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Biblical Archaeology or Near Eastern Archaeology? Redefining the Discipline from a Biblical Foundation

Michael G. Hasel, Ph.D.
Southern Adventist University, mhasel@southern.edu

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Redefining the Discipline from a Biblical Foundation

Michael G. Hasel

Southern Adventist University

Abstract

The original impetus in the early 1800s behind the worldwide discipline of archaeology was the exploration of Bible lands in the ancient Near East. Early discoveries began to fill museums in Europe and excite Christian believers. Governments began a vigorous competition and funded major excavations in order to elucidate the Bible, while scholarly societies were founded to carry out this work. But with time, the influence of secular thinking and the philosophical presuppositions of the Enlightenment began having their effect. From the 1940s through the 1970s there was a revival in Protestant America in the discipline of "Biblical Archaeology" led by key thinkers at Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University. During that period, over forty-five excavations were sponsored by institutions in the United States and Israel alone. However, today the secularization of the discipline has become nearly ubiquitous, with less than five Christian institutions worldwide offering archaeology degrees, and secular universities struggling with shrinking programs. The very term "biblical archaeology" has undergone vigorous debate. This paper will describe briefly the processes leading to the present situation. It will outline the assumptions and presuppositions that led to this dichotomy.

Keywords: archaeology, secularization, philosophy, Enlightenment, biblical archaeology, excavation

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Redefining the Discipline from a Biblical Foundation

In order to establish a biblical foundation for archaeology, a thorough theological study of the biblical concept of history and its significance for faith is in order. Issues that will be addressed from a biblical perspective include: (1) the nature of God's interaction in time and space; (2) the Biblical concept of time and chronology; and (3) the relationship between faith and evidence. The next step will be to propose a concept of archaeological science founded on the guiding principles of Scripture. Our assumptions will be guided by a biblical worldview that recognizes both the potential contributions and limitations of the discipline. Finally, the discussion will conclude by addressing popular notions of the interaction of archaeology and the Bible.

The original impetus in the early 1800s behind the worldwide discipline of archaeology was the exploration of Bible lands in the ancient Near East (Moorey, 1991: 1-24; Davies, 2004). We are reminded of the statement by Friedrich Delitzsch (1903: 1) in his two lectures before Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1902:

> To what end this toil and trouble in distant, inhospitable, and danger-ridden lands? Why all this expense in ransacking to their utmost depths the rubbish heaps of forgotten centuries, where we know neither treasures of gold nor of silver exists? Why this zealous emulation on the part of the nations to secure the greatest possible number of mounds for excavation…? One answer echoes to all these questions – one answer, which, if not absolutely adequate, is yet largely the reason and consummation of it all, *the Bible*."

Governments began a vigorous competition to fund major excavations in order to elucidate the Bible, while scholarly societies were founded to carry out this work.

In the 1940s through the 1970s there was a revival in Protestant America in the discipline of "Biblical Archaeology" led by key thinkers at Johns Hopkins University and Harvard University. During that period, over forty-five excavations were sponsored by institutions in the United States in Israel alone (see King, 1985; 1988). However, today the secularization of the discipline has become nearly ubiquitous with only three Christian institutions worldwide offering archaeology degrees and secular universities struggling with shrinking programs (Dever, 1995; 2010). The very term "biblical archaeology" has undergone vigorous debate and scholars today are under increased pressure to separate themselves from conclusions that support the biblical narrative (Dever, 1993b; Levy, 2010). This can be seen in the recent change in title on the mastheads of one of our oldest journals,

The Biblical Archaeologist, which was renamed *Near Eastern Archaeology* (Maeir, 2010, p. 296). In the most recent volume on the subject published a few months ago, *Historical Biblical Archaeology and the Future*, a number of pragmatic solutions and approaches to this impasse are suggested. The editor of the volume, Professor Thomas Levy, a fellow Arizona graduate and professor at the University of California, San Diego, suggests that, "Now that we are in the 21st century, it is necessary to take up Dever's (1993b) call for a secular "Biblical Archaeology,' taking it a step forward and making it more inclusive and less laden by ideology" (Levy, 2010, p. 9). But while the term may be "Biblical Archaeology" in quotes, this remains far from archaeology based on a biblical foundation. What would archaeology defined this way look like?

In order to establish a biblical foundation for archaeology, a thorough theological study of the biblical concept of history and its significance for faith is in order. Issues that will be addressed from a biblical perspective include: (1) the nature of God's interaction in time and space; (2) the Bible as a historical foundation and framework; and (3) the relationship between faith and evidence. The next step will be to address (4) the new developments of modernism and postmodernism; the resulting role of archaeology and methodology; and finally (5) the current contributions of archaeology. The discussion will conclude by briefly referencing some of the popular notions of the interaction of archaeology and the Bible.

The Nature of God's Interaction in Time and Space

The measurement of time and the location of events in history have long been crucial in biblical study. Jewish (Talmud [B. Abodah Zarah 9a]; Demetrius, Eupolemus, Josephus, *Seder Olam Rabbah*) and Christian writers (Julius Africanus, Eusebius, Jerome) over the centuries have studied the genealogies of the Old Testament (OT) with the assumption that the chronological data contained provided a secure basis for placing such events as creation, the flood, the and patriarchal period in historical context (Merrill, 2003, pp. 117-18). Other historians of the Middle Ages (Orderic Vitalis) (Chibnall, 1980, p. 134), and later (Scalinger; Petavius) worked with a similar time frame as derived from the OT (Barr, 1985, pp. 181-82). The reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries studied these chronologies anew from the perspective of *sola scriptura* (Calvin, Carion/Melanchthon, Luther, Ussher). Melanchthon wrote, "God willed that history should be written for us by the fathers and prophets in the best order, and with the number of years carefully handed down…. This is the singular glory of the church, that nowhere else in the entire human race has an older series of reigns and times been found. Nor does any other

people have the number of years reckoned back so certainly" (Barr, 1990, p. 64). For thousands of years the

assumption was that the Bible contained an accurate history of the events it described.

In the past, general statements have been made about the biblical concept of time. Ernst Jenni (1962, p.

