s Ark on Mt. Arat⁵⁰, the tomb of Moses at Mount Nebo, Pharaoh’s hordes in the Sea of Reeds, or the remains of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Dead Sea, all fueled by an irrational impulse to prove the historical authenticity of the biblical narrative. Surely the substance of a tale such as Sodom and Gomorrah lies in the punishment of the wicked, the reward of the righteous, and Abraham’s negotiation with God to prevent the punishment of the just with the wicked; the Bible uses the tale of Sodom and Gomorrah to transmit this eternal message. Can it be any way impaired should it transpire that Sodom and Gomorrah never existed but were invented as a parable? Or alternatively, would the message be clearer and of greater importance if those cities were to be found and proof was discovered of their existence?”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 8-10.

⁴⁹ Currid, 33-35.

⁵⁰ For a detailed history on the search for Noah’s ark, as well as the continued search in light of scientific evidence, see William Ryan and Walter Pitman, *Noah’s Flood: The New Scientific Discoveries About the Event that Changed History* (NY, NY: Touchstone, 1998).

⁵¹ Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 9.

This desire to find “proof of faith” through archaeology leads to the fact that a considerable proportion of the archaeologists active in the land of Israel over the past one hundred years have come from the religious establishment. Many of them received a large part of their education at various theological seminaries, while their archaeological training was often deficient. This is particularly evident among American archaeologists; William G. Dever has estimated that over 80 percent of the researchers affiliated with the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem since its foundation in 1900 came from within the religious establishment. He has also estimated that the same proportions existed within archaeological expeditions such as those of Shechem, Gezer, and Ai. Among the German and French archaeologists there was also a considerable proportion of theologians, though not as high as among the Americans; the fact remains that the umbrella organization of French archaeologists in the Land of Israel is controlled by the Dominican Fathers and that of the Germans by the Evangelical Church. In contrast, not one major British or Israeli archaeological figure has been a member of the religious establishment.⁵² Dever uses this example to show that a archaeologist with no presuppositions is ideal.

E. Biblical Archaeology or Syro-Palestinian Archaeology?

This state of affairs has given biblical archaeology a reputation for amateurism in some archaeological circles. Modern scientific excavation is so complex that those who have not received adequate training cannot conduct one properly.⁵³ The most successful American excavation before World War I, the Harvard Samaria Expedition, was far

⁵² W.G. Dever, “Retrospectives and prospects in biblical and Syro-Palestinian archaeology,” *Biblical Archaeologist* (1982) 45: 103-107.

⁵³ Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 9.

ahead of its time in its fieldwork, recording, and publication, a precocity attributed to its sponsorship by an expressly secular institution.⁵⁴ Thus, in recent years, the call has gone forth by W.G. Dever to sever archaeology from the Bible and to abandon the term “biblical archaeology.” This suggestion reflects the tendency to abandon the theological approach of traditional biblical archaeology in favor of a secular, professional approach which defines the archaeology of the Levant⁵⁵ as a specific branch of world archaeology with its own methods and goals.⁵⁶ One can fully agree with Dever’s analysis of the past nature of biblical archaeology and the changes that passed over this field of research during the last decades. The call for a professional approach to archaeological research is fully justified, as archaeological research today is a strict discipline with developed techniques and methodology. However, as Dever himself admits, the mutual relationship between biblical studies and the archaeology of the Land of the Bible continues to inspire scholars in both the field of archaeology and that of biblical/historical studies. The implications of archaeological research for biblical studies and history are sometimes of prime importance. The new questions and subjects raised by modern archaeological research of the Bronze Age and Iron Ages in Palestine gain a special flavor and interest

⁵⁴ M. Broshi, “Politics, ideology, and their impact on Palestinian archaeology,” *Israel Museum Journal* (1987) 6: 17-32.

⁵⁵ A designation for the lands of the eastern Mediterranean, primarily Asia Minor and Syria-Palestine but often the entire coastlands from Greece to Egypt.

⁵⁶ W. G. Dever, *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980), 1-15; idem, *Biblical Archaeologist* 45 (1982), 103-107. For the most comprehensive presentation of Dever’s view see his paper in G.A. Knight and G. M. Tucker’s, *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpretation* (Philadelphia, 1985) 31-74. Opposing his view, see H. D. Lance, *Biblical Archaeologist* (1982) 45:97-101; Yigael Yadin, *Biblical Archaeology Today* (Jerusalem, 1985):21-27; H. Shanks, *Biblical Archaeology Review* (1987) Vol. 13, Num. 2: 54-57; Amnon Ben-Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 9.

when studied in relation to the biblical text and extrabiblical documents. In that sense, “biblical archaeology” is still a justified term for this field of inquiry.⁵⁷

After laying a foundation for the study of Biblical Archaeology. This thesis will now examine a current site of excavation and show methods employed, site work, and finds unearthed.

II. Hazor and Amnon Ben-Tor

In this section I will examine the archaeological site of Hazor and its archaeologist Amnon Ben-Tor. I will use Hazor and Dr. Ben-Tor as examples which demonstrate the current field of Biblical Archaeology.

A. Hazor⁵⁸

1. Location

The Biblical city of Hazor was a site of Canaanite and Israelite settlement. Known as Tel el-Qedah⁵⁹ in Arabic, Hazor is the largest biblical era site in Israel. The name Hazor may mean “enclosure” or “settlement” and was therefore, not a unique place name in ancient Canaan. The most important settlement known as Hazor, however, was the fortified site in Naphtali identified with Tel el-Qedah, which is located about eight miles north of the Sea of Galilee. The site comprises a more-or-less oval-shaped tel nearly 2,000 feet in length and, north of this mound, a very large rectangular plateau about 2,300 feet wide and 3,300 feet long.⁶⁰ The site consists of the areas of the acropolis or

⁵⁷ Mazar, 32-33. Contra. Dever, 60.

⁵⁸ See Plate I

⁵⁹ It was first identified by J.L. Porter in 1875 as Tel el-Qedah, based on geographic references to Hazor in the Bible and in the works of Josephus. The name Hazor is mentioned in a clay tablet from the Old Babylonian period found at the site in the 1970s (Amnon Ben-Tor, “Hazor,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. Eric Meyers, Vol. 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997):1.

compound of administrative palaces (upper city), and, to the north, the fortified enclosure (lower city) measuring some 175 acres. Covering roughly 200 acres, Hazor is four times the size of Lachish, Israel's second largest site.⁶¹ It was approximately ten times the size of Jerusalem in the days of David and Solomon.⁶²

Hazor lies at the foot of the Galilee mountain range eight miles north of the Sea of Galilee. This location allowed the city to dominate a main branch of the "Way of the Sea" or *Via Maris* as known in later centuries. The commercial and military road led from Egypt to Mesopotamia through Syria and the Hittite region (or modern Anatolia). As a major trade route the *Via Maris* accommodated merchants traveling to and from Babylon during the second millennium B.C.E.⁶³ Hazor stood at the crossroads of the main trade routes from Sidon to Beth-Shan and from Damascus to Megiddo. It thus occupied the most strategic position in the region.⁶⁴

2. Biblical Hazor

The strategic position of Hazor mentioned above is indicated by the prominence which Hazor receives in the story of the settlement of the land in the Bible. Joshua 11 describes the "northern campaign" of Joshua, provoked by the coalition of the Northern cities under the leadership of Jabin, the king of Hazor, to oppose the Israelites. Hazor is said to be "the head of all those kingdoms" (Joshua 11.10) and is destroyed by Joshua, it

⁶⁰ Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, Vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 165.

⁶¹ "Hazor," www.bibarch.com/ArchaeologicalSites?Hazor.htm.

⁶² "The Tel Hazor Excavation Project," www.unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/history.htm

⁶³ "The Tel Hazor Excavation Project," www.unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/history.htm.

⁶⁴ Jefferies M. Hamilton, "Hazor," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Vol. 3 (New York, New York: Doubleday): 87.

is the only one of the Northern cities said to receive such retribution (Joshua 11.13). Hazor appears in the list of conquered cities (Joshua 12.19) and, as stated earlier, is assigned to the tribe of Naphtali (Joshua 19.36).⁶⁵

Hazor resurfaces as a source of trouble for Israel in Judges 4, where “Jabin, King of Canaan” threatens Israel by means of his army led by Sisera (Judg. 4.2, 17), a threat overcome by the prophetess and judge, Deborah, and her military counterpart, Barak. This episode is recounted by Samuel in his farewell address to the nation (see 1 Sam. 12.9).⁶⁶ Later Hazor is refortified by Solomon (1 Kings 9.15) and is destroyed by Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria ca. 733 B.C.E. during the reign of Pekah (2 Kings 15.29). Finally, the Maccabean warrior, Jonathan, defeated the Seleucid governor Demerits II on the “plains of Hazor” (see 1 Macc. 11.67).⁶⁷

Scripture Summary

- Joshua destroyed and burned the city of Hazor following his victory over the league of northern Canaanite cities at the “waters of Merom” (Josh. 11.1-11).
- Hazor was assigned to the tribal territory of Naphtali (Josh. 19.39).
- Deborah delivered Israel from the oppression of Jabin, king of Hazor and his general Sisera (Judges 4-5).
- Solomon rebuilt Hazor and fortified it (1 Kings 9.15).
- The city of Hazor was captured and destroyed for the last time by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III in 733 B.C.E. (2 Kings 15.29).

⁶⁵ Hamilton, 87.

⁶⁶ Hamilton, 87.

⁶⁷ Hamilton, 87.

3. Excavations at Hazor

Trial surroundings were first made at Hazor by John Garstang in 1928. Large scale excavations were conducted by the James A. de Rothschild Expedition between 1955 and 1958 and again in 1968, under the direction of Yigael Yadin, on behalf of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA), and the Anglo Israel Exploration Society. A small-scale trial excavation occurred at the southeastern foot of the mound in 1987, under the direction of Amnon Ben-Tor. Large-scale excavations directed by Ben-Tor, the Hazor Excavations in memory of Yigael Yadin, were resumed in the upper city in 1990 and continue to the present. This current project is a joint venture of the Hebrew University; Complutense University, Madrid; and the Israel Exploration Society, in cooperation with Ambassador University, Texas.⁶⁸

4. History

The earliest reference to Hazor, as *hdwizi*, appears in the Egyptian Execration texts of the late twelfth to early thirteenth dynasties (nineteenth-eighteenth centuries B.C.E.). It is in the Mari archives of the eighteenth century B.C.E. that Hazor emerges as a major city.⁶⁹ Of the nearly 25,000 cuneiform tablets discovered at least fourteen Mari documents refer to the city (as *Ha-su-ra*, *Ha-su-ra-a*, or *Ha-sura-yu*), the only one in Israel to be mentioned in that archive.⁷⁰ Hazor's role as one of the major commercial centers in the Fertile Crescent, together, with such city states as Yamhad and Qatna, is

⁶⁸ Ben-Tor, *Oxford*, 1.

⁶⁹ "Hazor," www.bibarch.com/ArchaeologicalSites?Hazor.htm

⁷⁰ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* Vol. 25, Issue 3 (May/June 1999): 22-39.

evident. The name of the king of Hazor, Ibni-Adad, appears several times in the documents.⁷¹

In these 18th century B.C.E. documents, we read of ambassadors coming and going from Hazor and of caravans, laden with gold, silver, textiles, and various other commodities, traveling to and from the city. One tablet informs us that Babylon stationed officials in Hazor: “Two messengers from Babylon who have long since resided at Hazor, with one man from Hazor as their escort, are crossing to Babylon.” Another tablet records several shipments of tin (used in making bronze) to the king of Hazor: “30 minas tin, for Ibni-Addu king of Hazor...20 minas tin for Ibni-Addu for the second time...20 minas tin for Ibni-Addu for the third time.”⁷²

Another group of documents mentioning Hazor (as *Ha-su-ri*) and its king, Abdi-Tirshi, is the Amarna letters of the mid-fourteenth century B.C.E. It also is included, as *hdr*, in the lists of conquered towns in Canaan compiled by the pharaohs of the New Kingdom, such as those of Thutmose III, Amenophis II, and Seti I. The latest Egyptian reference to Hazor is in Papyrus Anastasi I, ascribed to Rameses II.⁷³

As stated earlier, Hazor is mentioned several times in the Hebrew Bible in connection with the conquest and settlement accounts, first in Joshua and then in Judges.⁷⁴ The two latest references to Hazor are made in 1 Maccabees 11.67 and in Josephus (*Antiq.* 5.199).⁷⁵

⁷¹Ben-Tor, *Oxford*, 1.

⁷²Amnon Ben-Tor, “Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?” 25.

⁷³Hyun Chul Paul Kim, “Hazor,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 560-561.

⁷⁴The apparent contradiction between these two sources with regard to the process of the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites in general, and to the history of Hazor during that time in particular, has been

5. Excavation Results

Excavation has revealed that there is a difference in the history of occupation for the lower and upper cities. For this reason, the strata encountered in the upper city, where six areas were opened, were designated by Roman numerals, while those in the lower city, where seven areas were opened were designated by Arabic numbers.⁷⁶

Hazor was first settled in the Early Bronze Age, but only in the upper city. The lower city was not occupied until the second millennium B.C.E. For most of the second millennium the upper and lower cities existed side by side as one city. Toward the end of the Late Bronze Age, both the upper and lower cities were violently destroyed. Following that destruction, occupation was confined once again to the upper city, until Hazor was finally deserted in the second century B.C.E.⁷⁷

A. Bronze Age

1. History

Hazor was first occupied from EB II without interruption into EB III (ca. 2500-2300 B.C.E.). Remains from these strata and EB IV/MB I (2300-2200 B.C.E.) exhibits affinity with Syria and are confined to the upper city.⁷⁸ Bronze Age Hazor is mentioned on several occasions in external records: it is first mentioned in the 19th century B.C.E. in

one of the most controversial subjects in the study of the history of ancient Israel as well as in the understanding of the books of Joshua and Judges.

⁷⁵ Ben-Tor, *Oxford*, 1.

⁷⁶ Kim, 560-561; Ben-Tor, *Oxford*, 1.

⁷⁷ Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: The Head of All Those Kingdoms* (London, 1972), 87.

⁷⁸ Kim, 561.

