

# The Bible vs. Archaeology, You Decide.

**ABSTRACT:** This article comprehensively links sequential archaeological periods to the Bible rather than the Bible to archaeological periods dated by Egyptian history. The Bible, rather than a flawed Egyptian chronology, is used to date each period. Israel, normally placed in the Iron Age, is a Bronze Age culture. The Exodus starts the MBI, settled Israel starts the MBII, and the monarchy starts the LB. A corrected chronology results in a refreshingly convincing agreement between the Bible and archaeology at every period.

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## THE PROBLEM

The Bible and archaeologists do not tell the same story. The conquest of Canaan is a good example: The Bible says Joshua conquered the whole region leaving no survivors (Josh 10:42 cf. 11:16-23). Archaeologists say Israel “emerged” from among the Canaanite peoples without a conquest.<sup>1</sup> They say this because there is evidence of neither culture change nor comprehensive conquest. Archaeology has proved the Bible wrong.

Major differences between the Bible and archaeology are: There is no evidence of the destruction of Egypt by plagues at the Exodus. There is no evidence of a forty-year wilderness wandering, no evidence of a rapid and complete conquest by Joshua, and no evidence for a wealthy internationally trading kingdom of Israel under King Solomon, etc.

Properly interpreted archaeology should tell the same story as the Bible. The big details should match: plagues destroyed Egypt, Israel wandered forty years in the wilderness, Israel attacked and conquered Canaan, etc. Most recent archaeologists deny there is substantial evidence for these events.

Archaeologists cannot necessarily tell whether a culture is Canaanite or Israelite. They can tell cities were destroyed, but not necessarily how they were destroyed. They can tell the inhabitants were city dwellers or nomads. They can tell the difference between a poor local economy and a rich international economy. Most reconcilers pick one event, such as the Exodus or conquest of Canaan, not the big picture. The big details should match, but as currently interpreted, they do not. The goal of this article is to look at the big picture and provide a solution.

## BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY CHALLENGED

A few archaeologists have challenged the standard Biblical chronology. Rudolph Cohen, in “The Mysterious MBI People,” asked, “Does the Exodus tradition in the Bible preserve the memory of their entry into Canaan?” He answers yes; they may be Israel because only the MBI people match the Bible.<sup>2</sup> The problem is the MBI (Middle Bronze I Age) period ends *c.* 2000 B.C. over five hundred years before a *c.* 1450 B.C. Exodus. In another article, Emmanuel Anati asks, “Has Mt. Sinai Been Found?” He answers yes if we can place the Exodus in the Bronze

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony J. Frendo, “Five Recent Books on the Emergence of Ancient Israel: Review Article,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (July-Dec. 1992. London) 144.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolph Cohen, “The Mysterious MBI People,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9, 4 (July/Aug. 1983) 16.

Age Complex: c. 3200-1550 B.C. He also shows parallels between the Exodus and Egyptian literature in the First Intermediate Period.<sup>3</sup> Cohen and Anati do not have an archaeological problem with the Exodus story, but a chronological problem.

## **EGYPT, BASIS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL CHRONOLOGY**

Egypt holds a unique place in archaeology because its chronology is “fixed” and early. Egyptian chronology is fixed because it is based on written records tied to fixed risings of the star Sirius dating to c. 1870 B.C. Biblical archaeological chronology is tied to Egyptian chronology. Sir Flinders Petrie discovered pottery-dated stratigraphy, the ability to date debris layers by pottery. Pottery was similar over large areas and changed slowly with time. Pieces of broken pottery had little value; therefore, generally, stay in the strata where they first fell. Petrie linked the ubiquitous pottery pieces to Egyptian chronology. He linking the relative pottery chronology to the fixed Egyptian chronology, Biblical chronology became fixed.

## **THE SOLUTION**

Two questions arise: Does the Bible agree with a corrected chronology in all periods? Is there any reason to suspect an astronomically based chronology may be inaccurate? The short answer to both questions is yes. With a corrected chronology, these problems disappear, as will be shown below; but there is a new problem, how does one account for the excess six hundred years. I will deal with this later.

This revised archaeological interpretation assumes the ‘confirmed star dates’ are inaccurate. God said, “Once more . . . I will shake the heavens” (Haggai 2:6). Did God shake the heavens in the past? If God shook the heavens, ‘star dating’ can be challenged. The Bible also says God shakes the earth from its place (Job 9:6). If the earth’s orbit changed, dating by the rising Sirius may be invalid. Two stories in the Bible indicate a change in the stable progression of the earth in its orbit: Joshua’s long day and Hezekiah’s going back of the shadow of the sun.<sup>4</sup> God lengthened a day to twice its length c. 1400 B.C. God caused the shadow of the sun to reverse its normal direction for a time c. 700 B.C. These events challenge the assumption the rising of Sirius is a dateable event. Then Egyptian chronology could be wrong and, therefore, the archaeologist’s chronology of the Bible. For more details, see [Joshua’s Long Day](#).<sup>5</sup>

This article will look at the periods before and after the MBI period to see if a chronological shift makes sense. Cohen and Anati’s MBI people will be used as the reference for the Israelites when looking backward and forwards in time.

