

CHAPTER 8: CONQUEST OR COMPROMISE?

A) HISTORY AND POLEMIC

At first glance, the book of Joshua seems to flow naturally into the book of Judges. Only a few years separate the last events recorded in Joshua from the first events recorded in the book of Judges. The introductory words in each book also seem to suggest continuity between them. Joshua 1:1 begins, "It came about after the death of Moses..." Judges 1:1 echoes these words, saying, "It came about after the death of Joshua..." The book of Judges was clearly intended as a sequel to the book of Joshua. However, when was the book of Judges written? Appearances can be somewhat misleading. Most conservative scholars believe that the Pentateuch was completed by Joshua after Moses died, and that Joshua then probably wrote the book attributed to him.¹ The text of Joshua does not make a specific claim of authorship. However, Joshua 24:26 claimed that Joshua wrote the words of his covenant in the book of the law of God.² This verse is usually taken to mean that he added the book of Joshua to the Pentateuch. By an 18th Dynasty exodus model, the Holy Spirit did not inspire anyone to write new Scripture until David's reign around 400 years later.³ It should not be too surprising that a gap of 400 years should occur in the writing of Scripture.⁴ Israel sojourned in Egypt for 430 years with no recorded revelation. Another 400 year gap in Scriptural revelation occurred between Malachi and Christ's birth.

Several Scriptural books appeared during the United Monarchy. Judges and Ruth were written as polemics to defend David's reign. Many of the Psalms expressed David's theology and worship. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs expressed Solomon's wisdom. I and II Samuel described David's rise to power, although it is difficult to determine when the account in Samuel was written.⁵ The events that occurred during the United Monarchy were also recorded in the histories of Kings and Chronicles. These books were written after God's judgment had come on the divided monarchy. The history books of Kings and Chronicles traced the way that sin and failure brought suffering and death. The picture of David's kingdom recorded in the history books was a picture of great spiritual goals and limited earthly success. The Biblical books were far from the only written records in Israel during the United Monarchy. Israel had been a literate nation from its beginning, and the nation certainly had not descended into illiteracy for 400

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² It is unlikely that Moses could have written Deut. 34:9-12. Joshua may also have updated passages like Gen. 14:14.

³ Younger made an interesting point about the book of Joshua. He noted that Joshua's campaign records resembled campaign records across the ancient Near East. However, Joshua's record differed in one important way. Other nation's records would claim that a king acted at the command of his god. Instead of making a claim like that, the book of Joshua consistently recorded God's words. K. Lawson Younger Jr., *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing*, (JSOT, 1990), 198. The Bible was not mainly a record of human kings and their deeds. The Bible was mainly a record of God's acts and the actions of His Messengers.

⁴ A 19th Dynasty date for Israel's sea crossing would make this figure 200 years instead of 400 years.

⁵ Time periods of 40 days, 40 years, and 400 years were surprisingly important in the Biblical text. The symbolism of the number 40 in these contexts is not completely clear. In some cases, 40 years simply represented a generation. In other contexts, the numbers 40 and 400 may have had a deeper meaning. The symbolism of these numbers may have been hinted by Moses in Gen. 50:3. This verse noted that the process of embalming required 40 days. In Egyptian theology, these 40 days were an intermediate period between life and death. The deceased person's resurrection into eternal life only began after the completion of this 40 day process. In some Biblical contexts, the numbers 40 and 400 may have carried a hidden meaning of death and resurrection. Israel died symbolically as a nation when it went down to Egypt. Israel was resurrected as a nation at the exodus after 400 years in Egypt. Israel died symbolically when entering the wilderness and was resurrected 40 years later at the conquest. Moses died symbolically when he climbed Mount Sinai. After all, there was no food or water on the mountain, and he was climbing into the glory fire of heaven itself. Moses was "resurrected" in a "now and not yet" sense when he returned from the mountain 40 days later. Moses did not die physically or spiritually on Sinai, but the symbolism of the event resembled a "death" and "resurrection" event. Several Biblical characters were brought to the brink of death by fasting for 40 days. Then they were able to see into the spiritual realm. Similar imagery may stand behind other Biblical passages, although the topic merits further research.

Samuel himself could not have written this account since I Sam. 25:1 recorded his death. All of II Samuel described events that happened after Samuel had died. The text might have been written by someone in Samuel's circle, but that is largely speculation.

years. The Biblical text recorded many written texts in the community that were not part of divine revelation. Yet new Scripture as such did not appear between Joshua and David.

The book of Judges was written during David's reign as a polemic to defend David's rule over Judah and Israel.⁶ If an 18th Dynasty date for the Exodus is assumed, the book of Judges traced Israel's history over a 400 year time period from 1400 BC to 1000 BC. This was a huge amount of time. The whole divided monarchy would only last for a few more years than this. Solomon's son Rehoboam would instigate a revolt and the division of the nation around 931 BC. Israel would be carried away into its Assyrian captivity in 722 BC which was only a little over 200 years after Rehoboam. Judah would fall to Babylon in 586 BC which was roughly 454 years after Rehoboam came to power in Judah. So Israel's period of the Judges was almost as long as Israel's pre-exilic divided monarchy. Yet the account of the monarchy took up a large part of the Old Testament, while Israel's first 400 years was described only in the book of Judges.

During the Judges, God's people tried to order their nation as God had commanded. In Deuteronomy 17:15-20, God decreed to Moses the kind of rulers that the nation should choose after they entered the land. The nation was to choose righteous men who would read God's Word for themselves every day. These rulers were forbidden to multiply for themselves gold, wives, or horses. These prohibitions really meant that Israel was not to develop a bureaucracy which would tax the nation. They were not to have a large standing army, and they were not to enter into marriage alliances with other nations. For all the spiritual weaknesses of the Judges period, the nation did organize itself by these principles. With few exceptions like Gideon's son Abimelech, the nation was not led by men who wanted to make themselves kings. The nation was led by a series of spiritual rulers who judged the nation and who led the nation in revival. Unlike the nations around them, the Israelites lacked a permanent army or a central government. They were a theocracy led by Yahweh's representatives instead of a human nation state.

During these years, Israel represented a "now and not yet" prophetic reality. On one level, Israel was the kind of nation that God intended His people to be, and it was the kind of nation that God would finally bring to the earth in the eschaton. The problem with the Judges period was that Israel did not live up to its calling from God. Israel could not live the life promised for the eschaton because that life style could only occur after sin was removed from the earth and after God's Spirit was poured out on the world. Because they were still trapped in the damage caused by sin, generation after generation of Israelites continued the rebellion that had plagued the wilderness community. Apostasy followed apostasy as Israel slowly turned its back on God. With each new generation, the spiritual revolts became more severe and the deliverers became less admirable. Finally God gave His people a Judge named Samson who was physically strong. Yet he was also spiritually blind, morally weak, and intellectually foolish. Samson was a good example of the poor spiritual condition of God's people even at their best. The book of Judges argued time after time that spiritual decay was destroying the nation because each man did what was right in his own eyes, and there was not yet a king in the land. The book of Judges was an extended polemic that justified the rise of David's rule as king on God's throne. Israel's history during the Judges was not then only a brief historical footnote to be passed over quickly in search of more substantive events. Israel's history during the Judges was a very important time period for the nation. If the Old Testament is to be understood, it is vital to grasp the history of this period.

B) THE CONQUEST

6

Judg.18:30 could be used to argue against this interpretation. This verse claimed that Jonathan from Manasseh established a line of non-Levitical priests who served among the tribe of Dan until the captivity of the land. This verse sounds far more like a historical perspective than a prophecy. Unless this verse represents a scribal gloss, it would seem to suggest some editorial activity in the text as late as the exile. The current text of Judges is probably not identical in all points to the autograph. This is unfortunate since Evangelical theology grounds inerrancy in the autographs. There are two versions of Judges in the Greek translations. One version is reflected in Vaticanus and the other in Alexandrinus. Textual evidence from Qumran suggests that both are translations of different Hebrew texts. While the differences between these texts are rather minor in Judges, they may affect the accuracy of a few details in the text. For an Evangelical discussion of this problem, see Horace D. Hummel, *The Word Becoming Flesh: An Introduction to the Origin, Purpose, and Meaning of the Old Testament*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 122.

