

ISRAELITE ARCHAEOLOGY AND CHRONOLOGY



Roger Waite

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The Time of the Early Patriarchs

The early patriarchs that sojourned in the land of Israel, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their families and servants numbered only in the hundreds and left nothing that can be positively identified from their time in Israel, which was known as the land of Canaan at the time.

For most secular archaeologists there seems little to support the stories of the patriarchs in Israel before Israel became a fully fledged nation.

David Down, in Lesson 4 (Assyria) of his Digging Up the Past course, gives us some fascinating information about the city of Ebla in northern Syria to the west of the Euphrates River that lends support to the stories of the patriarchs. Ebla was a major city in the time of Abraham. David Down writes:



On April 23, 1975, Pettinato was able to announce in a public lecture at Rome's Pontifical Institute, that the Ebla texts were written in a language of the North-West Semitic group, more precisely in old Canaanite...

When Pettinato had translated the words on the statue of Ibbit-Lim, and identified Tell Mardikh as Ebla, the critics had howled him down. "One inscription proves nothing," they snorted, "this statue could have been imported from a thousand miles away". That was a possibility of course, but now here was conclusive evidence. The archaeologists had indeed found Ebla. Altogether some 20,000 tablets or fragments were found at Ebla and Pettinato worked feverishly at translating them. Some startling facts began to emerge.

Ebla, it seems, was not only a large city of about 260,000 inhabitants, but it was a highly civilized society with a well developed educational system...There were also encyclopedias of knowledge giving information on botany, zoology and minerology...

Then there were the proper names that had a familiar ring about them: Adam, Abraham, Esau, David, Saul, Tamar, Jethro, Sisera, Delilah and a host of others. There were even the words Ben-Israel, meaning the sons or children of Israel. Of course no one was suggesting that these tablets were referring to the actual Bible characters by that name but it was becoming very apparent that the Biblical records were assuming a more and more historical role. The Bible names were not just fictitious names. They were real people with real names. Here were people living at Ebla with similar names.



The archive of the Ebla tablets

But most astonishing of all was the name of Ebla's most powerful king: Ebrum which sounds suspiciously like Eber, the progenitor of the Hebrews (Genesis 11:16). This idea has not been accepted by the scholars and there is no reason why it should. But again it gives credence to the names in the Biblical genealogies.

The place names were also significant. One text mentioned Sedom and Amorah which Pettinato identified as Sodom and Gomorrah. Until recently, critics have regarded the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah recorded in Genesis 19 as fictitious. There

was no mention of any of these names in any literature outside the Bible and most scholars wrote them off as legendary. But not only are Sodom and Gomorrah mentioned in the Ebla tablets but in the same context, Pettinato identified the names of Admah, Zeboiim and Belah in that order. Now that is how these cities are listed in the story of Abraham and the five kings in Genesis 14.

Archaeology has also given us some outside historical support to the story of Abraham and the Kings of the East. In Zechariah Stitchin's book "The Wars of Gods and Men" we read:

"And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shin'ar, Ariokh king of Ellasar, Khedorla'omer king of Elam, and Tidhal king of Go'im - That these made war with Bera King of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shem-eber king of Zebi'im, and with the king of Bela, which is Zoar."

Thus begins the biblical tale, in chapter 14 of Genesis, of an ancient war that pitted an alliance of four kingdoms of the East against five kings in Canaan. It is a tale that has evolved some of the most intense debate among scholars, for it connects the story of Abraham, the first Hebrew Patriarch, with a specific non-Hebrew event, and thus affords objective substantiation of the biblical record of the birth of a nation.

For many decades the critics of the Old Testament seemed to prevail; then, as the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, the scholarly and religious worlds were astounded by the discovery of Babylonian tablets naming Khedorla'omer, Ariokh, and Tidhal in a tale not unlike the biblical one.

The discovery was announced in a lecture by Theophilus Pinches to the Victoria Institute, London, in 1897. Having examined several tablets belonging to the Spartoli Collection in the British Museum, he found that they describe a war of wide-ranging magnitude, in which a king of Elam, Kudur-laghamar, led an alliance of rulers that included one named Eri-aku and another named Tud-ghula - names that easily could have been transformed into Hebrew as Khedor-la'omer, Ariokh, and Tidhal. Accompanying his published lecture with a painstaking transcript of the cuneiform writing and a translation thereof, Pinches could confidently claim that the biblical tale had indeed been supported by an independent Mesopotamian source.

With justified excitement the Assyriologists of that time agreed with Pinches reading of the cuneiform names. The tablets indeed spoke of "Kudur-Laghamar, king of the land of Elam"; all scholars agreed that it was a perfect Elamite royal name, the prefix Kudur ("Servant") having been a component in the names of several Elamite kings, and Laghamar being the Elamite epithet-name for a certain deity.

It was agreed that the second name, spelled Eri-e-a-ku in the Babylonian cuneiform script, stood for the original Sumerian ERI.AKU, meaning "Servant of the god Aku," Aku being a variant of the name Nannar/Sin. It is known from a number of inscriptions that Elamite rulers of Larsa bore the name "Servant of Sin," and there was therefore little difficulty in agreeing that the biblical Elasar, the royal city of the king Ariokh, was in fact Larsa.

There was also unanimous agreement among the scholars for accepting that the Babylonian text's Tud-ghula was the equivalent of the biblical "Tidhal, king of Go'im"; and they agreed that by Go'im the Book of Genesis referred to the "nation-hordes" whom the cuneiform tablets listed as allies of Khedorla'omer.

Here, then, was the missing proof - not only of the veracity of the Bible and of the existence of Abraham, but also of an international event in which he had been involved!...

The second discovery was announced by Vincent Scheil, who reported that he had found among the tablets in the Imperial Ottoman Museum in Constantinople a letter from the well-known Babylonian King Hammurabi, which mentions the very same Kudur-laghamar! Because the letter was addressed to a king of Larsa, Father Scheil concluded that the three

were contemporaries and thus matched three of the four biblical kings of the East - Hammurabi being none other than "Amraphael king of Shin'ar.

However, when subsequent research convinced most scholars that Hammurabi reigned much later (from 1792 to 1750 B.C., according to The Cambridge Ancient History), the synchronization seemingly achieved by Scheil fell apart, and the whole bearing of the discovered inscriptions - even those reported by Pinches - came into doubt. Ignored were the pleas of Pinches that no matter with whom the three named kings were to be identified - that even if Khedorla'omer, Ariokh, and Tidhal of the cuneiform texts were not contemporaries of Hammurabi - the text's tale with its three names was still "a remarkable historical coincidence, and deserves recognition as such." In 1917, Alfred Jeremias (Die sogenannten Kedorlaomer-Texte) attempted to revive interest in the subject; but the scholarly community preferred to treat the Spartoli tablets with benign neglect.

Yet the scholarly consensus that the biblical tale and the Babylonian texts drew on a much earlier, common source impels us to revive the plea of Pinches and his central argument: How can cuneiform texts, affirming the biblical background of a major war and naming three of the biblical kings, be ignored? Should the evidence - crucial, as we shall show, to the understanding of fateful years - be discarded simply because Amraphel was not Hammurabi?

The answer is that the Hammurabi letter found by Scheil should not have sidetracked the discovery reported by Pinches, because Scheil misread the letter. According to his rendition, Hammurabi promised a reward to Sin-Idinna, the king of Larsa, for his "heroism on the day of Khedorla'omer." This implied that the two were allies in a war against Khedorla'omer and thus contemporaries of that king of Elam.

It was on this point that Scheil's find was discredited, for it contradicted both the biblical assertion that the three kings were allies and known historical facts: Hammurabi treated Larsa not as an ally but as an adversary, boasting that he "overthrew Larsa in battle," and attacked its sacred precinct "with the mighty weapon which the gods had given him."

A close examination of the actual text of Hammurabi's letter reveals that in his eagerness to prove the Hammurabi-Amraphel identification, Father Scheil reversed the letter's meaning: Hammurabi was not offering as a reward to return certain goddesses to the sacred precinct (the Emutbal) of Larsa; rather, he was demanding their return to Babylon from Larsa.

The incident of the abduction of the goddesses had thus occurred in earlier times; they were held captive in the Emutbal "from the days of Khedorla'omer"; and Hammurabi was now demanding their return to Babylon, from where Khedorla'omer had taken them captive. This can only mean that Khedorla'omer's days were long before Hammurabi's time.

Supporting our reading of the Hammurabi letter found by Father Scheil in the Constantinople Museum is the fact that Hammurabi repeated the demand for the return of the goddesses to Babylon in yet another stiff message to Sin-Idinna, this time sending it by the hand of high military officers. This second letter is in the British Museum (No. 23,131) and its text was published by L.W. King in The Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi.

That the goddesses were to be returned from Larsa to Babylon is made clear in the letter's further instructions.

It is thus clear from these letters that Hammurabi - a foe, not an ally, of Larsa - was seeking restitution for events that had happened long before his time, in the days of Kudur-Laghamar, the Elamite regent of Larsa. The texts of the Hammurabi letters thus affirm the existence of Khedorla-omer and of Elamite reign in Larsa ("Ellasar") and thus of key elements in the biblical tale.

The archaeological evidence of Jericho, in particular, with its many occupational levels has been interpreted to date its earliest occupations to around 8000 BC. This has been

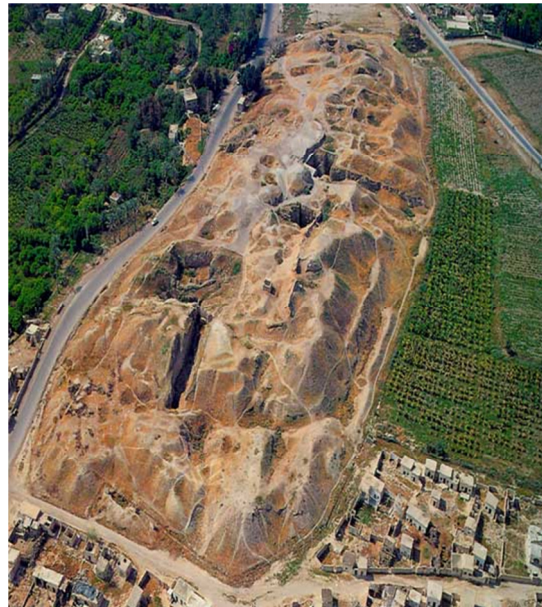
interpreted to expand pre-dynastic history in the Middle East far more than it should be in conflict with the Bible's view that man was created 6000 years ago.

I'd like to quote now from Donovan Courville's work "The Exodus Problem and Its Ramifications" (part 2) for his comments and his alternate interpretation of the evidence that has over-inflated the length of pre-dynastic history far more than it should be:

As noted in the previous chapter, the end of the Chalcolithic Age and its emergence into Early Bronze is marked by an influx of Mesopotamian influence into Egypt, Palestine, and Anatolia, which influx we take to represent the result of the Dispersion from Babel as described in the Genesis account. This incident belongs to the period of the Jemdet Nasr culture in Mesopotamia, and the point is marked archaeologically by Stratum XIX on the Megiddo mound proper. While it might appear desirable to trace the predynastic period of Palestine back in time from evidences on the Megiddo site, this is not feasible, since occupation of the site does not encompass the entire period. The most complete sequence of cultures are to be found on the site of Jericho. The Chalcolithic Age, which is presumed to be the connecting link between Neolithic and the dynastic period, is not represented at Jericho, however: it is thus presumed that this represents an era of nonoccupation at Jericho and must be inserted into the sequence of cultures found at Jericho.

These developments [sequence of cultures for the period under consideration] cannot be paralleled at any other site in Palestine or elsewhere. The history of the development of the settlement in Palestine has therefore so far been illustrated from Jericho alone.

Since this predynastic sequence from Mesolithic through Neolithic is illustrated only at Jericho, any evidence that truly demands a recognition of several millenniums duration for this period should appear in the archaeology of this site. The archaeological finds at Jericho down to bedrock have been reviewed by Miss Kenyon in her recent works. It may be presumed that she has included any and all details pertinent to the point in question, since she was an active archaeologist at this site. A summary based on her work of the finds pertinent to the chronology of the site is here reviewed.



Excavations to bedrock at the Jericho site revealed that the limestone composing it was covered by about one foot of clay which had been removed over an extended area to provide a foundation for a building structure on the rock formation. At one end of this excavated area, a substantial wall of stones enclosed an area about 10 by 20 feet. Since the structure was unlike any dwelling remains observed, it was presumed that this structure represented some sort of sanctuary. Interestingly, two large blocks of stone in the wall of the structure had holes bored through them to a depth of some two and one-half feet, an accomplishment somewhat surprising for the level of culture presumed to characterize this early period. The structure had eventually been burned; charcoal from the wooden beams in the roof yielded a date by the C-14 method *7,800 B.C. ± 210 years*. The bases for the total rejection of this date and others subsequently referred to are presented in a previous chapter.

At another small area on the site, it was found that a deposit of some 13 feet of clay existed between bed-rock and the so-called Natufian culture. This 13 feet of clay revealed no signs of a solid structure and no evidences of the use of pottery. The clay deposit was made up of a large number of mud floors, one above the other, each bounded with slight bumps which

were regarded as remnants of walls of the hut-like mud structures. Only above this were evidences found of solid houses.

The remains of the more solid dwellings of the subsequent period were enclosed by a wall, suggesting danger from depredations by either man or wild beast. At one point on the wall, and extant to a height of some 30 feet, were found the remains of a stone tower built against the inside of the wall. The whole comprised "an amazing bit of architecture" for the era involved. Within this wall could be observed a sequence of three successive phases of dwellings whose combined period of life would seem to approximate that of the wall itself. The upper of these three building phases had been burned, and C-14 analysis of the charcoal from the beams gave a date *6850 B.C. ± 210 years*. This culture was regarded as about 1000 years later than the stone sanctuary and 2000 years earlier than the earliest known village elsewhere in Palestine. From the similarity of flints and harpoons, this culture was correlated with the lower Natufian at Megiddo.

Evidences of severe erosion by water appeared in the upper levels of this culture, apparently representing a period of non-occupation following abandonment of the site. The length of this period of erosion could not be determined and "may have been a matter of years or of centuries." Above this evidence of erosion, a new culture appeared which was still characterized by an absence of pottery. This culture was distinguished in name from its predecessor by designating it Pre-pottery Neolithic B. The flint artifacts would identify the people as the Tahunians, who had had a prior nomadic existence elsewhere but who now settled on the abandoned Jericho site. The culture could be distinguished archaeologically by the new type of architecture which must have been developed prior to occupation of this area but which has not been discovered elsewhere as yet. While no pottery of this people has been found on the Jericho site, vessels of limestone "finely worked and carefully finished" were in use. The first settlement by this people had no defensive wall about it, and the dwellings extended down the sides of the mound, indicating an increase in population over Pre-pottery Neolithic A.

A succession of 10 house levels could be traced at one point. At some time during the succession, a wall seems to have been built. At another point, 19 successive building stages were traced. In the 16th phase from the bottom, charcoal residues were obtained which gave a C-14 date *6250 B.C. ± 200 years*, which date is another half millennium later than that attributed to Pre-pottery Neolithic A. At still another point, 26 building stages were traced, and the 9th from the bottom gave a date *5850 ± 160 years*.

The end of Pre-pottery Neolithic B was also marked by severe erosion, the length of the period involved being again undeterminable. The culture that followed brought the art of pottery-making with them, but the cultural level otherwise represents a marked retrogression. This people lived in pits cut into the ruins of the earlier town, a type of life otherwise known in the Chalcolithic period near Beersheba. To this culture, Miss Kenyon gave the name Pottery Neolithic A. The origin of the culture is known only in terms of a few pottery fragments at various localities in Palestine, suggesting a wide distribution but a small population.

The subsequent culture, called Pottery Neolithic B, built their primitive huts in the pits dug out by their predecessors. The break in the culture at this point is not sharp. The pottery is more refined, but continues to be mixed with that of the preceding culture. Pottery like that of the new culture had been found also at Sha'ar ha Golan, just south of the Sea of Galilee.

At Jericho, Early Bronze follows Pottery Neolithic B. As noted previously, the so-called Halafian culture from Tell Halaf in Mesopotamia and the Ghassulian culture from east of the Jordan Valley are regarded by some scholars as necessarily inserted in the time sequence between Pottery Neolithic B and Early Bronze. The period between Neolithic and Early Bronze is known as Chalcolithic, a name designed to indicate the combined use of copper and stone.

There are no evidences for the use of copper at Jericho or elsewhere in Palestine at this time. The archaeological sequence to be accounted for may be summarized as follows:

1. The stone sanctuary resting on bed-rock.
 2. The numerous floors beginning on bed-rock, each evidently representing the remains of mud hut dwellings and making up in total some 13 feet of clay.
 3. Three successive building phases of a more solid type and included within the duration of the earliest wall.
 4. Evidences of severe erosion for an undeterminable period.
 5. Successive building levels ranging in number from 10 to 26 and belonging to Pre-pottery Neolithic B.
 6. Further evidences of erosion over an undeterminable period.
 7. The pit dwellings of Pottery Neolithic A.
 8. The extension of Pottery Neolithic A into Pottery Neolithic B, with huts built in the pits carved out by the previous people.
 9. Allowance for the Chalcolithic period, presumed to require insertion between the end of Pottery Neolithic B and the beginning of the Early Bronze Age.
- An Alternate Interpretation of the Archaeology of Early Jericho

The currently accepted interpretation of the archaeology of early Jericho, as at other sites, is based on the uniformitarian concept which does not recognize a climate any different than now and which would assign to each of the successive mud huts and numerous subsequent structures durations up to 50 or 100 years each.

By the alternate thesis here defended, the period is that immediately following the Noachian Flood, during which time the conditions must have been notably different from those in later times. This period must have been characterized by severe earthquakes and geological disturbances involving a gradual sinking of the ocean bottoms or, what amounts to the same thing, the rise of land levels in mountain formation. Such changes must certainly have left the surface of the earth dotted with numerous internal lakes and seas, some of which remain to this day, others having lost their waters in whole or in part by schisms in the elevated areas which served to confine them.

Abundant geological evidence is at hand to indicate that such a situation existed in the prehistoric era with which we are dealing. These evidences will be interpreted differently, depending on one's philosophy. By the uniformitarian concept, the changes involved were gradual and extended over a period to be measured in a multiplicity of millenniums, thus requiring assignments of 50 to 100 years or more for the duration of the individual structures. In terms of the philosophy which accepts the Scriptural accounts of the Noachian Flood as historical, this series of changes occurred over a relatively brief period of time. In order to avoid the introduction of concepts of controversial nature that are not pertinent to the problem, the length of this period is taken to have been less than two centuries, though the writer believes that the period could be reduced by another half century without significant damage to the thesis.