646) has stated that the OT has a "lack of a general concept for the dimension of time" for "the abstraction 'time'

belongs among the accomplishments of Greek culture." To this, Clark Pinnock (1988, p. 852) responds that

"although Hebrew had no word comparable to Gk. *chrónos*, this does not mean that Hebrew thought lacks a

concept of chronological time." The entire point by Oscar Cullmann was to demonstrate that the Biblical concept

of time was linear, whereas other ancient concepts were cyclical in nature. Although he may have slightly

overstated the case, when in fact there are some elements of cyclic thinking in the OT (Barr 1962, pp. 47-81, 139-

42), "the Bible views time as the limited succession of days in which human experience of the world flows"

(Pinnock, 1988, p. 853). What is evident from the beginning is that God not only reveals himself in time he acts in

time (Wright, 1952). It is significant that the first act of God in creation is to establish a demarcation of time for this

planet. He established the cycle of days and seasons by which time is reckoned (Genesis 1:3-5; 14) "and he

possesses the power to dissolve them according to his eternal purposes" (Isaiah 60:19-20; Buckwalter, 1996, p.

774). God's activity involves much more than the creation of time. He is the one who is said to control the affairs of

the world, who determines in advance the time for all nations (Daniel 2:21; Acts 17:26). The biblical concept of

time then involves a God who created, but is not limited by time (Psalm 90:4). He is designated in both the Old and

New Testaments as "the First and the Last" (Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12), the "beginning and the End" (Revelation

21:6), "the One who is, was and is to come" (Revelation 1:4, 8). Jesus is designated as existing prior to the

beginning, creator of all things, and one who sustains all things (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2-3). He

is eternal and Lord over time (Psalm 102:25-27; Is 40:28; Romans 1:20). Jesus Christ is "the same today, yesterday,

and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He is "the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End"

(Revelation 22:13). In this way chronological time is not static (Buckwalter, 1996, p. 774). Time is meaningful,

moving forward to the fulfillment of the plan of redemption. The whole of the OT looks forward to the coming of

the Messiah who would be Redeemer. The prophecies indicate the very time in when this hope would be fulfilled.

This is exemplified in the following statement: "But when the time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a

woman, under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). So too the terminology

"time of the end," the "end of the ages," "the last times" all indicate the temporal finality that comes prior to and with the second coming of Christ (Pfandl, 1992). Yet while "time is meaningful and forward moving" revealing "a progressive unveiling of God's redemptive plan for humanity, (Buckwalter, 1996, p. 774)." Scripture also emphasizes the importance of remembering what God has done. The term "remember" occurs 166 times in the Bible. This implies "that the God who performed the past mighty deeds, which are remembered, is the God who is present with his people as he or they remember those deeds" (Toon, 1997, p. 668). Scripture in this way is not simply an account of human activity; it is at its core the account of a loving and sovereign God who acts in time to create a perfect world, and, as a result of sin, now works ultimately to save his people from the constraints of death. The Biblical concept of time then is not merely theological or symbolic. Paul Hansen (1985, p. 1058) writes about the "deep grounding of faith in historical events" (Hansen 1985, p. 1058). The Biblical worldview clearly establishes that God's acts in the natural world are firmly anchored in real time as is evident in the chronological information used in Scripture to designate these events in history.

The New Testament (NT) writers refer extensively to the OT to historically establish the events of Christ's birth, life, and ministry as a fulfillment of long-range prophecy. Luke's prologue is a case in point for the NT, where the NT event is seen as the fulfillment of the OT (Martens, 1994, p. 333; Wright, 1952, p. 17). Jesus, too, refers to events in the history of Israel, from the creation, to the days of Noah, the Patriarchs, the prophets, and the Psalms. These are historical events that are taken at face value. Paul emphasizes the connection between event and history in this way to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 15:12-14, 17:

> Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, the Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain…. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

In these verses Paul clearly articulates the connection between the historical event of an actual physical resurrection and the belief that these things took place. For Paul the connection between the event and history is paramount to the entire Christian faith. This is not only true for the resurrection event, but for other events as well.

The Historical Foundation and Framework of the Bible

The massive amount of chronological data found in the OT was certainly meant to provide a historical framework for the events of Biblical history, indeed earth's history since the creation. For the purposes of this study we will focus primarily on the first millennium B.C. The Biblical chronology of the first millennium supplied the numbers of the various Hebrew kings of Israel and Judah. These dates were given in terms of length of reigns and synchronisms with the opposite kingdom (Judah/Israel; Shea, 2000, p. 245). The numbers, as stated above, were clearly accepted as historical and trustworthy by Jewish and Christian scholars for centuries and it is clear that they were provided by the Biblical writers for a reason. The chronology of the divided monarchy, with confirming synchronisms with Assyria and Egypt take us back 350 years to the beginning of the Divided monarchy. The campaign of Shishak to Judah in 926/25 BC (1 Kings 14:25; 2 Chronicles 12:2; Egyptian Shoshenq I), during the sixth year of Rehoboam, serves as a valid anchor for establishing the beginning of the Divided Monarchy in 931 BC (Thiele, 1965, p. 55; Kitchen, 1996, pp. 432-47). Solomon ruled for forty years prior to this, establishing his first year at 971 BC (1 Kings 11:42). David's rule is also dated at 40 years. The Enlightenment and the historical-critical method brought questions concerning these dates, and scholars increasingly found them to be schematic and artificial (cf. Ewald, 1876; 206-220; Wellhausen, 1875; Stade, 1889, pp. 88-96, 558-60; Smith, 1882). It should be pointed out that these are not schematic numbers, for the years of David are further broken down into seven years of rule at Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 2:11). As Edwin Thiele's (1944; 1951) subsequent work demonstrated together with the synchronisms of astronomically dated Assyrian chronology to 910 B.C. (Millard, 1994), there is increasing confidence and certainty for the chronology of the first millennium B.C. Although minor discussions continue over some individual dates and specific correlations, these do not significantly affect the whole (Oswalt, 1979; Galil, 1996; Dever, 2001, p. 162; Rainey, 2002, p. 547). There is a tight correlation between biblical and ancient Near Eastern chronological data for the first millennium. The chronological data found in the Bible then was interpreted by the Biblical writers and by exegetes for millennia as the basis for any reconstruction of Israel's history. It is the primary source that has provided both the basic outline and extensive details concerning Israel's past. Any historical discipline, including archaeology that is based on a Biblical foundation must come to terms with this reality.

