BREAKING GROUND:

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE REFORM RABBINATE

by

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DIGEST

Advanced technology, recent discoveries, and entertaining media have raised the profile of biblical archaeology in the Jewish community. More and more Reform rabbis are asked to explore whether or not events in the Hebrew Bible actually happened and what archaeology can teach about the subject. The amount of training and continuing education available to rabbis in the field is limited, yet there is in increasing need for resources in the Jewish community from which to teach congregants. This is problematic, as Rabbis often serve as the gateway for adult Jewish education. Without proper education and training on the subject of biblical archaeology, congregations are unable to address spiritual and theological questions associated with current trends and "hot topics." The media and the biases they contain are becoming our communities' teachers.

This thesis examines the current state of affairs in biblical archaeology, providing a basic overview of the field, recent scholarship, common debates, and accessibility through media. It also explores some of the theological issues associated with the topic as it deals with interfaith relations, the land of Israel, and interdenominational concerns. It is my hope that the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Union for Reform Judaism continue their support for the study of biblical archaeology, combining resources to improve adult and clergy education. Not only would such efforts enable rabbis to better respond to questions, but it would open the door for congregants to look critically at the material available on the topic and how such issues affect them as Jews.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

From Indiana Jones to Lara Croft, archaeological adventures have captured the hearts and minds of the masses. More and more, laypeople are gaining access to archaeological data and are pursuing a greater understanding of the field. Archaeological magazines offer exposés aimed at the common reader. Cable television stations, such as A&E and Discovery, now broadcast videos about the latest archaeological finds. The focus of these journalistic ventures is often the Near East, due to its foundational role in the history of religion. Discoveries from ancient Israel attract people of many faiths and cultures, as Jerusalem plays a significant role in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As a result of increased accessibility to archaeological information about the Bible, people of all faiths turn to it to formulate some of their core beliefs about religion and biblical history.

The centrality of religion in the field of biblical archaeology is greater than one might suspect. Nearly 25 percent of the *Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR)* readership believes that the ultimate aim of archaeology is to validate the Bible. Yet, while archaeological evidence may at times validate the Bible, many times it contradicts it. Through controversial interpretations of this evidence and a multitude of scholarly theories, individuals are forced to grapple with new-fangled historical understandings of the Bible. The ramifications of this are visible in everyday life. For instance, education, both religious and secular, is significantly influenced by a personal theological understanding of the material.

Archaeology plays a dominant role for Jews trying to understand their religious history. Adult education has proven essential for the formulation of individual Jewish theology and is needed to digest the strong implications of archaeological discoveries. Courses should allow for intellectual and emotional discussion. Does archaeology sway personal religious beliefs? Do

personal religious beliefs cloud understanding of archaeological data? Do congregants feel archaeology should play a stronger role in their and their children's education, or is it mostly irrelevant?

Archaeological evidence relating to the Bible proves significant to the modern Jewish community on many levels. Politically, it defends a Zionist claim to the land of Israel. Proof of an ancient Israelite monarchy in the land unites the global Jewish community in the preservation of *Eretz Yisrael.* Yet, in many ways biblical archaeology can also be a dividing force within the interdenominational Jewish community. It challenges communities not only to discuss the issues mentioned above, but to examine how different parts of the greater Jewish community understand Scripture.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an overview of the impact of archaeology on today's Jewish community and on the Reform rabbinate, in particular. My research for this thesis is limited to topics pertaining to the period of Early Antiquity. Over the next four chapters, I will explore the current state of biblical archaeology and its role in Jewish congregational life. The first chapter studies the relationship between biblical archaeology and history by examining where biblical archaeology fits within the wider field of archaeology, its origins, and its modern trends. The second chapter delves into a couple of fiery debates circulating among archaeologists and biblical scholars. These "hot topics" include the historicity of the Exodus and the historicity of the United Monarchy under the reigns of David and Solomon. The third chapter unveils the relevancy of archaeological information as it factors into training clergy, educating congregants and responding to journalistic hype. This chapter also looks at issues of biblical archaeology as they exist in the modern Reform rabbinate. I examine interfaith and theological issues, as well as provide suggestions for how biblical archaeology can

be effectively disseminated to laypeople. Additionally, I examine how clergy is able to keep up with current archaeological scholarship so that they may appropriately answer the laity's questions while examining the very resources that move congregants to raise such questions in the first place. The fourth chapter raises issues of personal faith and the implications of biblical archaeology upon it.

CHAPTER 2: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE HEBREW BIBLE

Defining Biblical Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of human material remains combined with the research, recovery, and analysis of that data.[1] From North America to the Near and Far East, from Egypt to Ireland--archaeology can be applied to locations across the world. Nothing necessarily links archaeology to the land of the Bible. But since the majority of archaeological treasures receiving attention in the press are those that deal with biblical locations, much of the world assumes that archeology focuses solely on biblical material. As more archaeological information is made available through books, magazines, lectures, television shows, and movies, a curious public eagerly soaks it up.

Unlike the overarching field of archaeology, "biblical archaeology" is controversial and difficult to define. For the public, it is mostly just a way in which to better understand the Bible in context. In academia, however, it becomes more complicated. In order to define "biblical archaeology," one must first determine where it fits into the academic world. Some academics question the very existence of biblical archaeology,[2] for what is defined as biblical archaeology today does not resemble the biblical archaeology of 50 years ago. In the past, there was a clear biblical focus for archaeological excavations. Today, the focus is on understanding the history and culture of the land referred to in the Bible. Remarkably, neither archaeology nor biblical studies chooses to take ownership of biblical archaeology as part of their discipline, despite the fact that both are inextricably linked to it. They claim, according to P. R. S. Moorey, that

[1] Maynard P. Maidman, "Abraham, Isaac & Jacob meet Newton, Darwin & Wellhausen," *BAR* 32:3 (May/June 2006): 60.

[2] Ronald S. Hendel, "Is There a Biblical Archaeology?" *BAR* 32:4 (July/Aug 2006): 20.

biblical archaeology emerges from the intersection between Near Eastern archaeology and Biblical Studies, not from either one individually.[3] Ronald S. Hendel, in an article for *BAR*, explains that ". . . the study of texts and the study of material culture are logically interconnected."[4] Assuming that biblical archaeology could exist as its own academic discipline, this would not entirely eliminate the tension among scholars either. Archaeologists like William G. Dever argue that "biblical archaeology" should not stand alone. The big issue, he explains, comes from the poor interaction between the fields. That intersection is a superficial one. To acknowledge the field as this infrequent point of intersection would be inadequate. Dever has further explained:

> From the very beginning, I wanted to separate archaeology from Biblical studies for the purposes of dialogue. Read the earliest articles I wrote in the early 1970s: Coupled with the call for the separation of archaeology and Biblical studies was a call for dialogue. What I want is an honest dialogue between two disciplines. As long as Palestinian, or Syro-Palestinian, archaeology, or the archaeology of Israel, is construed as a sub-branch of Biblical studies, there will be a monologue, not a dialogue. It's not about semantics, it's not about names, it's simply about defining our fields of inquiry. I use the term "Biblical archaeology" in its proper sense for that inquiry that tries to relate archaeology to questions of Biblical history and religion. I have talked, as you know, about a new style of Biblical archaeology. I do not denigrate Biblical studies or the importance of archaeology for Biblical studies.[5]

Hendel also raises the point that "the two fields . . . have grown apart and show little interest in each other."[6] Archaeologists and biblical scholars ignore the contributions of one another, despite how influential they may be to the field.[7] Scholars from both disciplines suspect one

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[3] P.R.S. Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), xv.

[4] Hendel, "Is There a Biblical Archaeology," 20.

[5] Hershel Shanks, "Is This Man a Biblical Archaeologist? BAR Interviews William Dever—Part One," *BAR 22:04 (July/Aug 1996)*, n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM.*

[6] Hendel, 20.

[7] Shanks, "Is this Man," n.p.

another regarding the recovery and interpretation of data.[8] Despite all of the controversy, biblical archaeology is generally accepted as a sub-category of Near Eastern archaeology.[9]

Beyond its controversial name and placement within the matrix of academia, within its own field biblical archaeologists are venomously critical of one another. They question each other's methods of interpreting evidence. They spar with one other about what comprises fair and neutral readings of archaeological and textual evidence. As human beings, each of us holds beliefs that intrinsically influence our work. Yet only some scholars are willing to recognize this and take ownership of it. Philip R. Davies is one such scholar who acknowledges that biblical studies are "motivated by theology and religious sentiment . . ."[10] Gosta Ahlstrom (1918-1992), Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago, expressed the same view. He wrote that material facts alone do not tell the entire biblical story; rather, "it reflects the narrator's outlook and ideology . . ." This, he concludes, will continue so long as there is "a need for a method that uses reasoning, hypothesis, logic and imagination."[11]

Burke O. Long, professor emeritus of religion at Bowdoin College, points out the problem in defining history. He claims that: "no historical statement is *purely* referential. There are no 'brute facts. . . .'"[12] Not all scholars, however, recognize this to be the case. Some even claim to have done the impossible—to have revealed "just the facts" about the biblical past.[13]

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[8] Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, xv.

[9] Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), xvi.

[10] Philip R. Davies, "The Search for History in the Bible," *BAR* 26:02 (March/April 2000): 31.

[11] Iain W. Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel," *JBL* 114/4 (1995): 586-7, 593.

[12] Burke O. Long, *I Kings, with an Introduction to Historical Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984), 3-4.

[13] E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1997), 5.

Frank Moore Cross, former president of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), has argued that ancient religious history, like modern history, must be examined from a theology-free perspective." After all, theological interpretation of the Bible was of pre-modern times. Today, scholars are obligated to use "the ordinary tools of the secular historian."[14] To accomplish such an analysis, however, would require a scholar "for whom the historicity of the Hebrew Bible is a matter of complete indifference."[15] I am not alone in questioning whether such a scholar truly exists. Mark S. Smith also points out that, "like the ancient historians of Israel, modern historians investigating biblical history often have a personal, theological interest in the subject, even if they attempt to maintain a critical distance from the subject."[16]

While most modern scholars try exceptionally hard to look beyond the lenses of predetermined beliefs when examining archaeology, some people actually choose to look through them. The historicity of the Hebrew Bible often is seen as "theologically held to be crucial to its message."[17] This is remarkably apparent by the large number of laypeople who actually seek out biblical archaeology as a means to strengthen their theology. Though a publication openly committed to scientific truth and not sacred truth,[18] *BAR* has a strongly religious clientele. It is often read for theological use—in religious school classrooms or for intensifying personal faith.[19] As I indicated above, many laypeople use biblical archaeology to

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[14] Frank Moore Cross, "The History of Israelite Religion: A Secular or Theological Subject," *BAR* 31:03 (May/June 2005): 42-43.

[15] Luke P. Wilson, "Are the Minimalists Objective?" *BAR* 29:05 (Sept/Oct 2003): 10.

[16] Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2nd Ed. 2002), 15.

[17] Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, xvi.

[18] Hershel Shanks and Suzanne F. Singer, eds., *Cancel My Subscription* (Washington, D.C.: *BAS*, 1995), 5.

[19] Ibid., *9*, 88-89; 90; 96; 102.

serve as validation of the Bible. For them, it is a means to prove the truth of the biblical narratives. These individuals believe there is no room for contradiction of their Holy Scriptures. Every generation has been faced with this issue. Each has had to deal with information that goes against their theological foundation. Historically, biblical archaeology was formed out of this dissonance between the scientific and the sacred.

The History of Biblical Archaeology

Looking at the history of biblical archaeology, we are able to see tensions develop between religion and scholarship. In the late nineteenth century, German academics like Julius Wellhausen began to cast doubt on the infallible nature of Scriptures. Wellhausen published his *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* and was quickly recognized for his development of a "Documentary Hypothesis." Building on his predecessor's work, he identified multiple authors of the Bible and asserted that the Pentateuch was composed of multiple sources. As a biblical source critic, he was an "archaeologist of the text rather than the physical artifact."[20] Fundamentalist conservative Christians were outraged by Wellhausen's work. Some of these Christians entered the scene as Egyptologists and Assyriologists with a mission to defend their Holy Scriptures. Alfred J. Hoerth describes how they were full of theological presuppositions and clearly intended to vindicate the Bible.[21] These Christians believed that they had to prove the Bible historically accurate by means of physical evidence. Maynard Maidman succinctly says, "If tangible evidence from the earth was being used to dismiss the word of God, then

[20] Maidman, "*Abraham, Isaac & Jacob,*" 59-61.

[21] Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 19.

tangible evidence from the lands of the Bible would confirm the word of God."[22] Thus, Christians took up their spades alongside their Bibles. The earliest biblical archaeologists arose from among these conservative Christians, as did the magazine *Bible and Spade*.[23]

The most prominent of these early Christian archaeologists was William F. Albright (1891-1971). Albright was a pioneer to archaeologists interested in the Holy Land. He was the first to use archaeological fieldwork to synthesize the patriarchal narratives[24] of the Hebrew Bible. He paved the way for others who sought to date the patriarchal age with certainty through material artifacts. Albright used a type of "negative proof" methodology to prove the biblical text historical. In other words, according to Alex Joffe, Albright believed that "if something is not disproved, then it is proved."[25] His ground-breaking work inspired the "biblical theology movement" composed of individuals who openly sought to validate the Bible as history. Interest in the field grew rapidly. This theological movement, led by G. Ernest Wright, attracted Christian followers, such as John Bright. Jewish scholars, such as E.A. Speiser and Benjaman Mazar, also emerged at this time.[26] Unfortunately for these religiously motivated archaeologists, the consequences of their work unfolded differently than they had anticipated. Instead of vindicating the Bible, they had opened doors for their research to prove fallible their core theological premise.

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[22] Maidman, "*Abraham, Isaac & Jacob,*" 59-60.

[23] According to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_and_Spade cited on 10 December 2006: "*Bible and Spade* is a quarterly archaeological journal published by Associates for Bible research and written for the public at large and written from a conservative Christian Bible scholarship viewpoint. The association is explicitly committed to the use of archaeology to demonstrate the historical veracity of the Old and New Testaments."

[24] Davies, "The Search for History in the Bible," n.p.

[25] Alex Joffe, "The Albright Wars," *BAR* 30:01 (Jan/Feb 2004): 18.

[26] Moorey, *A Century of Biblical Archaeology*, 45.

During the interwar years new breakthroughs and methods were developed. The period became known as the "Golden Age of Archaeology."[27] Another group of individuals threw their biblical texts to the wind as they exposed layers of historical life during Biblical times. Some of the scholars, like Albrecht Alt and Martin Noth, looked back on the archaeological work started by the fundamentalist Christians. They did so, however, from a form-critical approach.[28] They applied "*historical-critical* methods to validate the *literary context* that is the Christian Bible."[29] These scholars splashed head-first into the touchy waters of Israelite origins.[30] In no time, they presented new evidence and understandings that ultimately dismantled the "Albrightean Synthesis." Their cutting-edge methods of research led modern scholars to decry the biblical theology movement. Modern scholars claimed conservative Christians had been blinded by religion, unable to recognize the gap between Biblical Israel and historical Israel as demonstrated through archaeology.[31] There is a small group of scholars today, such as Thomas Thompson, Philip R. Davies, and John Van Seters, who question how the archaeological evidence collected by theologians actually supported the Biblical narrative. In fact, they question if the methodology was appropriate outside of a theological and religious setting.[32]

The 1970s heralded new sociological and anthropological approaches to biblical archaeology. New scholars with new ideas gained popularity, simultaneously criticizing much of

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[27] Online: http://www.eblaforum.org/library/bcah/intbibarch01.html

[28] Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 25; Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 14.

[29] Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible*, 27.

[30] William G. Dever, *Who Were The Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 5.

[31] Davies, "The Search for History in the Bible," n.p.

[32] Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), v.

the older generation of biblical archaeologists. As the field took on a more interdisciplinary approach, eventually incorporating social sciences, biology, and history into biblical archaeology, the budding scholars accused the past generations of "failing to incorporate work from other disciplines, remaining altogether too narrowly within a theological angle of vision."[33] Much of the writing of this period debunked the idea that the Bible was intended to be interpreted historically. Rather, it emphasized how critical it was to understand the Bible contextually. During the 1970s biblical historicity became (and continues to be) the core issue to divide the field of biblical archaeology.

The Maximalist/Minimalist Debate

Over the past 30 years, two basic positions have emerged from this discussion: the historical maximalist camp and the historical minimalist camp, sometimes referred to as the "Copenhagen School," since many minimalists are associated with the University of Copenhagen. Most scholars do not subscribe to one group or the other; rather, they find themselves somewhere on the continuum between the two. Extreme maximalists approach biblical archaeology like Larry Williams does, "assuming that the Bible is written factually, correct as it is."[34] Minimalists, on the other hand, accept nothing as fact before analysis. Take Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, for example, who argue: "many events of biblical

[33] Joel Ng, "Introduction to Biblical Archaeology 1: Archaeological History and Method," rev. 2 July 2004. Cited 25 February 2007. Online: http://www.edwardtbabinski.us/biblical_archaeology/archaeological_history_method.html.

[34] Larry Williams, *The Mountain of Moses* (New York: Wynwood, 1990), 68.

history did not take place in either the particular era or the manner described. Some of the most famous events in the Bible clearly never happened at all."[35]

Generally, historical maximalists believe that the Bible is historically accurate unless proven otherwise. In this manner they maximize the amount of history that may be found in the biblical writings. Historical minimalists, on the other hand, view the "ancient text as 'guilty until proven innocent . . .' "[36] For them, the amount of history in the biblical text is minimal. Some speculate that the reason for such fundamental differences regarding the history of the Bible stems from each group's background. Historical maximalists, according to James K. Hoffmeier, "tend to be trained in Near Eastern languages, history, and archaeology with the Hebrew Bible as a cognate discipline, whereas . . . [historical minimalists] are largely trained in Old Testament studies in the nineteenth-century European mold and treat cognate languages and sources as ancillary rather than central to their discipline."[37] Generalizing is dangerous, however. Scholars often are offended by the idea of being categorized into one of these two camps. There are too many implications and associations with these titles for people to feel comfortable being labeled. A case in point can be seen by the screaming letters in Maidman's most recent article for *BAR* in which he writes: "I AM NOT A BIBLICAL MINIMALIST."[38] Maidman's tone is vehemently defensive, as if by being labeled a minimalist would instantly discredit him to those outside of the minimalist camp. In many ways resembling the discipline's early struggles between

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[35] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 5.

[36] James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 10-11.

[37] Ibid.,15.

[38] Maidman, "Abraham, Isaac & Jacob," 63.

theologians and scholars, issues of personal bias remain at the forefront of biblical archaeology discussions today.

The 30-year-old feud between maximalists and minimalists rages on in a variety of settings. The most prominent is historicism. Though the issue is a theoretical one, it is relevant to all who are involved in biblical archaeology. The "new archaeology" of the 1960s and 1970s argued "for the substitution of an overall theoretical framework that was in a sense less historical and more anthropological and scientific."[39] In much the same way, "new cultural history" has taken over how most people view history. Before this revolution, others had also tried to define history. As early as 1824, Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) wrote the following: "It has been said that the task of history is to judge the past and to teach the present generation so that it may profit in future years. The present book does not undertake any such high task; it only wants to show how things really happened."[40] Von Ranke dealt with the issue of "showing how things really happened." His ideas stressed the importance of using primary sources to relay history and he believed that the more authentic the text, the more historically accurate would be its analysis. In 1936, more than 100 years later, Johan Huizinga (1872-1945) redefined historical writing. He determined that "history is always an imposition of form upon the past, and cannot claim to be more." He explained: "Every civilization creates its own form of history, and must do so. The character of the civilization determines what history shall mean to it, and of what kind it shall be . . . . *The* past is limited always in accordance with the kind of subject which seeks to understand it."[41] Huizinga, unlike von Ranke, recognized the abundant subjectivity in

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[39]William G. Dever, "The New Archaeology," *BA* 50 (September 1987): 150.

[40] Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations from 1494 to 1514* (trans. William H. McNeill; Berlin: Leipzig, 1824), 2.

[41] Johan Huizinga, "A Definition of the Concept of History" in *Philosophy and History: Essays in honor of Ernst Cassirer* (ed. R. Klibansky and H. J. Paton; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1936), 5-7.

historical knowledge. Others, like Hayden White, have built upon this through the years. Like Huizinga, White has seen the impossibility of relating *the* past, rather than *a* past. He dismisses the idea that a historian can actually reproduce or represent reality as it was.[42]

These long-standing definitions of history are relevant to us in our modern debate, especially because archaeology is viewed, according to John D. Currid, as "an auxiliary science of history."[43] Each side of the maximalist/minimalist debate today is reminiscent of von Ranke and Huizinga. Historical maximalists, such as William Albright, John Bright, E. A. Speiser, William Hallo, and Kenneth Kitchen, understand ancient texts as a primary source of history, much like von Ranke did. They understand history as a way of relating "*the* story of *the* past."[44] For maximalists, the Bible is historically sound and a legitimate source to reveal the past. Lawrence Stager has even called the text "one of the prime sources of possible knowledge for reconstructing that history."[45] Historical minimalists, such as Niels Peter Lemche, Israel Finkelstein, Philip R. Davies, Keith Whitelam, and Thomas Thompson, are more aligned with Huizinga's definition of history. They do not believe that texts are historical in their recounting of ancient events. Rather, they believe that they need "to ask what their [the biblical texts'] function was: Who commissioned them, if anyone? Who read them? How and to whom were the contents promulgated? And whose interest did they serve?"[46] Consequently, some minimalists

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[42] Vincent B. Leitch, ed. "Hayden White," *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001), 1711.