A number of evidences are at hand to indicate that the early prehistoric geography was characterized by the existence of numerous inland seas that have since disappeared. At the time of Herodotus, a legend was extant to the effect that at the time of Mena's migration into Egypt, much of northern Africa was a vast sea, the waters of which have since been emptied into the Mediterranean, leaving behind a land that is now desert, except for that part which comprises the Nile Valley and the Delta region of the Nile.

There is also an extant legend that in ancient times the Gulf of Aqabah, a branch of the Red Sea, extended some 33 kilometers north of the present shore line. This legend has been discounted as having any factual basis since there are no evidences that the shores of the Red Sea have dropped significantly during the past 3,500 years. This may be quite true. The conditions to which we refer antedate this point by another 700 years by the shortest possible interpretation of Bible chronology. Thomas points out evidence of an internal lake anciently existing in what is now the desert of Arabia. The Great Salt Lake of Utah represents clearly the remnants of such an internal Sea on this continent, having an original shore line thousands of feet higher than the level of the present lake. The entire Mississippi Valley has had a similar history.

The existence of these numerous inland seas could be expected to serve as a source of a much heavier average rainfall than is common to these areas at the present time. With the

gradual elevation of the average temperature, commonly associated with the disappearance of the ice age, it is quite possible that this rainfall was more severe than anything known on the earth at the present time. Evidences are at hand to substantiate the concept of a much heavier rainfall throughout the area of Asia than now exists. Piggot refers to the observations of Sir Aurel Stein, who examined extensively the early evidences of man in Baluchistan and India. Piggot commented:

"The abundant evidence of ancient occupation in the Baluchi hills or the Indus plain implies less exacting climatic conditions in the past than at present, and, though historical evidence implies that by the time of Alexander conditions in Baluchistan approximated to those of today, yet ... there is good evidence for a heavier rainfall, and extensive forests in the Indus valley in ancient times.

"It is less easy to find evidence of the former climate of Baluchistan than it is for the Indus Valley. Today the territories of Makran, Kharan and Jhalawan in South Baluchistan, which contain a large number of prehistoric settlements are very sparsely populated (not more than two persons to the square mile in Kharan), and this population is partly migratory.

"In his explorations in Baluchistan these problems of climate and population were, of course, much before Sir Aurel Stein's eyes, and he was able to identify a large series of artificial stone-built dams and terraces known locally in Jhalawan as *gabarbands*, clearly designed to aid the irrigation of fields. The date of these is unknown but, as Stein remarks, they must reflect not only climatic conditions with a greater rainfall, but also a large population to provide the necessary labour for their construction...Even though the age and culture of these works are still unknown, their presence is important in indicating greater rainfall in antiquity, and it is by no means improbable that they do, in fact, date back to the prehistoric occupation of the Baluchi Hills."

The observations of Stein would seem to eliminate any possibility that the conditions described belong back at the end of the Ice Age when the population was exceedingly scant, since they indicate a significant population. A date toward the end of the prehistoric period is more likely. At that time, the rains had decreased notably, but were still ample to provide water for irrigation if impounded during the rainy season. Albright and others have expressed wonder at just when climatic changes could have existed to allow for occupation of such sites as Ghassul, far out in the desert plain east of Jordan.

"It would be interesting to know just what were the changes in climate which led to the abandonment of sites like Ghassul, situated far out in the Jordan plain where the soil could not be irrigated without prohibitive effort. It seems reasonably certain that there were more lateral streams flowing into the Jordan then than there are today."

It is stated in Scripture that prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the era of Abraham, this area at the south end of the Dead Sea was well watered "like as the Garden of the Lord." This area is still a fertile one, though now it requires irrigation to be utilized. Evidently, a condition of adequate rain continued to exist for several centuries after the beginning of the dynastic period. A heavier rainfall in the desert region of Egypt is indicated by the numerous finds of flints over this area. Since the winter rains at Jericho are still severe at times, as compared to the all but total absence of rain in the Baluchistan Hills, it may be logically concluded that Jericho, in this predynastic period, was exposed to torrential rains of exceeding violence. It was this sort of climate that man faced when he first descended from the mountainous region after the Flood.

Under these conditions, the mud shelters revealed archaeologically at Jericho in the Neolithic period could be expected to have had an exceedingly short period of use, possibly requiring rebuilding more than once a year. Ceram commented on the instability of adobe dwellings in Anatolia under conditions of "sparse rain."

"The buildings which make up these villages are still constructed of bricks of unfired clay - bricks which crumble under the baking sun and slowly dissolve under the sparse rain.... Such adobe houses seldom last more than twenty years."

If such dwellings rarely have a life of 20 years in the relatively dry climate of modern times, it is doubtful if similar mud dwellings at Jericho and elsewhere would survive a single season under conditions of heavy rainfall. The mud used in these structures was not baked as in later times, and once used, the disintegrated bricks cannot be reused again." The only choice is to level off the ground as best can be done and rebuild, using new clay. Thus was the tell built up *rapidly* from these frequent rebuilding procedures.

"The growth of these tells is particularly characteristic of those areas in which the local building material was mud-brick, for a destroyed building of mud-brick disintegrates into mud again, which cannot be used again in the same way that stone from a building can be. The growth of the tell is therefore more rapid."

The instability of even sun-dried brick under conditions of heavy rain has been reported by various investigators. Glueck writes of his experience in the area of the southern reaches of the Red Sea.

"In April, 1940, a terrific rain and hail-storm literally washed half of the mud-brick village [Aqabah] away. Many of the mud-brick walls simply dissolved.... Small wonder that such bricks go to pieces during the first heavy rain!"

Garstang describes the actual situation at Jericho in modern times. He pointed out that an additional factor may have served to give a very short life to the early mud dwellings on this site. Water from the spring evidently seeped upward continuously to add to the destructive effects of the rain. He wrote:"

Even before the Neolithic settlement a part of the original channel [water spring] seems already to have become covered, as the earliest floors of occupation within the excavated area were based upon a wet deposit, the traces of which rose through successive floor levels to a height of 12 or 15 feet. This may explain to some extent why the earlier buildings are found to have been frequently rebuilt.... It is true that mud-bricks, such as were used throughout the life history of Jericho, were peculiarly liable to decay.... Sometimes too, in winter, rain falls very heavily, so that unless the outer walls were protected from the elements, they would be liable to perish.

When these facts are given due consideration, a quite different interpretation of the archaeology of early Jericho becomes most reasonable. The 13 feet of clay representing numerous floors, each showing evidence of the meager remains of mud dwellings, need not be taken to represent in total a period of time in excess of a very few years, probably not more than a decade, and possibly significantly less, if the violent rains required a rebuilding more than once a year.

Allowances of a life of 30-100 years for mud houses has thus resulted in a grossly and unnecessarily expanded chronology for this area. Since this series of mud floors was found in one small area only, it is probable that this area represented the total population and that the era is the same as that of the life of the "sanctuary," which was probably a united effort to keep any kind of a roof over their heads during the period when their individual dwellings were being washed out as fast as rebuilt. The failure to use stone more liberally for dwellings evidently resulted from the necessity of having to carry such materials from a distance. Even in later times, it was only the foundations of the walls that were constructed of stone. Since mud was of necessity used to seal the spaces between the wood beams of the ceiling, it may be presumed that even this stone building did not provide an efficient shelter from the heavy rains. The destruction by fire may then be attributed to attempts to use fire within as a source of heat.

The three successive building phases within the duration of the early wall may then be presumed to belong to the same period when these conditions prevailed. The observation that the three building phases were eventually washed in to fill much of the wall enclosure reveals the continuation of these untoward circumstances against which the new inhabitants were but little more successful in their competition with the elements.

The 26 successive building levels of Pre-pottery Neolithic B then represent the attempts of a new population to succeed where the previous population had failed, and evidently with not

much better success. The life of the dwellings may have been somewhat longer than those of the previous phase, but there is certainly no valid reason for supposing a usage for a multiplicity of years. While these are described as "more solid structures," it is not to be inferred that these were all-stone structures, There is a possibility that more stone was used; also it is possible that the occupants had learned how to make brick of somewhat longer life. The rapidity of the succession of reconstruction is attested by comparison of the C-14 data. While the actual dates derived from the data have no necessary meaning, the relative dates may have.

At the point where there were 19 successive building stages, the 16th from the bottom (or fourth from the top) gave a date 6250 B.C. \pm 200 years; at the point revealing 26 such phases in sequence, the 9th from the bottom (18th from the top) gave a date 5850 \pm 160 years. Since the lowest structure in both cases undoubtedly had contemporary origins by the new population, the date for the structure 9th from the bottom is of later date than that in the 16th from the bottom. Even if one takes the latest possible date in one case and the earliest in the other to provide some sort of sense to the figures, it still remains obvious that the building phases were in such rapid succession as to indicate no appreciable time lapse throughout the entire sequence.

An even shorter period may be assumed for Pottery Neolithic A. The pit dwellings of this people suggest that the climatic problem at this time included a necessary protection from violent winds as well as rain. A similar brief period may logically be assigned to Pottery Neolithic B which followed the new occupants building their mud-huts in the pits dug out by the preceding culture. While it is, of course, not possible to assign any actual period of time to represent each of these phases or their combination, there is no genuine basis for presuming otherwise than that the entire predynastic period at Jericho, from Mesolithic to the beginning of Early Bronze, encompassed more than a relatively brief period of time; certainly two centuries is abundantly adequate (The Exodus Problem and its Ramifications, Vol.2, p.154-163)

Following the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob came the long sojourn in Egypt which started in the time of Joseph and later ended in captivity from which the hand of God was required to free them from.

We have already covered evidence of Joseph in Egypt. The most striking piece of evidence is the very long canal over 200 miles long that is fed from the Nile in Middle Egypt and feeds into an enormous lake known as the Faiyum which is known by the name "Bahr Yusef", an Egyptian name meaning the Canal of Joseph. Donovan Courville writes:

"An incident is recorded for us in the early 12th dynasty [of Egypt], which...finds its logical place in the era just before the famine...Reference is here made to the initiation of a vast project which had for its purpose the increasing of the available irrigation water and expanding the tillable soil of the Nile Valley. An artificial canal was dug which ran parallel to the Nile by means of a second shorter canal...This canal which served to turn the waters of the Nile into this natural basin is still known to this day among the natives as the Canal of Joseph and is so named on modern maps" (The Exodus Problem and its Ramifications, Vol.1, p.142-143).

Sir Flinders Petrie excavated in the Faiyum from 1880 onwards near the mud-brick pyramids of the 12th dynasty. Dr Rosalie David reviewed his work there and wrote:

"It is apparent that the Asiatics were present in the town (Kahun) in some numbers and this may have reflected the situation elsewhere in Egypt...their exact homeland in Syria or Palestine cannot be determined...The reason for their presence remains



unclear...[Petrie discovered] wooden boxes...underneath the floors of many houses at Kahun. They contained babies, sometimes buried two or three to a box and aged only a few months at death" (The Pyramid Builders of Ancient Egypt, p.191).

This is consistent with the decree of Pharaoh that all male children were to be killed at birth (Exodus 1:16). David also wrote the following about their sudden disappearance from Egypt:

"The quantity, range and type of articles of everyday use which were left behind in the houses may indeed suggest that the departure was sudden and unpremeditated" (ibid, p.199).

It should also be noted that the name Kahun, for this town, is a Hebrew word meaning priest.

Other evidence of the Israelites being in Egypt is the frequency of Egyptian names among the Israelites. Moses is an abbreviated Egyptian name, meaning drawn or born from. It is seen in the names of pharaohs such as Thutmose and Ra-mose or Ramses, meaning they were born from the gods Thoth and Ra. Moses may well have originally been named Hapi-mose, meaning drawn from the Nile god Hapi. Ernest Wright tells us:

"Other Levite names apparently from the Egyptian language are Phineas, Hophni, Pashur and perhaps Hur and Merari" (Biblical Archaeology, p.53).

Now there has been a rather persistent myth that has continued to be perpetuated that the slavery of the Israelites lasted some 400 years. This is based on a misunderstanding of **Exodus 12:40** that says that the sojourning of Israel was 430 years. Notice carefully the word is sojourning not the word slavery.

Paul says in **Galatians 3:16-17** that from Abraham when the promises were made till Mt Sinai and the giving of the law was the same period of time – 430 years.

Josephus further explains that the 430 years was from when Abraham came into Canaan till the Exodus and that from Jacob moving to Egypt till the Exodus was exactly half that period – 215 years which I have corroborated in the bottom left of the above slide.

From that remaining 215 years you have to subtract the remaining 71 years of Joseph after his father moved to Egypt so in reality the slavery was probably not much more than 100 years at most. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) translates **Exodus 12:40** this way:

The sojourning of the children and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan AND in the land of Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

It's interesting that it says that they left on the selfsame day as their forefather Abraham left the land of the Chaldees. It is quite fitting that Abraham came out of the land of the

Chaldees on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when the Israelites came out of Egypt, which pictures us coming out of this world and sin.

When did the Exodus occur? We read the following in **1 Kings 6:1**:

“And it came to pass in the **480th year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt**, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which *is* the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD.”

Based on Bible chronology we have previously looked at, the reign of Solomon started in 969 BC and so his 4th year would be about 965 BC. **This would place the Exodus around 1445 BC.**

Working back we have a date for Abraham leaving Ur in 1875 BC and Jacob moving to Egypt in 1660 BC. Joseph would have died in 1589 BC, a mere 144 years before the Exodus so the captivity itself would have only been around 100 years at most.

The Conquest of Canaan by the Israelites

I have covered information elsewhere showing the historical accuracy of the Red Sea crossing and the true Mt Sinai site so let us move ahead now to the archaeology within Israel itself.

Once they had freed from slavery in Egypt they entered the land from the east after crossing the Jordan. The first major city that they conquered was Jericho. So great has been the hold of the faulty chronology of Egypt that many historians and archaeologists have lost faith in the biblical record for the destruction that the Bible associates with the conquest of the Israelites to 1400 BC because of significant finds tightly binding that layer to Egyptian history that has been locked in and dated several centuries earlier.

Rather than questioning the foundations of Egyptian chronology that is believed to be rock solid, many have questioned the validity of the biblical narrative. This chronological tug of war is most felt here at Jericho so let us begin with a overview of Jericho and what various archaeologists and historians have said about it.

Summarising the situation archaeologists have on their hands in the land of Israel Peter James writes the following in “Centuries of Darkness”:

Given the absence of local inscriptions which can firmly link the archaeological record to biblical history, Palestinian sites have generally been dated by finds of imported material, principally Egyptian objects bearing the cartouches of particular pharaohs. Literally hundreds of scarabs have been found in Late Bronze Age strata.

Following the conventional chronology for the 18th-20th Dynasties, these have to be dated between c. 1550 and 1175 BC. Despite the fact that Egyptian finds become less common during the Iron Age, its starting point, and hence the overall framework, still depends on these connections with New Kingdom Egypt.

The archaeological picture resulting from this reliance on Egypt has produced a curious and unsatisfying mismatch with the Old Testament account. For example, the end of the Late Bronze Age in Palestine is conventionally associated with the Israelite Conquest.

Yet as Bimson has stressed, the archaeological record at this point provides a very poor match, Jericho being the most conspicuous example. While the first Iron Age levels are usually attributed to the Israelite conquerors, nothing has been found which definitely shows the presence of new settlers at that time.

The early part of Iron Age II is thought to represent the 'Golden Age' of the 10th century kings David and Solomon - yet its material culture is of a surprisingly low level. After Solomon's death his 'empire' split into two parts and the northern kingdom, Israel, gradually came under the domination of the Aramaeans from Syria - but neither of these important developments can presently be traced in the archaeology of Iron Age II.

Invasions from Assyria, Babylonia and Persia followed in the 8th-6th centuries, and various destruction levels are supposed to be associated with them.

However, at Lachish, the very 'type site' of the southern Kingdom of Judah, it has never really been resolved whether Level III was burnt by the Assyrian king Sennacherib in 701 BC or the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC.

The problems in linking the biblical and archaeological records have naturally had a serious effect on attitudes towards the Old Testament, apparently swinging the weight of evidence in favour of the sceptics. The case of Jericho has certainly shaken credibility in the story of the Israelite Conquest, and played a major part in the development of models which do not involve a military invasion.

Likewise on archaeological grounds the commercial and political ascendancy ascribed to Solomon has also been dismissed as a fantasy, an empire which existed only 'on papyrus'.

The existence of such discrepancies is particularly odd, as the Old Testament offers the only surviving consecutive history from any area of the ancient Near East. By comparison, the histories of Egypt and Mesopotamia had to be reconstructed by modern scholars. Moreover, the approach of the biblical authors, from raging prophets to pious chroniclers, is more even-handed than that of Egyptian and Assyrian scribes, whose main concern was the glorification of their 'kings' achievements. The prophets of Israel seemed to delight in recording the failure of their kings, harping on their military defeats more than their successes (Centuries of Darkness, p.168-169).

The Exodus of Israel from Egypt occurred about 1445 BC and the Israelites, according to the Bible conquered the city of Jericho 40 years later just before 1400 BC.

Using the conventional Egyptian chronology the conquest of Jericho occurred in the middle of the 18th dynasty, the dynasty which began the New Kingdom and the archaeological dating age called the Late Bronze Age.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AGE	EGYPTIAN DYNASTIES CONNECTED TO AGE	
Early Bronze Age	OLD KINGDOM	DYNASTIES 1 - 6
Middle Bronze Age	1ST INTERMEDIATE MIDDLE KINGDOM 2ND INTERMEDIATE	DYNASTIES 7 - 17
Late Bronze Age	NEW KINGDOM	DYNASTIES 18 - 19
Iron Age	LATE NEW KINGDOM 3RD INTERMEDIATE LATE PERIOD	DYNASTIES 20 - 31

The year 1400 BC is the crossover point between the Late Bronze I and Late Bronze II periods. The problem simply stated for Jericho is that the destruction, based on the pottery and artifacts found, is dated to the Middle Bronze Age and there is no evidence of the city being occupied for most of the Late Bronze Age.

