FILIP ČAPEK

ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY, AND IDENTITY FORMATION OF ANCIENT ISRAEL

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and Identity Formation
of Ancient Israel**

Filip Čapek

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We are able to see that biblical interpretation, historical investigations, and archaeological research can successfully dialogue even in the absence of consensus about the "facts."
—Andrew Vaughn and Ann Killebrew

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ABBREVIATIONS

AASOR	Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research
ABC	Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles (Grayson)
ADPV	Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins
AfO	Altorientalische Forschungen
AHI	Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions—Corpus and Concordance (Davies)
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (Pritchard)
ANES	Ancient Near Eastern Studies
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ArOr	Archiv orientální
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
BA	The Biblical Archaeologist
BAR	British Archaeological Reports/Biblical Archaeology Review
BASOR	Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research
BN	Biblische Notizen
BVB	Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
COS	The Context of Scripture (Hallo—Younger)
CV	Communio viatorum
DB	Darius' Besitun Inscription (Schmitt)
EA	El-Amarna Correspondence (Rainey)
ESHM	European Seminar in Historical Methodology
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HBS	Herders Biblische Studien
HeBAI	Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel
HS	Hebrew Studies
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
IJRHSC	International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies
JAEI	Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections
JAJSup	Journal of Ancient Judaism—Supplements
JANES	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society
JANEH	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History
JANER	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions
JAS	Journal of Archaeological Studies

JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JHS	Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JNSL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS	The Journal of Theological Studies
JSOT	Journal for Studies of the Old Testament
KUSATU	Kleine Untersuchngen zur Sprache des Alten Testaments und seiner Umwelt
LAS	Leipziger Altorientalistische Studien
NEA	Near Eastern Archaeology
NEASB	Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin
NSAJR	New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and Its Religion
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OJA	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
ORA	Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
OTS	Old Testament Series
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
RB	Revue Biblique
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SCJ	Stone-Campbell Journal
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
SR	Studies in Religion
TA	Tel Aviv
TAD	Textbook of Aramaic Documents (Porten—Yardeni)
UF	Ugaritische Forschungen
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WO	Die Welt des Orients
WUB	Welt und Umwelt der Bibel
ZAW	Zeitschrift für Altestestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins

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Prague, January 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

Neither archaeologists nor biblical scholars have access to the whole truth,
due not only to the limits of reliable information but also to their own inevitable subjectivity.
History writing is about the present, as well the past.
—William Dever

The origins of ancient Israel are shrouded in mystery, with many—often unforeseen—variables which influence the decision-making processes used in methods of reconstructing its early days and even scholars' understanding of the nature of the object of this search itself. In this respect, there are different assignments for archaeologists, historians, biblical scholars, and theologians—although their efforts often overlap and complement each other. Essentially, each of the professions must focus on three areas of inquiry and their relationship to each other: firstly, non-written material culture; secondly, literature of the ancient Levant; and thirdly, biblical texts, which present an important and very extensive resource for examining the past.

The first area of inquiry involves inspecting, analysing, and evaluating material culture, discovering specific pieces of information, and proposing interpretations. Unlike in the case of biblical testimony, which mostly comes from a later period of time and expresses the specific perspectives and desires of its later authors or editors, it seems that with material culture we basically stand on firm ground. However, even here we will encounter countless pitfalls, as this book will often demonstrate, which will make it impossible to find a simple solution to the mystery of Israel's creation and the formation of its identity. This search will lead us to more questions and interpretive crossroads than answers. What was there at the beginning; what was Israel? Was it a late eleventh or early tenth-century BCE state in the north, near the ancient city of el-Jib (the biblical Gibeon)? Or should the origins be sought more to the south, in the region of the Shephelah? There, the tenth century BCE saw the formation of a political entity in the valleys of the Judaean Mountains which also extended to their southwest, that some identify as the Kingdom of Judah even then. What is its relation to Jerusalem? And if Israel was created even earlier, at the end of the Late Bronze Age in the thirteenth century BCE, as suggested by the Merneptah Stele (COS 2.6), how was Israel then related to the later city-states and states in the region? What is the relation between

Late Bronze Age city-states, such as Jerusalem (presumably), and Iron Age territorial states? Is there a connection to be found? Or maybe Israel was not created until much later. Perhaps it became an independent political entity in the ninth century BCE, with the Kingdom of Judah being brought to life even later in connection with Neo-Assyrian influence over the Southern Levant in the second half of the eighth century BCE. As will be shown throughout this book, solutions to the mystery of Israel's creation greatly depend upon defining this object of study. This issue will be a topic of discussion, as well as the issue of the transformations of the name "Israel," which was not used to describe only one single entity, as it had numerous bearers during the more than five hundred years of history under discussion.

The second area of inquiry is tied to ancient non-biblical texts. In this area, knowledge is not obtained from the evidence of human activity in architecture, farming, or cult. There are no ramparts, walls, palaces, temples, religious items, or small objects of material culture for daily use. Rather, this area of inquiry centres upon written records, and those describing the origins of Israel are especially scarce. The domain of epigraphers, the literature of Israel's early reconstructed history, is only fragmentary, with more complete documents first appearing in the ninth century BCE. These documents shed their own light on the origins of Israel and, secondarily, on the Kingdom of Judah.

The third area concerns Old Testament texts. Separating these texts from non-biblical textual evidence is crucial, due to the nature of the perspective(s) presented and advocated by biblical materials in their own specific historical contexts. Biblical texts are distinct entities which should be separately investigated and analysed, before engaging these in direct confrontations with material culture and non-biblical textual evidence. In terms of synchronicity, the existence of a direct link between a historical event and a biblical text referring to it is both an ideal—and often unprovable—reality, and a trap set for laypeople and scholars alike who neglect critical approaches to biblical interpretation. The biblical textual corpus is similar to the ancient tell. It is an entity with multiple layers that must be identified within their specific

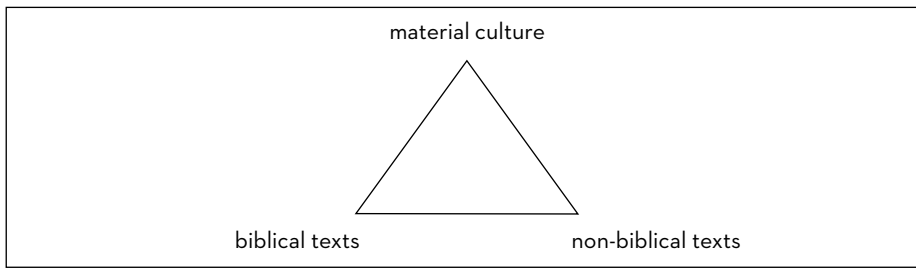

Fig. 1. The interrelationship between the three variables of interpretation

times and places; only afterwards can the data acquired be confronted with the other variables of interpretation—i.e., material culture and non-biblical texts.