Egyptian Execration texts. Hazor is the only Canaanite site mentioned in the archive in Mari (see above).⁷⁹

During the Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1900-1550 B.C.E.) Hazor became one of the great Canaanite cities, comparable in size to important centers of the day including Qatna, Ebla, and Mari. MB IIB (1800/1750-1650 B.C.E.) shows a substantial buildup, with massive fortifications in the upper and lower city. Also, its king, Ibni-Addu (meaning “Son of Hadad,” the Canaanite storm god and perhaps the patron deity of Hazor), played an important role in the politics of the Fertile Crescent.⁸⁰

Inhabited for the first time, the lower city increased the settled area by tenfold. While Garstang interpreted the lower city as an enclosed infantry or chariot camp, Yadin’s excavations demonstrated that it was a city proper with temples, public buildings and domestic structures. The foundation of the lower city at Hazor around 1800 B.C.E. was one of the most important phenomena of this period. Hazor is a superb example of grand-scale town planning. Its total area (Upper and Lower City), almost two hundred acres, was unrivaled in the history of Palestine, and it was to remain the largest city in the country until the thirteenth century B.C.E.⁸¹

Four gates of “Syrian” direct axis style allowed access to the city. In MB IIC (1660-1550) strata were found a wealth of buildings, most noteworthy those of a cultic

⁷⁹“The Tel Hazor Excavation Project,” www.unixware.msc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/history.htm

⁸⁰ Amnon Ben-Tor, “Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?” 22-39; We know this from cuneiform records discovered in the palace of the city of Mari, on the western banks of the Euphrates. In the Armana archive, we read of Abdi-Tirshi’s struggles with other leaders and his acquisition of new lands. In one letter, the ruler of Ashtaroth, east of Jordan, complains to the Pharaoh Akhentaten that the ruler of Hazor “took from me three cities.”

⁸¹ Mazar, 197.

nature. Hazor, along with many other cities in Palestine, was destroyed in a fire ending its MB occupation (ca. 1550).⁸²

A marked degree of continuity evidenced in the earthen ramparts, city gates, various temples, and domestic areas demonstrates that the LB I city (15th Century B.C.E.) was probably built by the returning population of the destroyed MB II city.⁸³

The LB IIA city of the Amarna period (14th century B.C.E.) differed significantly from its predecessor; defensive architecture underwent minor changes, but the layout of domestic areas differed completely. The area H temple was rebuilt on a three-roomed plan reminiscent of Solomon's temple (porch, hall, and holy of holies) in Jerusalem several centuries later. Two pillar bases located outside the front room of this temple may have served a purpose similar to that of Jachin and Boaz at the entrance to Solomon's temple (1 Kings 7.15-22). The LB IIA city was violently destroyed by fire attributed to Seti I at the end of the 14th century B.C.E.⁸⁴

The final LB IIB city (13th century B.C.E.) demonstrates a marked decline from its predecessor. Among the artifacts are fewer imported materials, and it is possible that the city's fortifications were no longer in use.⁸⁵

A well-preserved Canaanite palace was unearthed in area A. Hazor is among the few major tels in which a scanty occupation level followed the end of Early Bronze Age

⁸² A. Malamat, "Hazor the Head of All Those Kingdoms," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960): 12-19.

⁸³ Ben-Tor, *Oxford*, 3.

⁸⁴ Olga Tufnell, "Hazor, Samaria and Lachish," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 91 (1959): 90-105.

⁸⁵ Kim, 561.

IIA.⁸⁶ Thick walls, the lower sections lined with beautifully finished basalt orthostats, suggest it had been a multi-story building. The destruction of the Canaanite city probably occurred some time after 1300, which may confirm the biblical account of the Israelites under Joshua (see above *Biblical Hazor*); some attribute the destruction to the Sea Peoples or the events described in association with Deborah and Sisera. This destruction marks the end of Bronze Age Hazor. Though the upper city was reoccupied during the Iron Age, the lower city was never again rebuilt.⁸⁷

2. Who destroyed Hazor at the end of the Bronze Age?

The fierce conflagration marked the end of Canaanite Hazor. The unusual amount of timber used in the construction of the building, and the large quantity of oil stored in huge *pithoi* (storage jars) throughout the palace, proved a fatal combination—creating an inferno with temperatures exceeding 2350 degrees Fahrenheit. In this intense heat, the palace’s mudbrick walls vitrified, basalt slabs cracked, and clay vessels melted. Whoever burned the city also deliberately destroyed statuary in the palace. Among the ashes was 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 three-foot tall statue had been smashed into nearly a hundred pieces, which were scattered in a six-foot wide circle. The head and hands of this statue, and of several others, were missing, apparently cut off by the city’s conquerors. But the questions remain, “Who mutilated the statues of Hazor?” “Who burned the palace?” “Who destroyed this rich Canaanite city?”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Mazar, 152.

⁸⁷ Kim, 561.

As stated earlier, Joshua 11 and Jude 4-5 attest to the destruction of Hazor. But which one is true: The rapid conquest of Canaan in the Book of Joshua or the slow settlement of Canaan in which numerous scattered tribes gradually emerge in the hill country in the Book of Judges. This question motivated Yigael Yadin to excavate Hazor in the 1950s.⁸⁹ After four seasons, Yadin claimed that he had the answer: Hazor was destroyed by the Israelites under Joshua in the 13th century B.C.E., not later than 1230 B.C.E.⁹⁰ However, scholars have been arguing over this conclusion ever since.

The answer to this question was on the minds of the archaeologists, namely Amnon Ben-Tor, when excavations at Hazor were renewed in 1990. The question of who destroyed Hazor is difficult to address, for it is not primarily an archaeological issue but a historical, and to some extent a theological one. However, after six years of excavations at Hazor, Amnon Ben-Tor attempted to shed some light on the subject.

The fall of Hazor in the Late Bronze Age is not mentioned in any document other than the Bible. The Book of Joshua tells us: "The cities whose ruined mounds are still standing were not burnt by the Israelites, it was Hazor alone that Joshua burnt" (Joshua 11:13). The archaeological evidence supports a fiery blaze due to the fact that a thick layer of destruction by fire has been excavated at Hazor. However, the biblical account is not entirely accurate: Several sites in addition to Hazor perished by fire at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The fire at Hazor, however, was exceptionally intense, as noted above.

⁸⁸ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?" 22-39.

⁸⁹ Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible* (New York: Random House, 1975), 13.

⁹⁰ Yigael Yadin, *Hazor*, The Schweich Lecture Series of the British Academy 1970 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 108.

Was the vivid memory of that fierce conflagration transmitted orally, from one generation to the next, until it was recorded centuries later in the Book of Joshua?⁹¹

Several of the statues uncovered at Hazor were buried, apparently to protect them from mutilation, and others were deliberately mutilated.⁹² This too, is an archaeological observation. Does it have any bearing on the identity of the destroyers of the city?

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 mentioned above, the mutilated statues were Egyptian and Canaanite. It is extremely unlikely that Egyptian or 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. So the Egyptians and the Canaanites have to be eliminated.⁹³

As far as the Sea Peoples are concerned, Hazor is located too far inland to be of any interest to those maritime traders. Further, among the hundreds of thousands of potsherds recovered at Hazor, not a single one can be attributed to the well-known repertory of the Sea Peoples.⁹⁴

This leaves us with the Israelites. One of the most common objections to the Israelites is that the date is much too early; in the 13th century, the Israelites had not yet emerged as a people. However, we do have an inscription which tells us that sometime

⁹¹ Amnon Ben-Tor, “Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?”, 38.

⁹² Yadin, *Hazor: The Rediscovery*, 18-19.

⁹³ Amnon Ben-Tor, “Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?”, 38.

⁹⁴ Amnon Ben-Tor, “Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?”, 38.

around 1230 to 1220 B.C.E. there was an ethnic group—whether Israelite or proto-Israelite—in Canaan that was important enough to be mentioned as a vanquished enemy of Egypt. In the late 13th century B.C.E., the Egyptian pharaoh Merneptah led his army into southern Canaan. His victories were enumerated on a 7.5 foot-high black granite stele erected at Thebes: “... plundered is Canaan with every evil, carried off is Ashkelon; seized upon is Gezer; Yanoam is made as that which does not exist; Israel is laid waste, his seed is not ...”⁹⁵

With what we now know, the “Israel” of the Merneptah Stele seems to be the most likely candidate for the violent destruction of Canaanite Hazor. Forty years ago, Yadin ironically observed that for scholars, who are sometimes averse to substantiating the Bible, “Everyone is a potential destroyer of Hazor, even if not mentioned in any document, except those specifically mentioned in the Bible as having done so.”⁹⁶ I agree with Yadin. The excavations at Hazor seem to indicate that the Israelites (or proto-Israelites, together with other ethnic elements living in the region) may be considered guilty of Hazor’s destruction—at least until any evidence is uncovered that points to a better candidate.⁹⁷

B. Iron Age

The first Iron Age strata of the early 12th and 11th centuries consisted mainly of stone-lined storage pits, cooking installations, and a possible high place. Yadin

⁹⁵ Frank Yurco, “3,200-Year-Old Picture of Israelites Found in Egypt, *Biblical Archaeology Review* (Sept./Oct. 1990).

⁹⁶ Yigael Yadin, *Symposia: Celebrating the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the American Schools of Oriental Research (1900-1975)*, ed. Frank Cross (Cambridge, Mass: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1979), 66.

⁹⁷ Amnon Ben-Tor, “Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City?” 39.

suggested that these remains were left by Israelites attempting to resettle the old Canaanite city.⁹⁸

The first substantial Iron Age city, confined to the western half of the upper city, was surrounded by a casemate wall with a six-chambered gate flanked by two towers located in the center of the mound—the eastern perimeter of the city. Similar gates and casemate walls found at Megiddo⁹⁹ and Gezer led Yadin to attribute this stratum to Solomon's efforts at building a strongly centralized administrative system in the mid- to late 10th century (cf. 1 Kings 9.15). The city declined through the last part of the 10th century and into the early to mid-9th century. It was destroyed about the time Omrides came to power (mid-9th century), probably by Ben-hadad¹⁰⁰ of Damascus (cf. 2 Chr. 16.4).

Hazor was again rebuilt on a significant scale, probably by Ahab in the mid-9th century. A solid offsets-insets wall replaced the casemate wall, completely enclosing the top of the mound. A large rectangular citadel of ashlar masonry was established on the western end of the mound. A large rectangular building with three rooms separated by two rows of pillars, first identified by Garstang as Solomon's tables, belongs to this stratum and was probably a storage building.¹⁰¹

The most impressive structure of this stratum is the monumental water system, cut through the earlier strata of the site and solid stone. Located on the southern edge of the

⁹⁸ Yadin, *Hazor: The Rediscovery*, 18-19; Only a few major tels did a scanty occupation level follow the end of the

⁹⁹ Graham I. Davies, *Cities of the Biblical World: Megiddo* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

¹⁰⁰ A throne name taken by the king of Damascus (see Mark Anthony Phelps, "Ben-Hadad," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 165).

¹⁰¹ Kim, 561-562.

mound, it is similar to systems at Megiddo and possibly Gezer. Two ramps slope gently to a vertical shaft some thirty meters (ninety feet) deep. Five flights of stairs wind down the shaft to a vaulted tunnel, which runs another twenty-eight meters (eighty feet), sloping down below the water table to a pool of water. The direction of this tunnel toward the aquifer and away from the springs near the mound's base attests to the builder's excellent understanding of hydrology. The system provided a valuable source of water inside the city during the times of siege.¹⁰²

Stratum VII was destroyed by fire, plausibly during the Aramean incursions into northern Israel at the end of the 9th century. The city was rebuilt in the early 8th century on a different plan. While the citadel was rebuilt, other public buildings gave way to domestic buildings, workshops, and storage facilities. An earthquake in the time of Jeroboam II (cf. Amos 1.1) was most likely responsible for the destruction of stratum VI.¹⁰³

The city was rebuilt with heavier fortifications, undoubtedly in preparation for confrontations with Assyrian expansion. These preparations proved futile, as evidenced by the complete destruction of the city by fire, presumably at the hands of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III in 732 B.C.E. (cf. 2 Kings 15.29). The destruction is well attested by ashy debris one meter thick in some areas. With the end of stratum¹⁰⁴ V came the end of Hazor as a major Israelite city.¹⁰⁵ Hazor was never again to regain its importance.

¹⁰² Kim, 562.

¹⁰³ Kim, 562.

¹⁰⁴ A layer of earth containing the remains of a single period of occupation during which there was no major in architecture or culture,

¹⁰⁵ Kim, 562.

During the 7th-2nd century, settlement was confined to the citadels which were erected in the western extremity of the upper city.¹⁰⁶

Later remains include a small temporary settlement, probably of inhabitants returning after the Assyrian campaigns. Late in the 8th or early 7th century, the Assyrians rebuilt the citadel on the western edge of the site and constructed an Assyrian-style palace near the mound. While no remains of the late 7th-6th centuries have been discovered, a Persian (4th century) occupation included the rebuilding of the citadel; the site was again occupied during the Hellenistic period (2nd century). This last occupation was probably associated with Jonathan's struggle against Demetrius II.¹⁰⁷

C. Persian Period

Building remains from the Persian period were discovered at Hazor both on the tel and to the east in four separate areas.¹⁰⁸ When the citadel in area B was first unearthed, the excavators believed it to be an isolated structure, however, following the discovery of the farmhouse in area G., it became evident that a small rural settlement had been attached to the citadel on the slopes of the mound. The existence of a large public building and a stratum of settlement in the vicinity of the kibbutz at some distance from

¹⁰⁶ "The Tel Hazor Excavation Project," www.unixware.msc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/history.htm

¹⁰⁷ Kim, 562; The last historical reference to Hazor is to be found in the book of Maccabees (I Macc. 11.67). Here we are told that Jonathan fought against Demetrius (147 B.C.E.) in the "plain of Hazor."