Although the Bible contains within its historical framework from creation to its eschatological fulfillment tremendous detail concerning history, it by nature does not focus on a comprehensive history of all events. Many areas of interest to the historian or the scientist are not the primary focus of Scripture. For example, the account of the exodus gives neither the names of the Egyptian king or his daughter who rescued Moses. Simultaneously, other details, including the cities Pithom and Ramses, that they built are mentioned. In later books, the names of Egyptian (Shishak, Necho), Assyrian (Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon, Sennacherib, Essarhaddon), Babylonian (Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Marodach, Belshazzar), Persian (Ahasuerus [Xerxes], Cyrus, Darius) and Roman (Tiberias, Augustus) kings appear. The Bible is not always interested in the life ways or household details of life in ancient Israel – although it contains many allusions to Israelite society. It focuses rather on salvation history or God's acts through history. Were it to describe all there was to describe over the millennia of time it covers, we would be filling several Library of Congresses. But where the Bible does speak, it speaks authoritatively in matters of history and science, for "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine (teachings), for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). In this way, I would suggest that the Bible serves as not only the foundation but also as the framework upon which the disciplines of history, anthropology, archaeology, and other disciplines can build.

On the one hand, the Bible's worldview serves as the foundation by which we assess and measure the world and the universe around us. In addition, its chronological structure serves as a framework to study, fill in, and expand in areas that are not explicitly formulated or revealed in Scripture. Like the wooden frame of a house, supported by the foundation of its presuppositions and teachings, its chronological framework allows details to be filled in, be they the electrical wiring system, the insulation, the plumbing, that in the end provides a fuller picture of the overall framework. Each discipline contributes to this end and, in the final analysis, gives a fuller more complete structure for us to live by. History and archaeology in this way may provide additional details about the reigns of certain kings already mentioned in Scripture, by excavating the palaces that they built and the temples that they worshiped in. We can more fully understand the cultural milieu of the ancient Near Eastern world, further expanding our understanding of its people and nations.

The Biblical Relationship between Faith and Evidence

The Biblical concept of faith is thoroughly grounded in obedience to God's Word. God's Word, in some cases, is the only evidence required. Adam and Eve had a choice in the garden to either obey God's Word or to act on the serpent's contradiction of that Word (Genesis 3:1-15). Noah had no empirical evidence to assess God's Word that it would rain. He was undoubtedly scoffed at, but he believed in God's Word, acted on it by building the ark, and waited 120 years until the Word would be fulfilled (Genesis 9-10). Abram did not know where he was going when he left Ur and Haran to go to the place that God would show him, but he set forth in faith based on God's Word alone and it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Genesis 12:1-6). Likewise, it could not have made sense to Abraham to offer up Isaac his son after the promise, but he was obedient to God's Word (Genesis 22:1-14). This concept of faith is affirmed in Hebrews 11:1-2 where it states, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Bible teaches that God's Word is all the evidence required.

The Bible also refers to God's acts in history as evidence of his character. Evidence for God is revealed by His acts in human history (Hoffmeier, 2012). Walter Kaiser (1986, p. 67) states: "Without the exodus there is nothing to the claim repeated 125 times in the Old Testament, 'I am the Lord God who brought you up out of the land of bondage'." This statement refers back to the salvific act of God in saving his people. Walther Zimmerli (1982) similarly notes that the phrase in Ezekiel "and you (they) shall know that I am the Lord" usually refers in the context to an act of God. "It is not through speculation, but through an event that God makes himself known." In Malachi, God's statement, "I have loved you," is backed up by a long discourse on God's judgment against Israel's enemies (Malachi 1-2). Those events in history demonstrate his love. Paul's evidences that are given to the Athenians in Acts 17:16-34 appeal to their reason and to evidence that is known. Likewise, his discourse on the evidences of the resurrection in Acts 15 demonstrate that evidence is important for the believers of Corinth and those ministered to in Athens (Mare, 1968). This principle is reiterated by Jesus in his response to his accusers, "You search the Scriptures for in them you think they have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Later in the same context Jesus says, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings how will you believe in Me?" (John 5:46-47). Christ affirms that the writings of Moses testify to the authenticity of His Messiahship. But more than that, that belief in Moses' writings

are central in believing in Him. These are only a few examples of the self-authenticating nature of Scripture, which was basic to the *sola scriptura* principle of Protestant theology.

New Developments in Modernism and Postmodernism

The philosophy and consequent theological presuppositions of the Enlightenment brought serious questions concerning the history and sources of the Biblical narrative. The establishment of the historical-critical method, with its presuppositions of correlation, analogy, and criticism (Troeltsch, 1913), precluded supernatural interaction with the natural world, one-time events, and approached the Bible with the determined "methodological doubt" championed by Descartes (Scholder, 1966; Kraus, 1969, pp. 72-79). Walther Dietrich in his most recent book *The Early Monarchy in Israel* (2007, p. 102) summarizes the results of the first principle that of correlation:

> Statements about God are above historical evaluation – except as information about those who made these statements. In the modern age history must be understood and describes as *etsi deus non deratur* ('as though God did not exist'). From this perspective, the biblical narratives on Israel's first kings will not find it easy to gain the trust of the historian.

Dietrich goes on to explain why. The first problem is that God plays an active role. "He speaks to individual human beings" (Samuel and Solomon); "he gets personally involved in things on earth. He moves things along a certain path … allows a woman to get pregnant … grants wisdom to a king, his spirit results in courage … he personally defeats enemy armies and nations." Dietrich concludes, "What enlightened person can accept all these things as historical accounts?" (Dietrich, 2007: 102-103).

Direct divine interaction in human affairs is categorically denied. God's special revelation, creation, miracles (parting of the Red Sea, manna from heaven), the incarnation, the physical resurrection, and the second coming are outside the realm of the historian. The Lutheran NT theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1958) attempted to rescue the Bible from the presuppositions of modernism by demythologizing the text, but in doing so he categorically spiritualized a literal heaven and hell, or a physical resurrection stating, "These mythological conceptions of heaven and hell are no longer acceptable for modern men since for scientific thinking to speak of 'above' and 'below' in the universe has lost all meaning" (p. 20).