[43] John D. Currid, *Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible: A Basic Guide* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999).

[44] Huizinga, "A Definition of the Concept of History," 5.

[45] Hershel Shanks, "Scholars Talk About How the Field Has Changed," *BAR 27:02* (March/April 2001), n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM*, 2004.

[46] Hershel Shanks, "Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers," *BAR 23:04* (July/August 1997), n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM*, 2004.

tend to look toward archaeological evidence to tell history to them. For them, archaeology is the prime source of knowledge; it is the "only source of information on the biblical period that was not extensively emended, edited, or censored by many generations of biblical scribes."[47]

Historical minimalists do not believe that the Bible was written with the intention of being history. In fact, Lemche explains that the Biblical writer "didn't know the genre of history writing."[48] Unlike members of the maximalist camp, minimalists recognize that the biblical narratives are themselves stories. For this reason, biblical narratives are understood as "only occasionally historical"[49] among minimalists. They find too much subjectivity in the text as it was transmitted by scribes. Minimalists question the scribes' intentions at the time the Bible was written, claiming that: "the biblical writers were not really concerned about historical truth. Their goal was not that of a modern historian."[50] Contrary to the point made by von Ranke, minimalists believe that "what is primary is not necessarily historical and what is secondary not necessarily unhistorical."[51] In order for an ancient text to be deemed historically valid for them, it must first be corroborated in history. Thompson explains, "if we don't have evidence, we don't have any history."[52] Subsequently, minimalists tend to read the Bible as historiography. "Historiography is story: it is narrative about the past. Historiography is also ideological literature: narrative about the past that involves, among other things, the selection of material and its interpretation by authors who are intent on persuading themselves or their readership in some

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[47] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 23.

[48] Shanks, "Face to Face," n.p.

[49] Hendel, "Is There a Biblical Archaeology," 20.

[50] Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical," 594.

[51] Ibid., 597

[52] Shanks, "Face to Face," n.p.

way."[53] Though recognizing the Bible's historiographic value, minimalists conclude that "most of the Bible has no historiographical intention. It is a theological document."[54] Minimalists regard archaeology as a source of raw data, yet in much the same way as they view the text, they claim it too is subjective and therefore prohibitive in providing useful knowledge.[55]

Because of religious implications found within the biblical texts, deep theological conflicts often underlie the debate between minimalists and maximalists, most particularly fundamentalist maximalists. By and large, fundamentalists believe that the Bible is the word of God. As such, the Bible is inerrant and infallible and must, therefore, be historically correct. Fundamentalists are accused of relying on the historicity of the Bible to sustain their theological beliefs. They are perceived as motivated by preconceived religious ideas with regards tothe biblical text; the stories upon which their faith is built must be historical in order to preserve theological order and religious authority within their communities. This dependence on the Hebrew Bible is the reason that minimalists accuse fundamentalists of failing as academic scholars. Iain W. Provan scathingly writes: "modern scholars . . . failed to devote themselves to it [critical scholarship] wholeheartedly, selling their academic inheritance for a mess of religious pottage, preferring to embrace fantasy rather than to swallow hard fact."[56] Davies has criticized how this group of religious scholars is blinded by their faith; they are unable to view archaeological finds with clarity. He explains that they ". . . assume an 'ancient Israel' after the

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[53] Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical," 592.

[54] Davies, "The Search for History in the Bible," n.p.

[55] William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 76.

[56] Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical," 588.

manner of biblical story, and then seek rationalistic explanations for it, instead of asking themselves what is *really* there."[57]

The minimalist question of biblical historicism has been a thorn in the side of those who are devoutly religious. When confronted with minimalist theory, they are forced to question their faith, which is unacceptable for them.[58] For fundamentalists, it is far easier to discredit minimalist theory than it is to question their faith. Naturally, these fundamentalist maximalists are deeply upset by the minimalist viewpoint; not just on a personal religious level, but also on a communal religious level. They fear that "by minimizing or dismissing the Bible as a source for Israel's early history, revisionist histories can be written without the constraint of any controls."[59] Revisionist histories threaten fundamentalists because they throw shadows of doubt over the scriptural foundation of their faith.

There is another group of maximalists, such as William Dever, Benjamin Mazar and Amnon Ben-Tor, who are not religious fundamentalists. Though still a part of the maximalist camp, these scholars stand farther from the far right than the designation maximalist implies. In strong disagreement with both minimalists and fundamentalists, these moderate maximalists emerge with a middle-of-the road position. Mazar sums up this view when he acknowledges there is a "possibility that the [biblical] stories echo individual historical events which may have occurred. . . ."[60] Maximalists, however, still conclude that the Bible, although a theological

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[57] Ibid., 587.

[58] Judy Tetu, "Cancel My Subscription," *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1980), n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM.*

[59] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 14.

[60] Mazar, "Archaeology," 331.

document, does contain a "historical core."[61] They, like minimalists, recognize that the Bible is not actually a "history of Israel." Yet, they still accept there is some history to be gleaned from the Bible.[62] Across the board, maximalists are critical of those who deny historical value in the Bible. They believe that such a narrow view ". . . is to violate its [the Bible's] integrity as literature." Dever accusatorily contends that minimalists are "willfully blind to historical context."[63] Though recognizing the value of biblical text, Dever adds that "the Hebrew Bible is not an adequate source *in itself* for reconstructing a reliable portrait of Israelite religions as they actually were."[64] Rather, archaeology is seen as the key to exposing actual ancient Israelite history; it offers a "parallel way of viewing the past, alongside texts." In fact, Dever claims that archaeology "may constitute an equal or even superior source of information . . ." as it is "more 'objective' than texts."[65]

Though also maximalists, these more middle-of-the-road maximalists are just as apt to disagree with fundamentalists as they are minimalists. In contrast to the other two positions, religious fundamentalists deny the human role in the Bible's literary process and grossly maximize the text's historical value.[66] This, as discussed earlier, is because of their deep seated religious beliefs. Moderate maximalists, however, claim not to write out of religious zeal, but out of scholarly interest. In fact, these individuals often purport not to be profoundly religious.

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[61] William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 271.

[62] Ibid., 10.

[63] Ibid., 18.

[64] Dever, *Did God Have a Wife,* 32.

[65] Ibid., 74-5.

[66] Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know,* 19.

Some of them even claim to have abandoned religion altogether. Interestingly, many moderate maximalists have theologically swung the other direction from fundamentalists. Perhaps this is because such overt religious understandings would discredit them academically; it would cast doubt upon their use of the material. This is something with which maximalists have had to deal. Dever has argued that ". . . there is no single 'biblical theology' that characterizes the biblical literature as a whole."[67] Instead, interpreters of the bible have manipulated the text to reflect their own theology. Dever claims that ". . . the librarians in charge of the biblical corpus seem to be mostly clerics of one sort or another, intent upon forcing their 'orthodox' interpretations upon the rest of us, although no two of them agree."[68] Maximalists feel that allowing multiple understandings of the text and archaeological data, they are able to grant a access to the text to a wider array of people. The minimalists, on the other hand, are accused of being elitist with regard to the text. Dever, who calls this group "the new nihilists,"[69] has accused them of being ". . . academics, who seem to delight in making the Bible even more mysterious and therefore accessible only through them. . . ." In fact, he has gone so far as to say that minimalism: ". . . is arrogant and pretentious in its claim to 'new knowledge'—not so much 'post-Enlightenment' as *anti*-Enlightenment, anti-reason, anti-good sense, and ultimately anti-social despite its Utopian goals."[70]

Dever's biggest complaint with the minimalist position lies in its severe understanding of the Bible. He accuses the "revisionists" of giving the reader an ultimatum: one must choose between regarding the Bible as "history" or as "literature." He believes minimalists are

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[67] Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know,* 20

[68] Ibid., 2.

[69] Shanks, "Is This Man a Biblical Archaeologist," n.p.

[70] Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know,* 265.

impervious to ideas of anything in-between the two; they have deemed the Bible literature and have thrown it out as a historical source. Maximalists like Dever, however, believe it is impossible to write a history of ancient Israel without the Bible. They have expressed that minimalists, in their denial of such "fundamental data,"[71] as the Bible, have put themselves out of business as historians. Mazar and others have subsequently pointed out that "given this background of insufficient historical sources, the archaeological data is of prime importance."[72]

It is clear that, even though it is an academic field often saturated with religious individuals, biblical archaeology is not void of name-calling and finger-pointing. For Davies, even the simple but pejorative use of "minimalist" is considered "a sneering epithet."[73] Yet, if given the choice to be called a minimalist or a maximalist, he would certainly embrace being a minimalist. He explains that if "being a 'Biblical minimalist' means refusing to see what is not there, than I prefer to remain a minimalist. . . . I submit that this is far preferable to the stance of the 'Biblical maximalists' who, in matters of the Bible and archaeology, place the Bible before both archaeology and the conventions of scholarly argument."[74] Because of its religious and political implications, the minimalist position has undergone criticism and slander. This position is sometimes interpreted as an expression of hate. Cross has gone so far as to claim that the minimalist camp is being "kept alive by anti-Semitism."[75]

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[71] Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know,* 17

[72] Mazar, "Archaeology," 302.

[73] Philip R. Davies, "'House of David' Built on Sand," *BAR* 20:04, n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM.*

[74] Ibid., n.p.

[75] Shanks, "Scholars Talk about How the Field Has Changed," n.p.

Some scholars also believe the minimalist position is fueled by anti-Zionism, using archaeology to show that the Israeli claim to the Holy Land is illegitimate. Most notable among those accused of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is Whitelam, who published a book in 1996 entitled *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History."* Scholars identify examples such as this as political hate tools, and for good reason. Not only has Whitelam's book been translated into Arabic and become a best-seller in East Jerusalem, but also ". . . some Palestinians adopt the nihilist agenda of European biblical 'revisionists', who want to write Israel out of history . . ."[76] To the Palestinians, Whitelam's book has been received as "the 'real story' that the imperial West sought to hide." It is frequently cited on Palestinian websites as well as in Palestinian schools.[77] In this way, biblical archaeology appears to serve as judge and jury for settling modern political issues. It is evident that despite the scholarly viability of both the minimalist and the maximalist positions, religious and political agendas rear their ugly heads when such theories enter the public domain. In biblical archaeology, it is nearly impossible to separate objective truth from personal beliefs. This emphasizes why studying this topic is necessary for the Jewish community in how it relates to the world and why Jewish leaders should be knowledgeable to identify agendas in scholarship.

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[76] William G. Dever, "Some Methodological Reflections on Chronology and History-Writing," in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science,* (ed. Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham; London: Equinox, 2005), 417-419.

[77] Anton Fendi. "Ethnohistory, Ideology, and Modern Politics." *Across the Bay*, n.p. 2 July 2005. Cited 28 January 2007. Online: http://beirut2bayside.blogspot.com/2005/07/ethnohistory-ideology-and-modern.html.

CHAPTER 3: "HOT TOPICS" IN BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

In the next section we are going to look specifically at some "hot topics" in biblical archaeology. Prior to examining each of these topics, however, it would behoove us to look first at the historical argument imbedded in them. The questions that are asked beg an answer to: How much historical truth is contained in the Hebrew Bible? Can we prove or disprove that certain events occurred as they were described? To answer these questions, scholars have looked extensively at chronology to help determine the historicity of the Hebrew Bible's well-known narratives. By aligning specific events and artifacts with certain periods of time, scholars can ascertain that materials located above or below those assigned layers are earlier and later. Scholars have turned both to biblical criticism and to archaeology in order to seam together the evidence and define specific layers of history. Archaeology is understood by many to be the only unbiased source of ancient history that we possess, and thus more reliable than biblical criticism. Archaeological findings enlighten our understanding of history in lieu of the traditional Hebrew Bible through: datable architectural styles and pottery forms; settlement patterns; animal bones; seeds and soil samples; Hebrew inscriptions; objects of art; common household goods; and stray coins. It is easy to assume that modern tools in archaeology, such as radiocarbon dating, Beyesian statistical methods and "wiggle-match" dating, dendochronology, and other scientific processes provide scholars with adequate information to definitively mark these fixed points.[78] But, this has hardly been the case. Indeed such technology has significantly

[78] Radiocarbon dating is a technique for dating organic samples. The theory of Bayesian wiggle-matching is based on Bayesian radiocarbon calibration developed in the 1990s. Wiggle matching involves matching radiocarbon dates to the "wiggles" of the calibration curve to be fixed in the calendar scale. Dendochronology is the use of tree rings in determining historical dating. For more information see: "Bwigg: An Internet facility for Bayesian radiocarbon wiggle-matching" by J. Andres Christen, March 15 2002. Online: www.cimat.mx/jac.

lowered the calibrated uncertainties in historical dates, but it has not provided scholars with absolute answers.[79]

There are many theories today for the dating of the Hebrew Bible. Due to a variety of speculations about the historical time period in which the text was written, a multitude of ideas have emerged. The significance of specific details, dates, or non-dates, of biblical events vary depending on the scholar's perspective about when the Hebrew Bible was written. Many of these theories are heavily based on archaeological data. From the end of the nineteenth century, archaeological breakthroughs claimed to prove that the accounts in the Bible were completely historically accurate. Data uncovered during excavations in the modern State of Israel lent support to this. Research showed similarities not only with the text, but with surrounding Near East cultures as well. Scholars continued to believe that archaeology validated the Bible for several decades, until new evidence suggested otherwise. In the 1970s, new trends in archaeology raised questions regarding how previous scholars had interpreted material remains. They became more interested in a model that included anthropology and other social sciences. After this point scholars "sought to examine the human realities that lay *behind* the text."[80] The message of this "New Archaeology" was that while the text reveals a lot about the society in which it was produced, it is not necessarily historically accurate. Recent scholarship has thus revealed ". . . there were too many contradictions between archaeological finds and the biblical narratives to suggest that the Bible provided a precise description of what actually occurred."[81]

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[79] Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham, "Introduction: Radiocarbon Dating and the Iron Age of the Southern Levant," in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating*, (eds. Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham; London: Equinox, 2005), 3-14.

[80] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 21.

[81] Ibid., 20-21.

The issues that have become hot topics in the world of archaeology today are those that try to find answers to the questions that the texts are unable to prove. I will be examining the issue of historicity as it relates to the Exodus, David, Solomon and the United Monarchy

Was There an Exodus?

The Exodus narrative (Exod 12:29-15:21) is one of the most significant stories in collective Jewish memory. In fact, it is mentioned more than 120 times in the Hebrew Bible.[82] It makes sense, therefore, that the Exodus plays such a central role in Jewish religious observance. Year after year at the Passover Seder Jewish families retell the story of their escape from Egypt as if they themselves escaped. Jews pray daily to thank God for redeeming them from the House of Bondage, joyfully proclaiming God's wondrous acts. There is constant affirmation of a historical god, one who intervened on Israel's behalf to release them from Egypt. As important as the Exodus is in ritual, the Exodus is equally foundational in the creation of Jewish peoplehood. Dever explains that the Exodus is "as fundamental to later Israelite history, to the biblical vision of the people's selfhood, as the American Revolution is to the uniquely American experience and sense of destiny."[83] Lemche agrees with this, claiming that the Exodus is so important because it ". . . marks the birth of a nation and justifies that nation's very existence."[84] Moses is significant as well, as Lemche explains, he is "both national

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[82] Bruce Feiler, *Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land through the Five Books of Moses,* (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 174.

[83] Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites,* 4.

[84]Niels Peter Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past: Background and Beginnings of Israelite History and Identity* (trans. by E.F. Maniscalco; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), 46.

liberator and national prophet." In fact, Moses is so substantial a character that Lemche identifies Moses' role as a catalyst in the shaping of Israel's self-identity.[85]

Because the Exodus narrative is significantly intertwined with religious ritual and identity, it is a thorny subject beyond scholarly archaeological discussion. Several theories have been raised regarding the historicity of the Exodus, including claims that it never occurred. As one would imagine, the possibility that there was never an exodus challenges the heart of Jewish and Christian religious identity. In many ways, to suggest that one of the most monumental events recounted in the Torah never happened leaves individuals questioning most, if not all, biblical history. Theologically, an exodus-less history is a terrifying notion that many faithful believers are unwilling to explore. By and large, there is resistance to even consider the validity of the argument. Thus, archaeologists who attempt to uncover the truth of the Exodus must do so within a public that, for the most part, has already decided what the material must prove.

Despite its theological hurdle, the historicity of the Exodus is of great public interest. The public anxiously turns to archaeology to unveil definitive records that will prove or disprove the historicity of the Exodus. Unfortunately, archaeology has not been able to complete this task, at least not yet. This has not stopped archaeologists and Bible scholars from making assertions based on what the evidence, or lack of evidence, implies. Myriad theories about the historicity of the Exodus have been posited by scholars. According to Hoffmeier this is because ". . . the biblical and archaeological data can be read in different ways, thus producing varying results." [86] Since there are numerous approaches to interpret and date the Exodus narrative, some scholars focus on one method over another. Some examples of this include: Niels Peter Lemche, who

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[85] Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past*, 50-51.

[86] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 123.

takes an anthropological approach; Norman K. Gottwald, who deals with sociological reconstruction; Thomas Thompson, who looks to biblical history; Israel Finkelstein, who focuses on the archaeological; and James K. Hoffmeier, who uses a "contextual approach" utilizing biblical, historical, and archaeological evidence.[87] As seen previously, others will sometimes consider a lack of proof as proof in and of itself. For instance, John Laughlin has pointed out that if the Israelites were supposedly wandering around the Sinai Peninsula for 40 years, why haven't any traces of such a group been discovered?[88] Others do not find negative proof convincing; they seek more tangible evidence. This section will provide a number of possible answers, including the Hyksos theory and the *Habiru* hypothesis, to the question: "Was there an exodus?"

THE HYKSOS THEORY

Though in disagreement over whether or not there was an exodus, scholars have agreed that there was a Semitic presence in Egypt. If there were to have been an exodus, Israelites would have had to be in Egypt prior to their occupation of Canaan. One group of Semites in Egypt has been identified as the Hyksos.[89] The Hyksos, whose name is said to mean "rulers of foreign lands," were Asiatic foreigners who conquered Egypt c.1650 B.C.E. and ruled over the northern part of Egypt for more than 100 years.[90] Yet, there is a problem in the way scholars have interpreted this information. Their work is based on the assumption that a Semitic presence in Egypt (the Hyksos) is proof that there was an Israelite presence. They seem to confuse the

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[87] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt,* 17.

[88] John C. H. Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 91.

[89] "It has been well known for decades . . . that there were Semites in the Delta starting after the collapse of the Old Kingdom (ca. 2190) and reaching a zenith during the Hyksos or second Intermediate Period (ca. 1700-1550 B.C.) and on into the New Kingdom (1550-1069 B.C.)." Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt,* 53.

[90] Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible,* 72.

memory of the Expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt with the Exodus. Yet, there is no justification for equating the two. Based on what evidence we have, there are many possibilities for this assumption.

The Greek term "Hyksos" comes from the writings of Josephus (c. 38-100 C.E.), a Jewish historian who claims to quote directly from Manetho, an Egyptian priest-historian from the third century B.C.E. Josephus provides written information about the Hyksos describing how this group conquered and occupied Egypt. Based on Manetho's report, the Hyksos arrived in Egypt as the result of a fierce military invasion, which was then followed by a cruel dynasty that lasted more than 100 years.[91] Josephus' writings about the Hyksos in Egypt are easily supported by other materials. The ancient city of Avaris (Tell el-Daba), which was once the Hyksos capitol, has revealed several helpful forms of proof. For example, there are inscriptions and seals found at Tell el-Daba that reveal Canaanite names as well as signs of gradual Canaanization during the Second Intermediate period (1780-1570 B.C.E.).[92] The city's ruins also indicate that in the mid-16th century B.C.E. the city was abandoned suddenly. Evidence shows there was a "change in settlement planning and the occupation of the site by 'complete newcomers.' "[93] Such destruction implies that the Hyksos would either have been forced to escape to their main citadel in Southern Canaan or required to stay in Egypt and assimilate.[94]

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[91] Further excavation has revealed that the Hyksos invasion was a gradual process of immigration into northern Egypt. Nevertheless, placing them in Egypt at this point is still a significant chronological marker.

[92] Courtlandt Canby and Arcadia Kocybala, *A Guide to the Archaeological Sites of Israel, Egypt and North Africa* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 161.

[93] Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 103.

[94] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 60-61.

