# CHAPTER 7

# ORIGIN OF THE ISRAELITE NATION: SYNOPTIC SURVEY

In chapters 5 and 6 the Kenites and related marginal groups are deliberated. According to my hypothesis, these groups – who were later mainly affiliated to the tribe of Judah – were primarily involved in the spreading of the Yahwistic faith, and later in the formation of a monotheistic *Yahweh*-alone Judaic religion. It is therefore important that I am knowledgeable about the emergence, settlement and establishment of the Israelite nation, to deduce to what extent and at which stage these marginal groups could have had contact with tribes – or had merged with tribes – who later comprised this nation. It is thus evident that the origin of the Israelite nation should follow on the previous two chapters.

## 7.1 Introduction

Philip Davies[1] construes ancient Israel as a "scholarly construct". He argues that this Israel lies between literature and history and is unlike the biblical Israel which is brought to life in the biblical text. He mentions that a literary construct does not necessarily have an historical existence. He furthermore poses the question as to where the biblical literature came from that produced the history of a biblical Israel. Scholars should deliberate whether such a social and political reality – as that which the biblical concepts reflect – really ever existed. He also indicates that, when reconstructed historically, biblical Israel is 'a diverse, confusing and even contradictory notion'.[2] Unless the historical counterpart of biblical Israel is investigated independently of biblical literature, there is no way to judge the distance between these two "Israels", or to claim that the biblical Israel has any specific relationship to history. He denotes that biblical scholarship is viewed mainly as a theological discipline.[3]

In response to Davis' conception, Hurvitz[4] mentions that, should such "non-conformist" theories be accepted, it calls for 'far-reaching – if not revolutionary – modifications in widely prevailing views regarding the nature and development of our biblical corpus'. Every postulation by Davies should be critically evaluated. He, furthermore, denotes that a long-established scholarly practice necessitates a review of applicable earlier studies whenever a new thesis is put forward. Davies, however, does not adopt this practice. Hurvitz,[5] moreover, does not

[1] Davies 1992:16-18, 22, 46, 49.
[2] Davies 1992:49.
[3] Davies 1992:60.
[4] Hurvitz 1997:301-302.
[5] Hurvitz 1997:303, 305, 307.

agree with Davies that there is "extraordinarily little" extra-biblical material available as external control to date classical Hebrew. He indicates that, although Hebrew inscriptions – dated to the First Temple Period – are relatively few, they are by no means negligible.

Scholars generally agree that textual sources in the Hebrew Bible are the result of a final redaction of the tradition at a rather late date. Dever[6] denotes that, although 'archaeology cannot be used to "prove the Bible" … there are a number of points at which datable Iron Age archaeological evidence and literary reference in the Bible do "converge" in such a way as to suggest contemporaneity – a fact that responsible historians cannot deny'.[7] Numerous biblical references are so well documented archaeologically that aspects, such as socio-political organisation, material culture and origins can be described positively; many of these correspond to biblical allusions in such a manner that a post-exilic editor hardly could have invented these passages. Some of this well-documented material culture could readily be distinguished as a people and nation-state that could be Israel. Dever,[8] therefore, differs from Davies who proffers that an entity Israel never existed. He, furthermore, suggests that the phenomenon of "ancient Israel" should be approached anew in a 'truly critical, comparative, generative, synthetic, and ecumenical' manner.[9] We could, however, never really know how it actually was historically or archaeologically.[10] The "archaeological revolution" has brought about a radical variance of the biblical story. If the historical figure of Moses – as described in the Hebrew Bible – did not exist, and the exodus and conquest never happened, the implications are enormous and would seem to undermine the concept and foundations of Judaism, and even of the Christian faith.[11]

According to Zertal,[12] although archaeology applies modern technologies, many conclusions are based on intuition rather than on objective measure. If the interpretation of results could not depend on reliable historical sources, archaeology then becomes a technical investigation of material culture. Finkelstein and Na'aman[13] denote that, since the 1920s, results of archaeological excavations in respect of research on the "Israelite settlement", 'have stood in the eye of the storm'. During the past number of decades the pace of archaeological fieldwork in Israel has increased so rapidly that discussions which were not up to date became obsolete.