How can a Bible-believing person deal with this first assumption? First, it must be recognized that "the presupposition of the biblical writers that the supernatural and the miraculous are significant factors to be taken into account in their understanding and interpretation of history was by no means unique in the ancient world" (Miller, 1972: 16). This divine element is ubiquitous in ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian literature. In Egypt the king is born of the gods and nurtured by them as can be seen in the image of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri (Roehrig, et al. 2005). In the same dynasty, Amenhotep II asserts that "he himself [Amun-Re] caused him to appear as King upon the throne of the living…. He bestowed upon him a heritage forever, a kingship for all time" for in Egyptian campaign accounts the king is ordained to go forth in battle and conquer his enemies (Hasel, 1998, pp. 17-19, 36-37). Amun-Re is repeatedly depicted at Thebes handing the sickle-sword to the king of Egypt (Hall, 1986). He commands Ramses III, "Receive thou the sword that thou mayest smite the Asiatics" (Epigraphic Survey 1932, pp. 121, A, 3; B, 6). The same scene can be seen here on the top of the Merenptah stela where the king is commissioned by Amun to go forth in battle (Hasel, 1994, 2003; 2004; 2008). Few scholars doubt that the Egyptian kings went forth into battle and conquered lands and territories, even though the language in their accounts is replete with theocentric epitaphs. We find here a double standard, one that is placed upon the biblical writers that historians do not place on ancient texts (Yamauchi, 1994, pp. 27-28; Younger, 1990).

There is also a problem with the principle of analogy as defined by the historical-critical method. The principle of analogy assumes that we interpret the past on the basis of present experience. William Abraham has pointed out that the principle is too narrowly based if it is confined to my own personal experience. For one thing, there are too many events outside the realm of one individual's personal experience to limit knowledge to what only one knows, "therefore this principle must act within a larger context" (Abraham, 1982; in Long, 1994, pp. 125-27). In other words, to deny the supernatural is to close my mind to merely the material and disregard any other possibility of a greater reality beyond our world. This approach not only denies the plain assumptions of the Bible, but almost every other culture both ancient and modern. Dietrich (2007, p. 105) summarizes another assumption of critical scholarship:

> If we subject the biblical accounts ... to a rigorous historical critical analysis ... then their credibility as historical accounts grows even smaller…. If we discover that the Bible is not a collection of eyewitness accounts, or only to a very small degree, then the claim that it reports *how it actually occurred* suffers

greatly. Instead we seem to be faced with a conglomeration of texts that were developed over

centuries and that were finally – most would claim, decisively redacted half a millennium after the

events themselves occurred ... it is not at all clear that the reporting of historical facts was ever the

prime concern of those who wrote and handed down these texts.

Source criticism is employed to determine how the texts developed over time. The assumption is that the

Bible went through a lengthy process of editing and redaction, the final form of which is hundreds of years later

than what it reports and, therefore, may not reflect actual events at all. I have summarized elsewhere the

complexity of wide-ranging theories for the history of composition for the Davidic narratives spawned through

source, tradition-history, form, and redaction critical lenses over the last century (Hasel, 2012). The result has

produced such a myriad of hypotheses that some feel that "the number of editors and revisers has proliferated to

the point of absurdity" (Van Seters, 2009, p. 32). In the source critical debates of the earlier 20th century, Otto

Eisefeldt (1931; 1965, pp. 271-290) continued to defend the J and E sources of Wellhausen for Samuel but added

an earlier L source. Hermann Gunkel (1909-13, pp. 1348-54) placed the David narratives in Solomon's court,

followed by Hugo Gressmann (1991), who placed it back in David's time. Leonard Rost (1926, p. 105) tried to

demonstrate a thematic unity in these narratives and claimed that it was reported by a contemporary eyewitness

early in Solomon's reign. A. Lods (1948, pp. 358-62) promoted the "seer" and "Jabesh" sources, while A. R. S.

Kennedy (1905, pp. 13-20) divided 1 Samuel into four strands. Others based various sources on geographical

locales (Weiser 1962, pp. 819-30; Schunk, 1963; Herzberg, 1964). In the end, Bruce Birch (1976, p. 3) states that

"none of the various subdivisions of the material have been able to achieve widespread support." With the DtrH

hypothesis of Martin Noth a new direction emerged, yet with increasing complexity and without any clear

resolution. Noth, and others who followed, believed that the DtrH incorporated into his work the earlier sources in

the seventh century B.C. How and when this was done continues to be debated. The Göttingen school now divides

the DtrH into the DtrG, DtrP, and DtrN (Veijola, 1975; Dietrich, 2007, pp. 1-98). Frank Moore Cross, P. Kyle

McCarter, and others suggest a two-source Dtr[1] and Dtr[2] (McCarter, 1984). McCarter also adds a Prophetic History

(PH) prior to the DtrH (followed by Birch, 1976, p. 18, 20-21), while Anthony Campbell prefers the term Prophetic

Record (PR) (Campbell, 1986, pp. 70-71). Add the new hypothesis of I. Willi-Plein (1997; 2004) of the DHG

(*Davidshausgeschichte*), and it is little wonder that some lament the end of the DtrH altogether (Würthwein, 1994;

Westermann, 1994; Auld, 1998, pp. 120-26; Linville, 1998, pp. 46-73; Knauf, 2000). In regards to Samuel, one can

readily see that consensus is lacking among scholars on the date of these Biblical texts, their compositional history,

or the origin of various sources and strands. It is important to remember that these dynamic hypotheses of the

19th century are "constructions of modern scholarship" (Römer and Brettler, 2000, p. 417) and that they continue

to evolve and change. Recent postmodern revisionism proposes to re-date this entire history to the third and

second centuries B.C. and denies the existence of David and Solomon altogether (Davies 1992, p. 131; Lemche,

1993; Thompson, 1992; Pfoh, 2009, pp. 90-107), following the ultimate, logical conclusion in a trajectory that

earlier dismissed other periods of Biblical history. This trajectory through the past century has resulted in the

dismissal of one Biblical period after another. In the 1970s the Patriarchal period was rejected based on two books

by T. L. Thompson (1974) and John Van Seters (1975). In the 1980s the Exodus and Conquest accounts were

dismissed based on the presuppositions above (Miller 1977; Coote 1990; Dever 2003). In the 1990s the period of

the United Monarchy came under increasing attack as we will see below. In the end both diachronic and

synchronic approaches have struggled to provide an assured provenience for these texts in the ancient world. This

has led biblical scholars to turn increasingly to the archaeology of Israel for answers, but this, too, has led to

varying opinions and interpretations.

The Role of Archaeology and Methodology

In his most recent work, *The Biblical Saga of King David* (2009, pp. 53-73), the Biblical scholar John Van

Seters sets out to demonstrate that the David story is a late saga with little reference to the 10th century B.C. His

opening argument is the so-called lack of evidence for the United Monarchy in the archaeological record, following

exclusively the recent work of the Tel Aviv School and the Low Chronology advocated by Israel Finkelstein and

others. David Ussishkin (1980; 1990) and Finkelstein (1981; 1990) redate the Solomonic gates of Hazor, Megiddo,

and Gezer to the ninth century (but see the responses by Yadin, 1980; Dever, 1986; 1990; 1993; Younker, 1991).