An excellent DVD on the subject of Jericho is "Jericho Unearthed" shot on location featuring interviews with Peter Parr, who worked on the site in the 1950's with Kathleen Kenyon, and Biblical archaeologist, Dr Bryant Wood. The physical evidence is graphically

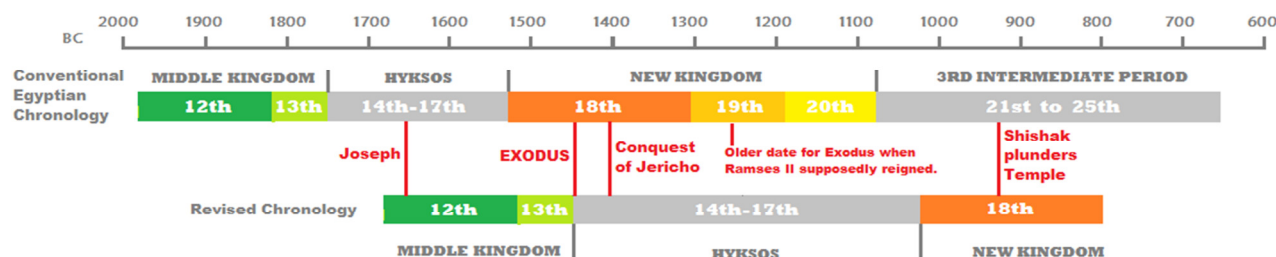
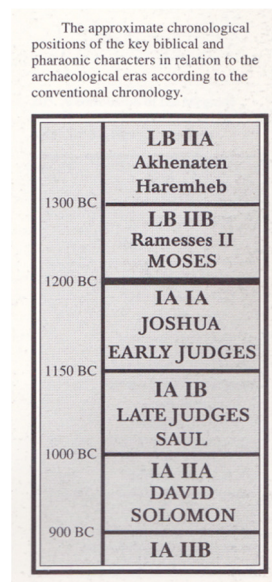
shown to match the events described in the book of Joshua but the issue of dating is the key issue that archaeologists, secular and biblical, argue over regarding the site.

Garstang in the 1930's dated Jericho's destruction to 1400 BC but Kathleen Kenyon in the 1950's re-dated the destruction, which she felt was clearly Middle Bronze Age, to 1550 BC.

Dr Bryant Wood argues for a re-dating of the site forward from the Middle Bronze to Late Bronze I.

If the city was destroyed in the year that Kenyon dates it (150 years before the Bible date) then there would have been no city for the Israelites to destroy and the Bible was wrong. Many critics of the Bible have used Jericho's archaeology to discredit the Bible.

As well as he argues his case, the unfortunate thing is that Dr Bryant Wood is labouring under the faulty belief that the conquest of Jericho is contemporary with the 18th dynasty. Whatever is contemporary with the first half of the 18th dynasty is given the dating of Late Bronze I yet, according to our revised chronology, the 18th dynasty started a few centuries later around the time of the kings in Israel.

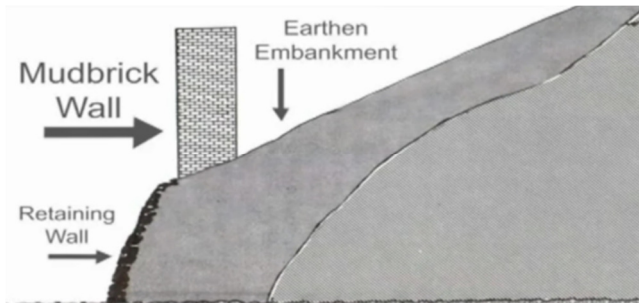


As we have seen previously, the Exodus occurred at the end of the Middle Kingdom. The Middle Bronze Age consists of the 1st Intermediate Period (Dynasties 7-11), the Middle Kingdom (Dynasties 12-13) and the time of the Hyksos rule (Dynasties 14-17).

Jericho, according to our revised chronology, fell during the time of the 14th dynasty and so fell during the Middle Bronze Age as Kenyon argued NOT during Late Bronze I as Dr Bryant Wood is trying to re-date the site to. Our revised chronology fits the archaeological age (Middle Bronze) that Kathleen Kenyon dated Jericho resolving the dating problem.

Jericho is Middle Bronze. It's the Middle Bronze Age that needs to be re-dated NOT the site to a different archaeological age.

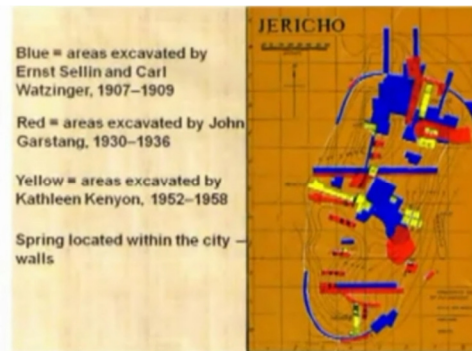
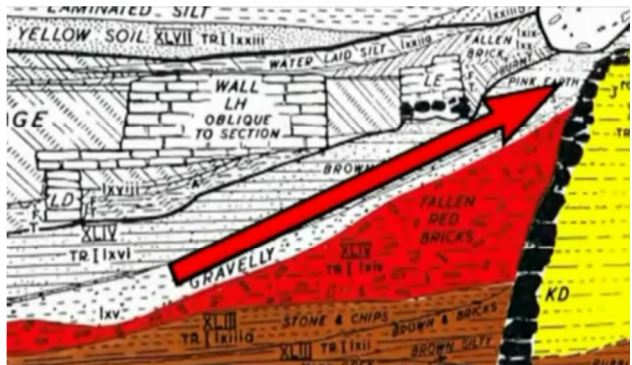
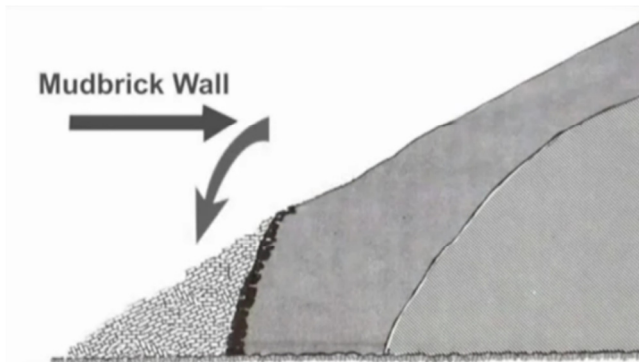
Let's take a look at the archaeology of the site as described on the documentary "Jericho Unearthed". The outer perimeter of the city of Jericho had a stone retaining wall. Above the stone retaining wall at the top of the earthen embankment above it was a mudbrick wall. Further up was another wall around the city.



What the archaeological teams discovered was that the mudbrick wall had collapsed, not the stone retaining wall. The red mud bricks had collapsed as noted in Kenyon's archaeological diagram (below right). This was a perfect match with the account in Joshua 6:20 which says:

And the people shouted when the priests blew with the ram's horns. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the ram's horns, and the people shouted with a great shout, **the wall fell down flat**, so that the people **went up** into the city, each man straight before him. And they took the city.

The fallen bricks of the mudbrick wall made a very convenient ramp for the Israelites to go up over the stone retaining wall.



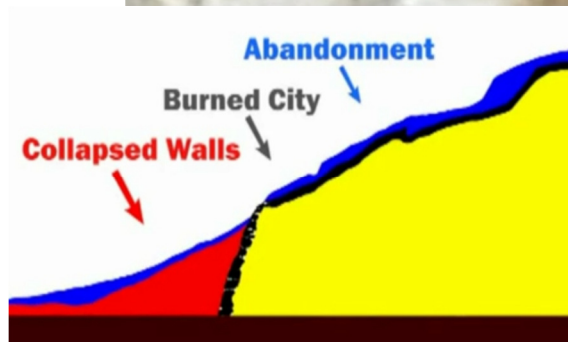
There are several other key details in the Biblical account that perfectly match what was found at Jericho. Lots of storage jars full of grain were found. This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it tells us the time of year that the destruction took place as it must have been soon after the harvest was gathered in. We read in the book of Joshua:

As those who bore the ark had come to Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bore the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for Jordan overflows all its banks, all **the time of harvest**) (Joshua 3:15).

And the sons of Israel camped in Gilgal and kept **the Passover** on the fourteenth day of the month at evening in the plains of Jericho (Joshua 5:10)

Also, grain was valuable and if an army set fire to Jericho this is highly unusual. This is further support of the Biblical account that says that the Israelites did not plunder the site and all was to be left to God as a firstfruits of the land that He was going to give them:

And the city shall be devoted to Jehovah, it and all in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. And you surely shall keep clear of the cursed thing, lest you make yourselves cursed when you take of the cursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it (Joshua 6:17-18).



The city was then burned according to Joshua 6:24 and everything in it and this is exactly what was found in the archaeological record – a collapse of the walls followed by the city being burnt leaving a layer of ash and then an erosional layer after it where the city was abandoned for some time exactly as described in Joshua 6:26:

And Joshua charged them at that time, saying, Cursed before Jehovah is the man who rises up and builds this city of Jericho. He shall lay the foundation of it in his first-born, and in his youngest son he shall set up the gates of it.

The only way Wood can credibly date Jericho to the biblical date is to date similarly pottery from other sites which others have dated to around 1400 BC.

Kathleen Kenyon based her date on what she didn't find. She did not find in the destruction layer an imported type of pottery from Cyprus which was common and easily distinguished and dated. She did not pay any attention to the local Canaanite pottery that was there in abundance which Garstang used. Since there was no Cypriot pottery it must have been destroyed before the dating of this pottery.



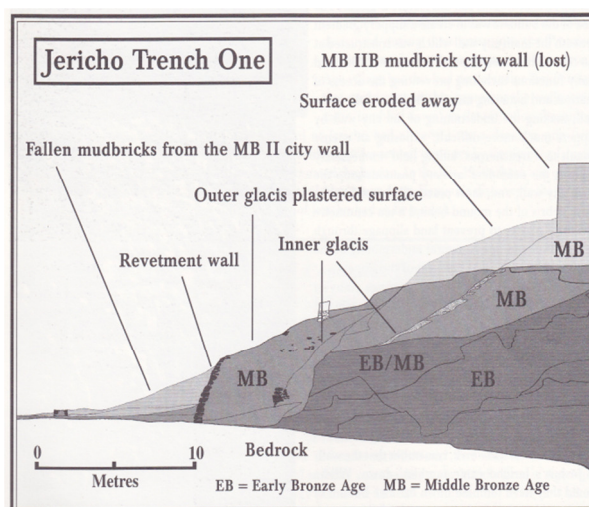
Dr Bryant Wood is basing his work on the dating of Canaanite pottery that are local copies of the imported pottery Kenyon was basing her dating on. Above is the pottery Kenyon was using for her dating and the Canaanite copy of it that Dr Bryant Wood is saying should be dated to Late Bronze I.

What we need to note here is that the pottery on the left is Middle Bronze Age pottery while the copy is claimed by Dr Bryant Wood to be Late Bronze I. Should not the copies be dated to the same age if one is a copy of the other? Assuming that it is a copy of the one on the left then the pottery should be dated to the same age – the Middle Bronze Age.

The destruction of Jericho should not be re-dated from the Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze I but the Middle Bronze Age is what needs to be moved forward in time to include the period of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan.

David Rohl in chapter 14 of his book “A Test of Time” has quite a bit to say about the subject of Jericho. This is what he has to say about how Jericho’s occupation levels and features should be dated:

Serious excavations first began in 1907 with three seasons by an Austro-German expedition under the direction of the respected German biblical scholar Ernst Sellin. Professor John Garstang of Liverpool University was the next archaeologist to tackle the site between the years 1930 to 1936 and it was not very long before he was proclaiming the discovery of the fallen walls of Joshua's Jericho. He had found a thick, reddish mudbrick city wall encircling the upper slopes of Tell es-Sultan and in places it appeared as if this wall had indeed collapsed. At last one of the biblical stories seemed to be confirmed: Jericho's wall had come tumblin' down!



Over the years further work was undertaken at other sites thought to be the cities conquered and destroyed by the Israelites. Gradually a picture was emerging which appeared to conform to the understanding scholars had of the Joshua campaign. Of course, by this time,

archaeologists were looking for a series of destructions which post-dated the time of Ramesses II, because it was this Egyptian king who had already been cast as the Pharaoh of the Oppression and hapless Pharaoh of the Exodus.

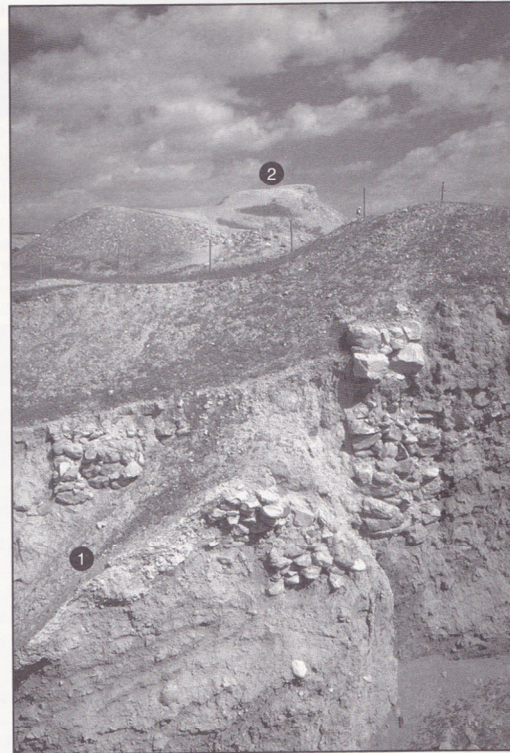
In archaeological terms this meant that Joshua's wholesale destruction of the cities of Canaan had to be sought in the strata marking the end of the Late Bronze Age (contemporary with the late 19th and early 20th Dynasties). The early Israelite settlement of Palestine was thus placed in the Early Iron Age (or Iron Age I). There are indeed widespread city destructions at around this time but gradually it has become clear that these destructions span a period of more than a century and so cannot all have been the work of Joshua and his men.

At the time of Garstang's Jericho dig the archaeological phases had not yet been so well defined. It took the follow-up excavation by Dame Kathleen Kenyon of the Institute of Archaeology, London, to put the record straight. It was her discoveries at Jericho which would have such a crucial influence on the late twentieth century's rejection of the 'historical' Bible.

Kenyon began work at Tell es-Sultan in 1952. She excavated a series of deep trenches which cut through the outer slope of the mound. By using this technique Kenyon was able to study the side balks of the trenches to record what was effectively a chronological and stratigraphical chart of the city's life. The lowest level or stratum in a mound is the earliest and the uppermost the latest. Ancient Near Eastern city mounds or tells are generally formed by the gradual deposition of occupation levels, one on top of the other, giving an inner structure somewhat like a layer cake.

If an archaeologist then comes along and cuts himself a slice of that cake the various layers can easily be seen. With an occupational mound this method gives you a good idea of the chronological development of the site but fails to provide much indication as to the cultural content of any specific stratum. For that one needs to open out a larger area and peel off each level as the excavation team slowly works down into the mound. This technique employs a grid of five- or ten-metre squares, each with its own set of balk walls in which the chronological profile of the city can be plotted. Kenyon used this second technique for a small area on the western side of the tell where the mound profile suggested Late Bronze Age occupation might be found.

Kenyon's detailed stratigraphical analysis of Jericho's occupational history demonstrated that Garstang's walls in reality belonged to the Early Bronze Age, a thousand years before the time of Joshua. The problem for Kenyon was that her work produced no walls belonging to the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age. In fact, her analysis seemed to clearly show that there was no Late Bronze Age city of Jericho at all which the Israelites could have destroyed during their entry into the Promised Land. There was evidence for a small Late Bronze Age village but this had no defensive fortifications that could conceivably represent the walls which came 'tumbly' down'. In the orthodox chronology most of the mound of Jericho had already been a desolate ruin (with occasional meagre settlement) for several centuries by the time the Israelite tribes would have crossed the Jordan. In the late 1950s there was only one conclusion which could be drawn from Kenyon's discovery: the story of Joshua's conquest of Jericho had to be a myth.



The lower part of the picture shows the exposed inner plaster glacis of the MB II defences in Kenyon's Trench One (1). Above, in the background, is the highest surviving part of the tell where the base of the main mudbrick city wall of MB II Jericho still survives (2).

Conclusion 28: There was no walled city of Jericho during the Late Bronze Age when in the conventional chronology the Israelites were supposed to have massacred the population and burnt the city to the ground.

You may now be ahead of me. If Jericho was at best a small unfortified village towards the end of the Late Bronze Age, then when was it a thriving city with impressive defensive fortifications? The answer, of course, is some three hundred and fifty years earlier in the Middle Bronze Age when the New Chronology places the Israelite Conquest. So, let us now take a look at what Kenyon found for Middle Bronze Age Jericho.



Near to the bottom of her cuttings Kenyon observed that the glacis came to a sudden end and that beneath it the builders had constructed a wall of field stones. Beyond this 'revetment wall' was a deep trench, no doubt intended to slow down any assault upon the lower slopes of the mound. The very top of the Jericho tell has been badly eroded by centuries of weathering. As a result remains of the Middle Bronze Age city wall no longer exist to any great extent. However, remember that the walls of Joshua's Jericho came tumblin' down. Where would they have tumbled down to? The bottom of the glacis slope is the obvious answer!

In the trench at the foot of the mound Kenyon found a thick deposit of red-brown earth which she interpreted as the remains of the great MB city wall which had collapsed outwards and fallen down into the defensive ditch. The walls of MBA Jericho had indeed tumbled down, thus affording any attacker easy access into the city by filling up the ditch which protected the base of Jericho's elaborate defensive system.

Within the MBA city itself all the houses and civic buildings had been blackened by a severe conflagration. In some places the ash and debris was a metre in depth.

"They (the Israelites) burned the city and everything inside it, except the silver, the gold and the things of bronze and iron; these they put in the treasury of Yahweh's house" (Joshua 6:24).

According to Joshua 3:15 the assault upon Jericho took place during the harvest season in the Jordan valley. When Garstang uncovered the floors of the houses of the MBA city he found large storage jars filled to the brim with carbonised grain.

Evidence of mass burials in the rock-cut tombs of MBA Jericho, contemporary with the very last phase of the city's existence, suggested to Kenyon that a plague had struck in the period immediately prior to its destruction. The abundance of food in the city ruled out famine and there were no visible signs on the skeletal remains of war wounds. Her archaeological interpretation of a Jericho plague provides another striking parallel with the biblical narratives.

We learn from the book of Numbers, verse 25, that the Israelites themselves were devastated by a plague, whilst they were encamped at Shittim in Transjordan, immediately prior to their assault upon Jericho. Twenty-four thousand Israelites were struck down. It is just possible that the plague may have been brought into Jericho by Joshua's spies - sent to reconnoitre the city's defences - where they were protected by the prostitute, Rahab, in her 'house of ill-repute'. Indeed, the Shittim plague was associated with widespread sexual intercourse which had been going on between the Israelite men and Moabite prostitutes prior to the invasion.

I will let archaeologist Piotr Bienkowski sum up Kenyon's analysis of the fate of MBA Jericho:

“Jericho was destroyed at the end of the MBA, probably by enemy action and possibly through a failure of the fortification system. Perhaps there was a fatal flaw in the design of the fortifications ... The reason for the destruction of Jericho is unknown.”

Bienkowski's last sentence no longer applies thanks to the work of Dr. John Bimson, which I will now come on to, and the revised archaeological date for the destruction of MBA Jericho provided by the New Chronology. Both have determined that Middle Bronze Age Jericho was attacked and destroyed by invading Israelites.