[6] Dever 1997b:301.
[7] Dever 1997b:301.
[8] Dever 1997b:302.
[9] Dever 1997b:305.
[10] Dever 1997b:293.
[11] Dever 1997a:45.
[12] Zertal 1991:30.
[13] Finkelstein & Na'aman 1994:9.

Out-of-date hypotheses on the rise of early Israel should be replaced by new theories. There has been tremendous development in research and on the analysis of documentary evidence discovered over the whole region of Western Asia – as a result of extensive fieldwork – as well as progress in modern biblical criticism. The historical and cultural interpretation of archaeological finds is a much debated and complicated undertaking. The same set of data may yield disparate conclusions.[14] The quest for Israel's origins is complicated as the Hebrew Bible – in the modern sense – is not a history book, and it never claimed to be one. It is almost exclusively sacred history written from a divine perspective. There are, thus, particular limitations to glean authentic historical information from its pages.[15]

Finkelstein[16] mentions that it is a problem to identify an Iron Age I site as a place occupied by early Israelites. During that period other ethnic entities – particularly Canaanites – were also active in the same areas. Therefore, before attempting to characterise Israelite settlement sites, an Iron I Israelite should be defined. However, distinctions between different groups who settled in the hill country seem to have been very vague. 'The formation of the Israelite identity was a long, intricate, and complex process',[17] which was probably completed only at the beginning of the Monarchy. Likewise, from a geographical and historical perspective, the Judean hills are important to understand the Israelite settlement process;[18] an activity – in these, as well as adjacent regions – whereon archaeological research could shed light. Dever[19] agrees that the emergence of ancient Israel coincided with 'a gradual and exceedingly complex process of socio-economic change' in Palestine; a development that covered more than two centuries. Sever[20] indicates that the correlation between an ancient society and its environment is an aspect relevant to the study of prehistory. According to Portugali,[21] processes which happened in Iron Age I, wherein sedentary and nomadic groups 'coexisted in complex relations of interaction and conflict,' are in agreement with those that occurred in Early Bronze I and in the Intermediate Bronze Age. During all these periods a transition took place from an agricultural to an urban society.

[14] Finkelstein & Na'aman 1994:12, 15.
[15] Dever 1997a:20.
[16] Finkelstein 1988:27,47.
[17] Finkelstein 1988:27.
[18] The Judean hills form an isolated mountainous bloc, bordered by arid regions on two sides. Invaded Canaanite cities that were not part of the unified conquests – as described in biblical narratives – were mostly connected with this region (Finkelstein 1988:47).
[19] Dever 1988:345.
[20] Sever 1988:281.
[21] Portugali 1994:203.

Knowledge of the geography of Palestine is indispensable for the biblical scholar in his research of Israel's history. Geographical features of Palestine – such as mountains and fertile plains – had an influence on the settlement patterns of Israel. Similarly, rainfall patterns, droughts, deserts, oases and lack of natural harbours also influenced the history of the inhabitants. Certain geographical features had a direct bearing on Israel's worldview and religious perspective – *Yahweh* was primarily a Mountain God and God of the desert.[22]

Dever[23] denotes that increased excavations at supposedly Proto-Israelite sites, and comparison of their material culture, economy and social structure with contemporary sites – presumably Canaanite or Philistine – are the only way to address the critical question of "ethnic identity". It is, however, not possible to recognise archaeological differences, or legitimately attach an ethnic label to these assemblages when comparing Early Iron Age sites – particularly in the hill country. Some archaeologists argue that they simply cannot distinguish between Israelite, Canaanite and Philistine locations. The hill country complex is, notwithstanding, 'archaeologically distinct, even unique'.[24] Dever,[25] nonetheless, is of the opinion that 'ethnic consciousness, which is an essential concomitant of national identity and statehood, is often thought to be difficult or even impossible to trace in the archaeological record, but that is not necessarily the case'. Archaeological data seem to suggest that the early Israelite peoples were a motley group.[26] Matters of archaeological concern in the search for Israelite identity are the appropriate use of the term ethnicity, the question of suitable methodology to identify those people who formed the early state, and, subsequently, 'the impact of research on the role of ethnicity in the developed kingdom of Israel to the larger question of ethnicity and state formation in general'.[27] The problem of the ethnicity of the early Israelites, and how to determine ethnicity from the material culture in Iron I Palestine, have come to the forefront of research in recent years. Finkelstein[28] deduces that material culture from this particular period and region is not sufficient to enable the drawing of clear ethnic boundaries.