¹⁰⁸ Two structures discovered on the mound were excavated by Yadin's expedition in 1955-58. One is the citadel uncovered in area B and the other is the dwelling called "the farmhouse" which was cleared in area G. East of the mound in the area of Kibbutz Ayyelet ha-Shahar a large building was excavated by Guy and Dothan in 1950. Farther east S. Yeivin in 1955 uncovered a stratum of settlement of the Persian period of which only one room was preserved in its entirety (the rest was destroyed in an earlier leveling). A trial trench dug by Dothan near the Rosh Pinna Ayyelet ha-Shahar road, which intersects the mound on the east side, was also found. A stratum of settlement from the Persian period was discovered here as well. See Ephraim Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982), 1; M. Dothan, 'Alon, *Bulletin of the Department of Antiquities of the State of Israel*, 5-6 (1957): 24; S. Yeivin, *A Decade of Archaeology in Israel (1948-1958)* (Istanbul: 1960), 28.

the mound suggest that the question of the size of the settlement in the Persian period should be reconsidered.¹⁰⁹

The building excavated in area B and identified as a citadel was situated on the highest point of the mound. Two phases of construction were distinguished in it. In the first phase (stratum III)¹¹⁰, it was constructed as a fortress consisting of a large open courtyard surrounded on three sides (north, west, and east) by a single row of rooms and halls, and by two rows of rooms on the south side. Part of a wall running parallel to the fortress may have enclosed it on the south side. North of the citadel stood a tower composed of two large rooms. The finds in stratum II were very meager, and the building itself was found to contain none of its primary objects. This, together with the fact that no traces of fire or serious destruction were found in the building, may perhaps permit the hypothesis that the building was destroyed by the forces of nature after it had been abandoned, and not as a result of its capture by an enemy.¹¹¹

The date of stratum III citadel was arrived at through the following considerations: a) its stratigraphic position; since it followed stratum IV (end of the eighth and beginning of the seventh century B.C.E.) and preceded stratum II (first half of the fourth century), its chronological range was fixed between 700 and 400 B.C.E.; b) the close resemblance between the plan of the building and Assyrian structures reduced its possible range, in the opinion of excavators, to the seventh-sixth centuries B.C.E. only; c) almost the only finds from this stratum were two jars found in secondary use in a sewage

¹⁰⁹ Stern, 1.

¹¹⁰ A layer of earth containing the remains of a single period of occupation during which there was no major gap in architecture or culture,

¹¹¹ Yadin, *Hazor: The Rediscovery*, 53.

chamber. These jars were attributed to the seventh century B.C.E. Several other potsherds were found in the drainage canal and more were uncovered during the dismantling of walls that were added in stratum II. The excavators, however, do not reject outright the possibility that the citadel was erected only in the sixth century B.C.E., since the jars, which have parallels in strata V-IV, were in secondary use, but mainly because of the fact that it was not necessary for citadel III to be reconstructed by the occupants of citadel II, but merely to be cleared of debris. The walls of the citadel were still standing and it is hardly likely that they were preserved in this condition after a prolonged abandonment.¹¹²

The citadel of stratum II continued the earlier plan almost unchanged, except for the following minor alterations: 1. The main entrance leading from the court into the southern wing was blocked and the citadel was thus divided into two separate units; 2. The other entrances were either reduced in size or blocked up; 3. Partitions were added inside the halls and small compartments were created. These alterations seem to indicate that a fundamental change took place in the function of the building, namely, the transformation of a single large citadel into two separate dwellings. This may also be reflected in the other changes: the reduction of the size of the rooms and entrances. The date of the citadel of stratum II was established mainly by the discovery of two imported Attic lamps, one of which was dated by R.H. Howard to the second quarter of the fourth century B.C.E. and the other from the second half of the fourth century to the first quarter

¹¹² Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Volume II: The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Periods (732-332 B.C.E.)* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), 1.

of the third century B.C.E. Confirmation for this date was supplied by a Tyrian coin which was attributed by L.Y Rahmani to the period 400-332 B.C.E.¹¹³

The excavations in area A at Hazor revealed that this part of the mound was uninhabited during the Persian Period when it was used as a burial ground.¹¹⁴

The building excavated in area G was defined by the excavators as some kind of farmhouse. In any event, it was not the type of house generally encountered in a densely populated town. The complete plan of the farmhouse could not be ascertained but from what had survived it appeared to be a large structure, consisting of a central court with rows of rooms attached to it on three sides (north, east and south). On the west side of the court were found stone bases (re-used orthostats) of wooden pillars. They had apparently been used for roofing on this side. Which opened onto an outer court, in the center of which was a rectangular building, probably a storeroom. The outer court was enclosed by a wall of which only a section on the west side was uncovered. A narrow rectangular niche in this wall held two bronze sickles. Y. Yadin noted that “the people of this period carried out some extensive building work on the terrace.” As for the date of the farmhouse, Yadin found analogies with the citadel of stratum II in area B, and indeed

¹¹³ Yadin, *Hazor*, 63. Although pages 53-54, in the discussion of the date of the citadel of stratum III, the date of the stratum II was fixed in the first half of the fourth century only, it seems, however, that the excavators assigned a too brief existence to the citadel, as indicated by the fact that repairs and additions to the building were carried out during this stratum, as for example, in the southern part of the floor in locus 3004 beneath which were found vessels of stratum II (locus 3082); and cf. *Hazor*, 56-57.

¹¹⁴ In area A, a group of objects were found from the end of the Persian period which were interpreted as burial offerings. These included a large assemblage of juglets of varied types, jars, cooking pots, “Persian” bowls, an open lamp, bronze kohl sticks, a fibula, a glass kohl tube and several bone objects. The graves to which these objects belonged were dated by the imported pottery: an Attic bowl and lamp from the fourth century B.C.E. and a Tyrian silver stater which was dated by L.Y. Rahmani to the years 400-332 B.C.E. The excavators thus assigned the graves to the end of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., contemporary with the citadel in area B (Yadin, *Hazor II*, 29-30; Pls. 75:50-26; 155: 8; 166:16; *Hazor III-IV*, Pts 190-191; 364:3-7, 11, 13, 15, 17; 365:6-9; In a conversation between Ephraim Stern and Yigael Yadin, Yadin informed Stern that these were pit graves dug in the ground without stone covers (Stern, 264). Cf. D. Barag, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, 183 (1966): 9.

a comparison of the ceramic finds from the two areas does not reveal any significant differences.¹¹⁵

Another large building, which probably had some public function, was uncovered on the lands of Kibbutz Ayyelet ha-Shahar. Its complete plan and purpose were not clarified during the excavations. It was constructed in an unusual technique with the walls made of *terre pisée* coated with thin layers of lime plaster. The main entrance was well preserved with two stone sockets in the corners. Because the side walls were much thicker than the end ones, the excavators concluded that the roof was vaulted. The building was paved with a fine mudclay floor which contained an excellent drainage system with pipes made of pottery sections.¹¹⁶

The building was assigned by P. L. O. Guy to the Persian period. A survey of the finds reveals that a number of the typical pottery types have parallels on the mound (bowls, jars, juglets, and several Attic sherds), and they attest to the fact that no significant gap in time separated settlements in the mound and at Ayyelet ha-Shahar. Guy did not go into the problem of the building's function but S. Yeivin defined it as a palace.¹¹⁷ R. Reich, on the other hand, has suggested that the building at Ayyelet ha-Shahar closely resembles the plan of a typical Assyrian royal palace. Thus it is now evident that the building comprised of two phases. It was first erected in the Assyrian period and again occupied in the late Persian period.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Yadin, *Hazor*, 45; imported Attic ware was among the finds here.

¹¹⁶ Stern, 3.

¹¹⁷ S. Yeivin, *A Decade of Archaeology in Israel (1948-1958)* (Istanbul: 1960), 28.

¹¹⁸ R. Reich, *Israel Exploration Journal* 25 (1975): 233-237.

The excavations at Hazor and Ayyelet ha-Shahar have thus revealed the existence of a sparsely populated settlement with large dwellings, scattered over the mound and in the plain to the east. Whether these buildings belonged to a single village or two separate adjoining settlements is not yet clear,¹¹⁹ but they nonetheless seem to be contemporary, dating from the latter part of the Persian period.¹²⁰

D. Hellenistic Period

As in the Persian period, this period concerns Palestine when under the domination of foreign powers. Accordingly, the archaeological remains from these periods reflect great foreign influence.¹²¹ Although this period is very meagerly attested to at Hazor, stratum I of the lower city contained the remains of another citadel attributed to the second century B.C.E., i.e., to the Hellenistic period.¹²² East of area B, a small trial trench was excavated. It confirmed the stratigraphical sequence obtained in areas A and B from the Middle Bronze Age II on. Area G, located on the northern edge of the eastern terrace of the mound, furnished important information regarding the extent of the upper city in the this period and the fortifications in this sector.¹²³

¹¹⁹ This may explain why in the Hellenistic period Jonathan's war with Demetrius is described as having taken place in the "plain of Hazor" (I Macc. 11:67).

¹²⁰ Stern, 4.

¹²¹ Curid, 21.

¹²² Y. Yadin, "Hazor," *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Investigations in the Holy Land* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976), 489; Finegan, 165.

¹²³ Y. Yadin, "Hazor," *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Investigations in the Holy Land*, 489.

B. Amnon Ben-Tor

Amnon Ben-Tor is the Yigael Yadin Professor of the Archaeology of Eretz Israel, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.¹²⁴ He is a respected Israeli archaeologist accomplished in the classroom, the field and the written page. However, Amnon Ben-Tor is most known for his current work at Hazor.

The ancient mound of Hazor has played a central role in the life of Amnon Ben-Tor. As a student, he worked there on his first dig. That was in 1957. Eleven years later he returned to Hazor, this time as a supervisor, working closely with dig director Yigael Yadin. While he was a supervisor, Ben-Tor, as he put it, “found” his wife, who at that time was a student on the dig. (She is now the curator of the Egyptian collection at the Israel Museum and the mother of their two daughters.)¹²⁵

When Yigael Yadin died in 1984, the last volume of the final report of the Hazor expedition had not yet been written. Ben-Tor was selected to head the team that would complete the work.¹²⁶

Ben-Tor reinitiated the Hazor archaeological expedition in 1990. Why did he go back? Ben-Tor explained that cuneiform archives had been discovered all around Israel—in Syria, Egypt and Iraq—but not in Israel—not yet! The archives have been found in capital cities. Hazor was a capital city. They were found in temples of palaces. Hazor has a palace (citadel). The temples and palaces dated to sometime in the second millennium B.C.E. Hazor’s palace dates to the second millennium B.C.E.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ See Plate II.

¹²⁵ Hershel Shanks, “Ben-Tor, Long Married, Will Return to Hazor,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 16 no. 1 (1990): 44-45.

¹²⁶ Shanks, 44.

Only a corner of the Hazor palace had been excavated by Yadin's expedition, however. One of the goals of Ben-Tor was to expose the enormous building (the wall of the exposed corner was over six feet thick).

Three cuneiform tablets had been discovered prior to 1990—lying around on the surface or in debris. One of the documents is a legal document, signed in the presence of the king of Hazor, so “there is no question that there was a scribe at Hazor.”¹²⁸

Accordingly, another goal of Ben-Tor's expedition was to discover and unearth the archive at Hazor.

Ben-Tor began his expedition at Hazor in 1990 in honor of his late colleague, Yigael Yadin. He has continued to the present day, spending each year trying to uncover more of the mysteries of Hazor. However, Ben-Tor is not known alone for his work at Hazor; he has worked at several other sites as well as written voluminously in his field. I will attempt to explain the life and work of Amnon Ben-Tor in: 1) his work at Hazor and 2) his work at minor sites.

1. Amnon Ben-Tor at Hazor

In 1990, thirty-five years after Yigael Yadin led the largest and most important archaeological excavation ever undertaken by the then young state of Israel, a renewed excavation at Hazor, named in memory of Yigael Yadin, began under the direction of Amnon Ben-Tor.¹²⁹ Ben-Tor had two main objectives: first, check the stratigraphy on which Yadin based his chronological and historical conclusions, and second, to explore

¹²⁷ Shanks, 44.

¹²⁸ Shanks, 44.

¹²⁹ The Selz Foundation Hazor Excavations in Memory of Yigael Yadin is a joint project of the Hebrew University and Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain, sponsored by the Israel Exploration Society.

several important issues unresolved by the Yadin expedition, such as the date of the destruction of the Canaanite city.¹³⁰ Further, Yadin had uncovered the corner of a Canaanite Palace, but that's all. Ben-Tor wanted to look at it more extensively. And although Yadin failed to find an archive, he did find evidence that seemed to confirm it was there: a small bilingual cuneiform text.¹³¹ The discovery of the elusive archive has been a major goal of the Ben-Tor excavations.

Ben-Tor has continued to dig at Hazor for the past twelve seasons. A brief synopsis of each season follows:

A. 1990-91

Work included in the synopsis of the 1992 season.

B. 1992¹³²

Area A

An area was excavated west of the pillared storehouse. The Iron Age buildings here are large remarkable stone structures with walls preserved to a considerable height. Among these a public building with a plastered floor (a courtyard?) was uncovered along the eastern edge of area A, adjacent to the pillared storehouse.

Excavation progressed on the solid city-wall dating from the ninth century B.C.E. A thirty meter long segment of this wall, along the entire length of the excavated area, was uncovered.

¹³⁰ See above, Who destroyed Hazor at the End of the Bronze Age?

¹³¹ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Solomon's City Rises From the Ashes," in *Biblical Archaeology Review* Vol. 25, Is. 2 (Mar/Apr 1999): 13-38.

¹³² Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 42, No. 1-2 (1992):254-260.

Notable in this year was the relocation of the pillared storehouse, excavated by Yadin in the 1950s, to a new spot, about one hundred meters west of its original location. The building was moved stone by stone, with strict adherence to the arrangement of the stones in their original placement. This procedure was undertaken in order to facilitate excavation of the area under the building. This undertaking was the first of its kind in Israel, and was carried out under full archaeological supervision, in coordination with the Israel Antiquities Authority and the National Parks Authority. The team made plans to preserve and reconstruct additional monuments at the site with the objective of creating a unique, impressive site for visitors.

Area M

A segment of a brick wall, the lower portion of which was covered with orthostats, was revealed in the north western part of the excavated area. All of these structures were engulfed in the blaze that discharged a landslide of debris one meter thick in certain places. This year's excavation focused on remains from the Iron Age, consequently, only scant remains from the Bronze Age were investigated, and few floors were uncovered. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of ceramic and other finds from the Late Bronze Age were noted.

A small fragment of a clay tablet was found in the fill of a floor of a ninth century B.C.E. structure in Area A. It bears the remains of nine lines of an Akkadian inscription dating from the Old Babylonian period. The recipient of the letter is named "Ibni-." "Ibni-Addu King of Hazor" is mentioned by name in the royal archive discovered at the

city of Mari;¹³³ the newly discovered document at Hazor may have been addressed to this person.