Based on archaeological remains and Egyptian texts from the 18th Dynasty,[95] we know that the Hyksos ruled in Egypt until Pharoahs Ka-mose and Ah-mose drove them out of the land.[96] Scholars thus argue that because there was an Asiatic presence in Egypt from the 18th century to the 16th century B.C.E. there is proof that Israelites were in Egypt. The Hyksos invasion is identified as the same descent of people moving from Canaan into Egypt as those described at the beginning of the Exodus story. The problem with connecting these two, however, is that a proven history of a Semitic migration from Canaan to Egypt followed by a forcible Egyptian expulsion does not an Israelite presence in Egypt make.[97] Though the Hyksos were Asiatics and had a similar experience in their migration patterns, their presence does not prove that Israelites were in Egypt with them. There is also a problem with connecting the two because, although we know that the Hyksos fled from Egypt, there are only a few similarities in detail to tie them to the Israelites in the story of the Exodus. To begin with, unlike the Israelites, the Hyksos were rulers in Egypt. Furthermore, while we know that the Hyksos were forcibly expelled from Egypt, there is no proof that they left in an organized fashion, as did the Israelites. No Egyptian document corroborates such a massive migration.[98] Additionally, one could reasonably assume that an event as massive as the Exodus (600,000 male escapees and their households) would have made it into the Egyptian records. It would certainly have made the

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[95] The Carnarvon Tablet I in "The War against the Hyksos," (*ANET*, 232); ,Ah-mose's tomb inscription in "The Expulsion of the Hyksos," (*ANET* 233); The Karnak stelae in "The War against the Hyksos," (*ANET* 234-235; 554); The Tanis stela in "The Era of the City of Tanis," (*ANET*, 252); "Beth-Shan Stelae of Seti I and Ramses II" (*ANET* 254-255).

[96] Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible*, 72.

[97] Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 52.

[98] Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past*, 54.

front-page news today. Yet, according to Laughlin, ". . . all the known Egyptian texts put together do not even remotely hint at an exodus as described in the Bible."[99]

An examination of the proof used to equate the Hyksos to the Israelites does not help build the case. Scholars who make this claim typically use data collected from what is known as the "Beni Hasan Tomb." Beni Hasan is a cemetery from the Middle Kingdom that housed the tomb of Khnumhotpe, an important noble of the 12th Dynasty. In Khnumhotpe's tomb is a well-known illustration of bearded Semitic nomads, the Hyksos, arriving in Egypt from the east for commercial reasons.[100] There are people who have referred to the Beni Hasan tomb-painting as a proof text, claiming that the picture depicts the biblical Exodus story.[101] The problem with such a claim, however, is that the painting is dated to the 19th century B.C.E., long before the Exodus could have occurred. It would be impossible to say that the painting depicted an event that would not happen until years later. Not only would the Exodus not have happened in the 19th century B.C.E. but, as Dever explains, the Hyksos would already have been out of Egypt hundreds of years before Moses would even have been born.

Another obstacle for those who try to show that the Hyksos were the "Israelites" is a lack of proof that the Hebrews described in the Exodus text were also identified as "Israel" or existed as a social entity during this time. The term "Israel" is not used even once in the Hebrew Bible with respect to the Hebrew sojourners from the Exodus. A mid-14th-century archaeological find adds weight to this evidence.[102] The el-Amarna tablets are letters found in Pharaoh Akhenaten's

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[99] Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible,* 90.

[100] Canby and Kocybala, *A Guide to the Archaeological Sites,* 130; Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt,* 61.

[101] Canby and Kocybala, *A Guide to the Archaeological Sites,* 130.

[102] Ibid., 126.

palace containing correspondence between Egyptian pharaohs and Canaanite princes between 1390-1365 B.C.E.[103] In the 382 letters found at el-Amarna, not once is a group known as the "Israelites" mentioned. Lemche points out the oddity of this and explains the difficulty in maintaining "that the Israelites had already been in the country for more than 200 years,"[104] without any record of them. To further support the claim that the Israelites were not in Canaan during the 14th century B.C.E., scholars have turned to the Merneptah Stele. The Merneptah Stele describes the campaign of Pharaoh Merneptah in Canaan at the end of the 13th century B.C.E. and is the first monumental inscription including "Israel" in extra-biblical texts, thus dating Israelites in Canaan by 1207 B.C.E.[105] From this, scholars claim both that there is no proof to show that the Israelites were considered a people until the period of Merneptah and that the Israelite arrival in Canaan at the end of the 13th century B.C.E. precludes the Hyksos theory (which is based on an early dating of the Exodus).

Despite various arguments against the Hyksos theory, some Egyptologists have still attempted to associate the Hyksos with the Israelites, though not all that successfully. Many of these scholars use the biblical text to examine Egyptianisms found within the Bible in order to assign the time period described. There is an assumption made that, after several hundred years of integration in the Egyptian community, the Israelites would have assimilated into Egyptian culture, accounting for the textual Egyptianisms. Scholars often turn to the Joseph story for such Egyptianisms, as Joseph's lofty political status implies he is one of the most culturally integrated Israelite figures.[106] Some of the details that scholars have examined include: the price at which

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[103] Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land* (New York: Praeger, 1960), 206.

[104] Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past*, 55.

[105] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 101.

[106] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 83.

Joseph was sold (20 shekels); Asiatic men serving in Egyptian estates; etymologies of personal names; and the generic use of the name "pharaoh".[107] Egyptian sources have provided a chronological marker for the time in which Joseph would have been in Egypt. But yet again, there is disagreement among the experts as to where this marker falls.

Scholars, such as Kitchen, have argued that the details of the Joseph story defend a late Middle Kingdom (1980-1630 B.C.E.) to Second Intermediate period (1630-1539 B.C.E.) setting. Such a date would make plausible the connection of Israelites to the Hyksos. However, scholars are not uniform in their interpretation of Egyptianisms. For instance, scholars such as Janssen and Vergote have posited that the Joseph story must be from the Ramesside period (1300-1100 B.C.E.), which is well after the time of the Hyksos.[108] Donald Redford, also using Egyptianisms in the Joseph text, has determined the story was later, from the Persian or Saite periods (late seventh-sixth centuries).[109] Others have flat out objected to the association, such as Alan Montgomery who writes:

> The Hyksos were not like the Israelites in any respect except they were Semitic. Pharaoh invited the Israelites into Egypt but the Hyksos invaded. The Israelites demanded to leave but Pharaoh held them by force. The Hyksos were driven out. Such identifications can be rejected. However, if the Israelites are not Hyksos we must admit an error in Egyptian chronology. [110]

Such discrepancies in interpretation show that Egyptianisms from the text are inconclusive for setting a time frame for the time of Joseph and the exodus that followed.

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[107] It was not until the 9th century B.C.E. that the epithet "Pharoah" prefixed a monarch's name. See William H. C. Propp, *The Anchor Bible Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 155.

[108] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt,* 87.

[109] Ibid., 78.

[110] Alan Montgomery, "An Alternative View of the Archaeology of the Exodus." 9 July 2004. Cited 31 January 2007. Online: http://www.ldolphin.org/alanm/exod2b.html.

THE *HABIRU* HYPOTHESIS

Surviving Egyptian records indicate that there were two groups of outsiders who lived in the margins of Canaanite urban society. One of these two groups was the Apiru (originally spelled Hab/piru).[111] Scholars have speculated that perhaps these *Habiru* were the same as the Israelites who escaped from Egypt. Once it was clear that the *Habiru* who occupied Canaan were in Egypt too, it was easy to make such a connection. Equating the *Habiru* to the Israelites has become known as "the *Habiru* Hypothesis." The proof for this hypothesis is mainly found in the el-Amarna tablets which date back to 1375 B.C.E. These letters describe the attacks of the "*Habiru*" on Canaanite cities. According to the Amarna letters, the *Habiru* were a group of roving refugees who preyed as bandits upon the people.[112] Because the attacks by the *Habiru* occurred at roughly the same period as the Exodus (using the traditional dating system) and in the same regions and cities associated with the biblical patriarchs, scholars have tried to link the *Habiru* attacks to the military exploits of Joshua.[113]

One of the key ideas supporting the *Habiru* Hypothesis is the name of the group itself: "*Habiru*", "hapiru", or "Apiru". As described previously, the Israelites in Egypt had been referred to as "Hebrews", or 'ivri(m). Scholars have noted that 'ivri(m) has a remarkably similar root to *Habiru*.[114] If one should assume that the Israelites were called "Hebrews", it would

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[111] Henceforth I will refer to this group as the *Habiru*.

[112] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 124.

[113] Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible*, 85; Harry Meyer Orlinsky, *Understanding the Bible Through History and Arcaheology* (New York: KTAV, 1972) , 28.

[114] Baruch Halpern, "The Exodus from Egypt: Myth or Reality" in *The Rise of Ancient Israel*, (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), 9.

provide an easy link to why there is no mention of a group known as "Israel" until 1300 B.C.E.[115] Harry M. Orlinsky has pointed out the fact "that the term Habiru ceased to occur in the extra-Biblical sources at about the same time that the term 'Hebrew' ceased to be used in the Bible" aids scholars' arguments for the two being the same.[116] Since this evidence only yields a hypothesis, scholars continue to search for solid evidence that the Hebrews were actually a part of this *Habiru* group.

Though the *Habiru* Hypothesis seemed reasonable to many at first, as more information became available about the *Habiru,* scholars discredited this association. Beginning with George Mendenhall in 1947 and followed by others such as Nahum Sarna and James K. Hoffmeier, scholars have dismissed the idea that the *Habiru* were the same people as the "Hebrews." Their primary case was based on the fact that the *Habiru* were not really an ethnic group, but rather they were a "well-defined social class."[117] More doubt has been shed on the *Habiru* Hypothesis by the fact that the *Habiru* are never described as invading from outside the Canaanite civilization, contradicting the description of the Israelite invasion.[118] Furthermore, the term

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[115] Sarna provides us with an overview of the term "hapiru". He writes: "From the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E. through the twelfth century B.C.E., cuneiform tablets from Sumer, Babylon, Upper Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Syrian-Canaanite area, as well as hieroglyphic texts from Egypt, register the presence of groups of people variously referred to as SA.GAZ, *hapiru, 'pr(m),* and *'pr(w)*. . . . . SA.GAZ is Sumerian ideograph that is read in Akkadian as *saggasu* and to which the scribes often attached the gloss *habbatu. Saggasu* in Akkadian means 'killer, aggressor, violent person.' In West Semitic languages the same stem denotes 'to be restless, ill at ease.' *Habbatu* means 'a robber' as well as 'a migrant,' but '*pr*, which must be West Semitic, is as yet of uncertain meaning." Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary Exodus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary by Nahum M. Sarna,* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991, 265-266.

[116] Orlinsky, *Understanding the Bible through History and Archaeology*, 28.

[117] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed,* 335; Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary Exodus* and Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt,* 124. Nahum Sarna explains: "Various lines of evidence converge to reject the likelihood. First, there is no doubt that 'apiru, an adjective, is the correct form of the name, as Egyptian and Ugaritic texts show, and the differences in the vowels and middle consonant between it and 'ivri, a gentilic, cannot be reconciled. Further, the 'apiru are a social entity, not an ethnic group like the Hebrews."

[118] Ibid., 266.

"'ivri," or Hebrew, was never used in the descriptions of the Israelite conquest in Joshua or Judges. For this reason, Kathleen Kenyon has argued that "neither the Amarna Letters nor other Egyptian sources give any hint of the events recorded in Exodus."[119]

It is significant to note that in order to prove whether or not there was an exodus, scholars have also looked for proof of an "Israelite" presence in Egypt. Namely, that there were indeed "Hebrews" making bricks for building projects through forced-labor in Egypt, as described in Exod 1:11-14. Scholars have looked at Egyptian sources to find a corroborating account. Though not referring to any Israelites, per se, Egyptian sources do describe how Pi-Rameses (Avaris) was built in the eastern Nile delta by Semites during the rule of Ramesses II (1279-1213 B.C.E.).

Similar to the *Habiru* theory, scholars like Redford have questioned if there was not a relationship between the Israelites and a group of nomads known as the *Shasu.* The *Shasu,* whose name means "shepherds," were a group of Asiatics first noted by the Egyptians in the 18th Dynasty (c. 1400). The *Shasu* emigrated to Egypt and were widespread in the country, the mountains, and on the desert fringes. Some scholars have suggested that the *Shasu* are the same as the *Habiru,* who they believe would later be identified as Israel. A. Mazar explains the difficulty in this association: "Such a theory perhaps explains the origin of most of the components of the Israelite confederation, but it still does not elucidate the identity of that confederation's nuclear group, which initiated Yahwism and was responsible for the traditions concerning slavery in Egypt, the Exodus, Mount Sinai, and the role of Moses. At present archaeology can contribute nothing to answering this question."[120] The Num 20:14 text,

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[119] Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land,* 207.

[120] A. Mazar, *Archaeology in the Land of the Bible,* 355.

however, seems to indicate a close relationship between the *Shasu* and the Israelites. In relation to the *Shasu,* the Israelites are described as "your brother Israel." Furthermore, a list of *Shasu* found at Amenhotep III's temple in Soleb includes one labled "*Yhw-* in the land of the *Shasu*", which is understood to refer to the Israelite god Yahweh. Because of this, Redford and Rainey propose that the *Shasu* are actually Israelites. However, it is unlikely that the *Shasu* and the Israelites were the same group, as the Merneptah stela does not depict the Israelites as *Shasu.* Moreover, archaeologists have discovered a stele from Beth-Shean erected for Ramesses II around the same period that continues to mention the *Shasu.* In dealing with this discrepancy some have suggested that the name "Israel" was not used until after the conquest of Canaan, explaining its absence in earlier sources.

LITERARY MYTHOLOGY

While many archaeologists have spent their lifetimes trying to authenticate the Exodus with tangible evidence, conversely, there are those who would find such attempts futile. There are many scholars who feel that the story of the Exodus is purely a literary creation. They suggest that in order to fully understand the Exodus narrative one must also see how it relates to the broader corpus of Near Eastern narratives. Several different theories by biblical scholars are represented below, but, as Carol A. Redmount explains, despite their differences, there is still an element of universal agreement within this group:

> ...scholars of all critical schools agree that the Exodus account as it stands today is a composite, a literary construct, carefully composed and edited to achieve historical and theological coherence, and that this composite is made up of smaller units that have been transmitted and redacted over centuries.[121]

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[121] Carol A. Redmount, "Bitter Lives: Israel in and out of Egypt," ed Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 84.

The level of historical and theological coherence within the text raises many questions about the text's purpose.

With little regard to the inconclusive archaeological data, biblical scholars have pointed to the mythological nature of the Exodus narrative and have determined that there are too many mythical elements for it to be coincidental. They have called the narrative: heroic fiction, folklore, myth, motif, legend, and allegory. In much the same way that the Exodus narrative is scrutinized, so too do biblical scholars tear the figure of Moses apart. Alt, for example, regards Moses as a heroic national myth rather than a historical character.[122] Just as there is no material poof to show that the Exodus occurred, so too is there no proof that Moses was a real man. However, there are scholars who still argue that a lack of direct proof is not reason enough to doubt the story's historicity. Hoffmeier explains, "It seems to me . . . that if the narratives look like history, are structured historiographically, and the events described . . . are not incredible and compare favorably with the Egyptian backgrounds . . . then the narratives ought to be considered historical until there is evidence to the contrary."[123] Such a difference in perspective regarding absolute proof has resulted in a never-ending debate about the historical validity of Moses and the Exodus.

One could, with good reason, assume that Moses was a fictional character based on his hero status. If we look at Moses as a hero in the Exodus story, his character can be analyzed in much the same way as any other literary hero. Both Moses' larger-than-life role in the Exodus and his mythic nature strongly suggest that Moses was merely an invention of the writers. Most who assert this (like Gosta Ahlstrom, Niels Peter Lemche, and B. F. Batto) are biblical scholars

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[122] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 329.

[123] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt, 97.*

who see the story through the lenses of literary criticism. Upon recognizing literary motifs in the Exodus story, these scholars conclude that the text is merely a historicization of a mythic event.[124] If one were to accept the literary proof that Moses was a creation of the writers, it would make sense to also look at reasons *why* the writers would have created him. David H. Aaron argues in his work *Etched in Stone* that Moses acts as a "literary pawn."

> What is being assumed here is that Moses, regardless of whether or not he was a real human being situated in a real time and place, ends up a literary pawn in the hands of a variety of writers, each of whom will use the Moses persona to great advantage. . . . Even if there was a historical Moses, we are still left with the task of understanding why he was depicted as he was in a literature that was written eight hundred years after he would have lived. [125]

From this perspective it makes sense that several Bible scholars have viewed the Exodus events as retrojections of a later period, not historical reality. Some define Moses not so much in relationship to how the society views their own history, but rather by how he was used by those who created him.

Searching for the authors' motives, Finkelstein and Silberman suggest that: ". . . in almost every case [of emerging sophisticated genres of writing] they are a sign of state formation, in which power is centralized in national institutions like an official cult or monarchy."[126] Similarly, Raz Kletter argues that "a nation is almost by necessity structured out of the fabric of myths: myths about history, myths about origins."[127] If we understand the nation of Israel as an "invented community," there is clear motivation for the character of Moses. Scholars who understand the Exodus narrative as a late literary creation rely heavily on the

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[124] Ibid, 108.

[125] David H. Aaron, *Etched in Stone* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 66.

[126] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 22.

[127] Raz Kletter, *Just Past? The Making of Israeli Archaeology*, (Oakville, Conn.: Equinox, 2006), 318.

presupposition that the "Deuteronomistic History" (Joshua-Kings) is a product of the Persian period, or the Hellenistic era.[128] This is the argument E. Theodore Mullen Jr. makes in *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch,* in which he builds upon an older theory set forth by Noth. Mullen argues that the Persian period (c. fifth century B.C.E.) is the actual setting for the creation of the Tetrateuch (the first four books of the Torah). He believes the Tetrateuch was developed to meet communal, religious, and ethnic needs and that the story as we know it was written in the Persian period as a metaphor, created by later writers to help deal with their current historical reality. He argues that its creation "is directly related to the formation of a distinctive Judahite ethnic identity that was recreated during the Second Temple period."[129] Such ideas have been reflected in the work of Rainer Albertz. He points out that "new insights of Pentateuchal criticism make it clear that the conception of the early period of Israel propagated in the Pentateuch derives in its present form only from the early post-exilic period; in other words, there is a period of a good 800 years between it and the real historical course of events."[130]

Aaron, who bases much of his work on intertextuality,[131] has similarly posited that the entire Exodus narrative was written later as an allegory for the exilic experience.[132] He sees the Babylonian exile as parallel to the return from Egypt. Aaron has identified that, at its core, "the

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[128] Dever, "Some Methodological Reflections," 415.

[129] Mullen Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations*, 11.

[130] Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period: Volume I From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy*, (trans by John Bowden in 1994; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 23.

[131] "Intertextuality" as defined by Christopher Keep, Tim McLaughlin, Robin Parmar on http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0278.html: "Derived from the Latin *intertexto*, meaning to intermingle while weaving, intertextuality is a term first introduced by French semiotician Julia Kristeva in the late sixties."

[132] Aaron, *Etched in Stone* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 204.

Exodus story was about the ingathering of a previously exiled people."[133] Moses clearly appears as a reflection of the Persian reality, had the Exodus been created during that time. Aaron explains:

> If one removes the action from the specific historical context in which it is presented and understands these narratives in the context of an exiled people looking for hope of some form of restoration and return to their land, then Egypt and the Pharaoh may be understood in metaphoric terms as any land and ruler that would try to enslave the people of Yahweh and hinder them from their service to him.[134]

Aaron also poses a difficulty in accepting Moses as historical based on what some have labeled an "argument of silence." Aaron points out that Moses is notably absent in biblical texts that were composed after the Exodus would have happened, such as the work of the literary prophets. For instance, in referring to the silence about the Exodus in Isaiah's writing, Aaron concludes that there are two explanations to this problem: "Either Moses was not known because he was crafted *after* the literature we are considering, or his story was not particularly relevant to the literary goals of the prophetic writers."[135] Aaron argues that it would be difficult to claim that the prophets would have found the acts in Exodus irrelevant to the Jewish people, so much so, that they would forget to mention the Exodus. The absence of material evidence, which in this case is any written allusion to the Exodus, is proof that an exodus never occurred. It should be noted, however, that claims based on the silence of a text are not universally accepted. In fact, they are quite controversial. In his book, *It Ain't Necessarily So,* John McCarthy reminds us of a common expression in the field of archaeology: "Absence of evidence is not evidence of

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[133] Ibid., 187.

[134] Mullen Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations,* 182.

[135] Aaron, *Etched in Stone*, 117.

absence."[136] There are also those, like Hoffmeier, who feel strongly that ". . . the burden of proof lies with the modern investigator, not the ancient writer who cannot explain himself to the modern investigator."[137] Others have also argued that additional factors may account for the omissions Aaron refers to, in particular the political climate in which the works were printed.

One of the most common explanations for the creation of Moses is based on similarities he shares with characters found in other Near Eastern works. Redford points out:

> The historical Moses is most unlikely to have endured so traumatic an infancy. Any folklorist recognizes the tale of an imperiled child of illustrious lineage, abandoned by its natural parents and raised in obscurity by foster parents, only at length to come into its own. This is, more or less, the biography of Oedipus, Romulus, King Arthur, Snow White, Tarzan, Superman and innumerable less familiar heroes (Rank 1952; Redford 1967; Lewis 1980: 149-276).[138]

Sarna, too, points out that the birth story of Moses has the same motif as any other birth story of a hero.[139] So long as they were aware of it, it is likely that the writers of the Exodus used this birth motif. And, according to Stephanie Dalley, it is likely that they *were* aware of it. Dalley points out that "plagiarism and adaptability are characteristics of written literature in ancient Mesopotamia. . . ."[140] She further explains that the use of such a motif in Hebrew literature is plausible: "Akkadian myths and epics were universally known during antiquity, and they were not restricted to the Akkadian language. . . ."[141] Dalley explains:

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[136] John McCarthy, introduction to *It Ain't Necessarily So: Investigating the Truth of the Biblical Past*, by Matthew Sturgis, (London: Headline, 2001), 12.