What was once dated to Solomon now becomes Ahab's building activities. In recent years, Finkelstein (1996)

proposes a down-dating of all material culture by nearly a century by the wholesale reassignment of strata to later

periods. On what basis do they suggest their hypothesis? In the introduction to their popular book *David and

Solomon*, Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman (2006, p. 17) state, "The familiar stories about David and Solomon

based on early folk traditions, are the results of extensive reworking and editorial expansion during the four

centuries that followed David and Solomon's reigns ... they contain little reliable history." This is the second

principle outlined by Dietrich above. Yet, in the very next paragraph they write, "The first obvious challenge in

assessing the historical reliability of the David and Solomon stories is to determine the precise date of their reigns.

This must be based on evidence within the Bible ... we must rely –with due caution–on the chronological clues

preserved in the Deuteronomistic History." To begin their reconstruction of the reigns of David and Solomon,

Finkelstein and Silberman largely base their reconstruction on the selective, subjective choice of which texts *they*

decide are historical and which texts are not, with little detail concerning the compositional development of the

Biblical record. In fact, as Amihai Mazar (2007, p. 118) has pointed out:

> Many of the same scholars who deny the historicity of the United Monarchy do accept the historicity of
>
> the Northern Kingdom of Israel ruled by Omri and Ahab in the ninth century…. Yet the time lapse between
>
> the United Monarch and the Omride Dynasty is less than a century, while several centuries separate the
>
> ninth century from the supposed time when the biblical texts were composed, namely in the seventh
>
> century B.C.E.

> Finkelstein's (2005, p. 38) reasoning is that, "Accepting the historicity of one verse and rejecting another is

exactly the meaning of two centuries of biblical scholarship." But as summarized above, which part of the last 200

years of Biblical interpretation is Finkelstein choosing? This tautological approach leaves ambiguous the

relationship of data and interpretation.

Recognizing the need for sophistication in their approach to Biblical sources, Van Seters (2009), building

on the Low Chronology, has now published his monumental study "to construct a literary analysis that will more

clearly reflect this new understanding of Judah's social history." But this raises the question, is the new proposed

literary analysis of the Bible based on the archaeological evidence garnered as interpreted by adherents to the Low

Chronology, as Van Seters claims? Or is the archaeological data re-dated to accord with the *Sitz im Leben* and lack

of historicity assumed *a priori* for the stories of the biblical narrative? To put it differently, do assumptions about

the text drive archaeological interpretation, or does archaeological data determine the date of the texts? This

relationship is not altogether clear. Both sides of the debate over the 10th century claim that archaeology is the

driving force behind their reconstructions of ancient Israel.[1] Dever says (1997, p. 251), "I have made no reference to the biblical texts as evidence…. My evidence throughout has been archaeological. We *have* an Israelite state in the Iron IIA period." On the other hand, Finkelstein and Silberman (2006, p. 22) state, "In the following chapters we will present archaeological evidence to show that there was no united monarchy of Israel in the way that the Bible describes it." But how much of the argument of the Low Chronology is, in the end, based on actual archaeological data? How much is based on existing data simply reinterpreted or even ignored? Finally, how much is based on negative evidence, or the "absence of evidence"? In this essay I will primarily deal with the negative evidence argument for the time period of David, since other arguments for the Low Chronology have been addressed elsewhere (see discussions in Hasel, 2012).

"Absence of Evidence" Arguments and the Nature of the Archaeological Record

In their recent popular books *The Bible Unearthed* (2001) and *David and Solomon* (2006), Finkelstein and Silberman contend that the history of the United Monarchy must be revised because, in their assessment, there is "not the slightest evidence of any change in the landscape of Judah until the following century. The population remained low and the villages modest and few" (2006, p. 96). There is "no evidence for David's conquests" (2001, p. 131; 2006, pp. 96-97), "no sign of monumental architecture or important city in Jerusalem" (2001, p. 131; 2006, pp. 96-97), "no sign of grand scale building at Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer (2001, p. 131; 2006, pp. 96-97), and "no trace of written documents, inscriptions, or even signs of the kind of widespread literacy that would be necessary for a widespread monarchy" (2001, p. 142). In fact, "there is no sign of extensive literacy or writing in Judah until the end of the eighth century" (2006, p. 86). For Solomon the alleged copper mines at Tell el-Kheleifah "proved to be fantasy," for there was "no evidence for smelting activity at the site" (2006, p. 284). There is "no archaeological evidence whatsoever that the situation of north and south [the divided kingdom] grew out of earlier political unity–particularly one centered in the south" (2001, p. 158). The list goes on (see Frese and Levy, 2010, 198-99).

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[1] Dever says (1997, p. 251), "I have made no reference to the biblical texts as evidence…. My evidence throughout has been archaeological. We *have* an Israelite state in the Iron IIA period." On the other hand, Finkelstein and Silberman (2006, p. 22) state, "In the following chapters we will present archaeological evidence to show that there was no united monarchy of Israel in the way that the Bible describes it."

But, according to Jane M. Cahill (2003, p. 73), "Theories based on negative evidence should never be preferred to theories based on positive evidence. Stated another way, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." Historian David Hackette Fischer (1970, p. 62) maintains that such arguments are historical fallacies. "Evidence must always be affirmative. Negative evidence is a contradiction in terms–it is no evidence at all." There are perhaps five reasons why evidence of this nature is not readily at hand.

First, it must be recognized that the heartland of David and Solomon's kingdom, as described in Samuel and Kings, has been inaccessible to archaeologists for the past half century. The West Bank, with hundreds of sites, remains largely unexcavated, and the results of surveys only provide limited data. Those sites that have been excavated have only been excavated to a limited extent. Jerusalem remains an inhabited city with limited access due to housing, roads, and other structures (Millard 2008, pp. 194-8). It is estimated that nearly half of the Iron Age city is under the Temple Mount and is archaeologically unknown (Mazar, 2003, p. 91). One might compare similar situations at other ancient cities occupied in modern times, including Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon (Millard, 2008, pp. 196-8). After multiple seasons at Gezer in the 1960s and 70s and the renewed excavations in this decade, only about two percent of the site has been investigated for Iron IIA material (Ortiz, 2011). At Megiddo, more of the site was exposed by the early Chicago excavations, but less than five percent of the Iron Age site has been re-excavated by Tel Aviv University (Finkelstein, et al. 2000; 2006; Lehman and Killebrew, 2010, p. 14).

