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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This issue is rather slimmer than normal. The adage "quality over quantity" certainly applies, however, as this issue includes valuable and thoughtful student work. With me for this issue was David Peterson, who will be taking over as editor in chief at my graduation in April. David is a junior in the Ancient Near Eastern Studies major on the Hebrew track.

Continuing the tradition begun in Volume 7.1, we have included Joshua Bodine's excellent review of the important controversy surrounding dating in Iron Age Palestine. He provides a thorough introduction into this important Near Eastern topic and his article "Gates, Dates, and Debates: A Review of Megiddo's Monumental Gate and the Debates over Archaeology and Chronology in Iron Age Palestine" can be found on page 1. We also have included an article that was presented at the Students of the Ancient Near East Symposium on Friday, 29 January 2010. David Ferguson's "'I Never Did an Evil Thing': An Examination of Hittite Sin and Religious Sensibility," another interesting and well-done piece, is on page 55.

This issue would not have been possible without the help of a number of individuals. We wish to thank Michael D. Rhodes for his expertise, as well as Cory Crawford, Ray L. Huntington, Frank F. Judd, Jr., and Thomas A. Wayment, who all contributed time to reviewing submissions and providing feedback to students. The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship has contributed generously to the publication of this journal, as have the Students of the Ancient Near East, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and Classics. We wish to especially thank Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and the Religious Studies Center, which provides the internship that makes it possible for us to dedicate the time necessary to publish this journal. Devan Jensen and his editors have provided essential assistance in helping edit the final version of this issue. Finally, Joany Pinegar continues to provide invaluable support for the publication of this journal.

Angela B. Wagner
Editor in Chief, *Studia Antiqua*

GATES, DATES, AND DEBATES:
A REVIEW OF MEGIDDO'S MONUMENTAL GATE AND THE DEBATES OVER ARCHAEOLOGY AND CHRONOLOGY IN IRON AGE PALESTINE

JOSHUA J. BODINE

Evolving originally from an aim to illuminate and authenticate the biblical text into being part of a wider movement in Near Eastern archaeology, for over a century now "biblical archaeology" (if it can be called such) has been a major activity carried out throughout Palestine.[1] At the same time, archaeology in the land of the Bible has produced endless debates and discussions over archaeological and historical interpretations—evident in recent years as one takes stock of the issues that have arisen over Iron Age Palestine.[2] As an important period in the study of early Israelite history and the emergence of its territorial state(s), the Iron Age layers at many locales have been focal points of unending archaeological digs and discussions. For the Iron Age II in particular, major differences of interpretation exist between scholars, so much so that establishing an archaeological framework and correlating it with secure historical details has been difficult and extremely divisive and has yielded anything but a scholarly consensus.

In the Iron Age II layers at Megiddo, one of Palestine's most important archaeological sites, are the remains of a monumental city gate that has had an enormous impact on the archaeological debates. Yet aside from its significance and effect on the current controversy over chronological models, its own interpretation is ironically dependent on the ever-evolving arguments of the very same discussions. Megiddo's monumental gate is thus a perfect primer into the wider issues and complexities involved in the archaeology and chronology of Iron Age Palestine. It is an influential architectural remain and is necessarily an important part of any archaeological and historical interpretations that may be offered of the biblical past.

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1. See Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (ABRL rev. ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1992), xv.

2. For a recent and accessible analysis of the issues from the standpoint of two prominent archaeologists who are heavily involved in the discussions, see Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel* (ed. Brian B. Schmidt; SBLABS 17; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

Archaeology, History, and the United Monarchy

It is perhaps obvious, but nonetheless important to point out from the start, that before any historical or chronological questions can be asked of archaeology, a proper archaeological framework must first be established.[3] The archaeological framework of a site can be said to be composed of stratigraphy and a relative chronology—in others words, layers of material remains, generally sequential in nature, that place data into a context with which it can be properly interpreted and hopefully dated.[4]

The single greatest problem in establishing such a framework is the fact that the data at any given site can almost always be interpreted in more than one way (e.g., specific remains being assigned to an upper or lower level for different reasons). Adding to the complexity is the reality that the archaeological framework of a given site cannot simply be worked out in total isolation from the surrounding "horizon" of the region. Yet these examples say nothing about the meaningful application of an archaeological framework, only of the difficulties inherent in archaeological work itself. Archaeology is invaluable in what it reveals about the past, but even if developed perfectly in all of its aspects, the archaeological framework of a site or region only offers a relative picture—culturally, historically, or otherwise. Irrespective of the soundness of an archaeological framework, then, unless it can be tied to historical dates, periods, events, and so on, it is in at least some senses meaningless. To truly understand the past, the archaeological and historical data must at some point be combined. However, attempting a synthesis of archaeological evidence with historical information is a significant undertaking that requires a thorough methodology, the cooperation of both archaeologists and historians, and the recognition that the array of data is often problematic in one way or another.[5]

3. See Amihai Mazar, "The Spade and the Text: The Interaction between Archaeology and Israelite History Relating to the Tenth–Ninth Centuries B.C.E.," in *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel* (ed. H. G. M. Williamson; Proceedings of the British Academy 143; Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2007), 146.

4. On this see David Ussishkin, "Archaeology of the Biblical Period: On Some Questions of Methodology and Chronology of the Iron Age," in *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel*, 135.

5. Speaking of these issues, David Ussishkin laments the practice of the interpretation of history that is carried out by professional archaeologists whom he believes "should concentrate on the study of the archaeological data, leaving the questions of history and the Bible to be dealt with by the historian and the biblical scholar who are more qualified to do so." Likewise, "biblical scholars and historians should refrain from analyzing the archaeological data, thinking that they are as well-qualified to do so as professional archaeologists." In theory, no one would disagree with the essence of this argument; it is sound advice. Even so, the problem is at some point archaeology and history must be combined "in order to provide an overall picture of what happened." The "proper methodology" for doing this, Ussishkin contends, is "some cooperation between archaeologists, biblical scholars and historians." To carry this out: "The archaeologist elucidates and organizes the data objectively, explains their meaning and limitations, and summarizes them. In the next stage the historian and biblical scholar study the results of the archeological work and incorporate them into their own research" (see Ussishkin, "Archaeology of the Biblical Period," 134–35). In reality, however,

To speak of the biblical past, if the several competing chronological models currently used today are any indication, coalescing archaeological and historical interpretations of the biblical text and its land is a seriously problematic endeavor. At the moment no period is more controversial than, roughly speaking, the eleventh to the ninth centuries B.C.E., in which various phases of the Iron Age are dated differently by different archaeologists.[6] As the very period that represents the formative years of the Israelite state(s), much discussion has centered on the nature and extent of the United Monarchy—in particular the reign of King Solomon.[7] To be sure, the contention over chronology is not about the existence of David or Solomon as historical figures, but, as Israel Finkelstein puts it, "the extent and splendor of their realm."[8]

The issues involved in the search for the biblical past of the period of David and Solomon and the surrounding centuries are not simply petty, scholarly arguments; the problems are real and the role that archaeology plays is vital. It has been said that Megiddo is the place where "the archaeology of the 10th–9th centuries was born."[9] It is here, then, where we will focus our discussion in order to illuminate the dynamics, trends, and general issues that factor into the archaeological and chronological controversy of Iron Age Palestine.[10]

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this ideal is hardly ever reached, even by Ussishkin. The tendency for historians to interpret rather than analyze the archaeological data, and the temptation for archaeologists to offer historical interpretations of their archaeological frameworks, is difficult to control. The point is all should attempt to be more careful in their assessments, research, and conclusions, and be willing to hold dialogue as part of creating a synthesis of archaeology and history. The need for dialogue between the fields to create an accurate picture has been called for by others as well; for example, see William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990): 30–35; and 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), 53–95.

6.   A glance at the terminology of archaeological periods used by different scholars testifies to the existence of diverse archaeological schemes for the Iron Age. On this see the brief discussion by Lester L. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 10–11.

7.   See, for example, the discussion in Gary N. Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon: The Disappearance of the United Monarchy from Recent Histories of Ancient Israel," *JBL* 116, no. 1 (1997): 19–44; or part one of the volume edited by Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew, *Jerusalem in the Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (SBLSymS 18; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 13–182.

8.   Israel Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001; repr., New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 142.

9.   Israel Finkelstein, "State Formation in Israel and Judah: A Contrast in Context, a Contrast in Trajectory," *NEA* 62, no. 1 (1999): 35–36.

10.   Of course, this is also to recognize the fact that the archaeological and historical data is much more nuanced, plentiful, and wide-ranging than Megiddo; in this regard, a review of Megiddo is in no way exhaustive and cannot pretend to be comprehensive enough for a complete understanding of the issues.

Megiddo, Its Monumental Gate, and the Debate

Home to one of the largest archaeological undertakings at an Iron Age site, the ancient, northern Palestinian site of Megiddo (modern-day Tell el-Mutesellim) is widely regarded as an important—indeed key—archaeological site.[11] Even before the Iron Age, extending back into the Late Bronze, Megiddo was a prominent city with monumental buildings and remained an important administrative center well into the Iron Age.[12]

The Stratigraphy of Megiddo

Beginning in 1903, several major and minor excavations[13] were carried out at Megiddo, resulting in a complex archaeological framework which continues to be challenged and developed today.[14] The convoluted nature of the archaeological framework owes itself to, among other things, the mismanagement and serious methodological errors of early digs, the ambiguity of several important archeological layers, and the differences of opinion by assessors of the data. Yet, despite these types of issues—or perhaps because of them—Megiddo became a centerpiece of the reconsiderations of the traditional chronological framework.

The Megiddo strata at the heart of the current controversy, and those that directly affect interpretations of the Israelite state(s) in the eleventh to the ninth centuries B.C.E., are those strata labeled V and IV, along with their sub-phases. It is in these layers that we find the remains of a monumental city gate whose impact and importance on this period cannot be understated: the so-called "Solomonic" gate. Unfortunately, in the words of André Lemaire, this is precisely the period where the "stratigraphy of Megiddo . . . is not at all clear."[15]

Megiddo and its "Solomonic" Monuments

Dating back to the 1920s and 1930s, in the expedition of Megiddo by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute, many Iron Age remains were first associated with King Solomon by the excavators. Among these were the famous "Solomonic" stables and gate—both originally assigned to Stratum IV—that appeared to be prime evidence confirming the accuracy of the biblical

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11.   For a general review and introduction to Megiddo, see G. I. Davies, *Megiddo* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1986).

12.   See Israel Finkelstein, David Ussishkin, and Baruch Halpern, eds., *Megiddo III: The 1992–1996 Seasons* (2 vols.; Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology Monograph Series 18; Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology, 2000), 593–97.

13.   For a brief review of Megiddo and an overview of the history of its archaeological excavations, see David Ussishkin, "Megiddo," *ABD* 4:666–79.

14.   One recent argument is that of Norma Franklin, a Megiddo excavator who proposes that all the sub-phases of Megiddo Stratum V and IV be done away with and classified as they originally were. On this see Norma Franklin, "Revealing Stratum V at Megiddo," *BASOR* 342 (2006): 95–111.

15.   André Lemaire, "The United Monarchy: Saul, David and Solomon," in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (ed. Hershel Shanks; rev. and enl. ed.; Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999), 118.

record. The following biblical passages were particularly important for this interpretation: (1) in 1 Kgs 9:15, in addition to Solomon's palace and temple at Jerusalem, Megiddo is listed as one of three cities, along with Hazor and Gezer, which Solomon rebuilt or fortified; (2) 1 Kgs 7:12 describes Solomon's buildings as being composed of "hewn stones" (i.e. ashlars); (3) 1 Kgs 9:19 mentions cities for housing chariots and cavalry. So, when the Oriental Institute's excavators uncovered a large gate structure (gate 2156) built of high-quality ashlar masonry, as well as two large buildings composed of rows of individual chambers separated by low walls with troughs on the opposite side, it seemed only reasonable, based on the biblical evidence, that these finds be dated to the period of Solomon in the tenth century (ca. 970–930 B.C.E.).

Two decades later the importance of these finds was greatly enhanced by the work of Yigael Yadin. Yadin, excavating at Hazor in 1957, uncovered a casemate wall surrounding the city which was connected to a large six-chambered gate. When Yadin noticed that the size and layout of the gate at Hazor was remarkably similar to the one unearthed at Megiddo twenty years earlier, Yadin was led to assert that Megiddo and Hazor were not only built by Solomon, but that both gates were "built by the same royal architect."[16] Not long after, Yadin took to the task of examining the archaeological reports of the third city mentioned in 1 Kgs 9:15, Gezer, and discovered, yet again, a similar type of gate structure to those at Megiddo and Hazor.[17] In Yadin's opinion, the controversy over the dating of the gate at Megiddo ended.[18]

One of the problems with Yadin's interpretation was that the gate at Megiddo was not found connected to a casemate wall like those at Hazor and Gezer. So, in the early 1960s Yadin set out to Megiddo to uncover a casemate wall that in his view surely must have been missed by earlier excavations. In the process, Yadin found the remains of (among other buildings) two palaces (1723 and 6000) built of ashlar stones. One of those palaces (6000) was connected to a row of structures interpreted by Yadin as a casemate wall, which in turn appeared to be connected to the city gate. This palace, according to a later article by David Ussishkin, was clearly similar to the biblical description of Solomon's royal palace in Jerusalem, thus allowing us, as Ussishkin put it, "but a glimpse of the magnificent buildings of this glorious king."[19]

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16.   Yigael Yadin, "Excavations at Hazor, 1957, Preliminary Communiqué," *IEJ* 8 (1958): 3.

17.   See Yigael Yadin, "Solomon's City Wall and Gate at Gezer," *IEJ* 8 (1958): 85–86.

18.   Yadin mentioned his opinion that the controversy was ended in his report of Hazor even before examining Gezer (see note 16); Gezer only cemented this. It should also perhaps be pointed out that the recent controversy is not an entirely new development, demonstrated by the fact that in 1958 Yadin had to call an "end" to the controversy over dating the gate to a period later than Solomon, signifying that such a debate had already arisen. In fact, in 1940, John Crowfoot had already argued for a lowering of the date of Megiddo Stratum IV to the ninth century based on his excavations at Samaria, and the similarities between it and Megiddo. See John Crowfoot, "Megiddo—A Review," *PEQ* (1940): 132–47.

19.   David Ussishkin, "King Solomon's Palaces," *BA* 36, no. 3 (1973): 105. See also David Ussishkin, "King Solomon's Palaces and Building 1723 in Megiddo," *IEJ* 16 (1966): 174–86.

In an unexpected turn, however, palace 6000 was found to be underneath the building previously identified as the "Solomonic" stables of Stratum IV.[20] Yadin's conclusion: the two palaces, gate, and "casemate" wall were part of a large city comprising stratum VA–IVB, while the stables belonged to a later city (Stratum IVA), built most probably by King Ahab of the northern kingdom of Israel in the early ninth century b.c.e.[21] Even with the loss of the magnificent stables to a city later than Solomon's, there were still enough monumental remains left assigned to the stratum above to lend evidence to the greatness of the "Solomonic" city of Megiddo VA–IVB. That is, until another decidedly "Solomonic" structure, the city gate, began to encounter its own stratigraphical challenges.

Connecting the Gate: A Casemate Wall, a Solid Wall, Both, or None at All?

The difficulties with the stratigraphical interpretation of the gate revolve around the lower courses of its structure. Yadin, after finding the rooms east of palace 6000, declared that he had found the missing casemate wall he had been looking for that corroborated his theory about the Megiddo gate and its similarities to those at Hazor and Gezer. In Yadin's opinion, the gate was connected to this casemate wall and belonged to the same stratum as the monumental palatial edifices of Megiddo VA–IVB—for Yadin, and others, all this was clear evidence for the great royal building projects of King Solomon.[22] In Yadin's view, then, contrary to the assessment of its first excavators, the lower portion of the gate connected to the casemate wall was thus not the gate's foundation, but its original superstructure.[23] To be sure, the advantage of this interpretation, as Amihai Mazar notes, was that the ashlars in the lower courses of the gate would be visible – as one would expect such beautiful stonework to be – and "not intentionally buried in foundation courses where it could not be seen"; the disadvantage was that the massive gate was left without a foundation.[24]

It was Yohanan Aharoni, in his own analysis of the stratification of Megiddo, who gave the first major blow to Yadin's interpretation of the gate. Aharoni disagreed with Yadin in the following important aspects:

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20. By this time, Megiddo Stratum V and IV had already been divided into sub-phases within which Yadin worked to present his own interpretation of the archaeological data.