Continuity and discontinuity are two words which play a key role in the study of Israel's history. Firstly, they aptly describe all reconstructions of the course of history. These are characterised by observable links and connections, but also turns and shifts due to puzzling data, as well as missing evidence for various events or even entire periods. Furthermore, continuity and discontinuity will be shown to be tools of interpretation used in the formation of ancient Israelite identity. Constituted mainly in retrospect, this identity was formed in various ways: by establishing an independent concept of the history of Israel and the neighbouring nations, justifying the origins of Israel, taking root in a specific geographic area, and often by very strict religious and cultural self-determination. This identity was construed against the flow of historical continuity, and historical "facts" are treated accordingly. Very simply put, the biblical discussions concerning Israelite identity are not about the exact manner in which events took place, but about the way they should have taken place to make sense to a very specific group of text authors and, consequently, also readers. In the process of identity formation everything is subordinated to this assignment. This includes seemingly objective and unquestionable facts—such as chronological lists which ostensibly catalogue the reigns of kings, lists of territories that they controlled, and also genealogical overviews (Oeming 1990).

Biblical texts place a characteristic emphasis on the formative role of the past in the formation of the identity of ancient Israel. The past is uniquely adapted and documented in this literature to carry weight and relevance for the present day (cf. Sláma 2017). Past events provide varying perspectives on the present, which shows a primary reason why the biblical writers included the material that they did in these great Old Testament compositions. This includes material such as the distant origin stories which have no apparent historical value, the patriarchal traditions, the exodus from Egypt, the occupation and settlement of Canaan, and even the monumental Deuteronomistic History. Finally, this explains the monotheising tendency present within biblical texts, though monotheism was not a primary feature of Israel's religion for the majority of the history depicted throughout these biblical texts (cf. Herzog 1999; Rollston 2003; Heiser 2008; Mastin 2010; Stern 2010; Stavrakopoulou and Barton 2010; Sugimoto 2014; van Oorschot and Witte 2017; Becking 2020).

In all the founding and historicising myths and texts linked to ancient Israel, it is necessary to differentiate between the idealised depiction of history they present and the actual reconstructible historical reality—examples of where this is necessary include events such as the formation of the United

Monarchy or the mass exodus and mass return of the Judeans to the land in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods. Confronting these two aspects, both of which are of considerable importance and have crucial roles to play, shows that the biblical depictions of these events function to serve the purposes of their authors' in their own present times.

When considering Israel and its sacred scriptures, the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, it is immediately surprising that so much space is dedicated to the origins, the travels, the nomadic patriarchs, the utopian cult area on Mount Sinai, the period of the Judges, and other such topics which appear to be outside of the area of interest and influence of the nascent Israel. However, modern research has convincingly proven that all these topics are construed through exilic and postexilic perspectives. That is, they are seen through the lens of authors writing from the sixth to fourth century BCE; a reflection which moves from the oldest to the newest and current. This chronological depiction of history explains the present and justifies its connections to everything that came before. The Creation of the world, the promise of land, the establishment of an independent kingdom, the cult of the Jerusalem Temple, and the choosing of the People are all described based on the following rule: the greater the importance of an early period to a later one, the more detailed its description.

Anticipating Israel's later settling and existence in a specific land, the wandering of the patriarchs occurs in an important geographical context, and so its toponymical logic cannot be considered random. There is a similar intention to the cult, which eventually finds its true and—according to biblical authors—only legitimate place in the Jerusalem Temple, after numerous temporary homes. A special position is also assigned to the topic of the kingdom; firstly, the idealised depiction of one in a golden age; and later, a kingdom that is more real and consequently subject to deterioration. Likewise, the land, cult, and political existence of Israel are also central topics and points in a specific time and place in the history of nascent Judaism, which is why they are discussed at such length.

As described by Rolf Rendtorff (2001, 297–301), professor of Old Testament at the University of Heidelberg, the past explains the present, and the present gives weight to the past. The best way to understand the significance of the present is to retell the past for the sake of the present and the continuity of a specific community—in this case, Israel (cf. Deut 6:20; 26:5ff; Josh 4:6–8; 24:2–15; Judg 6:7–11). It is no coincidence that Rendtorff's approach—building on the legacy of Gerhard von Rad (1901–71; see also Oeming 2001), another Heidelberg scholar and one of the most important Old Testament scholars in twentieth-century Europe—reminds one of Jan Assmann's (2000; 2003) concept of mnemohistory. The latter author, an Egyptologist and professor from the same university town, bases his study of collective memory also on von

Rad's (1947; 1961) studies of the Book of Deuteronomy and Old Testament historiography. Paraphrasing Assmann (1992; 2000), biblical texts may be said to contain a connective structure, which lends itself to accepting and forming an identity, and to establishing a connective memory. Part of this connective memory is differentiation (*Entdifferenzierung* in German), in which a distinction is made between the binding past and the present, which then reinforces counter-present recollection (ibid., 2000).

Drawing a line between a historical event (i.e., when, if at all, "it" happened) and a reference to it, no matter how transformed, is one of the principal tasks of not just biblical studies, but also archaeology and history. The interdisciplinary dialogue between these branches also examines the reference itself regarding its historical, religious, and ideological background (i.e., when it was written). There is another element investigated: the reference's function in the community of ancient audiences and readers (i.e., why and how it was written in this, and not any other, manner). In summary, critical research examines two basic historical contexts: firstly, the item to which reference is made; and secondly, the position from which reference is made. If we do not differentiate between the two contexts, we are at risk of plunging into (neo)fundamentalism and a superficial or naïve reading of not only biblical but ancient texts in general.

Frequently considered by many to be very ancient, the Old Testament Book of Hosea may serve as an example for this. In truth, the book itself is highly unlikely to feature any more comprehensive texts that were written in the second half of the eighth century BCE—i.e., directly in the time linked to the eponymous prophet. The book is not an on-site report on what the prophet said and did, but a text with later origins (secondary context), which retrospectively refers to the "original" period (primary context), by retrojecting present opinions into the past; the factual analysis of such views may then be used to trace the reasons for the writing of the book (the "why"). A graphic representation of these references is given below.

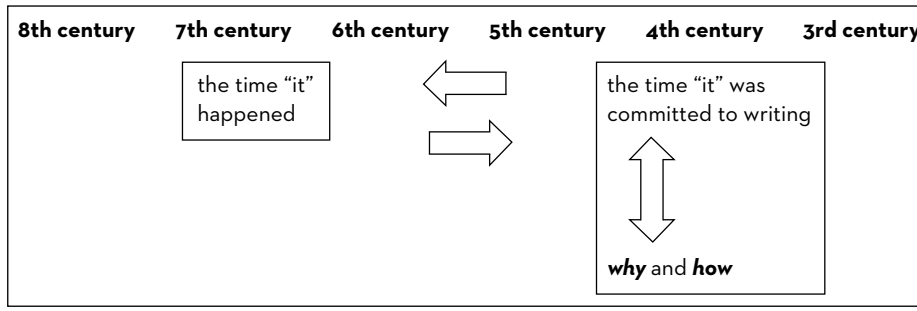

Fig. 2. The relationship between references and their contexts

Consequently, navigating ancient texts is a very complex matter, requiring erudition and competence among scholars and interpreters. This is further complicated by working with material culture and texts outside the Bible—but cognate in nature—which makes the whole enterprise even more daunting.