[137] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 16.

[138] Propp, *The Anchor Bible Exodus 1-18*, 155.

[139] Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary Exodus*, 267-8.

[140] Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Other*, (rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xvii.

[141] Ibid., xviii-xix.

> We must leave open the question of whether the Moses story depends directly upon an Assyrian, Egyptian, or Hittite prototype. Only the last clearly antedates the Bible. But the Sargon story, which may be older than the tablets on which it survives, is the closest to Exodus, and direct influence is not impossible. . . . [142]

Dalley and Redford are correct–there is a compelling reason to assume that the Moses story was created from a legend already in circulation. As referred to above, a biography of another Near Eastern hero with an identical motif has been found in cuneiform. The Mesopotamian "Legend of Sargon," describing the life of King Sargon of Akkad (2371-2316 B.C.E.), the great empire builder, includes a similar birth story to that of Moses in Exod 2:3.[143] Brian Lewis has explained that found in both is the "exposed-child motif." He suggests that this well-known motif may have influenced the writers of the Moses birth story and the "Legend of Sargon." Noth agrees with Lewis' analysis and additionally points out that even the words in Exod 2:1-10 have Egyptian etymology. Redford and Sarna, however, do not buy Lewis' theory and conclude that these legends are not true parallels. Sarna explains:

> A close examination of the account of the birth of Moses clearly demonstrates striking differences that distinguish it from the foregoing examples. Other than the life-threatening exposure of the infant, all the significant details of the Torah's narrative are antithetical to the conventional characteristics of the literary genre that has to do with the birth legends of heroes. [144]

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[142] Ibid., 158.

[143] The "Legend of Sargon" states: "*Sargon, strong king, king of Agade, am I. My mother was a high priestess, my father I do not know. My paternal kin inhabit the mountain region. My city (of birth) is Azupiranu, which lies on the bank of the Euphrates. My mother, a high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me. She placed me in a reed basket, with bitumen she caulked my hatch. She abandoned me to the river from which I could not escape. The river carried me along: to Aqqi, the water drawer, it brought me. Aqqi, the water drawer, when immersing his bucket lifted me up. Aqqi, the water drawer, raised me as his adopted son. Aqqi, the water drawer, set me to his garden work. During my garden work, Istar loved me (so that) 55 years I ruled as king.*"

[144] Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary Exodus*, 267-8. Sarna basis his work on Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, ed. P. Freund (New York: Vintage Books, 1959) and Redford's "The Literary Motif of the Exposed Child," Numen 14 (1967): 209-218 and B. Lewis' *The Sargon Legend*, Cambridge: ASOR (Diss Series No 4), 1980.

As described, it is clear that there is a good possibility that Moses and the Exodus are based on the "Legend of Sargon" or other Near Eastern literary motifs, such as the "exposed-child." However, as scholars have also pointed out, there are a number of differences in the stories to imply that they may be separate after all.[145]

DATING THE EXODUS SOJOURN

In order to answer the question of whether or not there was an actual exodus, scholars have also examined possible dates that such an event could have taken place. To some, looking for a possible exodus date may seem like a purely academic exploration. However, it is important to recognize that actually attempting to date the Exodus is often an acknowledgement in and of itself that the Exodus was a historical event, for dating the Exodus is only significant if the researcher accepts the Exodus narrative as a historical reality.

According to Jewish tradition, the way to date the Exodus is to rely on I Kgs 6:1, in which the Bible states that Solomon began building the temple in the fourth year of his reign, 480 years after the Exodus occurred. Commentators have defined the number 480 to be a symbolic figure. It is calculated based on twelve generations multiplied by forty, the number of years associated with one generation. Thus, if Solomon took office in c. 966 B.C.E., then the Exodus would have occurred c.1446 B.C.E. and the conquest would have began in c.1406 B.C.E.[146] Though seemingly a straightforward answer to the question, there are inconsistencies in the biblical versions that make this date less than reliable. Sarna explains that the problem with dating the Exodus "flows as much from the problems inherent in the biblical record itself as

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[145] For more information see online: http://www.tektonics.org/copycat/sargon.html.

[146] Bruce Feiler, *Walking the Bible*, 174.

from the absence of satisfying direct evidence from extrabiblical sources."[147] An example of this is found with the number 480. The verses in the Masoretic and Septuagint Bibles are not uniform. While the Masoretic text claims that 480 years had passed since the Exodus, the Septuagint claims that it was only 440 years, dating an exodus closer to c. 1400 B.C.E.

Many biblical scholars have objected to the traditional early dating of the Exodus for various reasons. They point to other biblical texts that cause us to take pause with the traditional methodology. To begin with, there are no parallel examples in the Hebrew Bible establishing that a single generation lived 40 years. In fact, scholars have actually suggested that a generation is closer to 25 years. This being the case, twelve multiplied by twenty-five yields three hundred years, which, when added to Solomon's fourth year, puts the Exodus c. 1267 B.C.E., much later than c. 1450 B.C.E. Additionally, problematic for traditional dating is the fact that biblical genealogical lists do not necessarily support their date. Kitchen and Hoffmeier have argued against this date and show through sequential dating (for the most part) that the results exceed 480 years. Kitchen explains: ". . . if we take that trouble to actually tote up all the individual figures known from Exodus to Kings in that period, they do not add up to 480 years." He concludes instead that the total span is closer to 600 years.[148] Such a date would indicate that the Exodus occurred even earlier, during the period of the Hyksos.

In addition to using genealogical data to help date the Exodus, scholars have turned to details in the biblical text that reflect the period of which the text describes. The difficulty with this, however, is that often interpretation of texts is subjective. For instance, the argument for an early date (c. 15th century B.C.E.) is marginally corroborated by the biblical text, but still fails as

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[147] Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1986), 7.

[148] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt,* 125; Kenneth Andrew Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 202-203.

a workable date. The early date is supported by Exod 1:11, which refers to the store cities of Pithom and Rameses. Both of these cities have been excavated and identified, thus granting proof of their historicity. However, the text does not work cleanly with this historical data. Some scholars, such as Hoffmeier and Albertz, speculate that the verse reveals the time period in which the event occurred. If this is the case, then the use of the name "Rameses" suggests that the Exodus tradition likely came from the 13th century B.C.E. Sources have indicated that the city of Rameses was not so named until the 14th century, since there was no pharaoh named Ramesses until 1320 B.C.E, when the Ramesside capital flourished.[149] This, however, would be more than a century after the biblical date. The name "Ramses" would have been inconceivable to the Egyptians in the 15th century B.C.E. It would not make sense that if the Israelites were in Egypt at that time they would call the city "Rameses." In their time, the city would have been called "Avaris." Using this data, it seems that the event would have taken place after that point, discrediting the early biblical date.

This theory regarding Exod 1:11 has not been universally accepted. Scholars have acknowledged that there is always the chance such details were later accretions by a biblical writer who was familiar with the later name. Other scholars, like Niels Peter Lemche[150] and Hans Goedicke,[151] have difficulties with the verse not because of the use of "Rameses," but because of the city named "Pithom". They provide evidence that the Egyptian word "Pithom", "House of [the god] Atum," was not used as a specific place name until a later period. At that point such a city name would never have existed. These scholars also argue for an even later

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[149] Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion*, 44; Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt,* 119.

[150] Lemche, *Prelude to Israel's Past*, 56.

[151] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt,* 119.

composition of the Exodus narrative and find discrepancies with the name "Pithom" insignificant. They acknowledge that details like "Pithom" are anachronistic and clarify such anachronisms as literary retrojections. It is most likely that the writer(s) of the Exodus knew of the name "Pithom" from a later time period. When a writer from a later period infuses details from his own period into the "older" literary work scholars consider it to be a retrojection.[152]

Halpern claims that the basic political chronology of the Iron Age is fixed by lists of Assyrian kings and eponyms, whose reigns can be dated with certainty. Assyrian historical records include a reference to the solar eclipse of June 15, 763 B.C.E. which, he explains, allows scholars to project regnal lengths forward and backward from that point.[153] Such extra-biblical annals help provide a political chronology of the Iron Age, providing reference points from which to establish an exodus date. By relying on the synchronism of "passages concerning foreign monarchs and international events from Mesopotamian, Aramaic and Moabite sources . . . " with the regnal lengths given in the two books of Kings , Halpern concludes that the Exodus tradition goes back to the late 12th or 11th century B.C.E.[154] Egyptologists, such as Manfred Bietek have also examined the Egyptian records and suggest an Exodus date of c. 1150 B.C.E.

Scholars have also looked at what evidence there is to show that the Israelites were ever in Egypt at all to date such an event. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, textual and archaeological data have provided us with several chronological markers to help figure this out. Most of these, in contrast to the biblical text, have indicated a later dating of the Exodus. Most who prefer a later date for the Exodus assume that if the event did take place, it must have

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[152] Ibid., 120.

[153] Baruch Halpern, "Eyewitness Testimony: Parts of Exodus Written within Living Memory of the Event," *BAR* 29:05 (Sept/Oct 2003).

[154] Ibid., 50, 57.

occurred during the late 13th century B.C.E. (c. 1290 B.C.E.) There are a number of reasons for this date that have yet to be mentioned.

One of the most frequent markers cited by scholars to defend this later date is again the Egyptian Merneptah Victory Stele. Composed at the end of the 13th century B.C.E. this stele mentions a group known as "Israel" that was subdued in Canaan. It is significant to point out, as does Smith, that this shows us that "Israel was differentiated as early as 1200 from its Canaanite forebears." [155] The Merneptah Stele is seen as a significant chronological marker, particularly to those who accept that an exodus involved all of Israel. The stele places the Exodus prior to the time the stele was composed (c.1207 B.C.E.), which proves problematic for some of the later dates posited above. The mention of Israel in Canaan at the end of the 13th century precludes an exodus date later than 1200 B.C.E. (such as was suggested by Bietak).[156] Though helpful for us in this manner, others have argued that the stele is irrelevant to the Exodus discussion. Laughlin argues that "without assuming the biblical story in advance, there is absolutely nothing in the stela inscription itself to suggest to anyone that this 'Israel' was ever in Egypt."[157] He argues, rather, that the biblical Israelites emerged 200 years later under the rule of Saul and David. Additionally, the stele loses authority if one considers it is possible that there were Israelites who remained behind in Egypt.

Another chronological marker is the tomb of Rekhmire, governor of Thebes and vizier, from the 18th Dynasty. According to Courtlandt Canby and Arcadia Kocybala's *Guide to the Archaeological Sites of Israel, Egypt and North Africa* "this tomb offers a variety of painted activities: his [Rekhmire's] own investiture as vizier, more foreign tribute-bearers, craftsmen at

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[155] Smith, *The Early History of God*, 27.

[156] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 126.

[157] Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible*, 90.

work, hunting, funerary and banqueting scenes."[158] The Rekhmire scene demonstrates that prisoners of war, beginning in the 18th Dynasty, were engaged in brick-making work. Additionally, Semitic-speaking peoples were employed in connection with building projects for the state.[159] Dever believes this group of people could have included the Israelites: "Asiatic slaves–among them possibly the ancestors of the Israelites–may indeed have been employed in making mudbricks (Exod 5:5-21) for Ramses II's construction projects there and elsewhere in the Delta."[160]

WAS THERE AN EXODUS FOR SURE?

We have examined the four most common methods of proving that there was an exodus: the *Hyksos* Theory, the *Habiru* Hypothesis, literary criticism, and indications that there may have been Israelites in Egypt. It is clear that even using different approaches, there is still no definitive way to interpret the evidence (or lack thereof). Despite reasonable scholarly theories, there will always be levels of subjectivity involved in literary criticism, biblical studies, and archaeology. How one chooses to look at the available proof often mirrors how one looks at the world. It is practically impossible to separate a scholar's theological and political issues from pure scholarly discovery. For this reason it seems that the archaeological evidence alone may not provide the answers that people are searching for. Rather, everyone gains deeper understanding and finds meaningful answers about the text when scholars of related fields collaborate on archaeological and biblical research. A broader understanding of the Exodus

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[158] Canby and Kocybala, *A Guide to the Archaeological Sites,* 178.

[159] Ibid, 114.

[160] Dever, *Who Were the Israelites,* 15.

question will enable one not only to consider the viability of the Exodus, but the religious implications as well.

Did David and Solomon Exist?

Jewish children around the world have grown up singing and chanting the words "*David melech Yisrael, chai v'kayam*" (David, the king of Israel, lives and endures). From infancy, Jewish children are taught about the legendary courage of King David and the extraordinarily wise King Solomon. Jewish life abounds with reminders of the United Monarchy rulers. From the walls of religious school classrooms to the streets of modern day Jerusalem, David and Solomon are essential to the Jewish understanding of Israel. Because of such an identity-forming and seemingly historical legacy, the stories of David and Solomon have been accepted as fact without question. Today, however, scholars have begun to use various means of modern technology to unearth the United Monarchy's past. In doing so, however, a lack of evidence compounded by multiple interpretations of evidence have led to deliberations concerning what the United Monarchy looked like during the times of David and Solomon. Was there actually a monarchy? Did David and Solomon actually exist? What evidence has been found about Israel's "Golden Age"?

In order to answer these questions scholars have turned back to the biblical texts, as well as to extra-biblical writings and archaeological data. Unfortunately, however, little consensus has been reached. There is virtually no evidence archaeologically for a 10th-century United Monarchy[161] as described in the Bible. In addition to only finding a small amount of material remaining in Jerusalem from the 10th century B.C.E., it also appears that only a small population

[161] This refers to the period when the Israelites united to form a single state under a single monarch (c.1050-920 B.C.E.)

resided in the area at that time. This is further complicated as few extra-biblical works from this period survive by which to verify the biblical stories. In fact, there is not one single mention of David and Solomon in texts found in regional texts from the 10th century. Only recently has archaeology been able to corroborate the existence of a "house of David" in any form. A gap appears from what the biblical texts report and what the extra-biblical evidence reveals. Predictably, minimalists, maximalists and several moderate scholars have proposed a plethora of answers to this difficulty.

BIBLICAL TEXTS

The biblical texts that discuss David and Solomon are mostly located in the books of Samuel, 1 Kings,[162] and 1 Chronicles. The picture painted is colorful and grandiose. The two kings were not only renowned in Israel and Judah but they were prominent throughout the region. Readers learn that the "fame of David went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations."[163] David was a fierce warrior; he heroically conquered Jerusalem[164] and defeated his enemies. Most notable, however, is that David and his legacy were sustained in this position by God.[165] Solomon was recognized for amassing great riches together with a great name.[166] Reportedly, he received such an abundance of wisdom from God that he was known for this throughout his own land and in foreign lands.[167] People would come from all over the world

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[162] There is a parallel history in 1 and 2 Chronicles.

[163] 1 Chr 14:17

[164] 2 Sam 5:6-10; 1 Chr 11:4-9

[165] 2 Chr 1:1

[166] 2 Chr. 9:13-28; 1 Kgs 10:14-29

[167] 1 Kgs 4:29-34

to hear his proverbial wisdom. Today our communities continue to shore up the example of Solomon and his insightful judgment regarding two mothers laying claim to the same child.[168]

Grandiose descriptions of David and Solomon leave biblical readers with expectations that the City of Jerusalem was a well-populated center of Near Eastern life in the 10th century B.C.E. Surely there must be evidence to be found archaeologically to expose the richness of this period. And if not, wouldn't it make sense that David and Solomon, who were so feared and respected throughout the entire region, would have been described in texts of neighboring populations? These expectations have been the root of why archaeologists and biblical scholars are confused by the evidence that has (or has not) surfaced.

Scholars argue that there are too many fine points of detail given about names and administrative workings for the biblical stories to have emerged much later than the events described.[169] The level of specificity indicates that the biblical stories were written close to the time of David and Solomon. There are a variety of explanations for when that occurred. Some posit that the Israelites of the 10th century B.C.E. were literate, allowing later writers to rely on their scribal notes for details. Some scholars, however, deny there were ever early documents. Furthermore, they criticize the use of later biblical documents for historical proof. Even as most of 1 Kgs 1-11 contains early traditions, it also contains obvious later additions and glosses.[170]

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[168] 1 Kgs 3:16-28

[169] Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 263.

[170] Andre Lemaire, "The United Monarchy: Saul, David and Solomon," in *Ancient Israel*, Ed. H.Shanks. (Washington, D.C.: Prentice Hall, 1988), 97.

These sections are composed in late monarchic Hebrew and are part of a distinct literary corpus known as the Deuteronomistic History.[171]

Some scholars who do not believe these later works were based on previously written materials, argue that the stories about David and Solomon are fictional.[172] There are some who even ascribe these texts to the seventh century B.C.E., although more extreme claims have emerged recently. Scholars now allege that these writings are products of much later periods, such as the Persian period and the Hellenistic Era.[173] Note that this alternative dating system is not merely a few years off from common dating theories, but it differs by several hundred years. If one accepts that the biblical texts are from Persian or Hellenistic times, then the narratives as we know them emerge as unreliable due to the great expanse of time from after the death of both kings to the time this "history" was written down.

Dever, notably in opposition to minimalist claims such as these, further elucidates this position: "In their view, the Hebrew Bible's (and modern scholarship's) 'ancient Israel' is an invention—a tortuous exercise in self-identification of confused Jews living in Hellenistic Palestine, a typical 'foundation myth'." Finkelstein and Silberman loudly defend the idea that Solomon and David were outgrowths of foundation myths laid out by later priests, claiming that ". . . in almost every case [of emerging sophisticated genres of writing] they are a sign of state formation, in which power is centralized in national institutions like an official cult or monarchy."[174] Kletter similarly points out that in addition to this emerging genre, the concept of

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[171] The Deuteronomistic History is so called because these writings display a strong resemblance to the theological and linguistic styles of the book of Deuteronomy. Many scholars believe that the Deuteronomistic History was recorded in its present form during the reign of King Josiah (639-609 B.C.E.) but the events described by the Deuteronomistic History date back to the 10th century B.C.E. (early Iron Age II).

[172] Finkelstein and Silberman, *David and Solomon,* 261.

[173] Dever, "Some Methodological Reflections," 415.

nationhood is also usually based on myths. He writes: "Anderson (1983), Smith (1991) and others showed that the nation is an 'invented community.' A nation is almost by necessity structured out of the fabric of myths: myths about history, myths about origins."[175] Mullen helps to fill in what such origin myths might have been for the Israelites. He argues that the creation of the United Monarchy narrative is "directly related to the formation of a distinctive Judahite ethnic identity that was recreated during the Second Temple period."[176]

Whether or not the text has elements of a "foundational myth," [177] there are good reasons for recognizing literary motifs in the biblical text. The overt agenda of the writer demands some skepticism. According to Andre Lemaire, "most of the account of David's reign was written to glorify and justify David and his son Solomon."[178] In fact, he suggests that David's promise to Bathsheba about Solomon's kingship is a literary artifice, not history, written to justify and extol Solomon. Davies posits that the authors of the text were religious ideologues who worked for the centralized temple government.[179] Without proof of who wrote these texts, when, and in what context, scholars are left to develop their own theories. Resulting from the complexity of the biblical text, scholars often find that the only way to really write a history of early Israel is to use non-Biblical sources and archaeological evidence.[180]

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[174] Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 22.

[175] Kletter, *Just Past*, 318.

[176] Mullen Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations*, 11.

[177] See Mullen's *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations* and Thomas Thompson's *The Mythic Past.*

[178] Lemaire, "United Monarchy," 97.

[179] Finkelstein and Silberman, *David and Solomon*, 261.

[180] Nadav Na'aman, "Cow Town or Royal Capitol: Evidence for Iron Age Jerusalem." *BAR 23:04 (July/Aug 1997)*, n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM.*

EXTRA-BIBLICAL TEXTS

Assyrian chronicles from the ninth-seventh centuries B.C.E. have been useful in understanding the debate about David and Solomon's existence. These lists span 261 years (910-641 B.C.E.)[181] and enable scholars to verify early dates by means of ancient records of natural phenomena, such as solar or lunar eclipses. Na'aman writes:

> We have seen several lines of evidence converge to place Solomon in the mid-tenth century B.C. The most direct are the Assyrian and Egyptian king lists, which agree very nicely with the Biblical royal chronologies and point to 970–930 B.C. as the time of Solomon's rule. Our date for Solomon also dovetails with geo-political realities.[182]

Scholars have looked to contemporaneous annals and administrative works to assess the historical reliability of the biblical text.[183] Unfortunately, there are only a few that are actually helpful for positioning David and Solomon in history. This is mostly related to the rule of Pharaoh Shishak (945-924 B.C.E.), which archaeology has confirmed. Both a topographical list[184] describing Shishak's Egyptian military campaign in Canaan and a fragment of a memorial stela set up by Shishak found at Megiddo reflect information specific to Shishak's campaign.[185]

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[181] Kenneth A. Kitchen, "How We Know When Solomon Ruled: Synchronisms with Egyptian and Assyrian rulers hold the key to dates of Israelite kings," *BAR 27:05 (Sep/Oct 2001)*, n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM.*

[182] Na'aman, "Cow Town or Royal Capital? Evidence for Iron Age Jerusalem," Editor, H. S. 2004; 2004. *BAR 27:05 (Sep/Oct 2001)*. Biblical Archaeology Society.