Conclusion 29: Biblical Jericho destroyed by Joshua's forces is to be identified with the Middle Bronze Age city at Tell es-Sultan which was devastated by fire and remained a desolate ruin for several centuries thereafter...

Before we leave Jericho I would like to add a couple of further potential points of consistency between the New Chronology and the archaeological record. During Garstang's excavations at Tell es-Sultan he uncovered a substantial building near the summit of the mound. The archaeological date of this structure has been notoriously difficult to pin down but the general feeling is that Late Bronze IIA is most likely.

In the New Chronology the end of LB IIA is the time of David and Solomon in Israel (c. 1010-931 BC). It is interesting to note therefore that the next time we hear mention of Jericho after Joshua's destruction of the town is during the reign of David. In II Samuel 10 the king sends his ambassadors to Hanun son of Nahash, ruler of the Ammonites. But, Hanun insults David by cutting off the beards of the Israelite representatives before sending them home. The embarrassment to the Davidic court was too great to allow their return to Jerusalem so David told his delegation to 'Stay in Jericho ... until your beards have grown again and come back then' [II Samuel 10:5].

We may envisage in this strange folktale some temporary occupation of the ruin-mound at Jericho, lasting a few years, for a limited group of David's courtiers. This fits nicely with Garstang's 'Middle Building' which was abandoned within a short period of its construction.

The next phase of occupation at Jericho is during the Late Bronze IIB when there is limited evidence of some construction work on the mound, including what may have been a small palace. The village – for all that is what it could have been – remained unfortified, although it may have had a perimeter ring of houses as was the case with some Late Bronze Age settlements. Now let me remind you of a passage in 1 Kings 16:34 where we hear of the rebuilding of Jericho during the reign of King Ahab.

“It was in his time that Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. Laying its foundations cost him his youngest son Segub, just as Yahweh had foretold through Joshua son of Nun.”

Ahab's reign is dated in the New Chronology to the time of late 19th Dynasty in Egypt – in other words the very end of the Late Bronze Age.

Conclusion 32: Garstang's Middle Building at Jericho is to be identified as the residence of David's ambassadors following their unsuccessful embassy to Ammon in Transjordan. The later LB IIB village represents the rebuilding of Jericho by Hiel (c.850 BC) during the reign of Ahab...

The evidence for tying this building that Rohl attributes to David's ambassadors to a particular time period is very tentative. I see two possibilities.

I think it is more likely one of Hiel's buildings or it could have been built by the Moabite king Eglon during the time of the Judges who possessed the city of palm trees (Judges 3:12), an expression that well fits Jericho. The curse for re-building at Jericho applied primarily to Israelites. Why would David's ambassadors build even one building on the summit of the ruin knowing about the curse?

Jericho, according to our revised chronology, fell during the time of the 14th dynasty and so fell during the Middle Bronze Age as Kenyon argued NOT during Late Bronze I as Dr Bryant Wood is trying to re-date the site to. Our revised chronology fits the archaeological age (Middle Bronze) that Kathleen Kenyon dated Jericho resolving the dating problem.

Jericho is Middle Bronze. It's the Middle Bronze Age that needs to be re-dated NOT the site to a different archaeological age.

I'd like to continue on now with Rohl's assessment of other archaeological sites relating to early in Israel's history in the land:

When news of the success of the Israelite assault on southern Canaan reaches Jabin he calls upon all the city-state rulers of the north to assemble their forces so that they can confront the Israelites and destroy them. The armies of Hazor, Merom, Shimron, Achshaph and the lesser towns are gathered together at the Waters of Merom. This formidable force is "as numerous as the sands of the sea, with a huge number of horses and chariots". According to Joshua 11:10 "Hazor in olden days was the capital of all these kingdoms" and it is this great city which pays the high price of defeat at the hands of Joshua's warriors.

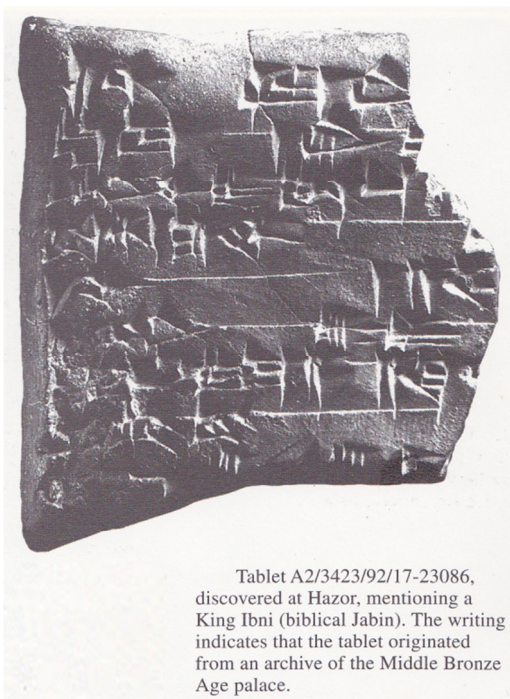
With the surprise attack of the Israelites at Merom the Canaanite coalition is routed and Joshua moves to take Hazor. There he puts King Jabin to the sword and once again Yahweh demands his blood sacrifice for guaranteeing the Israelite victory.

"In compliance with the curse of destruction, they put every living creature there to the sword. Not a living soul was left, and Hazor was burnt to the ground" [Joshua 11:11].

But how does the story of the destruction of Hazor as told in the book of Joshua compare with what Professor Ben-Tor is currently unearthing in the Upper City? Ever since excavations began in the 1920s with Garstang's tentative soundings it has been known that there are several layers of conflagration at Tell el-Kedah. The major destruction observed at the end of stratum XVI included a severe conflagration which produced a metre of ash and debris - also found in the equivalent stratigraphic horizon of the Lower City. This stratum XVI marks the end of the MBA city and, in the New Chronology, would be the city destroyed by Joshua.

Yadin died in 1984 before getting the chance to prove his theory, but three seasons of work in the Upper City by the Israeli/Spanish mission has brought them to the archaeological horizon just above the MBA palace. In doing so they had to remove the pillared building from its original location and re-erect it on another part of the site - a difficult and time-consuming task. The reward for their effort is that in the 1992 season objects from the MBA were just beginning to surface. This is where a new tablet fragment discovered in that year comes into the story. It would appear to belong to the stratum XVI palace which was destroyed by fire during the Middle Bronze Age. The broken text reads as follows:

"To Ibni-[Addu] ... Thus Irpa [says] ... Regarding bringing the young woman in the care of ... A certain woman, Aba ... Raised objections [against] ... Thus she (said): 'Until..."



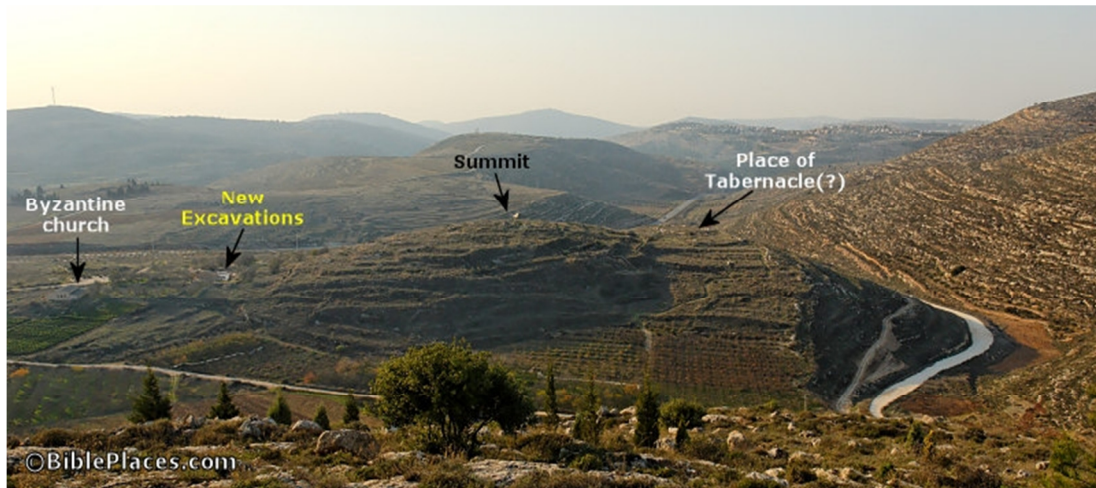
Tablet A2/3423/92/17-23086, discovered at Hazor, mentioning a King Ibni (biblical Jabin). The writing indicates that the tablet originated from an archive of the Middle Bronze Age palace.

Ben-Tor realised that the name of the addressee, Ibni-Addu, was the ruler of Hazor at the time the letter was written. The name 'Ibni' is the equivalent of Hebrew 'Yabin' - the biblical name Jabin'. So, the name of the ruler of Hazor found on a tablet datable to the palace destroyed by fire during the MBA is the same as that of the king of Hazor killed by Joshua who then burnt the city to the ground.

Conclusion 33: The city destroyed by Joshua's army was MB IIB Hazor burnt at the end of stratum XVI. The Middle Bronze Age ruler of Hazor, Ibni, whose name appears on Tablet A2/3423/92/17-23086 may therefore be identified with King Jabin of Hazor who was put to the sword by the Israelites in Joshua 11:10.

One excellent way to test out the New Chronology date for the Israelite settlement during MB IIB is to analyse the excavations on the sacred hill of Shiloh, thirty kilometres north of Jerusalem. Shiloh was the site chosen by the Israelite tribes as the home of the Ark of the Covenant immediately after the Conquest. There they established the great tented shrine which contained the casket of the Laws of Moses.

The site of Shiloh (Khirbet Seilun) was first excavated by the Danes in 1922 and again from 1926 to 1932. A third series of campaigns was initiated in 1981 by the Israelis under the directorship of Professor Israel Finkelstein of Tel Aviv University.



Let us now compare the excavation results with what we know of the history of the site from the Bible. I will use archaeologist Finkelstein's own words to describe what he unearthed.

- (a) 'Shiloh was first occupied in the period archaeologists call the Middle Bronze Age IIB.'
- (b) In the New Chronology the Israelites entered the Promised Land during MB IIB.

- (a) 'Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the Middle Bronze Age finds is that, already in this period, there appears to have been a shrine at the site.'
- (b) Of course there was, because this is precisely the time when the Israelites erected the sacred temenos of the Ark at Shiloh.

- (a) 'Shiloh thus joins several other sacred Israelite places where a cultic tradition had existed continuously ever since the Middle Bronze Age - long before the Israelite settlement in the 12th-11th centuries BC.'
- (b) These 'sacred...places' do not pre-date the Israelite settlement at all - they are the Israelite sacred sites. The early Israelites were the carriers of the Middle Bronze Age culture of the central hill country.

- (a) '...people from all over the region must have participated in the building activities at Shiloh - a possibility that casts an interesting light on the city's importance, perhaps as a cult site, already in the Middle Bronze Age.'
- (b) The Israelite tribes came together from all over Israel to gather around the shrine of the Ark and would have worked together as a combined labour force in order to construct the temenos with its great enclosure wall.

(a) 'Shiloh was destroyed at the end of the Middle Bronze Age ... inside and on top of the Middle Bronze fortification wall, there was an accumulation of earth, ashes and stones, nearly five feet thick.'

(b) Finkelstein's date for the destruction of Shiloh is a *Terminus Post Quem* for the abandonment of the site: a sherd of 'chocolate-on-white' ware - associated with LB I - was found in a storeroom, suggesting that the site was not destroyed until sometime after the Late Bronze Age had begun. Given, as I have suggested, that the MB II (tribal) culture in the hill country was contemporary with the LB I (urban) culture of the surrounding territories, it is possible that the destruction of Shiloh could be dated as late as the LB IIA. I Samuel 4 tells us of the seizing of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines at the Battle of Ebenezer about a dozen years before the reign of Saul, which falls in LB IIA according to the New Chronology. Professor Finkelstein's post-MB destruction level would correspond to destruction meted out by the Philistines soon after the Battle of Ebenezer.

(a) 'The Israelite settlement at Shiloh began in the twelfth century BC, at the beginning of Iron Age I, after the tell had been abandoned for some time. We found remains from Iron Age I virtually everywhere we dug.'

(b) This is not the Israelite settlement but rather the redevelopment of the site which begins in the reign of Jeroboam I [I Kings 14:2-4], continuing throughout the Divided Monarchy period.

Conclusion 34: Excavations at the sanctuary of Shiloh demonstrate that the Israelites developed the site to house the Ark of the Covenant during the Middle Bronze Age and not the Early Iron Age. The MB IIB culture of the central hill country of Palestine therefore represents the true archaeological remains of the Judges period in the history of Israel.

"Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together at Shechem; he then summoned all the elders of Israel, its leaders, judges and officials, and they presented themselves in God's presence. [Joshua 24:1]

"That day Joshua made a covenant for the people; he laid down a statute and ordinance for them at Shechem. Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. He then took a large stone and set it up there, under the oak tree in Yahweh's sanctuary" [Joshua 24:25-26].

This was Joshua's final act before his death. The story of the Israelite Covenant takes us to Shechem (modern Nablus) and the ruin-mound of Tell Balatah. Do the archaeological investigations of that site shed any light upon our efforts to demonstrate the historicity of the early Israelite presence in Canaan? You will find that the architectural history of Middle Bronze Age Shechem fits exactly with the biblical narrative now that the Old Testament and the archaeological record have been re-synchronised.

Biblical scholar Ernst Sellin began work at Tell Balatah in 1913, completing two seasons before the outbreak of war. He picked up where he had left off with four further seasons (winter and spring) in 1926 and 1927. A great cyclopean fortification wall (Wall A) was unearthed along with its gateway and, inside this formidable rampart, Sellin revealed an extensive platform filling upon which a great temple had been erected. It had walls five metres thick and a large open cella (13.5 metres long by 11 metres wide), the roof of which was originally supported by six columns.

The entrance portico of the temple had been flanked by two tall towers, giving the whole structure the appearance of a fortress-tower. Sellin immediately identified the building as the Temple of Baal-berith ('Lord of the Covenant') or El-berith and dated its construction to the early Late Bronze Age. This impressive temple of Shechem was also known as Migdol Shechem ('Tower of Shechem') [Judges 9:46] and Beth-Millo ('House of the Millo' - remember millo means filling or terrace) [Judges 9:6 & 20].

The biblical names seemed to fit perfectly with the fortress-temple of Tell Balatah, built on its terrace-filling. However, many scholars disagreed with Sellin because the structure appeared to have been built in LB I - far too early to be associated with the incidents in the

book of Judges which in the orthodox chronology would have fallen in the Iron Age I period. Sellin was dismissed by the dig's sponsors.

In 1956 the Americans took over the Tell Balatah excavations under the directorship of George Ernest Wright who worked the site for five further seasons. His excavations clarified the complex stratigraphy of Shechem and contributed to our understanding of religious life in the city with the discovery of a 'courtyard temple' in a level beneath, and in front of, Sellin's fortress-temple. This smaller structure lay outside the original temple at Shechem inner city wall (wall D) and appeared to be dated to the MB IIA. Wright also determined that the later migdol temple had been constructed in the MB IIB era but that it probably continued in use into the LB I when it was destroyed by a violent conflagration. With the archaeological evidence in mind let me now summarise the role of Shechem in the Israelite Story.

When Abraham entered Canaan he sojourned within 'the holy place at Shechem - the Oak of Moreh' [Genesis 12:f]. His son Jacob buried the confiscated foreign idols worshipped by his family beneath the same oak - but this time the Bible tells us that the tree was located 'near' or 'by' Shechem [Genesis 35:4]. Furthermore:

"Jacob arrived at the town of Shechem in Canaanite territory, on his return from Paddan-Aram. He encamped opposite the town and for one hundred pieces of silver he bought from the sons of Hamor, father of Shechem, the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. There he erected an altar which he called El - God of Israel" [Genesis 33:18-20].

It is my conviction that the courtyard temple complex found by Wright is the site of Jacob's altar dedicated to El, erected alongside the venerable Oak of Moreh under which the patriarch Abraham had rested. The courtyard plan of the sacred precinct reflects the style of open-air worship implied by the Genesis narrative. The buildings of the complex appear to have been built around the courtyard area in the MB IIA which is when, as you will learn in the next and final chapter, Jacob was resident at the city of Shechem.

Conclusion 35: The MB IIA courtyard temple at Shechem is to be identified as the site of the Oak of Moreh where Jacob set up an altar to El. Centuries later it was the gathering place for the Israelite covenant ceremony where Joshua erected the sacred massebah.

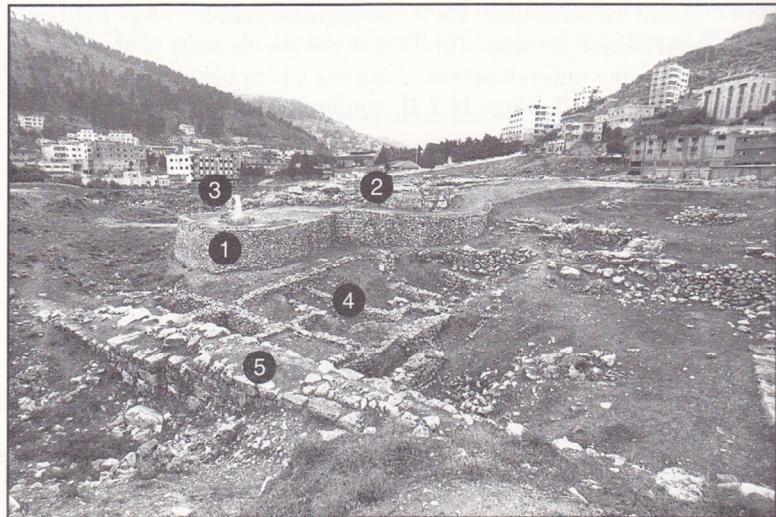
In the interval of time which corresponds to the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt (NC - 1662-1447 BC) the courtyard temple remained in use, but in MB IIB it was partially covered over with the filling upon which the great temple was erected. In the open court which was constructed in front of the massive new fortress-temple (and above the old courtyard temple) a great white stone measuring one and a half metres wide by around two metres high had been erected. Sellin identified it as a *massebah* or sacred stone pillar. Let me remind you of the passage in the book of Joshua concerning the Israelite Covenant, the events of which we are now dating within the MB IIB archaeological phase.

"That day Joshua made a covenant for the people ... He then took a large stone and set it up there, under the oak tree in Yahweh's sanctuary" [Joshua 24:25-26].