The chapters in this book are ordered according to a major segment of the chronology of historical periods in the Southern Levant. The default chronology used in the majority of the book is the modified conventional chronology, as introduced and further refined for the Iron Age I and IIA by Amihai Mazar and Christopher Ramsey (2008; for a reaction, see Finkelstein and Piasetzky 2010; Finkelstein 2013; for Vieweger's criticism, see 2006, 54–56, cf. also Boaretto et al. 2019). Instances where a different chronology is used by some scholars will be brought to the reader's attention, including what this means for the interpretation of the related topic.

Tab. 1. High, low, and modified conventional chronologies (overview)

	High chronology	**Low chronology**	**Modified conventional chronology (MCC)**
Late Bronze Age I IIA IIB (III)	1550–1400 BCE 1400–1300 BCE 1300–1250 BCE	1550–1400 BCE 1400–1300 BCE 1300–1130/1071 BCE	1550–1400 BCE 1400–1300 BCE 1300–1200 BCE
Iron Age I	1250–1000 BCE	1130/1071–920/900 BCE	1200/1140–970 BCE (964–944 BCE)
Iron Age IIA	1000–930 BCE	920/900–845 BCE	970–840/830 BCE
Iron Age IIB	930–721 BCE	845–722 BCE	840/830–732/701 BCE
Iron Age IIC	721–586 BCE	722–586 BCE	732/701–605/586 BCE
Neo-Babylonian Period	587/586–539 BCE	587/586–539 BCE	587/586–539 BCE
Persian Period I II	539–450 BCE 450–333 BCE	539–450 BCE 450–333 BCE	539–450 BCE 450–333 BCE

This book attempts to provide a critical reading of Israel's history, which was written by a highly diverse collective of Old Testament "authors." There will be neither a harmonising reading, which takes the picture painted by texts as a given fact, nor a reading complementing biblical texts with "missing" archaeological and epigraphic data, to prevent any tension between biblical texts and history; more options will be offered to the reader, often as theories and hypotheses about alternate ways to understand biblical narratives on historical as well as theological levels. In connection with this search

for the identity of ancient Israel, this effort to comprehend these old texts may be described as an analysis of memory traces, either visible, hidden, or somewhere between these two positions. As a biblical scholar cooperating with archaeologists and historians, the author of this book is an expert on biblical texts and theologian first, and an archaeologist second. Consequently, he may view the texts in a less "biblicist" manner than his fellow archaeologists and historians, but on the other hand, he is certain to have less knowledge of, and experience in, the archaeological field.

The following pages have a dual purpose: To reintroduce the basic state of research in recent decades, and secondly, the book aims to draw the reader's attention to new hypotheses and reconstructions based on the interdisciplinary dialogue between biblical studies, archaeology and history. These newly proposed interpretations are founded upon ongoing archaeological research in Israel, in which scholars and students from the Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University take part, in cooperation with Tel Aviv University and the Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology.

2. ORIGINS (LATE BRONZE AGE TO LATE IRON AGE I)

If historical (verifiable) truth should be our only concern,
the history of ancient Israel should not only be very short
(written on ten pages or so), but it would also be utterly boring.
—Hans Barstad

Attempts to determine the very origins of Israel are destined to fail if we expect to discover a clearly defined state with borders, evidence of centralised administration, and existing literature. These origins are often sought in the period between the Late Bronze Age IIB (1300–1200 BCE) and Iron Age I (1200–970 BCE). However, none of these three aspects have been identified conclusively throughout these periods. There is no founding charter, nor any clear indication that "something" emerged in the southern Canaan area that could be termed *Israel*. The word itself exists courtesy of the late thirteenth-century BCE Merneptah Stele (see COS 2.6), but there are various interpretive pitfalls when attempting to select an entity corresponding to that name which is identifiable in terms of territory and politics. There is an even older occurrence of the designation *Israel* on a fragment of a statue base, now housed in Berlin; the fragment dates to the time of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE), the father of Merneptah (1213–1203 BCE), but no certain conclusions can be drawn from reading it (see discussion in Görg 2001; Wood 2005; Hoffmeier 2007; van der Veen, Theis, and Görg 2010). Do we seek a nation, a specific state, or something else entirely? The hieroglyphic name *Israel* from the stele itself is a word for a group of people whose region cannot be directly and unequivocally determined; as such, it seems to originate more from the context of localising Late Bronze Age Canaanite city-states based on the Amarna correspondence (Mynářová 2007). In this early period, a connection of the name *Israel* with a state, a state-like entity, or a Canaanite city-state may be ruled out with a high degree of probability (cf. Frevel 2016, 57).

Seeking Israel at the end of the Late Bronze Age means reconstructing, or rather constructing, an identity in the time when Canaanite city-states were collapsing throughout the area. Differing from region to region in severity, the collapse happened gradually and was caused by various circumstances. The least likely explanation—which is probably impossible to be considered a determining factor—is that there is an "Israelite" trace, as depicted in bib-

lical texts written centuries later, mainly the Book of Joshua. Championed by the first generations of archaeologists, this interpretation continues to be advocated by some contemporary archaeologists, historians, and theologians of a fundamentalist and conservative persuasion, who do not differentiate the ideological basis of biblical texts from the historical, with the latter working for the former (for more, see chapter I). It is not the aim of this book to confirm such a setting in history; this possibility has already been convincingly disproven by critical research, which is why it should suffice to refer the reader to the literature included in the bibliography.

A lively debate is taking place as to the reasons for the gradual collapse of Canaanite city-states, and the role of specialised scientific disciplines continues to grow: archaeozoology, palynology, dendroarchaeology, climate archaeology, as well as the use of radiocarbon method, which all further hone the accuracy the dating of the period under discussion (Langgut, Gadot, and Porat 2013; Cline 2014; Langgut et al. 2015; Regev et al. 2017). There are a number of factors which contributed to this collapse each of which impacted multiple key aspects of these societies, the most common of which are the following:

It follows that this collapse was not a one-off event, but a longer process which occurred throughout the late thirteenth to second half of the twelfth century BCE. Moreover, some sites were not destroyed, and so the settlement system did not collapse everywhere (cf. Finkelstein 2013; Gadot 2017; Dever 2003; 2020); other sites were resettled quickly after the destruction; while yet others were temporarily abandoned (e.g., Lachish VII and VI). Selected destructions dates are presented in the following table.