During the final centuries of the Bronze Age and the transition from the Bronze to Iron Ages, the collapse of great power structures was witnessed, creating a mosaic of local cultures and ethnicities, which eventually forged the foundations of the biblical world. The previously

[22] Scheffler 1996:301-302, 305.
[23] Dever 1997a:37, 42.
[24] Dever 1997a:42.
[25] Dever 1998b:420.
[26] Dever 1997a:40.
[27] Small 1997:271.
[28] Finkelstein 1997:216, 230.

interconnected world system became fragmented and produced those peoples 'who later appeared as the key protagonists and antagonists in the biblical narrative'.[29] The interaction of "early Israel" with other groups has created some of the best-known biblical narratives.[30] Knowledge of historical and cultural context of the broader eastern Mediterranean is essential when dealing with the formative period of the biblical world.[31] There seems to have been a direct correlation between fluctuations in food availability, tribalism, nomadism, sedenterisation and the larger world system; tribalism being the mechanism that enabled small kin-related groups to adapt to super-tribal politics.[32]

Mendenhall[33] poses the question, who were the biblical Israelites? He denotes that, apart from one passage – which scholars have agreed is a textual error – the term *Yiśr$^{e}$ʾēlī* does not occur in the early parts of the Hebrew Bible. It is, therefore, a "confusion in terminology" to refer to the "Israelites" as an ethnic group during the biblical period. Dever[34] mentions that the field of biblical studies has been inundated 'with heated and often acrimonious discussions' on the topic whether there was at all an "ancient" or "biblical" Israel. There are even disputes on the authenticity of "a" Hebrew Bible. Although these assertions by revisionists[35] are rapidly becoming an ideology of a group, it nonetheless poses a threat to biblical studies. Schloen[36] mentions that the perception of the concept of "historical" origins, as well as the term "Israel", has been modified since the time of Albright.[37] Some scholars place the emergence of an Israelite national identity early in the ninth century BC – or even later. He is of the opinion that firm conclusions cannot be drawn, due to insufficient data. The "Israel" that existed at the beginning of the Iron Age, and the "Israel" of later periods differed from one another, depending on where the point of origin is established. He concludes that, although dramatic narratives of historical development are told, 'they are not all equally valid or valuable'.[38]

[29] Killebrew 2005:1.
[30] Compare the accounts of the exodus from Egypt, Joshua's conquest of Canaan and hostile contact between the Israelites and Philistines (Killebrew 2005:1).
[31] Killebrew 2005:1, 21. See Killebrew (2005:21-50) for a discussion of the crisis in the eastern Mediterranean during the thirteenth century BC.
[32] LaBianca & Younker 1998:403.
[33] Mendenhall 1973:224.
[34] Dever 1998a:39, 50.
[35] See discussion on "revisionists" in § 8.9.
[36] Schloen 2002:57-59.
[37] William Foxwell Albright. American archaeologist and biblical scholar (1891-1971) (Kenyon 1987:19).
[38] Schloen 2002:62.