The period of the Judges began when Joshua led Israel across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. The date of Joshua's conquest has been one of the most hotly debated topics in the arena of Old Testament studies. The interpretation of every event in Israel's history before the united monarchy must be shaped in part by the date that Israel first appeared in Palestine. This is true because events recorded in the Biblical text interacted strongly with other historical events in the Fertile Crescent. The 200 years difference between an 18th and 19th Dynasty exodus produces a vast difference in the historical context for Biblical events.

If an 18th Dynasty date is accepted for Israel's exodus, either Thutmose IV (Akhenaten) or Amenhotep III may have been on the Egyptian throne when Joshua led Israel into Palestine.⁷ The chronology for this period has been debated at length. By a high chronology, Amenhotep III may have reigned as early as 1412 BC to 1375 BC. By a low chronology, dates as low as 1382 BC to 1344 BC have also been defended. By high dates for his reign, Amenhotep III died at approximately the same time as Joshua. Amenhotep III was a great builder. He tried to surpass all of his predecessors in the size and magnificence of his buildings. The monuments left by an Egyptian ruler give succeeding generations an impression of his strength and power.⁸ It takes both substantial physical resources and strong political will to force the Egyptian people to carve a great number of monuments. So rulers who left abundant and substantial monuments have often been regarded as Egypt's greatest rulers. So Amenhotep III has long been recorded as a powerful ruler. Yet the size and number of monuments left by a ruler are only part of the story. It takes great resources to produce monuments, and those resources can not be used for other purposes once they are expended on monuments. So monument building limited other activities. Perhaps one of the better examples of this principle was the 19th Dynasty ruler Ramesses II. A 19th Dynasty exodus date would make him the ruler of Israel's oppression. Ramesses II campaigned in the Levant for the first half of his reign. After his peace treaty with the Hittites, he never again led his army north. Ramesses II then spent the second half of his reign filling Egypt with monuments to himself. By the end of his reign, he had used up his resources and Egypt was greatly weakened. The Libyans seized the western Nile delta from Egypt and Ramesses II did not have the economic, political, and military resources to drive them out. Something similar may have happened to Amenhotep III. He was too busy putting up buildings and monuments to worry very much about what happened in the north, and he had few financial resources left to carry on frequent campaigns in the north.

There has been an ongoing debate about whether Amenhotep III invaded Palestine. He bragged that he had filled his temple magazines with male and female slaves from foreign lands, and that settlements of Syrians had surrounded his temples.⁹ However, did he actually campaign in the north himself, or did he simply claim credit for earlier conquests? Egyptologists defend either position. If Amenhotep III did send his army north during Joshua's life time, his campaign would have been only a brief raid intended to restore Egyptian control of the region and to restore Egyptian administrative centers. During Joshua's conquest, Israel had attacked Egypt's administrative centers like Beth Shean and Aphek. Those attacks should have provoked an Egyptian response. For example, Joshua 12:18 noted that Joshua defeated the king of Aphek. The Egyptians would have seen this as a threat to their control of Palestine. After Joshua's conquest, an Egyptian governor's residence would stand on top of the acropolis at Aphek. Beck and Kochavi argued that six palaces were built on top of each other at Aphek. The 5th palace was occupied in the 14th/13th centuries BC. It was replaced by the 6th palace which contained a fortified Egyptian governor's residence. It was destroyed in 1230 BC.¹⁰

If Amenhotep III campaigned in Palestine, his campaign was not recorded in Scripture. It is unclear when such a campaign would have occurred. It could have occurred while Israel was struggling for

7

Proposed dates for the reign of Thutmose IV (Akhenaten) include: Wilson, 1406 BC to 1398 BC, Steindorff and Seele, 1425 BC to 1412 BC, Breasted, 1420 BC to 1411 BC, Kitchen, 1352-1336 BC.

Marshall Hindley argued in an EEF posting on 7/21/05 that Amenhotep III may be the best example of a Pharaoh who was regarded as divine during his life time. Hindley noted the case made by O'Connor and Cline in their article "Amenhotep III - Perspectives on his Reign." They noted that Amenhotep III's iconography changed during his *sed* festivals. The ruler was now depicted wearing the regalia of the sun god.

Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), II:44.

¹⁰ P. Beck and M. Kochavi, "The Dated Assemblage of the Late 13th Century BCE from the Egyptian Residency at Aphek," *Tel Aviv* 12 (1985): 29-42

control of the land. Joshua 16:11-12 noted that the tribe of Manasseh had been unable to capture Beth Shean and other cities in the region. Joshua 17:16-18 noted that cities like Beth Shean had iron chariots and were too powerful for Israel to conquer.¹¹ Beth-Shean had been a key Egyptian administrative center. These cities had obtained their chariots from Egypt, and an intervention by Amenhotep III could have prevented the Israelites from holding these cities.¹² If Amenhotep III campaigned in the north, he could also have led his army into the Levant after Israel's tribes had been given their inheritances. The tribes were assigned their territories five years after the conquest began which would be around 1401 BC. After this event, the book of Joshua was silent for roughly two decades between Joshua 22 and 23. The text picked up its historical account once more with Joshua's farewell address. The general tone of Joshua's history changed significantly between Joshua 22 and 23. Joshua 1-22 recorded Joshua's victories over Canaanite armies. Joshua 23 reflected an atmosphere of discouragement. Joshua had little confidence that Israel would obey God in the future. Joshua's despair may have reflected the impact of an Egyptian intervention in Palestine during the two silent decades.

C) JOSHUA'S BATTLES FOR THE PROMISED LAND

In Joshua 5:13-15, Joshua led Israel to the region around Jericho. As Joshua prepared to fight the city, he encountered a man standing opposite him with a drawn sword. Joshua confronted this man asking if he was for or against Israel. This Man declared that He was neither for nor against Israel. Instead, He had come as the captain of the Lord's hosts. He commanded Joshua to remove his shoes because he was standing on holy ground in the presence of his God. While there has been an ongoing debate about the nature of Old Testament theophanies, the majority of authors in the conservative Christian orbit has held that Joshua encountered Jesus in a pre-incarnate appearance, and that Jesus was standing as a warrior Who would fight for His people. Yahweh's most immediate battle would be against Jericho.¹³ The city of Jericho was one of the most ancient cities on earth. It controlled the east/west trade route at a point where the Jordan River could be crossed.

The excavation of Jericho has played an important part in the debate about the date of Israel's sea crossing. Garstang excavated Jericho between 1930 and 1936. Garstang argued that the fourth city level at Jericho was the level attacked by Joshua. Garstang argued that the walls of the city had fallen down in an earthquake, and the city was burned with fire. Kathleen Kenyon excavated Jericho thirty years

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The references to iron chariots in Joshua have generated substantial academic debate. Drews argued that the great age of chariot warfare began in 1600 BC and was over by 1200 BC. Drews argued however that iron chariots would never have been used at any time in the ancient Near East. Drews argued that references to iron chariots in Joshua were both anachronistic and fictional. Robert Drews, "The 'Chariots of Iron' of Joshua and Judges," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 45 (1989): 15-23. While the nature of an "iron chariot" is a problematic question, Drews' article may be useful in an Evangelical context. If the great age of chariot warfare was between 1600 and 1200 BC, that would suggest that the events recorded in the Biblical text fit well with an 18th Dynasty date for the exodus. Drews would disagree with that use of the evidence.

¹² During Amenhotep III's reign, the Egyptian empire was not threatened by the Hittites, Mitanni, or Mesopotamia. Weinstein argued that Egypt's northern empire was divided into three districts during his reign. These were Canaan, Upi, and Amurru. The district of Canaan included Palestine and the Mediterranean coast below Byblos. Weinstein argued that the governor of Canaan resided at Gaza. He answered to an official in Egypt who was called the Overseer of All Northern Lands. This official oversaw Egyptian officials in the district, garrisons in the Levant, vassal rulers, and the movement of goods between Egypt and the Levant. J. M. Weinstein, "Egypt and the Levant in the Reign of Amenhotep III," 223-29 in D. O'Connor and E. H. Cline, eds. *Amenhotep III: Perspectives on His Reign*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), 226-27. The nature of the empire's administration has been a topic of debate among Egyptologists.