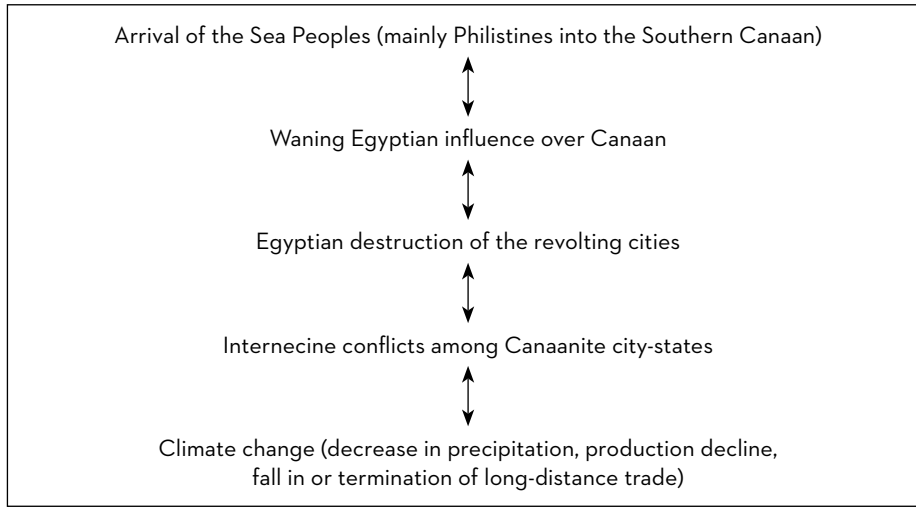

Fig. 3. Factors contributing to the Late Bronze Age city-state system collapse

Tab. 2. City-state destructions that are dated to the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age I

Site	Time of destruction
Azekah S2–5b/T2–3b	ca. 1140 BCE
Aphek X	ca. 1230 BCE
Ashdod XIV	ca. 1200 BCE
Beth-shean VII	sometime after 1150 BCE
Beth-shemesh IVB (or 6)	ca. 1200 BCE
Bethel 1	ca. 1200 BCE
Hazor XII	sometime after 1250 BCE
Lachish VII Lachish VI	ca. the first half of the twelfth century BCE ca. 1130 BCE
Megiddo VIIB Megiddo VIIA	second half of the thirteenth century BCE second half of the twelfth century BCE
Gezer XV	ca. 1200 BCE
Tell Balata (Shechem) X	ca. 1200 BCE (possibly 1150 BCE)
Beit Mirsim C	late thirteenth century BCE
Timnah / Tel Batash VI	ca. 1200 BCE

The end of Canaanite city-states—or the majority of these—was a key development. This becomes most apparent when comparing total city areas in the Bronze Age and the subsequent settlement in the Iron Age I and early Iron Age IIA. The main shift concerns the architecture, since the monumental elements typical of the Bronze Age vanish almost entirely. The evidence includes the absence of massive fortification walls or their significant reduction (see, e.g., Gezer XV and Tel Zayit IV), and there are apparent changes in pottery as well. However, despite the provable population decline and the documented destruction of numerous sites, the area of southern Canaan did not remain uninhabited. These developments were regionally determined: some locations were more affected by the decline in population and settlements than others (Frevel 2016, 68–70). In certain areas, such as the Philistine Pentapolis on the Coastal Plain and on the borders of the western Shephelah, the city-state system survived, only under a different local hegemon (see below). Still, an overall urban shrinkage is apparent and well documented. Tel Arad, built in the Bronze Age on nine hectares of land, was reduced to a fort of a mere half hectare in the Iron Age. Similar trends are observable in Megiddo and Hazor, where the original areas of the tells and the adjoining settlements shift from double (e.g., Hazor with eighty hectares) to single digits.

What happened in southern Canaan after the collapse of city-states in the Late Bronze Age? This question, which is closely linked to the search for Israel's origins, can be divided into three queries. The first and second focus

on examining notional pre-histories; without them, we cannot talk about the origins of Israel and Judah as two independent and, in certain periods, intimately connected political entities. The third query will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. The queries are as follows:

1. What was the general situation in the area of southern Canaan after the collapse of the city-state system (2.1)?
2. In what way was the area settled, and what was its social organisation (2.2)?
3. When and how did Israel and Judah first appear (3)?

2.1 IRON AGE I DEVELOPMENTS

The end of the city-state system in the Late Bronze Age brought about major developments in terms of settlement, administration, social relations, and agriculture. Viewed through a slightly simplifying "textbook" lens, the period was typified by the disappearance of cities (urban shrinkage) and a reduction in city populations (deurbanisation), while rural settlements and villages grew and developed. An intensive transition to agriculture, pastoral farming, and local barter trade also characterised the period. At the turn of the Iron Age I and Iron Age IIA, this trend gradually changed in two ways: sites that saw a decline in urban culture were reurbanised, and entirely new settlements were established.

The Iron Age I settlement transformation is linked to a shift in agriculture, moving from surplus to self-sufficient (subsistence) agriculture. Long-distance trading involving strategic commodities as well as luxury items which was characteristic of the Late Bronze Age ceased or occurred in a limited capacity, as evidenced by the pottery assemblages discovered (cf. Gadot, Lipschits, and Gross 2014). The morphology of these assemblages changed to simpler pottery types which were intended almost exclusively for everyday use. Some types of pottery vanished completely, and decorativeness (use of decor and colours) was minimal. However, such a dramatic disruption of the urban settlement was not seen in such localities as Kinneret in the

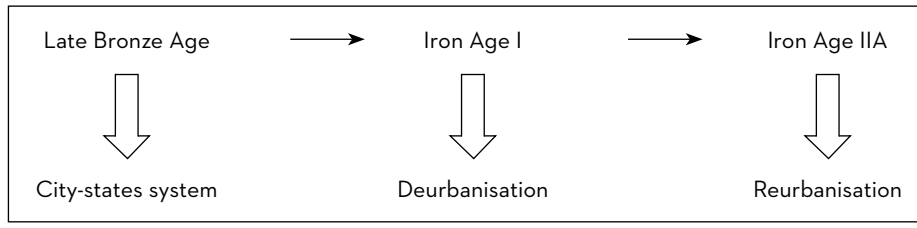

Fig. 4. Urbanisation changes from the Late Bronze Age to Iron Age IIA

area of the Galilee, Megiddo and Yokneam in the Jezreel Valley, and, to the southwest, Beth-shean and Tel Rehov (see below).

2.1.1 NORTHERN HIGHLANDS

Starting in the south, in the territory above Jerusalem, and extending to the Jezreel Valley, the area of the northern highlands is likely to have been controlled by the city-state of Shechem (*Tell Balata*; cf. EA 254 and EA 289), and it saw a settlement increase in the Iron Age I. The number of settlements exceeds that of the Late Bronze Age many times over, since the indigenous seminomadic population mixed with the Canaanite urban population who were arriving from lowland areas affected by the city-state collapse. There was also a third (and possibly fourth) group co-creating a new compound ethnic population in the northern highlands: *Apiru* is the name given to the group of migrants of varying origins recorded as early as the Amarna documents (for more, see EA 285–290), while in fourteenth- and thirteenth-century BCE Egyptian texts there is also mention of *Shasu* (the name means "the travelling" or "shepherds"), although as this group is sometimes also referred to as *Apiru*.