21. See Yigael Yadin, "New Light on Solomon's Megiddo," *BA* 23, no. 2 (1960): 62–68 and Yigael Yadin, "Megiddo of the Kings of Israel," *BA* 33, no. 3 (1970): 66–96. Yadin didn't necessarily rule out the existence of stables belonging to Solomon, only that the ones on top of the palace did not date to his time. Graham Davies has attempted to show the possibility of Solomonic stables at Megiddo in a similar building that dates earlier than the one Yadin re-dated. See Graham I. Davies, "Solomonic Stables at Megiddo After All?" *PEQ* 120 (1988): 130–41.

22. For example, prominent archaeologist William Dever holds to this view unflinchingly; see Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 131–38.

23. See Yigael Yadin, *Hazor: The Head of All Those Kingdoms* (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1970; London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 147–64.

24. See Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 400, note 15.

(1) that Yadin's interpretation of the row of rooms east of palace 6000 as a casemate wall was weak and untenable; (2) the wall that the city gate was stratigraphically connected to was actually a solid wall (city wall 325) that ran *over* the top of one of the monumental palaces (1723); and (3) as the gate and the palaces were clearly stratigraphically separated, Stratum VA–IVB should be separated as well. Still, Aharoni agreed with Yadin in another respect: coupled with the passage in 1 Kgs 9:15, and with the evidence at Hazor and Gezer, the Solomonic provenance of the city gate was not in question. Aharoni thus saw the solid city wall (325) and the gate as belonging to Stratum IVB, while the palaces that ran underneath the solid wall he assigned to Stratum VA, which he interpreted as a "Davidic" city.[25]

Then, years later, building upon the argument of Aharoni (as well as Ze'ev Herzog), David Ussishkin maintained the city gate's connection to the solid wall running over the top of the palaces, but also highlighted the problem of its missing substructure. For Ussishkin, it was necessary to distinguish between the gate's foundations and its structure. He contended that the lower courses of the gate found in Stratum VA–IVB were not its superstructure, but its subterranean foundation. Moreover, the reason that the foundation was composed of ashlars, was that it was a "constructional fill" built up to ground level by the builders of Stratum IVA, utilizing ashlars from the destroyed buildings (e.g. palace 6000) of Stratum VA–IVB—a type of foundation and structure that is attested at other sites. For Ussishkin, then, the gate should be a part of Stratum IVA along with the stables, and not assigned to the combined (Yadin) or separated (Aharoni) VA–IVB layer(s) along with the palaces.[26] To be without a city wall, without a monumental gate,[27] and without great stable (or storage[28]) compounds—all part of a later monumental city with strong fortifications—meant that the "emphasis of the Solomonic constructions at Megiddo mentioned in 1 Kgs 9:15 was clearly on monumental palace-compounds."[29] In some respects, then, the monumental "Solomonic" city was slowly being stripped of its monumental architecture.

25.   See Yohanan Aharoni, "The Stratification of Israelite Megiddo," *JNES* 31, no. 4 (1972): 302–11.

26.   David Ussishkin, "Was the 'Solomonic' City Gate at Megiddo Built by King Solomon?" *BASOR* 239 (1980): 1–18. Ussishkin admitted in footnote 2 that he had originally accepted Yadin's date in his earlier studies on King Solomon's palaces, and though his view had changed in that specific, he held to his analysis of the palaces themselves.

27.   Ussishkin did not see Stratum VA–IVB as totally devoid of a gate; he argued that the six-chambered gate in question was actually preceded by a small two-chambered type, consistent with "the nature of the fortifications at that level." Ussishkin, "'Solomonic' City Gate," 17.

28.   If they are indeed to be interpreted as stables, which, incidentally, is also a point of debate.

29.   Ussishkin, "'Solomonic' City Gate," 17. In this view, Stratum VA–IVB is still Solomon's city. However, the "Solomonic city—characterized by monumental palaces, residential quarters, weak defenses, and a small city gate (see note 27)—had been replaced by a city protected by massive city walls and a massive city gate, large stable compounds . . . and a water system." See David Ussishkin, "Notes on Megiddo, Gezer, Ashdod, and Tel Batash in the Tenth to Ninth Centuries B.C.," *BASOR* 277/278 (1990): 73.

Yadin, in a rejoinder to Ussishkin, responded that Ussishkin had failed to account for a building method Yadin referred to as "no foundations proper," where the composition of the underlying ground is believed to be "sufficient to support the structure."[30] Having recognized the gate's connection to the city wall of Stratum IVA, Yadin concluded that the gate could have had two distinct building phases: "the original one" belonging to Stratum VA–IVB, and a "later stage [tentatively labeled IVA1] . . . in which the whole area was raised and a new floor was built," and was only then connected to the massive city wall of Stratum IVA.[31] Since the existence of a true casemate wall that preceded the solid wall was no longer tenable, this would mean that the original phase of the gate in Stratum VA–IVB would not have been connected to any wall at all. One plausible explanation is that "the gate could have formed the entrance to a city which lacked a city wall and in which the outer walls of the outer belt of buildings [i.e. Yadin's row of rooms] created a defense line."[32] This would allow the high level of a floor that joins the city wall of Stratum IVA to represent a second phase in which a lower, original floor belonging to Stratum VA–IVB butted against the five courses of ashlars and wooden beams in the lowest portions of the structure, and was thus above the ground and visible as would be expected. There are, admittedly, some other stratigraphical problems with this view; however, it is nonetheless an acceptable interpretation.[33]

To put it succinctly, depending on one's analysis, the gate can belong either to both Stratum VA–IVB and IVA in two phases, or to IVA alone. Stratigraphically speaking, then, as expressed by Mazar, "we can progress no further with this matter."[34]

Dates and More Debates

Dating the Megiddo gate, however, is a completely separate issue. Once again, arguments vary and views are divided. Any problems of interpreting the archaeological remains are exacerbated by the fact that there are no historical anchors within immediate sight of this period that can be confidently used to ascertain absolute dates. The closest secure anchors are Egypt's hegemony over Canaan until ca. 1140–1130 B.C.E., marking the upper limit, and the Assyrian campaigns of 732–701 B.C.E., designating the lower.

We can narrow the range between the two somewhat, but not with the same confidence. The lower boundary can plausibly be moved up to ca. 840–830 B.C.E., based on pottery assemblages found at the one-period site of Jezreel—the second royal residence of the Omride dynasty.[35] The ceramics, similar to those found in Megiddo Stratum VA–IVB, were found in the

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30. Yigael Yadin, "A Rejoinder," *BASOR* 239 (1980): 19.
31. Yadin, "A Rejoinder," 20.
32. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 400, note 15. As Mazar notes, such "town planning" is attested elsewhere.
33. See Mazar, "The Spade and the Text," 156.
34. Mazar, "The Spade and the Text," 157.
35. See David Ussishkin and John Woodhead, "Excavations at Tel Jezreel 1994–1996: Third Preliminary Report," *TA* 24, no. 1 (1997): 6–72.

destruction level of the royal compound at Jezreel, and also below it.[36] While this chronologically-restricted site can offer a credible lower boundary for Iron IIA type pottery, the fact that similar pottery was also found below the royal residence (and thus from an earlier period) means the similar pottery of Megiddo VA–IVB could be associated with either the period of the royal enclosure in the mid-ninth century B.C.E., or with the earlier pottery found beneath it.

Regarding an upper boundary for dating the Megiddo gate, an important historical datum is the invasion of Palestine ca. 925 B.C.E. by Sheshonq I (biblical Shishak). Though important in certain respects, this event is not without its problems. Based on the assumption that Sheshonq ravaged the Palestinian countryside, destruction levels at many sites have naturally been attributed to him. However, no longer do all scholars accept the interpretation of widespread destruction. In fact, according to Gabriel Barkay, it "has not been proven that any sites were destroyed by Shishak in 925 B.C.E., and the attribution of destruction layers to the end of the tenth century at many sites is mere conjecture."[37] Hence, a growing number of scholars would agree with Ussishkin when he says that "one way or another Shishak's list [of cities he conquered] is useless as a secure archaeological and chronological anchor."[38]

In any case, although the use of Sheshonq's invasion and its association with destruction layers has difficulties, a royal stele he erected at Megiddo may provide for a possible chronological interpretation. To be sure, the stele was not found within a stratigraphical context, so it cannot be used as a datable anchor, but, as notes Ussishkin, the very act of erecting a stele at Megiddo indicated Sheshonq's intention to create a "foothold" in Canaan and use Megiddo as a base.[39] In other words, Sheshonq would not have erected a stele in a desolate city, nor would he have destroyed the city if he intended on holding it. Thus, at least at Megiddo, attempts to associate a total destruction layer with Sheshonq (like Megiddo Stratum VIA[40]) are probably misguided. Yet, it would be naïve to assume that an Egyptian takeover did not result in at least some sort of trauma to Megiddo. Indeed, this is a scenario we see in the last phase

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36. See Orna Zimhoni, *Studies in the Iron Age Pottery of Israel: Typological, Archaeological and Chronological Aspects* (Tel Aviv Occasional Publication Series 2; Tel Aviv: Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, 1997), 13–56.

37. Gabriel Barkay, "The Iron Age II–III," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (ed. Amnon Ben-Tor; trans. R. Greenberg; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 306–7. See also G. J. Wightman, "Megiddo VIA–III: Associated Structures and Chronology," *Levant* 17 (1985): 125, who argues that "there is no clear evidence for a Shishak destruction level at Megiddo."

38. Ussishkin, "Archaeology of the Biblical Period," 137.

39. See David Ussishkin, "Notes on Megiddo, Gezer, Ashdod, and Tel Batash," 74.

40. Despite arguments otherwise, Megiddo Stratum VIA should probably be seen as having to do with King David and his military exploits, as argued by Timothy P. Harrison, "The Battleground: Who Destroyed Megiddo? Was it David or Shishak?" *BAR* 29, no. 6 (November/December 2003), 28–35, 60–64. For a detailed analysis of Megiddo Stratum VI see Timothy P. Harrison, *Megiddo 3: Final Report on the Stratum VI Excavations* (OIP 127; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2004).

of Stratum VA–IVB (i.e. a partial destruction of palace 6000 and a few other buildings). Given the circumstances, it is possible that this was the result of Sheshonq's intended occupation of Megiddo, and it is thus feasible to date the end phase of Stratum VA–IVB to around 925 B.C.E.

In response to the question of whether or not the city gate at Megiddo can be dated with certainty, then, the answer must be no. The monumental six-chambered gate clearly belongs *at least* to Stratum IVA, but the question is whether this was a second phase of the gate, or whether it existed originally in the preceding stratum (VA–IVB). If belonging to both, then a date around 925 B.C.E. (in accordance with the interpretation of Stratum VA–IVB above) is as close as we can get, since we can only conjecture its possible existence at the time and not its date of construction. If to Stratum IVA only, then determining the construction date is more problematic, but its range cannot extend beyond our lower boundary ca. 840–830 B.C.E. (for reasons cited above and others).[41] As of now, inseparably tied as it is to the larger debate, any date assigned to the gate at Megiddo is necessarily tentative. In light of this, and with the recognition that the spectrum of archaeological and historical data is much more complex and plentiful than the brief summary offered here, a synthesis of the available data (at Megiddo and elsewhere) can suggest narrowing the date to somewhere in between ca. 925–840 B.C.E.—a range that allows for the gate at Megiddo to fall within several different chronological models. Is it, then, Solomonic? Yes, no, maybe.

A Crisis of Chronologies

What began with a reconsideration of archaeology and chronology that centered on Megiddo has become a crisis of chronologies, as it were, of Iron Age Palestine—in its current state, what Lester Grabbe describes as an "only-partially controlled chaos."[42] Two of these chronologies will be mentioned here.

The most notable—and controversial—assault to the conventional chronology came in the mid-1990s with the development of Israel Finkelstein's so-called *Low Chronology* (LC), in which he argues for a down-dating of 75–100 years for the entire Iron Age chronology in Palestine.[43] It was, in fact,

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41. An interesting example used by one archaeologist to corroborate our lower boundary is the remains of a four-chambered gate found in Bethsaida Stratum V (ca. 850–732 B.C.E.), and its implications for the four-chambered city gate at Megiddo that succeeded the six-chambered one. As Megiddo's four-chambered gate is sometimes assigned to Stratum III and sometimes to Stratum IV, if it is to be related to the similar gate type at Bethsaida Stratum V, the implications for our six-chambered gate are clear: since Bethsaida Stratum V was constructed shortly after 850 B.C.E., the six-chambered gate must have been destroyed around 850 B.C.E. and replaced by the four-chambered type (there are no layers in between). However, this is still only a possible correlation with its *de*struction and not its *con*struction. Bethsaida's director, Rami Arav, is of the opinion that if the four-chambered gate at Bethsaida is parallel in time to the four-chambered gate at Megiddo that sits atop the six-chambered one, then dating the six-chambered gate to the ninth century is "improbable." Rami Arav, email message to author, 25 October 2008.

42. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 11.

43. See his original remarks on this in Israel Finkelstein, "The Date of the Settlement

his renewed excavations at Megiddo that led him to this conclusion.[44] In short, Finkelstein's redating scheme means that most of the monuments associated with Solomon are moved from the tenth into the ninth century b.c.e., under the northern Israelite kings of the Omride dynasty (Omri and Ahab; ca. 884–842 b.c.e.). In this view, the United Monarchy is nothing more than a small chiefdom that "could have been an expanding 'early state' rather than a full-blown, mature state," with the real development occurring in the ninth century b.c.e. with the northern kingdom of Israel.[45] The LC, then, can be said to be a paradigm shift that changes the entire understanding of state formation in the biblical world.

As expected, the LC was met with much criticism that continues today.[46]

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of the Philistines in Canaan," *TA* 22 (1995): 213–39, and Israel Finkelstein, "The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View," *Levant* 28 (1996): 177–87. His views were developed in later articles and in a full synthesis in his book on the subject (see Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*). A similar lowering of dates was already argued by G. J. Wightman in his "Megiddo VIA–III: Associated Structures and Chronology," *Levant* 17 (1985): 117–29, and "The Myth of Solomon," *BASOR* 277/278 (1990): 5–22. The main arguments Finkelstein uses to support his view (summarized in his book; see 123–45, 169–95, 342–44) are: (1) pottery assemblages found in the one-period site of Jezreel that "safely" date to the ninth century were "almost identical" to pottery found in the palaces at Megiddo; therefore, not only the gate and the stables, but the palaces too, all date to the ninth century; and (2) similarities in construction and layout between the palaces at Megiddo and those at Samaria dating to the ninth century. Of course, additional reasons beyond these were also involved, such as his criticism of the heavy dependence on a single biblical verse by adherents of the traditional chronology, circular reasoning employed as a result of the use of the biblical text to offer an interpretation of the archaeological data which then authenticates the text, similar gate types not limited to the tenth century b.c.e. but that appear to be a popular form throughout Palestine up until the seventh century b.c.e., the problem of a Jerusalem-centered royal monarchy, the existence of a strange gap (or "dark age") in the archaeological record that leaves not much in the way of monumental architecture for the ninth to the eighth centuries b.c.e. for which there are clues, and more.

44.   See Finkelstein, "State Formation in Israel and Judah," 35–36.

45.   Finkelstein, "State Formation in Israel and Judah," 42. In this Finkelstein built upon an argument by David W. Jamieson-Drake in his *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach* (JSOTSup 109; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1991), in which he had argued that the real rise of Judah as a full-fledged state came in the eighth century b.c.e.

46.   See Amihai Mazar, "Iron Age Chronology: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein," *Levant* 29 (1997): 157–67; Amihai Mazar, "The Debate Over the Chronology of the Iron Age in the Southern Levant," in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science* (ed. Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham; London: Equinox, 2005), 15–30; William G. Dever, "Archaeology and the 'Age of Solomon': A Case Study in Archaeology and Historiography," in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium* (ed. Lowell K. Handy; SHCANE 11; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 217–51; Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 131–38; William G. Dever, "Visiting the Real Gezer: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein," *TA* 30 (2003): 259–82; Amnon Ben-Tor, "Hazor and the Chronology of Northern Israel: A Reply to Israel Finkelstein," *BASOR* 317 (2000): 9–15; Lawrence E. Stager, "The Patrimonial Kingdom of Solomon," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel and their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palestine* (ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 63–74; David Ben-Shlomo, Itzhaq Shai, and Aren M. Maeir, "Late Philistine Decorated Ware ("Ashdod Ware"): Typology,

The individual arguments are varied and many. Leading the way in this regard is Amihai Mazar, an outspoken opponent of the LC, who has been active in his efforts to demonstrate the issues with Finkelstein's chronology. Yet at the same time, the arguments raised by the LC have not been entirely dismissed by Mazar either;[47] he recognizes that there are some issues with the traditional chronology as well.[48] In fact, it was the "results of the archaeological work of the 1990s and renewed analysis of various sites" that led to an additional chronological development—Mazar's *Modified Conventional Chronology* (MCC).[49]

As its name indicates, the MCC is not a radical altering but rather a minor adjustment and modification to the traditional chronology. It posits a longer duration for the Iron IIA period, covering most of the tenth and ninth centuries B.C.E.[50] While the MCC fits well enough with most of the archaeological data for this period, it is perhaps not saying much due to the ambiguity it implies—of course it fits the data better if we do not have to be specific as to what century a particular strata dates to. (In the context of Megiddo, then, with the MCC "the door is left open to date Megiddo Stratum IVB–VA to either the tenth or the ninth centuries."[51]) But Mazar is not oblivious to this uncertainty as he admits that the specific assignment of remains to either the tenth or the ninth century B.C.E. is obscured in the MCC.[52] Then again, such flexibility might just be the point, and the reason why the MCC is becoming so appealing to more and more archaeologists (although many still adhere to the traditional chronology). As Mazar points out, the situation is "far from being 'crystal clear,'" and in a sense requires such openness—one reason why he criticizes the LC for its unbending assignment of all Iron IIA data to the ninth century B.C.E., and its emptying of the tenth of any notable remains.[53] For Mazar, the option of dating Iron IIA remains to either century is open, making the MCC "the most reasonable and acceptable chronology."[54]

Chronology, and Production Centers," *BASOR* 335 (2004): 1–35; and Raz Kletter, "Low Chronology and United Monarchy: A Methodological Review," *ZDPV* 120 (2004): 13–54.