¹³ It is striking that Yahweh commanded Israel to march around Jericho for seven days. Israel's siege of Jericho resembled part of the mythology at Ugarit. In the Canaanite myth of king KRT, the god El had commanded KRT to besiege the city of Udm for six days without firing a weapon against the city. El promised that the city would capitulate to KRT on the seventh day. J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1977), 85. Ugarit was destroyed by the Sea People in 1200 BC. By an 18th Dynasty model for Israel's early history, the Canaanite myth may have been written under the influence of Joshua's conquest of Jericho. By a 19th Dynasty model for the exodus, Joshua's siege of Jericho may have been intended to provide a polemical argument against Canaanite theology. Those who reject the historical accuracy of the Biblical text may see the Biblical account as a fictional story written under the influence of the KRT epic. Chronological presuppositions often determine the interpretation of historical evidence.

later. Kenyon disagreed with Garstang. Kenyon argued that the city wall at Jericho was actually destroyed in the Early Bronze Age. Kenyon argued that there was no new city wall at Jericho at any time that the city could have been attacked by Joshua. Kenyon argued that the OT was simply wrong, and Jericho was not occupied at any Biblical date for Joshua.¹⁴ Kenyon argued that the assignment of an archaeological level to Joshua was simply speculation.¹⁵

Kenyon's position did not take into account the nature of wilderness travel in the ancient Near East. When people crossed the wilderness in the ancient Near East, they did not carry pottery. It was heavy. When it broke, it could not be repaired and its contents were lost. Wilderness travelers used wine skins and baskets. These left no archaeological remains. So Israel may have entered Palestine without a pottery tradition of its own. Israel largely adopted the pottery styles of the Canaanites. So there was no pottery horizon at the conquest. Yigael Yadin pointed to a different problem with Kenyon's claims. He argued that Kenyon had missed an important point. Yadin argued that Jericho did not build a new wall during the 18th Dynasty, but had rebuilt an old wall. The Egyptian empire allowed vassal city states in Palestine to rebuild and reuse old walls. However, cities could not build new walls. Doing so was a signal of intended revolt against Egypt, and Egypt responded with a military attack.¹⁶

The quality of Kenyon's work has also been criticized. Livingstone noted that Garstang excavated an area 13 times larger than the area excavated by Kenyon. Beyond that, Garstang published a rather large amount of Late Bronze Age material from level IV at Jericho. Garstang argued that this Late Bronze material proved that city level IV was destroyed around 1400 BC.¹⁷ Livingstone noted that Kenyon was either unaware of Garstang's findings or simply ignored them. Consequently, her conclusions were mistaken.¹⁸ Kenyon may have chosen to ignore Garstang's data because archaeological method had advanced significantly since Garstang's day, and Kenyon may have questioned the validity of Garstang's method. Bryant Wood has recently supported Garstang's work. Wood argued that Level 4 at Jericho was completely destroyed around 1400 BC. Wood argued that walls and floors in the city were either blackened or reddened by fire and every room was filled with fallen bricks.¹⁹ Wood argued that this was the destruction layer caused by Joshua's conquest.

Yahweh's destruction of Jericho demonstrated the "now and not yet" character of Joshua's conquest. God Himself brought the destruction of sin from His land and God Himself brought salvation. God Himself caused Israel to inherit the land promised already in some sense in Genesis 3:16. Since God Himself conquered Jericho, He claimed all the spoils of war for himself.²⁰ Yahweh placed the objects in Jericho under the "ban," and He forbade any Israelite to take objects from Jericho for himself. Abraham Malamat noted that such bans were mentioned at Mari where they were called *asakkum*.²¹

After Jericho fell, Joshua led Israel in a conquest of Palestine that lasted for five years. Joshua led Israel into the highlands of Palestine which Israel took with only limited opposition. The highlands and the

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¹⁵ For a discussion of this debate, see Ronald Harker, *Digging Up the Bible Lands*, (New York: Henry Z. Walck, 1972).

¹⁶ Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Amorites and Canaanites*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 5.

¹⁷ Yigael Yadin, "Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan Historically Reliable?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 8.2 (1982): 16-23. G. Ernest Wright argued that Jericho had been destroyed by Egypt in 1550 BC. After that destruction, Jericho was still inhabited. However, it was a far weaker city and it was poorly fortified. Wright, "Is Glueck's Aim to Prove that the Bible is True?" 14-21.

¹⁸ Wood noted that Garstang found Egyptian ruler's scarabs at Jericho in an unbroken sequence down to 1400 BC. Wood noted that charcoal at Jericho dated to 1410 BC. He noted that Kenyon squeezed 20 tell layers into 100 years which is unrealistic. See the discussion in Lambert Dolphin, <http://www.ldolphin.org/Jericho.shtml>.

¹⁹ David Livingstone, "The Exodus-Conquest Dating Fiasco," <http://www.ancientdays.net/datingfiasco.htm>.

²⁰ Bryant G. Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16.2 (1990): 44-59. Wood's position has not been widely accepted in the field.

²¹ Niehaus explored the motif of holy war in the book of Joshua. Jeffrey J. Niehaus, "Joshua and Ancient Near Eastern Warfare," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31 (1988): 37-50.

Malamat noted that the king Shamshi-Adad described bronze as being the *asakkum* of the god Adad. Abraham Malamat, "The Ban in Mari and in the Bible," 40-9 in *Proceedings of the Ninth Meeting of "Die Ou-Testamentiese Werkgenootskap in Suid-Afrika*, (University of Stellenbosch, July 1966).

southern part of Palestine had been largely depopulated by conflicts with the Egyptians.²² Weinstein argued that the Late Bronze IB period in Palestine had lasted from Thutmose III's battle at Megiddo in 1482 BC down to the end of the reign of Thutmose IV. Weinstein dated his death at 1386 BC though that date is debated.²³ Weinstein noted that it has become traditional to argue that Palestine had a decreased population at this time. Weinstein argued that the population gap really only occurred in the hill country and in the south. A population gap did not occur on the northern coast, on the Sharon plain, and in northern Palestine which were inhabited at this time. Occupied towns in these regions still had strong economic and political ties with Egypt.

These ties with Egypt can be seen in Joshua 17:16. This verse explains that the Israelites lived in the hill country. They could not defeat the Canaanites on the plains because the Canaanites had horses and iron chariots located at Beth-Shean and the valley of Jezreel.²⁴ These were Egyptian strongholds. Beth-Shean had been rebuilt by Thutmose III, and it was controlled by gentiles until the time of king David. When Saul and Jonathan died in battle, their bodies were hung on the walls at Beth Shean because the fortress was comparatively safe from Israelite attack.

Joshua 11:4-7 noted that the Israelites were able to defeat an alliance of Canaanite kings led by the city of Hazor. The Israelites destroyed their horses and burned their chariots with fire. However, the Israelites were not able to defeat the Egyptian garrison that had been stationed in Palestine since the days of Thutmose III. Joshua 17:16-18 noted that the descendants of Joseph were forced into the hill country because the Canaanites around Beth-Shean and the valley of Jezreel had iron chariots.²⁵ Beth-Shean and Jezreel were Egyptian strongholds held by an Egyptian garrison. Thutmose III had constructed Beth Shean as a fortress designed to control the East/West trade route. Throughout the Amarna Age, Egyptian chariots protected the Canaanite city states and made Israel's victory almost impossible. It is interesting that these were iron chariots. This was still the Bronze Age in Egypt and Palestine. The iron chariots may have been purchased from the Hittites or Mittani before these nations began to see Egypt as a threat to their expansion. Millard noted that small amounts of iron had been in use during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, but that iron was very difficult to work. He suggested that the iron chariots were reinforced in some way with iron instead of being composed entirely of iron.²⁶

It is also interesting that this text describes Canaanites instead of Egyptians at Beth-Shean. There certainly were Canaanites living in Beth-Shean and the villages around it, but the fortress was run by the Egyptians. The books of Joshua and Judges were strangely silent about the Egyptian forces that occupied part of the Promised Land during the Judges. This silence may seem somewhat strange. The Egyptian dominance of the Levant would have made Joshua's initial conquest far easier. Thutmose III had defeated the great fortress of Megiddo, and the Egyptians prevented the Canaanite city states from mounting a defense strong enough to oppose Egyptian interests. That weakened the Canaanite city states enough to make Joshua's conquest possible. Yet Egyptian military assistance also prevented Israel from following up on its original victories with any permanent control of the coastal plains.