Sellin re-erected the great monolith believing it to have been the covenant stone of Joshua. He was later criticised for his hasty conclusions because his temple and standing stone were far too early to be identified with Joshua. But we now know that Sellin was right all along. Still on the spot where he set it up, the Joshua stone - a tangible piece of early Israelite history - stands today in its neglect, covered in the yellow and green paint of Palestinian political graffiti. This is surely the saddest testimony to the lost history of the Conquest - all brought about by a simple mistake in chronology.

Conclusion 36: The standing stone which was discovered in front of the great MB fortress-temple at Shechem is to be identified with the cultic stone of the Covenant erected by Joshua. During the era of the early Judges the stone was established in front of the Temple of Baal-Berith which is now recognised as the MB IIB temple.

A view of the sacred enclosure at Shechem showing the 'millo' (terrace platform) (1) upon which the great migdol temple of the MB IIB and LB I was erected (2). In front of the temple the large white standing stone has been re-erected (3). Beneath the forecourt of the temple an earlier complex of shrines from the MB IIA has been uncovered (4) in the area between the temple and the massive revetment wall 900 (5).



The next time we hear of Shechem is in the tale of Abimelech, son of the judge Gideon and his Shechemite concubine.

"After Gideon's death, the people of Israel again began to prostitute themselves to the Baals ... All the leading men of Shechem and all Bethmillo then met and proclaimed Abimelech king at the oak of the cultic stone at Shechem" [Judges 8:33 & 9:6].

With the election of Abimelech as king of Shechem we reach another bloody passage in the story of the Israelite settlement in Canaan. We are now in a time more than two centuries after the death of Joshua. In the New Chronology the date is *circa* 1170 BC - the last year in the reign of Ahmose, founder of the New Kingdom in Egypt. It is the Late Bronze I period in the coastal and lowland cities but still the Middle Bronze IIB in the central hill country. The great Temple of Baal-berith has been erected at the site of the Israelite Covenant and the cyclopean wall surrounding the town has also risen up to protect one of the Israelites' most sacred sites.

Abimelech's three-year rule was exceptionally brutal and eventually the Shechemites revolted against their king. The culmination of the rebellion was yet another slaughter. The vast majority of the citizens of Shechem were slain by Abimelech's warriors. The surviving remnant of one thousand Shechemites sought refuge in the great migdol temple with its thick walls, believing it to be not only secure but also sacrosanct. But Abimelech had no such religious foibles.

"As soon as Abimelech heard that the leading men inside Migdol Shechem had all gathered there, he went up Mount Zalmon with all his men. Then, taking an axe in his hands, he cut off the branch of a tree, picked it up and put it on his shoulder, and said to the men with him, 'Hurry and do what you have seen me do.' Each of his men similarly cut off a branch; then, following Abimelech, they piled the branches over the crypt and set it on fire over those who were inside; so that all the people in Migdol Shechem died too, about a thousand men and women" [Judges 9:46-49].

Here again we have a remarkable parallel between the early biblical narratives and archaeology. The Middle Bronze Age fortress-temple discovered by Sellin was destroyed by fire and, as Kenyon notes, 'the succeeding occupation was slight, and there was possibly even a complete gap'. The only biblical passage which records an abandonment of Shechem is Judges 9:45 where we read that Abimelech 'stormed it and slaughtered the people inside, razed the town and sowed it with salt'.

Conclusion 37: The destroyed second stage of the massive MB fortress-temple at Shechem is to be identified with Migdol Shechem burnt to the ground by Abimelech with one thousand Shechemies inside. The subsequent abandonment of the site is consistent with the Abimelech story in which he razed the town and sowed it with salt (A Test of Time, p.315-325).

The Golden Age of Solomon

Following the conquest of the land of Canaan by the Israelites and the time of the Judges that was roughly during the same time as the Hyksos in Egypt, the next major period of Israel's history was the time of the United Kingdom of Saul, David and Solomon. Yet again, we run across the same chronological conflict between the Biblical record and the conventional dating of archaeology.

David Rohl in "A Test of Time" looks at what archaeologists have uncovered showing how the Late Bronze Age is a better fit than the Iron Age for the time of King Solomon:

Within the biblical narratives, clearly painting the era of Solomon as the cultural high point in the early history of Israel, we should expect to find considerable evidence of Solomon's wealth and Israel's internationalism within the archaeology of the period if the narratives have a basis in historical fact. In the orthodox chronology Solomon is dated to what archaeologists call Iron Age IIA.

This is how two of the leading authorities in Palestinian archaeology have described the period. In discussing the so-called Solomonic cities of Iron Age IIA, Professor James Pritchard of Pennsylvania University writes:

"... the so-called cities of Megiddo, Gezer and Hazor, and Jerusalem itself were in reality more like villages. ... Within were relatively small public buildings and poorly constructed dwellings with clay floors. The objects reveal a material culture which, even by the standards of the ancient Near East, could not be judged sophisticated or luxurious ... The 'magnificence' of the age of Solomon is parochial and decidedly lacklustre, but the first book of Kings implies exactly the opposite."

Dame Kathleen Kenyon was equally mystified by the general impoverishment of Iron Age IIA:

"Archaeology has provided us with little direct evidence of the glories of Solomon's court, and has shown that, away from the capital, the civilisation was not of a very high order, nor are there striking signs of economic prosperity ... The sites which have provided the best archaeological evidence, moreover, do little to illustrate another aspect of Solomon's innovations known to us from the Bible, his activities as a merchant prince. Almost no recognisably imported objects have been found in levels of this period in Palestine proper."

There are no magnificent buildings, no fine artefacts adorned with semiprecious stones and inlays, no gold, silver or ivory, and no signs of a flourishing international trade.

So once more the conventional chronology produces a negative result when comparing the archaeological remains with biblical history.

When we turn to Phoenicia in the Early Iron Age to seek evidence for the famed Phoenician craftsmanship in stone-cutting, so prized by Solomon, we again find a complete absence of monumental ashlar building techniques - in fact we find no monumental stone buildings at all!

As Israeli archaeologist Professor Yigael Shiloh of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem remarks:

"On those sites which have been examined over and over again - such as Sidon and Byblos - so far no relevant evidence from the Iron Age has come to light. There is no possibility today - in the light of the archaeological finds - of determining the existence of a clear connection between the ashlar masonry of Judah and Israel and Iron Age Phoenicia."

Archaeological investigation undertaken in Lebanon and coastal Syria (ancient Phoenicia) has produced no evidence for monumental stone building between the end of the Bronze Age (OC - c. 1150 BC) and the start of the Hellenistic era (c. 332 BC). In the conventional chronological model the stories of Solomon - the builder king - and his ally Hiram of Tyre have to be complete exaggerations or pure fiction.

Conclusion 9: The cultural wealth of the era of Solomon as described in I Kings and II Chronicles is not reflected in the archaeology of Iron Age Palestine which can only be described as a period of general impoverishment in the cultural history of the Levant.

Having noted the relative impoverishment of Early Iron Age Megiddo, we can now, by contrast, demonstrate the great wealth and cosmopolitan character of the Late Bronze Age city by enumerating the noteworthy features of strata VIII and VIIB.

1. The Late Bronze Age Palace (stratum VIII, continuing in use during stratum VIIB): The building is fifty metres in length with two-metre thick walls. An entrance gate leads the visitor into a large courtyard with plastered floor, surrounded on three sides by palace apartments. The largest hall (possibly the throne room) has an imposing portico flanked by two basalt pillars. One of the palace rooms is paved with seashells and has a square basin at its centre - obviously a bathing room.



2. A royal treasure found in room 3100 of the palace: This magnificent hoard included gold vessels; jewellery of different styles including gold and lapis-lazuli beads; and a collection of ivory plaques.

3. The ivory hoard found in the palace treasury: The collection of carved ivories numbered over two hundred items. The workmanship is described as 'Canaanite art at its best'. The deposit has been dated to stratum VIIB. An even bigger collection, found in the treasury of the later stratum VIIA palace (a modification of the VIIB structure), has also been attributed to the historical period of stratum VI IB, recognised as 'left-overs' from Bronze Age Megiddo. In the opinion of Professor Yigael YADIN of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem 'the cache of ivories, mostly plaques, constitutes the largest and richest collection of Canaanite carved ivory yet discovered' in Palestine.

4. The Triple-entry gateway to the city: The fine ashlar gate, located just to the east of the palace, is usually dated to stratum VIII.

5. Migdol Temple 2048: The great temple (now destroyed by excavation) had a single large chamber measuring eleven metres by ten metres with exterior walls three metres thick. Two massive towers flanked the entrance with a pair of columns erected in the entrance portico leading to the great cella. The date of construction of the temple is disputed - it may be earlier than stratum VIII - but it certainly underwent a number of modifications during VIIB and VIIA, including the erection of the portico pillars.

It can be seen from this impressive series of finds that Megiddo reached its cultural zenith during the Late Bronze IIA to IIB period - precisely when we have placed the kings of Israel from David to Ahab in the New Chronology.

I think it would be instructive to look in more detail at some of the luxury artefacts from LB II Megiddo and one or two features of the architecture - with the specific intention of comparing them to what we understand of Solomon's reign from the Old Testament narratives.

When Solomon built the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem, he erected two great pillars which flanked the entrance to the cella of the building. They were called Jachin and Boaz [I Kings 7:15-22]. Temple 2048 at Megiddo also has a pair of columns guarding the entrance - Megiddo's own Jachin and Boaz.

Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter [I Kings 3:11] so one might expect a certain amount of Egyptian influence in the artistic tastes of the Solomonic court. If we look at some of the ivories from Megiddo's LB II palace we find a number of Egyptian motifs, including papyrus plants, lilies and lotus flowers (the floral motifs of Upper and Lower Egypt), as well as palm trees and winged sphinxes.

The most famous Megiddo ivory is the remarkable panel depicting palace life in LBA Palestine. There are a number of intriguing elements, but first let me describe the overall scene. To the right, the king arrives in his chariot, driving before him shasu captives; in the centre is an intimate cameo of the same ruler, seated upon his throne with his queen and lyre player standing before him; to the left, behind the king, two courtiers attend to the royal couple's needs.



Now let us pick out what might be interpreted as Egyptian elements in the scene. First, above the chariot horses is a winged sun-disk; second, the queen offers a lotus flower to her husband; and third the king is seated upon a throne, the sides of which are guarded by winged sphinxes (i.e. human-headed lions). Surrounding the monarch we see three doves - a well known motif of peace.

Solomon married an Egyptian princess; he had 'a great ivory throne' made for him which was protected by 'lions' on either side [I Kings 10:18-20]; his traditional name means 'peaceful'. Could we have here a representation of King Solomon and his Egyptian queen?

Conclusion 10: Solomon was not a ruler of the Iron Age IIA but instead reigned during the last century of the Late Bronze Age. The cultural zenith of the United Monarchy period in Israelite history (10th century BC) is reflected in the archaeological remains of Megiddo VIII to VIIB.

Apart from the building of the Temple of Yahweh and the royal palaces, Solomon's greatest building achievement was the Jerusalem Millo which took most of the second half of his reign to complete [I Kings 9:15 & 11:27]. The Hebrew word Millo translates as 'filling' and has been understood to mean a massive terrace system constructed with stone retainer walls back-filled with rubble. This terracing would have increased the building area within the old City of David along its precipitous eastern slopes affording an increase in population within the walls of the new Israelite capital city.

In 1961, Dame Kathleen Kenyon began her seven year excavations of the eastern slopes of the ancient city of Jerusalem. Its southern spur, between the Kidron and Tyropoean valleys, is the oldest part of the site and the location of the Jebusite and Davidic city which the biblical writers call the 'City of David' or the 'Fortress of Zion'. The small, somewhat cramped hill-top city of early Jerusalem became the royal residence and capital of the rulers of United Monarchy Israel and post-Schism Judah. Kenyon was in search of material evidence for this

important period in Jerusalem's history and, in particular, for signs of Solomon's famous royal city.

Her strategy was to dig a great trench running straight down the eastern slope of the hill towards the floor of the Kidron valley. Excavations began immediately beneath the Hasmonean bastion, near the summit.

As she removed the debris of centuries, Kenyon began to reveal a deeper, more massive structure which dated from a much earlier period. She had found a vast stone terracing system which stretched along the east scarp of the old city. It has been estimated that this 'extension' of the city summit added at least six thousand square metres to the occupational area of early Jerusalem.

Dame Kathleen Kenyon believed that she had uncovered the Millo of Solomon and duly announced her discovery in the pages of the Palestine Exploration Quarterly. However, once again, there was a problem. The associated pottery found in the filling material of the terraces proved to belong to the Late Bronze Age:

"There was not a great deal in the way of finds in the fill, but there was enough pottery, including a few sherds of Mycenaean ware and White Slip II milkbowls, to show that the date is c. 14th century BC."

The date of the Late Helladic IIIA2 (Kenyon's 'Mycenaean') pottery found in the terrace fill has subsequently been refined to *circa* 1370-1310 BC - the time of AMENHOTEP III (late-reign) to Haremheb in the orthodox chronology.



Detail of the stone terrace (with field-stone filling), excavated by Kenyon, which runs along the eastern slope of ancient Jerusalem.

So, here was Kenyon's problem - the pottery suggested that the terraces which she had uncovered were constructed several centuries before Solomon was anointed king over all Israel (indeed, even before the Israelites had supposedly departed from Egypt for the Promised Land!).

Her solution to this dilemma was to retain her identification of the great stone terraces with the biblical Millo, but then to 'doctor' or reinterpret the passage in I Kings 9:15, relating to the building-works of Solomon. She proposed that the Israelite king had not 'built' the Millo as the Old Testament text states, but rather 'rebuilt' or repaired it. There was no other possible explanation as her excavations had clearly demonstrated that the Millo was originally constructed some three hundred and sixty years before Solomon's reign.

Kenyon's difficulties had come about, of course, as a direct result of her adherence to the orthodox dating of the Mycenaean (LH IIIA2) pottery - dated to the fourteenth century BC by finds of the same pottery at Tell el-Amarna.

If we apply the New Chronology's dates for the Amarna period, as devised in the previous chapter, we get a date range of *circa* 1030 to 970 BC for LH IIIA2. According to the biblical chronology, Solomon succeeded David in 970 BC. It would hardly be surprising, therefore, to find pottery which was still in use at least as late as 970 BC associated with a Millo built by Solomon in *circa* 950 BC. Thus, the New Chronology can re-establish Solomon as the true builder of the Millo of Jerusalem and Kenyon's awkward 'repair' theory is no longer required.

Conclusion 11: The massive Late Bronze Age stone terracing system constructed along the eastern slopes of the City of David is to be identified with the Jerusalem Millo, constructed in the reign of Solomon as stated in I Kings 9:15.

During the 1980s Professor Gabriel Barkay of Tel Aviv University began to piece together tantalising clues from incompletely published excavations of the last century which, combined with his own archaeological investigations, confirmed an Egyptian enclave had once existed to the north of the Damascus Gate, just outside the walled city of Herod's Jerusalem. He had already unearthed a collection of small artefacts from the 1882-1883 excavations in the display cabinets of the Ecole Biblique along with records of larger finds from the original excavation site now beneath the church of St. Etienne. The objects included a fragment of an Egyptian stela with hieroglyphic texts; a large *hotep-class* stone offering table; two Egyptian alabaster vessels; a headless statuette of a seated female figure in typical Egyptian style; and a limestone column capital of the open-papyrus design relocated by Barkay in the grounds of the famous 'Garden Tomb' believed by some to be the place of Christ's interment following his crucifixion.

The original 1880s excavations were undertaken within the grounds of the Ecole Biblique where the church of St. Etienne is situated, and so Professor Barkay has concluded that an Egyptian-style building or compound once stood at this location, probably adjacent to the ancient road leading to Nablus (biblical Shechem). The Egyptian alabasters associated with this building are of 18th Dynasty type (i.e. LB IIA) and, as a result, Barkay has tentatively dated the structure to the time of the late 18th to early 19th Dynasties.

The objects so far found do not tell us precisely what type of building we are dealing with - it could be a small temple within the residence of a native Egyptian of high rank or, perhaps more likely, the tomb of that Egyptian (as the presence of stone architecture, a funerary stela and an offering table suggests). I must say I find all this extremely interesting.

The simple facts are that (a) this is the only structure containing Egyptian architectural elements in stone ever found in Jerusalem and (b) the only building (we know of) constructed for a native Egyptian in Israel was that built by Solomon for Pharaoh's Daughter (according to the Old Testament).

In the orthodox chronology Barkay's Late Bronze Age structure is much too early to be associated with Solomon, whereas it fits in rather well with the chronology outlined in this book.

If I am right in identifying the remains uncovered by Gabriel Barkay as elements from the residence of Solomon's Egyptian queen, we may find a ready explanation for the puzzling statement found in II Chronicles 8:11. There it states that 'Solomon moved Pharaoh's daughter up from the City of David to the palace which he had built for her'. We now know that the biblical historian was being very precise in his location of the Egyptian queen's residence. Solomon built her palace on a hill overlooking the city of Jerusalem which really was 'up from' the old city and its new sacred precinct on the temple mount.

Conclusion 12: The only Egyptian architectural remains ever found in Jerusalem may be identified with the palace of Pharaoh's daughter constructed after the completion of the Temple of Yahweh in the king's 11th year (1 Kings 6:37-38). These remains date to Late Bronze IIA-B and are contemporary with the reigns of the Egyptian pharaohs Haremhab (late-reign) and Seti I (A Test of Time, p.173-184).

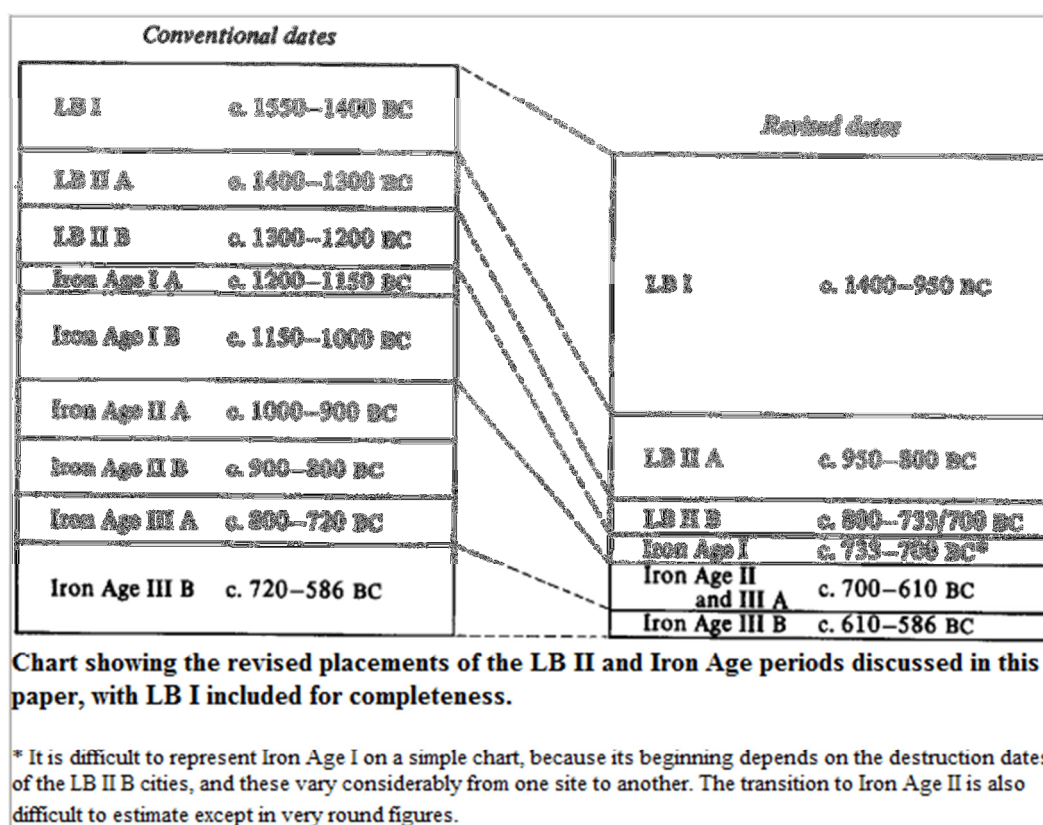
John Bimson in his article "Can There be a Revised Chronology Without a Revised Stratigraphy?"