[183] Lemaire, "United Monarchy," 104.

[184] Shishak was the first Egyptian ruler mentions by name in the Hebrew Bible. He is also the first foreign monarch listed in the Bible for whom we have collaborative extra-biblical evidence.

[185] 2 Chr 11:5–12. See Bryant G. Wood, "BAR's 20th Anniversary Scholars Speak Out: Biblical Archaeology's Greatest Achievement." *BAR 21:03 (May/June 1995)*. n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM.*

The information contained in these records corresponds with biblical data found in 1 Kgs 14:25-26 and 2 Chr 12:2-9. The convergence of the biblical and extra-biblical texts involving Pharoah Shishak's campaign lends credence to the corresponding biblical texts of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

Some archaeologists have also found the Amarna letters useful for supporting the existence of a centralized and literate monarchy in Israel under David and Solomon.[186] This collection of cuneiform tablets describes 14th-century Jerusalem as a capital city that was overseen by Egyptians. This written proof that Amarna age Jerusalem held a centralized government grants credibility to the idea of a United Monarchy. It is determined by the fact that, like with 14th-century Jerusalem, 10th-century Jerusalem is described in the biblical text as literate and centralized, but archaeology would lead us to think otherwise. If we compare the two situations, a lack of archaeological evidence for the United Monarchy does not mean that the biblical text is inaccurate. Cahill asserts that ". . . although the archaeological evidence for Late Bronze Age II Jerusalem is sparse, we may be confident, based on the Amarna letters, that a city, significant for its time, existed then."[187] Coogan defends this position as well, and points out that there may still be evidence to find yet:

> In Jerusalem . . . significant new remains have been uncovered by Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron, and by Eilat Mazar. Evidence for literacy is also increasing, most recently in the discovery in 2005 of an alphabet preliminarily dated to the tenth century B.C.E. at Tel Zayin (Tell Zeitah) in excavations directed by Ron Tappy.[188]

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[186] Michael D. Coogan, "Assessing David & Solomon: From the Hypothetical to the Improbable to the Absurd." *BAR* 32:04 (July/August 2006), 59.

[187] Jane Cahill. "Jerusalem in David and Solomon's Time: It Really Was a Major City in the Tenth Century B.C.E." *BAR* 30:6 (Nov/Dec 2004), 63.

[188] Coogan, "Assessing David & Solomon," 60.

Even though records have been found to help archaeologists assign chronological markers for historical events in the 10th century, they still fail to contain explicit references to either David or Solomon. Perhaps excavations yet to come will reveal the proof archaeologists have been searching for.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

A lack of extra-biblical evidence has made the archaeological evidence all the more important in the case of David and Solomon. Despite scarce evidence of a monarchy, as pointed out by Cahill and Coogan, were one to search for information about the United Monarchy on the internet, one would get the impression that archaeology has made significant contributions to the argument. One would discover websites asserting that archaeology absolutely provides proof of biblical texts such as these.[189] Sites like these provide examples of archaeological remains that prove such a period of rulership was historically likely. Frequently, sites that claim archaeology supports the existence of the David and Solomon will refer to the archaeological work of Kenyon, whose 1961 excavation exposed part of a Jebusite wall surrounding Jerusalem from the time that David is believed to have conquered the city.[190] They will also often report about the discovery of a *tsinnor,* or water shaft, which corresponds to 2 Sam 5:8. According to the Bible, it was by way of this shaft that David's nephew Joab was enabled to enter the city c. 1003 B.C.E.[191]

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[189] An example can be found online: www.gnmagazine.org/issues/gn05/kingdavidmanmyth.htm

[190] Toward the end of the 11th century B.C.E. 2 Samuel 5:6, 7.

[191] In 1867 Capt. Charles Warren discovered a subterranean Jebusite water shaft, possibly the same shaft used by Joab. This theory has since been disproved.

While the evidence described may seem convincing, it pales in comparison to the most recent discovery at Tel Dan that made the front page of the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine. At Tel Dan, archaeologists found an Aramaic inscription from the mid-ninth century that specifically refers to the "house of David" and the "King of Israel."[192] This "house of David" inscription is the first reference to David or his dynasty found outside of the Bible and lends proof to the claim that by the mid-ninth century David's kingdom was established and well-known.[193] The content of the inscription is compatible with the Hebrew Bible; it resembles the 1 Kgs 15:20 account in which Ben-Hadad attacked the northern kingdom of Israel. Only a few years before the Tel Dan inscription was unearthed, Lemaire had similarly interpreted the Mesha Stela[194] to contain a reference to the "house of David."[195] The Tel Dan inscription is believed to be the long-sought-after proof to seal the case of the United Monarchy. Based on information found in magazines and on public websites, archaeology seems to indicate that David and Solomon reigned in 10th-century Jerusalem—case closed. If this case is closed, however, why is the topic such a hot issue today?

Unfortunately, the data does not provide archaeologists with definitive case-cracking evidence. In fact, scholars have begun to look twice at the material. The discovery of the "city of David," the oldest part of Jerusalem located on a spur south of the Temple Mount, as well as the unearthing of what may even be David's palace has given reason to believe that the stories of David and Solomon are true. However, excavations in Jerusalem have yielded little other evidence to prove this. Some scholars, like Ussishkin, argue that "Jerusalem has failed to

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[192] David's dynasty is believed to have been c. 1010-970 B.C.E.

[193] Hershel Shanks, "Happy Accident: David Inscription." *BAR* 31:05 (September/October 2005), 46.

[194] The Mesha Stela is a basalt stela erected to celebrate victory for King Mesha of Moab in the late ninth century B.C.E

[195] Lemaire, "'House of David' Restored in Moabite Inscription," *BAR* 20:03 (May/June 1994), 31-2.

produce any evidence of an occupational stratum, a fortification wall, or even pottery from the period of the United Monarchy."[196] Furthermore, scholars judge that the evidence that has been discovered is faulty. According to Dever, minimalists have come to this decision only because they choose to view the archaeological evidence as "ambiguous, inconclusive, ultimately irrelevant."[197]

This has certainly been the case with regards to the most definitive data available—as minimalists deny any relationship between the Tel Dan inscription and the Davidic dynasty. Davies has argued that the archaeological claims made about the inscription are not factually true. He cannot accept Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh's translation of "BYTDWD" as "house of David." Davies argues instead that, since there is no word divider between "BYT" (house) and "DWD" (David), it is only by a stretch of imagination that one can view this single word as two separate words. Additionally, he points out alternative ways one may define "DWD" that he believes are presumably more likely than "David." He also stresses that all that remains of the original Tel Dan inscription are 13 lines, and not one of them is complete.[198] Because of the amount of speculation needed to complete the content, Davies is suspect of the actual meaning of the inscription. In fact, he points out that the narrative as translated by Biran and Naveh actually varies from the biblical episode in 1 Kgs 15:16-22, adding more ambiguity.[199] Most archaeologists have acknowledged that there is a discrepancy between the inscription and the 1 Kings text, but consider it minor because of the context in which it was likely written.

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[196] Cahill. "Jerusalem in David and Solomon's Time," 20.

[197] Dever, "Some Methodological Reflections," 417.

[198] Avraham Biran, "David Found at Dan," *BAR 20:02* (March/April 1994), 33. It should be noted that both "House of David" and "King of Israel" (*melech Yisrael)* were found intact.

[199] Davies, "'House of David' Built on Sand," n.p.

Davies' analysis of the Tel Dan inscription seems short-sighted in the way it denies overt biblical and historical correlations. However, he is not alone in his criticism. Gustav Niebuhr also raises a concern:

> It should be noted that "David" is the name of an old Cannaanite god, which is likely the reason there would be an inscription with his name on it. In 1975 at Ebla, Syria, there were found 20,000 clay tablets, 4500 years old, a thousand years before the biblical David and Solomon supposedly lived. These tablets contain the names of various apparent Canaanite gods, such as "Ab-ra-mu (Abraham), E-sa-um (Esau), Ish-ma-ilu (Ishmael), even Is-ra-ilu (Israel), and from later periods names like Da-'u'dum (David) and Sa-'u-lum (Saul)."[200]

Niebuhr's explanation, though provocative, is problematic. Niebuhr shows that there are other uses for the name David (which, by the way, is an acknowledgement of Biran and Naveh's translation), but he does not back up his argument with evidence to suggest that dynasties were at any time defined by names of gods. Additionally, Niebuhr does not address the narrative correlations that scholars have found in the full Tel Dan text that refer to I Kgs 15:16-22. Both texts describe a war involving Judah, Israel and Aram, a detail that is much too coincidental to be discounted as quickly as it is by Niebuhr.

Despite the abundance of material supporting the existence of David and Solomon, we are still left without solid archaeological proof that Jerusalem was as important a city in the 10th century B.C.E. as the biblical text asserts. Without this, scholars have doubts as to the actual nature of David and Solomon as leaders or the extent of their kingdom. They may have existed, but where is the proof that they ruled a huge empire? Carol Meyers describes how "by the middle of the tenth century, according to the biblical narrative, this state reached near-imperial proportions, complete with a capital city, complex regional centers, a royal court, luxury goods,

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[200] Gustav Niebur, "The Bible, as History, Flunks New Archaeological Tests," *The New York Times,* July 29, 2000. Quoted online: www.truthbeknown.com/bibleflunks.htm.

and other social, economic, and political features associated with the concentration of power in a monarchy."[201] According to Finkelstein, however, archaeology has revealed no evidence to support a community like this:

> In the 10th century Jerusalem was a small, poor, unfortified village (Finkelstein 2001; Ussishkin 2003); meticulous surveys show that the highlands of Judah—the backbone of the supposed great United Monarchy—was sparsely inhabited in the 10th century by a dozen of small villages, with a population of no more than a few thousand people (Lehmann 2003). There is no sign of monumental building activity in 10th-century Judah; there is no sign of industrialization of agricultural output; there is no evidence for mass production of pottery; there is no mark of settlement hierarchy.[202]

In a controversial article published in *Harpers' Magazine*, Lazare elucidates on this dilemma:

> Solomon was both a master builder and an insatiable accumulator. He drank out of golden goblets, outfitted his soldiers with golden shields, maintained a fleet of sailing ships to seek out exotic treasures, kept a harem of 1,000 wives and concubines, and spent thirteen years building a palace and a richly decorated temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. Yet not one goblet, not one brick, has ever been found to indicate that such a reign existed. If David and Solomon had been important regional power brokers, one might reasonably expect their names to crop up on monuments and in the diplomatic correspondence of the day. Yet once again the record is silent. True, an inscription referring to "Ahaziahu, son of Jehoram, king of the House of David" was found in 1993 on a fragment dating from the late ninth century B.C. But that was more than a hundred years after David's death, and at most all it indicates is that David (or someone with a similar name) was credited with establishing the Judahite royal line. It hardly proves that he ruled over a powerful empire.

Despite not having discovered the remains of a booming metropolis, there is some archaeological evidence that indicates David and Solomon once lived and an explanation for why there is not more. Cahill points out that Jerusalem was heavily quarried by the Romans and Byzantines and has been rebuilt some 15-20 times. This, she explains, leaves little left for archaeologists.

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[201] Carol Meyers, "Kinship and Kingship: The Early Monarchy," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World,* ed. by Michael D. Coogan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 221.

[202] Israel Finkelstein, "A Low Chronology Update: Archaeology, history and bible," in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science,* ed. by Levy and Higham, (London: Equinox, 2005) 35.

Despite how difficult it is to locate buildings from this period, recently Reich and Shukron exposed remains of a defensive wall in Jerusalem that predates David, lending more credibility that the city was once a stronghold of power.

While Cahill's argument is convincing, it is necessary to consider that, based on the evidence, the descriptions of David as provided in the Hebrew Bible are likely to have been overstated. Yet, the narratives never claim that David was a great builder (like his son Solomon was). His rule mostly focused on wars and political machinations, not on the physical build up of a huge empire. The only major construction built during David's time was a gift from the king of Tyre (2 Sam 5:11; 1 Chr 14:1), which hardly indicates that David was skilled in this field. Because David did not focus on construction, it is not as problematic that only a few buildings have been located.

Though David was not a great architect, Solomon has long been lauded for his construction of new buildings. And, scholars like Na'aman still argue that: "the story of Solomon cannot have been fiction dreamed up in the early Hellenistic period (300 B.C.), as some Biblical minimalists claim. At that late date there were no resources upon which to base such 'dreams,' especially with such accuracy as we find from all these sources."[203] The main source Na'aman refers to is the discovery of early tenth-century gates and stables found in Gezer, Hazor and Meggido that for many years were credited to Solomon for building. Yet, according to

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[203] Na'aman, "Cow Town or Royal Capital," n.p.

Lazare, "recent analysis of pottery shards found on the sites, plus refined carbon-14 dating techniques, indicate that the palaces postdate Solomon's reign by a century or more."[204]

More and more archaeologists like Lazare are using carbon-14 (C-14) dating to establish exactly where the transition occurs from Iron Age I to Iron Age II. Scholars most recently have been using organic samples from Mazar's excavation at Tel Rehov, yet this has only led to more questions than answers. According to Hershel Shanks, after a scholarly conference focused on the results of C-14 dating, participants concluded that "carbon-14 is not the answer. Or, perhaps more accurately, each side regarded the carbon-14 results as supporting its chronology."[205] The difficulties in using radiocarbon dating are that it is still a relatively new science, sample materials can be contaminated, and its dating results are never 100 percent accurate.

This radiocarbon curiosity has sparked an entirely new theory for the 10th century. This alternative theory is credited to Finkelstein and is referred to as "low chronology." His dating system places remains and events previously thought to be 10th-century to later centuries, including placing the construction of the Solomonic gates to 100 years after the time of Solomon. Through this claim, scholars portray David and Solomon as lesser characters built up as "propaganda." Those who subscribe to the "low chronology" generally believe that the biblical writer(s) had an agenda, which they feel is evident in the mythological nature of David and Solomon's fame. They claim that the stories of David and Solomon were written years later. Archaeologists like A. Mazar find such interpretations to be based on personal bias. Through his description of the current argument between tradition dating and "low chronology," Shanks

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[204] Daniel Lazare, "False Testament: Archaeology Refutes the Bible's Claim to History," *Harper's Magazine* (March 2002). Cited 1 January 2007. Online: http://fontes.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/lazare.htm.

[205] Hershel Shanks, "Radiocarbon Dating: How to find your true love." *BAR* 31:01 (January/February 2005), 52.

points out that at a recent conference in Oxford Mazar showed that ultimately there was only a discrepancy of 60 years between the two. Mazar raised the question of scholarly intentions when he asked: "Is it a coincidence that this 60-year period includes King Solomon's reign?"[206] Though C-14 samples raise interesting questions, they are not definitive enough yet to rewrite history with. Until recently C-14 dating had mostly focused on samples determining greater spans of time and have not mastered how to accurately date a short time period such as 60 years. As a result, most scholars reject Finkelstein's "low chronology"[207] and, according to Dever, on this subject Finkelstein is not supported in print by a single other ranking archaeologist.[208]

While the issue of dating the Iron Age with carbon-14 seems only to gives scholars a "chronological headache,"[209] it is quite certain that the Tel Dan inscription is authentic and translates to "house of David." There is clearly good reason for why most scholars give credence to the Tel Dan evidence and take the C-14 discoveries at Tel Rehov with a grain of salt. However, there are good questions raised by these results regarding the size of Jerusalem and the extent of the power of the monarchy.[210]

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[206] Shanks, "Radiocarbon Dating," 53.

[207] Ibid., 50.

[208] Rabbi Dovid Lichtman, "Archaeology and the Bible—Part 2: Is there archaeological evidence that supports the Bible?" Aish.com. Online: http://www.com/societyWork/sciencenature/Archaeology_and_the_Bible_-_Part_2.asp. Cited 8 January 2007.

[209] Ibid., n.p.

[210] Hershel Shanks, "The Mistress of Stratigraphy Had Clay Feet: Kathleen Kenyon's flawed Jerusalem excavation," (review of M.L. Steiner, *Excavations by Kathleen M. Kenyon in Jerusalem 1961-1967, Vol.3—The Settlement in the Bronze and Iron Ages. BAR* 29:03 (May/June 2003).

CHAPTER 4: BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE REFORM RABBINATE

Accessibility of Archaeological Information

When I began work as a full-time Jewish Educator in a Reform congregation, I had no idea what role biblical archaeology might play in my position. Yet, it quickly made its way into my normal routine. On more than one occasion I have been asked about the ancient past and how it affects Jewish lives today. I vividly recall a phone message from a frantic parent up in arms because his child was asked to participate in a play celebrating ancient Egyptian life. His child was absolutely not going to be forced into a production that glorified Egypt, the same community that oppressed his ancestors. He believed that to ask such a thing of his daughter was morally reprehensible. My initial thought was that this man clearly never heard about Joseph, but my second thought dwelt on the fact that he was in crisis between the realities of history as we know it and the significance attributed to those same events in the Bible. It was apparent to me from this conversation that even adults (sometimes *especially* adults) have no idea how and where the Bible and history converge.

Then, of course, there is the difficulty of congregants who believe they do understand where the two converge. Although they have been exposed to modern theories, they are then in such spiritual angst and archaeological confusion that they turn to their rabbis for help. Earlier this year I taught a four-week adult education course about whether or not there had been an exodus as described in the Hebrew Bible. I was shocked to find that less than two weeks after the class I received a letter from a student lauding our discussions and persuading me to write a scholarly article that would, in lay terms, prove that there was an exodus. In fact, he also mailed me his two-paged typed preface for this article, based mostly on scholars I had not talked about, such as Goedicke and Ian Wilson. I admit that I found it difficult to explain to this elderly

gentleman that, despite my numerous time constraints, I was unable to write such an article. It is significant that I had trouble with this conversation even *after* studying the archaeology of the Exodus in depth. So much more difficult would this question be if it were posed to another educator or rabbi with no such experience. Congregants like this one exist in every congregation and eventually will seek more information. Will our teachers be prepared to handle these questions and to do so being gentle to the spiritual needs of the individuals?

Jewish educators, by which I refer to rabbis, cantors and teachers, wield great power over their communities that may go unrecognized. They are the ones to determine at what age and in what context biblical archaeology and critical biblical scholarship are factored into Jewish education, if at all. It is important to recognize that the ramifications of these decisions go beyond just plain ignorance and education. When children are not taught about these issues until they are older, they often feel deceived or cheated of their central religious mythologies. All too often I hear the same set of questions from adults: "Why didn't I learn that in religious school? How dare we teach our children that biblical events are undeniably true? At what age should I present this information to my children? How can I find meaning in the Passover Seder now that I am not sure that Moses ever existed?" Discussions like these have demonstrated to me that our communities are not ready to look critically at the roots of their religious beliefs. However, we would be amiss to assume that just because our congregants may not be emotionally prepared for such questions that they will not be confronted by them.

Everywhere our communities turn, from the *New York Times* to the History Channel, the average layperson is passively soaking up bits and pieces of this material. Key biblical, historical, and theological uncertainties have become popular material for the media. In fact, increased public interest in biblical archaeology has led Cross to claim that "number one in

people's interests is sex and second is archaeology."[211] I cannot defend Cross's statement about how strong an interest the public has in archaeology, however, it strikes me that if a prominent scholar can make such a far-reaching claim, positioning archaeology just below sex, the Jewish community has an obligation to at least have the topic on its radar. Education about biblical archaeology must begin in our congregations with direction from our religious leaders.

SEMINARY

As our rabbis ultimately are responsible for education within the Jewish community, we should look closely at how our educators are educated. Who provides the academic materials to the clergy from whom congregants hope to eventually learn? Are our leaders academically prepared to teach us? I have looked online at some liberal rabbinic seminaries and have found that most programs for training rabbis are not well equipped to teach about archaeological issues dealing with the Bible. I found only three courses offered to rabbinic students at Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)[212] that appear to handle this topic at all. Not one, I must add, is a required course. Yet, in comparison to the University of Judaism (UJ)[213], JTS is in good standing. The UJ rabbinic course-book lists *no classes* in biblical archaeology for the 2006-2007 school year. Having studied at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC),[214] I am grateful this has not been the case. In fact, archaeology is valued highly enough at this rabbinic seminary that an entire school of archaeology is linked to it. Moreover, in courses taught both in history and Bible, modern issues of biblical archaeology have been incorporated.

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[211] Cross, "The History of Israelite Religion," n.p.

[212] JTS is the official seminary of the Conservative Movement.

[213] UJ also trains Conservative rabbis.

[214] HUC-JIR is the official seminary of the Reform Movement.