47.   Amihai Mazar, "Does Amihai Mazar Agree with Finkelstein's 'Low Chronology'?" *BAR* 29, no. 2 (March/April 2003).

48.   Based particularly on the pottery finds at the site of Jezreel (the same key site figuring prominently in Finkelstein's LC), he suggests a modification that extends the accepted Iron IIA chronology to the destruction of Jezreel ca. 840–830 B.C.E. See Mazar, "Iron Age Chronology," 157–67.

49.   Mazar, "Debate Over the Chronology," 21. To be sure, like the LC, Mazar's chronology is not an entirely new development either, but is a modification of some earlier proposals (see Mazar, "Debate Over the Chronology" 16, Table 2.1).

50.   Mazar, "Debate Over the Chronology," 21–26.

51.   Mazar, "The Spade and the Text," 149.

52.   Mazar, "Debate Over the Chronology," 26.

53.   Mazar, "Debate Over the Chronology," 26.

54.   Mazar, "Debate Over the Chronology," 26.

Concerns, Clarifications, and Observations

With the expectation that the details of Megiddo—along with those of the two chronological developments adumbrated above—offer at least a flavor to the archaeological issues and how they are engaged by scholars, it is perhaps appropriate at this point to offer a few critical comments that relate to the chronological controversy, as well as a reflection on some implications of the data. In the interest of brevity, a short summary of some substantial, general concerns will be touched upon (with the footnotes providing further detail and examples), followed by some observations.

To be sure, both the LC and the MCC are viable paradigms for different archaeologists, and both are important contributors to the current chronological debates. Yet serious concerns remain with all chronologies, and resolving the issues is far from a simple matter. The following key considerations (one could say "problems") highlight the inconclusive nature of any interpretation.[55]

The Problem of Dating

Beyond the fact that there are virtually no *solid* historical anchors in the tenth and ninth centuries B.C.E. with which to date any archaeological remain with any degree of accuracy, most dating alternatives also pose their own problems.[56] Pottery, for example, has its limitations in that, for a specific region, the data is obfuscated by questions such as how quickly a new type may have spread to other areas (or if they did at all in the case of poor backwaters), whether old types survived simultaneously and for how long, how to account for the tension between local fashions and regional tendencies, and so on. All make it difficult to compare the remains between many sites and determine an appropriate pottery sequence for the entire region.[57] With respect to architectural remains—such as city gates or royal palaces—things fare no better. Architectural fashions at one site are often dated relatively by their comparisons to those at other sites. However, such parallels are insufficient in particular respects and there are good reasons why each must be dated on

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55. Some of these issues (and others) can be found expressed similarly in Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 12–15.

56. For a brief summary of the archaeological dating methods and their problems, see B. S. J. Isserlin, *The Israelites* (New York: Thames and Hudson; repr. Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2001), 17–19.

57. Since similarities in pottery assemblages between one-period Jezreel (ninth-century B.C.E.), and those found in the palaces at Megiddo, are a key factor in Finkelstein's dating of Megiddo VA–IVB to the ninth-century B.C.E., this is not an insignificant matter. In fact, it may well be, as suggested by Ussishkin, that the monumental palaces of Megiddo VA–IVB were originally built in the tenth century B.C.E., and continued in use into the ninth century (see Finkelstein, Ussishkin, and Halpern, *Megiddo III*, 600). This could explain the existence of similar pottery in the royal compound at Jezreel and the palaces at Megiddo, and not necessarily require Megiddo VA–IVB to date to the same period as Jezreel. Thus, one can still date the Megiddo gate to the ninth century (if part of Stratum IVA) without necessarily adhering to LC.

their own merits.[58] Floor remains and building construction too are just as inconclusive.[59] Even radiocarbon dating, while promising, is not without its limitations and requires further developing.[60]

58. To put it frankly, similar gate types—whether six-, four-, or two-chambered—are not enough to draw an unequivocal association between any two, based on similar construction alone (at least not with the preciseness needed in many cases). True, the six-chambered gates at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer, are all similar and may all be associated with one another. But what about the six-chambered gate at Lachish that likely comes from a later period and has a peculiar similarity to the gate at Megiddo, or the same type at the Philistine city of Ashdod which was clearly not built by Israelites? (On this see Ussishkin, "'Solomonic' City Gate," 17.) Furthermore, if we are to declare connections and similar dating between gates because of architectural similarities, then what are we to do with the four-chambered gate at Megiddo that follows the six-chambered one? Arav would have us use the mid-ninth century, four-chambered gate at Bethsaida as a paradigm for the four-chambered gate at Megiddo to assert that it should be dated to the ninth century and thus that the six-chambered gate should be pushed back to the tenth (see note 41). If so, then what about the recently excavated four-chambered gate at Khirbet Qeiyafa, which seems to be from the tenth century? Should we then attempt to associate the four-chambered gate at Megiddo to the tenth century, pushing the six-chambered "Solomonic" gate that preceded it even earlier? As the association of the Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer gates was the original linchpin of traditional tenth-century chronology, these types of concerns should not be taken lightly and should, at the very least, not be used as a solid method for constructing a chronology. (Similar to this discussion, for a relevant study which calls into question the similarities of these three gates, see David Milson, "The Design of the Royal Gates at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer," *ZDPV* 102 [1986], 87–92.) Moreover, comparisons between the gates should not "presuppose a centralized building program, and by extension some sort of centralized building government" (J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* [2d ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Know Press, 2006], 203). To speak briefly of another important architectural fashion, the same goes for the monumental palaces. Finkelstein wishes to down-date Megiddo VA–IVB to the ninth century b.c.e. because of similar architectural features and building plans—including similar mason marks—between its ashlar palaces and the ninth-century palace at Samaria. Yet as Mazar points out, "this resemblance can be explained if we assume that both kings—Solomon and Ahab—used Phoenician masons" (Mazar, "The Debate Over the Chronology of the Iron Age," 21). The point is that while it may be instructive to draw correlations—and some of those may be entirely correct—each gate, palace, or whatever must be evaluated on its own stratigraphical and other terms, and any similarities must not be used as *decisive* chronological markers—unless, of course, the architecture is accompanied by an inscription!

59. Provided certain finds can even be dated historically, interpretational problems with the find's relation to a building's floor obscures obtaining a precise construction date for the building that it may be associated with. In other words, should the construction date for a particular building be determined by the finds *below* or *in* the floor, or by those deposits found *on* the floor? "A compromise between these positions," notes Isserlin, "may be the best solution. Finds below or in floors may be much earlier than the date when the buildings concerned were erected; on the other hand, since floor deposits often represent the last rather than the initial phase of use, they may be rather later. Together, deposits below, in, and on floors may thus offer a time span of variable length; a more exact construction date within these limits may sometimes be suggested by historical or other considerations, but all too often it remains indeterminate" (Isserlin, *The Israelites*, 18–19).

60. As the calibration process can only yield approximate dates, it is perhaps enough to say here that the recent attempts to use ^{14}C dating have not been conclusive or perfect enough to assign a precise date so as to clarify the debates over dating. Ironically, the imperfect nature of the results is admitted by those who would use the data, yet they nonetheless forge

The Problem of Jerusalem

In its essence, the problem is a simple one: if Jerusalem was the center of a full-fledged Israelite state with a strong centralized government marked by the United Monarchy of David and Solomon, why is this not borne out in the archaeological record? Of course, such phrasing of the issue hides the complexities of the historical situation of Jerusalem during the tenth–ninth centuries B.C.E., which is not always conveyed well amidst the polemic that occurs on both sides of the debate.[61] As well, it runs the risk of amounting to an argument from silence,[62] and further archaeological discoveries may offer vindication for this important city.[63] Still, when due consideration is given

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ahead and declare that it supports their particular chronology (e.g., Finkelstein, Mazar, and others). See, for example, the various contributions to the following volume: Thomas E. Levy and Thomas Higham, eds., *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text, and Science* (London: Equinox, 2005).

61.   In reality, Jerusalem does offer some archaeological evidence for this period, but the definitions and terminology used to describe the nature of the Jerusalem's politics (e.g., chiefdom, flourishing political center, royal capital, and so on) can mean different things to different scholars. It may not have been the great, flourishing political center described in the biblical text, but it was certainly no mere "cow town." While Jerusalem might be best referred to as a "chiefdom" during the tenth–ninth centuries B.C.E., which only gradually developed into a fully-mature state in the eighth century B.C.E., for ancient rulers and peoples, it was the "governing center of the tenth-century B.C.E. kingdom." On this see Nadav Na'aman, "Cow Town or Royal Capital? Evidence for Iron Age Jerusalem," *BAR* 23, no. 4 (July/August 1997): 43–47. What is important is that however the phrase "kingdom" might be defined today, tenth-century Jerusalem was likely not the glorious kingdom depicted by later biblical authors.

62.   This is the main criticism of Jane Cahill, who admits that even though "no archaeological remains in Jerusalem can be identified confidently with any of the structures named in the Bible," the negative evidence should not be preferred over "positive evidence" (see Jane M. Cahill, "Jerusalem at the Time of the United Monarchy: The Archaeological Evidence," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* [ed. Andrew G. Vaughn and Ann E. Killebrew; SBLSymS 18; Atlanta, Ga. Society of Biblical Literature, 2003], 54, 73).

63.   For instance, despite the controversy that surrounds it, the building being excavated by Eilat Mazar could provide promising results (see Eilat Mazar, "Did I Find King David's Palace?" *BAR* 32, no. 1 [January/February 2006]). As also could some of the recent research on metallurgical activity being pursued by Thomas Levy in southern Jordan, where there is evidence of a tenth–ninth century B.C.E. industrial-scale copper industry at Khirbat en-Nahas and nearby Rujm Hamra Ifdan. Regarding this, however, additional research is required to determine what, if anything, it had to do with a tenth-century Judean kingdom under Solomon (i.e., the tradition of "King Solomon's mines") or if it was a production center controlled by ancient Edom (see Thomas E. Levy et al., "High-Precision Radiocarbon Dating and Historical Biblical Archaeology in Southern Jordan," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 105, no. 43 [October 2008]: 16,460–16,465). A dramatic example is the archaeological excavations now underway twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem at Khirbet Qeiyafa, an early Iron IIA massively fortified city that appears to date to the tenth century B.C.E. and may be part of an early Judean kingdom. (Interestingly, it has a four-chambered gate connected to a casemate wall that surrounds the city, offering some additional evidence for the problems of gate types and architectural comparisons as a dating method [see note 58]). In any case, its current excavators have already asserted that the "traditional view [that] points to a single powerful centralized authority in Jerusalem

to the evidence currently available, it must be admitted that at this point, Jerusalem remains an enigma.[64]

The Problem of the Biblical Text

If the scholarship of the last century or so has shown us anything, it is that the biblical text in its present form is not history in the modern sense, though this is a far cry from declaring the text completely worthless. Indeed, this can be said to be *the* problem of the biblical text. Yet, without the biblical text we would know almost nothing about the emergence of the Israelites, or even where to look for them exactly; rhetoric aside, there is good evidence that the biblical text has traces of history embedded within it that, *properly used*, can provide a useful framework for evaluating archeological or historical data. As a late and biased text, however, its proper use is a matter of debate.[65]

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that controlled the entire country" is now vindicated by the evidence at Khirbet Qeiyafa, "proclaim[ing] the power and authority of a centralized political organization, namely a state" (Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: Sha'Arayim," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8, no. 22 [2008]: 5). Additionally, they have claimed that the "low chronology is now officially dead and buried" (presentation of Garfinkel and Ganor at the 2008 ASOR conference found here: Yosef Garfinkel and Saar Ganor, "Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Early Iron IIA Fortified City in Judah," http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/qdb/ASOR_2parts.pdf). However, not all scholars are prepared to accept such certainty at such an early stage. Though it is a site of potentially great importance, the entity responsible for its fortifications, who the resident population was, and how it all may relate to an early Judean kingdom, remains to be seen. In fact, Nadav Na'aman questions the declaration that it was a "Judahite stronghold on the border of Philistia" and, based on several reasons, entertains the notion that it may have been "connected to the neighboring lowland kingdom of Gath" (Nadav Na'aman, "In Search of the Ancient Name of Khirbet Qeiyafa," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8, no. 21 [2008]: 2–3). See also Na'aman's rebuttal of Garfinkel and Ganor's article in his "Shaaraim—The Gateway to the Kingdom of Judah," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8, no. 24 (2008): 2–5.

64. The problem of Jerusalem is summarized by Grabbe: "When one considers the *longue durée*, it would have been extraordinary for the Judaean highlands to dominate the north in Iron I or IIA. A number of archaeologists argue that the archaeology does not support the text which depicts a Judaean-highland-centered united monarchy. Those who do argue for archaeological support for the united monarchy generally do so by explicit—or implicit—appeal to the biblical text as the guide for interpreting the archaeology. Jerusalem remains an area of considerable controversy, but those who maintain that Jerusalem did not develop into a substantial city until Iron IIB have current archaeology on their side . . . Those who maintain an earlier development must argue on the basis of what is presumed to have disappeared or what might be found in the future. This is why a substantial argument is now made that the northern kingdom (in the form of the Omride dynasty) was the prior development to a state in the ninth century, with Judah coming along more slowly, reaching its height only in the eighth century. But the debate continues" (Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 76–77).

65. It is no secret that the archaeology of Palestine started out as the archaeology of the Bible (and in some ways still is). Moreover, in many ways it was this "biblical archaeology" that profoundly influenced the development of the traditional chronology. For example, there is no doubt that the biblical text was a dominant factor in the interpretation of the gates at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer (e.g., 1 Kgs 9:15). And, indeed, it is such influence that is a main complaint of Finkelstein, and the reason why he views his own work as "part of a quest to emancipate Iron Age archaeology from Bible archaeology" (Israel Finkelstein, "Bible Archaeology or Archaeology of Palestine in the Iron Age? A Rejoinder," *Levant* 30 [1998]:

Observations

Reflecting on the brief considerations above, perhaps the first observation that can be made is that no chronology is immune to criticism; nor is any one of them free from the myriad problems inherent in developing an archaeological framework and a sound historical interpretation. The problems this poses for reconstructing the biblical past of the tenth–ninth centuries B.C.E.—our immediate concern—almost need not be mentioned. The current gaps in our knowledge, and the complications encountered when utilizing archaeology to reconstruct an historical past, prevents the perfecting of a chronology of Iron Age Palestine that accounts for all the data, and is precise enough to make confident historical judgments.

What this all means for our discussion of state formation in the biblical world and the nature and extent of a united kingdom of David and Solomon is clear: the present situation precludes us from creating an unassailable picture of the emergence of the Israelite state(s). So, as Mazar would claim, "'the archaeology of the United Monarchy' remains a legitimate possibility, though not mandatory."[66] In contrast, Finkelstein would counter that it was certainly not a united monarchy at the insignificant site of Jerusalem in the tenth century B.C.E., but rather northern Israel in the form of the "forgotten first kingdom" under Omri and Ahab in the ninth century B.C.E., that "had the necessary organization to undertake monumental building projects, to establish a professional army and bureaucracy, and to develop a complex settlement hierarchy of cities, towns, and villages—which made it the first full-fledged Israelite kingdom."[67] Either historical situation is plausible in the absence of any further defining elements.