Second, of those sites that have been excavated, few are fully published. The final Chicago report of the Megiddo excavations pertaining to this crucial period has only now been published after a period of 70 years, and the interpretation of the data seriously undermines the conclusions and recent publications of the Tel Aviv excavations and the Low Chronology (Harrison, 2004). The conclusions that Jerusalem was wholly unoccupied, or at best an impoverished village, ignores the fact all the major excavators of Jerusalem–Kenyon (1967, p.p 31-62), Shiloh (1985, pp. 453-4), and now Eilat Mazar–concluded otherwise. Shiloh insisted that the stone-stepped structure found by Kenyon in the City of David represented monumental architecture and was constructed in the early Iron Age or earlier (Cahill, 2003, p. 76). In fact, "virtually every archaeologist to have excavated in the City of David claims to have found architecture and artifacts dating to these periods" (Cahill, 2003, p. 76; Cahill and Tarler, 1993, pp. 625-26; Cahill, 1998; 2004). Eilat Mazar (1996, 2006; 2014) in her current excavations in Jerusalem, has

also claimed to have found a monumental building that may have been the palace of David. The data supporting

these claims are still being processed and await final publication, yet these claims are already summarily being

dismissed by adherents of the Low Chronology as suspect, if not altogether false.

Third, the reason that some data elude the modern investigator is that there is massive destruction of

archaeological remains and structures over the centuries. We find what survives and what the ancients did not

need and left behind. What evidence of literacy should one expect when parchment and papyrus do not survive in

the climate of the central hill-country? Millard (2008, p. 198) points out that "Of about 120 kings known from a

dozen Iron Age states of the Levant, including Israel and Judah, at the most only 20 have left inscriptions that are

known today." In some cases, materials were carried away by invading armies, destroyed, or reused; there are

several ways that cultural and natural formation processes affect material remains (Schiffer, 1987). Erosion is also

a major factor on hill-country sites (Cahill 2003, p. 77). Then the question might also be asked, would one really

expect monumental inscriptions when Egypt was in decline at this time and Assyria had not even risen to

domination in the east (A. Mazar, 2007, pp. 134-35; 2003, p. 90).

Fourth, the ancients left us with texts dealing with what *they* were interested in. What external records

are we to expect of major campaigns, especially when they experienced defeats? These kinds of admissions are

exceedingly rare and in most cases not existent at all among ancient sources (Kitchen, 2003, p. 246). How often do

we actually find textual records that can pinpoint the cause of a given archaeological destruction or discontinuity

conclusively? What the adherents of the Low Chronology paradigm do is take one destruction, such as that

traditionally attributed to Shishak/Sheshonq I, and simply redate it to Hazael, in this way shifting the entire

sequence. But by what internal (textual) and external (archaeological) criteria are these decisions made? Are

destructions systematically analyzed (in order to ascertain what the specific correlates of destruction are in the

archaeological record) to justify this reassignment (Hasel, 1998, pp. 240-56; 2005; 2008, pp. 67-81)? Or is the shift

simply based on the *a priori* assumption that the architecture could not date to Solomon?

Finally, reports and interpretations of specific sites and their contribution to understanding the history of

the region remain tentative and may change with the next season of excavation. The triumphant tone of Philip R.

Davies and others who declared that David and his kingdom were mythical in 1992, based on the absence of

evidence for his name in the archaeological record, must now be modified by the discovery in 1993-94 at the site

of Tel Dan of an inscription mentioning the "house of David" (Biran and Naveh, 1993). For these reasons,

conclusions based on both the presence and lack of evidence must be tentative and provisional, avoiding sweeping

generalizations.

The Contributions of Archaeology

Despite some of these limitations that are inherent in the discipline, archaeology has been a tremendous

source of new information about the world of the Bible. The discipline can provide new ammunition against some

of the minimalist interpretations that seek to undermine Biblical history. Archaeological data is not used to "prove"

the Bible, for the Bible stands on its own authority as God's Word, but it can be a useful tool to provide new data

as a corrective to those interpretations. Here we should mention three specific contributions of the discipline.

Expands understanding. First, archaeology expands our understanding of the life ways of everyday people

living in Biblical times. If the Bible provides a foundation and framework, archaeology has the ability to fill in the

framework through its discovery of the ancient cities in which these people lived. The thousands of texts that have

been found can illuminate the languages they communicated in and as those languages are deciphered can give

new insights into the belief systems and values of nations and individuals in the ancient world (Pritchard, 1969;

Hallo, 1997-2000). In 2014 a most exciting collection of tablets from sites in southern Babylon were published,

documenting the everyday like of Judean exiles who were forced to leave Jerusalem and Judah at the time of

Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (Pearce and Wunsch, 2014). The tablets are dated to the reign of Nebuchadnazzar

and Nabonidus from a Āl-Yāhūdu, or the "town of Judea." They recount the names of these Judeans who, in the

first generation, receive Babylonian names and then later their descendants are given Judean names. These tablets

will be studied for years to come as give insight for the first time into the everyday life of those like Daniel and

later descendants like Esther who were deported and forced to make a new life in the land of Babylonia and

Persia.

The past thirty years have dramatically illuminated the Philistines (Dothan, 1982; Dothan and Dothan,

1992; Killebrew and Lehman, 2013). We have now excavated their temples, houses, palaces, and cities. We have

analyzed their beautiful and unique Bichrome pottery, their advanced technology in metals, and we have

discovered texts that give us five generations of kings (Gitin et al., 1997). The Biblical cities of Ashkelon, Ekron,

Gath, Gaza, and Ashdod, no longer are abstract conceptions, but real places that have revealed their secrets for us

to study and learn from. The excavation of these cities has changed the way we look at the Biblical world and our perceptions. The Philistines are no longer a barbarian, warring tribe that merely caused havoc for Israel. They are a sophisticated, cultured, architecturally and technologically advanced civilization that exerted a different kind of influence than perhaps previously imagined. We could mention here the cities of Babylon, Nineveh, Susa, Persepolis, Hattusha, Thebes, and Jerusalem - all capitals of the ancient world that have yielded up their secrets (Westenholz, 1998). The texts and monuments allow us to compare their religious beliefs with the concepts of the Bible and we are able to compare and contrast these ideas with the realities on the ground.