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J. Weinstein, "The Egyptian Empire in Palestine: A Reassessment," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, #241 (1981): 1-28.

²³ Kitchen argued that his date ended in 1390 BC. K. A. Kitchen, "Egypt, History of," David Noel Freedman, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 2 D-G*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 329.

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Iron chariots were not made completely of iron. That would have been too heavy to use. They were instead made of wood and either decorated or reinforced with iron. See the discussion in Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 178.

²⁵ There has been quite a bit of academic debate about whether iron chariots could have been in use in the Levant at this time. Alan Millard noted that the chariots were probably made of wood but strengthened in some way with iron. Millard noted that iron chariots would only have been noteworthy at the end of the Late Bronze Age. After this time, they would have been taken for granted. Millard noted that iron weapons were mentioned in a letter by the Hittite king Hattusilus III who reigned from 1289 to 1265 BC. Millard noted that iron was already in use at Mari during the Middle Bronze Age. Millard noted that an iron throne was also mentioned in the Anitta Text from Anatolia that is now dated no later than the 16th century BC. This throne would have been made of wood and would have been decorated with iron. A. R. Millard, "King Og's Bed and Other Ancient Ironmongery," 481-92 in Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor, eds., *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988).

²⁶ Millard, "King Og's Bed and Other Ancient Ironmongery," 488. Millard would disagree with the suggestion that Israel was already in the Promised Land during the 18th Dynasty. So Millard would not see the Habiru of the Amarna Letters as Israelites.

In some ways, the book of Joshua was structured as the annals of a military conquest. Joshua recorded the triumphant conquest of the divine warrior. James Hoffmeier suggested that the conquest narratives were the same kind of literature as the *Annals of Thutmose III*. Hoffmeier noted that the conquest narratives in Joshua 1 to 11 have received quite a bit of academic attention in recent years. Many authors have had little confidence in the historical reliability of the text of Joshua. Hoffmeier argued that the real prototype for Joshua 1-11 should be sought in the Egyptian texts. The structure of Joshua 1-11 resembles closely the *Annals of Thutmose III* which described his conquests in Syria and Palestine. Hoffmeier suggested the following six similarities between Joshua 1-6 and the *Annals of Thutmose III*: 1) both texts include a divine commission to conquer Palestine, 2) both texts record an attempt to get an intelligence report before the invasion, 3) both describe a march into the land, though different routes are used, 4) Both describe the setting up of a camp and preparation for war, 5) both describe a siege, Megiddo by Thutmose III and Jericho by Joshua, and 6) both describe the surrender or defeat of the city that was besieged. So there were similarities in the content of the two texts. Hoffmeier added that there were also similarities of style between the *Annals of Thutmose III* and Joshua 1-11. Both works included long narratives that described the most important campaigns. Both also included short, terse descriptions of less important campaigns. These short descriptions used repetitive stereotypic language. Both also included summary statements and descriptions of the booty taken. Hoffmeier concluded that there are many similarities between the *Annals of Thutmose III* and Joshua 1-11. Hoffmeier suggested that these similarities exist because the Hebrews used the Egyptian "day book" scribal tradition for recording their military actions.²⁷

One of the more interesting items in Joshua's day book was the battle recorded in Joshua 10. This battle featured a polemic against Baal worship just as Israel's sea crossing had provided in part a polemic against Baal worship. Baal was both a great warrior and the Canaanite storm god, and Yahweh's control of the weather would place a decisive role in His battle against the Amorites. This account has been one of the more commonly misunderstood passages in the Old Testament. Joshua 10:9-11 described how Israel defeated the Amorites at Gilgal. Then Joshua 10:12-15 described the same battle in other terms. In this second description of the battle, Joshua prayed that the sun and moon should stand still in the sky so that Israel could defeat their enemies. Joshua 10:13 claimed that the sun stood still for a whole day. The nature of this miracle has often been misunderstood because the Hebrew text has been translated into English in unfortunate ways. The English translations usually claim that this miracle produced a longer day when the Hebrew text would be understood better as describing a miraculous extension of the night.

There has been endless debate about this passage. For half a century, a rumor floated around the evangelical church that a mathematical formula or a computer program had proven that there was a day missing in the earth's rotation, and that this day was lost during Joshua's battle.²⁸ The rumor proved surprisingly resilient despite its inherent impossibility. A better understanding of Joshua 10 can be gained from a careful study of the text. The Israelites had marched all night to arrive at Gilgal. They had caught the Amorites by surprise and had attacked them before dawn. In the confusion and darkness, the Israelites had success in the battle. However, as dawn came, the Amorites were able to organize their

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Critical authors have often denied that a conquest of Palestine occurred. Martin Noth argued that Israel really found its origin in a tribal amphictyony. Gottwald argued for an almost Marxist proletarian revolution in the Levant. James Hoffmeier noted that the roots of their skepticism went back at least to 1935 when Albrecht Alt argued for a migration settlement pattern instead of a military conquest. Not all critical authors have denied the military character of the account. Hoffmeier noted that recently John Van Seters and Moshe Weinfeld have compared Josh. 1-11 to Near Eastern historical records. Van Seters argued that the Deuteronomist history writers invented the story of Joshua's conquest of Palestine. Van Seters compared Joshua only to three Assyrian texts from the 8th and 7th centuries BC. Moshe Weinfeld also compared Joshua to 1st millennium BC Assyrian texts. Both authors defended the idea that Josh. 1-11 was written late by the Deuteronomist historian. Hoffmeier argued that the Assyrian texts used by Van Seters and Weinfeld were actually based on earlier Middle Assyrian prototypes. James K. Hoffmeier, "The Structure of Joshua 1-11 and the Annals of Thutmose III," 165-79 in A. R. Millard et al, eds. *Faith, Tradition and History: Old Testament Historiography in its Near Eastern Context*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 165.

The claim has often been made that astronomers have studied the motion of the stars and have proven with a computer program that there is a day plus fifteen minutes missing in the earth's rotation. The missing day has then been credited to Joshua's battle and the missing 15 minutes to Hezekiah's request in II Kings. 20:11. This claim is simply impossible. The earth spins like a top. If God were to stop the earth's rotation for a day, its relationship to all other stars and planets would be unchanged. There would be no way at all to prove with a computer program that such an event had occurred. Certainly no observation of the stars would suggest it.

forces and turn the battle against Israel. Joshua prayed that the darkness may return. In Joshua 10:13, Joshua prayed that the sun should stand still at Gibeon and the moon should stand still in the valley of Aijalon. From the battle site at Beth-horon, Gibeon was located on the eastern horizon, and the valley of Aijalon was located on the western horizon. So Joshua was asking that the sun not rise and the moon not set. God did not answer this prayer by stopping the earth's rotation. God answered this prayer by sending a terrible thunder storm that darkened the sky. In effect, the sun did not come up for half a day. Joshua 10:11 indicated the power of this storm. Great hailstones falling from the sky killed more of the Amorites than the Israelites killed.²⁹ Joshua fought a nation that worshipped storm gods. Yahweh sent His great storm and destroyed them. By doing so, Yahweh proved that He alone was the true God and creation obeyed Him alone.