The following chart summarizes the big picture during the archaeological periods and may aid the reader in understanding the standard view and the proposed view of each period. The proposed chronology used for the Biblical periods follows the dates normally used if archaeology is not used to amend the chronology of the Bible.

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<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Anati, “Has Mt. Sinai Been Found?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11, 4 (July/Aug. 1985) 45, 57.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Kgs 20:11; Is 38:8; Josh 10:13-14; Dan 2:21 He changes times and seasons.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Killian, “Joshua’s Long Day And Other Pole Shifts Recorded in the Bible,” 2007, [www.scripturescholar.com/JoshuasLongDay.htm](http://www.scripturescholar.com/JoshuasLongDay.htm)

Archaeology Period		Egyptian Period	Date Standard (length)	Date Proposed (length)	Brief Palestinian Archaeology Description	Standard Interpretation	Proposed Interpretation	
Early Bronze Age (EB)	I	Pre-dynastic	3300 (250)	2450 (250)	Unfortified cities emerge with regional diversity. <sup>1</sup>	Before Abraham	Before Abraham	
	II	Archaic Period	3050 (350)	2200 (350)	Cities become fortified with public buildings, intensive urbanization. <sup>2</sup>		<b>Patriarchs to Canaan</b> <sup>3</sup>	
	III	Old Kingdom	2700 (400)	1850 (400)	Growth, very similar to EB II, with impressive formidable fortifications. <sup>4</sup>		<b>Israel in Egypt</b>	
EB <sup>5</sup> OR MB	IV I	1st Intermediate	2300 (300)	1450 (50) <sup>6</sup>	Nomads destroy every city but don't settle. Mostly cemeteries. <sup>7</sup> No Egyptian presence.	Before Abraham <sup>8</sup>	<b>Wandering &amp; Conquest</b>	
Middle Bronze Age (MB)	IIA	Middle Kingdom	2000 (200)	1400 (200)	"Mighty City-States," totally new urban population. <sup>9</sup>	Patriarchal Period	<b>Israel Settles</b>	
	IIB		1800 (150)	1200 (100)	Increased settlement & urban growth. No cultural break. Hazor was great.	Israel in Egypt	<b>Judges Rule</b>	
	IIC	2nd Intermediate	1650 (100)	1100 (100)	Increased settlement & urban growth. No cultural break. Prosperity zenith. <sup>10</sup>		<b>United Israel</b>	
Late Bronze Age (LB)	IA	New Kingdom	1550 (80)	1000 (70)	No cultural break, Little Egyptian presence. International marine trade. <sup>11</sup>		<i>Exodus</i>	<b>United Israel</b>
	IB		1470 (100)	930 (230)	Egypt conquers & influences <sup>12</sup> No walls or breaks, declining population/urbanization <sup>13</sup>	<b>Israel &amp; Judah</b>		
	IIA		1400 (100)	700 (90)	Cities destroyed at various times & places, partial urban revival, Conquest in Canaan <sup>14</sup>	<i>Wandering &amp; Conquest</i>		<b>Judah; Assyrian Conquest</b>
	IIB		1300 (100)	610 (20)	No cultural break, Hittites powerful. Bible is the only record of public construction. <sup>15</sup>	<i>Judges Rule</i> <sup>17</sup>		Babylonian Conquest 1
Iron Age	IA	1200 (50)	590 (10)	No-break. Strong Egyptian presence. Two waves of destruction. Turmoil. <sup>16</sup>	<b>Babylonian Conquest 2-3</b>			
	IB	1150 (150)	580 (50)	Egyptian control ends. Subsistence pottery, no public buildings, small Population. <sup>18</sup>	<b>Babylonian Captivity</b>			
Iron Age	IIA	Late Period	1000 (75)	530 (200)	Sparse evidence. Urban culture begins. Poor unwalled villages. Dark age. <sup>19</sup>	<i>United Israel</i>	<b>Persian</b>	
	IIB		925 (195)	330 (160)	Jerusalem, a metropolis <sup>20</sup> Well studied, but few remains until c. 800.	<i>Israel &amp; Judah</i>	Greek	
	IIC		720 (135)	170 (120)	Great prosperity in Judah. Hardly known outside Judah. <sup>21</sup>	Judah	Maccabean	
<b>Babylon Persian</b>			585 (535)	50 (0)	Remains very rare; until recently, most obscure. Iron culture continues. <sup>22</sup>	Captivity to Herod	Roman	

**Bold** text indicates the Biblical period **matches** the archaeological of the period.

*Italic* text indicates the archaeology of the period *does not match* the Biblical account.

Many of the standard dates vary by up to one hundred years from one author to the next.

Footnotes for this page are on the last page.

## ABRAHAM

Big picture differences between the Bible and archaeology in Abraham's days hinge on the existence of certain walled cities in Canaan. According to the Bible, Abraham migrated to Canaan c. 2050 B.C. It was a time when there were walled cities at Shechem, Hebron, and Sodom and a time when Bethel, Ai, Hebron, Jerusalem, and Gerar, were cities (and probably walled) in Canaan.<sup>6</sup> During this period, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. This period was during the Middle Bronze Age I (MBI), which archaeologists date to c. 2300-2000 B.C. At the start of the MBI period, all walled cities in Canaan were destroyed and not rebuilt until the MBII period.<sup>7</sup> Genesis mentions walled cities in Canaan in Abraham's day; therefore, most archaeologists place him after the MBI period. If so, then Ai, Sodom, and Gomorrah were in ruins in Abraham's day.