The sedentarisation (of seminomadic groups) and resedenterisation of the population coming from Canaanite city areas brought about a shift in the way of life and forms of subsistence. The region was typified by smaller rural settlements of up to one hectare, almost half of which were founded on previously uninhabited sites (Frevel 2016, 83); these localities had one settlement phase and then vanished again. Somewhat larger settlements, created mainly for strategic reasons near water sources, were the rudiments of key cities of the Kingdom of Israel in the ninth century BCE (e.g., Taanach, Samaria, and Tirzah). The only documented northern location that might have been an administrative centre in the Iron Age I is Shiloh, uncovered in the 1980s. Its destruction dates to 1050 BCE (Finkelstein, Bunimovitz, and Lederman 1993; Finkelstein 2020c; cf. Dever 2003).

When observing the developments in the northern highlands, we must keep in mind that most of the area observed is situated on the West Bank. That is, a location where recent decades have seen minimal standard archaeological research with proper institutional backing (Finkelstein and Na'aman 1994; Zertal 2000–2008). The information at our disposal is therefore limited and so partial findings are continuously reinterpreted and old excavation reports are perused, without any new data becoming available. The only place where the ^{14}C absolute dating method has been used is Shiloh and Stratum V therein (dating to the second half of the eleventh century BCE; see above). Other localities have been dated using pottery that shows a strong continuity with the Bronze Age which makes exact dating difficult. This brings into play another question: what is the relationship between Egypt's withdrawal

from Canaan and the destruction and later reemergence of the local urban culture (Schipper 2012)? In contemporary studies, localities have tended to be revisited in an interpretative sense, reconsidered, with their significance re-evaluated. The authors of some of these more recent papers (e.g., Gadot 2017) claim that the urbanisation of the highlands was greater than has previously been suggested, and so it was also more in line with the settlement trend of the preceding periods.

In the Iron Age I, subsistence agriculture was used in the northern highlands, dependent on the local production. Rural settlements have characteristic houses with four rooms (or sections) divided according to their respective functions. The self-sufficiency of the settlements is corroborated by the higher number of silos discovered in the villages; the numerous silos constructed outside buildings contrast with the significantly lower number of these structures in the Bronze Age, at which time centralised storage was used. The volume of produce stored proves "that these are self-sufficient agricultural villages where the uncertainties of rural life—drought, noxious pests, poor yields—would have necessitated large-scale storage facilities" (Dever 2003, 115).

Corn and other agricultural produce was stored in reinforced containers or collared rim jars (henceforth CRJ), which, along with cooking jars, are sometimes interpreted as evidence typical of Proto-Israelite or Israelite culture (Faust 2012, 230–54). These containers are smaller in comparison with those from the Bronze Age The reason for this difference is functional, not ethnic. Smaller volume allowed for easier manipulation and met the needs of the specific settlements; these were understandably much lower in line with the population size (cf. Pfoh 2009) as compared to the central storehouses of Canaanite cities, which gathered produce from the wider surroundings.

In the Iron Age I, the northern highlands were a region where the various ways of life of diverse southern Canaanite groups intersected. The mechanisms triggering change included the collapse of the city-state system at the end of the Late Bronze Age and the resulting search for more convenient and safer places to live. Referring to the northern highlands, some scholars use the phrase *melting pot* (Dever 2010), in which the participating groups become a new entity with, putatively, new specific characteristics (see above) that may be termed *Israelite* or *Proto-Israelite*. However, the fact that these shared aspects are proven to show continuity with Canaanite culture speaks against such an identification. The evidence—including texts that would clearly demonstrate the genesis of a unique new ethnic group or an embryonic political formation, endogenous or exogenous, named *Israel* at the turn of the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I—is unconvincing or outright lacking (this idea is advocated in, e.g., Redford 1992; Hasel 1994; 2003; Miller 2004; Dever 2010; also cf. chapter 1).

2.1.2 SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS AND SHEPHELAH

The area of the southern highlands, which comprises the Judaean Mountains, and the Shephelah which is located to the west and southwest, paint a rather different demographic picture. The mountains show a trend similar to that of the northern highlands: compared to the Late Bronze Age, more new settlements were created after the collapse of the city-state system when the area was mostly inhabited by migrating shepherds, though not as many as north of Jerusalem (see 2.1.1). South of Jerusalem, there was no significant increase in population (Sergi 2017b). However, there was a different and highly complex settlement situation in the Shephelah. The older theory which claimed that the Shephelah was practically uninhabited and that "the countryside was almost completely deserted" (Finkelstein 1996) in the Iron Age I, is now in stark contrast with the most recent research findings in numerous localities (see table below).

Estimates of populations which have been acquired from recent or ongoing archaeological campaigns in several sites in the area (Tel Azekah, Lachish, Tel Burna, Tel Zayit, Khirbet Qeiyafa, Yarmuth, Tel Batash, Beth-shemesh, Tel Gezer, and others) show that the most important process "in the entire region of Shephelah is the continuous founding and refounding of local centers at the very same sites from the Middle Bronze Age II to the Iron Age II" (Koch 2017b, 183). Situated at the meeting points of several ancient cultures, the individual localities in the Shephelah also underwent very different developments. Consequently, the model demonstrable elsewhere (urbanisation—deurbanisation—reurbanisation) applies only in a limited capacity here (cf. Sergi and Koch 2023).

The events at the turn of the Late Bronze Age and early Iron Age I are sometimes described, rather schematically, as the creation of a power vacuum (a similar theory is used for the late seventh century BCE in a largely identical area; see 6.1). It is likely that no such thing ever happened. Granted, Egypt's influence in southern Canaan had grown weaker, but very soon after, or immediately, Philistia became the new hegemon over the area of the Coastal Plain and on the western borders of the Shephelah, particularly around the entrances to the Sorek and Elah Valleys (for discussion see Maeir 2023). The exact determination of the cultural and power interactions is linked to the dating, which is hotly debated (see, e.g., Webster et al. 2017). One can also assume that the waning influence of the twentieth Egyptian dynasty strengthened the ambitions of the local Canaanite city-states, which started vying for power. Comprising the destruction of numerous settlements by unknown actors, the events of the time may be compared to uncoordinated movements on a chess board; the pieces used break the "rules of the game," so some predictable events do not occur, while other, unexpected ones do take place

instead. Some archaeologists (e.g., Bunimovitz and Lederman 2017) have likened the events in the Shephelah to swinging on a swing: a cycle in which the influence of one culture was gradually replaced by a series of newly arriving and originating cultures.