This leads us to a final and vital observation, suitably summarized by two historians of Israel:

> In the final analysis, one's interpretation of the archaeological evidence depends heavily upon the degree of confidence that one places in the biblical profile of Solomon. If one begins with the biblical vision of

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167). Yet, he is also justly criticized for his own use of the biblical text to validate his theories and supply his dating scheme (e.g., his use of the text in evaluating and dating the palace at Jezreel to Ahab and the palace at Samaria to Omri [1 Kgs 21:1]), which leads us to the reality that, like it or not, its use simply cannot be avoided. It can and must, however, be used cautiously. While it may or may not justify his use of specific biblical verses, Finkelstein's reply is nonetheless a responsible handling of the problem of the biblical text: "The biblical material cannot be treated as a monolithic block. It does not require a take-all-or-leave-all attitude. Two centuries of modern biblical scholarship have shown us that the biblical material must be evaluated chapter by chapter and sometimes verse by verse. The Bible includes historical, nonhistorical, and quasi-historical materials . . . . So, yes, one may doubt the historicity of one verse and accept the validity of another" (Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 343–44). The "lateness" of the biblical text, and whether the books of Kings can be considered as reliable evidence of Iron Age Palestine, is an issue dealt with by Jens Bruun Kofoed in a chapter from his *Text and History: Historiography and the Study of the Biblical Text* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 33–112.

66. Mazar, "Debate Over the Chronology," 21.

67. Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 169–70.

Solomon as a powerful ruler and great builder, then it makes sense to credit him with the fortifications at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer, along with roughly contemporary architectural remains at other Palestinian sites, and to see these cities, towns, and villages as belonging to a Jerusalem-centered government. . . . On the other hand, if one is not convinced in advance by the biblical profile, then there is nothing in the archaeological evidence itself to suggest that much of consequence was going on in Palestine during the tenth century B.C.E. and certainly nothing to suggest that Jerusalem was a great political and cultural center.[68]

Admittedly, the total deconstruction of at least some sort of historical kingdom under David and Solomon may be taking things too far,[69] it must be said that the biblical text in its present form is certainly an idealized depiction of a glorious past from a southern Judean point of view—the reality likely being that David and Solomon's kingdom was a small, developing entity with a short-lived power that may have *temporarily* extended well beyond the borders of its center at Jerusalem.[70] By no means, however, does the evidence indicate a fully mature state the likes of which developed under the Omrides in the ninth century B.C.E.

Conclusion

By now, after a focused look at an important Iron IIA site, coupled with a general review of the wider discussion it is a part of, the complexities involved in the debates over the archaeology and chronology of Iron Age Palestine as well the implications that can be drawn therefrom, should be glaringly apparent. With its particular importance and impact on Iron IIA chronology, the site of Megiddo and the controversy surrounding its monumental gate offer a context within which to explore larger issues. Yet the review of Megiddo was only an inroad into the expansive subject matter; it by no means exhausts the array of issues and details involved, hopefully evident from the brief discussion of the current chronological crisis and the problems facing it.

In truth, from the lack of indisputable historical anchors, the ambiguity of stratigraphical layers, the problems of comparing archaeological remains, and the difficulties of using the biblical text as a source of positivistic history, to the differences of interpretation and the ever-evolving views of archaeological and historical interpretations of the data, the current crisis of Iron Age chronologies seems to forestall a resolution on the immediate horizon, as Knoppers stated:

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68. Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 203–4. It should be noted that Miller and Hayes nevertheless "resist" the LC but also "recognize . . . that under the Omrides ancient Israel reached a level of economic and political strength unprecedented in its history" (311–12).

69. At the very least the Tel Dan inscription is solid evidence in itself of the existence of an historical figure named David who was credited with being the founder of a dynasty of Judean kings. For this find, see Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 43 (1993): 81–98; and Avraham Biran and Joseph Naveh, "The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment," *IEJ* 45 (1995): 1–18.

70. Na'aman argues in this direction in his "Cow Town or Royal Capital?" 43–47.

"The only present certainty is that the age of consensus is past."[71] A synthesis of archaeological evidence and historical information is what must be done to provide an accurate depiction of the past, yet such cannot be done without a solid archaeological framework that accounts for all of the disparate data. At the moment such does not exist and contributes to the presence of what seems to be truly irresolvable differences. However unfortunate it may be, reality tells us that "as long as no new additional data are available it would be impossible to solve the chronological differences being debated at present."[72] Perhaps this is why—despite the ambiguities it allows in its flexibility of dating remains to either the tenth or ninth centuries B.C.E.—the MCC is, in my mind, the most appealing chronological development. Without new data, such uncertainty may be as close as we can get to secure historical interpretations for this period of the Iron Age in the southern Levant.

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71.   Knoppers, "The Vanishing Solomon," 44. The cogency of such a statement is perhaps more acute today than when stated a little over a decade ago.

72.   Ussishkin, "Archaeology of the Biblical Period," 139.

THE GOD OF THE PATRIARCHS AND THE UGARITIC TEXTS: A SHARED RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

JED ROBINSON

In Exod 6:2–3, God spoke to Moses, telling him that "I am Yahweh. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shaddai (אֵל שַׁדָּי), but by my name Yahweh (יְהֹוָה) I did not make myself known to them." This passage, along with other passages in the Hebrew Bible, has been used to show that the Canaanite god El may lie behind the the mid-second-millennium B.C.E. cult of ancient Israel. This theory has received much attention since the discovery and translation of the texts found at Ugarit (modern day Ras Shamra) in northern Syria. In the Ugaritic texts, the god ʾil or El is clearly portrayed as the supreme god of the Bronze Age Canaanite pantheon and shares many similarities to Israel's patriarchal deity. It was during this same period that Canaanite culture has been thought to flourish in Syria-Palestine. This paper will explore some of the archaeological evidence of the two cultures but will rely mostly on the historical textual evidence and research of modern scholars to show a shared religious tradition between the Bronze Age ancestors of Israel and the native inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

Canaanite religion is often mentioned as an abominable cult in the Hebrew Bible—an enemy to the God of Israel.[1] Because of this, much of early scholarly research was polemic in nature and conducted with a preconceived notion of the religion of Israel's neighbors as being "inferior, puerile, barbarous, retarded or shocking."[2] In 1929, a vast library of texts was discovered in the northern Levantine city of Ugarit which greatly enhanced our understanding of the Canaanite culture and cult. Many liturgical manuscripts from this library bring to light various aspects of the late Bronze Age Ugaritic religion, such as the pantheon of gods and cultic practices like ritual sacrifice. The textual evidence discovered at ancient Ugarit has raised many questions about Bronze Age Israel's culture, ethnicity, and religious tradition.

In this paper I will try to identify evidence of a shared religious tradition between Israel and the Ugaritic peoples by exploring: (1) the definition of the word *Canaanite* and the problems associated with it, (2) the word ʾil, and

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1. As an example, see the story of the prophet Elijah and the priests of Baʾal in 1 Kings 16–18.

2. Delbert R. Hillers, "Analyzing the Abominable: Our Understanding of Canaanite Religion," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 75, no. 3 (1985): 254.

the god El, in West Semitic languages/cults, (3) the Bronze Age cult of the Patriarchs and the god El in ancient Israel, and finally, (4) the relationship of Iron Age Israel's god Yahweh and El.

Defining *Canaanite*

Is it possible that the Bronze Age God of Israel was a Canaanite deity? That depends on what definition of Canaanite is used. The biblical texts usually refer to the Canaanites as those who inhabited the land of Canaan or the land west of the Jordan River. The term *Canaanite* is very vague and seems to connote both a large group of peoples which inhabited the land of Canaan (Gen 12:6; Josh 3:10) or one of many smaller groups or tribes which inhabited the land, included with such groups as the Amorites, Perrizites, Hivites, Jebusites, Moabites, and so on (see Gen 15:19–21; Exod 3:8; Josh 24:11). It is still not clear whether the term *Canaanite* describes an actual people or is a method of describing an area or region that was inhabited by multiple peoples. Revisionist scholars have even gone as far as to claim that Canaanites are a construct invented by the biblical writers.[3]

Mark Smith prefers to abandon the term *Canaanite* in favor of the term *West Semitic*, which would include the Canaanite, Amorite, and Ugaritic cultures.[4] Israel would fit under this umbrella, sharing similar parameters in "language, social structure, religious terminology, and religious practice (prayer, sacrifice, and religious experience and even conceptualizations of deity)."[5] Although it is clear that one culture does not equal another, the evidence points to the sharing of similar tradition among all these separate groups, as will be discussed later. William Dever suggests that Canaanite geographically refers to the southern Levant but ethnically or culturally refers to the "closely related, indigenous West Semitic peoples living in these regions."[6] Dever further states that these peoples would be called in our period "Canaanites and Amorites; Israelites; Phoenicians; Aramaens; and various peoples of Transjordan such as Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites."[7]

Scholars continue to use the term *Canaanite* when describing the inhabitants of second-century B.C.E. Palestine. There are many extrabiblical sources referring to Canaan, dating to as early as 1500 B.C.E. For example, the Egyptian Amarna Letters of the second century B.C.E. refer to the "kings of Canaan"[8] and a "man of Canaan."[9] An Akkadian text found at Ugarit also refers to "the sons of Ugarit," and the "sons of Canaan,"[10] making a distinct

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3. Niels Peter Lemche, *The Canaanites and Their Land: The Tradition of the Canaanites* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 152.

4. Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.

5. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 17.

6. William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 253.

7. Dever, *Religion in Ancient Israel*, 253.

8. EA 30.

9. Anson F. Rainey, "Who Is a Canaanite? A Review of the Textual Evidence," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 304 (1996): 3.

10. Quoted in Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 15; see also M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. Sanmartin, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other*

differentiation. An Iron Age Egyptian stele, *The Merneptah Stele*, dating to 1208 B.C.E., also shows a clear differentiation between the land of Canaan and the people of Israel:

> Plundered is the Canaan with every evil;
> Carried off is Ashkelon; seized upon is Gezer;
> Yanoam is made as that which does not exist;
> Israel is laid waste, his seed is not;
> Hurru is become a widow for Egypt![11]

"Canaan" is written in a determinative denoting land, while Israel is written in a determinative denoting people.

Clearly the people of Israel were seen as distinct by 1200 B.C.E., but distinct in what manner? If Canaan described a geographic area and Israel described an ethnic group in that same area, then it is plausible that foreigners could view Israel as Canaanite in nature, as well as the other distinct ethnic groups living in the land of Canaan—even though they did not consider themselves Canaanite. Lester L. Grabbe argues that "our term 'Canaanite' as a contrast to 'Israelite' is nonsense. Israelites were as much Canaanite as anyone else."[12]

Whatever the term used to describe the West Semitic inhabitants of Canaan, our understanding of their culture has been greatly increased since the discovery and translation of the texts found at Ugarit. These texts are largely religious or mythological in nature and paint a picture of the late Levantine Bronze Age world from which Israel evolved. The Bible spends a considerable amount of time pointing out the differences between Canaanite and Israelite religious tradition; however, considering the Ugaritic texts, many shared traditions start to emerge. Concerning these similarities, Mark Smith pointed out: "These specific points of contact between Ugaritic and Israelite religion need not be understood as pointing to a single or 'same' religion, but they do point to a larger religious tradition shared broadly by West Semitic peoples, including the Israelites."[13] To find examples of this shared religious tradition, I will examine the head god of the Canaanite pantheon found in the Ugaritic texts compared to the descriptions of the Bronze Age God of Israel found in the Old Testament.

The Word *'il* and the God El in West Semitic Language and Cult

The name of the head Canaanite god is *'il* or El, which is the same word for "god" in many of the West Semitic traditions and other ancient Near Eastern cultures, including Israel. While El can also be used as an appellative of deity in the Ugaritic texts, it is much more commonplace as a proper name. Frank Moore Cross shows evidence of El being used in the "earliest old Akkadian sources without the case ending, unambiguously the divine

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Places (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995).

11.   James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 378.

12.   Lester L. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 51.

13.   Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 17.

name and not an appellative."[14] Cross also points out that Amorites used the term *'il* to denote "god" and that *'il* is also found as a divine proper name in Old South Arabic.[15] Cross believes that because of the fact that *'il* appears as a proper name in the earliest strata of languages belonging to East Semitic, Northwest Semitic, and South Semitic, we may conclude that this denotation of *'il* belongs to Proto-Semitic.[16] The question of whether El was the proper name of a god is laid to rest by the texts found at Ugarit where El is repeatedly portrayed as the head of the pantheon.[17]

The word *'il* is used over five hundred times in the texts from Ugarit.[18] The most obvious usage of the word is the name of the divine patriarchal god, who was the head of the pantheon.[19] El has a role as the father (*'ab*) of the pantheon and of humankind.[20] He is seated before the divine council (El's family) as its head.[21] He is portrayed as being elderly and bearded and is often called the "ageless one" or "father of years."[22] He acts as a help to both the lesser gods[23] and mankind.[24] Interestingly, El is also seen as the creator in a Hurrian-Hittite text discovered in Anatolia.[25] El sits on the throne with his consort and wife Athirat, or biblical Asherah, the "Progenitress of the Gods."[26] El's attributes as a kind father are expressed in the phrase "Kind El, the Compassionate." Another important epithet associated with El is that of "Bull," found in almost all mythological or epic texts.[27]

The abode of El is described in the Ba'al myths as being "at the source of the rivers, amid the channels of the two oceans."[28] El is seen as dwelling on a remote mountain in the north, with which Cross sees direct Biblical correlation in Isaiah 14:13, where the mount of the council of El is referenced to be in the distant north.[29] El is also said to dwell in a tent, pavilion, or tabernacle similar to the biblical *'ohel mo'ed*.[30] This could correlate with the tent traditions of the

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14. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays In the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1973), 13.

15. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 14.

16. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 14.

17. See G. Del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit* (Bethesda, Md.: Eisenbrauns, 2004); Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (ed. Simon B. Parker; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002); or G.R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956) for complete Canaanite deity lists from the texts of Ugarit.

18. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 135.

19. James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts,* 131. See e.IIAB (5) where Ba'al calls El "his Father" and "the King" (his begetter).

20. Driver, *Canaanite Myths*, 29. Keret has a vision of El "the father of mankind."

21. Cross, *Canaanite Myth,* 39–43.

22. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 136.

23. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts,* 129–42, as Ba'al and Ashera beg El for a temple to be built for Ba'al.

24. Story of Keret.

25. KAI 26 A III: 18, quoted in Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 137.

26. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 132.

27. A similar epithet is found in the Hebrew Bible (see below).

28. Driver, *Canaanite Myths*, 77 III*c.4.

29. Cross also sees references to the Garden of Eden here (Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 38).

30. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 133. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 36–39; Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism,* 136; and Conrad E. L'Heureux, *Rank Among The*

biblical Shiloh (Ps 78:60; Josh 18:1; 1 Sam 2:22) or even the seminomadic patrimonial traditions of the ancient Hebrews.

The Cult of the Patriarchs and the God El in Ancient Israel

The connection between the Canaanite god El and the El of Israel largely centers on the religion of the great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Mark Smith points out that Israel is called "Isra-el" instead of "Isra-yahwe," or, perhaps better, "Isra-yah," which would be "in accordance with other proper names containing the divine name."[31] This suggests that the name of the early god may have been El, not the Mosaic god Yahweh. We know from the biblical record that Abraham started his epic in Ur, thought to be in Mesopotamia, and there moved to Harran. The account continues with Abraham moving through Damascus and southward to Hebron. We are told that God gave Abraham the land of Canaan as an inheritance. Abraham also spent much time traveling south to the Negev and into Egypt.[32] Though the story of the Patriarchs has very little extrabiblical archaeological or historical proof, the biblical record and tradition holds that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in Canaan and were familiar with the people, customs, language, and religion of the people who lived there.

Evidence that the Bronze Age religion of Israel was different from the Iron Age religion exists in some distinct features found in Gen 12–50. For instance, God spoke to diverse people (not just those of the covenant) in an open and inclusive manner. These people include pharaoh of Egypt,[33] Abimelech of Canaan,[34] and Abraham.[35] Also, in these passages there is an absence of antagonism between the native Canaanite population and the Patriarchs, both religiously and socially. Furthermore, the important role the head of house played in religion (patrimonial society)[36] and the name Elohim is more fundamental than Yahweh, where the reverse is true outside of Gen 12–50.[37] These distinct features and others are not conclusive, but do point to an early memory of at least familiarity with, if not shared, traditions of language, custom, and religion.

Though we are not sure when Abraham would have first entered Canaan, due to conflictions and lack of historical evidence, scholars usually place it much later than the Bible's in-text dating. William Dever argues that the Hebrew Bible places Abraham at around 2100 B.C.E. and the Exodus at around 1450 B.C.E. (see Gen 47:9; Exod 12:40; I Kgs 11:42). However, due to

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Canaanite Gods El, Ba'al, and the Repha'im (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Edward Brothers, 1979), 26–29, for more information on the abode of El.

31.   Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 143.