The account of Joshua's conquest may seem somewhat unrealistic at first glance because Egypt would still rule Palestine for 200 years. Joshua stressed that no nation in Palestine could stand before Israel. God fulfilled all of His promises to Israel and gave them control of the land. Yet God had not promised to drive out the nations immediately at Joshua's conquest. In Exodus 23:27-30, Moses recorded Yahweh's promise to Israel. Yahweh promised that He would send His terror before Israel and throw the people into confusion. All Israel's enemies would flee before them. Then God would send "hornets" before them to drive out the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites from the land. However, Yahweh promised that He would not drive them all from the land in a single year. If He did so, the land would become desolate and full of wild beasts. Instead, Yahweh promised to drive out the nations a little at a time as Israel was able to take possession of the land. Eventually their territory would stretch from the Euphrates to the Red Sea and from the Mediterranean Sea to the wilderness. While Israel would not take possession of the whole land immediately, Israel was commanded to make no treaty or covenant with the peoples of the land. Israel was forbidden to allow the nations to continue to live in their land for they would lead the Jews away from God. Yet in Joshua's day this instruction had not yet been carried out.

D) AMARNA AND THE HABIRU

There has been quite an academic debate about the strength of the Egyptian empire during the reigns of Amenhotep III and his successors. Some authors claim that Egypt's rule of the north was very strong at this time. James Weinstein argued that Egypt's control of the north was strongest during the reign of Amenhotep III. He argued that no vassal in Palestine could resist Egypt's will, and Egypt was able to rule the north with only a few soldiers. Weinstein wrote,

Egyptian rule was strongest along the Palestinian coast and the major highways of the southern Levant, and it was weakest in the hill country, peripheral areas of Palestine (such as the desertic regions), and Syria. Palestine and southern Syria offered nothing that was absolutely essential to the economic well-being of Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt, but the region formed an important buffer zone between Egypt and the superpowers of western Asia; hence it was necessary to keep the vassal rulers in line. Military support for the Egyptian officials stationed in the region was provided by a series of garrison towns and grain storage depots. Six garrison towns are mentioned in the Amarna Letters: four along the coast (Gaza and Jaffa in Palestine, Ullaza and Sumur in Syria), and two inland (Beth Shean at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley in northern Palestine, Kumidi in the Beqa Valley). ... The impression one gets from the archaeological and textual sources of the period is that the principal goal of the Egyptian administration in western Asia during the first half of the fourteenth century B.C. was to exploit the region economically and politically at the smallest cost militarily.³⁰

On the other hand, several authors have claimed that the Egyptian empire was weakened seriously at this time. The difference between these perspectives grows from their approach to the Amarna Letters. Some

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So the text did describe a miracle and an answer to prayer. However, it does not describe the kind of miracle so often sought in the text. This is a good example of how a traditional interpretation of a text can blind us to what the text really says. The traditional interpretation can even influence how the Hebrew of a text is translated in published Bibles.

³⁰ James M. Weinstein, "Egypt and the Levant in the Reign of Amenhotep III," in *Amenhotep III: Perspectives on His Reign*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 228-29.

scholars stress how few troops Egypt had in the north and how weak Egypt's vassals were at the time. Other authors stress the weakness of the Egyptian response to complaints by its vassals. Goetze argued that Egypt's control of Syria became nominal at this time.³¹ Amenhotep III's partial loss of control of the north can be seen in several of the Amarna Letters which were written from the Canaanite city states to *Nbm3'tR'*, or Amenhotep III.³² These letters illustrated the historical outworking of vassal treaties similar perhaps to the treaty pattern behind Deuteronomy.³³ While there has been a debate about the date of various Amarna Letters, several of them were written to Amenhotep III.³⁴ These included a number of letters written by Rib-Addi, the king of Byblos.³⁵ He warned Amenhotep III repeatedly that the *Habiru* were attacking the cities near Byblos. While Rib-Addi claimed that Byblos itself was safe, the Egyptian administrative center at Sumur was seriously threatened.³⁶ Rib-Addi requested Egyptian assistance to fight the *Habiru*. Rib-Addi mentioned the *Habiru* 45 times in his letters. If Israel entered Palestine during the 18th Dynasty, these letters were written after Joshua had assigned the tribes their inheritances and before Joshua died. Yet the *Habiru* who were attacking Rib-Addi's territory were not Israelites.³⁷ Byblos was too far north to be threatened directly by Israel.³⁸ Byblos was located north of Tyre and Sidon.³⁹ As chapter three discussed, the *Habiru* were disenfranchised and often homeless elements in the population. The Israelites were *Habiru*, or Hebrews, but so were people from many other ethnic backgrounds. The Israelites were only a small part of the much larger and older *Habiru* population.⁴⁰ The *Habiru* that Rib-

³¹ A. Goetze, "The Struggle for the Domination of Syria (1400-1300 B.C.), in *The Cambridge Ancient History* 2, pt. 2, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 2.

Edward Fay Campbell Jr., *The Chronology of the Amarna Letters: with Special Relevance to the Hypothetical Coregency of Amenophis III and Akhenaten*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), 38.

For a discussion of the treaty aspects of the Amarna Letters, see Michael S. Moore, "Big "Dreams and Broken Promises: Solomon's Treaty with Hiram in its International Context," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14 (2004): 205-21.

Most of the Amarna Letters seem to have been written roughly between 1385 BC and 1360 BC. The last of them must have been written before Harmheb brought an end to Akhenaten's monotheistic revolution. Moran claimed that the Amarna Letters were written between the 13th year of Amenhotep III and the first year of Tutankhamun. William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xxxiv.

For a detailed analysis of Rib-Addi's letters, see Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Amarna Correspondence of Rib-Addi, Prince of Byblos (EA 68-96) a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*, (Philadelphia: Dropsie College of Hebrew and Cognate Learning, 1961).

Samuel A. B. Mercer, *Extra-Biblical Sources for Hebrew and Jewish History*, (New York: Longmans, Green, and co, 1913), 19. Mercer's translations have often been criticized in the field. The best sources for the Amarna Letters are J. A. Knudtzon, *Die el-Amarna-Tafeln. Anmerkungen und Register bearbeitet von C. Weber und E. Ebeling*, (Leipzig: 1907) and Moran, *The Amarna Letters*.

The *Habiru* had already been present in Palestine before Joshua had led Israel into the land. Thutmose III encountered *Habiru* at Joppa before the exodus and Amenhotep II had brought 179 *Habiru* captives south from Palestine while Israel was in the wilderness. The encountered by Thutmose III and Amenhotep II could not have been Israelites.

In theory, the promised land extended north to the Euphrates. The Egyptian empire had extended that far north at times, but even Egypt found the northern region impossible to hold. Israel rarely tried to exert influence north of Dan. Josh. 13:1-7 listed this entire area as land that the Israelites had been unable to conquer. It was not even included in the inheritances given to the tribes at the end of Joshua's life.

Rib-Addi's city was within the region promised to Joshua in Josh. 1:4. Yahweh promised Joshua a territory as large as the empire of Thutmose III. Yahweh promised that Israel would control Lebanon, the west bank of the Euphrates, and all of the land of the Hittites. Joshua did not succeed in extending Israel's territory that far, and Israel was not a threat to Byblos.