Regional developments did not only involve cities—some of which were abandoned, while others were rebuilt after destruction, and still others gained influence as local hegemons (especially Ekron and Gath)—but also the countryside. Unlike in the more sparsely populated Judaean Mountains, in the late Iron Age I there are dozens of villages documented in the Shephelah (Bunimovitz and Lederman 2008), which formed the economic hinterlands around cities. The amount of documented built-up area is considerable, as demonstrated in the following table outlining the estimated total population, which is significantly higher than that of Jerusalem.

Tab. 3. Estimated extent of built-up area and total population in the Iron Age I (according to Lehmann 2003)

Region	Built-up area in the Iron Age I (hectares)	Estimated total population
Shephelah	39.9	5,985–11,970
Southern highlands (south of Jerusalem)	18.1	2,715–5,430
Area north of Jerusalem (including Jerusalem)	7.9	1,185–2,370
Total	65.9	

The specific feature of the region is the presence of Philistine culture, which is partially adopted by the late-Canaanite population. Though this process also works in reverse. Interpreting the mutual influence between these two populations is one of the key aspects in determining possible ethnic developments and defining the creation of new political entities (see 3.2).

In similar fashion to the northern highlands, one may claim that the area of the southern highlands was predominately inhabited by the late-Canaanite population, which had the greatest influence on the material culture, evident from its considerable continuity. The shifts in pottery were especially functional (volume changes) and economical (a decrease in the luxurious types). The situation was more complex in the transition area between the Shephelah and the Coastal Plain: there, the indigenous population—in cities and the countryside—was confronted with a new ethnic group, the Philistines. However, even here, the most important characteristic of the area is the continuity with the earlier traditions of Canaanite culture and the presence of some traditions adopted from Egypt, especially concerning small objects (including scarabs, amulets, and jewellery) and pottery (Ben Dor Evian 2011; 2017). Consequently,

it is impossible to find specific ethnic features that could be termed Israelite or Proto-Israelite in this area in the context of the eleventh century BCE.

2.2 IRON AGE I SOCIAL ORGANISATION

The population pattern allows one to attempt to reconstruct the organisation of society. There was no central administration in the highlands area; Shiloh is the only place that could be considered an administrative centre. In the late Iron Age I, the highlands population was more of a multifaceted and highly diverse unit oriented on immediate and specific life necessities than, sociologically speaking, a homogenous community (cf. Frevel 2016, 80). In their efforts to depict the society in a more specific manner, numerous reconstructions (e.g., Halpern 1981; Brooks 2005) lean on biblical texts, especially the Book of Judges; however, the book comes from a much later time and presents a paradigmatically ideal, romanticised picture of the origins, rather than a reliable historical description. The same caveat applies to the claim that society was egalitarian, documented by simple unadorned pottery and the syntax of house architecture (esp. Faust 2012; 2015; contra Pfoh 2009; Berlejung 2010). Highland settlements and villages were small and inhabited by several families, forming tribes led by elders. It is likely that other hierarchic structures, characteristic of a more complex social organisation, did not develop until the turn of the Iron Ages I and IIA, in relation to reurbanisation.

The situation is different in two types of areas in the Shephelah: mainly in the immediate vicinity of late-Canaanite cities, which did not collapse or were briefly abandoned and then resettled; and around Philistine cities. Constant developments—especially the eastward expansion of Philistine cities into the Shephelah, but also their temporary withdrawal due to intercity competition (Ekron versus Gath in particular)—brought about complex changes that, in terms of ethnic identification, are difficult to interpret clearly based on material culture analysis (Lipschits and Maeir 2017). The model of synekism is sometimes used for the Shephelah (cf. Soja 2008): rural settlements create support for the cities, which in turn offer the rural population opportunities for trade, work, and protection from danger (Faust and Katz 2011; Bunimovitz 1998; contra Koch 2017b).

2.3 SUMMARY—WHEN AND HOW ISRAEL AND JUDAH FIRST EMERGED?

The above description of the Iron Age I in southern Canaan offers a brief overview of multiple processes which took place during the collapse of the city-state system and thereafter, at the end of the twelfth and during the

eleventh centuries BCE. Concerning the search for the origins of Israel and Judah as specific political entities, it can be argued that there is no reliable data to support the identification of these states as a single whole or separate units. Connecting the rural population in the highlands to the Israel of the Merneptah Stele, the historical continuity theory is legitimate, but remains speculative (Frevel 2016, 89; for a defence of the theory, see Hasel 1994; 2003).

The same applies to the supposedly oldest occurrence of the name *Israel* in biblical texts—the Song of Deborah in the Book of Judges (see Judg 5:2ff)—which is likely to have originated in the ninth or eighth centuries BCE, at the time of the Omrides (Knauf and Guillaume 2016, 98). The text establishes an identity or ethnicity retrospectively, using a tribal and "genealogical roofing" (ibid.) from the time when the northern Kingdom of Israel already existed, but also from later exilic and postexilic times—i.e., from the sixth to fourth century BCE. There can be no doubt that the book underwent a complex editing process, but searching it for historically accurate information on the very origins of Israel in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age I is a highly disputable endeavour. As depicted in biblical texts, the origins of Israel are a "collage of distinct images, not all from the same setting or date" (Fleming 2013, 270). According to one such notion, peculiar but understandable in respect to establishing the ancient identity of Israel (see the basic trajectory: nomad → herder → settled farmer → tribal leader → king), "the Israelite writers imagine their forebears to have lived differently from themselves" (ibid. 271). Generally, as described in the texts, the origins of Israel are largely a retrospective construct, and must be treated as such (cf. Frevel 2016, 91).

The Iron Age I is a period during which late-Canaanite culture continued to develop in a strong continuity with Late Bronze Age traditions. The most crucial developments did not concern customs, cult, or ethnic transformations; rather, they related to the socioeconomic realm. The changes were functional answers to impulses that were both political (city-state system collapse) and environmental (decrease in precipitation, droughts etc.), which is clear from archaeological materials (including pottery, settlements, and storage methods). Signs of transformations, which can be considered political in nature, did not appear until the end of the period—i.e., at the moment of transition to the Iron Age IIA. A primary substrate, the Iron Age I promised the future existence of new political entities (cf. Cline 2024) that would be established gradually and—most importantly—independently, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter. Without the Iron Age I, the new processes of the Iron Age IIA would have never taken place.