32.   See Gen 11–28. For further reading see W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 65–73.

33.   Gen 12:14–20.

34.   Gen 20:1–18.

35.   Gen 17:1–15.

36.   For detailed information on the West Semitic patrimonial household, see J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2001).

37.   For more on this, see Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 149–51.

archeological evidence such as the Marneptah stele, Dever dates Israel's arrival in Canaan ca. 1200 B.C.E. and the Patriarchal age somewhere in the "early-mid 2nd millennium B.C.E."[38] If these dates are correct, then the age of the patriarchs would be near the end of a millennium of West Semitic/Amorite cultural tradition in Syro-Palestine. Ugarit was the heir of this tradition, as evidenced by the Ugaritic texts.

In the Old Testament narrative of the Patriarchs, God is given many epithets which start with El. Also, many descriptions of ancient Israel's God are similar to those of Ugarit El. For example, in the Bible, God or "El Shaddai" is depicted as being a provider of progeny in the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stories.[39] In Gen 49:25 Jacob describes El Shaddai as the provider of the blessings of the "breast and womb" (תְּחַת בִּרְכֹת שָׁדַיִם וָרָחַם), thus establishing a possible connection to blessings of progeny. In Gen 28:14 the blessings of eternal progeny are passed on to Jacob at Bethel (for Bethel's significance, see below). Later, Hannah goes to the temple at Shiloh to pray for blessings of progeny from Yahweh (1 Sam 2). In the Ugaritic Texts, El is also depicted as a provider of progeny. In the Keret epic, King Keret asks the Father God El for a blessing of progeny, saying, "'Grant that I may get sons, grant that I may multiply kin.' And the bull El his father answered (with) kind words while Keret wept, while the gracious one, servitor of El, shed tears."[40] El then tells Keret to go and offer sacrifices (including a sacrificial lamb) to be provided with a way to obtain a wife to bear him children.

Specific epithets with connections to the Ugaritic texts are numerous in the Bible. El Shaddai is used many times (especially in Gen and Job). God tells Moses he was called El Shaddai by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Exod 6:2–3. El Shaddai is traditionally rendered "God Almighty" in most translations of the Hebrew Bible, but "Shaddai"(שַׁדָּי) in biblical Hebrew could also be translated as "mountain" or "mountains" in the dual form.[41] Dever and Cross both argue that "El Shaddai" would really mean "El, the One of the Mountains."[42] This corresponds very closely to the Ugaritic El, who also dwelled on the mountain (see above), as well as to many other Near Eastern deities who did the same. Cross mentions the Amorite Deity Amurru and his epithets, "he who dwells on the pure mountain," "lord of the mountain," and he who "inhabits the shining mountain."[43] The significance of the mountain comes into play later in Israel's history with Yahweh and the stories associated with Sinai and other holy mountain sites.[44]

In Gen 49:25, El Shaddai is also mentioned along with other El epithets including "Bull of Jacob." Ugaritic El was also known as the bull (as shown above in the Keret text, as well as in many other texts). El Shaddai is also known as the name of the god that appeared to Jacob at Bethel (Gen 43:14;

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38. Dever, *Religion in Ancient Israel*, 253.

39. See Gen 15:1–2; 21:1–2; 24:60; 28:14.

40. Driver, *Canaanite Myths*, 29 I.ii.4.

41. See BDB, 961; see also Dever, *Religion in Ancient Israel*, 257–258; Smith, *The Early History of God*, 8; and Cross*, Canaanite Myth*, 54–56.

42. Dever, *Religion in Ancient Israel*, 257; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 55–56.

43. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 57.

44. For example, when Moses goes to Horeb and sees the "burning bush" in Exodus 3 as well when Moses goes up Sinai to receive the law in Exodus 19.

48:3). Bethel is usually translated "house/temple of God" but could also be rendered "house/temple of El." In Gen 31:13, God appears to Jacob at Paddan Aram and identifies himself as "El-Bethel" (בֵּית־אֵל הָאֵל), which could be translated as "The God of the House of El."[45]

Other El epithets appear in the Biblical texts. Dever, Smith, and Cross all point out that El Elyon (see below) of Gen 14:18–24 and Deut 32:8–9, El Olam of Gen 21:33, El Elohay-Israel of Gen 33:20, and finally El Roi of Gen 16:13 all have connections to the ancestral god of Israel, El.[46] Biblical personal names also point to Israel's connection with El. Isra-*el*, *El*-ijah, *El*-isha, and Samu-*el* are all examples. Shaddai names also appear in the bible, such as Zuri-*shaddai* in Num 1:5–6 and Ammi-*shaddai* in Num 1:12. Later in the Bible, after the exodus from Egypt, many names are combined with the divine name Yahweh, such as Hezekiah or Joshua. As substantiated in Exod 6:3, this fact supports the idea that prior to the exodus the God of Israel was probably known as El or one of his epithets. Cross also agrees that all of these El epithets used in the Bible are variant cult forms of El and could be attributed to the Canaanite El.[47] We also know from Exod 6:3 that if they can be attributed to such epithets as El Shaddai, then they were probably attributed to Yahweh as well in Israel's later religious tradition.

The Relationship of Yahweh and El in Iron Age Israel

The evidence that points to a shared West Semitic traditional or ancestral deity does not end with Moses and the emergence of the deity titled Yahweh. The scripture previously mentioned, Exod 6:3, equates the ancestral god of Abraham with Jehovah by essentially saying he was called El Shaddai by the ancients and now will be called Jehovah (Yahweh). This could mean that Yahweh is only another epithet of El. This also helps explain why there are no or very little polemics in the Hebrew Bible towards El, while the Canaanite god Ba'al is seen in a very polemic light. Yahweh is also portrayed very similarly in the Bible to the descriptions of El in the Ugaritic texts. Yahweh is seen as an ageless or elderly god in many scriptures (Ps 102:28; Job 36:26; Isa 40:28; Tob 13:6) including Dan 7:9–14; 22, in which he is seated amidst the heavenly hosts, similar to Ugaritic El's divine council.[48] Yahweh also appears in vision and dream to his patrons, corresponding to El Shaddai and the Ugaritic El.[49]

An extrabiblical source is suggested by Smith as evidence of Yahweh sharing the characteristic of a long beard with El. An "enthroned bearded god appears on a Persian period coin marked *yhd*, 'Yehud'" possibly meaning Yahweh.[50] Yahweh and El are also both portrayed as fathers both to other divine beings and to mankind (Deut 32:6; Isa 63:16; Exod 4:22; see above for El descriptions). Both El and Yahweh are associated with dwelling in

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45. Dever, *Religion in Ancient Israel*, 259.

46. Dever, *Religion in Ancient Israel*, 257–64; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 49–60; Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 48–49, 156–57.

47. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 49.

48. See also 1 Kgs 22:19; Isa 6:1–8; Jer 23:18.

49. See 1 Sam 3:4; Gen 28; and the Keret Epic of Ugarit cited above.

50. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 142.

a tent,[51] as well as being associated with mountains.[52] Also, when Moses brought down the law etched in the tablets by the hand of Yahweh, he found Israel worshiping a golden bull calf (Exod 32:4). It has been suggested that this represented the Ugaritic El epithet "Bull," but it could also be applied to Canaanite Ba'al.[53]

Frank Moore Cross has put forth evidence showing that the translation of Exod 3:14 as Yahweh could actually be alternatively translated as an epithet of the god El. Cross believes that the traditional rendering of "Lord of Hosts" could be translated as "El who creates the (heavenly) armies."[54] Cross goes on to compare this with Ugaritic epithets of El as a "Father of the Gods" and "creator of creatures."[55] Cross believes Israel saw Yahweh as simply a new epithet of ancient El; however, there is evidence of that Israel saw Yahweh and El as two separate beings.

In the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) translation of Deut 32:8–9 we find evidence of Yahweh being a son of El, "When the Most High (Elyon) allotted peoples for inheritance, When He divided up humanity, He fixed the boundaries for peoples, According to the number of the divine sons: For Yahweh's portion is his people, Jacob His own inheritance."[56] Scholars such as Mark Smith use this text to show the original separation of El and Yahweh in Israel. According to Smith, this text found in the DSS as well as the Septuagint portrays Yahweh as one of El's sons, but later in pure monotheistic Israel the text was changed from "sons of El" to "sons of Israel."[57] The latter remains in most modern translation of the Masoretic Texts (a much later source of the Hebrew Bible). The evidence is not clear as to whether Yahweh was a title of ancient El or if Yahweh replaced ancient El after the exodus, but the evidence seems to support that El and Yahweh are connected.

Conclusion

Was the pre-Iron Age God of Israel a Canaanite deity or vice versa? This question can be answered by asking another question. Were the ancestors of the people of Israel considered Canaanite in Bronze Age Palestine? The answers: both yes and no. The archaeological evidence suggests that Ugarit and Canaan were seen as two separate peoples. It is possible that the ancestors of Israel would have been seen as a separate people as well. It is also possible that they were not seen as a separate people because of the many similarities in culture, language, and even religion. From the outside looking in, a foreigner may well have labeled all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan as Canaanites, including the ancestors of Israel.

These West Semitic peoples did share a religious tradition in the descriptions and epithets of their main god. The Ugaritic texts show that a god named El was worshiped in the land of Canaan. This ancient tradition was

51. See Psalm 78:66; Joshua 18:1 for the tent tradition of Shiloh. Also, the tabernacle or tent of the Exodus was seen as the abode of Yahweh.
52. "El Shaddai" (see above), the home of Ugaritic El (see above), and Sinai or Horeb.
53. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 32.
54. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 68–70.
55. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 70.
56. 4QDeut.
57. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 143.

preserved in the Hebrew Bible as many of the descriptions and even epithets of Ugaritic El applied to the Israelite god as well. In the Iron Age, Israel kept these historical memories of El. They were either applied to the old god El's new epithet, Yahweh, or the new god Yahweh inherited many of the historical traditions associated with ancestral El.

A surface reading of the Hebrew Bible would lead one to conclude that Canaanite peoples and Israel had distinct religious traditions and cultures. A more in-depth examination, however, shows evidence of shared and common elements. Ancient extrabiblical texts, such as those found at Ras Shamra, have shed great light on some of these common elements. Though Bronze Age Israel and other West Semitic peoples may not have had the exact same cult, it is plausible that these two groups at this time shared many traditions. What differences existed may have grown greater over time, but echoes of a shared tradition are alive in the Iron Age worship of Yahweh. Was the pre-Iron Age God of Israel a Canaanite deity, or was the pre-Iron Age God of the Canaanites a Hebrew deity? These questions cannot be answered right now. However, evidence suggests that the divide between the two may not be as broad as once believed.

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF VOTIVE OFFERINGS IN A NABATAEAN BURIAL

DANA BLACKBURN

The Brigham Young University Wadi Mataha Project for 2008 was sponsored by BYU's Department of Anthropology and the David M. Kennedy Center. The excavations took place from 6 May to 3 June 2008, with the excavation of site 16I taking place from 21 to 27 May. The chief purpose of the excavation was to test the theory produced from the previous season's excavations that artifacts such as ceramics, lithics, and fossils were used as votive offerings in Nabataean ritual situations.[1] Site 16, a Nabataean rock-cut tomb, provided an ideal situation for this theory to be tested in the context of Nabataean burial rituals. Along with partner Krystyna Hales, I excavated one of the cists, or individual burial places, within the tomb. During the excavation and subsequent lab analysis of bones and artifacts, we determined that many of the artifacts recovered from our cist support the idea of Nabataean votive offerings being used in funerary rituals.

The entire tomb has been dated to use between the end of the first century B.C.E. and the end of the first century C.E.[2] It is probable that loculi were carved out of the tomb as needed rather than all at once, with the earlier ones closer to the door. This is supported through the change of style seen in some of the cists. If this were the case, then cist I would have been carved towards the latter end of the tomb's usage, most likely in the first century C.E. However, the artifacts recovered offer little diagnostic evidence of dating, so it is difficult to be sure.

Background Information

Many people have heard of Petra, Jordan, the rose-red city carved out of rock, but few people know where it is—not to mention who built it. The extent of most people's knowlede is that the Treasury, one of its monumental tombs, was included in an Indiana Jones movie as the hiding place of the Holy Grail. The Treasury is a very impressive sight to behold, but there are much grander, more exquisite tombs located throughout Petra. So who were these

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1. David Johnson, "Brigham Young University Wadi Mataha Project, 2 May through 10 June 2008." Official Site Report, forthcoming.
2. Johnson, "Wadi Mataha."

people who spent years carving tombs out of the rocks? Known as Nabataeans, these people created a sanctuary in Petra, and it became their largest city in a kingdom that ruled from at least 323 B.C.E. to 106 C.E., when Rome annexed Arabia.[3]

Nabataean origins are foggy at best, and scholars have many different theories trying to explain where they may have come from. The best-supported ideas include beginnings in Mesopotamia or northwestern Saudi Arabia based on language comparisons and snippets of recorded history that have survived.[4] We do know that the Nabataeans were a nomadic tribe of Arabs who settled the area known as Edom. When the Edomites moved into Judea after the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites during the sixth century B.C.E., the area east of the Arabah Valley became vacant. The Nabataeans, who mastered survival in the desert, soon inhabited the desolate desert between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba.[5] Through the rising up of their kingdom, the Nabataeans subsequently spread as far north as the northern area of the Dead Sea and as far south as northern Arabia. They made their money running trade routes of frankincense, myrrh, bitumen, and other valuable trade items throughout the Mediterranean and the Near East. The Nabataeans' cunning mastery of water supply in the desert fostered the rise of the kingdom. As their wealth increased, Nabataeans began to settle down; it was during this time that they built the city of Petra, probably during the second to third centuries B.C.E. It was here that the Nabataeans constructed a multitude of tombs, and it is one of these tombs which we excavated in order to gain further insight into the Nabataeans and their burial practices.

The burial practices of a society indicate the social, economic, ritual, and religious complications of that society. Ucko stated, "in the vast majority of cases known ethnographically, a culture or society is not characterized by one type of burial only; on the contrary, one society will undertake several different forms of burial . . . correlated with the status of the deceased."[6] In Petra, abundant rock-cut tombs appear in every direction, in every shape and size; some even have elaborate carvings and water features around the entrances, such as the Treasury and the Garden Tomb. There are also more humble and crudely constructed tombs, such as the one I helped excavate. The grander the tombs, the more resources and skill it took to construct, and therefore the more expensive they were; thus, by looking at just the basic tomb structure, size, and décor, we see evidence of social strata within Nabataean society.

Archaeologists have studied many aspects of the Nabataean world: temples, language, iconography, art, theology, and so forth. When studying their burial practices, there is one main source that we gather information from—a short passage recorded by the ancient Greek geographer Strabo: "They think dead bodies no better than manure; as Heraclitus says, corpses are more to be thrown away than dung heaps. Wherefore they bury even

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3. Bjorn Anderson, "Constructing Nabataea: Identity, Ideology And Connectivity." *ASOR* 54 (2004): 14.

4. Jane Taylor, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataean* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 14.

5. Taylor, *Lost Kingdom*, 14–36.

6. Peter J. Ucko, "Ethnography and Archaeological Interpretation of Funerary Remains," *WA* 1 (1969): 270.

their kings beside their privies."[7] Strabo interpreted these practices among the Nabataeans as being disrespectful and irreverent towards their dead. However, the archaeological record suggests this interpretation was a classic case of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Strabo was raised in the Roman Republic, where cremation was the most popular burial practice.

The Nabataeans, however, left bodies by their dung heaps exposed to the elements and creatures until only bones remained. Then they gathered the bones, wrapped them in cloth shrouds, placed them in wooden boxes, or ossuaries, and finally interred the ossuary in the family tomb. These Nabataean burial practices had no relation to what Strabo knew or understood, resulting in his harsh disapproval. When almost everything else has disappeared with time, the Nabataean tombs have survived millennia; the sheer amount of time, effort, and energy that the Nabataeans put into constructing proper resting places for their dead actually suggests that the dead were a very significant part of the culture. A culture would not expend so many of its resources on something merely considered routine.

Nabataeans left votive offerings at tombs and other ritual sites, such as open-air shrines and niches. Votive offerings are objects deliberately placed in a sacred or special place. This practice can be traced back to ancient cults and continues even today. The common Western practice of taking flowers to the grave of a loved one is one such example. Nabataean votive offerings included common items such as stones, pottery, incense, and foodstuffs, as well as the uncommon shells, fossils, jewelry, and even vessels full of water, considered very sacred. Some votive offerings may have been plain and unaltered by human hands, whereas others show signs of alteration, such as painting, chipping, or carving. In our cist, both altered and unaltered votive offerings were found. Some of these human modifications appear clearly on the objects, but this is not always the case.