I have argued at length elsewhere that the Israelite Conquest of Canaan is marked by the collapse of Palestine's major cities at the end of the Middle Bronze Age - an event which I date to the late 15th century BC. A corollary of this is that the first subdivision of the LBA (LB I) is largely contemporary with the time of the Judges, and, in the revised chronology, with the Hyksos period. I have also discussed evidence for this in a recent article. At one place in that article, I assumed a division of LB I into two parts, LB I A and LB I B.

Though chiefly concerned with dating the start of LB I A relative to the Hyksos period, I also suggested briefly that the transition to LB I B belonged in the reign of Solomon. Research carried out since that article was written has led me to modify that view. Although an exhaustive study of the LBA contexts of all scarabs commemorating Hatshepsut and Thutmose III would be required to establish this point, a preliminary survey suggests that objects from the joint reign of these two rulers do not occur until the transition from LB I to LB II, and that scarabs of Thutmose III occur regularly from the start of LB II onwards, and perhaps no earlier.

Velikovsky's chronology makes Hatshepsut (with Thutmose III as co-ruler) a contemporary of Solomon, and Thutmose III's sole reign contemporary with that of Rehoboam in Judah. Therefore, if the revised chronology is correct, these scarabs would suggest that Solomon's reign saw the transition from LB I to LB II, rather than that from LB I A to LB I B.

Placing the beginning of LB II during the reign of Solomon produces a very good correlation between archaeological evidence and the biblical record of that period. It is with this correlation that we will begin. In taking the LB I - II transition as its starting-point, the present article not only takes up the challenge offered by Stiebing, but also continues the revision begun in my previous articles, and will bring it to a conclusion (in broad outline) with the end of the Iron Age.



Though Kenyon has stated that the LB I - II transition saw a decline in the material culture of Palestine, ongoing excavations are now revealing a different picture. LB II A "was definitely superior to the preceding LB I", in terms of stability and material prosperity; it saw "a rising population that reoccupied long abandoned towns". Foreign pottery imports are a chief characteristic of the period. According to the biblical accounts in the books of Kings and Chronicles, Solomon's reign brought a period of peace which saw an increase in foreign contacts, unprecedented prosperity, and an energetic building programme which extended throughout the kingdom.

I Kings 9:15 specifically relates that Solomon rebuilt Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. In the revised stratigraphy envisaged here, the cities built by Solomon at these sites would therefore be those of LB II A. More specifically, these three Solomonic cities would be

represented by Stratum VIII in Area AA at Megiddo, by Stratum XVI at Gezer, and by Stratum XIV of the Upper City at Hazor (= Str. Ib of the Lower City).

The wealth and international trade attested by these levels certainly reflect the age of Solomon far more accurately than the Iron Age cities normally attributed to him, from which we have "no evidence of any particular luxury".

The above-mentioned strata at Megiddo and Gezer have both yielded remains of very fine buildings and courtyards. The Late Bronze strata on the tell at Hazor have unfortunately not produced a clear picture, because of levelling operations and extensive looting of these levels during the Iron Age; but the LB II A stratum of the Lower City has produced a temple very similar in concept to the Temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem, as described in the Old Testament.

Art treasures from these cities not only indicate the wealth of the period but also reflect contacts with Egypt and northern Mesopotamia. These contacts are precisely those we would expect to find attested during Solomon's reign, the Bible records Solomon's trade with Egypt and his marriage to the Pharaoh's daughter, and says (I Kings 4:24) that his kingdom extended as far to the north-east as Tiphshah, which is probably to be identified with Thapsacus, "an important crossing in the west bank of the Middle Euphrates ... placed strategically on a great east-west trade route".

The Bible adds extra detail concerning Gezer: namely, that Solomon rebuilt it after it had been captured and burnt by the Pharaoh, who had given the site to his daughter, Solomon's wife, as a dowry (I Kings 9:16-17). In Velikovsky's chronology, this pharaoh is identified as Thutmose I. In the revised stratigraphy considered here, we would expect to find evidence for this destruction of Gezer at some point during LB I, and sure enough we do, including dramatic evidence of burning. The "latest possible date" for this destruction is said to be the reign of Thutmose III, with some archaeologists preferring an earlier date. We may readily identify this destruction as the work of Solomon's father-in-law.

From the period between this destruction, and the LB II A city, comes a group of several dozen burials in a cave. DEVER remarks that most of these "show signs of advanced arthritis, probably from stoop labour, which may be an indication of the hardships of life during this period". Yet contemporary finds, including "Egyptian glass, alabaster and ivory vessels, and a unique terra-cotta sarcophagus of Mycenaean inspiration", indicate considerable prosperity and international trade at this time. In a revised framework, it is tempting to speculate that the burials were of people who suffered under Solomon's system of forced labour, by which Gezer was built according to I Kings 9:15. It emerges in I Kings 12 that this forced labour caused sufficient hardship to contribute to the bitterness that split the kingdom after Solomon's death.

We must turn briefly to Jerusalem, where Solomon's building activities were concentrated for the first twenty years of his reign, according to I Kings 9:10. Here we find that traces of occupation datable to Solomon's time in the conventional scheme are rather poor. In the revised scheme, we may attribute to Solomon the impressive stone terrace system of LBA date excavated by Kenyon on the eastern ridge. In fact, this is probably the "Millo" which Solomon is said to have built (I Kings 9:15, 24; II:27). Kenyon describes the nucleus of this terrace system as "a fill almost entirely of rubble, built in a series of compartments defined by facings of a single course of stones..." "Fill", or "filling", is the probable meaning of "Millo".

Also to Solomon's time would belong at least some of the LBA tombs discovered on the western slope of the Mount of Olives; many of these contain LB I - IIA material which includes "a surprisingly large number" of imported items from Cyprus, Aegean and Egypt. The number would not be surprising in the context of Solomon's reign.

Unfortunately, we cannot hope to locate any remains of Solomon's Temple and Palace at Jerusalem, since even if traces of these buildings survive, they are almost certainly inaccessible to archaeologists because of more recent (especially Herodian) building activity.

We must now leave the subject of Solomonic cities to consider the rest of the LBA. I will not discuss possible correlations for the remainder of this period in any detail here.

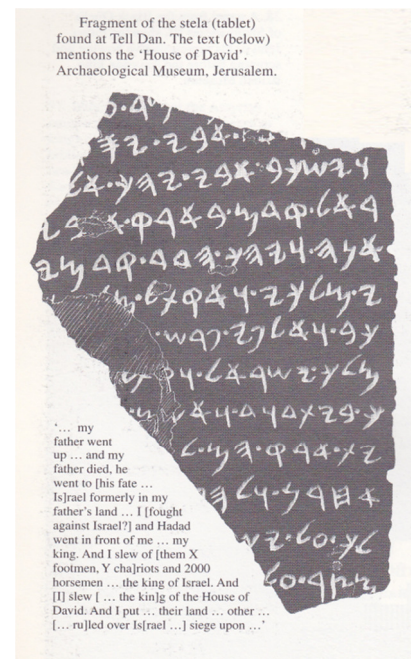
I simply note the possibility that the transition from LB II A to LB II B, which saw a widespread decline in material culture, should be linked with the Aramaean invasions of Israel and Judah which occurred at the end of the 9th century BC (cf. II Kings 12:17-18; 13:1-7). The destruction of Hazor's LB II A strata, conventionally dated to about 1300 BC, could have been the work of either Hazael or Ben-hadad II.

One of the more recent discoveries of actual inscriptional evidence for David occurred at Tel Dan in 1993. Regarding this discovery Mario Seiglie wrote the following in the January/February 1998 issue of the Good News (p.29):

In 1993 archaeologists discovered the names of David and Israel in an inscription carved in stone only 100 years after David's death. Reports Biblical Archaeological Review:

"It's not often that an archaeological find makes the front page of the New York Times (to say nothing of Time magazine). But that is what happened last summer to a discovery at Tel Dan, a beautiful mound in northern Galilee, at the foot of Mt Hermon beside one of the headwaters of the Jordan River.

"There Avraham Biran and his team of archaeologists found a remarkable inscription from the ninth century BCE that refers to the House of David and to the King of Israel. This is the first time that the name David has been found in any ancient inscription outside the Bible" (Biblical Archaeological Review, March-April 1994, p.26)".



On the Nova DVD entitled "The Bible's Buried Secrets" they interviewed Eilat Mazar who has been excavating at the "The City of David" archaeological park that has become a major tourist attraction at the top of the SE spur to the south of the Dome of the Rock.

Her team uncovered walls 3 to 5 metres thick and at least 30 metres long near the entrance to the City of David tourist attraction. This represents a huge building in this location and she believes it to be the King David's palace. Pottery and radio carbon dating of organic remains points to a date somewhere within the range of King David and Ahab.





In 1 Kings 9:15 we read of Solomon's building works:

And this *is* the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the LORD, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and **Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer.**

In the same DVD they spoke about how the cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer were all found to have six chambered gates proving they were built by a central authority and one archaeologist felt that this was proof that they were built by Solomon.



There is a problem with the evidence on the ground and that is that the archaeologists dated the six chambered gates to the Iron Age. While this matches up with the conventional chronology, the revised chronology that has been amply shown to be superior to the conventional chronology, starts the Iron Age couple of centuries later

around 750 BC. John Bimson has this to say about them in the aforementioned article "Can There be a Revised Chronology Without a Revised Stratigraphy?":

Turning to the chambered gateways usually attributed to Solomon at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, we note the fact, rather surprising for the conventional view, that "This unusual type of gate has now been discovered outside of Israel as well, in Philistine Ashdod", where it is dated to the same time as the so-called "Solomonic" examples. If we are correct in linking this type of gateway with Assyrian rule in Palestine, this discovery is what we would expect, since Ashdod was reorganised as an Assyrian province following the revolt of 712 BC.

Ground plans of Iron Age chambered gateways from Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer and Ashdod, conventionally dated to the 10th century BC. Those from Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer are assumed to be Solomonic. All four probably belong to the period of Assyrian domination, late 8th century.

How do explain this difference in the Bible and the revised chronology that has held up so well so far? The cities all did exist in the Late Bronze Age as there are lower strata supporting this so they did exist in Solomon's day by the revised chronology.

Remember that gates are the part of the cities that are most attacked during war. If they suffer enough damage they are probably rebuilt from time to time. This is a likely possibility for why these gates are Iron Age and they were probably rebuilt on the earlier configuration that Solomon probably used such as the six chambers.

The Divided Kingdom and Post Exile Period

Now I'd like to continue with John Bimson's article "Can There be a Revised Chronology Without a Revised Stratigraphy?" as he covers the time of the Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah:

The End of the Late Bronze Age

It is well known that at the end of the LBA several cities in Palestine were destroyed. These destructions are conventionally dated to the late 13th century BC, and those scholars who favour the theory of a 13th century date for the Exodus and Conquest have often attributed the destructions at Hazor, Lachish, Debir and elsewhere to the Israelites invading Canaan under Joshua.

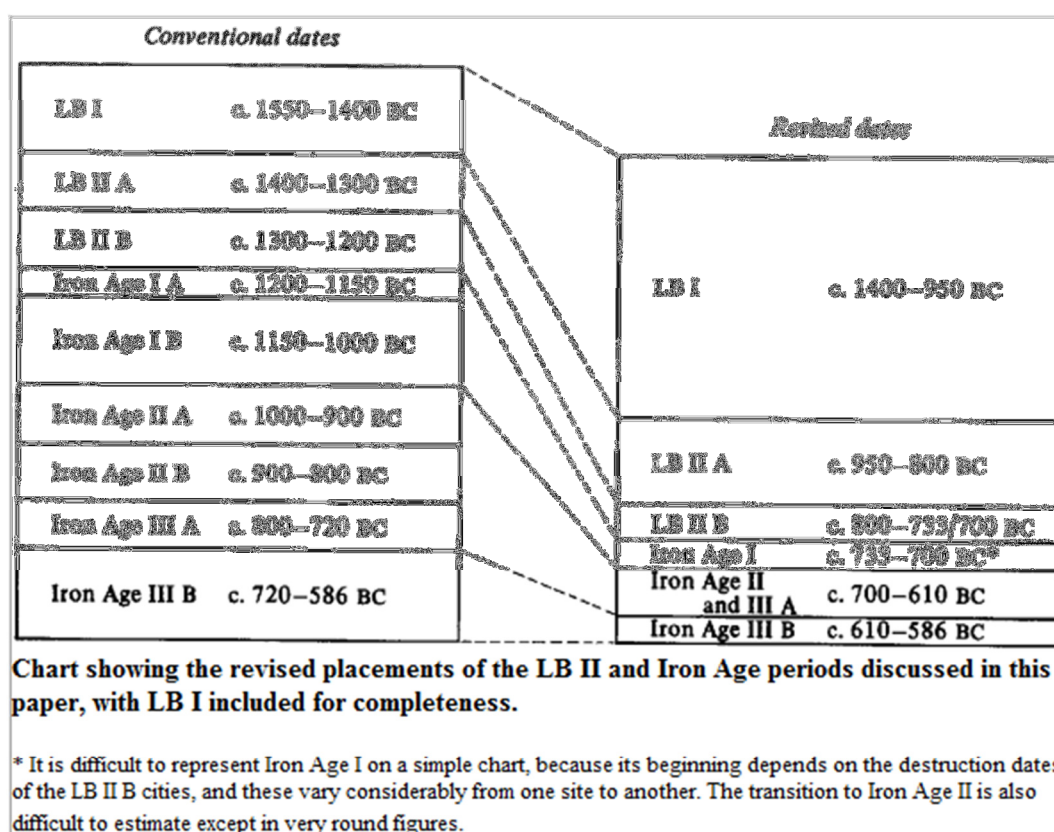
The Iron Age culture which follows these destructions has been viewed as that brought by the newcomers, and hence has often been described as Israelite. However, it has been pointed out that this culture is, in fact, only an impoverished form of that of the LBA, and that there is no reason to attribute it to a nation of newly-arrived settlers apart from the a priori assumption that the settlement by Israel was taking place at this time.

The logical revised position for these destructions is the late 8th century, from 733 BC onwards, when Palestine suffered a series of destructive invasions by the Assyrians.

For example, the final destruction of LBA Hazor (Str. XIII of the Upper City, Str. 1a of the Lower City), currently dated to about 1230 BC, would be the work of Tiglath-pileser III in 733 BC, as recorded in II Kings 15:29; the end of LBA Gezer (Str. XV) was probably the work of the same campaign, during which the Assyrian armies also attacked Philistia, a conquest of Gezer is depicted in reliefs from Tiglath-pileser III's palace at Nimrud; the end of Lachish level VI, currently dated to around 1200 BC, would be the work of Sennacherib in 701 BC, his siege of the city being recorded in his own reliefs and referred to in the Old Testament (II Kings 18:14, 17; 19:8).

It is interesting in this connection that the destruction of level III at Lachish, dated to 701 by TUFNELL and others, has been redated by a number of archaeologists to 598 BC; but despite almost conclusive evidence for this later date, Tufnell objects to it on the grounds that with this destruction removed from 701 BC, "there is no other evidence on the site to substantiate the existence of the well-documented Assyrian campaign". Our proposed redating of the destruction of level VI provides the missing evidence of Sennacherib's attack.

A whole series of similar correlations could be suggested for Debir, Megiddo, Bethshan, Ashdod, Tell Abu Hawam, Aphek and Beitin. That the Iron Age culture which followed these destructions was an impoverished form of what had gone before is what the above scheme would lead us to expect, that culture represents a scattered population's efforts at recovery after the major cities had been destroyed and many of their inhabitants killed or deported.



There is considerable evidence to support the view that the LBA ended 500 years later than is currently supposed. Let us look firstly at the argument between AHARONI and ROTHENBERG on the one hand and NELSON GLUECK on the other, concerning the dating of pottery at Timna, an ancient copper-mining site in the Arabah. At Timna, a type of pottery described as "Edomite" by Glueck was found with transitional LBA - Iron Age pottery well known from Palestine. This led Aharoni to date the "Edomite" pottery at Timna to the 12th - 11th centuries BC and no later.

Glueck protested that this dating of the Timna material was "in error", his reason being that this same "Edomite" pottery had been found by him at Tell el-Kheleifeh (possibly the site of Ezion-geber), where it is confined to Str. IV. This stratum has been dated by the inscriptional material and the Assyrian pottery which it contains. It does not begin until the end of the 8th century and belongs chiefly to the 7th - 6th centuries BC.

It is well known that Egyptian finds at Timna now seem to have overridden Glueck's objections and to have established an early date for the Timna material. An excellent account of the dispute between Glueck and Aharoni/Rothenberg has already been given by E. DANIELIUS in two articles which draw out some of its implications for a revised

chronology. But one fact emerges from the above which did not receive emphasis in those articles, and which is very significant for our present discussion: the same pottery is found (a) in Tell el-Kheleifeh Str. IV, where it occurs with Assyrian styles and cannot be earlier than about 700 BC, and (b) at Timna, where it is associated with the transitional LBA - Iron Age pottery types common in Palestine. The logical implication is that there should be no gap of five centuries between the LBA - Iron Age transition and the end of the 8th century BC...