C. 1993¹³⁴

Area A

In this area, the work of the previous seasons was continued to uncover buildings from the Iron Age. One of the most interesting structures revealed in 1993 was a large public building dating from the time of the Israelite Monarchy (ninth century B.C.E.), which contained three parallel long halls. Although no finds were unearthed in the building except for one large storage-jar sunk into the floor of the central hall, there is little doubt that the structure served as a storehouse and was part of the public district located southwest of the city gate.

On the northern edge of the Upper City, the remains of eighth century B.C.E. buildings, uncovered and studied the previous two seasons, were cleared, and a portion of a large ninth century B.C.E. building was revealed comparable in construction style to the public structure discussed previously.

Area M

The excavation of the structures from the Bronze Age continued in area A. In contrast to previous estimates, there are not one, but two, enormous architectural complexes in this area. These structures are most likely the palaces of the Canaanite Kings of Hazor, dating from the second milenium B.C.E. The earlier of the two structures dates from the first half of the second millennium, while the later one dates

¹³³ See Above

¹³⁴ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 43, No. 4 (1993):253-256.

from the second half of that millennium. Parts of what appears to be a grand entranceway were uncovered in the later palace this season.

Within the framework of the restoration activities at Hazor, a major effort was expended in the monumental six-chambered Solomonic gate, through which visitors will enter the western sector of the city after all the restoration work has been completed. Further preservation activities this season included the relocation and restoration of an Iron Age dwelling, complete with a reconstructed olive press in its courtyard.

D. 1994¹³⁵

Area A

This season, the excavation under the pillared building revealed a large building, obviously earlier than the storehouse above it. This building is situated to the west of, and a short distance from the casemate city wall. It is thus clear that the casemate wall and the six-chambered gate connected with it are of the same date as the earliest phase of the building unearthed underneath the storehouse, i.e. of the tenth century B.C.E.

The tenth-century date of the earliest Iron Age defensive system was reconfirmed in another area of excavation: in Area M, where the two fortification systems—one of the casemate and the other of the solid-wall type—join one another.

This season's findings in Areas A and M clearly determine the date of the two major defensive systems of Iron Age Hazor, as well as the extent of the occupied were in the tenth and ninth centuries B.C.E.: the casemate wall (and gate) were built in the tenth century B.C., during which period only the western half of the mound was occupied, while the solid wall, built in the ninth century B.C.E., doubled the size of Israelite Hazor.

¹³⁵ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor, 1994," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 45, No. 1 (1995):65-68.

Area M

Work on the two palaces continued this season. The utmost important find that occurred was the evidence of the later palace's destruction by a huge fire, the intensity of which was augmented by the extensive use of timber in the walls. Temperatures were sufficient to melt part of the mudbrick walls and crack the basalt orthostats; a thick layer of ashes covers the floors.¹³⁶

E. 1995¹³⁷*Area A*

This season the uncovering of the Israelite strata continued. The foundations of a very large public structure dating from the Late Iron Age were encountered in the western part of the area. The floors of the Iron Age structure have not survived; nevertheless, it can be dated with certainty to the latter part of the eighth century B.C.E. on the basis of the pottery found on a sole surviving small fragment of a floor, of the pottery collected in the foundation trenches, and mainly of the eighth-century pottery found on the floors of an adjacent building, which were cut by the larger structure. This huge public building is the largest Iron Age structure ever to have been found at Hazor. This building excavated this year sheds new light on eighth-century Hazor: it indicates that Hazor maintained its importance even during those troubled years that until now were perceived as a period of decline in comparison to the peak years of the ninth century.

¹³⁶ See above, "Who Destroyed Hazor at the End of the Bronze-Age?"

¹³⁷ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor, 1995," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 45, No. 4 (1996):283-287.

Area M

Work continued on the palace. Questions still surrounded the conflagration of the palace. Decorated ivories, found among the debris, point to the wealth of the palace's occupants. The most important discovery of this season is a rather large basalt statue of a deity, found in the courtyard close to the palace entrance. An emblem on the chest establishes with certainty that it represents a deity. The fire that destroyed the palace, melted the bricks, and damaged the stone foundations also cracked the statue into many pieces; even so, its height, from shoulder to knee, is about 1.2 meters, making it the largest Bronze Age statue of a deity to have been found in Israel to date.

F. 1996¹³⁸

Area A

Investigation of the earliest Israelite strata continued, after having removed the eighth-century stratum in 1995. Most of the Israelite remains uncovered during the 1996 season date from the eleventh to tenth centuries B.C.E. Most noteworthy were several solid, well-built walls and a pebble-paved floor, belonging to a large architectural complex whose limits have not yet been reached.

This season's excavation also focused on excavating the Canaanite palace westwards. By the end of the season, most of the large hall, termed "the throne room," was cleared. Alongside the palace, the Iron Age city wall was dismantled in the excavated area in order to enable the study of the underlying Late Bronze Age strata.

¹³⁸ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor, 1996," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 46, No. 3-4 (1997):262-269.

Area M

The main objective in this area was to expand the excavation of the paved area surrounding the Late Bronze Age cultic podium. Also, work on the conservation and restoration of various architectural elements unearthed at Hazor continued this year. The basalt slabs crack as a result of changes in temperature and moisture conditions as soon as they are exposed. These cracks were stabilized in order to prevent further damage. Preservation work focused this year on the orthostats lining the walls of the throne room, the steps leading into the palace, and the aforementioned podium.

Cuneiform Tablets at Hazor

The 1996 excavations at Hazor yielded four cuneiform tablets, bringing the total of cuneiform finds at Hazor to eleven. Two of these, like all seven previous finds, date from the Middle Bronze II Age, the time of the Mari documents in the east.¹³⁹ The remaining two new tablets date from the Late Bronze Age, and are written in a hand and dialect familiar from documents of the fourteenth century Amarna Archives in Egypt,¹⁴⁰ and contemporary tablets in Canaan and its environs. The two tablets are the first LB cuneiform finds at Hazor, despite the fact that the city is mentioned in the Amarna letters.

The two MB documents are a partially preserved letter and a mathematical fragment. The letter's contents concern deliveries of commodities and sacrificial animals to Mari, apparently from Hazor. Thus, the letter sheds further light on the close commercial and cultural ties between Mari and MB Hazor already known from the Mari letters and

¹³⁹ See Above, "Hazor-History" (Hazor and Amnon Ben-Tor- Hazor ID).

¹⁴⁰ See Above, "Hazor-History" (Hazor and Amnon Ben Tor- Hazor ID).

previously found Hazor tablets. The discovery of the mathematical prism fragment demonstrates the high level of scribal scholastic activity at Hazor, and the lexical fragment published by Prof. Hayim Tadmor,¹⁴¹ suggests that a cuneiform scribal school functioned in Hazor during the Middle Bronze Age.

G. 1997¹⁴²

Area A

The first major focus of this season was in Area A. The goal in this area was to expand the excavation of the Canaanite palace westwards and of the courtyard to the east and north. By the end of the season, the excavation of the large hall (“the throne room”) had been completed. Evidence of the violent destruction of the palace was encountered, as in previous years, throughout the palace and courtyard. Among the fallen stones, bricks and ashes, an impressive variety of finds was encountered including pottery, cylinder seals, metal artifacts, and ivories, as well as part of a stone statue of an Egyptian king. The latter, like similar statues found in previous seasons, had suffered intentional mutilation.

A life-sized lion orthostat,¹⁴³ carved in relief on a smoothed basalt slab, was found while dismantling an eighth century B.C.E. building, in the foundation of which it had been incorporated. It most probably was the left member of a pair which had guarded the entrance to a temple or palace of the Canaanite period. An identical lion orthostat, the

¹⁴¹ H. Tadmor, “A Lexicographical Text from Hazor,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 27 (1977), 98-102.

¹⁴² Ben-Tor, Amnon. “Tel Hazor, 1997,” *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 47, No. 3-4 (1997): 261-278.

¹⁴³ Orthostats are large, well cut, decorated slabs of stone.

right member of such a pair, was discovered by the Yadin expedition in the 1950s one kilometer to the north. Another large fragment of a lion orthostat, in secondary use as a door jamb of an Israelite building, was also uncovered during the season. The head of this lion had been uncovered by Yadin a few meters away. Thus, this lion may also have been one of a pair, originally positioned somewhere in the Canaanite palace.¹⁴⁴

Area M

Excavations in this area were extended to the north and west. The excavation of the podium was extended further west and north. Of major importance is the large gate surrounding the podium. From here, the upper city might have been accessed by means of the huge staircase. The presence of such a gate in this location has been conjectured since excavations in Area M began in the early 1990s.

As in previous seasons, the Hazor expedition devoted a considerable effort to the conservation and preservation of the major architectural assemblages uncovered. Most of the work this year focused on the conservation of the orthostats and the mudbricks of which the palace was constructed.

H. 1998¹⁴⁵

Area A

During this season, continued excavation of the throne room proceeded. Excavations in the eastern extremity of the palace courtyard (Area A4) were conducted in a spot where the main entrance to the palace was suspected to be located. This area was

¹⁴⁴ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Big Game Hunting: The Lion of Hazor," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 24 (Jan./Feb. 1998): 44.

¹⁴⁵ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor, 1998," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 48, No. 3-4 (1998): 274-278.

covered by a massive accumulation of Iron Age buildings, which gave Ben-Tor the opportunity to reexamine the sequence of Iron Age strata at Hazor. During these excavations, the team encountered a continuous sequence of Iron Age walls and floors, dated by the associated pottery. The most noteworthy finds in this area were two handles of a cooking pot, possibly of the ninth century B.C.E., both bearing impressions of stamp seals. One of these impressions includes writing which at first glance appears to be Neo-Hittite.

Area M

The most significant find from this season was a Late Bronze Age clay figurine, probably of a ruler, wearing a conical headdress. Excavation of the cultic podium continued this season, as well as the stairs which lead to the cultic podium. Along with the figurine, the most significant single find of the Bronze Age during the 1998 season was a fragment of a leg, made of greenish stone, of an Egyptian statue. This brings the number of Egyptian royal statues whose fragments have been found so far at Hazor to six.

Conservation of Hazor continued this season with continuous preservation methods being applied to the mudbricks of the various buildings and walls.

I. 1999¹⁴⁶

Area A

The accomplishments of the 1999 season include the following: determining of the extent of the Late Bronze Age palace in the east and south (Areas A-1 and A-7); connecting the area excavated by Yadin's expedition in 1968 with the area investigated

¹⁴⁶ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor, 1999," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 49, No. 3-4 (1999):269-274.

by the present expedition (Area A-2); locating the main entrance into the palace complex; further work toward investigating the massive mudbrick fortification wall dated to the Bronze Age, and determining the date of its construction and duration of usage (most likely as a temple); uncovering the monumental building located in the northern part of the palace courtyard; and digging below the Late Bronze Age strata and investigating the nature of earlier remnants underlying them (Areas A-1 and A-2).

Area M

The goal of the excavations in this area was to uncover the western part of the citadel and the pebble paved street associated with it, and to complete the excavation of the mudbrick fortification wall, parts of which had already been investigated during the previous seasons.

The entire length of the citadel's western wall was uncovered. Since the paved street runs parallel to the outer face of this wall on the north and west, it seems that this is indeed the western wall of the citadel. The entrance into the citadel was located in this wall. The most important find in Area M this season is a small fragment of an Egyptian inscription, apparently part of an Egyptian stele or statue. The date and content of this inscription, however, were not determined.

As in all previous seasons, preservation of the mudbrick walls of the palace continued. The main effort this year focused on the reconstruction of the tower of the late Iron Age located in the north-eastern summit of the acropolis. Only the foundations and, in some places, fragments of the walls were preserved.

J. 2000¹⁴⁷

Area A

The excavation in Areas A-1 and A-7 proved that the plan of the palace is symmetrical: no extensions were noticed south of the rooms located in the south of the throne room. The outer wall of the palace was uncovered almost in its entirety. Also, the staircase was uncovered in area A-7. The uncovering of the paved courtyard situated north of the palace was continued this season, but the limits of the courtyard on the north, west and east were not yet reached. The search for the main entrance to the palace continued. Pebble pavements, similar and contemporary to the pavement of the palace courtyard, were uncovered. These are out by several Iron I pits, of which a high concentration was found here, just like in the western part of the palace courtyard. In Area A-5, a monumental mudbrick structure, placed on a stone foundation, has been partially uncovered. Alongside this mudbrick structure, a cuneiform inscription on a small clay tablet was found. Also in this season, continued investigation of the two temples occurred.

Area M

The main purpose of the excavation in this area was to investigate the phases of construction and usage of the citadel and the installations associated with it, such as the paved street and several drainage systems.

¹⁴⁷ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor, 2000," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 50, No. 3-4 (2000):243-249.

All the phases of use of the citadel are dated to the Late Bronze Age. With the exclusion of a relatively small amount of Middle and Early Bronze Age sherds, no earlier activity could be identified in this area.

A fragment of a huge basalt basin was found next to the entrance of the citadel in the destruction debris of the final phase of occupation. A five-line cuneiform inscription in Akkadian is incised on the outer face of the vessel.¹⁴⁸

As in previous years, restoration and preservation work on Hazor continued. As with the past years. The main effort this season concentrated on the palace, in an attempt to conserve the orthostats and mudbrick walls of the structure.

K. 2001¹⁴⁹

Area A

One of the aims of the 2001 season was to uncover the south-western and south-eastern corners of the Canaanite palace. Also this season in Area A, a stratigraphic sequence of Iron Age dwellings spanning the ninth to eighth centuries B.C.E., was uncovered. In the southern part of Area A, the excavation of the massive Late Bronze Age walls, first encountered during the 2000 season, continued. Finally, in Area A, during the 2001 season, Iron Age structures of a domestic nature, arranged along a paved street, were uncovered.

Area M

In this area, the upper pavement covering the street and the entrance to the citadel was removed in order to investigate earlier phases of construction. An earlier pavement,

¹⁴⁸ The inscription which seems to be incomplete has not yet been interpreted and published.