'The Settlement of the Israelites in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE, and their transformation from a society of isolated tribes into an organized kingdom, is one of the most exciting, inspiring, and at the same time controversial chapters in the history of the Land of Israel.'[39] This conundrum has been debated intermittently by scholars from viewpoints of the biblical narrative, historical geography and archaeology. Finds from major excavations during the 1920s and 1930s were interpreted in relation to the biblical description of the conquest of Canaan. Since that time, reconstruction of the process of settlement is an 'illustration of the extent to which research on the Settlement has been rife with speculation and imagination'.[40] Analysis of the genealogies of the characters associated with the exodus events reveals that six of the Israelite tribes[41] were not part of the original group of federated tribes. Israelite traditions were slightly remodelled when these tribes became associated with, and accepted as part of Israel.[42]

The question remains, 'what *was* "early Israel", as a people? What, if anything, was unique, or even different, about early Israel?'[43] The population group of Early Iron I villages – archaeologically identified– do signify a new ethnic group.[44] Could these people be labelled "Israelites"? Dever[45] maintains that the claim in biblical texts, that the appearance of early Israel in history was unequalled – validated by its Yahwistic faith – is an ideological "mask". He furthermore denotes that, like any other group of people, Israel evolved mainly out of local conditions. Such people survive by adaptation when conditions change. In reality most Israelites had local Canaanite ancestors. Bimson[46] argues that, when archaeological evidence is taken into consideration, Mendenhall's "peasant revolt theory"[47] is not an accurate account of events which took place in Canaan during the period at the end of the Late Bronze Age and beginning of the Iron Age. Scholars lately generally agree that the Israelites were originally inhabitants of Canaan. He denotes that – in the light of more knowledge and better perception

[39] Finkelstein 1988:15.
[40] Finkelstein 1988:20.
[41] The tribes of Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar and Zebulon (Zevit 2001:640).
[42] Zevit 2001:640.
[43] Dever 1993:23.
[44] To qualify as an "ethnic" group, these people should be 'biologically self-perpetuating'; share a 'fundamental, recognizable, relatively uniform set of cultural values, including language'; constitute 'a partly independent interaction sphere', have 'a membership that defines itself, as well as being defined by others, as a category distinct from other categories of the same order'; and perpetuate 'its sense of separate identity both by developing rules for maintaining "ethnic boundaries" as well as for participating in inter-ethnic social encounters' (Dever 1993:23).
[45] Dever 1993:24, 31.
[46] Bimson 1989:10, 13.
[47] See § 7.4 for a brief discussion of the different "settlement" theories.

– biblical traditions are not incompatible with some of Canaan's archaeological, social and economic history.

The conquest of Egypt's foes in Syria-Palestine is briefly mentioned in Merenptah's "Israel Stela".[48] An inscription on this stele celebrates Merenptah's defeat of the Libyans in ca 1209 BC [or ca 1207 BC–see paragraph 2.7]. "Israel" is referred to in this particular context:

> ' … Gezer is seized; Yanoʿam is made non-existent;
> Israel is laid waste, his seed is no more; … .'[49]

According to this inscription, there was thus a recognisable entity "Israel" in the land of Canaan during the thirteenth century BC, which confirms that they were a group – settled in Palestine[50] – with which there had to be reckoned with.[51] The question is whether this entity was pre-monarchical biblical Israel. There is no reason to doubt the assumption that it was. The "Israel" referred to in the stele was probably nomadic; part of Canaan's population was thus already known as Israel. Some scholars assume that archaeology provides a sufficient basis to reconstruct Israel's origins – it is, however, unlikely that such evidence alone would give insight into the date and nature of Israel's origins in Canaan.[52] Hasel[53] indicates that – regarding the reference in Merenptah's inscription that Israel's 'seed is no more' – the term "seed" could be defined as "fruit, seed" with reference to planting, but also to "offspring, posterity". However, according to him, the particular term *prt*, "seed", in the inscription does not refer to human beings.[54]

Most archaeologists agree that, should there be archaeological evidence for the emergence of Israel in Canaan, such an occurrence should be dated at the beginning of the Iron Age, ca 1200 BC. The Merenptah Stele refers to "Israel" in ca 1209 or 1207 BC. The inscription on this stele is an important testimony in the debate concerning the origin and rise of Israel. Shanks[55] denotes – contrary to Hasel, above – that the determinative[56] linked to the name

[48] Bimson 1991:10. See § 2.7 for a discussion of Merenptah's inscriptions and relief.
[49] Rainey 2001:63.
[50] See arguments for possible places of settlement in § 2.7.
[51] Le Roux, M 1994:316.
[52] Bimson 1991:13-14, 19.
[53] Hasel 2003:19-20, 22.
[54] For a detailed lexical and contextual discussion of the passage referring to Israel on the Merenptah Stele, see Hasel (2003:20-26).
[55] Shanks 1992:19.
[56] See footnote in § 2.7 for a description of "determinative".