If the MBI people are the Israelites, then Abraham lived back in the EBII period, a time when these walled cities existed. Abraham must have entered Canaan before Ai, Sodom, and Gomorrah were destroyed and abandoned during the EB.<sup>8</sup>

## JOSEPH

Archaeologists place Joseph during Egypt's Middle Kingdom or in the Second Intermediate Period. There is no record of the seven-year famine or Joseph's service as vizier.

In this interpretation, Joseph entered Egypt during the third dynasty near the start of the Old Kingdom. It was a period of very high cultural achievement.<sup>9</sup> The Step Pyramid built by Djoser, the second pharaoh of the third dynasty, was the first pyramid. Imhotep was Djoser's second in command, Egypt's most renowned vizier.

Joseph was made vizier over all Egypt after he interpreted the pharaoh's dream. The dream was there would be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine (Gen 41:46, 53-54). In the reign of Djoser, there was a seven-year famine.<sup>10</sup> This seven-year famine is the only one in Egyptian history, and it precisely parallels the famine recorded in the Bible.

A second parallel between Djoser's reign and the Bible are dreams and their interpretation. The same stele that records the seven-year famine also records a dream of Pharaoh Djoser. Imhotep, his foreign-born vizier, interpreted that dream. The interpretation of this dream reveals the method for making a concrete-like stone for use in the construction of pyramids.<sup>11</sup> God taught Pharaoh through Joseph how to make the pyramids.

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<sup>6</sup> All in Genesis: Shechem 34:20, Hebron 23:2, Sodom 19:1, Bethel & Ai 13:3, Hebron 13:18, Jerusalem 14:18, Gerar 20:1.

<sup>7</sup> Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 3rd ed. (New York: Prager Publications, 1970) 134.

<sup>8</sup> Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 143.

<sup>9</sup> W. C. Hayes, "Chronology: Egypt—to the End of the Twentieth Dynasty," C. J. Gadd, I. E. S. Edwards, and N. G. L. Hammond, eds., *Cambridge Ancient History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968) 175-6.

<sup>10</sup> G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, New and rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 56.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Davidovits and Margie Morris, *The Pyramids: an Enigma Solved* (New York: Hippocrene, 1988) 143.

On this same stele, priests advised Ptolemy V in 186 B.C. to build a dam to stop a famine due to flooding. They discovered this solution by researching the ending of Djoser's famine.<sup>12</sup> The solution was to build a dam to direct part of the Nile flood into the Faiyum. The name of the river created by this dam is River Joseph.<sup>13</sup> Was this river named to memorialize the architect?

## **THE EXODUS OUT OF EGYPT**

Archaeologists agree if there was an Exodus, it occurred sometime during the prosperous New Kingdom typically dated c. 1550-1085 B.C. During this period, Egypt was an empire, and there is no sign of devastating plagues, millions of slaves leaving, sudden collapse, long periods of anarchy, or a missing pharaoh and his army. The plagues and Exodus of Israel had an imperceptible effect on life in Egypt.

The Bible says a pharaoh of Egypt harshly oppressed Israel for eighty years. Then God sent ten plagues and destroyed Egypt. He destroyed all Egypt's trees, crops, livestock, firstborn, army, and pharaoh. He then led millions of her slaves out with large flocks and the wealth of Egypt. The disastrous effects in Egypt persisted at least forty years and were remembered fearfully three hundred years later.<sup>14</sup> The Bible does not mention Egypt again as a nation until King Saul, about four hundred years later.

In this revised interpretation, the Exodus occurred (c. 1450 B.C.) at the end of the Old Kingdom. This period corresponds to the start of the MBI. The next to the last pharaoh of the Old Kingdom was Pepi II. "When he died, the whole vigorous, complex, coherent structure of the united kingdom of Egypt fell in ruins, and a time of anarchy ensued."<sup>15</sup> The time Moses spent in Midian as a shepherd corresponds to the last years of Pepi II's ninety-four-year reign. The Ipuwer Papyrus<sup>16</sup> records the plagues and devastation from the Egyptian viewpoint, strikingly paralleling the Bible.<sup>17</sup>

No one has found the mummy of Pepi II's successor, because he drowned in the Red Sea. The Bible explains why the mighty Old Kingdom of Egypt suddenly collapsed into anarchy. The plagues in great part destroyed the nation of Egypt, Israel left behind a kingdom that had only a shadow of its former glory, and her pharaoh drowned in the sea.

## **ISRAEL WANDERS THE WILDERNESS**

Archaeologists discount the Bible because not a single find has been made in the desert between the Middle Bronze II and the Late Bronze Age, the entire period typically dated from c. 2000-1200 B.C.<sup>18</sup> Finkelstein said there is "not a shred of evidence" providing information on the Exodus. Further, it is "extremely unlikely" new materials will be found to allow serious

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<sup>12</sup> Davidovits and Morris, *The Pyramids: an Enigma Solved*, 142.

<sup>13</sup> (*Bahr Yusef*) National Geographic, *Atlas of the World*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 1981) 181:X2.