¹⁴⁹ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Hazor, 2001," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 51, No. 3-4 (2001):252-257.

differing in nature from the later one, was revealed. This earlier pavement predates the construction of the citadel and the western wall which cuts through it. 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 seems to place the date of this earlier destruction somewhere in the Late Bronze Age I. This destruction is most notably 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.

In addition to the several drainage systems uncovered in this area during the previous seasons, two large drainage channels were uncovered this season. These are the largest and most elaborate ones encountered so far, one covered by well-cut basalt orthostats which were placed here clearly in secondary use. This drain leads into the main drain which was uncovered here in previous seasons.

An infant burial, accompanied by some jewellery, several vessels, and a Middle Bronze Age scarab, was encountered within the orthostats covering the drain. When, why and how this burial could have been placed within the drain is not clear.

A considerable effort was directed this year towards conservation, restoration, and construction of supporting walls of the Late Bronze Age palace. These works are part of the planned roof which is to cover the entire palace area in order to protect it—and primarily its delicate mudbrick walls—from the elements.

L. Summary

The renewed excavation project focused much attention on the Late Bronze Age remains at Hazor, especially on the Canaanite palace discovered in Area A. In contrast with Yadin's dating of the palace to the Middle Bronze Age (1600-1550 B.C.E.); the

current excavations led by Amnon Ben-Tor have shown that it should be dated to the Late Bronze Age (1300-1200 B.C.E.). Among the many artifacts recovered from the palace are fragments of ivory plaques and boxes, cylinder seals and beads, figurines, two bronze statues of kings or deities, and the largest Bronze Age anthropomorphic statue ever found in Israel.

Three cuneiform tables were found in the palace core, which led excavators to believe that an archive was close at hand. Unfortunately, no other direct evidence for a royal archive has come to light since these documents were excavated during the 1996 season (see above).

Excavations in the second area opened on the tel, Area M, also yielded important Late Bronze Age remains. Excavators believe that this area must contain the main passage between the Lower City and the tel during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. In addition to the remains of the staircases, drainage installations, and fragments of massive walls, archaeologists have uncovered a cultic platform just inside a gateway with two small towers.¹⁵⁰

Another one of the focuses of the renewed excavations was to establish who destroyed Late Bronze Age Hazor. Using the archaeological evidence, the excavators from the renewed project at Hazor have determined that the Israelites indeed were the destructors of this city.

As one of the largest and most important Bronze and Iron Age sites in the region, Hazor has the potential to answer a number of longstanding questions in archaeology and

¹⁵⁰ Jennie R. Ebeling, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Hazor," www.Bibleinterp.com/articles/Hazor_Ebeling.htm.

biblical studies and to ask new ones. Analysis and publication of the results of the current excavation project will contribute a great deal to our understanding of Hazor's history and the larger history of the southern Levant.

2. Amnon Ben-Tor and the Yoqneam Regional Project, Israel

A. The Yoqneam Regional Project

The Western Jezreel Valley, the focus of the Yoqneam Regional Project, is triangular-shaped and extends over an area of approximately 120 square kilometers. The three points of the triangle are the ancient sites of Megiddo, Shimron, and Tel 'Amr. In this region, there are three sites whose dimensions exceed fifty dunams: Shimron, Megiddo, and Yoqneam. These are undoubtedly the major cities in the region. From here extend two major international routes: one from Megiddo leading north-northeast via Hazor to Damascus and beyond, and the other running from Yoqneam to the north-northwest, via Acco to Phoenicia and beyond. The combination of fertile soil, abundant water, excellent climate, and important local and international routes resulted in the establishment of a large number of settlements of a variety of sizes which dotted the valley.¹⁵¹

Three sites located in the Western Jezreel Valley were chosen for investigation: Yoqneam, with an area of approximately ten acres, Tel Qiri, with an area of about 2.5 acres, and Tel Qashish, with an area similar to that of Tel Qiri. Yoqneam is undoubtedly the major site in this region, while Qiri, located two kilometers to the south, and Qashish, located two kilometers to the north of Yoqneam, are clearly minor village sites, dependent on the main urban center. These three sites were excavated during the years

¹⁵¹Amnon Ben-Tor, "The Yoqneam Regional Project, Israel," www.fas.harvard.edu/~semitic/wl/white_levy_bentor.html.

1977-1987 in an attempt to investigate their history of occupation and compare their material culture.¹⁵²

Probably as a result of its perfect location, Yoqneam presents a long and continuous occupational history. The stratigraphic sequence covers the period from the Early Bronze Age to the Ottoman period, longer than most other sites known in the country, and spans twenty-seven strata with eleven sub-phases. The most significant strata at Yoqneam are those dated to the Middle Bronze-Iron III periods, to which fourteen strata with eleven sub-strata have been ascribed. Eleven strata were discerned at Tel Qiri, the most important of which span the Iron I-III period with four strata and nine sub-phases. Fifteen strata were noted at Tel Qashish, the most important of which date to the Early-Late Bronze Age, to which nine strata with ten sub-phases were noted for the period covering the entire Early Bronze Age at Tel Qashish. The site presents an uninterrupted and thus an important ceramic sequence for that period. The detailed stratigraphy and the long occupational sequence noted in the three sites is of special significance: the Middle-Late Bronze Age strata of Yoqneam and Qashish overlap, as do the Iron Age strata at Yoqneam and Qiri. This situation presents an exceptional opportunity to establish a detailed and comparative ceramic typology spanning the time period of Middle Bronze-Iron III, in village and city sites located at a distance of no more than five kilometers from each other.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Amnon Ben-Tor, "The Yoqneam Regional Project, Israel," www.fas.harvard.edu/~semitic/wl/white_levy_bentor.html.

¹⁵³ Amnon Ben-Tor, "The Yoqneam Regional Project, Israel," www.fas.harvard.edu/~semitic/wl/white_levy_bentor.html.

This detailed typology which was established proved to be of great importance. After the completed work the ceramic sequence formulated at the Yoqneam Regional Project for the periods Early Bronze I-Iron Age II became a major point of reference for many other sites which were occupied during these periods.

1. Yoqneam

Tel Yoqneam was chosen to excavate for a number of reasons, the two most important being the continuous occupation of the site for nearly four thousand years and its immediate proximity to the important communication arteries discussed above.¹⁵⁴ Finds at this site consist of pottery sherds, lamps, pipes and kitchenware from the Byzantine Period (7th century A.D.), Late Roman Period (5th and 6th centuries A.D.), Early Roman Period (3rd and 4th centuries A.D.), Hellenistic Period, Persian Period, Iron Age and Late Bronze Age.¹⁵⁵ The results from excavations at Yoqneam reveal an intensive population particularly during the Iron Age and Persian period. The Hellenistic and Byzantine periods were sparsely represented although there is some evidence of large-scale architecture (fortifications?) datable to the Byzantine period. Small evidence was found supporting the Late Bronze Age.¹⁵⁶

2. Qiri

The importance of excavations at Tel Qiri must not be overlooked. First, there is the possibility of studying an almost interrupted sequence of five hundred years of

¹⁵⁴ Amnon Ben-Tor, "The First Season of Excavations at Tel Yoqne'am, 1977," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 28, No. 1-2 (1978): 57-82.

¹⁵⁵ Amnon Ben-Tor, Yuval Portugali and Miriam Avissar. "The Second Season of Excavations at Tel Yoqne'am: Preliminary Report," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 59, No. 2 (1979): 65-83.

¹⁵⁶ Amnon Ben-Tor, Yuval Portugali and Miriam Avissar. "The Third and Fourth Seasons of Excavations at Tel Yoqne'am, 1979 and 1981: Preliminary Report," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 33, No. 1-2 (1983): 30-54.

occupation at the site. Second, Tel Qiri forms part of the framework of the Yoqneam Regional Project. Finally, the excavation of Tel Qiri and similar sites contributes to the process of closing an important gap in our knowledge: the way of life of the majority of the inhabitants of the country, namely those living in villages.¹⁵⁷

The excavation of Tel Qiri revealed remains covering a very long time-span extending from the fifth or fourth millennia B.C.E. to the Islamic period. The most complete and representative sequence at the site, however, is relating to the Iron Age. Therefore, the periods represented at Tel Qiri may be divided into three major units: 1) the late periods—from the Islamic to the Persian Period; 2) the Iron Age; 3) the early periods—from the Late Bronze Age (?) to the Late Neolithic period.¹⁵⁸

The period best represented at Tel Qiri is the Iron Age, remains of which were encountered in each of the excavated areas. In each phase at least some of the walls constructed in the previous phase were still in use. It seems, therefore, that Tel Qiri was never the target of any military campaign during the period, probably because it was not considered to be important enough. This situation allowed excavators to follow and study the uninterrupted development of the site and of its material culture over a period of nearly 500 years. Throughout its entire history, Tel Qiri remained a village which was never fortified. It was a prosperous village, as demonstrated by the impressive nature of the dwellings: the building material was primarily stone. The economy was clearly based on agriculture, as indicated by a large number of ubiquitous flint sickle blades, as well as by the many agricultural installations composed mainly of silos and oil presses. Evidence

¹⁵⁷ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Qiri: A Look at Village Life," *Biblical Archaeologist* (Spring 1979):113.

¹⁵⁸ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Qiri: A Look at Village Life," *Biblical Archaeologist* (Spring 1979):107.

of cultic practices at Qiri was found, which, after continued excavations, determine the small village practices of an Israelite village.¹⁵⁹

3. Qashish

Excavations at Qashish were carried out between 1978 and 1987 as part of the Yoqneam Regional Project. The most significant results of the excavation are those pertaining to the Early Middle and Bronze Ages.¹⁶⁰ Tel Qashish is located on the right bank of the Qishon River, at the point where it bends north, and thus is bordered on two sides by the river. The mound is clearly seen from Tel Yoqneam, some 2 kilometers to the south. Qashish is a long, narrow mound measuring about 270 X 160 meters including the slopes; the upper, more or less flat part measures about 180 X 60 meters, and the western half of the mound is higher than the eastern.¹⁶¹

The decision to dig at Qashish was based on three main factors: 1) the settlement, situated as it is only a short distance from the much larger Tel Yoqneam, could have been one of its dependents during certain periods. 2) The mound is strategically located on the main route which cuts across the Jezreel Valley from the southeast to northwest. This strategic position may have a bearing on the site's major architectural features and its history. 3) In the lower part of the site, remains from the Early Bronze Age are to be found on the surface of the mound. This enables excavators to uncover a large area

¹⁵⁹ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Tel Qiri: A Look at Village Life," *Biblical Archaeologist* (Spring 1979):111-113.

¹⁶⁰ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Early Bronze Age Cylinder Seal Impressions and a Stamp Seal from Tel Qashish," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 295 (Aug. 1994): 15-29.

¹⁶¹ Amnon Ben-Tor, Yuval Portugali and Miriam Avissar. "The First Two Seasons of Excavation at Tel Qashish, 1978-1979: Preliminary Report," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 31, No. 3-4 (1981): 137-164.

dating from that period and thus trace the plan of the Early Bronze Age settlement.¹⁶²

Among the more noteworthy finds from Tel Qashish were twenty cylinder seal impressions and one stamp seal, all dating to the Early Bronze Age. This is a significant number for such a small site. Four of these impressions, as well as the stamp seal, were dated to the Early Bronze Age I, while all of the other seal impressions date to the Early Bronze Age III.¹⁶³

C. Summary

Amnon Ben-Tor is a relatively unknown name among biblical scholarship yet, in the realm of archaeology, he is a giant. He has actively advanced the discipline of biblical archaeology for the past 30 years. As noted above, his most important work involves the continued excavations of Hazor. Through his work at Hazor, Ben-Tor has become a figurehead for most of the discussions on biblical archaeology. Ben-Tor is an example of an archaeologist who sees the correspondence between the Bible and archaeological finds. He has continued to hold that position in a new conversation going on in biblical archaeology: the minimalist vs. maximalist debate.

III. Minimalist vs. Maximalist

A. The Debate

One of the most controversial issues in modern biblical studies is the increasingly assertive contention that the Bible is essentially useless as a historical source, even for the period of the Israelite united monarchy (tenth century B.C.E.). David and Solomon, it is claimed, are mythological, not historical. The Bible, according to this school of thought,

¹⁶² Amnon Ben-Tor, Yuval Portugali and Miriam Avissar, 138.

¹⁶³ Amnon Ben-Tor, "Early Bronze Age Cylinder Seal Impressions and a Stamp Seal from Tel Qashish," 17.

can tell us only about the period in which it was written; naturally, these scholars contend that it was written late—in the Persian period (fourth century B.C.E.) or even in the Hellenistic period (third-second centuries B.C.E.).¹⁶⁴

This newer generation of biblical scholars sometimes style themselves “revisionists,” but others now regard them as “minimalists.”¹⁶⁵ The minimalists school argues against the Bible as history instead they hold several other conflicting viewpoints. These are the following: 1) All the texts of the Hebrew Bible in its present form date to the Hellenistic era. They are therefore unhistorical, of little or no value for reconstructing a “biblical” or an “ancient Israel,” both of which are simply modern Jewish and Christian literary constructs. 2) Interpretation of the biblical texts should be “liberated from historical consideration.” It should proceed strictly on the basis of literary analysis of the Bible’s stories, which reveal mainly the self-perception of the narrators. 3) This radically “anti-historic movement” in the study of ancient Israelite history has at last brought us such “new knowledge” that it makes all other approaches obsolete, indeed illegitimate. Those who persist in traditional approaches may be dismissed as either servants of the religious Establishment, or simply “crypto-Fundamentalists.” 4) Attempts to write any more histories of Israel should be abandoned. Instead, we should be writing “Palestinian history,” which American and Israeli biblicists and archaeologists have conspired to “suppress” because of their biblical and nationalistic biases.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴Hershel Shanks, “Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* (July/August 1997): 26.

¹⁶⁵The most common epithets nowadays seem to be: traditional vs. revisionist, maximalist vs. minimalist, positivist vs. nihilist, credulist/theist vs. skeptic, neo-conservative vs. scientific. Several of the minimalist have objected that these epithets are not helpful, however labeling the debate, especially the different camps, allows this heated argument to be better portrayed.