Contextualizes. Second, archaeology can contextualize our understanding of Biblical ideas that are often difficult to understand in our modern setting. When David says in Psalm 110:1-2: "The LORD says to my Lord; Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet," we may have difficulty understanding this statement. Archaeology has produced the footstools of kings, particularly king Tutankhamun, who when seated upon his throne literally placed his feet upon the "Nine Bows," the traditional enemies of Egypt (Eaton-Kraus, 2008). The Nine Bows were even placed in his sandals to that he could trample them underfoot, a scene often depicted on temple walls as well (Hasel, 1998, p. 49, fig. 5). When Jesus tells the parable of the ten virgins, we can now hold in our hands a lamp from his time and touch, feel, and visualize what he and his listeners had in mind 2,000 years ago.

Document individuals in their cultural context. Third, archaeology is able to discover through ancient documents the existence of specific people that are mentioned in the Bible and illuminate their lives within the context of their culture. In 1993 archaeologists at Tel Dan in northern Israel uncovered a remarkable find. Outside the gate to the city, a basalt stone was found reused in a wall. When the volunteer turned the stone over they noticed a written inscription. The excavator and a linguist later published the text, which mentioned a victory by the Aramean King Hazael who boasts of defeating the "house of David" and the "house of Israel." The inscription is dated on the basis of the writing to 840 B.C. The significance of the inscription is that it mentions for the first time the name David. It is used here in the context of referring to "the house of David," the dynastic name for Judah also used in the Bible (2 Kings 12:26; 14:8; 17:21). In fact, of the twenty foreign kings mentioned in the Bible from Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, and Persia, seventeen have been documented through archaeological discoveries. From the time of Ahab and Omri, nine of the 14 Hebrew kings appear in Assyrian inscriptions and many others are

attested in personal seals and impressions. In fact, today over 80 people from the Old and New Testament have

been documented in extra-biblical sources. These include kings, generals, military officers, scribes (like Baruch, the

scribe of Jeremiah), and others (Fant and Reddish, 2008).

Corrective to Reassess Claims and Hypotheses

Finally, archaeological fieldwork can provide new data that allows us to reassess previous claims based on

faulty interpretations and the absence of evidence. Here, I will discuss briefly our recent excavations at Khirbet

Qeiyafa and the contribution they make concerning the early history of Judah and the United Monarchy (Garfinkel

and Ganor, 2009; Garfinkel, Ganor and Hasel, 2014). The summary below has been published elsewhere (for full

references, see Hasel, 2012).

Surveys and reconstructing settlement patterns. One of the main arguments of Finkelstein and the Tel

Aviv school is that surface surveys conducted in the last 30 years show that Judah was sparsely settled. Khirbet

Qeiyafa was surveyed by Yehuda Dagan (2009), who identified occupation phases from the Iron I and Iron IIB, but

no settlement at all from the Iron IIA. However, the excavations revealed an opposite picture: no finds at all from

the Iron I or Iron IIB, but a massive fortified city from the Iron IIA period. Excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa indicate

that the surveys completely overlooked the large fortified Iron IIA city at the site and that Iron Age pottery

collected from the site surface should not be dated by centuries, but only to larger chronological units, such as Late

Bronze or Iron Age. The reconstructed settlement patterns based on surveys have no solid base. How many more

sites have been missed in the heartland of Judah by surveys?

Fortifications and social organization. One main issue in the debate concerning the early Iron Age IIA is

whether it was a centralized urban society or an unfortified rural tribal community. Traditional scholarship ascribes

the building of fortified cities like Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer to the time of King Solomon. In the same way, the

fortifications of various other sites have been related to the tenth century B.C. As stated above, advocates of the

Low Chronology, however, date the same building activities to the Ahab and the Omride Dynasty. Khirbet Qeiyafa,

with its massive fortification system built with an estimated 100,000 tons of stone, two major gates, and with its

ceramic assemblage dating to the early Iron IIA, demonstrates that the social organization of early Iron IIA Judah

was already an urban, centralized society. If this is the case for Khirbet Qeiyafa, then there are also implications for

seeing fortified cities later in the tenth century.

City planning in the Iron Age. The planning of Khirbet Qeiyafa includes the casemate city wall and a belt of houses abutting the casemates, incorporating them as part of the construction. This is a typical feature of urban planning in Judean cities of the ninth and eighth centuries BC and is known in the cities of Beersheba, Tell Beit Mirsim, Tell en-Nasbeh, and Tel Beth-Shemesh (Fig. 1). Khirbet Qeiyafa is the earliest known example of this city plan and indicates that this pattern had already been developed in the very early Iron IIA period.

The pottery repertoire and typology. As Khirbet Qeiyafa was abandoned suddenly large quantities of restorable Iron Age IIA pottery vessels are found on the floors of each excavated room. This rich assemblage is in contrast to the other published assemblages of this period, which usually include a small number of sherds, but not complete vessels. The Khirbet Qeiyafa painted pottery known as "Ashdod Ware" enables us to subdivide this pottery tradition into two groups, earlier (Ashdod I) and later (Ashdod II). This reveals that a one period site can contribute much more than tell sites to our understanding of a specific short period of time. At the end of the project, when hundreds of restorable vessels will be available, Khirbet Qeiyafa will become a type site for early tenth century BC pottery.

New radiocarbon dates for Judah. Adherents of the Low Chronology have claimed strong support from radiocarbon data gathered at several sites in the north. New radiocarbon dates from Khirbet Qeiyafa, in the heart of Judah, challenge these assumptions and support early urbanism and fortification in Judah in the early 10th century B.C.E. (Garfinkel, et al., 2012).

Preparation and consumption of food. Khirbet Qeiyafa is different from the nearby Philistine centers of Tel Miqne-Ekron and Tell es-Safi-Gath in two main aspects. First, after nearly 30 percent of the site was excavated, pig bones were entirely absent at Khirbet Qeiyafa, while they were largely consumed by the Philistine population (Kehati, 2009; Lev-Tov, 2000). At Tel Miqne-Ekron pig bones increase from fourteen percent of all faunal remains in Stratum VII, to seventeen percent in Stratum VI, and twenty-six percent in Stratum V, indicating that "pork is an important component of the Philistine diet" (Gitin, 2010, p. 337; Lev-Tov, 2006, pp. 211-13). At Beth Shemesh, another Judean site to the north of Khirbet Qeiyafa, only 0.20 percent of the bones are pig, indicating a differentiation between these sites and neighboring Philistine cities (Bunimotitz and Lederman, 2009, pp. 123-4). Second, pottery baking trays which were found at Khirbet Qeiyafa are unknown at Tel Miqne and Tell es-Safi.