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 9:6, 25; 10:15; 12:29,37; Psalm 136:15; Deuteronomy 11:3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Mertz, *Temples, Tombs and Hieroglyphs*, rev. ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1964, 1978) 96.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (London: Oxford University Press paperback 1964, Clarendon, 1961) 110.

<sup>17</sup> Velikovsky, *Ages In Chaos*, 22-39.

<sup>18</sup> Y. Aharoni, "The Negeb," *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, D. Winton Thomas, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 386.

archaeological research on the Exodus and desert wanderings.<sup>19</sup> Israel left nothing to indicate their presence. The city of Arad did not exist between c. 2300 and 1000 B.C. It simply was not there for Israel to conquer.

According to the Bible, God led Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea c. 1450 B.C. They spent a year camped at Mt. Sinai and then nearly forty years wandering the desert. Near the end of this wandering, they attacked and destroyed the city of Arad, a city in southern Canaan.

In this revised interpretation, a large population of nomads, Israel, suddenly and briefly occupied the desert. They show up at Mt. Sinai (Har Karkom). These nomads wandered exclusively in the desert proper, not in the better land to the north. Their pottery indicates they were a sedentary people from Egypt living as nomads.<sup>20</sup> The evidence of their wandering is abundant, but their presence remains a puzzle.<sup>21</sup> The main evidence of their presence is a distinctive form of pottery made on a fast wheel, for they built few structures. Millions of Israelites ‘wandered’ the desert for forty years; their remains are abundant and scattered widely. Israel destroyed Arad as they left the area.

### **ISRAEL IN THE TRANSJORDAN**

Archaeologists place the Exodus at a time when Edom and Moab were countries of nomads. There is some evidence of small settlements, but no fortified cities. Heshbon destroyed by Moses did not exist between c. 2300 and 1200 B.C.

At the end of the wilderness wandering, Moses led Israel to the plains of Moab. The route led through Edom and Moab. But the kings of Edom and Moab denied them passage through their territories. Moses complied and led Israel around these two countries. During the MBI period, there were populations in walled cities in these countries. In these countries, the EB culture continued after the MBI culture started elsewhere. Israel left Edom and Moab alone.

Then the Amorites attacked Israel. Israel destroyed them and their capitol Heshbon and captured their territory (Num 21:21-25). Moses then turned northeast up the road toward Bashan and destroyed everyone and all their sixty fortified cities (Deut 3:1-5). Glueck found in the Transjordan, a long line of fortified sites destroyed during the MBI. These sites reached from Transjordan to Syria and were never reoccupied, matching the destructions of the Amorites and Bashan. The MBI pottery is unique and amazingly uniform wherever they find it.<sup>22</sup>

### **ISRAEL CONQUERS CANAAN**

Archaeologists find little evidence for the conquest of Canaan by Israel. There was an almost total lack of fortifications during this period.<sup>23</sup> Rather than taking Canaan by conquest, Israel peacefully emerges from among the Canaanites.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Bible, Joshua led Israel in their conquest of Canaan. Millions of Israelites crossed the Jordan and camped out near Jericho for six years while they conquered Canaan,

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<sup>19</sup> Israel Finkelstein, “Raider of the Lost Mountain—An Israeli Archaeologist Looks at the Most Recent Attempt to Locate Mt. Sinai,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 15, 4 (July/Aug. 1988) 46.

<sup>20</sup> Aharoni, “The Negeb,” 388. Cohen, “The Mysterious MBI People,” 25.

<sup>21</sup> Aharoni, “The Negeb,” 386.

<sup>22</sup> Nelson Glueck, *The Other Side of the Jordan*. (Cambridge, Mass.: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1970) 139-43.

<sup>23</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 239.

<sup>24</sup> Frendo, “Five Recent Books on the Emergence of Ancient Israel: Review Article,” 144.

starting with Jericho. They conquered seven nations, killed thirty-one kings, and destroyed their cities. The cities were large and fortified. Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He destroyed all who breathed (Josh 10:40). Joshua destroyed Jericho c. 1400 B.C.

The MBI people now show up in Canaan as conquerors. The Bible says, “Joshua destroyed every city on its mound.” Miss Kenyon emphasizes this,

The final end of the Early Bronze Age civilisation came with catastrophic completeness. The last of the Early Bronze Age walls of Jericho was built in a great hurry, using old and broken bricks, and was probably not completed when it was destroyed by fire. Little or none of the town inside the walls has survived denudation, but it was probably completely destroyed, for all the finds show that there was an absolute break, and a new people took the place of the earlier inhabitants. *Every town in Palestine that has so far been investigated shows the same break. The newcomers were nomads, not interested in town life, and they so completely drove out or absorbed the old population, perhaps already weakened and decadent, that all traces of the Early Bronze Age civilisation disappeared.*<sup>25</sup> [Emphasis added]

Ai seems to require the MBI people to be Israel. One can say we do not know the site of this city (very unlikely), someone made up the story of the destruction of Ai, or the Entrance occurred in the MBI period.<sup>26</sup> Ai provides an excellent additional correlation between the Bible and this interpretation. Here is a picture of the heap of stones built at the city gate (Josh 8:29).<sup>27</sup>

At Jericho, after the city was destroyed, there was a prolonged camping occupation. Israel camped at Gilgal (near Jericho), while they conquered the land. Their pottery was brittle,<sup>28</sup> which may account for the frequency of the finds.