For students who are excited by the archaeological material, they are offered additional courses as electives and are allotted the chance to work on an archaeological dig with faculty. Despite such an array of opportunities for education, is a rabbinic student who does not take any of these classes knowledgeable enough to be considered a community teacher of biblical archaeology? Even as a soon-to-be-ordained rabbi, I would never make such an audacious claim. The majority of our rabbis, teachers, and educators in the field are not equipped with the essentials to teach about the subject. Dever describes this problem and shows that it is evident in a multitude of seminaries:

> My colleagues tell me that many priests and clergy no longer know Hebrew and Greek and thus cannot read the Bible in the original. The study of the history of ancient Israel, long fundamental to our understanding of biblical Israel and her faith, is scarcely taught in many Protestant seminaries. History and historical exegesis have been replaced by more stylish courses in liberation theology; feminist approaches to the Bible; new literary criticism, including structuralism, semiotics, rhetorical criticism, and even more esoteric 'schools'. . . .[215]

Because clergy and educators are not adequately trained by seminaries to teach biblical archaeology, it is paramount that they are provided curriculum materials and continuing education classes. Our educators need to have access to this information for answering their community's questions, but also for nurturing the community's spiritual growth. From what I have seen, there is a lot of work that needs to be done before our communities can get to that point. I was troubled by what materials I found (and didn't find) that are available to alumni of HUC. Two departments of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), the Joint Commission for Sustaining Rabbinic Education and the Department of Lifelong Learning, offer a variety of adult education material: a scholar-in-residence program, the *Lilmod Ul'lameid* program, adult study courses and Distance Education Mini-Courses. While it is impressive that the URJ has multiple

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[215] Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 3.

means for disseminating adult learning material, I was shocked to see how few of these resources provides either materials or scholars to speak to the subject of archaeology and how it intersects with biblical history. Though I was able to locate yearly archaeology lectures offered at HUC in New York, open to the public through the Kollel, I still feel this is a limited corpus of material.[216]

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

If Jewish educators and adult learners are not offered materials from which to receive accurate and balanced archaeological information, from where does their information come? A rabbi or an educator needs to be prepared to respond intelligently to questions about the discovery of Noah's Ark or the location of Mount Sinai. For better or for worse, media has emerged as the main source of information on biblical archaeology, even for clergy.[217] While some programming is informative, most is not without partiality. Much that is available to the public is supported by agenda-driven groups that are motivated by political or religious issues.[218] Because media often is the only exposure our congregants have to biblical archaeology, Jewish laypeople are stuck in a vulnerable position. Regardless of their bias, media generally neither reflects the entire corpus of available information nor provides an equally balanced range of scholarly theories.

In their successful attempts to make archaeology more accessible to laypeople, the media has created oversimplified and often dramatized productions. Dever, in good company, has

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[216] Online: http://www.huc.edu/kollel/schedule/07/spring/lec/, http://urj.org/Events/index.cfm?id=13015, and http://www.huc.edu/newspubs/pressroom/2005/3/arch.shtml.

[217] In a 1986 letter to the editor, George Wood admits: "...when I taught seminary I often referred to it [*BAR*] to update myself."

[218] For example, see online: www.ChristianAnswers.net.

complained that "the commercial and somewhat cynical exploitation of biblical topics is clearly designed to titillate more than to educate the public."[219] The average person knows more about *Raiders of the Lost Ark* than they do about ancient Judaism. Understandably, archaeologists have been frustrated by the way laypeople have been drawn like magnets into archaeology because of attractive adventurers like Lara Croft and Indiana Jones. Images like these are more fictional than factual and are not useful for the purpose of educating. The media creates "sexy" archaeological mysteries, terrifyingly dangerous expeditions, and never-ending heated debates with which to captivate the public audience. Cinematic archaeology seems to "revolve around words like ancient, secret, mystery, lost, civilisation [sic], empire, detective."[220] This type of narrative is what will sell at the box office or newsstand. Television programming does this as well. In his new show "The Naked Archaeologist," Simcha Jacobovici, a two-time Emmy Award winning producer and director, "lays history bare" as he dances, raps and acts irreverent to captivate an audience and teach about biblical archaeology.

Visual media often amplifies latent subjectivity within the discipline and manipulates it to attract an audience. This, in and of itself, is nothing new. We see examples of this in news reporting all of the time. Take for example CNN, Fox News, MSNBC and other news stations which report on life in the Middle East. Those who have lived in the areas portrayed argue that the news in America does not accurately reflect the political climate. Without an obvious conflict, however, news stations are without a front-page story. This has similarly become the case with the exploitation of the Holocaust. The media tends to portray the Holocaust as "controversial" and even offers speaking platforms for Holocaust deniers. Yet, the media fails to

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[219] Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 1.

[220] Don Henson, "Television Archaeology: Education or Entertainment?" Cited on 5 January 2007. Online: www.history.ac.uk/education/conference/henson/html.

point out how these people are driven by anti-Semitic agendas or how proven facts are available to break down their arguments. Just as the Middle East conflict and the Holocaust have fallen victim to partial media coverage, so too has biblical archaeology. In fact, one of the main arguments by Palestinians today is rooted in biblical archaeology. Palestinian leaders have evasively used the lack of archaeological evidence for David, Solomon and the Israelite monarchy as proof that Israel has no claim to their "promised land." As I mentioned above, most notable for doing this is Whitelam, whose books are widely read as required reading in Palestinian schools. Biblical archaeology has, in this case, become a rallying point, rather than an educational point.

In addition to the news, many books and films about archaeology (cinematic archaeology) promote specific ideas while diminishing alternative ones. Only on rare occasions will authors and producers be upfront about their agendas, admitting, for example, if a work was created for the purpose of validating sacred texts. And, as more people become involved in a production, more agendas get integrated. For instance, when a television producer is involved, his narrative "almost certainly will not be the narrative that the archaeologist, or even historian, wants to convey."[221] It is not usually the case that media producers are obvious about their intentions, so we need to research the sources we use to determine the purpose for which a piece was created. Sometimes it is more blatant, but many times it is confusing. Additionally, when material is relayed through a credible source, one is less likely to research it. Although some sources seem reliable, media productions will inevitably incorporate narrative, subjectivity and special effects.

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[221] Ibid., n.p.

Television and film are more popular than ever as tools for teaching about biblical archaeology. A recent study showed that 56 percent of the American public uses television as their primary source for learning about archaeology.[222] A person can turn on the tube and find: William Dever in the long-running A&E television series, "Mysteries of the Bible"; Simcha Jacobovici on History International's "The Naked Archaeologist"; Josh Bernstein on The History Channel's "Digging for the Truth"; programs like "Think Tank" on PBS and "Walking the Bible" on TMC. This strong media influence has added an interesting twist to the maximalist/minimalist debate. Both groups recognize that the media is critical for making biblical archaeology accessible to laypeople. It is the easiest way to generate support for their ideas. The maximalists, especially, embrace the media to promote their own ideas to an easily swayed general public. The most recent example of this can be seen in "The Exodus Decoded," which aired in August 2006 on The History Channel. This channel purports to provide *history* to its viewers. Yet, it recently featured this documentary, produced by Simcha Jacobovici, a Canadian documentarian, and James Cameron, director of *Titanic*, which claimed to solve the mystery of the events of the biblical Exodus for the first time.[223]

"The Exodus Decoded" brags that it provides "tangible proof of what the Bible calls the Exodus." In it, Jacobovici provides limited archaeological evidence, including: a Tempest Stele of Pharaoh Ahmose (c. 1540-1515 B.C.E.),[224] evidence of the expulsion of the Hyksos, a Serabit slave inscription saying "El, save me,"[225] and a seal of Joseph on a royal ring which, they claim,

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[222] Online: http://www.saa.org/public/primaryDocuments/Media_Fact_Sheet.pdf.

[223] Online: http://theexodusdecoded.com/index1.jsp.

[224] Associating the Thera eruption with the tempest has previously been refuted.

[225] Jacobovici claims this is proof because it is written in the second oldest alphabetical writing and mentions El, the god of the Israelites. However, he does not mention that this inscription dates to the 12th Dynasty, more than 300 years before Ahmose.

is "a biblical treasure trove that proves the Biblical Exodus." The film also refers to: bullae found at Tel el-Dab'a (Avaris), a hieroglyphic inscription referring to the parting of the sea,[226] and scenic paintings in Thera.[227] All of these work in tandem to support evidence that the Exodus story took place during the time of the Hyksos and Pharaoh Ahmose, which corresponds to the 1500 B.C.E. Santorini Volcano.[228] Jacobovici posits that this volcano, which occurred on a fault line at the same geographical point where the biblical story occurred, can explain the plagues of the Exodus. When presented with high-tech graphics and reenactments, almost any theory can be persuasive—especially if the viewer is ignorant of the topic. When shown "archaeological and geographical evidence that perfectly fits with the Exodus story as presented in the Bible,"[229] audiences will be easily convinced. I have had numerous conversations with Jews in my community who bought Jacobovici's argument—hook, line, and sinker. According to the program's website, viewers of "The Exodus Decoded" claim that the synthesis of the material presented "felt right" to them. Yet, feelings alone are unable to deem the Bible history. Unfortunately, when information like this is shown on The History Channel, it insinuates otherwise. Despite its popularity, several of Jacobovici's points raised in this film have previously been examined and rejected by scholars (which Jacobovici is not). Yet, Jacobovici does not address those. Rather, he seems to misrepresent quotes by leading scholars while failing to address holes in his own argumentation. Although this program does not offer any disclosure of bias, Bietak points out that: "every sentence of the Biblical text is taken literally in

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[226] Jacobovici does not explain that this inscription dates to the fourth century B.C.E., a millennium after Jacobovici's dating of the Exodus.

[227] It has been disproved that the Thera pictures represent Avaris.

[228] The Santorini Volcano was more than 500 miles from Egypt and scholars have not yet concluded exactly when the eruption occurred.

[229] Online: http://theexodusdecoded.com/mb_view.jsp?BID=10&MTID=1046

quite a fundamentalist fashion."[230] Even with an obvious agenda, this documentary aired on a channel that most consider valid for conveying history. With first-rate production and alluring hype, Jacobovici's theory appears to be laid out brilliantly.

Because programs like "The Exodus Decoded" often serve as an introduction to the complex world of biblical archaeology, communities are misled. Those who are just building a curiosity about the topic can walk away from the film believing archaeology confirms the biblical Exodus. At the same time, anyone who has studied these theories in depth can see that Jacobovici's arguments are non-convincing, filled with holes, and provide only simplistic answers to difficult historical and theological issues. "The Exodus Decoded" exemplifies that "there is no such thing as value-free academic endeavor,"[231] even defining history.

Because media is such an effective means of raising public interest in biblical archaeology, could it be that some of the more extreme scholars and theorists are writing to be picked up by the media? According to Paul L. Maeir, it seems that, based on the material remains that have been studied, "such revisionism is vastly overdone and sensationalistic."[232] He goes on to accuse minimalists of playing up biblical and archaeological inconsistencies for air time or front page publicity. "This attack on Old Testament Scripture is of a full-fledged, no-holds-barred variety. Such extreme views invite dismissal of this assault as the work of a cadre

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[230] Manfred Bietak, "The Volcano Explains Everything—Or Does It," in *BAR* 32:06 (November/December 2006), 60.

[231] Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical," 590.

[232] Paul L. Maeir, Christian Research Institute, "Archaeology: Biblical Ally or Adversary?" http://www.equip.org/free/DA111.htm. This article first appeared in the *Christian Research Journal* 27:02 (2004).

of sensation-seeking quasischolars whose radical revisionism almost guarantees attention in the media." [233]

Despite the way media may be misused by educators or marketed by profit-based companies, it is important to remember the potential educational value it offers when it is responsibly done. According to the Council for British Archaeology's Don Hensen, who argues on behalf of the use of media in education:

> Television is in many ways the modern means of transmitting societies' accumulated stories and values to the younger generation. When we get the balance right between evidential fact and creative narrative, we can produce very powerful television, which is also powerful history and powerful archaeology.[234]

As with any learning endeavor, in order for media and technology to work as it is described, educators must use it appropriately. Describing adult Jewish education, Caren N. Levine points out:

> It can be very tempting to jump in and use techonology for its own sake, without considering what is most appropriate for the task at hand. . . . To be truly effective educationally, however, techonologies should be employed because they add something of value to the learning experience. . . . Technology should be viewed as a tool to enhance the learning experience, not as a fascination that detracts from the topic at hand."[235]

When technology is used as Levine suggests, to enhance that which is being taught in a physical classroom setting, it is called "technology-enhanced learning." This term encompasses many forms of e-learning: course-related online discussion lists, television shows, videos, DVDs, blogs,electronic resources and CD-ROM programs. Despite flaws inherent in such materials,

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[233] Ibid., n.p.

[234] Henson, "Television Archaeology: Education or Entertainment?" Online: www.history.ac.uk/education/conference/henson/html.

[235] Caren N. Levine. "Technology and Adult Jewish Learning," in *The Adult Jewish Education Handbook: Planning, Practice, and Theory* by Roberta Louis Goodman and Betsy Dolgin Katz, (Denver: A.R.E, 2004), 218.

such as I describe above, Levine and others have pointed out that adults are positively influenced by the use of technology and media. This is especially true for subjects of religious content, as many times an obstacle for adult religious learning is that adults often feel ashamed by their lack of knowledge, especially when they are successful in other areas of their lives. In some ways, because technology permits anonymity, it reduces fear and tension and technology-enhanced and technology based learning helps adult learners enrich their lives and explore their Jewish identities in a casual setting. I will look at some of the available resources below.

MAGAZINES AND BOOKS

In magazines and books, minimalists and maximalists manipulate written media, using open forums as their soapboxes. Maximalists have been publishing for some time now, but minimalists have only recently launched a verbal counter-attack to what they see as irresponsible portrayal of biblical archaeology to unsuspecting viewers. Although in their writings maximalists may acknowledge that other evidence exists that contradicts their positions, some do not always do so in ways that educate responsibly. For example, Davies accusatorily writes:

> I have to say that Biblical 'maximalists' are pretty shameless . . . where Biblical parallels to archaeological evidence are concerned! If a Biblical text fits, then the fit proves the accuracy of the Bible; if it doesn't fit, then the event must be something not recorded in the Bible. Their strategy is clear: Put the possible parallel into bold relief, then use the small print to show that it is more likely a contradiction. [236]

There is little literature out there that actually provides educational material about biblical archaeology in a way that is not misleading or stilted. *BAR,* however, has somewhat successfully stepped in to fill the gap. While most publications have a specific religious or political agenda,

[236] Davies, "'House of David' Built on Sand," n.p.

Shanks, the Editor-in-Chief, explains: "The aim of the *Biblical Archaeology Review* is to make available in understandable language the current insights of professional archaeology as they relate to the Bible. ... Our commitment is to scientific truth, not to sacred truth."[237]

For many, *BAR's* framework for discussion is a breath of fresh air. According to the media kit offered by *BAR* on its website, 69 percent of its readership are content with the variety of views presented. In another letter to the editor, entitled "Frustrated by the Ordained Ministry," a subscriber, Homer May, elaborates on the importance of *BAR's* open forum:

> . . . I always appreciate the spirit of honest inquiry and free expression. That spirit is, sadly, not common fare for Christian laypersons such as myself. I have long been frustrated by the way some of the ordained ministry has (1) greeted with doctrine my inquiries into the historic aspects of my faith, (2) glibly responded with arcane theological phrases, or (3) assured me that I am bound for Hell with such questions.[238]

While there are people like May who seek academic information about biblical archaeology free from religious analysis, there are also *BAR* readers looking for spiritual confirmation and who are closed off to academic theories. The same survey from *BAR* also shows that 78.4 percent of its readership is mostly interested in archaeological stories that illuminate the Bible. This is not surprising as 30 percent of the readership identifies as Evangelical Christian. In another letter to the editor, a woman complains: "I am not sure whether the editors of this magazine believe in a divine God or not. . . . Maybe I misunderstood your magazine, but I wanted the subscription in order to build my faith, not lose it."[239] A significant 18.8 percent of the readership agree that there are too many liberal scholars doubting the Bible presented in *BAR*.

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[237] Shanks and Singer, ed., *Cancel My Subscription*, 5.

[238] Ibid., 28.

[239] Ibid., 9.

Religious individuals are not the only ones dissatisfied by *BAR's* work. In some cases readers express displeasure because of a perceived *BAR* agenda. In a comment to the editor, Joyce Lively exlains that *BAR's* "standards of science and objective study seem to be replaced by 'we want it to prove the Bible and we will make sure we do." [240] There are also subscribers who not only desire more academic materials, but are put off by *BAR's* choices of material. In another letter to the editor, Oliver Nichelson laments: "...*BAR* could have made an important contribution to informed discussion of important historical topics, but instead in turning into something of an archaelogical tabloid."[241] Over the past few years, a shadow has been cast over the magazine based on issues involving publication of unprovenanced archaeological remains as well as black market antiquity advertisements.[242] This has led to heated debates and, as a result, scholarly works have avoided including references or footnotes to *BAR*. In fact, some have expressed fear of association with the magazine and even refuse to answer specific questions directed to them in *BAR's* articles. Shanks acknowledges that "... some academics act like they've never heard of us [*BAR*]."[243]

Despite the bad rap that *BAR* receives for its easy-to-read articles, there are those who specifically choose the publication because it is one of the only sources accessible to them. Often, *BAR* is as scholarly a work as most laypeople can comprehend. According to Wilson, *BAR* served as his "Bible" upon which he based his book *The Bible Is History.*[244] It is important

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[240] Shanks, ed., *BAR* 31:05 (September/October 2005), 14.

[241] Shanks, ed., *BAR* 31:03 (May/June2005), 10.

[242] Jim West, *Biblical Archaeological Review: Friend or Foe?* September 2005. Online: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/West_Biblicial_Archaeology.htm

[243] Hershel Shanks, "Cites Unseen: Why do some scholars avoid references to BAR?" *BAR 31:06.* (November/December 2005), 6.

to remember that, for the person who has just seen "The Exodus Revealed" or "The Exodus Decoded," *BAR* is able to serve as a helpful place for sifting through such archaeological theories. *BAR* is not the only magazine out there about biblical archaeology, but most others have specific religio-political agendas. There are a few others that steer clear of these agendas, but inevitably have a smaller readership because they are less accessible to the layperson. Those include *Near Eastern Archaeology*, published by ASOR, and *ARCHAEOLOGY*, published by the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA).

In 1971, Jerry M. Landay published a book for many of the same reasons biblical archaeology scholars do today—he wanted to make materials more accessible to a larger readership. He writes: "so much of the recent work of Palestinian archaeologists, together with that of scientists and scholars in allied fields, has been buried in learned journals, so much fragmented among specialized texts, and so much neglected by current popular works on archaeology that I felt that a survey for the general public might be of some value."[245] Archaeological book sales have since increased, mostly as a result of media and journalism and other "popular works." In the early 1990s the debate over the historical reliability of the Bible attracted laypeople's attention. As more and more key historical questions were raised about the Bible and people were demanding answers, biblical archaeologists began to publish more and more. This has led to a recent increase of books for the general reader by individuals such as Finkelstein, Silberman, and Dever. While their books are generally well written and span a great deal of theories and materials, they are heavily burdened by the arguments and politics of the field. Many of these are written to convince the reader of the writer's scholarship and also serve

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[244] See: Ian Wilson, *The Bible Is History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999).

[245] Jerry M. Landay, *Silent Cities Sacred Stones: Archaeological Discovery in Israel* (McCall Books, New York, 1971), 11-12.

to debunk other theories out there. For the average reader, it is difficult to identify an author's personal agenda without a broader understanding of the field.

Archaeology and Education

CONGREGATIONAL EDUCATION

Many Jewish adults have received but a child's education in Jewish history. Their perspectives are naïve, which makes learning about it as an adult a difficult and sensitive process. Congregants have long had to learn about ancient history in a secular forum, without any spiritual context for the material. Today, especially with such potential for educating adults, the Jewish community must also offer this material to them, as well as provide a safe environment for discussion about it. Modern theories, especially about the ancient Near East, are sometimes at odds with what our congregants were taught years ago in religious school. Because of this, Jewish adults are seeking to continue their education as adults. As educators, we must do this, but gently. Archaeology, while it is historically enlightening, can also have great spiritual significance.

It is difficult for some to concretely see spiritual value in this field and they doubt the significance of educating about biblical archaeology. Ephraim Stern of Hebrew University has asked whether or not teaching biblical archaeology to our religious communities is worthwhile because of the recent surge in biblical criticism. He asks, " . . . is the effort worth it any longer, at a time when the biblical literature—indeed the entire biblical tradition—is being dismissed by

so many as 'irrelevant,' even by those in Synagogue, Church, and Seminary?"[246] Because many congregations have opened their doors to critical scholarship, it is even more important that these same communities also teach about biblical archaeology. If not, they are failing to provide a balanced understanding of the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, there is great potential for spiritual growth through studying what the land reveals about our past.

As a result of modern technology and advanced media, the world in which we live has changed exponentially over the last century. Even 30 years ago educators expressed that: "epoch making new discoveries of material things have created many new social, economic, political and moral problems."[247] To this list I would also add religious problems, as new archaeological information rapidly collides with old ideas. As quickly as new discoveries of material things posed problems to people in the '70s, so-much-the-faster and more intense have they become in the 21st century. The more innovation and progress scholars make, the more rapidly the world must emotionally adjust to all of this change. With the advancements of radiocarbon dating and other statistical methods for analyzing data, scholars and laypeople have been inundated with new archaeological theories. Scholars now race to publish their works before new information can be unearthed to disprove them. Little time has been spent examining the repercussions of each discovery to one's religious identity.