Archaeological data at Khirbet Qeiyafa demonstrates that two different populations coexisted in the Iron Age

Shephelah, and that the Qeiyafa population is clearly not Philistine.

Writing and literacy. The most prominent find from Khirbet Qeiyafa is an ostracon, a text written with ink

on a broken pottery sherd (Misgav, Garfinkel , and Ganor, 2009). While most texts from this time period are rather

short, the Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracon is a five-line inscription with nearly seventy letters. Many of the inscriptions

from this period lack provenance or stratigraphic context (Rollston, 2010), yet the Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracon was

found directly on the floor of a house and is securely dated to the early tenth century B.C. For these reasons it is of

tremendous importance for understanding the development of *both* script and language in the Iron Age.

The script of the ostracon is in the Canaanite tradition (so-called "Proto-Canaanite"). According to the

studies of Frank Moore Cross, this script came out of use during the middle of the 11th century B.C., but the Khirbet

Qeiyafa ostracon demonstrates that this script was used until the beginning of the tenth century B.C. A comparison

study of the script on other inscriptions, like the 'Izbet Sartah ostracon and metal arrowheads, which were

traditionally dated to the 12th – 11th centuries B.C., now enable us to date these items to the late 11th - early 10th

centuries B.C. The language of the ostracon is now under dispute. If we accept the reading *'l t's* (אל תעש= do not do)

in the beginning of the first line, then the language is Hebrew. Other possible languages could be Canaanite,

Phoenician, Philistine, or an unknown Semitic dialect. According to the expedition interpretation of the site, its

location, architecture, and diet, it was part of the kingdom of Judah. Thus, the language is more likely very early

Hebrew.

The publication of the ostracon allows scholars from around the world to reexamine it and to improve its

reading and meaning. One article has already been published by Emile Peuch (2010) and others have announced

that they are currently preparing new publications (Christopher Rollston, Gershon Galil, and Andre Lemairé).

Undoubtedly, the importance of this ostracon will generate many articles in years to come. We can only hope that

these studies will contribute to a better understanding of this rather enigmatic text.

As Gary A. Rendsburg (2010) has observed, "Taken together, the Tel Zayit abecedary, the Khirbet Qeiyafa

inscription and the Gezer calendar demonstrate that writing was well-established in 10th-century Israel–certainly

sufficiently so for many of the works later incorporated into the Hebrew Bible to have been composed at this time"

(p. 89). The existence of writing at such an early stage of the Iron Age is significant, because it implies that

historical data could have been documented and passed on from the early tenth century B.C. until the biblical

narrative was finally formulated. It also indicates that the paucity of evidence for writing is less secure than

previously thought.

Historical geography: Is Khirbet Qeiyafa biblical Shaʻarayim?

Another aspect relating to Khirbet Qeiyafa is its ancient name. Do we have enough solid data for the

complicated task of site identification? Various suggestions had been proposed both in scientific and popular

publications. The current expedition accepted the name Shaʻarayim, which appears three times in the biblical

tradition. Of these, in two cases it is mentioned in the context of the Elah Valley and in two cases in association

with King David. In addition, Khirbet Qeiyafa has two city gates, and the term Shaʻaryaim means "two gates" in

Hebrew.

The early kingdom of Judah. According to the biblical narrative, King David first ruled from Hebron for seven

years. Later he conquered Jerusalem and moved there to establish a new capital. The archaeological picture of Jerusalem in

the 10th century B.C. is obscure for the reasons outlined above, and fundamentally different suggestions and

interpretations have been raised. Hebron is also a difficult site to excavate, and the few expeditions who worked there did

not find any meaningful remains from the early tenth century B.C. So far there is no clear published archaeological data

regarding the period of King David in the two major cities of his kingdom. The absence of evidence has raised serious

questions concerning the nature of the political structure in the tenth century B.C. The mainstream view points to a single,

powerful, centralized authority in Jerusalem that controlled the entire country, while Finkelstein and others suggest various

local, autonomous forms of organization.

The Khirbet Qeiyafa excavations have completely altered this situation. Now we have a fortified city in

Judah located within a one-day walk from Jerusalem and a one-day walk from Hebron. The distance between these

three cities corresponds well to the expected distance between central cities in a kingdom. Khirbet Qeiyafa might

have functioned as the third most important city in the early kingdom of Judah. Its strategic importance is not only

due to its relative distance from Jerusalem and Hebron but also its location on the border between Judah and

Philistia, opposite Tell es-Safi (Gath), a very large Philistine city during this specific period. Khirbet Qeiyafa, with its

position on the main road leading from the Coastal Plain into the hill country, functioned as a "gate city" to the

kingdom; a check-point on the western border of Judah. In a similar way, Khirbet ed-Dawwara probably functioned

as a border city on the northeastern border of the kingdom in the same period (Finkelstein 1990). While Jerusalem

and Hebron remain problematic due to many of the issues discussed above, Khirbet Qeiyafa provides significant

new data for the early kingdom of Judah.

Conclusions and Implications

Given the limitations of archaeology, we must remain cautious in asserting categorical claims about the

Bible. What we can do is present the evidence at hand in the most objective way possible and recognize that it

does not provide the final word on the subject. The Bible's own internal self- authentication, in the end must

provide the foundation and framework for all the illustrative, illuminating aspects that archaeology may provide.

As God's inspired Word, the Bible stands above human disciplines and critique. As inappropriate as it is to try to

"prove" the Bible, it is as inappropriate to attempt to "disprove" the Bible as Finkelstein and others have claimed.

As archaeologists, we must remind ourselves of two things. First, we must humbly recognize that believers

throughout the world for millennia lived and died for their faith in the Scriptures, relying on what God had

revealed to them through His Word and what they experienced in Christ as the *raison d'etre* of their existence.

Second, we must continually submit our facts and interpretations to the authority of Scripture. It is through the

lens of Scripture that we began the quest into the ancient Near East and in the future, "with each new discovery,

the fascinating nexus between *realia* and text bring to life the context of Scripture" (Monson, 2004, p. 317).

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