Primary evidence of the MBI people is the shaft tomb. In the area around Jericho, there are numerous shaft tombs built by the Israelites while they conquered Canaan.<sup>29</sup> The tombs evidence a large and virile population, but the graves are frequently just a bag of disarticulated bones.<sup>30</sup> These are the bones of the Israelites who died in the wilderness and Egypt. Joseph’s bones were taken from Egypt and buried in Shechem (Gen 50:25; Ex 13:19; Josh 24:32; Acts 7:16). A shaft tomb is a tomb dug down into a level area. There are several types of tombs, evidencing a tribal organization, with each group maintaining its own burial customs.<sup>31</sup> The tombs show a clear Egyptian influence.<sup>32</sup> The tombs also show they came “from a comparatively civilised area, in

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<sup>25</sup> Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 3rd ed. (New York, Prager Publications, 1970) 134.

<sup>26</sup> Ziony Zevit, “The Problem of Ai,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, 11, 2 (Mar., 1985) 59-61.

<sup>27</sup> [http://tech.ph.groups.yahoo.com/group/ancient\\_chronology/photos/view/8208?b=1](http://tech.ph.groups.yahoo.com/group/ancient_chronology/photos/view/8208?b=1).

<sup>28</sup> Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 153, 136.

<sup>29</sup> When John the Baptist said God could raise up sons of Abraham from these stones, he was likely referring to Israel buried here (Luke 3:8). This is also the valley of dry bones (Eze 37:1).

<sup>30</sup> Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 139.

<sup>31</sup> Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 137.

<sup>32</sup> Kathleen M. Kenyon, “Jericho,” *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, D. Winton Thomas, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 271.

which there was a well-developed architectural tradition.”<sup>33</sup>

## ISRAEL SETTLES CANAAN

Between c. 1900 and 1200 B.C., there is clear evidence of no cultural break and only gradual culture change after that.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, archaeologists infer Israel absorbed the Canaanite culture. The population and settlement declined. Local conflicts caused much disruption during this period.<sup>35</sup> Archaeologists have Canaan controlled by Egypt as a part of its empire to a greater or lesser extent throughout the New Kingdom. They see the stronger Egyptian control as the periods of peace mentioned in the Bible. These include conquests and rule of Canaan by Pharaohs Rameses II and Seti I.

The Bible says after the conquest, Israel settled in the land. So God gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there (Josh 21:43). Some Canaanites reappeared with iron chariots, settling the coastal plain and the valley of Jezreel at least to Beth Shan. Israel settled, particularly in the hill country. Judges then ruled Israel for more than three hundred years. During that period, Israel was conquered and briefly controlled at different times by most of the surrounding nations except Egypt.

In this revised interpretation, Israel now settles Canaan. The culture change Archaeologists place at c. 1900, is Israel c. 1400. The settlement pattern is one of the best indications of a cultural change. Finkelstein wrote on the settlement pattern during the EB, MBI, and MB periods. He says, during the Early Bronze Age, there were 118 settlement sites in the hill country, all but one were abandoned during the MBI. During the MBI, there are 49 mostly small settlement sites clustered in the desert in the eastern half of the country, evidenced mainly by cemeteries.<sup>36</sup> Then during the MBII, there is an unprecedented wave of settlement in the hill country; there are 248 sites, including about half the MBI sites and nearly all the Early Bronze sites.<sup>37</sup> These events exactly describe what happened when Israel entered Canaan. The EB people are the Canaanites. Israel, the MBI people, camped out for six years, mainly at Gilgal while conquering Canaan (Josh 4:19; 9:6; 10:15; 10:43; 14:6). Then Israel, the MBII culture, occupied the land after the conquest (Josh 21:43).

With the Judges, we enter into the Middle Bronze Age proper (MBII). The MBII was a period of higher culture, reverting to town life, and absorbing the culture of the nomadic conquerors.<sup>38</sup> The newcomers brought pottery made entirely on a fast wheel, and they introduced bronze weapons.<sup>39</sup> “The pottery of the period is exceptionally fine.”<sup>40</sup> Finds of metal weapons are plentiful from the MBI period but rare during the rest of the Middle Bronze Age,<sup>41</sup> as is so stated

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<sup>33</sup> Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 157.

<sup>34</sup> Kenyon, “Jericho,” 269.

<sup>35</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.* 239.

<sup>36</sup> Israel Finkelstein, “The Central Hill Country in the Intermediate Bronze Age,” *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 41, No 1-3, 1991. 42.

<sup>37</sup> Finkelstein, “The Central Hill Country in the Intermediate Bronze Age,” 27.

<sup>38</sup> Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 160.

<sup>39</sup> Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 63-4.

<sup>40</sup> Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 176.

<sup>41</sup> G. Posner, “Syria and Palestine c. 2160-1780 B.C.,” C. J. Gadd, I. E. S. Hammond and N. G. L. Edwards, eds., *History of the Ancient Near East*, 3rd ed. 15 vols. Vol. 1, Pt. 2: *Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge: University Press, 1971) 568.



in Scripture (1 Sam 13:19-22).