Description of Tomb and Cist

Site 16 is a rock-cut tomb located in the Wadi Mataha region of Petra prominently placed overlooking the bed of this ancient waterway. The tomb chamber is 4.6 meters wide east to west, 6.5 meters long north to south and 2.7 meters high."[8] Only accessed by climbing directly up the rock face, the tomb is off of the most common paths used by the Bedouins and tourists. It faces east, as many of the tombs in Petra do, and it receives protection from high winds; its discreet location and its inaccessible entrance both contributed to its state of preservation. Although it was obvious to us that the tomb was raided, probably on multiple occasions, the Bedouins have not used it as shelter for themselves or their animals, at least long-term. There is only a small platform inside the door, which has successfully discouraged potential occupants. The tomb was carved into the rock by hand, with the chisel marks still visible. The architect created both a door to the north (right), and a window to the south (left) into the tomb, providing a substantial amount of light in the tomb during the morning hours (Fig. 1).

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7. Strabo, *Geogr.* XVI.4.26 (Jones, LCL).
8. Johnson, "Wadi Mataha."

Figure 1

Figure 2

The tomb has twelve loculi (cists) or individual burial chambers cut out of the rock: five on the north, five on the south, and two on the west wall. We excavated cist I, which was located in the center at the south end of the tomb (Fig. 2). Compared to several of the other cists, there were few large rocks on top, and it was only filled about two-thirds of the way with sand.

On this project, we excavated by natural stratigraphic layers or units (SUs), meaning that anytime the soil changed in color, compaction, composition, or artifact type, we started a new SU. Rather than excavating in arbitrary ten-centimeter levels, which is another common excavation method, it was more important for our data to note the natural changes in the soils. This helped in observing which levels had been disturbed, how the artifacts were deposited, and also which levels contained artifacts still *in situ*, or in their original depositional locations. There were four stratigraphic units in 16I consisting of very fine, light tan, gray sand with some small rocks of sandstone and gray chert. A white, pastelike clay mineral coated some of the rocks and artifacts throughout all four SUs. This mineral has still not been successfully identified, but the lack of its appearance in the other loculi suggests its (or its origins) deliberate placement in the tomb. Generally speaking, SU1 was disturbed and mixed with modern materials.

SU2 supplied a moderate amount of very scattered human bone, along with several ceramic sherds, many small rocks and one very flat, chiseled stone—likely spall from the tomb construction. SU2 also exhibited a very disturbed layer with scattered, broken bone and rock throughout. One item of note was a curved wooden branch about 30cm in length with charred textile wrapped around one end. This item seems to be some type of crude torch (Fig. 3). This was a unique find; so it was turned over to the Jordanian Antiquities Department for safekeeping. Unfortunately, this also prevented us from really studying and examining it further. It was definitely crafted in a deliberate manner and left behind, but it is unclear if it was a votive offering on its own, a tool used in the burial ritual, or merely just a means of providing light for those in attendance, among countless other possibilities.

Figure 3

SU3 contained a collection of scattered human remains in no apparent original context, even from secondarily deposited processes. The bones were nearly all very poorly preserved. A moderate number of Nabataean plain style ceramics were scattered throughout the layer, as well as patches of textile in the north-central portion of the cist. SU3 contained a moderate to heavy layer of rock, seemingly most abundant in the north section of the cist. Also, SU3 had some pieces of intact wood sections which showed evidences of carving and drilling. At this level, the wood pieces seemed to be associated with the textile. Much of the artifact concentration occurred at the north end of the cist, giving the wood and textile there possible significance as pieces of a shroud and ossuary, or bone box used for secondary burials, which could have been placed at this end of the cist.

SU 4 contained the final stratigraphic unit in cist 16I resting on bedrock. The layer contained a scattering of human bone, ceramics, wood, and textiles. A collection of seeds were scattered throughout SU4, but one concentration was noted in the north-central section. Two shallow depressions were observed in the final bedrock floor, one in the very north end and one in the south. These were chiseled out of the floor surface and measured 4–5 cm in depth at the deepest point. The depressions extended the entire width of the cist, forming a shallow, narrow basin at both ends of the cist. One of the other cists in the tomb had evidence of plans to make similar depressions, but they were unfinished. These depressions in cist 16I are unique among the other cists. It is still unclear what purpose these may have served, but a variety of ideas have been proposed. One interpretation suggests this was where the

Nabataeans originally placed offerings or grave goods during burial, because of the small concentration of pottery sherds found in the northeast corner. Another explanation says it may have been a headrest and a footrest, because it is the same on both ends. It also could be that this was where each ossuary was placed—one on either end and one in the middle—because it is estimated that there were three individuals buried here. However, none of these ideas have conclusive evidence that rule out other possibilities. The most important thing for us to recognize is that this particular cist was different from the others in the tomb. Did it have a different architect? Was there something different about the individuals buried here? Was it a stylistic change in Nabataean architecture? Unfortunately, we may never know!

Human Osteology Analysis

The purpose of our excavation was to recover the remaining contexts of original Nabataean burials, including the human remains and their votive offerings. However, since this paper focuses on the votive offerings, very little detail will be discussed in regards to the actual burials we excavated. Of course it is important to keep in mind that all of the votive offerings found in this cist were placed in honor of those buried here, which gives purpose and context to the other items of discussion.

Based on the osteological analyses performed, it is estimated that there were three individuals buried in cist 16I. One of these was a juvenile, while the rest of the human bones belonged to two adults, one male and one female. The male was sexed based on a sacrum found; excavated in two pieces that fit together, the sacrum was lighter in color and much more curved than the other sacrum found. The female was sexed according to a pelvis and sacrum found. The sacrum differed from the male in that it was larger, flatter, and darker in color. It was excavated in three pieces that all fit together. The pelvis was badly deteriorated (Fig. 4), but measurements taken in situ suggest that it belonged to a female younger than twenty-five years old. The four teeth found suggest that the individuals they belonged to were young adults, based on wear, with the age range of three of them being from twelve to twenty-four years old, and the other one being from twenty-four to thirty years old.
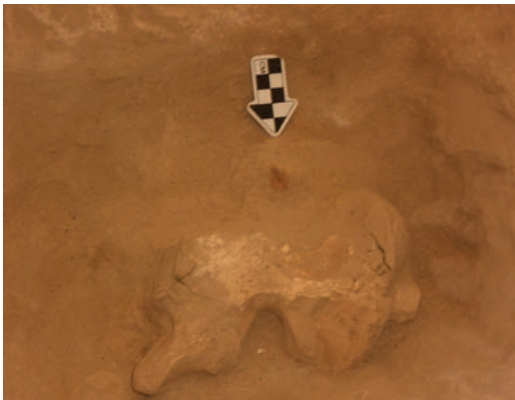

Figure 4

Though SU4 had the heaviest concentration of human bone, most of the bone recovered was very scattered. However, the placement of the female pelvis in the northwest corner is noteworthy. Separated from most of the other human bone and other artifacts, the pelvis was surrounded by several ceramic pieces. Bellwald mentions the discovery of an adult human pelvis surrounded by ceramics—"five, unpainted, nearly identical bowls"—in the main Siq of Petra. This suggests the possibility of a ritual practice by Nabataeans.

> The bone must have been removed from the body after its decomposition because there are no traces of any cuts or other damage. Perhaps these deposits are the result of a commemorative rite, consisting of the removal of a bone from a skeleton and its careful reburial. . . . There are other examples of such Nabataean postfuneral rites in Petra. Apart from this new find in the Siq, a tomb in the northern part of Petra, either Nabataean or Roman in date, was excavated in 1958–59. The burial was well preserved and apparently undisturbed in modern times, but the feet had been severed and the pelvis was missing (Parr 1960). It is clear that the pelvis must have been removed after the decomposition of the body since the rest of the skeleton still lay in its original position and showed no sign of damage. This, together with the new find in the Siq, suggests the existence of a tradition among Nabataeans of the removal of certain bones, particularly the pelvis, after decomposition of the body for further commemorative rites.[9]

It is merely conjecture for us to suggest that this might have been the case with the female pelvis. However, its particular placement away from most of the other finds, its resting atop the north-end depression, and its being surrounded by ceramics all suggest a deliberate placing rather than its haphazardly ending up in that position after two millennia. Therefore, the suggestion that its placement might have been related to a postfuneral rite is not implausible, especially with similar evidence from other burials in Petra.

Faunal Bone Analysis

The analysis of faunal bones can tell a lot about the people and culture of a particular site. For instance, any butcher marks on the faunal bones may suggest certain ways the animals were being used by the habitants, tools they might have used, or their butchering methods. Also, the occurrence of faunal bone from one type of species with the absence of another common to the area may suggest the community preferred one type of meat, or that there may have been certain restrictions on usage of particular species. The presence of juvenile faunal bones versus adult faunal bones can also determine possible animal husbandry or merely someone's preferred meal. Without a specific context to relate to, it is difficult to name all of the ways faunal bone analysis can contribute significant data; however, suffice it to say that because of countless possibilities in what it may or may not say about the people, culture, or specific archaeological site, faunal bone analysis is crucial.

There were only three faunal bone specimens excavated from 16I, and they

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9. Ueli Bellwald and Ma'an al-Huneidi, *The Petra Siq Nabataean Hydrology Uncovered* (ed. Isabelle Ruben; Amman, Jordan: Petra National Trust, 2003), 80.

all belonged to a juvenile goat. The inhabitants of Petra have herded goats for millennia, with record of this being the Nabataeans' main occupation after settling. It is not surprising then that we found goat bones in the cist. However, it is unlikely, though not impossible, that a goat (particularly a juvenile) would have climbed up into the tomb on its own. Therefore, the possibility should be considered that a Nabataean deliberately placed a goat, or these particular parts of a goat, in the cist during the funerary rituals. Nabataeans commonly feasted as part of funerals, and these faunal remains could be evidence of such a practice for those buried in this tomb. Whether part of a feast or some other ritual, the evidence suggests that these goat bones are probable votive offerings.

Ceramics Analsyis

In archaeology, ceramic analysis can often provide diagnostic evidence for dating purposes, as well as the types, forms, and decorations used by a culture on their ceramics. Though as a group, a pile of sherds may all look the same, a trained eye can separate out sherds based on wares, painting styles, and even whether it was a jug, bowl, or plate. In Petra, there is no want for Nabataean ceramics; sherds are so abundant that they crunch under your feet as you hike through the wadi. Archaeologists have been able to substantially study the Nabataean pottery, so it is very useful in dating sites down to a specific period of particular pottery. Unfortunately, cist I lacked any diagnostic pottery pieces that would help us specifically date the burials.

Three of the four stratigraphic units contained ceramic sherds but unfortunately no complete ceramic vessels. Eighty-six ceramic sherds were recovered from the cist, and they originated from no fewer than fifty-three vessels. More than 75 percent of the ceramics were modified after the vessels were broken, either with paint or mineral around the edges of the sherds or by chipping on the edges and surfaces. This suggests that the Nabataeans brought them as individual votive offerings rather than vessels to be used as containers.

Lithic Analysis

Archaeologists most often use lithic analysis to see what kinds of stone tools a particular people is using and making, as well as what materials they are using, where it comes from, and how they are getting it. The types of tools used can also help determine particular lifestyles among a people, such as what they were hunting and eating. Larger lithic samples can also supply loads of information, like what kind of grain was being ground into meal or possible building materials depending on their context. Larger rocks, natural or modified, as well as smaller lithic flakes left over from making stone tools were all used as votive offerings by the Nabataeans. They were common items, found along most paths a Nabataean would have walked, and therefore lithics were easily accessible like most objects used as votive offerings. Lithics are also easily altered for a worshipper's particular purpose in offering. A few of the smaller lithic flakes appeared in our cist, but the majority of the rocks were much larger. The most noteworthy lithic was incised with a Nabataean "K" (Fig. 5). One interpretation is that this "K" stands for Kutba, the Nabataean equivalent for the Egyptian god Thoth, which gives substantial support to identify this lithic as a votive offering.

Figure 5

Wood Analysis

Wood is important archaeologically because it can be dated using carbon-14 testing. Though these tests are very expensive, it can be worth the cost when no other means of dating a site exist. Also, the types and forms of wood uncovered in archaeological situations can give insight into construction techniques, trading for foreign building materials, traditions of furniture, utensils, weaponry, transportation, and even burial rituals, depending on its context.

We recovered ninety-four wood fragments from the cist. All of the wood had been worked, and nail holes occurred in four of the pieces. The fragments included five pieces of planks, two wedges, and two corner pieces. The partial planks with nail holes (Fig. 6) and the corner pieces suggest that a type of square wooden object held together by nails was placed within the burial chamber. It is not outrageous for us to interpret these as evidence for the burial of at least one ossuary in this cist.

Figure 6

Textile Analysis

Textile analysis gives insight into production methods of cloth, styles of

clothing, and other forms of textiles, as well as their uses. In Nabataean burials, the bones were often wrapped in linen shrouds before being placed in ossuaries or burial chambers. We recovered ten pieces of linen from the cist. The largest piece contained three to four centimeters of the selvedge (the original edge of the textile). It also showed deliberate ribbing within the fabric, presumed to be decoration. In this same textile, there are two holes still visible, where it is possible a brooch or other jewelry was pinned (Fig. 7). Unfortunately, tomb raiders stole objects of value centuries ago. Another textile of note was a much smaller piece, but it had three pieces of dark purple wool embedded into the weaves of the linen. Purple often represented royalty, and it was a common practice by the "lesser" of society to decorate textile with it in order to imitate elevated status.[10] Whether the family members were trying to imitate status, or they just put a special piece of cloth in the grave as a votive offering or shroud is hard to support without original context.

Figure 7

During the 2006 excavation season in the region near Petra, a Nabataean burial was uncovered, showing textiles laid over the deceased's face. The rest of the burial was encased in a leather shroud. It is possible that our textile was used in the same manner, covering either the face, the body, or the bones.[11] Even many cultures today cover up the faces and bodies of their deceased before or during burial. Though this practice can generally be interpreted as a sign of respect, it is presumptuous to assign more meaning than this to Nabataean burials because we simply do not know what significance the covering of a body may have held for them.

Miscellaneous Artifact Analysis

We also found a variety of other artifacts within the cist that were possibly used as votive offerings, including four fossils (one was manipulated), a piece of manipulated petrified wood, two nails made of iron, presumably used

10. Walter Elwell and Philip Comfort, *TBD*, 294, 298–9, 392–3.
11. Megan A. Perry, Abdel Halim al-Shiyab, and Hani Falahat, "The 2006 Wadi Abu Khasharif and Wadi al-Mudayafi'at Cemetery Excavations," *ADAJ* 51 (2007): 303–12.

to hold the ossuary together, and the most unique find in our cist—a small fragment of parchment (Fig. 8) inscribed with what Johnson thought to be two cursive Nabataean letters and dates from 1-100CE. The Jordanian Department of Antiquities is in possession of the parchment, because it is a rare find— particularly thousands of years later! Nabataeans commonly used parchment, but further analysis has not been possible. However, we can conclude that some type of written document was placed in with the burials—whether as being to the deceased or perhaps to a deity on behalf of the deceased, or countless other possibilities—and therefore it can be considered a votive offering.
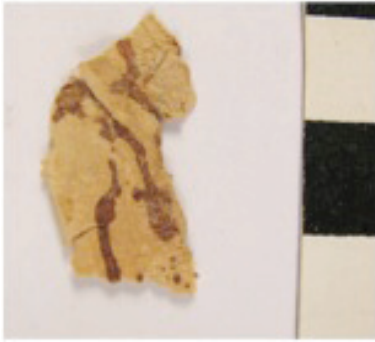

Figure 8

Conclusion

We found substantial evidence that supports the theory that Nabataeans did use votive offerings in the burial ritual. This evidence includes the faunal bone, ceramics, lithics, wood fragments, textile pieces, fossils, and even the parchment recovered from the cist—all of which were deliberately placed in this cist by the Nabataeans during the funerary rituals or subsequent visits to the tomb. It is still unclear as to whether these offerings were being made *to* the deceased or *on behalf of* the deceased to one of the many Nabataean deities. It is hoped that further evidence recovered from subsequent excavations will help to more clearly and accurately answer these questions. We also conclude that the burials in cist I were secondary burials according to the typical Nabataean burial tradition. The sheer amount of wood retrieved, as well as their shapes, the presence of nail holes, and the discovery of two nails all suggest that the bones were placed in ossuaries and may have been wrapped in linen shrouds.

A PORTRAIT OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN COMMON LIFE: THE CYCLE OF ORDER AND CHAOS IN *THE TALE OF SINUHE*

COURTNEY DOTSON

Centered in Egypt's literary history is the theme of order and chaos, usually shown on a grand scale in connection with the gods, the king or the physical land of Egypt. These themes of stability and mayhem are portrayed throughout the Middle Kingdom classic poem *The Tale of Sinuhe*. Yet the purpose of the tale is not to give mythological or a philosophical account of these themes. Instead it gives the story of a man, Sinuhe, who experiences the cycle of order and turmoil in his life. The author uses mainstream Egyptian ideology and imagery to thematically expound upon these cycles and how they were experienced by the common ancient Egyptian.