"Israel" indicates "people". Therefore, in ca 1207 BC there was a people Israel in Canaan who was important enough for the pharaoh to boast that he had defeated them militarily.[57]

The past number of years biblical readers have become 'alarmed by what they perceive as a concerted, hostile attack on the Bible – much of it coming from reputable biblical scholars themselves'.[58] Lately a few biblical archaeologists have joined the ranks of these scholars. Critical biblical scholarship – from the late nineteenth century – pursued the question of "Israelite origins" but never raised questions to discredit the texts. As archaeological information increased, new data, however, brought more questions than answers.[59] Faust[60] indicates that 'the attempt to identify peoples in the archaeological record is very problematic'. The previous simplistic attitude of archaeologists to associate specific material culture with particular peoples has received much criticism and was abandoned. Archaeologists now realise that ethnicity is too complex to be identified unreservedly with "material culture". There are, however, 'certain relationships between material culture and ethnicity'.[61] Finds at villages in different regions demonstrate that the social and ethnic background of the various population groups were disparate.[62]

'The nature of the archaeological and historical material is such that on the one hand, we possess quantitative data which can be measured and counted, while on the other hand, quite often we need to supplement them by interpretations, even by speculations'.[63]

Dever[64] assesses the state of biblical and Syro-Palestinian archaeology at the turn of the millennium, which has progressed 'toward independent and highly specialized professional status'. Questions arise whether a satisfactory history of ancient Israel can be written and whether there is any certainty about the past. According to postmodernism, and the so-called revisionists, 'all claims to knowledge are merely social constructs',[65] implying that there are only interpretations and no facts. Dever[66] concludes that archaeology is a discipline 'that requires first-hand mastery of the data' related to excavated remains. In response to Dever's

[57] Shanks 1992:17, 19.
[58] Dever 2003:2.
[59] Dever 2003:2, 4-5.
[60] Faust 2000:2.
[61] Faust 2000:2.
[62] Faust 2000:20.
[63] Portugali 1994:204.
[64] Dever 2000:91.
[65] Dever 2000:107.
[66] Dever 2000:110.

assessment, Davies[67] denotes that 'any reader of his [Dever's] article[68] may well be seriously misled' by his comments on so-called "minimalism".[69] In the article under discussion, Dever[70] refers to 'recent attempts of a few European "revisionist" biblical scholars such as Davies, Lemche, Thompson and Whitelam to revive the ghost of "biblical archaeology" as their whipping-boy in a radical attack on any historicity in the Hebrew Bible'. In reaction, Davies[71] defends the minimalistic approach, indicating that these scholars [minimalists or revisionists] 'insist … that archaeology alone ought to be first employed', and 'that the conclusions of archaeological reconstruction be applied to evaluating the biblical stories'. Such an evaluation 'is responsible for the recent consensus [amongst "minimalists"] that there was no patriarchal period, no Exodus and no conquest'.

### 7.2 Phenomenon of interaction among nations

In the Ancient Near East, hybrid cultures were the norm – it seems that "pure" cultures never existed. The Phoenicians, for one, were organised in a number of city-states along their coast[72] and never composed a united political entity or national state. Sidon was the leading Phoenician city during the twelfth and early eleventh centuries BC. In Iron Age I the Sea Peoples[73] occupied the Akko[74] plain. Scholars suggest that the Israelites lived in a kind of symbiosis with the Sea Peoples and Canaanites.[75] Seals and ostraca inscribed with Phoenician personal names have been found inland, which demonstrate that these people – as well as their culture – penetrated deep into the Israelite society.[76] A number of Ugaritic texts indicate that during the fourteenth to thirteenth centuries BC, new settlements in the central hill country and mountains of Palestine were the outcome of defections from city-states, as a result of increased burdens imposed by the elite. It seems that during the transition from Iron Age I to Iron Age II the Phoenician city-state of Tyre expanded into the Akko plain, creating a new political and economic system there.[77]