Rowton noted that the name Hebrew was spelled *Habiruu* at Nuzi and *Habiraa* at Babylon. M. B. Rowton, "The Topological Factor in the HAPIRU Problem," 375-87 in *Assyriological Studies* #16, *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 384-85. The name *Habiru* has been found in Near Eastern texts as early as the Ur III period, and Mendenhall suggested that the name may have originated in prehistoric Northwest Semitic. George Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973), 138. The *Habiru* appeared as warriors during the reign of Naram-Sin before 2255 BC. At Mari, 2,000 *Habiru* served Zimrilim as warriors, and thirty were reported to have come from the region north of Babylon. The *Habiru* were common in the Nuzi texts, in texts from Hammurabi's Babylon, and in texts from Bogazköy and

Addi faced may have included Canaanites who had fled before Israel. In Joshua 2:9, Rahab told the Israelite spies that the population of Palestine was melting away before Israel because they had heard about God's judgment on Egypt.⁴¹ Many of those who fled before Israel may have joined the *Habiru* and may have attacked areas like Byblos that were beyond Israel's immediate territorial limits. In EA 69, Rib-Addi complained about hostility and opposition from *Habiru*, or SA.GAZ, troops. In EA 73, he worried that the *Habiru*, or GAZ people, would kill Egyptian officials and that all lands would join the *Habiru*. In EA 74, Rib-Addi complained that his fields could not be cultivated. All of his cities in the mountains and the sea shore had united with the *Habiru*, or the GAZ people. While Egypt sent military supplies to its northern vassals, Egypt did not attempt to dominate the Levant permanently with its troops.⁴²

If Amenhotep III had led his army north shortly before Rib-Addi wrote his letters, Egypt may have compounded his problems. The Egyptian army lived off the land whenever possible. When New Kingdom rulers led their armies north, they raided the region for provisions. Loyal vassals were also expected to provide for the army. Peasants in the Levant would have been impoverished both to pay the annual Egyptian tribute and to provision the Egyptian military campaign. In the Amarna Letters, the Canaanite city state rulers constantly asked for food as well as military assistance. Egypt's vassal rulers in the Levant then compounded the region's problems by seizing grain from each other. Peasant farmers in the region were ruined by both the empire's demands and the resulting chaos.⁴³ As farmers lost their land, many of them were forced to join the *Habiru* population. In EA 77, Rib-Addi complained that his own peasants might slay him. Then in EA 85, he wrote to Egypt:

Since he has attacked me 3 times this year, and for two years I have been repeatedly robbed of my grain, we have no grain to eat. What can I say to my peasantry? Their sons, their daughters, the furnishings of their houses are gone, since they have been sold in the land of Yarimuta for provisions to keep alive. May the king, my lord, heed the words of his loyal servant, and may he send grain in ships in order to keep his servant and his city alive.⁴⁴

If Israel entered Palestine during the 18th Dynasty, they attacked the region while wooded highlands across the Levant contained angry and hungry peasants who had been driven to a *Habiru* life style by Egypt's vassal rulers.

About the time that Joshua died, Amenhotep III was followed to the Egyptian throne by his son Thutmose IV who is also called Akhenaten. The dates for Amenhotep III and Akhenaten have been constantly debated. The two rulers may have served as co-regents during Amenhotep III's illness,

Ugarit. The *Habiru* may also have been mentioned in Ugaritic texts during Israel's period of the Judges. Schloen suggested an interpretation of a highly problematic Ugaritic text which is numbered as *KTU* 1.12. This text that may have associated the *Habiru* with the wilderness. Schloen argued that this Canaanite text depicted the Canaanite god El sending away the maid servants *TIŠ* and *DMGY* with the words, "Take your (birth) stool, your baggage, your swaddling bands, and go forth from our household (?). Be oppressed in the midst of the wilderness of the god of desolation (?). Hire yourself out, O *apiru* maid servant - mighty is the hand of the hirelings." J.D. Schloen, "The Exiles of Disinherited Kin in *KTU* 1.12 and *KTU* 1.23." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993): 215-16. If Schloen understood the passage correctly, the wilderness *Habiru* motif was part of Canaanite religious traditions before Ugarit was destroyed in 1200 BC.

While Amenhotep III claimed sovereignty over Palestine, Rahab claimed in Josh. 2:8-11 that the land of Palestine was terrified of Israel. The events at the exodus were well known, as were Israel's victories over the Amorites. Rahab suggested that the Canaanites were aware of Israel's presence and Israel's faith. Rahab may even have alluded to Deut. 4:39. Rahab clearly knew Israel's covenant name for God, which was Yahweh.⁴²

⁴³Memories of the exodus might have made Egypt hesitate to send its army against Israel again.

The extent that the Egyptian empire impoverished Palestine has been debated. Weinstein et al claimed that the 14th century BC was a period of great commercial activity in the Levant. They argued that despite Egyptian demands for tribute, the large cities on the coast became rich because much of the trade was carried on by sea. They also argued that small towns in Palestine were drained of their resources. James M. Weinstein, Eric H. Cline, Kenneth A. Kitchen, and David O'Connor, "The World Abroad," in David O'Connor and Eric H. Cline, eds. *Amenhotep II: Perspectives on His Reign*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 229. Cline argued that Egypt dominated trade with the Aegean between the 17th and 15th centuries BC. Eric H. Cline, "Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean," B.A.R. International Series 591. Oxford: Tempus Reparatum. 1994. <http://home.gwu.edu/~ehcline/SWDSAb.html>

Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, 156.

although both his possible illness and the possibility of a co-regency with Akhenaten have been hotly debated.⁴⁵ Akhenaten's reign was one of the most bizarre periods of Egyptian history. Akhenaten tried to establish something rather like a monotheistic religion in Egypt. Akhenaten did not worship Israel's God, and it is impossible to know if the story of Israel's exodus influenced him to adopt a monotheistic faith. There has been a lot of discussion about his northern vizier. Akhenaten was served by a vizier named Aper-EI. This was a Semitic name that translated as "Servant of El." Aper-EI was a "child of the kap" which meant that he was a foreigner raised in the royal court like Moses.⁴⁶ His presence in the court has led to speculation about a Semitic influence behind Akhenaten's monotheism.

Akhenaten worshiped the sun god Aten as the high god of all the earth.⁴⁷ Akhenaten built a new city as Egypt's religious and political capital. His reign was a period of huge political and religious conflict in Egypt. He was unable to deal with attacks against Egypt's interests in the Levant beyond sending limited military assistance to the Canaanites.⁴⁸ Malamat noted that the *Amarna Letters* often requested only between 10 and 50 Egyptian soldiers to help defend the city. A request for 50 chariots was considered to be quite extreme at the time. One letter only requested six bows, three daggers, and three swords. These small numbers demonstrated how vulnerable the city states of Palestine had become during Akhenaten's reign.⁴⁹

While some *Habiru* in the Amarna Letters clearly were not Israelites, others may have been.⁵⁰ The *Habiru* were mentioned 125 times in the Amarna Letters. If Israel left Egypt during the 18th Dynasty, Joshua would still have been leading Israel against the Canaanites when the first of the Amarna Letters were written. It is interesting that the king of Megiddo mentioned a *Habiru* leader named Yashuay which is a similar name to Joshua.⁵¹ Most of the Amarna Letters would have been written in the generation after Joshua died which may be why the names of Canaanite kings were consistently different from the names recorded in the book of Joshua.⁵² The Israelites often claimed to be *Habiru*. In Genesis 14:13; 39:14-17; 40:15; 41:12, and 43:32, Moses described Israel's patriarchs as Hebrews from the land of the Hebrews. It is not surprising that the Patriarchs were *Habiru*. During the patriarchal age, the Levant had not yet recovered from the 300 year long drought that had ended the Early Bronze Age. The Early Bronze culture had survived largely among semi-nomadic peoples in semi-arid regions. These semi-nomadic people would have been called *Habiru*. The patriarchs lived in tents and migrated from place to place across the

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Akhenaten may also have been involved in a coregency at the end of his reign, although this suggestion has also been controversial. Difficulties in the evidence for these coregencies have led to endless chronological debates.

Marianne Luban discussed this vizier in an EEF posting on 8/21/05. Luban noted that the name Aper-EI was comparable to the Semitic Obed-EI, and that this was the older form of the Hebrew name Obediah.

Near the end of his reign, Akhenaten tried to erase every example of the name Amun-Re in Egypt. He even required that the Amun half of his father's name Amenhotep be destroyed.

Weinfeld argued that the Amarna Letters depicted the Levant nearly in chaos because of bureaucratic indifference, political corruption, rivalry between vassal rulers, and continuous minor military conquests. Weinstein, "Egypt and the Levant in the Reign of Amenhotep III," 228.