Further evidence comes from Tell Deir Alla, in the Jordan Valley, east of the river and on the northern bank of the Wadi Zerqa. Here we have a LBA settlement destroyed, according to present estimates, at the beginning of the 12th century BC. From the destruction of the LBA occupation come several plates of scale armour. Now fragmentary, these were clearly rectangular in shape originally, and thus resemble the plates of scale armour worn by Assyrian troops in reliefs, e.g. those depicting the siege of Lachish in 701 BC. If the end of the LBA occupation does in fact date to the late 8th or early 7th century BC, these fragments of armour would indeed belong to the time of the Assyrian invasions.

The first Iron Age occupation at Tell Deir Alla is dated to the 12th - 11th centuries BC, and from this comes an interesting item of pottery. This is a child's feeding-bowl, with a rounded hollow rim which begins in a spout, and, "after coiling round the bowl, dips down into the middle ... ending with a fox's head almost touching the base of the bowl". It is made "of light grey metallic ware", and, in FRANKEN'S opinion, represents "a striving to recreate metal prototypes in pottery". But the only metal version with which Franken compares this bowl is one in the Hittite Museum at Ankara, and which "comes from a young prince's grave in 7th century Gordion".

This can hardly be a metal prototype for the Tell Deir Alla version if it post-dates it by four or five centuries! Unless much earlier metal versions can be found, preferably dated independently of the Egyptian chronology which underlies current Palestinian dates, we have here a curious anomaly: two examples of an intricate and distinctive design, separated by 400-500 years, the pottery version being that much older than the metal version which it appears to copy. The revised stratigraphy suggested here would allow the Tell Deir Alla bowl to date from the 7th century, like its metal counterpart...

The Iron Age II A Cities

There are the Iron Age cities at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer normally attributed to Solomon. The logical time for their construction in this revised scheme is the years around 700 BC and following.

In this connection, we must return briefly to the Menkheperre scarabs commonly found in levels conventionally dated to the 10th century BC and assumed by Velikovsky to belong to Thutmose III. It was noted by MURRAY several years ago, in connection with the common late occurrence of these scarabs, that the name Menkheperre was borne by rulers of the XX1st and XXVth Dynasties, as well as by Thutmose III.

During the XXVth Dynasty, whose present placement is not affected by the revised chronology, Menkheperre was probably a second prenominal of Shebitku, who preceded the better-known Tirhakah and probably initiated that dynasty's anti-Assyrian involvement in Palestine. Since Shebitku reigned around 700 BC, it would be logical to attribute to him, rather than to Thutmose III, those Menkheperre scarabs found in levels currently dated to the 10th century.

In the view offered here, the Iron Age cities normally assigned to that time are no longer "Solomonic" but instead were built some two-and-a-half centuries later than Solomon, under the rule of Israel's Assyrian governors.

This later dating is in harmony with a considerable amount of evidence. Palace 6000 of Str. Va - IVb at Megiddo, currently assumed to be Solomonic, closely resembles in plan a palace at Zinjirli dated firmly to the late 8th century, while the masonry of this stratum at Megiddo compares closely with that of 7th century Ramat Rahel.

Casemate walls like those dated to the 10th century at Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer were in use in many periods, including the 7th century. One of the casemates of the supposedly 10th century wall at Gezer was found to contain "badly burned 7th - early 6th century pottery". Did this wall remain in use for nearly four centuries (surviving the conquest of Gezer by Tiglath-pileser III in 733 BC), as concluded by the excavators? Or was it actually built after that conquest, being in use for just over a century before falling to the attacks of the Babylonians?...

But the most striking support for dating these cities to the Assyrian domination comes from the pottery evidence. The scheme I have proposed here involves reducing the dates of Iron Age pottery so that pottery dated at present to the 10th century BC onwards all belongs later than the Assyrian invasions of the late 8th century. We would therefore expect this pottery to include occasional items reflecting an Assyrian presence in Palestine. This is precisely what we find.

In one of his last articles, Glueck included a long list of finds of Assyrian pottery in Palestine. Glueck believed that these finds reflected an Assyrian influence which was introduced into Palestine "through troops, traders and settlers from Mesopotamia, from the last part of the eighth century on". But on checking through the list, we find that several examples come from contexts which are much earlier than this if conventional dates are correct.

Of three examples from Lachish, two come from deposits conventionally dated to the 11th - 10th centuries BC, and the third comes from a burial dated to "c. 900 B.C.". An example from Ain Gev, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, comes from Str. III, which is dated to the 9th century BC. Examples which Glueck cites from Dibon, in Moab, also come from a context dated to the 9th century. In addition to Glueck's examples, we may note an item of Assyrian pottery from Hazor illustrated by AMIRAN. This is assigned in the excavation report to Str. Va, which is conventionally dated prior to the Assyrian invasion of 733 BC.

We therefore see that possibly from Iron Age I onwards, and certainly from Iron Age II A, Assyrian pottery was appearing in Palestine. In the revised scheme under consideration, these items all date from about 700 BC onwards, which is their expected place.

In the terminology followed here for the Iron Age, the final subdivision of that period is labelled Iron Age III B. This subdivision is conventionally dated c. 720-586 BC. It seems to me that the conventional link between the end of this phase and the Babylonian invasions of the early 6th century is not open to question. With the date for the end of the Iron Age thus fixed, and the date for the beginning of the Iron Age drastically lowered, it is obvious that the Iron Age as a whole must be considerably shortened if the revised stratigraphy outlined here is to succeed as a working hypothesis. Indeed, almost the entire Iron Age must be contained in the period now filled by Iron Age III B alone.

This degree of compression is by no means impossible, provided it can be shown that Iron Age III B began much later than 720 BC; we must show, in fact, that it was a very short period beginning near the end of the following century.

At the beginning of Iron Age III B there appears in Palestine a type of pottery known as Assyrian Palace Ware. Until recently, this was confidently dated to about 720 BC (the time of Assyria's conquest of Israel). A few years ago this pottery would have constituted an insurmountable problem for the redating of Iron Age levels suggested here. At sites where this pottery occurs (e.g. Tell el-Farah North, Samaria, Tell Jemmeh), it would have seemed to confirm beyond doubt the conventional dates for Iron Age strata. But it has recently emerged that the long-held dating of this pottery is over a century too early.

Thus J. S. HOLLADAY, after noting that Assyrian Palace Ware in Palestine "has generally been attributed to the Assyrian occupying forces of the late eighth century B.C.", points out that recent studies of independently dated pottery from Nimrud show that its floruit "should be placed in and following the last days of the Assyrian empire"; such forms are "actually post-Assyrian in date. That is, we must recognize them as witnessing to a Babylonian influence..." The similar pottery from two groups at Nimrud "is to be dated very closely to 612 B.C. and later, instead of to the late eighth and early seventh centuries B.C."

We therefore find that far from precluding the revision suggested here, this pottery actually demands a drastic lowering of dates for Iron Age levels.

At Samaria and Tell el-Farah North we find destruction-levels currently dated to c. 722 - 720 BC. The "Assyrian Palace Ware" is generally assumed to appear immediately following these destructions. It is a logical corollary of redating this pottery that these destruction levels should also be dated over a century later than at present. However, Holladay avoids the full implications of redating the pottery, and retains dates of c. 720 BC for the destructions at Samaria and Tell el-Farah North by assuming that they were followed by occupation periods lasting over a century, with the "Assyrian Palace Ware" belonging to the end of these periods.

That this is incorrect is shown by an item of this pottery from a Samaria deposit which immediately pre-dates the destruction of the Iron Age city. Holladay has to treat this item as "probably intrusive from Pottery Period VII", i.e. in his view from over a century later than the destruction. This merely begs the question. The logical conclusion is that the "Assyrian Palace Ware" was actually coming into use in Palestine when the above-mentioned destructions occurred, and that the destructions must be redated with the pottery.

I would suggest that these destructions at Samaria and Tell el-Farah North, and also others conventionally dated to the late 8th century BC (e.g. at Hazor and Gezer), were actually the work of the Scythian raid into Palestine mentioned by Herodotus (bk. I, 105) and thought by some to be referred to in Jeremiah 47. MALAMAT has argued for dating this event to 610 BC. Dating the above-mentioned destruction-levels to this time would suit excellently the new date for the "Assyrian Palace Ware" - 612 BC and later.

Further evidence for a reduction of dates for Iron Age III B comes from the coastal site of Mesad Hashavyahu. According to NAVEH, Palestinian pottery types normally dated "to the eighth to seventh centuries B.C." have been found here in the same context as East Greek pottery which cannot be earlier than 630 BC, and which some archaeologists prefer to date even later.

Samaria

A separate word must be said concerning the dating of Iron Age Samaria, though for the present this will necessarily be brief.

Periods I and II of the Iron Age town at Samaria are conventionally attributed to Omri and Ahab (first half of 9th century BC). A further four, or possibly three, periods (Kenyon's "Period VI", may not exist as a separate building phase) supposedly bring us to a date of 722 BC, when the city was conquered by Shalmaneser V after a long siege, and its inhabitants deported to Assyria. If Velikovsky's revised chronology is correct, this dating must be wrong. This follows from the firm link already discussed between the XVIIIth Dynasty and LB II strata in Palestine.



If Velikovsky's dates for the XVIIIth Dynasty are correct, we would expect Israelite Samaria to be characterised by LB II pottery; in particular we would expect the city of Ahab's time to produce Mycenaean IIIa pottery, a chief characteristic of the Amarna period. But the Samaria levels mentioned above all contain Iron Age pottery. We are forced to the conclusion that if Velikovsky's placement of the XVIIIth Dynasty is correct, these levels do not represent the period when Samaria was the capital of Israel. Instead, they must date, like other Iron Age cities discussed previously, from the Assyrian domination onwards.

Unfortunately, this leaves us with no evidence at all for the Israelite city, since no LBA material has yet been found at Samaria. However, this absence of LBA finds may have a simple explanation. Remembering that so far less than a third of the upper "royal" quarter has been excavated, and that the lower city has hardly been touched, we may suggest that the activities of the Iron Age builders have removed all traces of the earlier city from the areas so far excavated.

The excavations on the tell at Hazor lend plausibility to this suggestion. Here the Iron Age builders have in places completely removed the remains of the LBA city by massive levelling operations, so that Iron Age remains are found directly above those of the Middle Bronze Age. It is feasible to suggest that similar operations on the summit at Samaria would have brought the Iron Age builders down to bedrock. I would, however, expect further excavations to produce LBA material from somewhere on the site if the present theory is correct.

The proposed dating of Samaria's Iron Age levels to the period of the Assyrian domination onwards can be supported in several ways. Firstly, it is precisely in keeping with the revised stratigraphy worked out above for other sites, and actually resolves a long-standing problem concerning the pottery of Periods I and II.

Believing these periods of Samaria's history to belong to the reigns of Omri and Ahab, KENYON dated the pottery found beneath their buildings to the 9th century BC, affirming that it was contemporary with the time of their construction. But AHARONI, AMIRAN and WRIGHT all noted that this pottery is identical with that which elsewhere occurs in levels dated to the 10th century, e.g. at Megiddo and Hazor.

These latter writers therefore claimed that it must date to an earlier period than the buildings beneath which it was found, and that it indicated a pre-Omride occupation of the hill. Kenyon continued to assert that it dated to the time when the buildings of Periods I and II were constructed. The grounds for this disagreement are removed by the revision proposed here, since I am suggesting that Samaria Periods I and II belong to the same period which saw the construction of those cities currently attributed to Solomon and dated to the 10th century BC.

I would actually suggest that Period I represents the administrative capital which Sargon II built at Samaria. Sargon's annals relate: "[The town I] re[built] better than (it was) before and [settled] therein people from countries which [I] myself [had con]quered." Significantly, the Iron Age levels as conventionally dated provide no evidence of Sargon's apparently extensive building activities. If Period I represents these activities, it would date from between 720 and 705 BC. Period II, with its substantial casemate wall, probably dates from c. 700 BC.

Our next concern must be the date of the famous Samaria ivories. Although hundreds of ivory fragments were discovered during the excavations of the 1930's, none could be associated with any building remains. Hence they are not firmly linked with a particular building period, and have been conventionally dated independently of stratigraphic considerations to the reign of either Ahab or Jeroboam II. We must show that a much later date is possible.

There is no a priori reason why ivories of this sort should not be dated later than 720 BC, since they actually remained fashionable as late as the 6th century. We should note especially that the Samaria ivories resemble very closely those in a collection from Khorsabad. These date from the reign of Sargon II, and therefore belong to the same time as Samaria Period I if our dating of the latter is correct. We may therefore suggest that the Samaria collection was also formed during the reign of Sargon II, when that king was

rebuilding Samaria as an administrative capital. It is possible, of course, that some individual pieces may be earlier than the collection as a whole, while some items may have been added later than Sargon's reign.

Finally we turn to the Samaria ostraca. These are pottery fragments with invoices for wine and oil written on them in Hebrew script. They probably belong to either Period IV or Period V and have been variously dated to the reigns of Ahab, Jeroboam II or Menahem, the latest of these dates being mid-8th century. There are actually strong reasons for adopting a much later date.

The Hebrew script in which they are written resembles very closely that of the Lachish letters, which belong to the early 6th century. The similarity has been described as "striking", and the notion that nearly two centuries lie between the two sets of ostraca has been called "unlikely" and even "impossible". The script of the Samaria ostraca also resembles that of ostraca found at Mesad Hashavyahu and dated to the reign of Josiah.

I would suggest, in the context of the present revision, that the Samaria ostraca also belong to Josiah's reign (640 - 609 BC), during which Samaria was incorporated into an enlarged kingdom after Assyrian power in Palestine had collapsed. The occurrence on the ostraca of some personal names combined with the theophoric element "Baal", alongside others incorporating the divine name "Yahweh", does not weigh against this dating; one of the ostraca from Mesad Hashavyahu also bears a personal name of this type - "Netasbaal" - and that certainly dates from after 630 BC.

Dating the final periods of Iron Age Samaria to the reign of Josiah fits well with our previous suggestion that the city was destroyed in 610 BC by the Scythians.

Scripts of the Lachish letters (early 6th century BC), Mesad Hashavyahu ostraca (late 7th century BC) and Samaria ostraca (conventionally dated to the 9th or 8th centuries BC). The relationships do not justify such an early date for the latter

Conclusion: Limits Set by the Archaeological Evidence

We have seen that several currently emerging lines of evidence support a redating of Palestine's Iron Age strata. The result is to reduce the Iron Age to the period between c. 730 BC and 586 BC.

This is not merely the degree of compression indicated by the evidence we have noted, but also that required to allow LB II to become contemporary with the monarchic period between c. 950 BC and the late 8th century. In other words, this revision readily accommodates Velikovsky's placement of the XVIIIth Dynasty.

We should also note that the revision of LB II dates proposed here is of the same order as that implied by the "Dark Ages" which characterise other regions of the ancient Near East.

We may suggest, in fact, that the chronology of the Iron Age in Palestine has been "stretched" by the conventional scheme to fill what would otherwise have been roughly the same "Dark Age" period as we encounter elsewhere.

Bimson makes a fascinating comment that if there wasn't this false stretching of the Iron Age in Palestine the conventional chronology would have created a false Dark Age that is painfully noticed in Greece and in sites in Turkey. Emmett Sweeney puts it this way when he says:

One of the fundamental principles of *Ages in Chaos* is that the changeover from the 18th to the 19th Dynasty (during the time of Nikmepa) represents just the point at which the archaeology of northern Syria ceases to be dated along Egyptological lines and commences being dated according to the chronology of Assyria. This is because, following the reign of

Akhnaton, Egypt lost her control and influence in the region, with her place being taken first by the Hittites under Suppiluliumas I and later by the Assyrians under Shalmaneser III. From the time of Shalmaneser III, Assyria becomes dominant politically and the art and culture of Mesopotamia prevails.

Velikovsky shows that Egyptian history for much of its history is dated several centuries older than it really is. Assyrian chronology is much more accurate. At the crossover point, as a result of the Egyptologists dating Egyptian history much older than it is, conventional chronology has created an artificial gap and archaeologists have found themselves baffled by a major absence of artifacts that it can date in this "gap" that most evident in Greece and Turkey.

The end of the Late Bronze Age in Greece and Turkey is dated to around 1200 BC. The next Iron Age settlements that follow these are dated to the 700's BC and archaeologists are baffled by the absence of artifacts that than can be positively dated in this artificial gap. To add to the mystery there is no stratigraphic evidence for a lacuna (break) between strata of the Late Bronze and Iron Age at this sites.

The faulty identification of the destruction layers at Lachish, which Bimson covered in his article, have compounded correctly understanding Israelite archaeology.

This has led to incorrectly identifying the time periods for various strata around the time of the late Divided Kingdom and the post-Exile period creating a kind of archaeological dark age in the period of the post-exile Persian kingdom. To further explain this I quote now from Peter James' book "Centuries of Darkness":

The Return from Babylon

The basis of rabbinic Judaism was laid after the return of the Jews from their Exile in Babylon, where they had been taken as captives by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. Soon after he conquered Babylonia in 539 BC, the Persian King Cyrus granted the Jews their liberty. Among the returnees who trickled home over the next century were many who had acquired both wealth and influence in the land of their captivity. They resettled the land, rebuilt the Temple and refortified Jerusalem. In the mid-5th century, the governor Nehemiah reformed Judah into a national state within the Persian Empire, while Ezra 'the Scribe' oversaw a return to strict adherence to the ancient Mosaic laws and customs.

Yet despite these activities, the archaeological record for the Persian occupation of Palestine (539-332 BC) is notoriously meagre. At many sites, the very definition of Persian strata has been difficult, while the period as a whole has few architectural remains. Those levels that can be assigned to it are generally confined to the second part (after c. 450 BC). The earlier phase of the Persian domination is almost completely unrepresented. In his definitive survey Stern lamented that: 'Although the Persian period is a relatively late one from the archaeological standpoint, it is one of the most obscure eras in Palestine.'

For the preceding period, that of the Jewish Exile in Babylon (587-539 BC), the situation is even worse. Albright claimed that 'archaeologically speaking, the country was a tabula rasa', arguing that Nebuchadnezzar had reduced the population of Judah to a mere 20,000 or so. From a historical perspective, Albright's characterization seems greatly exaggerated. While an impoverished material culture in Judah is only to be expected after the depredations of the Babylonians, life still went on. The biblical evidence suggests that outside of Jerusalem itself, only a relatively small proportion of the population (mainly the nobility and some craftsmen) was actually removed.

A list given by Nehemiah (11:25-36) around 440 BC includes a number of important towns in the Shephelah (west) and the Negev (south) as inhabited by the 'residue of Israel' -

suggesting that the Babylonian deportations seriously affected only the central hill country of Judah. Lachish in the Shephelah is one of these remnant towns mentioned by Nehemiah. Yet, according to present archaeological dating, the site lay largely uninhabited between its destruction by the Babylonians in 587 BC and its resettlement in the mid-5th century BC. Remains of the Babylonian and Early Persian periods are likewise missing at many other Judaeon sites.