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[67] Davies 2000:117.
[68] See bibliography in this thesis for information on this article by Dever (2000:91-116).
[69] See § 8.9 for a brief discussion on minimalistic or revisionistic views on the historicity of the Masoretic Text and an Israelite nation.
[70] Dever 2000:95.
[71] Davies 2000:117.
[72] The Phoenician city-states were situated along the Lebanese and Syrian coast (Lehmann 2001:66).
[73] See footnote on the "Sea Peoples" in § 2.7.
[74] Excavations at Akko – a site in southern Phoenicia – have disclosed remains of flourishing towns from the tenth century BC. Typical red burnished pottery and other vessels reveal close commercial connections with Cyprus (Kenyon 1987:135).
[75] Lehmann 2001:66, 89.
[76] Kenyon 1987:135.
[77] Lehmann 2001:89-90, 97.

An early connection of the Phoenicians – who were actually Canaanites from Tyre, Sidon and Byblos – with the interior is evident in the adoption of the Canaanite script[78] by a number of other nations. The Proto-Canaanite alphabet, which was a Canaanite invention, was appropriated by the Aramaeans from either the Canaanites or Phoenicians. During the early Iron Age constructive contacts took place between the Phoenicians and the Aramaeans.[79] As the script developed, it was no longer called Proto-Canaanite, but Phoenician.[80] Although Israel may have been rooted in the Canaanite continuum, regional characteristics indicate that the alphabet was borrowed from the Phoenicians and adapted to suit national interests. Mid-ninth century BC inscriptions on the Mesha Stele[81] of Moab signify that the alphabet was also adapted by Judah, and then acquired in Moab, at which stage there were already features which separated it from its Phoenician origins. Eclectic dedications in ninth century BC Phoenician inscriptions at Kuntillet ʿAjrud[82] suggest that these might have been left by Tyrian merchants.[83] Moab and Edom thus received the alphabet from Judah, with whom they had much in common. The Philistines got it from Judah and from a Phoenician centre – possibly Tyre; they had economic and cultural links with both these groups.[84] It is thus evident that the alphabetical script – developed by the Canaanites and later known as Phoenician – appeared widespread in the western regions of the Ancient Near East, indicating interaction among various nations in the Ancient Near East.

According to documents from Ugarit, the city had regular contact with Phoenician Tyre, Sidon and Byblos, as well as with other Canaanite coastal cities. These documents, together with later epigraphic material, demonstrate the network of relations that existed among the ports, harbours and cities along the Canaanite coast.[85] Regarding Ancient Near Eastern trade, 'the most perfect models for world trade in general are already found in the Old Assyrian trade colonies in Anatolia … , the Hyksos in Egypt … , the Phoenicians … and the overseas Greek colonies … .'[86] Long-distance trade was dependent upon individuals and groups who went abroad to take up residence with the objective to "do business". This type of trade necessitated people to go to other countries and become foreigners. These people, who took up residence elsewhere, survived for generations by virtue of maintaining their language, ethnic

[78] See § 2.8 and § 2.13, subtitle "Lachish ewer", for brief discussions of the Canaanite alphabetical script.
[79] Peckham 2001:19-20, 22, 33.
[80] Naveh 1987:101-102.
[81] See discussion in § 4.3.8.
[82] See discussions in § 2.9 and § 4.3.9.
[83] Peckham 2001:22-23.
[84] Peckham 2001:36.
[85] Peckham 2001:24.
[86] Holladay 2001:141.

identity and religion. At times two or more ethnic groups would mix, giving rise to a new diaspora; the recognition of social structures in the archaeological records points to long-distance trading diasporas. Hittites exploited ports and overland trade routes that linked Anatolia with the Levant, as well as trade routes along the Euphrates River crossing into the Transjordan. Egyptian trading capitalised on regions of the southern Levant, as well as the highlands. An Arabian trade diaspora connected Amorites in the most southern Levantine coastal regions with, inter alia, South Arabia and India. Long-distance trade also involved early "Israelite" settlers who were present in northern Syria, regions of the Euphrates and the southern Shephelah.[87] Research on a large number of cuneiform tablets point to Old Assyrian trade with Anatolia.[88] Holladay,[89] nonetheless, indicates that it has 'proven dangerous to attempt the reconstruction of ancient social and economic history on the basis of court documents'.