In this revised interpretation, the prosperous new culture was the Israelite culture. This culture had a long life, lasting from the MBII through at least the Iron I, a period of about eight hundred years.<sup>42</sup> That is until the conquests by Assyria and Babylon. Archaeologists can find no change in culture in this period because there was no change in culture. The change of culture occurred in the MBI when Israel entered the land. After the conquest, there was no cultural change for at least eight hundred years. Since there was no change archaeologists reason, Israel arose from within Canaan rather than from the outside.

The Israelite settlement began the MBII period or the start of the Middle Bronze Age proper. The nomads settled rebuilding most of the cities. They introduce an entirely new culture, with a certain Egyptian style. The most complete break ever recorded.

Joshua destroyed the Canaanites, but new ones came back. This group had iron chariots and built impressive new fortified cities. A new line of fortified cities shows up on the coastal plain and the valley of Jezreel as far as Beth Shan, again precisely matching the Bible (Josh 17:16).<sup>43</sup>

## **SOLOMON**

Archaeologists place Solomon's reign during a period when Canaan was a backwater nation with little evidence of wealth or trade.<sup>44</sup> Israel was a nation just subsisting. It was not rich, even in comparison with its poor neighbors. It was a nation whose cities had no walls or public buildings. The traditional dating of Solomon has been linked to a distinctive type of city gate first recognized at Megiddo and later found at Hazor and Gezer.

Yigael Yadin redated a city gate at Gezer, of the same design and dimensions as the Megiddo gate to the Solomonic period. Macalister had dated the Gezer gate to the Maccabean period on the evidence of Hellenistic pottery and Greek inscriptions.<sup>45</sup> Yadin redated the gate on the evidence of distinctive Iron Age pottery. The Hazor site Yadin ascribed to Solomon covered only half the acropolis and was much smaller than the preceding cities. Some thought it was a palace enclosure, not a royal city. Macalister called it a Maccabean castle. Did Solomon build cities, not castles, on part of the previous mounds? This period of subsistence described by the archaeologists was the actual situation when Nehemiah returned.

According to the Bible, Solomon reigned at the pinnacle of Israel's wealth, power, and influence. He built the Temple, palaces, and store cities. He sent fleets of ships on international trading voyages. Solomon was described as greater in riches and wisdom than all other kings on the earth (1 Kgs 10:23, 2 Chr 9:22). Solomon came to power at the end of the Middle Bronze Age. Archaeologically this is a prosperity zenith in Canaan with a flourishing international trade. This period was a time of population and urban growth.

## **ISRAEL IN THE KINGS PERIOD**

Archaeologists have extensively studied this period. In Israel, fortified towns and villages were abundant. There were public buildings and underground water systems. The massive

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<sup>42</sup> Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land*, 162.

<sup>43</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.* 176-8.

<sup>44</sup> J. Maxwell Miller, "Solomon: International Potentate or Local King?," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* (Jan-June 1991).

<sup>45</sup> Yigael Yadin, *Hazor*, (New York: Random House, 1975) 201-3.

fortifications were presumably to counter the Assyrian threat.<sup>46</sup>

According to the Bible, shortly after Solomon died, Israel separated into two countries Israel and Judah. We will deal with these countries separately. Israel and Judah were regularly at war. Near the end of this period, Assyria took Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee from Israel. Later Assyria conquered Israel and deported the entire population. Assyria then settled a new population from a variety of locations into the area previously occupied by Israel. These people were taught the religion of Israel and became the Samaritans (2 Kgs 15:29; 17:24, Ezra 4:2).

In this revised interpretation, there was a great deal of continuity between this period and the preceding period. There are regular battles with Judah, resulting in various destructions.<sup>47</sup> The period ends with a total conquest by the Assyrians, and the population of Israel deported.

In the next period an “entirely new settlement in the Iron Age I hundreds of new small sites were inhabited in the mountainous areas of Upper and Lower Galilee, the hills of Samaria and Ephraim, in Benjamin, in the Northern Negev, and in parts of Central and Northern Transjordan,” but not in Judah.<sup>48</sup> Archaeologists generally attributed this to the settlement of Israel. It is the settlement of the Samaritans after the deportation of Israel.

### **JUDAH IN THE KINGS PERIOD**

Archaeologists designate this period as the Iron IIB. They link Judah’s conquest to the Egyptian Sheshonk, on the evidence of the similarity of his name to Shishak, the name given to the conqueror in the Bible. This period is a dark age in archaeological history. Jerusalem becomes a great metropolis at this time.

According to the Bible, when Israel divided, Rehoboam came to power in Judah. A few years later, Egypt conquered and subjugated Judah and carried off the treasures of the Temple (2 Chr 12:2-9). Canaan had not been under Egyptian domination since the Exodus. Though Egypt subjugated it, Judah appears to continue as a sovereign nation. Wars between Israel and Judah punctuated this period.

In this revised interpretation, Egypt conquered Judah at the start of the Late Bronze IB period. The Egyptian archaeological record supports this. Since the end of the Old Kingdom, Egypt had not attempted to conquer Canaan. Rehoboam’s reign corresponds to the sole reign of Pharaoh Thutmose III, the great conqueror of the New Kingdom. Thutmose III invaded and conquered Judah. Rehoboam, Judah’s king, became subject to Thutmose III, and he sacked the Temple. Thutmose III carefully details on the wall of the temple of Karnak the treasures carried from the Temple. The reliefs include the type, number, design, and material of the Temple contents. These match the account given in the Bible.<sup>49</sup> Thutmose III is called Shishak in the Scriptures. Although Canaan was part of the Egyptian Empire, control was left almost entirely in the hands of the native princes.<sup>50</sup> The Amarna letters were exchanged during this period, correspondence between Egypt’s pharaohs and various rulers in the countries to the north.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 414.