Huey B. Long recognized that: "it is possible that churches, synagogues, and temples have greater contact with more adults than any other social institution in the United States of America."[248] He recognized such institutions to be vital to adult education. While it is true that

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[246] Shanks, "Scholars Talk About How the Field Has Changed," n.p.

[247] Barton Morgan, Glenn E. Holmes, and Clarence E. Bundy. *Methods in Adult Education* (Third edition. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Printers and Publishers, 1976), 4.

people walk into congregations for many reasons, often it is to find a sense of order amidst a chaotic life. Religious education helps to achieve this goal in many ways. It offers individuals a chance to grow in personal wisdom and understanding. Bradley Courtenay explains that this is actually measurable and proven:

> Tulloch concluded that positive intervention through education in an individual's faith development is possible and is measurable. These findings respond to Knowles' recommendations and also suggest the relationship between adult education and faith development."[249]

Because of the significance of education on spiritual wellbeing, it is all the more so important that congregational education is of a high level, while also leaving room to handle theological ramifications of controversial topics. Without responsible presentation of educational material and support for determining to which media to give credence, congregants can easily walk away from lessons loaded with inaccurate information based on weak and unsupported claims.

To fail to explore the religious influences of a topic such as biblical archaeology runs contrary to the common goal of adult Jewish education, which, according to Roberta Louis Goodman and Betsy Dolgin Katz, "is to connect content to people's experiences, not just to teach about Judaism, but to reach people so that Jewish knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes inform and transform their lives."[250] In order to accomplish this, congregations need to allow for in-depth discussion about the historicity of the Bible and biblical figures such as David and Solomon. Jewish educators must be trained to facilitate discussion groups and help individuals

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[248] Huey B. Long, *Adult Education in Church and Synagogue.* (New York: Syracuse University Publications in Continuing Education and ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education, 1973).

[249] Bradley Courtenay, "Personhood—Personal and Faith Development" in *Adult Education and Theological Interpretations,* Jarvis and Walters, eds. Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing, 1993, 167. He cites E.F. Tulloch. *A Study of Faith Stage Transition in Adults.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Commerce, Tx., East Texas State University, 1985.

[250] Roberta Louis Goodman and Betsy Dolgin Katz. *The Adult Education Handbook: Planning, Practice, and Theory* (Denver: A.R.E., 2004) 16.

reconcile difficult information. If congregations fail to offer this, to where and whom will our communities turn?

Most congregations have significantly increased opportunities for adult education and discussion. Goodman and Katz point out the many values in doing so:

> Adult Jewish learning can provide an ongoing dialogue for engaging adults in their journeys Jewishly, religiously, spiritually, and ethnically. Good adult Jewish learning demands that learners enter into a conversation with themselves—with their past and future selves—and with one another, interpreting, thinking, debating, feeling, evaluating, and acting."[251]

These benefits are exactly why congregational education is essential when it comes to biblical archaeology. The topic lends itself well to discussions of this nature. It is important, however, that the rabbi or educator must act as a band-leader behind the symphony of adult educational discussions. They must be skilled to create an environment for learning that provides a feeling of safety. According to Jane Vella,

> Safety is a principle linked to respect for learners as subjects of their own learning. But it has an added connotation. It means that the design of learning tasks, the atmosphere in the room, and the very design of small groups and materials convey to the adult learners that this experience will work for them. Safety does not obviate the natural challenge of learning new concepts, skills, or attitudes. Safety does not take away any of the hard work involved in learning.[252]

And there is definitely hard work in learning about biblical archaeology. Many congregants experience theological angst while trying to digest material that seems contrary to their childhood religious beliefs.

Biblical archaeology's newfound accessibility through a range of popular media has drawn in a varied following, including our temple congregants. Groundbreaking discoveries

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[251] Ibid., xi.

[252] Jane Vella. *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 6.

have drawn people to the subject by means of videos, television, publications, and books geared for the general public. This popularity of various media in our congregations is partly due to the lack of courses temples and synagogues offer and partly due to the entertainment value of the production. The quandary I face is not with how the media has stepped up to answer our community's call for archaeology; rather, it is in how our congregations have not prepared laypeople to deal with this media when it is encountered. There is much to be gained from teaching about biblical archaeology in a religious setting and it is just starting to make its way into congregational adult education.

There is an enormous amount of effort that can and should be made for educating our congregations—both their educators and laypeople. From websites, conferences, workshops, lectures, short films, reviews of popular media, brochures, and even curriculum dedicated to hot topics in biblical archaeology, the possibilities are endless. Admittedly, over the past few years there have been some positive changes within this field. Some communities have begun adding biblical archaeology to their educational menu. In fact, some congregational Israel trips have formed around visiting archaeological sites and studying what the earth reveals. A few years ago, Rabbi Shlomo Wing wrote a rabbinic thesis[253] providing a curriculum for children in supplementary religious schools to learn about biblical archaeology. He has since given presentations at educational conferences raising awareness of teachers that such resources exist. I look forward to a time when resources like Rabbi Wing's are available to congregational teachers and when curriculum of this sort is developed for the adult community.

I have found that there are only limited amounts of material that appropriately address biblical archaeology from an educational standpoint. Generally speaking, the Union for Reform

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[253] Shlomo Wing, "Text Meets Artifact: A Curriculum for Teaching Biblical Archaeology in the Supplemental Religious School Setting" (Thesis, HUC-JIR, 2003).

Judaism (URJ) has successfully produced resources for use in an adult education setting: pamphlets, curriculums, lists of sites for e-learning, books, examples of effective programs, and online resources. Despite all of this, I have yet to find any such materials offered to rabbis and congregations for dealing with biblical archaeology. Reference materials abound in temple libraries and resource centers on every subject imaginable, but few actually address where history and the Bible meet and even fewer do so responsibly. Seldom are there opportunities for adults to discuss biblical stories and the implications that are drawn from archaeology.

Because leaders in the Jewish community are often unequipped to teach this archaeology meaningfully and because television and computer programs transmit information in an easy-to-grasp and visually stimulating way, Jewish educators have begun to use media resources as a primary means by which to teach. Rather than find someone who is knowledgeable to teach, synagogue and temple educators are tempted to relinquish to the media their own responsibility to teach. Though it may be easier to pop in a video or to read from a magazine, it does not mean doing so is responsible teaching. Levine comments on this growing phenomenon:

> Good educational practice . . . should be applied to the use of technology in adult Jewish education as well. It can be very tempting to jump in and use technology for its own sake, without considering what is most appropriate for the task at hand....Technology should be viewed as a tool to enhance the learning experience, not as a fascination that detracts from the topic at hand.[254]

Unfortunately, while examining what media resources are available for teaching, it became clear that in this industry, entertainment is often the primary concern and education is secondary. However, I did find some materials, that stood out for their teaching value. For example, Heritage has released a new DVD-ROM that includes maps, videos, timelines and pictures of

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[254] Levine, "Technology and Adult Jewish Learning," 218.

ancient remains relating to the Bible. This multimedia tool has an exceptional amount of information about biblical archaeology and provides a well-balanced position. This would be an important resource for every temple library to own. Impressive resources also include: bibleplaces.com, "The Dead Sea Scrolls Revealed" by Logos and Softkey's "Pathways Through Jerusalem," Past editions of magazines, slide show pictures and other materials have been put into a CD-ROM format, such as *Biblical Archaeology Review,* and are also decent library resources.

While looking at what resources would be helpful for teaching biblical archaeology, I also looked to ways in which the non-Jewish community has dealt with it. One of the most notable resources I found was a short film developed by archaeologist Amy Ramsey, specifically addressing a problem with how people learn about archaeology from the media. In her film, Ramsey eloquently stresses the importance that viewers think critically and objectively while watching an archaeological production. She demands that students become active in their knowledge, not passively accepting everything as fact.[255] Ramsey points out explicit ways in which cinematic archaeology often is burdened with ulterior motives, such as: validating the status quo; supporting contemporary ideas; reinforcing an idea of what is natural and normal; and showing selectivity in artifacts and images presented. In the video, Ramsey instructs students to learn more about *who* presents the media they draw on and to better understand for what purposes the media was created. Although Ramsey created this film to deal with the general field of archaeology, rabbis and their students would benefit from watching it. Should one choose to use media to teach biblical archaeology, it would be helpful to enhance the discussion with this type of presentation.

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[255] Amy Ramsey, "Excavating Television," USC Summer Production Workshop, 2003. Online: www.archaeologychannel.org/content/video/excavatingtv.html.

In an attempt to counter the damage of unbalanced archaeological presentations, the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) has also produced an overwhelming amount of material addressing how to incorporate archaeology into education. Rather than opposing the integration of media in education, the SAA collaborates with it to inform and not just entertain. The SAA emphasizes the weight of archaeology as an effective teaching tool. It considers archaeology the "fourth 'R'," of education because "archaeology is a powerful 'hook' that draws students into questioning and learning." Its website[256] is filled with fundamental guidelines for journalists, educators and laypeople. The SAA offers material about how to accurately and responsibly use archaeology in the media and it even warns about mistakes journalists should avoid.[257] In addition to fact sheets for the media and for the public, the SAA also offers numerous lesson plans for teachers from which to teach archaeology. The SAA provides a great example for how the Jewish community might respond to biblical archaeology. We, too, must learn to be able to recognize legitimate sources of information related to archaeology, as well as common pitfalls in media-driven archaeological exploits. It is important that material such as presented through the SAA becomes available in our own communities for biblical archaeology. Only through addressing these questions with knowledgeable teachers in a safe environment will our congregants be able to integrate all of the information being thrown at them. Until this happens, there are only a few possibilities for our communities. I suggest congregations offer books, such as Marc Zvi Brettler's *How to Read the Bible* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2005) and provide links to useful resources online, such as the site: http://www.shma.com/bookreviews.phtml. I would also direct them to teaching resources, such

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[256] Online: www.saa.org/public/resources.

[257] Online: www.saa.org/public/resources/ArchaeologyforEducators.html.

as are available on The Archaeology Channel website. It offers multiple curriculums about archaeology in general that meet the needs of a variety of communities' scholastic standards.

ISSUES OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN INTERFAITH RELATIONS

In 2002, biblical archaeology exited the archaeological and religious journals and made its debut in *Harper's Margazine*. This, of course, was not without contention. Biblical archaeology and liberal scholarship of the Bible did not suddenly appear in 2002; it has been around for some time. However, looking at the material through a well-respected secular journal presented to a multifaith audience, struck an unpleasant chord among many. In an article provided by eQUIP, the online Ministry of Christian Research Institute,[258] the following appeared in response to the article:

> One-sided, trenchant, and biased to the extreme, the article follows a sensationalist title that says it all: "False Testament: Archaeology Refutes the Bible's Claim to History." *Harper's* has a proud history going back to Abraham Lincoln's time, thus lending credibility to its contents. As a result, many more conservative Jewish and Christian readers are now alarmed that the very foundations of their faith are called into question, and this crisis of faith has been exacerbated by a Torah and commentary (*Etz Hayim*) recently published by the United States Synagogue of Conservative Judaism that incorporates these revisionist views.

It is obvious by these statements that to acknowledge that archaeology may disprove the Bible, can generate a crisis of identity. This is clear in another response to this article by Steven Feldman, an editor of *BAR*. He explains: "I've received calls from clergy telling me that congregants have had their faith shaken by it. If the Bible is unreliable as history, why believe

[258] Maier, "Archaeology: Biblical Ally or Adversary," n.p.

any of it?"[259] The more theories in biblical archaeology emerge, the more people of all faiths must deal with them. Many observant people find archaeology and higher biblical criticism spiritually threatening and in ways feel that such scholarship rapes them of their personal and religious histories. Lemche points out that for some Jews ". . . the denial of the historicity . . . of the Israelite historical narratives comes close to a denial of the very existence of the Israelite people."[260]

It is clear from the response above written by Paul Maier that biblical archaeology is a problem that crosses over from one faith to another. Religious liberals of all faiths are notably more open to the idea that biblical writings may be historically inaccurate. Generally, they acknowledge allegory and metaphor in the text and will accept that the Bible was influenced, if not written, by man. In this way, it does not undermine their identities in the same way that it does in more conservative communities. A major line is drawn not necessarily between religions, but between the liberal and conservative communities. Long writes:

> Among Protestants, as among Jews, there have been left-wing and right-wing liberals. Right-wing liberals have hardly gone beyond Biblical criticism in applying scientific principles to religion and life. Their liberalism consists, in the main of an enlightened and tolerant use of the historical Christian heritage. Left-wing liberals, in going beyond Biblical criticism have taken hold of scientific concepts issuing from the social and biological sciences and have sought to make the church instrumental in helping people to use these scientific materials intelligently and faithfully in the interest of enhancing human living. Whenever this point of view becomes pervasive one may expect an active program of adult education, conveying the resource of scientific enlightenment to the people.[261]

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[259] Steven Feldman, "First Person: Is the Bible a Bunch of Historical Hooey? *Harper's Magazine* would have us believe so," *BAR 28:03* (May/June 2002), n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM.*

[260] Lemche, *Prelude*, 46-7.

[261] Long, *Adult Education in Church and Synagogue*, 15.

Because of such discrepancy in these views, communities feel they must be armed to deal with those who see things differently.

Although adult education has not quite caught up, religious websites offer advice to their followers about ways to respond both to liberals and to recent archaeological claims while reinforcing the value of faith stronger than evidence. For example, at www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2020, the creators of this website use technical rhetoric as they pose questions painting the work of archaeologists and scholars as a threat. The website tries to sound knowledgeable and appreciative of scholarly advances while simultaneously discrediting the field:

> How should we respond when archaeologists' interpretations are at variance with biblical facts? The following principles might be helpful as we struggle with the increasing antagonism toward the Scriptures from the field of archaeology. Therefore, we should listen with cautious skepticism when archaeologists appeal to evidence that conflicts with the biblical text. . . . Indeed, archaeology is most helpful in biblical studies, often confirming and illuminating biblical texts. We must be aware, however, of its limitations, and deficiencies. The dating methods employed (e.g., radiocarbon, dendrochronology, pottery, and others) are imperfect, and are always based upon certain assumptions. Further, we should be aware of the current anti-biblical trend among many archaeologists. As with any scientific discipline, we need not sift God's Word through the sieve of archaeological inquiry. Archaeological interpretations are in a constant state of flux and often wither as grass, but God's Word abides forever.[262]

Positions like this one are most frequently articulated by Fundamentalist Christians, conservative Christians who assert that the Bible is both infallible and undeniably historically accurate. A website such as this is essential for the Fundamentalist community because it gives their people verbal ammunition with which to respond should they be exposed to ideas that cast doubt on their faith, as we saw in *Harper's*. This is also seen in another article:

> Leaders of the "moderate majority" will discount the previous argument as an evasion, circular reasoning, irrationalism, and double-talk. It is simply wrong, say they, to believe

[262] http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2020.

> that the Bible speaks truthfully on historical matters because it says it does. The Bible itself must be checked, or "verified." But by what can Scripture be corrected? What is the standard the moderates use to judge the Bible? Archaeological methods of research can provide us with mountains of information about—or at least mountains of—pottery and spears used in ancient Israel, and we should respect that information, and the scientists who work so diligently to extract and study the artifacts they find. But any theory they devise concerning any part of Biblical history is by the nature of their own inductive method tentative and inconclusive. One cannot verify any narrative with a worse theory. The "moderate majority" cannot legitimately test Biblical history with scientific methodology, and since there currently are no other possibilities with which to verify it, they must either receive the Scriptural narrative in faith or reject it for no good reason.[263]

Conservative groups such as these will frequently cite the scholarship of Norman Geisler, Gary Habermas, F.F. Bruce, Edwin M. Yamauchi, William Albright, Kenneth Kitchen, and Bryant G. Wood, editor of *Bible and Spade,* to promote their positions. By referring to the work of these conservative scholars and appearing to embrace archaeology, Fundamentalists can make outrageous statements, such as the following, which claims: "The Bible can be tested–historically, geographically, scientifically, etc. And it always passes the test. Its incredible accuracy can be explained only in light of its divine inspiration."[264] Atkins points out the danger of Fundamentalist groups to scholarly debate:

> For those who take the position of total inerrancy of the Bible, it is a case of all or nothing: unless there is *exact* correlation with Scripture, an archaeologist's conclusions are written off as invalid. As a consequence, there have been instances where extreme claims have been made without regard to proper evidence, where disproven arguments have not been retracted, and where shallow scholarship has precipitated subjective debates and emotional declarations.[265]

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[263] Phillip Climer, "Archaeology and the Bible." First published by the *Trinity Review*, Number 170 (April 1999). Cited 28 February 2007. Online: http://www.answersingenesis.org/home/area/magazines/tj/docs/divided.pdf.

[264] Online: http://www.biblicalarcheology.net/Bible/BibHistAccurate1.htm

[265] Richard L. Atkins "Extravagant Claims in Bible Archaeology" Online: http://www.asa3.org/asa/PSCF/1984/JASA9-84Atkins.html

Leaders of conservative Christian communities appear unjustly critical of people in the field of biblical archaeology because, to them, these scholars are not just casting religious doubt, but they are working to undermine the authority of the church in the Christian communities. Jon Levinson explains that the emergence of religion departments, Jewish studies programs and critical biblical scholarship, "have inflicted grave damage upon the status of Christian theology as the ruling paradigm in biblical studies."[266]

For reasons that range from major theological difficulties to lesser one, such as published images in *BAR* that are deemed revealing or provocative[267] or the use of alcohol and tobacco pictured amidst the archaeological community, the conservative Christian community is widely unsupportive of biblical archaeology. Responding to this, there are Christians who try to disassociate from these groups to avoid a connection with religious argumentation.[268] According to Levinson:

> Most Christians involved in the historical criticism of the Hebrew Bible today . . . seem to have ceased to want their work to be considered distinctively Christian. They do the essential philological, historical, and archaeological work without concern for the larger constructive issues or for the theological implications of their labs.[269]

Fundamentalist Christians are not alone in their theological concerns about archaeology. Orthodox Jews also find problems with it. Leaders of these communities have established laws that limit the scope of the field. They have influenced the Israeli government in forbidding excavating in areas that may contain burial sites out of respect for the dead. They also refuse to

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[266] Levenson, 31-32.

[267] See "Queries and Comments" in *BAR 31:03*: 8-10.

[268] Philip Davies, "Cancel My Subscription," *The Bible and Interpretation* October 2005. Cited 28 February 2007. Online: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Davies_Cancel_Subscription.htm.

[269] Levenson, 29.

let archaeologists analyze human materials for the same reason. Furthermore, archaeologists are often denied permission to excavate in locations deemed too religiously significant to risk being damaged. As a result of such orthodox bias, most Israeli scholars do not associate with the religious community. Jennifer Wallace points out that: ". . . most archaeologists in Israel insist their work has nothing to do with politics. Their debates, they say, focus on what is in the Bible, and what is in the ground."[270]

For Arab Muslims and for Jews, there are distinct problems that exist beyond religious theology when it comes to archaeology in the land of Israel. Archaeology is at the center of political discussions that determine the parameters of the land of Israel. Jews have found this threatening because it undermines Jewish authenticity to the promised land and because other groups also have an interest in archaeological sites for their own theological reasons.[271] The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which claims to be on the same ground as Jesus' crucifixion and burial tomb, is a case in point. Whereas Jewish authorities claim that the Hebrew Bible demonstrates Israelite ownership of the land, Dever also points out that "Pan-Arab nationalists, Messianic Zionists and others claim that archaeology supports their claims to legitimacy and ownership of the Holy Land.[272] To avoid entering into this debate, some archaeologists are careful in their argumentation about saying that the earliest Israelites were Canaanites. Archaeology is not only used as a source for biblical land claims, but also as a source for modern political problems in Israel. Not only has surveying land displaced Palestinian residents at times, but archaeological sites frequently mirror political situations. Take Joseph's Tomb, for example.

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[270] Jennifer Wallace. "Shifting Ground in the Holy Land: Archaeology is casting new light on the Old Testament," in *Smithsonian* 37:2 (May 2006), 61.

[271] For instance, *Smithsonian* points out that many Christians believe Armagedon will occur at Megiddo. 63.

[272] Dever, *Who Were the Ancient Israelites*, 237-9.