3. THE DIFFICULT TENTH CENTURY (LATE IRON AGE I TO IRON AGE IIA)

Archaeology is partly the discovery of the treasures of the past, partly the meticulous work of the scientific analyst, partly the exercise of the creative imagination.
—Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn

The period termed the Iron Age IIA (970–840/830 BCE, according to the modified conventional chronology) is one of the most debated eras in relation to Israel's history. Almost two centuries of the Iron Age I were followed in southern Canaan by a new phase of urban settlement (reurbanisation) and a significant increase in the area settled; this applied mainly to the region of the northern highlands (although cf. Gadot 2017) and, with a caveat, its southern part (for a description of Jerusalem and Hebron, see 3.2.3). However, the trend described is more complicated and cannot be generalised to the whole locality. Contrary to the population decrease or temporary abandonment of cities in most areas, there is archaeological evidence supporting the continuity of urban culture in Galilee, the Jezreel Valley (for "New Canaan"; see Finkelstein 2013), the Coastal Plain settled by the Philistines, and in some late-Canaanite settlements in the western Shephelah (Panitz-Cohen, and Mullins 2016; Sergi and Kleiman 2018). The development of inland cities, which were probably rural in nature for most of the Iron Age I, is linked to the renewal of long-distance trading, a growing barter trade, and more extensive agriculture. According to demographic calculations, the total population increases (Dagan 1992; Ofer 1993; Finkelstein 1988; Lehmann 2003), and so does the area settled.

3.1 CLOSELY WATCHED CHRONOLOGY

In accordance with biblical chronology (also termed high or conventional chronology), past research used southern Canaan in the late Iron Age I and the first half of the Iron Age IIA as a setting for the "United Monarchy," with Jerusalem as the capital; this period signified the "golden age" of Israel as a territorial state. At its peak, Israel stretched from the Sinai Peninsula in the south to Lebanon, possibly as far as the Euphrates River (cf. 2 Sam. 8). Generally, it can be argued that, until the 1970s, biblical texts supported

archaeological work and vice versa. From the 1980s, the historicity of the United Monarchy as a political entity documentable using archaeology has been cast into doubt, especially when using the high chronology for reconstruction. A full discussion of the issues within the debate over chronology would provide enough material for a stand-alone book (for a summary, see Handy 1997; Frevel 2016), which is why only basic context will be given here, as well as some lesser-known realities from the history of research.

Here in particular the concept of "Solomonic archaeology" needs to be revised, as it is based on intuitive speculations and unverified hypotheses. This concept was first elaborated not by an archaeologist in Israel, but by the Australian scholar Gregory J. Wightman. The impulse for change came from the results of renewed excavations in Lachish in 1973, during which a team led by David Ussishkin from Tel Aviv University newly dated the six-chambered gates in Stratum IV to the ninth century BCE, ruling out their "Solomonic" origins (cf. Ussishkin 2004a). Wightman (1985) then described the development at length in his extensive dissertation at the University of Sydney. In this and several later studies, the author uses a remarkably detailed pottery analysis to propose a more exact dating of Hazor X/IX: specifically, as an extension of Stratum XI, including the chamber gate from a later time, the ninth century BCE. For Samaria, the author suggested dating the second construction phase to the time of Ahab—i.e., the same period as Hazor X/IX. As for Gezer (Field III, Stratum 6), Wightman made reference to 1 Kings 16:24 when dating the extension of the south wing of the outer wall, including the six-chambered gate, also to the ninth century BCE. Therefore, specific strata in all three sites were re-dated to almost a century later (cf. Wightman 1990).

The fourth locality, Megiddo, is a peculiar case. There, the author distinguished three phases: VB (960–950 BCE), IVB (late tenth century BCE), and IVA (mid-ninth century BCE). According to Wightman, Megiddo was only a small fortress in the VB phase, extended by the construction of Palace 6000. In the IVB phase, the west administrative wing was constructed, as was a two-chambered wall further west of the new wing, and there was also an overall extension, with older buildings enclosed by new ones. The phase was also said to have seen the destruction of Megiddo linked with Shoshenq I (the biblical Shishak, 946–924 BCE), supported by a fragment of the pharaoh's victory stele found near Palace 6000 (although it was not found in a clear stratigraphic context). Massive fortification walls and the six-chambered gate linked to them architectonically were constructed in the IVA phase—i.e., the Omride dynasty period in the second half of the ninth century BCE.

The gradual shift in the perception of the United Monarchy was crucially influenced by linking and confronting the archaeological sites discussed above with the biblical text of 1 Kgs 9:16, which claims that Solomon built Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. Wightman (1990) elaborated the "low chronol-

ogy" (ibid., 19) not because he doubted the existence of the United Monarchy, which he considered a historical fact, but based on pottery analysis, which he used to propose a change in the dating of the stratigraphic sequence. The historicity is not disputed; the argument concerns attributing construction activities linked with Solomon and the mid-tenth century BCE to a later period and different rulers of the already separate entities of Israel and Judah. Though Solomon is ruled out as the main instigator of the monumental construction efforts, biblical narratives still carry weight in the author's eyes; the only change involves attributing the building activities to a specific ruler. Politically, Wightman associates Gezer with Judah and links the wall and gate construction with Asa (912–871 BCE), or even with Jehoshaphat (870–846 BCE). Unlike the understandable attribution of Samaria, Hazor, and Megiddo to the Omride dynasty, the author ignores the possibility of Gezer being part of the northern kingdom, since he puts his faith in the biblical text regarding the borders of the existing kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

The revision of the concept of Solomonic archaeology and low chronology, which stems from it, was predictably criticised by scholars such as Dever (1990), but even by Israel Finkelstein, the man who would later champion the very same chronology. Considering Wightman's conclusions to be insufficient and misleading, Finkelstein (1990) instead argued that individual pottery phases cannot be attributed to the rulers of Israel, since this leads interpretation down the rabbit hole of ambiguity. Finkelstein added that the methodology is flawed if there are doubts about the historical reliability of biblical texts regarding Solomon (1 Kgs 9:16), while the text is elsewhere tied uncritically to a specific stratigraphic sequence. This methodological flaw is only exacerbated by the dating "evidenced" by biblical texts (Samaria) being used to legitimise the putative chronological shift in other localities (Megiddo, Gezer, and Hazor). In Finkelstein's view, Wightman relied too heavily on archaeological evidence in Samaria, which caused him to misunderstand the biblical text; while in Gezer and other sites, the opposite happened—a biased interpretation of the historical source led to a misinterpretation of archaeological data (Finkelstein 1990, 117).

Despite these reservations, which carry traces of professional rivalry, Wightman must be considered the first proponent of low chronology, a postulate with a far-reaching impact on notions of Israel and Judah's origins in the Iron Ages I and IIA. Originally based on pottery analysis, low chronology would be later corroborated in many aspects and refined using the radiocarbon method, which would determine an absolute time horizon. In terms of the northern kingdom, assigning the strata to the ninth century BCE is considered a consensus of sorts; even Finkelstein, originally a dissenter, still uses this consensus in his work to this day (for discussion see Boaretto 2019). The contributions of the new postulate are no less valuable even though, over

the years, the historical reconstructions proposed by Wightman proved to be inaccurate, his reading of biblical texts biased, selective, and sometimes almost naïve. The debate among the supporters of the high, low, and modified chronologies continues, and it will be described in more detail below.