Abraham Malamat, "How Inferior Israelite Forces Conquered Fortified Canaanite Cities" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 7.2 (1982): 29. However, it may be worth exploring whether the reference to a bow or a sword may refer to a small military unit.

Malamat argued that the Hebrews were "somehow connected linguistically and ethnically with the 'Apiru.'" Malamat claimed that "each and every Israelite is a Hebrew and likely an 'Apiru, while not every Hebrew or 'Apiru is necessarily an Israelite." Abraham Malamat, "The Exodus: Egyptian Analogies," 15-26 in Ernest S. Frerichs and Leonard H. Lesko, eds. *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 18. Malamat did not associate the 'Apiru of the Amarna Letters with Israel. Malamat believed that the exodus traditions reflected a rather limited group of Israelites who left Egypt near the end of the Egyptian 19th Dynasty. Kline argued that the *Hapiru* of the Amarna texts may have been Hurrians, and the *Hapiru* invasion of the Amarna Letters may have been Cushan-Rishathaim's invasion of Palestine recorded in Judg. 3:7-11. This invasion occurred around 1375 BC which would be the Amarna Age. Meredith Kline, "The Ha-Bi-Ru - Kin or Foe of Israel? - III," *Westminster Theological Journal* 20 (1957): 54-61.

⁵¹ Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 148.

In troubled times, kings often only reigned for brief periods. The kings named in the Amarna Letters may have been different rulers who followed the deaths of the kings whose names were recorded in Joshua. Yet they may still have ruled within the same general historical context.

land. This was a *Habiru* life style. At the exodus, Israel returned to a *Habiru* life in the wilderness. The ancient Near East would have viewed the wilderness community as a *Habiru* people.⁵³

When Israel entered Palestine, many Israelites retained a *Habiru* life style. Judges 1 summarized the regions that Israel was unable to conquer. Israel could not control Egypt's vassals on the coastal plain because the Canaanite city states were reinforced by Egyptian chariots.⁵⁴ Israel was also unable to control Egyptian fortresses like Beth Shean. An Israelite attack against an Egyptian administrative center risked an armed Egyptian response. Israel did control the wooded highlands throughout the Judges. Israelites in the highlands often retained the *Habiru* life style that they had adopted in the wilderness. They lived in tents and raised livestock. The Old Testament referred to tent dwellers in Judges 4:11-14; 5:24; 7:8-13; 8:11; 20:8; I Samuel 4:10; 13:2; 17:54; II Samuel 18:17; 19:8; 20:22.⁵⁵ The tent based culture left few archaeological artifacts, so an Israelite archaeological horizon has been difficult to identify.⁵⁶

Like the Egyptian army, Israel may have used mainly baskets and wine skins in the wilderness instead of pottery. Wanderers in the wilderness normally used wine skins and baskets because they were light and could be repaired easily. Broken pottery could not be repaired. So the Israelites may have entered Canaan with no pottery tradition and only a limited material culture that could have survived in an archaeological context. Israel may have even have adopted Canaanite material culture before they entered Palestine. Numbers 31:35 noted that 32,000 young Canaanite girls were taken into the community as captives. That represented a strong Canaanite cultural influence. Beyond that, Deuteronomy 1:46-2:3 noted that Israel spent much of its wilderness sojourn either near Kadesh or around Mount Seir. Both regions were close enough to settled areas of Palestine to be in range of Canaanite traders. So it is impossible to know how much Canaanite material culture Israel had gained before the conquest.

If an 18th Dynasty exodus is defended, the highlands and the south of Palestine had been at least partly depopulated in the Late Bronze IB period by the conquests of Ahmose and perhaps Thutmose III. The extent of this depopulation has been debated at length.⁵⁷ If Israel encountered only a small population in the highlands, it may be easy to understand why Israel was able to conquer this region.

Judges 1:1-2 noted that Israel made a new attempt to drive Canaanites from their territory shortly after Joshua died.⁵⁸ One of the more interesting examples of this may have been the renewed pressure that Judah brought against Jerusalem.⁵⁹ Shortly after Amenhotep III and Joshua died, 'Abdu-Heba of

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The Israelites' understanding of the name *Habiru* can be seen in the way that the name Hebrew was used in the Old Testament. It is quite striking that the Israelites were called Hebrews eight times in the book of I Sam. After I Sam, the name Hebrew only appeared in Jer. 34 and Jonah 1 because Israel no longer lived as *Habiru*. The Hebrew theme was continued in the "stranger" and "sojourner" motif in passages like Ps. 39:12.

Sakkie Cornelius argued that the Hyksos introduced chariots to Egypt. The earliest depiction of a chariot in Egypt dated to the reign of Thutmose I around 1490 BC. Cornelius noted that depictions of Egyptian chariots in Canaan became common in the 19th Dynasty. Sakkie Cornelius, "The Iconography of Weapons and Warfare in Palestine/Israel C. 1500-1200 BCE," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 25 (1999): 265.

One limitation of this argument is that the word *ohel* or "tent" was at times used for permanent structures as well as tents. So some of these passages may or may not have described a tent based culture. The phrase "to your tents" may sometimes have meant little more than "go home." See the discussion of *ohel* in M. M. Homan, *To Your Tents, O Israel! The Terminology, Function, Form, and Symbolism of Tents in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

An interesting parallel can be found in the earliest section of the Assyrian King List. This list began with 17 kings who were described as living in tents during the early 2nd millennium BC. Kitchen suggested that these kings were sheikhs of the steppes. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 198.

⁵⁸ Weinstein, "The Egyptian Empire in Palestine," 1-28.

A possible reference to this renewed Israelite pressure may appear in an Amarna Letter that Albright dated between 1380 BC and 1370 BC. The letter was written by the ruler of a city named Zaphon in the Jordan valley. Albright translated part of the letter as, "Let the king, my lord, rescue his land from the hands of the raiders! Let her not perish, thy city, the town of Zaphon!" William F. Albright, "Two Little Understood Amarna Letters from the Middle Jordan Valley," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 89 (1943): 7-17. The word that Albright translated as "raiders" was 'Apiri which is the same name as Habiru. Josh. 13:27 assigned Zaphon to the tribe of Gad. Most Canaanite cities in this region were destroyed as the Israelites occupied Ammonite territory, the highlands, and the Jordan valley. In EA 273, the Lady of Zaphon reported that the *Habiru* had attacked Zorah and Aijalon. These cities were assigned to Dan in Josh. 19:41.

⁵⁹ Josh. 10:1-11; Judg. 1:21.

Jerusalem wrote a series of letters requesting assistance from Akhenaten. 'Abdu-Heba described his struggles both against the *Habiru* and against Shuwardata, the king of Keilah (which was near Hebron). 'Abdu-Heba was very worried by the *Habiru* attacks against Jerusalem. He complained to the Egyptian court that the *Habiru* were attacking the land that Pharaoh had given him. 'Abdu-Heba reported that he had fought the *Habiru* chief with fifty chariots provided by Zurata and Indaruta because the *Habiru* had stolen his own weapons. 'Abdu-Heba requested military help from Pharaoh so that Pharaoh's control of the land could be restored to its former limits.⁶⁰ In EA 286, 'Abdu-Heba warned Egypt that he had to send a garrison to assist Jerusalem. 'Abdu-Heba reported that he had warned Pharaoh's commissioners that the king's lands were lost, but the commissioners would not listen. 'Abdu-Heba warned that there was not a single city mayor remaining who served Pharaoh. The Hebrews had plundered all of the king's lands. 'Abdu-Heba pleaded that archers be sent to Jerusalem. He warned that if he did not receive archers in that year, all of Pharaoh's possessions around Jerusalem would be lost. However, 'Abdu-Heba promised that he would be able to hold the king's lands if he received the required military support. 'Abdu-Heba's fear was well founded. Judges 1:8 noted that on one occasion, Israel was able to capture Jerusalem and burn the city. Jerusalem was probably rebuilt with Egyptian help. Gabriel Barkay noted that Jerusalem contained an Egyptian fort, an Egyptian temple, and a small Egyptian garrison until Merenptah's reign in the 19th Dynasty.⁶¹ The Egyptian garrison at Jerusalem would have made it hard for Israel to capture Jerusalem at least until the Sea People invasion of 1200 BC.