Before any plot in *The Tale of Sinuhe* unfolds, the protagonist reveals his personal status in Egypt. He maintains that, before the conflict of the tale, he was "a servant of the royal harem, waiting on the Princess, the highly praised Royal Wife of King Sesostris in Khenemsut, the daughter of King Amenemhet."[1] While Sinuhe originated from the upper class, he still represents the common Egyptian in that, he makes mistakes, gets hurt, and suffers. Being a servant of the royal family was a high position; it shows that the king had trusted Sinuhe and that Sinuhe had a stable and honored place in society.

The framework of the poem, namely, autobiographical, is one of the earliest Egyptian genres of literature. After reciting his identity and position, Sinuhe introduces the event that would trigger the spark of chaos into his life: "the god ascended to his horizon."[2] Amenemhet I, king of Upper and Lower Egypt, had died and ascended to heaven. By nature, the death of any king would bring some amount of chaos to a nation: Who would rule next? Would there be coups? Revolts? Yet when the king's eldest son, Sesostris, on a campaign in Libya, heard the news, "not a moment did he delay. The falcon flew with his attendants."[3] On the outward appearance, the transition of kings appears to have commenced smoothly. However, there seems to be some evidence that Amenemhet I was murdered, though the death of the king is not what brings disarray into Sinuhe's life.[4] It nevertheless has a part to play.

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1. "Sinuhe," trans. by Miriam Lichtheim (COS 1.38:77–82), 77.
2. "Sinuhe," 77.
3. "Sinuhe," 77.
4. In *The Teachings of Amenemhet I*, an instruction written to his son and co-regent

Amenemhet's Political Role in Egyptian History

The death of Amenemhet I in *The Tale of Sinuhe* functions to compare the turmoil that is felt by the Egyptians as a nation to the turmoil that is soon to enter Sinuhe's life. Using the imagery of the demise of a king would bring to the minds of the Egyptian people the myth of the resurrection of Osiris by his son Horus. Belonging to the fourth generation of gods, Osiris was a king over Egypt and taught the people how to live civilly.[5] His perfect kingdom came to a halt when he was killed by his brother Seth, cut up into little pieces, and spread across the Nile. This act symbolized the chaos that then entered the world. Order was not to be restored again until Osiris's son Horus had defeated Seth and sectored the cosmos. Applied to the time of Sinuhe, the dead father of the current king was considered to be an embodiment of Osiris and his son the living king was Horus.[6] Ideologically, every time a king died chaos would enter the land of Egypt again, and order would not be restored until the new king ascended his throne.

On a broader scale, this happened during the First Intermediate Period prior to the Middle Kingdom. Near the end of the sixth dynasty, central control in the monarchy was crumbling. Discussion as to why this happened has not yet reached a conclusion among modern scholars. Suggestions include drought, which might have caused the people to rebel against the king, or "increased pressures from the frontiers" and "provincial families erod[ing] royal power by seizing privileges for themselves."[7] What scholars do know is that ruling families emerged in Herakleopolis and Thebes. After civil war between the two ruling cities, the Thebans proved victorious and established the eleventh dynasty.[8] Though a united monarchy was recognized in Egypt, the eleventh dynasty was not able to reach the point of unification the monarchies had maintained during the Old Kingdom. However, the eleventh dynasty was followed by a new age in Egypt: the Middle Kingdom. Considered the classical age of Egyptian history, the Middle Kingdom brought about the unity and glory of the Old Kingdom and even exceeded it.[9] The eleventh dynasty ended in chaos, which allowed for the birth of the twelfth dynasty.

Founder Amenemhet I is believed to have been the vizier of the last king of the eleventh dynasty, Mentuhotep IV.[10] This assumed, then Amenemhet

Sesostris , he tells him about attempts that have been made on his life. More details can be found in Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 160.

5. R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 103.

6. Clark, *Myth,* 107.

7. Amelie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–300 B.C.*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 1995), 171.

8. It was fourteen years into the reign of Mentohotep II that the final phase of civil war ended. The Tomb of the Warriors at Deir el-Bahri are believed to be the bodies of the heroes in the battle during the civil war because of their proximity to the royal cemetery. For more information. See Shaw, *The Oxford History*, 151.

9. Wolfram Grajetzki's states in his book *The Middle Kingdom of Ancient Egypt* that "for the ancient Egyptians of later times, the Middle Kingdom was the classical period of their arts, history and literature" (London: Duckworth, 2006), 1.

10. Grajetzki states that "four Wadi Nammamat inscriptions mention the vizier Amenemhat. . . . It has been assumed that he was the future King Amenemhat I and that he

I came to acquire the throne of Egypt through an exceptionally scandalous method: usurpation. Most likely, Amenemhet I was accepted as the new king of Egypt by the people, but he still needed to propagate that he was *the* legitimate king. A popular theory among scholars of how he accomplished his goal was through the production of the literary text of *The Prophecies of Neferti*.[11] I agree with scholars like Hans Goedicke, who argues that the text was not purely propaganda; I do believe, however, that propaganda was a driving force in the creation of the literature. The setting of the tale takes place during the reign of King Snefru in the fourth dynasty. At court, Neferti prophecies that soon calamities would befall the land of Egypt; "Re separates himself (from) mankind," "the land has perished" and "man killing his (own) father."[12] Probably alluding to the First Intermediate period, the author is trying to conjure the imagery of the disorderliness during that time. While the gods most likely did not forsake Egypt, the land probably did not completely "perish," and not every son was killing his father. The audience nevertheless got the message that Egypt was not in her glory days.

Yet Neferti tells the court to not despair, feeding hope to the king Snefru and readers of Amenemhet's day by declaring that "a king will come from the south, Imeny, the justified, is his name."[13] The king named in the prophecy is Imeny, which according to Miriam Lichtheim and other scholars is a nickname for Amenemhet.[14] The literary motif used to introduce the new king is sometimes referred to as a "redeemer" king—Lichtheim says that "redemption [comes] through the rise of a great king," and Goedicke uses the term "savior king."[15] Essentially, if the dating of *The Prophecies of Neferti* is correct, then the tale was used in part as propaganda to instill in the minds of the Egyptians that Egypt needed to be saved and that Amenemhet I was the one to save them.[16]

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was the real power in Egypt at this time." Grajetzki also acknowledges that this "assumption is not proven, though hypothesis that the vizier and the later king are identical is at least possible" (Grajetzki, *Middle Kingdom*, 26).

11. Many scholars, such as R. O. Faulkner, Miriam Lichtheim, and Hans Goedicke, believe that the Prophecy of Neferti was written during or in connection to Amenemhet I, though they do not agree as to the purpose of why it was written. Faulkner believes that it was written "to ensure his position" as political propaganda (R. O. Faulkner, "Prophecies of Neferti," in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* [ed. William Kelly Simpson. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1973], 234). Lichtheim believes it was written as a "glorification" of Amenemhet I and as a "historical romance in pseudo-prophetic form" ("The Prophecies of Neferti," *Ancient Egyptian Literature* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975], 1:139). Goedicke believes that "there is no reason to doubt Neferyt's contemporaneity with Amenemhet I" but he gives the caveat that "there is no indication in the text of any contact by Neferyt with the court of Amenemhet I" (Hans Goedicke, *The Protocol of Neferyt* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977], 11).

12. "The Prophecies of Neferti," trans. Miriam Lichtheim (COS 1.45:106–110), 108–9.

13. "The Prophecies of Neferti," 109.

14. "The Prophecies of Neferti" (AEL 1:139). The same interpretation for Imeny as a nickname for Amenemhet I is accepted by Hans Goedicke, *The Protocol*, 4, as well as by Grajetzki, *The Middle Kingdom*, 29.

15. "The Prophecies of Neferti" (AEL 1:139), and Goedicke, *The Protocol*, 4.

16. Goedicke states that "the date of the composition as well as its authorship is still an unsettled question" (Hans Goedicke, "Sinuhe's Epistolary Salutations to the King," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 41 [2004], 5).

Legitimizing his rule, Amenemhet I was finally able to justify his taking of the title of king of Upper and Lower Egypt, uniting the two lands under one ruler after three hundred years of turmoil. Knowing the history of how Amenemhet I ascended the throne helps us to fully understand and sympathize with Sinuhe when mayhem enters his life.

The Chaos of Sinuhe

In *The Tale of Sinuhe*, the co-regent and prince, Sesostris, is on his way back to Itj-towy to claim the throne.[17] Before he arrives, Sinuhe finally reveals what it is that turns his world upside down. He claims:

> The royal sons who had been with him on this expedition had also been sent for. One of them was summoned while I was standing (there). I heard his voice, as he spoke, while I was in the near distance. My heart fluttered, my arms spread out, a trembling befell all my limbs. I removed myself in leaps, to seek a hiding place.[18]

It is not necessarily the death of the king that throws Sinuhe into confusion, it is what he overhears one of the royal sons say. Unfortunately, Sinuhe never reveals what was said, but three popular theories have been proposed: (1) that he overheard the news of the pharaoh's death and became irrational, (2) that he misunderstood the message, or (3) that he overheard the "hatching of the plot" to kill pharaoh.[19] Sinuhe was in Libya with Sesostris and the other royal sons at the time; he decided though to "set out southward. [He] did not plan to go to the residence."[20] By leaving Egypt, Sinuhe metaphorically leaves order and descends into chaos.

At this juncture in the text, the format changes from autobiographical to several different forms, including narratives, eulogies, royal decrees, etc. Thus the framework of the tale itself mirrors the erratic nature of Sinuhe's state of mind, once again emphasizing the order and chaos cycle that happened in the individual lives of ancient Egyptians.

Finally descending into chaos, Sinuhe informs the reader that "land gave me to land. I traveled to Byblos; I returned to Qedem. I spent a year and a half there."[21] The wanderings of Sinuhe in the Levant illuminate his psychological frame of mind. Egyptologist Antonio Loprieno states that the journey motif in Middle Kingdom literature is "a paradigm of an intellectual journey to a fuller understanding of humans in society," illustrating a dramatic change in their perspective.[22] Sinuhe knows when he leaves Egypt that he will not find peace until he returns to the land of order. This opinion does not change in Palestine.

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17. Amenemhat I moved the Egyptian capital from Thebes to Itj-towy, because it was a more neutral setting for the capital between Upper and Lower Egypt.

18. "Sinuhe," 77.

19. Scott Morschauser, "What Made Sinuhe Run: Sinuhe's Reasoned Flight," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 37 (2000): 187–198.

20. "Sinuhe," 77. Itj-towy is translated as "the residence," referring to returning to the palace in the capital.

21. "Sinuhe," 78.

22. Antonio Loprieno, "Travel and Fiction in Egyptian Literature," in *Mysterious Lands* (ed. David O'Connor and Stephen Quirke; University College London: Institute of Archaeology, 2003), 37.

Considered the most historically accurate part of the tale, Sinuhe lives in Syria until he is an old man. After his first couple of years of wandering, he meets Ammunenshi, the ruler of Upper Retenu. Ammunenshi says to Sinuhe, "You will be happy with me; you will hear the language of Egypt." Sinuhe claims he said this "because he knew my character and had heard of my skill, Egyptians who were with him having borne witness for me."[23] It is possible that Egyptians would have been in the Levant at that time. In fact the "Middle Kingdom culture was now more open to foreign influences than that of the Old Kingdom."[24] Earlier Sinuhe mentioned some cities that he went through during his wanderings; one of the mentioned cities was Byblos.[25]

The twelfth dynasty was able to get a foothold into Palestine and commenced in trading with its many cities, Byblos among them. From Byblos, ancient Egyptians would obtain high-quality cedar wood imported from Lebanon.[26] Egyptian influence also extended southward to Nubia, where they built massive fortresses with glacis and watchtowers. Whereas the ancient Egyptians occupied Nubia and subjected the population for mining and quarrying, it seems that Egypt was interested "in fostering close diplomatic relations" with Palestine.[27] *The Tale of Sinuhe* gives support to this claim of Egypt trying to foster good relations. During his wanderings Sinuhe becomes famished; he declares that "this is the taste of death."[28] Asiatics[29] then arrive on the scene and give him water and boiled milk. Sinuhe claims that the leader recognizes him. The kindness bestowed on Sinuhe from the Palestinians paints a picture of strong relations between Egypt and Palestine. While the evidence is not definite, archeological remains and insights from literary texts seem to validate these descriptions.

During Sinuhe's first meeting with Ammunenshi, Ammunenshi inquires about the state of Egypt after the death of Amenemhet. Assuring Ammunenshi that Egypt is doing well, Sinuhe launches into a beautiful panegyric on the merits of the new king, Sesostris. Claiming that "he is a God who is peerless, before whom no other exists. He is a lord of understanding, excellent of plans, effective of orders."[30] The praise which Sinuhe lavishes upon Egypt in a foreign land illustrates that he has not undergone a dramatic change intellectually; he still believes that Egypt is the paramount nation and that the king is the embodiment of all that was good. His faith in this had not wavered, so it is interesting to note that he does not return to Egypt after a few years. This leads the reader to the conclusion that Sinuhe needed to find resolution before the grip of chaos would let him go. And because Egypt is doing fine, chaos does not stem from the death of the king. Only when the resolution of his panic and fleeing is resolved can he obtain peace and stability in his life.

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23. "Sinuhe," 78.

24. Grajetzki, *The Middle Kingdom*, 133.

25. Byblos was the Phoenician capital, also known as Gebal.

26. Grajetzki, *The Middle Kingdom*, 136.

27. These watch towers were established between the first and second cataracts. Kuhrt, *Ancient Near East*, 168–71.

28. Sinuhe," 78.

29. "Asiatics" is a term for people who lived in Asia or in the eastern desert (Grajetzki, *The Middle Kingdom*, 20).

30. "Sinuhe," 78.

Another device utilized in the tale to expound upon Sinuhe's turmoil is his creation of a new life and identity in Palestine as a substitute for Egypt. Ammunenshi, the ruler of Upper Retenu, takes the place of the king of Egypt in Sinuhe's life. At the beginning of the tale, Sinuhe claims the title of "true acquaintance of the King," then, while living with Ammunenshi, he claims the same intimacy with him, informing the reader that "much also came to me because of the love of me; for he had made me chief of a tribe in the best part of his land."[31] Sinuhe had now obtained the trusted friendship of two kings. Heaping on him praises and luxuries, Ammunenshi gave Sinuhe his eldest daughter to wife and appointed him ruler over a tribe. Spending almost the rest of his life in Palestine, Sinuhe gained a family, occupation, wealth, and respect. Yet prospering in Retjenu was not enough for Sinuhe; it could not give him the stability that Egypt divinely maintained.

The Order of Sinuhe

Lamenting in his old age, Sinuhe cries out, "Whichever god decreed this flight, have mercy, bring me home! Surely you will let me see the place in which my heart dwells!"[32] Nearing death, Sinuhe longs for resolution in his life; his cries are answered. Sesostis is told of Sinuhe's longings to return home and sends a letter of hope to him. Telling Sinuhe that he has done no evil in his eyes, Sesostris declares to Sinuhe that it was own heart which carried him away and "it was not in [Sesostris'] heart."[33] The king offers Sinuhe an olive branch, insinuating that even though he does not understand the reasons for his flight from Egypt, he does not care; he just wants him to come home to Egypt. R. B. Parkinson contends that a "royal letter is a motif of autobiographical inscriptions and marks the start of a gradual reassertion of order on a formal level."[34] Just as the passing of an Egyptian king symbolizes chaos entering his life, the emergence of an Egyptian king symbolizes the return of order to his life. The king gives Sinuhe a sarcophagus of gold and lapis lazuli as a house-warming gift. The gift of a coffin by the king was considered a great honor and a sign of respect. In the *Autobiography of Weni* from the Old Kingdom, Weni records that the king had given him a white sarcophagus and "never before had the like been done in this Upper Egypt."[35] Assuring Sinuhe that he is wanted back in Egypt, the king also reminds him that Egypt is his home and where he should be buried.