3.2 LESS UNITED, LESS VISIBLE?

If there was no United Monarchy in the region under discussion in the Iron Age IIA, then what was there in its place? From the outset, it must be noted that presenting the birth of the Kingdom of Judah and the northern Kingdom of Israel is a highly demanding task, and that, in this regard, the tenth century BCE is indeed a difficult century, as stated in the title of this chapter. The following subchapters will introduce three reconstructions of the nascent Judah and Israel in the Iron Age IIA: the first concerns the area of Shephelah and three localities within it, whose interactions can be used to note processes leading to the ethnogenetic developments on the borders between late-Canaanite and Philistine localities (3.2.1); the second focuses on Israel as a possible polity in the area of Gibeon and Bethel in the northern highlands (3.2.2); and the third, which is in many aspects opposed to the second, involves Jerusalem and the land of Benjamin in the north (3.2.3).

3.2.1 WESTERN BORDER PROCESSES—SOREK AND ELAH VALLEYS (SHEPHELAH REGION)

The western Shephelah and three localities within it constitute an area that can serve to document the highly complex process by which new ethnic and political realities were established. Specifically, the three areas are Khirbet Qeiyafa in the Elah Valley and the two cities Beth-shemesh and Tel Batash which are located to the north of the first locality in the Sorek Valley. Located within kilometres of each other, the three sites are associated geographically and also in terms of their cultural, religious, and political evolution. This evolution has inspired a notion, championed by many who base their claims on biblical texts and their harmonisation with the available material culture, that the three cities were Judean settlements at the turn of the Iron Ages I and IIA. According to this theory, the sites themselves evidence the existence of Judah as a state provable in accordance with traditional biblical chronology. However, the matter is much more complex, as will be explained presently.

The following line of reasoning will start with localities uncovered later and then move to sites where archaeological research started earlier; its aim is to examine the degree of connection between the areas, their mutual fea-

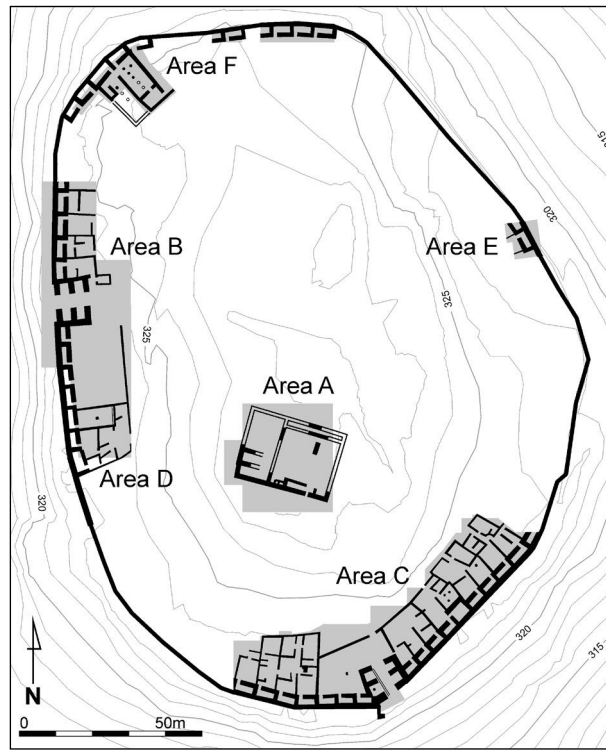

Fig. 5. Topographic plan of Khirbet Qeiyafa (courtesy of Khirbet Qeiyafa Excavation)

tures, and their demonstrable discrepancies. Firstly, there will be an examination of excavation reports, prepared by the campaign directors: whether finished (Tel Batash) or still in the process of publication (Khirbet Qeiyafa and Beth-shemesh). In conclusion, these localities will be discussed jointly, with emphasis on the origins of early Judah as a territorial state separate from Israel. This distinction is made even though numerous scholars still do not differentiate between the two entities, or they consider everything "Israelite" without further categorisation. However, in this historical period, such an interpretation is unjustified if the focus is on Judah and the south (cf. chapters V and VI).

3.2.1.1 KHIRBET QEIYAFA: THE FIRST TRACE OF JUDAH?

3.2.1.1.1 LOCATION, GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT, AND IDENTIFICATION

Khirbet Qeiyafa is situated 328 metres above sea level, on the right bank of the Elah Valley which connects the Judaean Mountains with the Coastal Plain. At 2.3 hectares, it is a relatively small settlement surrounded by 700 metres of

fortification walls. Research at this site was carried out in 2007–13 under the direction of Yosef Garfinkel from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Saar Ganor from the Israel Antiquities Authority. Over seven seasons, one of which also included Czech representatives, a total of six areas (A–F) were uncovered, with the most important being Area C and the connected Areas B and D. Two four-chambered gates in Areas B and C were a crucial discovery. The gates are followed by chamber walls which run along the entire length of the settlement.

Due to the discovery of the second gate, the campaign directors identified the locality as the biblical area of Shaaraim (meaning in Hebrew "gates"), referred to in 1 Sam 17:52, Josh 15:36, and 1 Chr 4:31–32. The first of the texts gives relatively exact coordinates for the site: doubtlessly in the Elah Valley, and likely between Sokoh, Azekah, and Ephes-dammim on one side, and the Philistine cities of Gath and Ekron on the other.

3.2.1.1.2 SETTLEMENT—URBAN PLANNING CONCEPT

According to Garfinkel and Ganor, the nature of the settlement resembles that of other localities in ninth-century BCE Judah. Individual buildings directly adjacent to chamber walls are documented in Beer-sheba, Tell en-Nasbeh, and Tell Beit Mirsim. The site is a fortified settlement with analogies in Arad Stratum XI, Beer-sheba Stratum VI, and Lachish Stratum IV—all likewise dating to the ninth century BCE. In the preceding period of the tenth century BCE, which comprises the settlement strata of Arad XII, Beer-sheba VII, and Lachish V (cf. also Tel Batash IV), the cities had no fortifications, but they were settlements which were enclosed by the rear sides of buildings.

3.2.1.1.3 STRATIGRAPHY AND DATING

Iron Age IIA settlements were uncovered in all areas of the site (Khirbet Qeiyafa IV), without any evidence of prior life in the settlement; the only exception is a tiny quantity of Middle Bronze Age pottery found in Stratum V. Clearly, though there are other strata coming after it, Stratum IV is dominant and defines the entire locality. The excavation directors themselves comment on this fact, stating that Khirbet Qeiyafa is "in a way a one period Iron Age IIA site" (Garfinkel and Ganor 2010a, 72). Further interpretation of the site under discussion is heavily influenced by two aspects: the dating of Stratum IV and the question of the ethnic composition of Khirbet Qeiyafa (see below). When considering the nature of the settlement and the possibility of urban planning, we could be forgiven for thinking that this is a ninth-century BCE locality. However, both relative and absolute chronology date this stratum to an earlier time: between the late eleventh and mid-tenth century BCE.

As elaborated by Hoo-Goo Kang and Yosef Garfinkel, relative chronology is derived from pottery analysis. The upper limit is based on the absence of

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