B. Meet the Minimalists

1. Philip R. Davies

Much of the present controversy began with Philip R. Davies, of the University of Sheffield, in his book *In Search of "Ancient Israel"* (1992).¹⁶⁷ Here Davies sets forth the basic revisionist premises noted above, which became the foundation for most subsequent discussions. Davies contends that there was no "ancient" or "biblical" Israel; and the "historical Israel" that archaeology might recover in theory is beyond our reach due to archaeology's deficiencies. Yet, nowhere does Davies document the basic premise on which his basic statement rests—that all literature of the Hebrew Bible in its present form was composed long after the fact, and thus yields no real "history."¹⁶⁸

2. Thomas L. Thompson

Thomas L. Thompson set out on this path, although apparently not deliberately, many years ago with his work *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (1974),¹⁶⁹ a radical attack on Albright and his school.¹⁷⁰ Thompson makes various statements in his work that put him in the minimalist school of thought. Among these are: 1) There were no real cities in the Bronze Age heartland (including Hazor). 2) Archaeology cannot distinguish

¹⁶⁶ The quotes above are all taken directly from current literature on the topic. The leading spokesmen of this movement are Phillip R. Davies, Thomas L. Thompson, Niels Peter Lemche and Keith W. Welham. The above agenda is perhaps seen most succinctly in Lemche, *Currents in Research* 4 (1996): 9-24. The agenda is also clear in Lemche and Thompson, "Did Brian Kill David? The Bible in Light of Archaeology," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 64 (1994): 3-22 (Dever, 26-27).

¹⁶⁷ JSOTSup 148 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992).

¹⁶⁸ Dever, 29; As for "Biblical Hebrew," Davies regards this as an artificial literary language that was invented by late scribes who wrote the Bible. He ignores the fact that we have hundreds, possibly thousands, of ostraca, inscriptions on stone, inscribed in pots, seals, and seal-impressions from well-dated 10th-6th century contexts, in precisely this "non-existent" Iron Age Hebrew (Dever, 30).

¹⁶⁹ *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, BZAW 133 (New York, NY: de Gruyter, 1974).

¹⁷⁰ See above, *The Golden Age and William F. Albright*.

Israelite from Canaanite culture. 3) Albright's Canaanites existed only in his head. 4) In the Iron I period (12th-11th centuries) the notion of an indigenous Israel...is historically meaningless. 5) The Bible's stories about Saul and David are no more factual than the tales of King Arthur. 6) There was no Judean state until the 7th century, because only a few dozen villagers lived as farmers in all the Judean highlands. 7) Jerusalem finally became a political and religious center or capital only in the 2nd century B.C.E. 8) The very existence of an exilic period...is open to serious challenge. 9) The concept of Israel was a literary and theological creation of the Persian, if not Hellenistic period. 10) Our new knowledge proves that the Hebrew Bible is a late Jewish construct. 11) There was no Judaism until the 2nd century A.D. and claims to the contrary are literary fiction.¹⁷¹

In his latest book, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel*, Thompson makes even more minimalist statements. Some of these are: 1) It is only a Hellenistic Bible we know: namely one that we first begin to read in the texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls near Qumran. 2) The Bible is not a history of anyone's past. 3) There was never a United Monarchy. 4) Gods are created, but the true God is unknown. 5) The [biblical] text doesn't speak to us, nor was it addressed to us. To pretend that it does and was, is among theology's least critical and most self-serving lies.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ See Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People from the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); *JBL* 114 (1995):683-698; "Historiography of Ancient and Early Jewish Historiography: "W.G. Dever and the Not so New Biblical Archaeology," in *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*, ed. Volkmar Fritz and Philip R. Davies, 26-43; "Defining History and Ethnicity in the South Levant," in Grabbe, *Can a "History of Israel" Be Written?*, 166-87.

¹⁷² Thompson, *The Mythic Past*, xiv, xv, 13, 32m 234, 305, 387. Thompson's book contains no footnotes or documentation.

3. Keith W. Whitelam

A more recent convert to minimalism is Keith W. Whitelam of the University of Stirling, who had earlier collaborated with Robert B. Coote in a settlement-history of ancient Palestine entitled *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective*.¹⁷³ This foray into archaeology was followed by Whitelam on his own in several programmatic sentiments on “early Israel.”¹⁷⁴ His first full-scale work appeared in 1996 entitled *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*.¹⁷⁵ Whitelam’s basic thesis is similar to that of Davies and Thompson, except for one twist. Not only have scholars been preoccupied with reconstructing an imaginary “ancient Israel,” but American and Israeli biblicists and archaeologists have meanwhile conspired to deprive modern Palestinians of their history.¹⁷⁶

Whitelam’s main arguments¹⁷⁷ are that both archaeology and biblical studies have conspired to “usurp Palestinian history” and that the conspiracy results from biases of European and American scholarship regarding an “ancient Israel,” as well as the program of Zionism coupled with modern Israeli archaeology. According to Whitelam, the ancient Israel of biblical studies is a scholarly construct based upon a misreading of the biblical tradition and divorced from historical reality. The result of the preoccupation with an “Israel” has been that in effect, Palestinian history, particularly for the thirteenth

¹⁷³ *Social World of Biblical Antiquity* 5 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987).

¹⁷⁴ Dever, 34.

¹⁷⁵ (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁷⁶ Dever, 35.

¹⁷⁷ See Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel*, esp. chs. 2-6.

century B.C.E. to the second century A.D. has not existed except as the backdrop to the histories of Israel and Judah or of Second Temple Judaism.¹⁷⁸

4. Niels Peter Lemche

Niels Peter Lemche, of the University of Copenhagen, came to international prominence in 1985 with what at the time seemed a revolutionary new socio-anthropological history, *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society Before the Monarchy* (popularized in 1988 as *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society*¹⁷⁹). By 1994, however, his mind had changed sufficiently that he could write a programmatic article entitled “Is it Still Possible to Write a History of Ancient Israel?” Practically speaking, his answer was No. His full-scale work in German in 1996 appeared in English in 1998, *Prelude to Israel’s Past: Background and Beginnings of Israelite History and Identity*. This was followed in 1999 by *Israelites in History and Tradition*. Lemche’s most recent works leave no doubts that his “history” is so minimal that it scarcely merits the term. For instance, David, Solomon, and the United Kingdom were all invented. And without a Davidic empire there was no Israel in the biblical sense.¹⁸⁰

Lemche’s view is that the biblical texts reveal only the self perception of the people who wrote this narrative, and that they lived in the Persian period in the Exile (6th-5th centuries). These genuine historical recollections of Israel’s history are not to be found in

¹⁷⁸ Dever, 35; As proof of this bias, Whitelam asserts that recent archaeological surveys of the West Bank have been heavily influenced by biblical scholarship and the all-consuming search for “ancient Israel.”

¹⁷⁹ (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988).

¹⁸⁰ Dever, 37-38.

the Old Testament historical narrative. For Lemche, as for other minimalists, the Hebrew Bible for the most part is only literature, not history.¹⁸¹

C. A Critique of the Methodology and Agenda of the Minimalists¹⁸²

The following are consistent fallacies within the minimalist camp: 1) All the minimalists follow in one way or another Davies' original 1992 attempt to distinguish three "Israels": "biblical" and "ancient" Israel, both of which are antiquarian and modern "social constructs," that is, fictitious; and a "historical" Israel, which admittedly did exist, although little can be said about it.¹⁸³ Dever argues that Davies is playing word-games here. The terms "ancient" and "historical" Israel clearly must refer to a single entity, however inadequately known one claims it to be, that is, the tangible Israel of the past.¹⁸⁴ 2) The minimalists, having isolated a "biblical" Israel as the principal focus of their attack, miss their target for several reasons. They fail to identify specifically what they mean by "biblical" Israel. There is no systematic, comprehensive, uniform portrait of Israel among the many writers of the Hebrew Bible. Lumping various Israels (i.e. of the Pentateuch, the Deuteronomistic Israel, of the Prophets, of the Wisdom, poetic, or apocalyptic literature) to discredit them does not do justice to the richness and variety of the biblical literature, nor does it constitute sound critical and historical method.¹⁸⁵ 3) Even when the minimalists do occasionally acknowledge the existence of a hypothetical Israel in the Iron Age (Davies' "historical Israel"), their approach is consistently minimal.

¹⁸¹ Dever, 40.

¹⁸² Much of the following comes from Dever's well-written book on the debate, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?*

¹⁸³ See Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel,"* 21-74.

¹⁸⁴ Dever, 45.

¹⁸⁵ Dever, 46.

Given their skepticism about the trustworthiness of one potential source, the texts of the Hebrew Bible, it is not surprising that they can salvage little useful information there. However, the fact is that one of the minimalists' major faults is that they ignore, cite selectively and cavalierly, misinterpret, distort, or otherwise abuse modern archaeology and the rich data that it produces.¹⁸⁶

D. Against the Minimalists: A Historically Based Bible

The central proposition of this section is that, contrary to the minimalists, who declare that the Hebrew Bible is not about history at all, i.e., that it is mere propaganda, the Hebrew Bible contains much history, as seen in conjunction with archaeological evidence.

One of the main issues against the minimalists is the question of whether we can recognize in the archaeological record an "early Israel," in the sense of an ethnic group that was different from its contemporaries. The minimalists uniformly say "no," so there is no "early Israel."

Israeli archaeologists, together with excavation in depth at a few sites (including Hazor), have revealed that in the heartland of ancient Israel about 300 small agricultural villages were founded in the late 13th-12th centuries B.C.E. These villages are located principally in the central hill country, stretching all the way from the hills of lower Galilee as far south as the northern Negev around Beersheba. Population estimates, based on well-developed ethnographic parallels and site size, indicate a central hill-country population of only about twelve thousand at the end of the Late Bronze Age (13th century), which then rapidly grew to about fifty-five thousand by the 12th century, then to about seventy-five thousand by the 11th century. Such a dramatic "population explosion"

¹⁸⁶ Dever, 47-48.

simply cannot be accounted for by natural increase alone, much less by positing small groups of pastoral nomads settling down.¹⁸⁷

Nearly all of the traits of these villages indicate that the village economy was based on mixed agro-pastoralism, dry farming of cereals, and localized exchange of agricultural surpluses and other products. Large multigenerational families would have been the mainstay and focus of such an economy. Similar agrarian lifestyles have characterized ancient Palestine in the rural areas in many periods, even in the mid-20th century A.D. But one aspect of what archaeologists are now distinguishing as “food systems” is unique: the consistent absence of pig bones in excavated remains.¹⁸⁸

Along with the archaeological evidence found at the village sites, there are also a number of other pieces of evidence that justify the proposal of an 12th-11th century Israel. One of these is the well known “Victory stele” of the 19th Dynasty Egyptian pharaoh Merneptah,¹⁸⁹ erected at Thebes in about his third year (ca. 1210 B.C.E.), which celebrates victories over a number of real or perceived enemies in Canaan.¹⁹⁰ The text of the stele lists several defeated peoples and then mentions “Israel,” who “is laid waste, its seed is not.”¹⁹¹ This stele represents our earliest and most secure extrabiblical textual

¹⁸⁷ Dever, 110.

¹⁸⁸ Dever, 113; Pork was relatively common in Bronze Age sites, pigs being well adapted to many areas. The statistical rarity of pig bones in Iron I hill-country sites—often absent altogether or composing only a fraction of a percent—may be an ethnic marker. In this case, it would be one consistent with later biblical data regarding the prohibition of pork in Israelite society, probably to be understood as a criterion in distinguishing “Israelite” from “Canaanite.” The presence or absence of pig bones may thus be our best archaeological indicator of the much-debated “ethnic boundaries” and their physical extent (Brian Hesse and Paula Wapnish, “Can Pig Remains Be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East?” in Neil A. Silberman and David B. Small, *The Archaeology of Israel*, 238-270).

¹⁸⁹ See Plate III.

¹⁹⁰ See Michael G. Hasel, *Domination and Resistance: Egyptian Military Activity in the Southern Levant, ca. 1300-1185 B.C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

reference to “Israel.” Although the minimalists argue that the mention of an “Israel” tells us nothing about its nature or location, the Merneptah stele tells us unequivocally that there does exist in Canaan a people calling themselves “Israel,” and thus called “Israel” by the Egyptians.¹⁹²

Another piece of archaeological evidence that confirms an early Israeli state is the “House of David” inscription on a victory stele.¹⁹³ According to most scholars, “The House of David” (BYTDWD, *Beth David*) is inscribed on this old Aramaic stele from Tel Dan in northern Galilee. In 1993 excavator Avraham Biran found the stele’s large right-hand fragment beneath an eighth-century B.C.E. wall; Biran later recovered two additional fragments and attempted to fit them into place. Apparently erected by the king of Damascus, the Tel Dan stele boasts of victories, in Biran’s reconstruction, over “[Jeho]ram son of Ahab, King of Israel” and [Ahaz]iah son of [Jehoram, ki]ng of the House of David.” The biblical rulers Jehoram (851-842 B.C.E.), of the northern kingdom of Israel, and Ahaziah (834 B.C.E.-842 B.C.E.) of the southern kingdom of Judah, were exact contemporaries—supporting a mid-ninth century B.C.E. date for the stele. The reference to the “House [or dynasty] of David” suggests that Judahite kings traced their

¹⁹¹ B. S. J. Isserlin, *The Israelites* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 56; Hershel Shanks, “Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers,” 30-31.

¹⁹² All scholars would agree that the date (1210) is fixed within a margin of less than five years by astronomical reckoning; that the reading “Israel” is certain; that “Israel” is followed by the Egyptian plural gentilic or determinative sign for “peoples,” rather than a kingdom, city-state, or the like, and must therefore designate some ethnic group; and that this entity, whatever it is, was distinct in the minds of the Egyptians from the Canaanites, Hurrians, Shasu-bedouin, or other groups in Canaan well known to Egyptian intelligence and mentioned in this and other Egyptian texts (Dever, 118).