<sup>47</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 239-43.

<sup>48</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 334.

<sup>49</sup> Velikovsky, *Ages on Chaos*, 143-63.

<sup>50</sup> Lionel Casson, *Ancient Egypt, Great Ages of Men* (New York: Time, 1965) 56.

<sup>51</sup> Velikovsky, *Ages on Chaos*, 223-4.

## THE FALL OF JUDAH

Archaeologists in these later periods often substitute the Biblical record for the archaeological record. It is, therefore, necessary to sort opinions taken from the Bible from archaeological evidence. This period is one of the most obscure in the lands of the Bible; stratigraphic sequences for this period are rare. In Judah, the period from Solomon until *c.* 700 B.C., is little known, presumably because of the continuity and lack of destructions at these sites. Jerusalem greatly expanded during this period, and the population became concentrated there.<sup>52</sup>

The Bible describes Judah's 350 years of history as peaceful but punctuated with war. Some years later, a Pharaoh again conquered Judah and killed Josiah. The last years of Judah are prosperous but idolatrous; Babylon finally destroyed them over twenty years in three conquests. With the destruction of Jerusalem, the population was either killed or deported to Babylon. The country was then left desolate for fifty years.

In this revised interpretation, the decline and fall of Judah occurred at the end of the LB period. While Josiah was king, Pharaoh Neco went up to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah marched out to meet him in battle, but Neco faced him and killed him at Megiddo (2 Kgs 23:29). Today this pharaoh is better known as Ramses II. The three waves of conquest in the fall of Judah are obvious at the end of the LB Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. With the conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, he deported the population, and the land was left desolate for fifty years.

## ISRAEL RETURNS FROM BABYLON

Archaeology textbooks cover this period briefly; little can be dated to this period. From *c.* 500 to 335 B.C., the "Persian cultural influence seems to have been minor, the influence of the Greek world began to be felt strongly."<sup>53</sup> "Even where the Persian period is represented the levels of debris are often thin and badly cut about by subsequent Hellenistic and Roman foundation trenches and rubbish pits."<sup>54</sup>

The Bible says while Judah was in Babylon, the land lay desolate for seventy years. After this, the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity and lived at a subsistence level for seventy more years. This period is the Iron IIA, a period with a small, poor population, just barely subsisting. They lived in cities without walls. Then Nehemiah became the leader of Judah. He led them in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and repopulating it. A time of prosperity ensued. This period starts Iron IIB; with the building of the walls of Jerusalem, it becomes the one walled city in the area. From Daniel 11, we find a period of peace extended until the Maccabees.

For hundreds of years, Jerusalem and Judah grow and prosper in peace under the Persian and Greek Empires.

The archaeologists, by this period, are feeling the stretch of the periods. Alexander the Great conquered and then Hellenized the world. Here the Greek culture overshadows the Assyrian culture centuries before Alexander, even though many of the Israelites returned from the Assyrian culture.

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<sup>52</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 416.

<sup>53</sup> Neil Asher Silberman, "Measuring Time Archaeologically," *Biblical Archaeological Review*, 15, 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1989) 70.

<sup>54</sup> Kathleen M. Kenyon, rev. ed. by P.R.S. Morey, *The Bible and Recent Archaeology*, rev. ed. (Atlanta, John Knox, 1987) 139.

## MACCABEES

It is difficult to find archaeological details of the period from the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar down to the period of the Maccabees and beyond. "In the Hellenistic period (332-63 B.C.), even the political revolt of the Maccabees and the creation of an independent Jewish kingdom in Judea (150-60 B.C.) did not significantly affect the process of Hellenization."<sup>55</sup>

The Maccabees led the casting off the Seleucid rule. The Books of Maccabees recorded this period. It was a period of war, succeeded by a period of prosperity.

The destruction attributed to the Babylonians occurred during the war between the Seleucids and Maccabees. The reason the Maccabees do not slow the Hellenization is they were gone by this time in the stretched out Greek period. The whole reason for the Maccabean revolution was to throw off the incursion of the Greek culture and restore the culture of the Jews.

When Macalister dug up Gezer, he dated much of the remains to the Maccabean period. Later Yadin looking at the gate design of Gezer, redated it to the period of Solomon because of its similarity to other gates that had been dated to Solomon's day. One archaeology student "complained" this redating eliminated a considerable part of the Hellenistic remains.<sup>56</sup> Solomon should be eight hundred years before the Maccabean period, could there be a mix-up?

Velikovsky observed that the Egyptian record after the New Kingdom almost exclusively came from outside sources, such as the Bible and Greek literature. And even though these pharaohs had done great exploits, they did not leave monumental remains as their predecessors had done. If one searches the libraries for hard information on the archaeology of the period after the captivity down to the period of the Maccabees, one will search nearly in vain.