Thus well over a century of biblical history is only sparsely reflected in the archaeological record. Are we to assume, then, that there was a 'Dark Age' in Palestine between 587 BC and c. 450 BC? Archaeologists of the early 20th century held a different view, frequently dating material now placed before the Exile to the blank period which presently exists.

This situation was altered radically during the 1930's, as Albright explained:

"Macalister and Watzinger, followed by many others, dated most of the characteristic pre-exilic pottery from southern Palestine in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. When this pottery was transferred to its proper date before 587 B.C. it left something of a void behind."

Albright and others have tried to fill the lacuna left by this redating, but with no great success. The question arises: on what grounds was a redating of such consequence decided in the first place? The dates given by early fieldworkers were, admittedly, often based on slender evidence. But were they replaced by anything more solid?

The 'Lachish Letters'

A firm chronological peg is believed to have been found at Lachish, whose stratigraphy provides the key to Judaeon archaeology. Here a settlement of the late Persian period, Level I, was founded around the mid-5th century BC - to judge from the imported Greek pottery.

Immediately beneath this was Level II, a fortified settlement destroyed by fire. Excavation of its burnt gatehouse between 1935 and 1938 uncovered some extraordinary writings on potsherds (ostraca). This famous group of letters, sent by a Jewish commander named Hoshai to his superior Yaosh - apparently just before the city fell to an enemy attack - is the oldest known in the Hebrew script.

Before discovering these texts, the excavator of Lachish, J. L. Starkey, had already surmised that the destruction of Level II was the handiwork of the Babylonian invaders of 587 BC. He passed on the Lachish Letters for examination to the Hebrew specialist Harry Torczyner, who compared the personal names they contained with those in the Bible.

He concluded that the ostraca belonged to the time of Jeremiah, the leading prophet of Judah during the Babylonian invasions of 597 and 587 BC. As he worked on his translation, Torczyner began to identify individual events with those in the Book of Jeremiah. In Letter IV the mention of Lachish and Azeqah together, in a context suggesting that they were under military threat, invited comparison with Jeremiah's reference to these two cities as the last to withstand Nebuchadnezzar's final attack (Jer. 34:7)

Letter III refers to a mission to Egypt led by a commander named 'Yikhbaryahu son of Elnathan', and also, obliquely, to 'a prophet'. Torczyner claimed to find numerous references to this figure throughout the Letters, and even his name, 'Uriah'. He connected these allusions to the biblical account of the extradition of the troublesome prophet Uriah in the reign of Jehoiakim (609-598 BC):

"... the king sent men into Egypt, namely Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt. And they fetched forth Uriah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people" (Jer. 26:22-3).

The obvious problem is that while the Letter mentions 'Yikhbaryahu son of Elnathan' as commander, Jeremiah talks of one 'Elnathan son of Achbor'. Nevertheless, Torczyner was sure that the two events were identical.

The Letters naturally attracted the attention of the finest Semitic scholars of the day, who re-examined the ostraca and in a series of articles published over the next decade completely eroded Torczyner's case. Names were reread and events reinterpreted; indeed, many readings were shown to be merely products of his fertile imagination. For example, Torczyner's 'Yikhbaryahu' was corrected to 'Coniah'. Where he read the name of a prophet as 'Uriah', only the last three characters are actually visible: '-iah'. It could just as easily be any one of the dozens of other Hebrew names with this ending.

With the benefit of hindsight it can be seen that Torczyner's detailed argument was built on sand. The only role played by a prophet in the Letters was the minor one of messenger. As closely neighbouring cities, Lachish and Azeqah must have been endangered by common threats on many occasions. Nor can much be learnt from the fact that a Judaeen general was sent on a mission to Egypt; again, this is something which could have happened numerous times.

The dissection of Torczyner's work took many years. Yet by the time it was all over no one seems to have noticed what had really happened. Almost without exception, the very scholars who had systematically pulled his case to pieces still accepted his date for the Letters.

Albright, amongst others, took it on trust that the onomastic (name) evidence presented by Torczyner proved that they belonged to the time of Jeremiah. However, our examination of the names known from the ostraca shows that Torczyner's conclusions were completely misleading.

According to his analysis, 1 per cent of these names are known from the period of Jeremiah and only 40.9 per cent from afterwards. The true situation is that while 50 per cent match Jeremiah's time, 55 per cent reflect the period after the return from Babylon. Thus, contrary to Torczyner's claim, this method of analysis favours a date after the time of Jeremiah, in the Persian period."

Moreover, particular individuals in the Lachish Letters appear to be identifiable in the sources covering the mid-5th century BC. One case is outstanding.

Letter III concludes with the following passage:

"And as for **the letter of Tobiah servant of the king**, which came to Shallum son of Jaddua through [via] the prophet, saying, 'Beware!', thy servant hath sent it to my lord."

An extraordinary parallel to the letter-writer described here is found in the Bible. The principal enemy of governor Nehemiah was the half-Jew Tobiah, governor of Ammon (across the Jordan), whose status is reflected in his title 'the servant', universally agreed to be an abbreviation of 'servant of the king'.

Just as the Tobiah of the ostraca wrote to a Judaeen nobleman conveying the warning message: 'Beware!', so the following is recorded by **Nehemiah (6:17-19)** of his enemy:

"Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah **sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them** ... Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear."

As for the anonymous prophet described as Tobiah's messenger in the ostrakon, the biblical Tobiah likewise employed prophets - notably Shemaiah (Neh. 6:10), who was sent to terrorize Nehemiah with stories of plots against his life. Thus the Lachish Letters describe a prophet in the service of a powerful writer of threatening letters called Tobiah, with the particular title 'servant of the king' - a detailed complex of circumstances exactly paralleled in the Old Testament account.

Further confirmation that the ostraca date to the time of Nehemiah comes from Letter VI. Despite some uncertain phrases, the main elements of this communication are clear. Some letters from unnamed princes, and one by the King, had come into the hands of Hoshaiiah, the writer of the Lachish ostraca.

Reporting to his superior Yaosh, he described the words of the princes as being 'not good', expressing harmful intent ('to weaken our hands') regarding some undertaking by Hoshaiiah's people in Jerusalem. He pleaded with Yaosh to intercede and remind the princes that their actions were contrary to the King's policy.

Again these circumstances are mirrored in Judaeen history of the mid-5th century BC. Nehemiah had the blessing of the Persian King Artaxerxes to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem; all the Jews of the area participated, including one Hoshaiiah, the first-mentioned of the 'princes of Judah' (Neh. 12:31-32).

Other, more powerful, princes - i.e. Tobiah, governor of Ammon, the King of the Arabs and the governor of Samaria - fiercely opposed the project. They spread rumours that the rebuilding was an act of rebellion against the King (Neh. 2:19) and tried to intimidate the Jews by sending an open letter to Jerusalem accusing them of plotting rebellion. Its aim was, as Nehemiah (6:9) records, to ensure that 'Their [the Jews'] hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done.'

Despite the limited information provided by the ostraca, the pattern of similarities is striking. It stands in stark contrast to that offered by the early 6th-century placement of the Lachish Letters. No parallel of equal substance, or even the identification of a single individual, has yet been found in the rich biblical literature concerning the time of Jeremiah, even after fifty years of research.

Following the lead given by our new interpretation of the Letters, Lachish II would have been destroyed, not in 587 BC by the Babylonians, but c. 440 BC under the Persians.

The troubles during the governorship of Nehemiah, as described by the eminent biblical historian John Bright, provide a feasible context for a violent assault on Lachish:

"Nehemiah had enemies on all sides . . . they incited - surely unofficially and while pretending ignorance of the whole thing - bands of Arabs, Moabites and Philistines to make raids on Judah. Jerusalem was harassed and outlying towns were terrorized; according to Josephus not a few Jews lost their lives."

An incursion from nearby Philistia seems the most likely explanation for the destruction of Lachish II, as the material culture of the succeeding settlement (Lachish I) includes new pottery forms, altars and figurines known principally from coastal sites. Lowering the date for the end of Lachish II would also eliminate the long gap interposed by the conventional chronology before the beginning of Lachish I in the mid-5th century BC.

Lachish III: Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar?

Despite this coherent picture, and the tempting evidence provided by the Lachish Letters, can the dating of such a key site really be lowered by as much as 150 years? This drastic shift for Lachish II seems less strange within the context of the long-standing argument surrounding the dating of the earlier strata. Almost since the first excavation of the site, academic opinion has been sharply divided between a 'low' and a 'high' chronology for Lachish III involving a difference of over a century. It has posed, in the words of the present excavator of the site, David Ussishkin, "one of the most serious and central dating problems in Palestinian archaeology".

Both sides in the debate accept that Lachish II was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC - unfortunately on the basis of Torczyner's slipshod scholarship. All estimates of the dates for earlier strata have been calculated from this baseline.

BELOW: Stratigraphic illustration of Lachish showing greatest destruction layer is between Lachish III and Lachish IV showing Lachish III suffered its greatest destruction.



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Starkey discerned little change in the pottery of Lachish III to II and argued that the former had been destroyed by an earlier Babylonian invasion in 597 BC. He was followed by Albright, Kenyon and others."

The other school of thought, represented initially by Starkey's assistant Olga Tufnell and later by the prestigious Israeli archaeologist Yohanan Aharoni, opted for a far earlier dating. They highlighted the differences between the pottery of Levels III and II, suggesting a long passage of time; further, there was no evidence of a Babylonian campaign in Palestine in 597 BC of sufficient duration to take in the siege and capture of a major city such as Lachish. Instead they drew attention to the famous reliefs left by King Sennacherib of Assyria depicting in some detail his siege of Lachish in 701 BC. The high chronologists attributed the destruction of Level III to this Assyrian conquest.

During the 1970s the idea was widely promulgated that the new excavations by Ussishkin had solved the problem once and for all. Yet close examination shows his case was not based on any new evidence per se.

His main conclusion, after intensive work at the site, was actually based on a negative argument - the elimination of the other possible candidates for the city supposedly laid waste and burnt by Sennacherib. Level II was ruled out by its conventional dating to the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. Level IV, while it also came to 'a sudden end', showed few signs of burning, so its demise was tentatively attributed to an earthquake. This left only Level III, which was ended by a massive conflagration.

The fatal flaw in this reasoning was, in a way, admitted by Ussishkin himself: "the burning and destruction of Lachish are not specifically recorded in Sennacherib's annals."

Indeed, it would be quite atypical for the Assyrians, who normally delighted in recording the burning and devastation of enemy cities, to omit such details with respect to Lachish. Sennacherib does record such actions for his campaigns in almost every other region except Judah. In fact there may have been good strategic reasons why the strongholds of Judah, once taken, were not systematically demolished. Sennacherib states that the Judaeans cities he captured were granted to the loyal kings of Philistia. In the very year that Sennacherib took Lachish he also had to fend off an incursion from Egypt. It is therefore probable that the cities were turned over to Assyria's vassals in a relatively intact state. Thus the fulcrum of Ussishkin's argument is illusory.

The Assyrian records do not argue for a complete burning or devastation of the city. The deeper Level IV, which also seems to have met a violent end, actually provides a perfectly good match with the city besieged and captured by Sennacherib in 701 BC.

The destruction of Lachish III would then logically belong to the well-attested attack on Lachish by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC (Jer. 34:7).

The last kings of Judah

The Lachish controversy is central to the understanding of the royal stamps impressed on the handles of storage jars found at numerous Judaeans sites of the later Iron Age. Bearing the inscription Wk ('belonging to the king'), these fall into two major classes, depicting either a four-winged scarab beetle or a two-winged sun disc. Most likely the stamps, often accompanied by place-names, are marks identifying the royal vineyards where the contents of the jars were produced.

Before Ussishkin's excavations, the consensus was that the two winged stamps were introduced by King Josiah (640-609 BC), the last ruler of Judah with any real power, during his administrative reorganization of the kingdom. The four-winged class was generally placed shortly before Josiah, though a few argued a date as early as the reign of Hezekiah (715-686 BC), the king who faced the invasion of Sennacherib.

Soon after the renewal of work at Lachish, Ussishkin discovered jars bearing both classes of stamp together in sealed deposits of Lachish III. Once it was felt that a date of 701 BC for the destruction of this level had been demonstrated beyond all doubt, the royal stamps as a whole had to be backdated to the late 8th century BC.

This redating of the stamps went hand-in-hand with a large-scale revision of Palestinian archaeology, one which had in fact already been advocated by Aharoni. Sites whose destruction was once dated to 597 BC were thrust into the late 8th century. The last days of the Judaeans kingdom were effectively robbed not only of their prime palaeographic material - the stamps - but also of many cities.

It had to be assumed that numerous Judaeans sites were laid waste and remained abandoned for the last century or so of the kingdom's history. A wave of destructions now had to be attributed to the Assyrians, who actually claimed no such thing.

Alternatively, if - as we have argued here - Lachish III was actually burnt by the Babylonians in 587 BC, then the introduction of the royal stamps can again be attributed to the time of Josiah. Indeed, their distribution fits better with the historical circumstances of the late 7th century than with those during Hezekiah's reign.

Likewise, their disappearance can be seen as a natural consequence of the demise of the Judaeans monarchy. Moreover, the horizon of destructions containing royal stamps can be restored to their logical context - during the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar which left Judah's cities in smoking ruins and brought the kingdom to an end.

A final argument comes from another group of jar-handle impressions, giving the names of non-royal individuals. The most controversial of these 'private stamps' are those of 'Eliakim, steward of Yawkin'. Impressions were found at Tell Beit Mirsim, Beth Shemesh and Ramat Rahel, in levels originally dated to the early 6th century BC. Albright therefore argued that the stamps belonged to an official of Jehoiachin, the penultimate king of Judah, who ruled for six months in 597 BC before being deported by Nebuchadnezzar. As he noted, Babylonian tablets mentioning this king in exile show that his name was vocalized 'Yawkin', like that on the Judaeans stamps. This attractive identification, once widely accepted, had to be summarily rejected when the '597 BC' destruction levels were redated to 701 BC.

After careful examination of the 'Eliakim' stamps and their find-spots, Ussishkin showed beyond reasonable doubt that they came from storage jars which also bore the familiar royal stamps on other handles. Since he dates the royal stamps to before 701 BC, Ussishkin saw this as conclusive proof that Albright was wrong.

But the real significance of his discovery seems to have eluded Ussishkin. As the Eliakim stamps were on jars also impressed by seals marking them as crown property, it seems logical that he was a royal official. This being the case, the Yawkin whom Eliakim served

was most likely a king. This raises an immense problem for Ussishkin's dating, which places the Yawkin stamps a full century before a ruler of this name took the throne. On the other hand, if Lachish III and related sites were destroyed in 587 BC, the Judaeen king Jehoiachin can be restored to the palaeographical and archaeological record.

The Assyrian Conquest

The only remaining argument raised against a late date for the royal stamps comes from the site of Ramat Rahel, a Judaeen palace complex near Jerusalem. Here nearly 150 stamps were found beneath a layer containing pottery generally described as 'Assyrian Palace Ware' of the 7th century BC. This was thought to provide proof that the stamps were pre-Assyrian, agreeing with the case for placing them before 701 BC at Lachish. The argument depends, of course, on the identification of this pottery as a product of the Assyrian Empire. Petrie was the first to identify it, during his excavations of Tell Jemmeh in southern Palestine. As it was clearly alien to the Palestinian repertoire, Petrie decided that he had uncovered the 'dinner service' of an Assyrian governor." Now known from a scatter of sites in both Israel and Judah, its distinctive style has come to be accepted as a diagnostic feature of the Assyrian domination (c. 733-630 BC).

However, it was pointed out more than ten years ago that the so-called Assyrian Palace Ware, judged by the evidence of Mesopotamian stratigraphy, must largely postdate the fall of the Empire, c.610 BC. At the Assyrian capital of Nimrud it appears in the very latest levels and continues in the 'squatter' occupation of the 6th century BC.

The Palestinian archaeologist John Holladay drew attention to these finds and concluded that 'the floruit of the ware...should be placed in and following the last days of the Assyrian empire'. The pottery could therefore reflect, not Assyrian influence, but Neo-Babylonian, at least in terms of its date. Applying these results to Palestine, Holladay suggested that Petrie's 'Assyrian' Fort and Residency at Tell Jemmeh were the work of Nebuchadrezzar, who may have established a garrison in the deep south of Palestine after his defeat of the Egyptians in 605-604 BC. An even later date, around 570 BC, when Nebuchadrezzar invaded Egypt, would be equally plausible.

Far from upholding the high chronology for Palestine, the presence of Assyrian Palace Ware actually places a considerable strain on the dating of strata currently assigned to the late 8th-7th centuries BC. All available evidence suggests that these levels really belong to the end of the Judaeen kingdom and the period of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Recent work by Francis and Vickers on the chronology of the Archaic Greek pottery finds from southern Palestine is producing results broadly in step with the revision suggested here.

Accordingly, the Assyrian period must be sought deeper in the stratigraphic record, in levels conventionally dated to the 9th century BC. The idea that the successive cultural phases of Palestinian archaeology have been mislabelled to such a serious degree may seem surprising, but the truth is that the chronology of early Iron Age Palestine is extraordinarily fluid. For example, the latest excavator of Tell Abu Hawam, a key site in southern Phoenicia, has lowered the date for the destruction of Stratum III, once associated with an Egyptian invasion around 925 BC, to as late as the 8th century, and possibly to the time of Sennacherib's conquest c. 700 BC.

In a period of history documented by both Mesopotamian and biblical records one might expect more straightforward answers - from, say, the discovery of items of unquestionable Assyrian origin, such as texts on clay tablets or stone, in specific strata. Unfortunately, most Assyrian inscriptions from Palestine are stray finds, while the few known from excavations pose considerable problems. At Gezer in Israel a cuneiform tablet bearing the precise date 651 BC was found by its early 20th-century excavator in a stratum he dated to the 10th century BC. Discovery of another 7th-century Assyrian tablet at Tell Keisan in southern Phoenicia caused pandemonium - the excavator had to revise drastically his already published interpretation of the stratigraphy and was accused by one of his site supervisors, in no uncertain terms, of manipulating the evidence.

There are also many finds of Assyrian-style pottery in contexts conventionally dated as much as two centuries earlier than the initial invasion of Israel by Tiglath-pileser III in 733 BC. A similar anomaly is presented by Black-on-Red Ware, dated by Cypriot archaeologists to the period 850-700 BC, but found repeatedly in '11th to 10th-century' contexts in Palestine.

Indeed, it would seem, had not the beginning of the Iron Age been set by links with Egyptian chronology, that the cumulative weight of biblical, Persian, Neo-Babylonian, Assyrian, Greek and Cypriot evidence would have forced an overall lowering of Palestinian Iron Age dates (Centuries of Darkness, p.170-182).