¹⁹³ See Plate IV.

descent back to an actual David, who is traditionally believed to have lived a century earlier.¹⁹⁴

The Biblical minimalists, however, contending that David is a mere literary creation,¹⁹⁵ dispute this reading. They point out that the dots used to divide words in the Tel Dan inscription are absent in BYTDWD, which might indicate that the phrase is a place-name, like Bethlehem. It has also been suggested that DWD should be read not as *David* but as *Dod*, possibly meaning “beloved”—so that the phrase might be translated as “The House of the Beloved.”¹⁹⁶

One case-study in the possibilities of a dialogue between texts and artifacts is especially relevant, namely the well-known city gate and walls at Gezer. These were first excavated by R. A. S. Macalister in 1902-9. It was Yigael Yadin who first drew attention in modern times to the distinctive four-entryway gate and casemate (or double) city walls at Gezer, after he recognized almost identical gates and walls in his excavations at Hazor, in the 1950s and later on at Megiddo in the central Jezreel valley. Yadin knew his Hebrew Bible; so, in a brief 1958 article, he cited 1 Kings 9:15-17.¹⁹⁷ This text basically describes how Gezer was ceded by the Egyptians to Solomon after the pharaoh destroyed the city “by fire”; and how Solomon subsequently “built the wall” at Gezer, along with walls at Hazor, Megiddo, and Jerusalem. Yadin observed that the discovery of nearly

¹⁹⁴ Shanks, 34.

¹⁹⁵ Not only do the minimalists claim that David is mere fiction, they also vociferously deny that there ever was any such entity as the Hebrew Bible’s “United Monarchy,” or the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon (Dever, 124).

¹⁹⁶ Shanks, 34; the minimalists continue to hold this position even though we now have published opinions by most of the world’s leading epigraphers: the inscription means exactly what it says. Lemche and Thompson have gone so far as to imply that the inscription is a forgery, a hoax, planted on the unsuspecting dig director, Biran (Dever, 30).

¹⁹⁷ “Solomon’s City Wall and Gate at Gezer,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 8 (1958): 80-86.

identical 10th-century city walls and gates at three of the four sites listed in 1 Kings 9:15-17 could hardly be a coincidence. He took the convergence of the evidence and the text to imply that all these defenses could only have been constructed by a sort of “Royal Corps of Engineers” under Solomon’s highly centralized administration.¹⁹⁸

Between 1967 and 1971 the Hebrew Union College-Harvard Semitic Museum excavations at Gezer discovered that the casemate wall was founded above a deep destruction layer dated by the pottery to about the mid-10th century, the latter possibly the earlier Egyptian destruction in question. The gate as well was on top of a destruction layer. The pottery from this destruction layer included distinctive forms of red-slipped and slipped and hand-brushed (polished) pottery, which have always been dated to the late 10th century. Thus, on commonly accepted ceramics grounds—not on naïve acceptance of the Bible’s stories about “Solomon in all his glory”—is the Gezer Field city walls and gates dated to the mid-late 10th century. In addition to ceramic evidence, the datum provided by the well-known campaigns of the Egyptian Pharaoh Sheshonq, ca. 925 B.C.E., is used to fix the date of the destruction, and thus place the construction and major use-phases somewhat earlier. These would then fall within the ca. 970-930 date that the biblical accounts would give for Solomon’s reign.¹⁹⁹

There are other numerous correlations between archaeological artifacts and the Hebrew Bible, some of which are the administrative lists of King Solomon found in 1 Kings 4,²⁰⁰ the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem,²⁰¹ and certain pieces of evidence from

¹⁹⁸ Dever, 131; See Plate V.

¹⁹⁹ This evidence of centralization at Gezer, as well as Hazor and Megiddo, is used as proof of a Solomonic state in the 10th century, the heated denial of which is one of the basic building blocks of the minimalist agenda (Dever, 131-133); Shanks, 38-39; Isserlin, 136.

the House of the Bullae.²⁰² However, one more very important archaeological piece needs to be examined in detail in light of biblical text.

“Tribute of Jehu, Son of Omri” reads the cuneiform caption above the second register of the Black Obelisk. Erected by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III at Nimrud in about 841 B.C.E., the obelisk is carved with five registers depicting tributes paid to Shalmaneser by various kingdoms.²⁰³ Jehu (841-814 B.C.E.) has the dubious honor of being the only king of Israel or Judah whose actual portrait has survived to come down to us. Having just acceded to the throne, he capitulated to the Assyrian Shalmaneser and was forced to pay heavy tribute. Thus he is portrayed on the famous Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser, now in the British Museum, bowing in humiliation before the Assyrian King and kissing his feet. The biblical authors do not mention Jehu’s paying tribute,

²⁰⁰ Some of the names mentioned in that chapter of the Bible match with certain inscribed ostraca that have been found dating to that particular period. One of these very personal names in 1 Kings 4, “Alihud,” father of the governor of Meggido, occurs in all probability on one of our earliest Hebrew inscriptions (although partially broken), a 12th century inscribed jar handle found at Raddana, possibly biblical Beeroth (Frank Cross, Jr. and David Noel Freedman, “An Inscribed Jar Handle from Raddana,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 201 (1971): 19-22.

²⁰¹ The biblical descriptions of the temple in the Hebrew Bible found in 1 Kings 6-8 seem fantastic, literally unbelievable. The fabulous nature of Solomon’s temple in the Bible is largely what prompts the revisionists and others to dismiss it as a figment of a late writer’s imagination. The fact is that we now have direct Bronze and Iron Age parallels for every single feature of the Solomonic temple as described in the Hebrew Bible; and the best parallels come from, and only from, the Canaanite-Phoenician world of the 15th-9th centuries (William Dever, “Were There Temples in Ancient Israel? The Archaeological Evidence,” on *Text, Artifact and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. Theodore J. Lewis (2001).

²⁰² The House of the Bullae, built near the Stepped-Stone Structure just below the City of David, the oldest section of Jerusalem, has yielded the largest number of Hebrew seal impressions ever found in a controlled excavation. These bullae—lumps of clay on which seals were pressed to secure official documents—measure about a half-inch across; they were found in 1982 by archaeologist Yigal Shiloh, in a building destroyed during the Babylonian conquest of 586 B.C.E. Of the hoard of 51 bullae, 41 are legibly inscribed with their owners’ names. One of these names is known from the Bible: Gemariah son of Shaphan. Gemariah was a prominent member of the court of King Jehoiakim; it was from Gemariah’s chamber that Jeremiah’s scribe, Baruch, publicly read from the scroll containing Jeremiah’s prophecies (Jeremiah 36:10). Not only do these bullae suggest that pre-exilic Jerusalem was a city of some importance, but they help to confirm aspects of the Bible’s historical account (Shanks, 37).

²⁰³ Shanks, 41; See Plate VI.

either because they did not know about it or possibly because they were hesitant to reject a one-time revolutionary of whom they had originally approved. 2 Kings 10:28-32 reports only that “in those days the Lord began to trim off parts of Israel,” blaming the attrition on Jehu’s abandonment of “Yahweh only” policies that in their view had established his reign.²⁰⁴

This is one of many instances in which Biblical kings are attested in extra-biblical sources. Interestingly, Jehu is called “Son of Omri,” meaning that he was a member of the House (or dynasty) of Omri, who ruled Israel from 925-871 B.C.E.—another confirmation of the biblical account. A similar statement was found on the Tel Dan stele mentioning the House of David (see above).

E. A Hellenistic Period Hebrew Bible

The minimalists’ picture of a Hebrew Bible written almost entirely in the Hellenistic period, the date they now increasingly prefer, is a scenario. Not only is such a scenario unlikely, but the minimalists have never thought through the issue of what the Hebrew Bible would look like if it had actually been a literary product of the Hellenistic-early Roman era in Palestine.²⁰⁵

William Dever offers some aspects of the world of Hellenistic Palestine that would inevitably have been reflected in the biblical literature, had it actually been composed in this period. 1) The impact of the Greek worldview would surely be seen. Yet the

²⁰⁴ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know?*, 166; Isserlin, 85-86.

²⁰⁵ An example of this deficiency of knowledge is seen in the fact that Thompson’s *History* does not even cite the basic archaeological handbook, Ephraim Stern’s *The Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period, 538-332 B.C.*, or for that matter such standard works as Francis E. Peters’ *Harvest of Hellenism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970). Equally conspicuous by their absence from minimalists discussions and citations are fundamental works on the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual milieu of Palestinian Judaism, such as Martin Hengel’s *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) (Dever, 275).

outlook of the Hebrew Bible is pervasively Oriental reflecting an old order unaware of the new order of Hellenism. 2) The everyday things/situations of 4th-1st century Palestine would also be reflected if the Hebrew Bible stemmed from that period. Yet the Hebrew Bible betrays no trace of such a world, apart from the book of Daniel. Its relatively isolated world is still that of villages and small walled towns atop the old Bronze Age mounds. 3) Most significant of all, if its writers really meant it to be understood in this era, the Hebrew Bible would have been written mostly in Greek, which already in the Persian period had replaced Hebrew as the vernacular language of Palestine, or perhaps in Aramaic. Yet only portions of Ezra and Daniel, admitted as being late, are written in Aramaic; and there is no trace whatsoever of Greek. The Hebrew Bible is written almost entirely in Hebrew. It is the standard Hebrew of the Iron Age, as attested in hundreds of archaeologically well-dated ostraca, inscribed objects, seals and seal impressions, and even a few remains of monumental stelae. 4) Finally, the Persian-Hellenistic temple, especially the Hasmonean wars, centered around this shrine in the 2nd century B.C.E., would have provided the religious setting of the Hebrew Bible had it been a product of those times. Yet the temple is always Solomon's; and the stories of wars reflect nothing of the Hasmoneans and their struggle against Hellenization. In asking what the Hebrew Bible would look like if it were really a Hellenistic religious document, we need to recognize that we actually have such literature. First, there is the biblical book Daniel, almost certainly written in the context of the Hasmonean wars of the 2nd century, although of course artificially set in the Babylonian-Persian period for literary effect. And it is no coincidence that the last chapter of Daniel clearly presupposes the Greek notion of the immortality of the soul totally foreign to ancient Israel. Daniel is what a

“Hellenistic Bible” might look like; and it is atypical, indeed unique, in the corpus of the Hebrew Bible. The books of 1-2 Maccabees are even better comparisons. In light of the minimalist’s argument that the Hebrew Bible is a piece of Hellenistic literature, the only plausible conclusion one might reach is that the biblical writers simply invented the story of an ancient Israel in the Iron Age and got right virtually every detail that we can now affirm.²⁰⁶

F. Conclusion

This section has sought to counter the minimalists’ conclusions by showing how archaeology uniquely provides a context for many of the narratives in the Hebrew Bible. It thus makes not just “stories” arising out of later Judaism’s identity crisis (with Hellenism), but a part of the history of a real people of Israel in the Iron Age of ancient Palestine. The archaeological evidence must be given as much weight as the biblical text in determining the history and fact of the Israelite people. As Joseph A. Callaway of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary concluded, henceforth it is the archaeological evidence, not the textual, that will be decisive in understanding Israelite origins.²⁰⁷ Evidence examined in this section argues that an entity named Israel did exist and that the archaeological evidence coincides with biblical text to give us a picture of this people. As Amnon Ben-Tor stated in response to Dr. Herzog of Tel-Aviv University, “there is a large measure of glorification in the Bible,” but he states that inscriptions and excavations from the 10th century B.C.E. show the ancient Hebrews had established a state ruled by

²⁰⁶ Dever, 275-277.

²⁰⁷ Joseph A. Callaway, “Response,” in *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology*, Jerusalem, April, 1989, ed. J. Amitai (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 72-78.

David and Solomon, that was substantial if not magnificent. Thus the minimalists' are incorrect in their statements.

IV. Conclusion

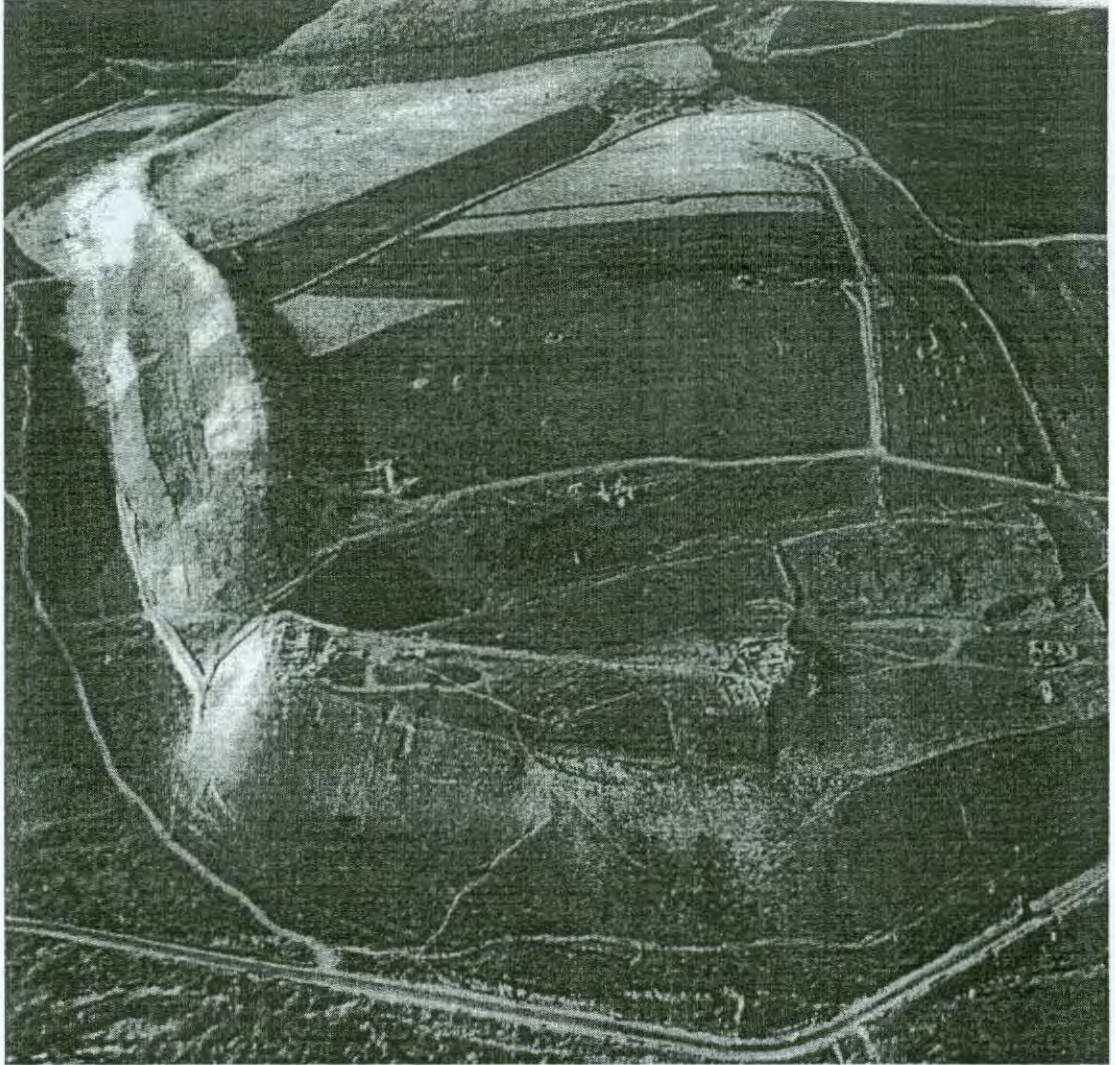
This thesis has attempted to enter into the conversation of Biblical Archaeology. First, the history surrounding the discipline has been examined along with key figures that have furthered Biblical Archaeology to its current state. Next, a particularly important site (Hazor) as well as the ground-breaking archaeologist at the site (Amnon Ben-Tor) was discussed with special emphasis on the current developments of the site. Finally, the most controversial discussion within Biblical Archaeology was surveyed. What has all this research done? It has allowed this study to “engage in the conversation”; to take the first beginning steps in a discipline that has both individual merit as well as the ability to integrate the material into other disciplines such as biblical studies.