McCarthy explains: "... because of the story of Jacob's land purchase in Genesis xxxiii, 19, it is seen by some as legally belonging to the Jewish people and, since the Six Day War of 1967 when Israel seized the area, Palestinians have viewed the tomb as a symbol of Israeli occupation."[273] Not only has this perspective led to damage of archaeological sites by Arab Muslims, but also, as Kletter points out, it has given fuel to the anti-Israel sentiment held by many of them. One example of this can be seen in this comment made by Yasser Arafat:

> For 34 years [the Israelis] have dug tunnels [around the Temple Mount]...they found not a single stone proving that the Temple of Solomon was there, because historically the Temple was not in Palestine [at all]. They found only remnants of a shrine of the Roman Herod... They are now trying to put in place a number of stones so that they can say 'We were here.' This is nonsense. I challenge them to bring a single stone from the Temple of Solomon.[274]

When it comes to teaching about biblical archaeology, educating a community with similar essential beliefs can be challenging. Trying to educate a community without the same underlying beliefs, however, is practically impossible. From the nuances of referring to the text as the Bible, Old Testament, Tanakh, or Torah, to the impact of acknowledging historical periods as A.D. or C.E., there is little common ground. While there are some religious people who try to put their faith aside in favor of liberal or modern scholarship, as we see above, many find such a feat impossible. By and large, the Fundamentalists have been closed-minded to community discussions about archaeological discoveries in the Holy Land, unless they are led by conservative scholars. Mostly, however, scholars in the field try to stay clear of religious issues. As shown above, there are multiple reasons for why scholars stick only to the academic nature of their work. One that is deeply rooted has been pointed out by Levinson, who explains that

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[273] McCarthy, *It Ain't Necessarily So,* 2.

[274] Yasser Arafat. *Al-Hayat (*London), 5 October 2002, BBC Worldwide Monitoring

scholars avoid theology because of the "intense anti-Semitism evident in many of the classic works in that field."[275] Many Jews fear both modern biblical criticism (outside of the religious community) and biblical archaeology because they view the entire field as infused with anti-Semitism. Solomon Schechter, for example, gave an address entitled "Higher-Criticism—Higher Anti-Semitism"[276] It is a well-known fact that Wellhausen's "Prolegomena," one of the most influential works in biblical criticism, was written during a time of increased Jew-hatred. Minimalist scholars have continued to build upon Wellhausen's work and have been associated, often unfairly, with anti-Semitism.

Because of highly charged issues found in both liberal and conservative communities related to biblical archaeology, interfaith education on the topic is difficult on a congregational level. Inviting speakers of one persuasion or the other is seen as instigating disagreement, though it would seem logical that communities that give honor to the Hebrew Bible would be able to sit together and discuss the text respectfully. The recent argumentation surrounding Creationism and Intelligent Design, arguments that claim that the book of Genesis is literally correct, is proof of this. In an interfaith clergy discussion I attended this past year, it was clear that no consensus would be reached. Though more liberal communities, both Jewish and Christian, seemed open to scientific discoveries, more fundamental communities stressed the importance of faith. It did not look as if these views would change as a result of discussion.

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[275] Levenson, 40.

[276] Ibid., 43.

Nicholas Walters was on to something when he asked: "How far can pluralism be sustained before a situation of contradiction and even chaos emerges?"[277]

Such has been the ideology about interfaith dialogue dealing with land in Israel with the Muslim community, in a post-September 11th world. Neither Muslim nor Jewish leaders would intentionally enter into a controversial debate over the Middle East. While many discussions are successful for interfaith settings, I would discourage congregations from focusing on biblical archaeology. There are too many scholars of varying persuasions that may be quoted, too large a corpus of materials to adequately address the issues, and too many political and spiritual roadblocks to overcome. It is unlikely that leaders of faith communities are knowledgeable enough about the subject to argue from a purely scholastic position. Such is seen in the following description , in which Alexander Joffe and Rachel Halote acccuse Palestinians of manipulating biblical archaeology for political gain:

> An impression gathered from the few sources available to us is that initially (late 1980s to early 1990s) Palestinian 'versions' or 'narratives' tended to elide over the topics of ancient Israel and Jews generally, treating them minimally or in a somewhat tortuously neutral fashion. Emphasis appears to have been placed on the alleged neglect of Islamic sites and periods, and on contextualizing ancient Israel, and Biblical archaeology as a whole, as merely episodes in much longer frameworks. This approach followed the lead of Glock. More recently (mid 1990s to present) the tendency has been to discount, excise, or wholly revise the questions of ancient Israel and any Jewish presence. Elite promotion of the ideas that Palestinians were descended from Canaanites, Philistines, or third millennium B.C.E. Arabian migrants, has been considerable, despite the lack of evidence or logic to support these claims, and their inherent contradiction with Islamic mythology. . . . Palestinian revisionism has not surprisingly coincided with Palestinian denial of any

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[277] Nicholas Walters, "Open Multicultural Society—Access and Election". In Jarvis, Peter and Nicholas Walters, ed. *Adult Education and Theological Interpretations* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Co., 1993), 221.

> Jewish connection to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, an issue which, as noted by Shlomo Ben-Ami, manifest strongly during negotiations during 2000. . . . Some measure of inspiration for these latter developments has been derived from continuing academic debates over the historicity of the Bible, and the strong divisions between the unfortunately labeled 'maximalist' and 'minimalist' factions. . . . These latest efforts to generate Palestinian identity in 'real time' should be understood in their historical context, as the intersection of ethnogenesis, Arab nationalism, and the continued spread of Western intellectual thought.[278]

Whether this description of biblical archaeology among Palestinians is correct or not, it is clear that interfaith dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis is unlikely in the near future.

[278] Alexander Joffe and Rachel Hallote's "The Politics of Israeli Archaeology: Between 'Nationalism' and 'Science' in the Age of the Second Republic," *Israel Studies* 7.3 (2002): 84-116.

CHAPTER 5: THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

On June 1, 2001, Rabbi Barry Block delivered a sermon to a Reform community that addressed the theological difficulties that have resulted from biblical archaeology. He writes:

> A couple of months ago . . . a rabbi's sermon made the headlines, not only in Los Angeles, but across the country and even around the globe. You see, Rabbi Wolpe had told his congregation that the Exodus from Egypt might never have happened.
>
> Heresy! Making maters worse, Rabbi Wolpe delivered this sermon on Passover morning, to a synagogue packed with holiday worshipers. The throngs thought that they had gathered to celebrate the Exodus. Instead, they heard their Rabbi tell them that the blessed event is likely fiction, all this from a Conservative Rabbi, no less than a former professor at the Conservative Movement's rabbinical seminary. Heresy, indeed!
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> A storm of protest rolled through the Jewish world and beyond it. Religious leaders of various faiths lambasted Wolpe. How could a teacher of biblical truth deny the historical accuracy of the Bible? The noted Jewish writer and personality, Dennis Prager, also of Los Angeles, claimed that Wolpe's sermon undermines the very foundation of Judaism. If God did not liberate the Israelites from Egypt, and did not give our ancestors the Torah at Mount Sinai, there is no warrant for the observance of Judaism.[279]

Rabbi Block eloquently describes the feelings of Jews as they respond to the implications of biblical archaeology. Not only are the debates scholarly and difficult to follow, but they are spiritually confusing as well.

The Impact of Archaeology on Individual Faith

While it may be simple to outline the problem of educating our clergy and communities about biblical archaeology, it is not so easy to expose the impact of this education. Within Judaism, much depends on the accuracy of the past. Every day Jews sing praises to God for redeeming the Israelites from Egypt. Every Pesach Jews recall Moses and the miracles that freed

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[279] Rabbi Barry H. Block. Sermon delivered 1 June 2001. Online: http://www.bethelsa.org/be_s0601.htm. Cited 31 January 2007.

them from bondage. Biblical history is embedded in their core beings. This makes learning about biblical archaeology all the more difficult for religious individuals. In the second year of rabbinical school at HUC in Cincinnati, students are required to take a course in Bible and intertextuality. I recall the second week of class when I sat for hours discussing the course with a fellow student. Simultaneously as he just started his required in-depth studies in Bible to fulfill his profound religious need to become a rabbi, his entire foundation of belief was pulled out from under him. His basic assumptions upon which his faith was based were discredited one after the other without advanced warning. Despite the fact that it is essential to educate our future clergy in how the Bible relates to history, it is a difficult and deeply emotional task. I do not believe that even a seminary is necessarily prepared to handle the religious fallout inevitable in such education.

There are many ways people of faith respond when the floor drops out from under the pillars of the religion. For some, it is so difficult to consider this scenario that they refuse to try. Usually these individuals work from the finished religious concept backwards to defend its beginnings. In many ways it is like shooting the archer's arrow into the tree and drawing the bull's-eye circles after. That is to say, if we believe that there was an exodus, then let us find the information that supports this. However, in many cases the facts do not lead to the same conclusion. This is frequently the argument of the minimalists, claiming that we must connect our own dots using only the facts available to us. They, however, represent an extreme component of this logic. They leave no discussion room for the adage: "If it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck, and quacks like a duck—it's a duck."

As heavy a hit as it is for clergy to learn that the Bible is not completely historically accurate, it is often just as difficult for congregants trying to find meaning in faith that was never

solid to begin with. I cannot count the times I have been asked if it is possible to be a Jew and also doubt if Moses existed, or if God made the waters of the Red Sea part. People are anxious to know if belief in God hinges on a literal belief in the Bible. I have been witness to family and congregants as they struggle to explain why faith must prevail in such instances. They are simply unable to deal with the emotional quandary they will face if it does not. It is evident to me that there is a great need for open dialogue about these questions, one that is facilitated by clergy. I find that some congregants need a safe space to ask these questions. They won't address them with others on their own, fearing they will be shunned for their lack of belief or be discounted as an inauthentic Jew. Wouldn't a safe educational space be better than the front headlines of a national newspaper?[280]

The question that I ultimately feel needs to be raised in clergy-led congregational discussions is: "Whether or not the history of the Bible is exactly true, does it lessen the importance of God or the role of the biblical narratives in your life?" *Keeping Posted* eloquently answers this question: "However we choose to explain the Exodus, whether miraculously or scientifically, the story continues to touch something fundamental in the human experience, our universal yearning for freedom, giving expression to that longing in uniquely ethical terms."[281] This further supports what I have found from discussions I have had about this with congregants. Biblical archaeology does not diminish faith among laypeople. Rather, to the contrary. Whether parts of the Hebrew Bible were written at the time of the events they describe as first-hand accounts or whether they were written down hundreds of years later, the narratives are central to Jewish religious identity today. It matters less how and if the Exodus occured as compared to the influence this event had on the writings of our people through the ages. Even a glimpse into

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[280] Ibid., n.p.

[281] *Keeping Posted,* "Exodus." Volume 32:5. (March 1987). New York: UAHC, 1987.

religious identity in the Persian period can be spiritually meaningful. It is powerful to see the way that Jews of all generations recorded their experiences, whether historically accurate or not. Biblical archaeology only intensifies this relationship; it does not necessarily destroy it. Congregants will need help, however, in finding meaning from the utter theological chaos that archaeology can incite. It requires clergy with an open mind and a safe environment for our communities to flesh out these ideas.

The Impact of Archaeology on the Jewish Community

CLAIM TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Biblical archaeology is a subject close to the heart of Jewish Zionists. Because of the significance of the land of Israel both in religion and archaeology, discussions about excavations are almost always politically charged. There is an added layer to this, though. For Zionists, national identity is entangled with the issue. Many Zionists have an identity that is shaped by Jewish mythology, much of which is understood as history. Israeli identity is more complicated than American patriotism. Every level of government is founded on religious interpretation of history. Wallace has pointed out that "in the Israeli collective consciousness, the kingdom of David and Solomon is the model for the nation-state."[282] This complex Israeli identity runs deep. It also usually is accompanied by feelings of religious entitlement based on history as that community has defined it. For this reason it is difficult to distinguish between issues of politics or religion.

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[282]Wallace, "Shifting Ground in the Holy Land," 61.

Because national identity is so prevalent, the government uses archaeology to promote this nationhood. Sometimes, however, this is used to further political goals as well. Kletter, while describing archaeology in the 1950s, lays out a common perception that Israelis "... harnessed it to their needs, in the form of help from the army, funding for projects, and so on."[283] According to Kletter, it was under the guise of supporting scientific advancement through Near Eastern archaeology that early Israeli politicians were able strengthen Israeli nationhood and gain political strength. McCarthy points out elements of this perceived conflict-of-interest:

> Biblical passages map out definitive Israelite ownership of the land of Israel. This is significant vis à vis the current situation with the Palestinians, where land claim is the main source of hostility and violence. It would be incomprehensible for them to consider that the borders of the land of Israel were not divinely mapped out. This would be at political odds with their Zionist beliefs. How could they build an army and defend occupation if the land was not divinely theirs?[284]

This is the basis of what drives much of Israeli archaeology today. Non-religious Zionists have developed a stronghold of support for Israel through its relationship to biblical archaeology. Davies explains how all of this has affected biblical scholarship:

> "In short, critical Biblical scholars now realize that the two Israels—the Biblical Israel and the historical Israel—should not, indeed cannot, be brought together. The problem is not a scientific one, but a theological and political one for those who think the Bible has to be history if it is not to be worthless. Unfortunately, Biblical scholars are in a discipline where scientific views are most under pressure from those who think that religious and political arguments have some weight.[285]

It is easy for the scholars to claim that there is no element of personal or political persuasion regarding their work, but ultimately no scholar is entirely free of the shackles of personal identity

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[283] Kletter, *Just Past,* 314-5.

[284] McCarthy, *It Ain't Necessarily So,* 7.

[285] Philip R. Davies, "The Search for History in the Bible," *BAR* 26:02 (March/April 2000), n.p. *BAR on CD-ROM.*

and religion. Such is the basis for procedural questions like the following, which was raised by the BASE Institute regarding excavation of the Near East. They ask, "ARE MUSLIM ARCHAEOLOGISTS FREE TO BE UNBIASED ON ISSUES OF JEWISH HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY AND ARCHAEOLOGY?" This article explains how religion and politics may muddy the science of biblical archaeology.

> While we recognize the academic and intellectual capabilities of Muslim scholars, we also recognize the government-mandated allegiance of many Muslim archaeologists to the tenets, ideals, and conclusions of Islam – particularly in countries where the Koran is the legal constitution. We willingly acknowledge the freedom of Muslim scholars to adhere to their religion; but we also question their objectivity in matters pertaining to the geography and archaeology of Jewish history, including the possible location of historical Mt. Sinai inside a fundamentalist Muslim country.[286]

Regardless of what the material evidence reveals, whether one is a Zionist or an anti-Zionist may ultimately define how one interprets results. It would be unlikely for Muslim archaeologists to reveal anything that undermines their claims to Israel just as it would be unlikely for Jews to reveal anything that would undermine Israel's authority over their land. Because of suspicion on both sides, archaeology and science become the losers. Sites are often damaged and contaminated by religious ideologues, as has been seen with the removal of remains by the Muslim authority from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

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[286] The BASE Institute. http://*Baseinstitute.org/muslim.html*

IS BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY INTERDENOMINATIONAL?

It seems obvious that interfaith relationships are significantly strained when in comes to the topic of biblical archaeology. What about discussions and education within the Jewish community? Though I have presented the most serious of problems in biblical archaeology to be a result of Middle East politics and varying religious affiliations, I must add that the Jewish community itself is also torn apart by the issues. While there is a clear commonality among Jews that the Jewish people rely heavily on their "history" as part of their religious identity, this does not mean that all Jews see education in the same way when it involves issues of religious significance. Knowles summarizes these distinctions as they were presented by Leon Feldman:

> Orthodox Jews emphasize the information and training necessary for the full observance of traditional Jewish laws, customs and observances. Reform Jews . . . emphasize 'cultural' Judaism rather than observances, problems of relationships between Jews and non-Jews, and problems of ethics and character building. Conservative Jews generally stand mid-way between the Orthodox and Reform ideologies, balancing observance and adult education for 'customs' and emphasizing the importance of understanding Jewish history.[287]

Common national identity and intertwined religious meaning associated with the land of Israel does not necessarily indicate that all Jews feel the same about biblical archaeology. Do not be fooled into thinking it would be a sound idea to invite a biblical archaeologist to speak at a community forum. Just as there are fundamentalists and liberals in Islam and Christianity, so too do they exist within Judaism.

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[287] Huey B. Long, *Adult Education in Church and Synagogue (*New York: Syracuse University, 1973) "Publications in Continuing Education and ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education," 4. Malcolm S. Knowles, *The Adult Education Movement in the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, Inc., 1962), 149.

Reform Jews, the most liberal denomination of Judaism, have historically been known to support the "science of Judaism." The movement was founded upon a need to incorporate Judaism into modern life, which included looking at ancient texts through the eyes of modernity. It was out of this desire that Reform Judaism embraced higher biblical criticism. It was seen as a more enlightened way to understand religion than believing God wrote each and every word of Torah down. The Reform community is generally open and interested in the area of biblical archaeology and could accept what it may or may not reveal about Jewish history.

On the other side of the spectrum, Orthodox Jews would not take as kindly to the matter. Their belief in Judaism is much more fundamental and leaves no room for skepticism of God's word. To identify literary motifs and various biblical authors is antithetical to their most basic beliefs. The Torah is seen as flawless; there is no chance of human error in its transmission to the people. This sets a difficult stage for a discussion on biblical archaeology, unless the material presented confirms what the Bible claims. Unless a scholar has been chosen from the maximalist camp, a community lecture would be futile and inflammatory.

Aside from these basic theological differences, other factors also must be considered. The Orthodox are in control of religion in the State of Israel. This includes authority over ancient burial grounds, sites of religious significance, and any human remains that may be discovered. Orthodox theology mandates burial of all human remains in preparation for the Resurrection of the Dead. When it comes to biblical archaeology, all three issues are key. It is at sites of religious significance that archaeologists usually choose to excavate. Burial grounds are often treasure troves of ancient remains. And, human remains are frequently unearthed in these processes, but are unable to be tested for historical data. This has strained the relationship between archaeologists and Orthodox authorities in Israel. Though archaeologists from the early

20th century, such as Nelson Glueck, gave the impression that archaeology is compatible with the Bible and in this way interdenominational, recent studies prove otherwise.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

The Jewish community has long recognized the importance of history and its role in education. It successfully serves as a resource for educational material about historical events such as the Holocaust and the Middle East conflict. In fact, the Jewish community has gone above and beyond this call to responsibly to direct people to trustworthy educational sources. Jewish educators have taken time to facilitate understanding of historical events, helping process the spiritual responses that arise. Subjects dealing with tragedy are handled gently but nevertheless they are taught. While a child may be learning about the Holocaust for the first time in public school, the congregational school tries to look at the more personal significance of the event for the student. Yet, little to no material has been created to help educators teach biblical archaeology in our religious schools even though for some, it too can be interpreted as a disaster. The crushing destruction of mythological figures and religious events can be just as heartbreaking to some as a lost relative may be for others. And still we have no tools with which to handle this problem. I would argue that the Reform Jewish community, which has a long history of liberal scholarship, has a responsibility to provide educational materials about biblical archaeology to Jews of all ages. We repeatedly claim that the future is best understood through an examination of the past. It is time that we put our resources where our mouths are and eliminate our idle talk.

Ideally, the Jewish community would deal with biblical archaeology much the way the SAA has. There could be pamphlets available for synagogues to give to local media so that they may be empowered to present biblical archaeology responsibly. Rabbis would be offered distance learning opportunities to familiarize themselves with current scholarly trends and theories that may have circulated around their congregations. Small discussion groups would be

offered to congregants during which they could openly discuss the Bible, archaeological evidence and understandings of that evidence in the company of a professional who can help guide the discussion towards finding religious meaning in it all.

Beyond points of controversy, there are points that can be examined where the Bible and archaeology converge. I have seen Rabbi Wing's curriculum for students in the religious school and only wish for more materials like these to surface—for adult education courses as well. Just as the SAA and The Lookstein Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora have offered curricula for teachers about history and archaeology on their websites, the Jewish community should create a storage bank online of lessons and activities for our own communities.

There are several excellent online resources available in other fields outside of biblical archaeology that use media to maximize learning of their subject. For example, Harvard Business School offers continuing education to its graduates this way. Its website, HTTP://WWW.EXED.HBS.EDU/PRODUCTS/TEL/INDEX.HTML, explains how and why the school believes in technology enhanced learning:

> In order to extend opportunities for executive development to a broader managerial audience and deepen the ability of participants to apply what they learn in on-campus programs, Harvard Business School (HBS) Executive Education continues to develop innovative educational multimedia resources. These resources include action-learning programs and the Faculty Seminar Series.

There are limited resources of this nature for biblical archaeology. One that stands out to me is a mini-course that is offered from the Joint Commission for Sustaining Rabbinic Education, entitled "They Did Not Teach Me that in Rabbinic School: Innovation and Revision in Biblical Studies." This course, led by Ehud Ben Zvi & David H. Aaron, has the following description:

> In this mini-course we will endeavor to learn and understand the implications of recent developments in biblical studies (Prophets and Pentateuch in particular) and how these developments might be integrated into our teaching as rabbis and educators.

Though this course is not specifically geared to biblical archaeology, it deals with many of the same scholarly theories and issues. I would also recommend that congregants be directed to the site, "History of Israel," posted by the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.[288] I was equally impressed by links for useful information provided by the Web Institute for Teachers[289] online at: http://jwit.webinstituteforteachers.org/~jsales/webquest/Resources.htm. Although today there are some sources available for congregants by which to learn about biblical archaeology, there is still so much more work to be done. I look forward to a day when I see courses offered in all congregations to help adult Jews to more fully appreciate the complexity, the richness, and the value of their biblical heritage.

[288] http://fontes.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/history_of_israel.htm, updated on August 3, 2006.

[289] http://jwit.webinstituteforteachers.org/~jsales/webquest/Resources.htm.

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