'Abdu-Heba then accused Shuwardata of using the *Habiru* attacks for his own advantage. In EA 290, 'Abdu-Heba complained about the loss of Bethlehem to Shuwardata. He claimed that Shuwardata had taken troops from cities like Gaza and Gath. He added that Bethlehem had gone over to Shuwardata's side. It is striking that 'Abdu-Heba lost control of Bethlehem. It was David's home, and it remained outside of Canaanite control during the Judges. Shuwardata argued his own case before the Egyptian court. While 'Abdu-Heba was accusing him of aggression, Shuwardata wrote Egypt in EA 366 that the *Habiru* had risen up against the king's lands and the lands which the king's god had given him. Shuwardata told the Pharaoh that all of his brothers had abandoned him. Only he, 'Abdu-Heba, and the rulers of Akka and Akshapa had stood against the *Habiru*. So Shuwardata claimed to be campaigning alongside of 'Abdu-Heba against the *Habiru*.

'Abdu-Heba complained especially about Lab'ayu, the king of Shechem. In Amarna Letter 289, 'Abdu-Heba asked why he should remain loyal like the rulers of Gaza and Beth-Shean who were being supported by Egyptian troops.⁶² 'Abdu-Heba asked why he should not imitate Lab'ayu the king of Shechem.⁶³ Lab'ayu had given his city to the *Habiru*, and his father had helped the *Habiru*. Lab'ayu was in a difficult position. To survive, he had to placate both Egypt and Israel. 'Abdu-Heba's claim was a striking in the light of Israel's early history. Joshua 20:7 had designated Shechem as a city of refuge, and Joshua 24 recorded all Israel being gathered at Shechem for Joshua's final covenant renewal ceremony. Joshua was even buried at Shechem. This suggests that Shechem was an Israelite vassal of some kind during Joshua's life.⁶⁴ These details of Amarna Letters could be understood in the context of Israel's early struggles for the land. If Israel left Egypt after the death of Thutmose III, the chronology would require this context.

'Abdu-Heba also complained that several small towns in the Shephelah had sided with the *Habiru*. In Amarna Letter 287, 'Abdu-Heba complained that the lands of Gezer, Ashkelon, and Lachish were providing the *Habiru* with grain, oil, and anything else that they required. According to Joshua 10:31-33,

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Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, 269.

⁶¹ Gabriel Barkay, "A Late Bronze Age Egyptian Temple in Jerusalem?" *Israel Exploration Journal* 46 (1996): 41-2.

⁶² Anson Rainey noted that Amarna Letter #244 implied that Egyptian troops had also been stationed at Megiddo. Only after these troops returned to Egypt did trouble with Shechem break out. Anson F. Rainey, "The Military Camp Ground at Taanach by the Waters of Megiddo." *Eretz-Israel* 15 (1981): 63*. Rainey would not accept the suggestion that Israel was already in Palestine at this time, and he would not agree that some of the *Habiru* of the Amarna Letters were Israelites.

⁶³ W. Horowitz, "The Amarna Age Inscribed Clay Cylinder from Beth-Shean" *Biblical Archaeologist* 60 (1997) 97-100.

⁶⁴ Callaway noted Alt's claim that in the Amarna Age, Shechem was the only city state in the highlands of Palestine between Jerusalem and Jezreel. Alt argued that Israel could have settled peacefully between the territories of the Canaanite city states. He assumed that this happened in the 12th century BC. Mendenhall saw Israel's origin as something not unlike a Marxist revolt. Joseph A. Callaway, "A New Perspective on the Hill Country Settlement of Canaan in Iron Age I," 31-49 in Jonathan N. Tubb, ed. *Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages*, (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1985), 32.

Joshua defeated Lachish and Gezer. He left them no survivors within the city walls. When these cities were resettled by Canaanites after the destruction, the city may have been very weak and subject to Israelite influence. Ashkelon had long been a center of Minoan influence in the southern Levant. Moses had not listed the Philistines as a people to be driven out of the land.⁶⁵ So a temporary alliance between Israel and Ashkelon should not be surprising. 'Abdu-Heba asked especially for archers. He warned that unless he received archers from Egypt, all of Pharaoh's lands in Palestine would be lost. 'Abdu-Heba predicted that Pharaoh Akhenaten would lose all of his territory in the Levant if he did not send help to Jerusalem because the *Habiru* were plundering all of the land.⁶⁶ 'Abdu-Heba had a reason to be afraid. Judges 1:8 recorded that Israel had captured and burned Jerusalem, which may have occurred shortly after the last of his letters was written.⁶⁷ Between the 14th and 13th centuries BC, three quarters of the Canaanite cities in the highlands of Palestine were destroyed.⁶⁸

In order to understand Israel's period of the Judges, it is important to recognize the regions that Israel did and did not control. Judges 1:1-21 noted that the Israelites tried to take possession of the land shortly after Joshua died. In this ongoing conflict, the Israelites consolidated their control of the highlands but were unable to take possession of the valleys or Jerusalem. M. B. Rowton argued that the wooded highlands of the ancient Near East had always been *Habiru* territory. Rowton argued that the ancient Near Eastern texts associated the *Habiru* with woodland areas that were very hard for the city states to control.⁶⁹ The wooded highlands were the areas of Palestine that were occupied by most of the Israelite tribes during the period of the Judges. These highlands contained pasture lands, forests, cliffs, ravines, and thick brush. Chariot warfare was impossible in the highlands. Even Canaanite infantry could only invade the highlands with difficulty. The highlands were Israelite territory because the highlands could not be held by Egypt's allies on the coastal plains. This was clearly stated in Joshua 2:16; 17:16; Judges 1:19 and 1:34. These verses noted that the Israelites had occupied the highlands, but could not defeat the Canaanites in the valleys and on the plains. The Canaanites dominated the plains with their Egyptian chariots.

The highlands were also occupied by Israel for a second reason. The wooded highlands and much of southern Palestine had been largely unoccupied throughout the Late Bronze 1B time period between 1482 BC and roughly 1386 BC. The area had been depopulated by earlier Egyptian 18th Dynasty rulers. Redford argued that the sparsely populated hill country had been partly stripped of its inhabitants during the 18th Dynasty. He noted that the region contained little that attracted the Egyptians who felt no need to police it. However, the Egyptians did believe it important to deny the use of the hill country to anyone who would use it to threaten Egypt's interests in the region.⁷⁰ Most of the inhabitants of the highlands probably moved down to the Canaanite city states to find protection from Egyptian raids. When Israel entered the land, they faced only limited opposition in the highlands. Israel's greatest difficulty was their battles for control of the coastal plains. Israel had only limited and temporary success freeing the coast from Egyptian domination.

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Phythian-Adams and Garstang excavated Ashkelon in 1921. Phythian-Adams concluded that the earliest settlement layer that he found at Ashkelon already contained pottery that betrayed the influence of Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean. W. J. Phythian-Adams, "Ashkelon reports: Stratigraphical Sections," *Palestine Exploration Fund: Quarterly Statement*, (1921): 165. Whether this was in fact the earliest level at Ashkelon is another issue. The Old Testament described three different groups of people in Palestine by the name "Philistine." The first was the Minoan traders of the Patriarchal Age. The second was the Mycenaean Greeks of the Mosaic Age. The third was the composite Sea Peoples culture of Samson's time.

⁶⁶ Dyer, "The Date of the Exodus Reexamined" 79.

⁶⁷ While Israel burned Jerusalem, they failed to drive the Jebusites from the region. Jerusalem was soon rebuilt as a Jebusite city, and it remained outside of Israel's control until David captured it 400 years later.

⁶⁸ M. Kochavi, "The Israelite Settlement in Canaan in the Light of Archaeological Surveys," *Biblical Theology Today*, (Washington: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 54-60.

⁶⁹ Rowton, "The Topological Factor in the Hapiru Problem," 375-87.

⁷⁰ Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, 269.