All three of the sections are connected in some manner. The first section laid the foundation for further research. Before Hazor was examined in detail, it was good to have a basic knowledge of biblical archaeology's past. Next, Hazor and Amnon Ben-Tor served as examples of the current fieldwork in the discipline; particularly a model of an archaeologist who finds that the Bible and archaeological discoveries do correspond. Finally, engaging the minimalist debate allowed this study to connect biblical archaeology with a more familiar field—biblical studies, as well as insight into the future work of the Biblical Archaeology. A look at Hazor and the connection between it and the Bible attempted to demonstrate to the reader that archaeologists argue that sites do correspond to the Bible. The minimalist position refutes this position. It is important to

examine the minimalist position and dialogue with it in order to come to a decision if there can be such a field as Biblical Archaeology. As stated earlier the goal of this thesis was to inform the reader of current discussions within the field of Biblical Archaeology and to give them a foundation for further research. This thesis has served its purpose.

Plate I

Aerial view of Hazor (1999).¹



¹ Amnon Ben Tor, "Hazor," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. Eric Meyers, Vol. 3. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Plate II

Amnon Ben-Tor at Hazor.¹

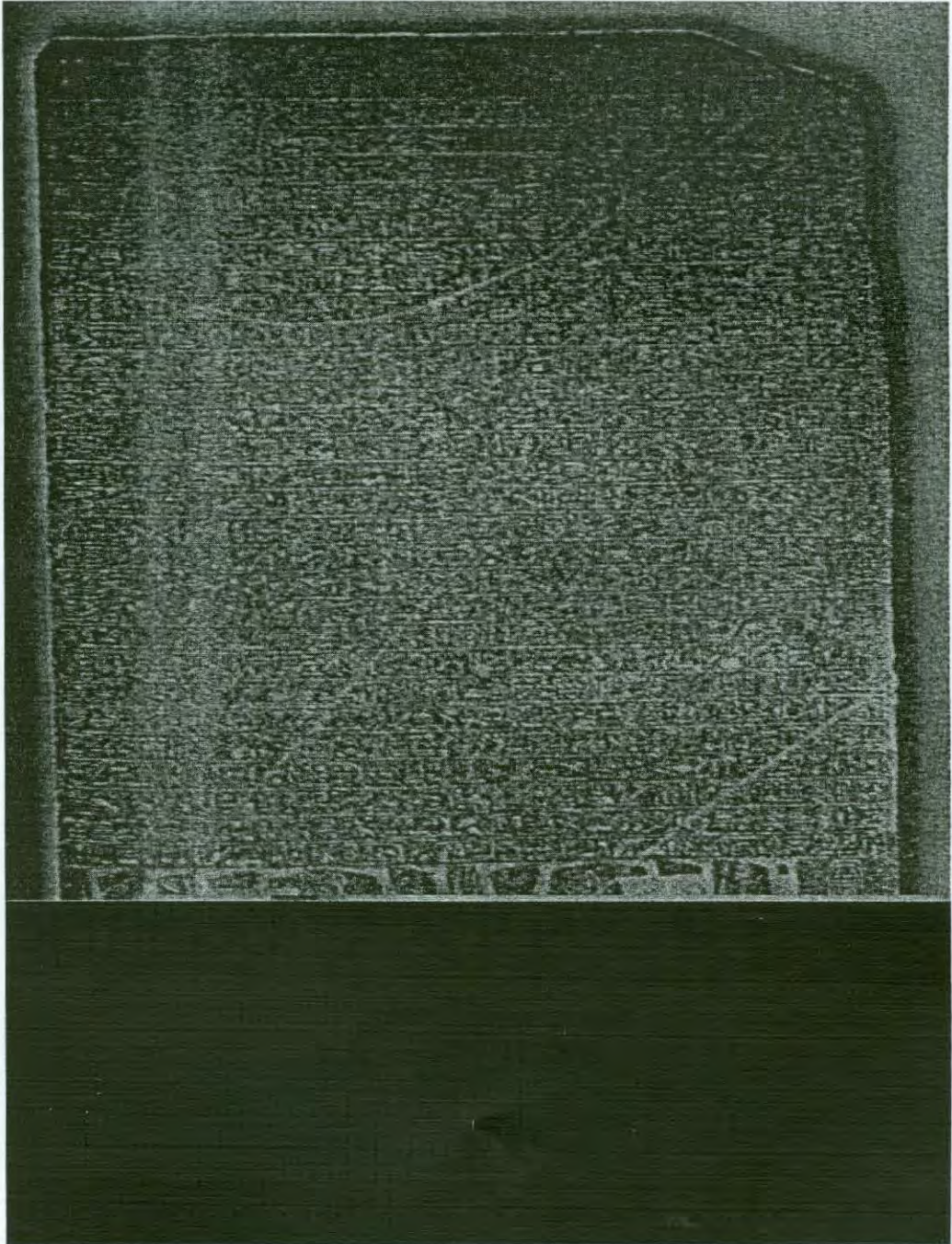


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¹ Amnon Ben Tor, *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1992).

Plate III

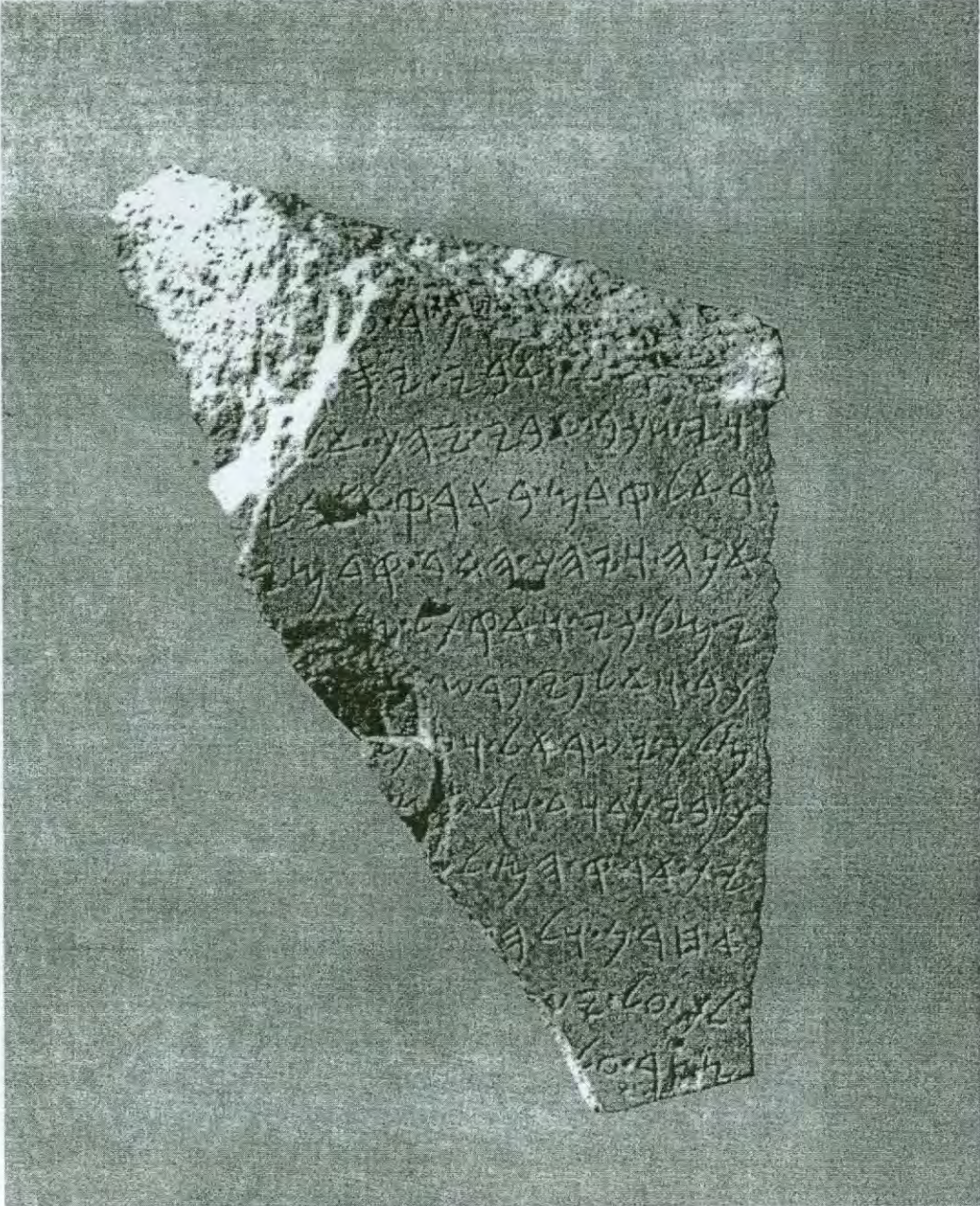
The Merenptah Stele.¹



¹Hershel Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (July/August 1997): 26.

Plate IV

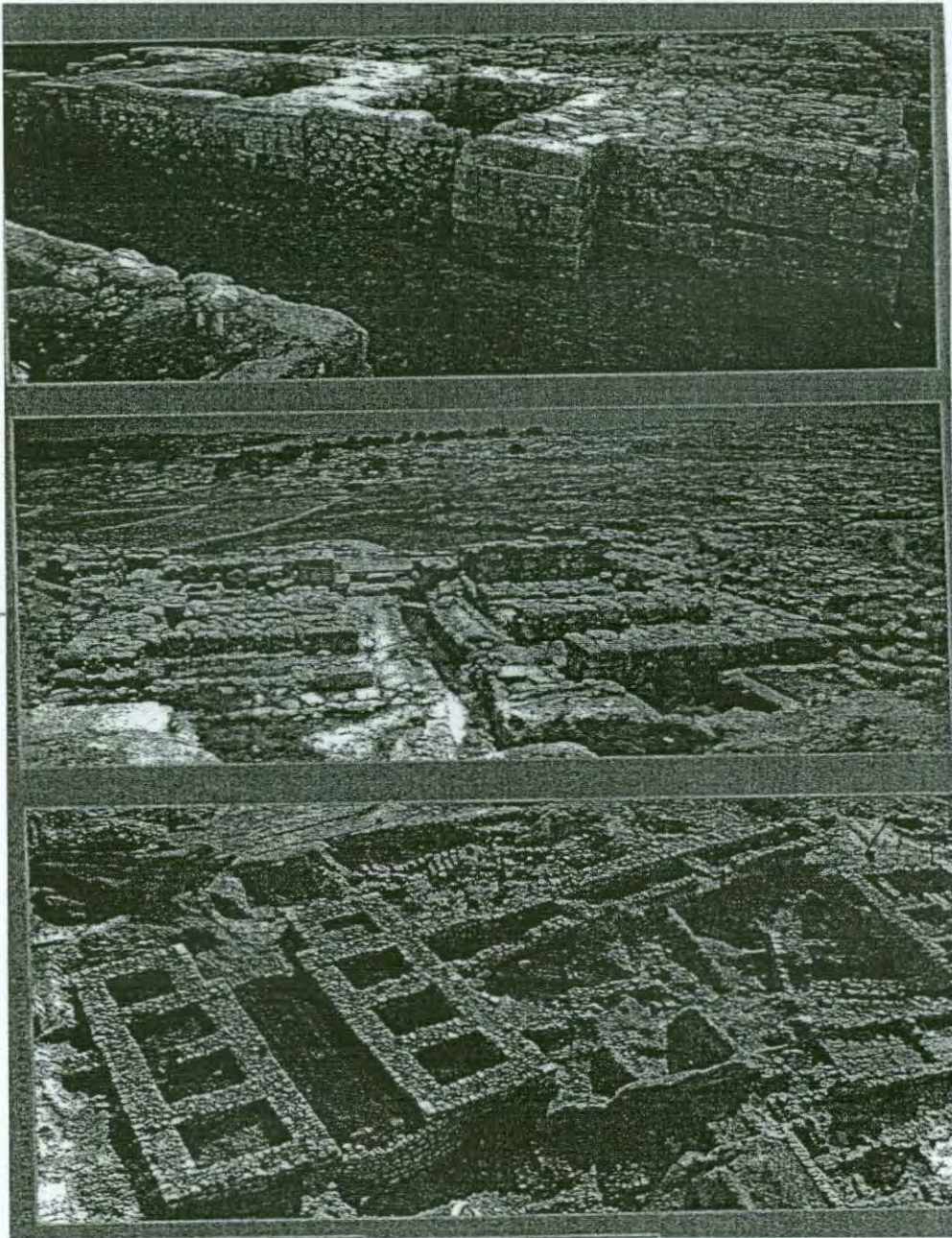
The “House of David” Stele found at Tel Dan.¹



¹Hershel Shanks, “Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* (July/August 1997): 26.

Plate V

The three gate structures found at 1)Meggido, 2)Gezer, and 3)Hazor.¹



¹ Hershel Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (July/August 1997): 26.

Plate VI

The Shalmaneser ("Jehu") Obelisk.¹



¹ Hershel Shanks, "Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers," *Biblical Archaeology Review* (July/August 1997): 26.

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