Returning to the land of Egypt is not enough to take the chaos out of the life and heart of Sinuhe, however. It does symbolize that a transition would soon take place; just as chaos had entered Sinuhe's life when he left Egypt, returning foreshadows order about to enter his life again. Kneeling before the king, Sinuhe declares, "Here I am before you. Life is yours. May your Majesty do as he wishes!"[36] Putting his life into the king's hands was the only way for

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31. "Sinuhe," 77, 79.
32. "Sinuhe," 80.
33. "Sinuhe," 80.
34. R. B. Parkinson, *The Tale of Sinuhe and other Ancient Egyptian Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 24.
35. Miriam Lichtheim, "The Autobiography of Weni" in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 21.
36. "Sinuhe," 82.

the chaos in Sinuhe's life to end. The king was the *only* one who could end the turmoil in Sinuhe's life because he was the *only* one with the authority to forgive him. Upon pardoning him, Sesostris decreed that Sinuhe "shall not fear, he shall not dread! He shall be a Companion among the nobles."[37] Sinuhe is then washed, shaved, and given Egyptian garments. His physical cleaning is as a metaphor to show that now all evidence of his life in chaos had been washed away.

The last paragraph gave hope to ancient readers that the stability and peace Sinuhe found in the latter end of life would be forever experienced in the afterlife. Parkinson suggests that the tomb is a "link between the imperfect world of men and the perfection of the otherworld."[38] Therefore it is appropriate that Sinuhe's described his "stone pyramid," "funerary . . . garden" and a golden statue of himself that the king made.[39] The author is now transcending the everyday rustics of chaos with the eternal bliss of peace. Thus Sinuhe finds order in his death, order which will carry on with him into the afterlife. Echoing the words of Weni, Sinuhe ends his tale with "there is no commoner for whom the like had been done."[40]

Conclusion

While many scholars mainly view *The Tale of Sinuhe* as nationalist propaganda, and though it certainly contains that element, they are missing the insight that the tale reveals to modern readers about the everyday life of an ancient Egyptian. In the minds of the ancient Egyptians, the cycles of order and chaos were real, manifested through myth, religion, and the propaganda of new kings. Yet this psychological view on the ups and downs of life did not just exist to the ancient Egyptians as stories on papyrus—it was lived by them all the days of their lives.

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37. "Sinuhe," 82.
38. Parkinson, *The Tale of Sinuhe*, 26.
39. "Sinuhe," 82.
40. "Sinuhe," 82.

"I NEVER DID AN EVIL THING": AN EXAMINATION OF HITTITE SIN AND RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITY

DAVID FERGUSON

As early as 3000 B.C.E., a group of Indo-Europeans settled in what is now central Turkey.[1] Speaking a language closer to English and German than the native languages of the inhabitants of that region, these people integrated into and adopted the diverse culture around them. They were the Hittites, who went on to establish a kingdom and then an empire.[2]

From ca. 1650–1180 B.C.E., the Hittites emerged as a major player in the world of the ancient Near East.[3] In 1595 King Muršili I sent an army more than 800 miles away to sack distant Babylon,[4] and later King Muwatalli II challenged Ramesses II of Egypt's imperial expansion at the famous Battle of Kadesh in 1275.[5] According to Ramesses III, the Hittite empire collapsed with the invasion of the Sea People around 1200 B.C.E.[6] Remnants of the empire scattered, and some are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible among the groups in Canaan when the Israelites invaded.[7]

The title of this paper, "I Never Did an Evil Thing," comes from a statement made by the Hittite king Hattušili III. When the Hittite king said it, he expected that his audience would believe him, and history shows they did. However, when I say it, no one believes me. While the difference in reaction could simply be attributed to the fact that Hattušili was a king and that I am not, there is a stronger possibility that evil meant something different for Hattušili's culture than mine. However, without understanding the value systems of ancient cultures including the Hittites, we are likely to interpret statements such as Hattušili's in a modern context and misunderstand how the people of that culture viewed themselves. The result of this problem may be

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1. I would like to thank Ed Stratford, whose insights and perspective were key to giving this paper life.
2. Billie Jean Collins, *The Hittites and Their World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 27.
3. Collins, *The Hittites*, ix. Dates according to the Middle Chronology.
4. Amelie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000–330 B.C.* (2 vols.; New York: Routledge, 1995), 1:244.
5. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East*, 1:258.
6. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East,* 2:391.
7. Collins, *The Hittites*, 197.

best articulated by the fictional character Mr. Dooley from Halsted Street:

> I know histhry isn't thrue, Hinnissy, because it ain't like what I see ivry day in Halsted Sthreet. If any wan comes along with a histhry iv Greece or Rome that'll show me th' people fightin', getting' dhrunk, makin' love, gettin' marrid, owin' th' grocery man an' bein' without hard-coal, I'll believe they was a Greece or Rome, but not befure.[8]

Mr. Dooley's statement exemplifies the dangers of oversimplifying past societies. History can be made to look like earlier versions of ourselves, if we choose, but at the inevitable risk of misunderstanding it.

While a complete system of Hittite values cannot now be constructed (and may never be constructed), Hittite literature gives us a basic view into the role of sin and religious sensibility in Hittite culture. My purpose in talking about the Hittites is to first establish basic characteristics of the Hittite view of sin and religious sensibility, and second, to examine how this view affected Hittite literature, particularly *The Apology of Hattušili III.*

Role of Religion and Sin

The Hittites proudly referred to their nation as the "land of a thousand deities."[9] Based on surviving texts, religion permeated Hittite thought in topics from war to law to matters of daily life.[10]

Nevertheless, the Hittites were very concerned with sin, its causes, and its remedies. For the Hittites, misfortune had a highly material aspect. When Hittites sinned, they could expect physical punishment, typically illness. If they persuaded the gods that they had reformed, their illness would be relieved. The confused pleas of Kantuzzili, a Hittite prince living probably in the fourteenth century B.C.E.,[11] referenced some misfortune which came from his sin. The problem for Kantuzzili was that he didn't know what his sin was:

> My god, ever since my mother gave birth to me, you, my god, have raised me. . . . And the more I grew up, the more I attested my god's mercy and wisdom in everything. Never did I swear by my god, and never did I then break the oath. . . . [Now] may my god open his innermost soul to me with all his heart, and may he tell me my sins, so that I may acknowledge them. . . . What have I, Kantuzzili, ever done to my god and [in what way have I sinned] against my god? You made me, you created me. But now, [what] have I, Kantuzzili, done to you?[12]

Then later, "Do not denigrate my reputation in the presence of other humans."[13] Understandably, Kantuzzili was worried what other people would

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8. Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 1.

9. Gregory McMahon, "Theology, Priests, and Worship in Hittite Anatolia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 3 (ed. Jack M. Sasson; New York: Scribners, 1995), 1985.

10. Gabriella Frantz-Szabo, "Hittite Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East,* vol. 3, 2011.

11. Itimar Singer, *Hittite Prayers* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 29.

12. Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 32.

13. Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 33.

think.

While Kantuzzili primarily prayed to have his sins removed, the Hittites also developed complex rituals and spells to influence the gods. Many of these rituals focused on appeasing offended gods. For example, in the Ritual Against Pestilence, we read:

> If people are dying in the country and if some enemy god has caused that, I act as follows: They drive up one ram. They twine together blue wool, red wool, yellow wool, black wool and white wool, make it into a crown and crown the ram with it. They drive the ram on to the road leading to the enemy and while doing so they speak as follows: "Whatever god of the enemy land has caused this plague—see! We have now driven up this crowned ram to pacify thee, O god! Just as the herd is strong, but keeps peace with the ram, do thou, the god who has caused this plague, keep peace with the Hatti land!"[14]

The ritual gives us some clue as to how seriously the Hittites took the matter of pacifying angry deities, and what their role in connection with the deities was.

Still, the Hittites did not view the gods as beings whose sole purpose was to be appeased by mortals. From one text we read: "Are the desires of gods and men different? In no way! Do their natures differ? In no way!"[15] For the Hittites, gods could be persuaded, they could do evil, they were responsible for humans just as good masters are to servants, and they could be expected to treat good servants well or be guilted for negligence otherwise.[16] Puduhepa, Hattušili's wife, is recorded in at least two prayer texts asking favors from the gods. When asking a storm god to protect her husband from evil, she said, "Have pity on me in this matter, O god, my lord. . . . Hattušili, your servant, took pains for the god's will, and he engaged his body and soul until he rebuilt Nerik, the beloved city [of] the gods, my lord. You, O god, my lord, be favorably inclined towards Hattušili, your servant."[17] Although the gods were ultimately more powerful than mortals, one Hittite story relates an instance where spells cast by mortals were partly responsible for forcing the god Telipinu to set aside his anger and save humanity.[18]

As evident in Puduhepa's prayer, the repercussions of sin in Hittite religion transferred to the political realm. The state punished temple workers if they were disobedient in their duties.[19] As sin caused impurity, an otherwise pure person could receive impurity from a sinful person. But if the king, who was responsible to the gods for all of the Hittites became impure, instead of punishing the king, the gods could punish the entire country in the form of a plague.[20]

This is shown in the plague prayers of King Muršili II. Because of his father's sins, the gods sent a plague upon the Hittites, and Muršili gave several prayers on behalf of his country to be forgiven.

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14. "Ritual Against Pestilence," trans. by Albrecht Goetze (*ANET*, 345).
15. Bryce, *Life and Society*, 139.
16. McMahon, "Theology, Priests, and Worship," 1985; see also Bryce, *Life and Society*, 139.
17. Singer, *Hittite Prayers*, 105.
18. Arvid S. Kapelrud, "The Interrelationship between Religion and Magic in Hittite Religion," *Numen* 6, Fasc. 1 (Jan. 1959): 38–39.
19. McMahon, "Theology, Priests, and Worship," 1988.
20. McMahon, "Theology, Priests, and Worship," 1988.

> May you, the gods, my lords, be well-disposed toward me once more. . . .
> I have [not] done anything evil. (Of) those who sinned and did do evil,
> not one is still here today. They all died off previously. But because the
> affair implicating my father has devolved upon me. . . . I am now making
> restitution.[21]

Muršili's plague prayers show us that sin is connected to a bad relationship
with the gods. And as Kantuzzili shows us, because sin had a clearly visible
aspect (i.e., illness), Hittites could tell when an individual had fallen out of
favor with the gods and could act accordingly against this social stigma. If
impurity were transferable, who would want to associate with someone who
the gods do not associate with?

Because the king's sins could affect the entire empire, the Hittites must
have been concerned if they suspected their king carried an impurity. This
concern played a central role in a Hittite text recording a pivotal moment in
history—Hattušili's successful rebellion and takeover against his nephew Urhi-
Tešub.

The Characters of the Apology

Hattušili was in his fifties when he took the throne from his nephew.[22]
Prior to that, he was a military general, and fought against Ramesses II at
the Battle of Kadesh, checking Egyptian expansion in the Levant. Then, as
a king, he concluded a peace treaty with Ramesses II, which gave him the
international respect he needed to be recognized as the new legitimate Hittite
king.[23] But legitimacy abroad did not necessarily mean legitimacy at home
where Hattušili's efforts to protect his claim required a different approach.

As Bryce noted, the document which records Hattušili's rise to power, the
Apology of Hattušili III is "a largely self-laudatory and self-justificatory account
of Hattušili's through a succession of administrative and military appointments
to his seizure of the Hittite throne."[24] In fact, Hattušili's emphasis on his
deeds and subsequent rewards as a part of his qualifications places him nicely
amid the trend of how ancient Near Eastern kings of his time period depicted
themselves.[25]

Hattušili had two main opponents in the *Apology*. The first was his distant
relative Armatarhunta.[26] The second and more important historical figure was
his nephew Urhi-Tešub. In three encounters, both characters followed a similar
pattern: they were both jealous of Hattušili's favor with the goddess Ištar, they
both attempted to ruin him, and they both failed.

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21. "Plague Prayers of Mursili II," trans. Gary Beckman (*COS* 1:60:157).
22. Trevor Bryce, *Kingdom of the Hittites* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005),
293.
23. Bryce, *Kingdom of the Hittites*, 278–79.
24. Bryce, *Kingdom of the Hittites*, 246.
25. Mario Liverani, "Historical Overview," in *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*
(ed. Daniel C. Snell; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 13.
26. "Apology of Hattusili III," trans. Theo P. J. van den Hout (*COS* 1:77:200 ft.9).

The Apology[27]

In the first encounter, when Hattušili's brother Muwattali became king, he promoted Hattušili to "Chief of the Royal Bodyguard" (§4) and made him leader over a territory to the north of the empire. But Muwatalli's favoritism came with repercussions. Armatarhunta, Hattušili's distant relative, ruled that area and would not be forced out.

To regain his land, Armatarhunta accused Hattušili of a serious crime. Severity notwithstanding, Hattušili was exonerated, a success he attributed to the intervention of his patron goddess, Ištar. Reflecting on this event, Hattušili wrote, "Since I was a man divinely provided for, since I walked before the gods in divine providence, I never did an evil thing against man" (§4). After all, had Hattušili been evil, his favor with Ištar would have been in question and his claim to protection spurious.

Years later, in Hattušili's second encounter, the jealous Armatarhunta, along with his wife and son, tried to ruin Hattušili by casting spells on him (§9). While physicians and religious figures were allowed to cast spells to benefit people, Hittite law made the use of sorcery to curse others punishable by death.[28] But before the encounter is played out, Hattušili gave the reader a literary clue from the first encounter with Armatarhunta. From the first encounter we read, "When people saw the recognition of Ištar, My Lady, and my brother's [Muwatalli's] benevolence towards me, they envied me. Armatarhunta, son of Zida, and other people as well began to cause me harm" (§4). Then at the beginning of the second encounter, "But when Armatarhunta, son of Zida, saw the benevolance of Ištar, My Lady, and of my brother towards me, they (i.e., Armartarhunta) with his wife (and) his son then began to cast spells over me" (§9). The two passages focus on the same point: others harm Hattušili because Ištar favors him. But there is more to it than that. Hattušili's parallels deliberately point the reader to a direct conclusion: Hattušili was faultless. Armatarhunta, on the other hand, was caught doing sorcery. A trial commenced, and he was found guilty.

Hattušili's third encounter came in response to the conflict with Urhi-Tešub. After the ordeal with Armatarhunta, Muwatalli died, leaving his son, and Hattušili's nephew, Urhi-Tešub to reign in his stead (§10a). Hattušili initially supported his nephew, but their relationship began to break up when Urhi-Tešub cut off Hattušili's power. Hattušili explained the source of the conflict was "when Urhi-Tešub saw the benevolence [o]f the goddess towards me, he became envious of me, he [be]gan to harm me" (§10a). Of course, by this point we can predict the encounter's end, as Urhi-Tešub falls into the same pattern that Armatarhunta fell into—he was jealous and tried to harm Hattušili. Still, Hattušili makes a great effort detailing the affront Urhi-Tešub caused him.

While campaigning with his brother Muwatalli, Hattušili recaptured two important religious centers from the enemy: Hakpiš and Nerik (§10a). In praise of the act, Muwattali endowed Hattušili with both cities. But after years of bad relations with Urhi-Tešub, and after all his other power was stripped

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27. This translation for the *Apology* comes from "Apology of Hattusili III," 199–204.
28. Harry A. Hoffner Jr., "Legal Institutions of Hittite Anatolia," in vol. 1 of *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 1, 557.

away, Urhi-Tešub finally took Hakpiš and Nerik from him.

In response, Hattušili sent a letter to Urhi-Tešub challenging him to battle, In a manly way I declared to him: 'You opposed me. You (are) Great King, whereas I (am) king of the single fortress you left me. So come! Ištar of Samuha and the Storm-god of Nerik will judge us'" (§10a). It is significant that Hattušili framed the conflict as a lawsuit for the gods to judge. As H. J. Howink ten Cate noted, "According to Hittite ideas a process before the court of divine powers underlies every conflict situation in history."[29] By winning the battle, Hattušili was not accountable for sin, but merely the recipient of the gods' will. In what I believe is the definitive statement of the *Apology*, Hattušili broke the narrative to write:

> If someone speaks thus: "Why did you at first install [Urhi-Tešub] in kingship, but why do you now declare war on him in writing?" (I will answer:) "If he had in no way opposed me, would they (i.e. the gods) really have made a Great King succumb to a petty king?" Because he has now opposed me, the gods have made him succumb to me by (their) judgment. (§10a)

Thus Hattušili made it to the throne legitimately and without sin. His subjects could rest easily knowing their leader's actions would not bring the wrath of the gods.

Conclusion

The role of religious sensibility and sin in Hittite thought factored deeply into the Hittite value system. When a sinner became impure, they brought the punishment of angered gods. And when a king was impure, the entire nation was at risk for punishment. If the Hittite people were concerned with the questionable circumstances in which Hattušili came to be their king and if that concern was significantly felt in the empire, we should not be surprised to see the *Apology* of Hattušili III in response to their concern. From appearances, the *Apology* succeeded. Hattušili died peacefully, and his son succeeded him without crisis.[30]

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29. H. J. Howink ten Cate, "Hittite Royal Prayers," *Numen* 16, Fasc. 2 (Sep. 1969): 94.

30. Theo P. J. van den Hout, "Khattushili III, King of the Hittites" in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 2, 1119.