Reisner led a team that excavated every grave in Egypt that was to be covered by the lake created by the Aswan dam. He found there was *an uninterrupted sequence of graves from predynastic times to the end of the New Kingdom period, at which point there was a gap in the archaeological record until the Greco-Roman period.*<sup>57</sup> The archaeologists have stretched the Greek period to fill the period from the captivity to the Roman period. There should be no gap in the sequence of graves. The New Kingdom period reached to the Greco-Roman period. Egyptian archaeological chronology has been artificially expanded by about six hundred years. This same addition has been made to Palestinian archaeological chronology. Either they buried no one in a large area of Egypt for six hundred years, or there is a gap in the chronology of Egypt.

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<sup>55</sup> Silberman, "Measuring Time Archaeologically," 70.

<sup>56</sup> Ronny Reich, "Archaeological Evidence of the Jewish Population at Hasmonean Gezer," *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 31 Num. 1-2, 1981, 48.

<sup>57</sup> Michael A. Hoffman, *Egypt Before the Pharaohs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979) 255.

## **CONCLUSION**

The reader has two primary choices:

The oppression of Israel occurred during the New Kingdom under Thutmose III or Rameses II, while Egypt was at the pinnacle of its empire. After his death, the Exodus occurred. Egypt was little affected by the plagues and Israel leaving. Israel entered the Negev and left no remains during their forty-year stay. There were no cities in the Transjordan for Moses to destroy.

The evidence for the destruction of Jericho is confusing. If the walls did fall, there is no evidence for destruction by fire, and the city was promptly re-inhabited. Of the conquest of Ai and Arad, there is no evidence. The conquest of the rest of Canaan occurred over many generations, probably by a peasant revolt, and the story later embellished. Israel adopted the culture of the Canaanites. The culture and population declined until the time of Solomon when Israel was a poor and backward nation. The kingdom recovers in the succeeding generations.

## **OR**

The oppression occurred at the end of the EB during the last years of the Old Kingdom under Pepi II. The plagues and the Exodus of Israel devastated Egypt, and the Old Kingdom collapsed. Then Israel appears and left abundant evidence of their nomadic presence in the desert. Animal pens, pottery pieces, and drawings marked their stay. They disappear as suddenly as they appeared.

The walled cities in Edom and Moab were flourishing at the time Israel went around these countries. Jericho was a flourishing city with a wall reinforced shortly before it fell outward, and the city destroyed by fire. All the cities of the Northern Transjordan and all the cities in Canaan were destroyed at this time. During the conquest, Israel camped in the desert along the Jordan River, especially in the region of Jericho.

After a time, Israel settled in the cities of Canaan. The culture remained at least until the Assyrian culture in Israel and Babylonian captivity in Judah.

A third choice follows argument in the second possibility, but rather than condensing the archaeology of Israel by six-hundred years assumes that six-hundred years were lost from the chronology of the Bible sometime after the Babylonian captivity.

These are two very different views. One follows the archaeological interpretation presuming the Bible “embellishes” what happened. The other follows the Bible and discovers matching archaeology. You decide which is correct.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 92-3.
- <sup>2</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 108-9.
- <sup>3</sup> Evidence of Biblical Names at Mari. Alfonso Archi, "Further Concerning Ebla and the Bible," *Biblical Archeologist* Summer 1981, Vol. 44, num. 3, 151-2.
- <sup>4</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.* 119.
- <sup>5</sup> EBIV only in Edom and Moab after conquest. Mazar, 142, 158. This period is also called Intermediate Bronze (IB) and the EB/MB.
- <sup>6</sup> Duration problem discussed Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 190.
- <sup>7</sup> Vast cemeteries surrounded by a vast campsite. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 154, 162, 158.
- <sup>8</sup> Y. Aharoni, "The Negeb," *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*. D. Winton Thomas. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 387.
- <sup>9</sup> Revolutionary change in all aspects of the material culture: settlement pattern, urbanism, architecture, pottery, metallurgy & burial customs. Mazar, 175. Culture similar to Byblos (which was similar to Egypt) 189. There was no break at Byblos, coastal Lebanon or Syria. 198, 187, 203.
- <sup>10</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 174.
- <sup>11</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 239-40, Widespread destruction. 226-7.
- <sup>12</sup> Shishak conquers Judah. Thutmose III conquers Judah.
- <sup>13</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 239.
- <sup>14</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 240-1. No evidence of Population in Negev. No evidence of population in Edom or Moab. Archaeological remains of the Assyrian campaign are found in Assyria not in Palestine.
- <sup>15</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 234, 379.
- <sup>16</sup> New settlement pattern in Israel, but not in Judah. International trade disappears. Mazar, 334, 296-7, 300, 235.
- <sup>17</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.* 359 Transjordan Iron I does not confirm Biblical traditions of Edom, Moab and Amorite Kingdoms.
- <sup>18</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 300, 344-6, 337.
- <sup>19</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 371, 374, 416, 378.
- <sup>20</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 424. Abundant fortified towns in Israel 415.
- <sup>21</sup> Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000—586 B.C.E.*, 438, 549.
- <sup>22</sup> Assyria documents period. Only hill country suffered, coast & Galilee prospered. *The Bible and Recent Archaeology*. rev. ed. by P. R. S. Moorey (Atlanta: Knox, 1987) 139, 143-5.