Salt, as an essential mineral, was obtained in the Levant along the Mediterranean coast and along the shores of the Dead Sea. Its use by agriculturalists is known from the time of the Early Bronze Age. It was furthermore valued as food flavouring, was a necessary ingredient in sacrifices, was part of the ritual in the signing of an agreement, therapeutic qualities were ascribed to salt, and it was applied in the treatment of animal hides and the preservation of fish and certain meats.[90] Salt was therefore an important commodity for trading purposes. Likewise, iron and copper ores, or manufactured articles, were employed in the trading business. Experimentation in metallurgy started at a very early date in the Ancient Near East. As none of the ores was locally available in Mesopotamia, it would have been obtained through trade. Mines and mining areas from antiquity were discovered in eastern Anatolia, which was known for its rich iron ores. Trade routes developed and gateway cities progressed along these routes.[91] Tyre was well known for its production of the highly valued purple marine dye. The colour was extracted from salt-water molluscs, such as the *Murex brandaris*, which was common at Tyre. This deep blue violet dye was colourfast and enabled the washing of garments. Due to its exceptional commercial value the dye was greatly in demand, also in the sense of tributes.[92] Tyre was on the Mediterranean coast, as was the Late Bronze Age city of

[87] For a description of the Shephelah, see "Shephelah", incorporated in a footnote in § 2.13, subtitle "Lachish ewer".
[88] Holladay 2001:141, 143, 183.
[89] Holladay 2001:181.
[90] Negev & Gibson 2001:446-447.
[91] Kelly-Buccellati 1990:117-118, 126. See also discussions in § 5.1, § 5.2 and § 6.2.2 regarding the importance of metallurgists; their contact with various tribes over a large area afforded them the opportunity to spread, inter alia, their religious beliefs.
[92] Danker 1992:557-558.

Ugarit, which was built in close proximity to a small harbour;[93] this afforded the city easy access to imported and luxury goods.[94]

Even though Palestine did not have good natural harbours at its disposal, it played an important role in international trade. Its trade routes 'were always thronged with merchants from all parts of the world'.[95] Tolls collected from trade routes were important for the country's economy. During the biblical period, grain, oil and wine were the main exports from Palestine. Tyre bought these products from Palestine and resold it in the Mediterranean ports. Israelites engaged in large-scale international trade only from the time of Solomon.[96] A significant development during the Early Bronze Age is the dramatic increase in commerce. Urban growth in Palestine coincided with increased trade-prospering cities, such as Ugarit, Ebla, Hamath and Byblos.[97] Cuneiform records attest to important crossroads at the biblical city of Haran. The site is connected to the modern place name Harran, close to the Baliḫ River. Scholars mainly agree that this site corresponds with the "Haran" in the patriarchal narrative of Abraham. It is generally accepted that the Baliḫ region could be linked to Abraham and his family. Likewise, a number of toponyms in the Baliḫ River and Harran regions could be connected to personal and geographical names in the Abraham narrative in Genesis 11.[98]

The Philistines – or Sea Peoples[99] – entered Palestine from outside the Levant.[100] Their original language may point to an Indo-European origin, particularly from the Aegean or Anatolia – or from both. The Philistines were – according to biblical texts – an urban society,[101] normally depicted as acting together.[102] They monopolised the smiths[103] – particularly to prevent the Israelites from building up a supply of weapons. There was evidently a Philistine centre for metallurgy[104] either in the Jordan Valley or on the Mediterranean coastal heartland.[105] The question is, however, how the presence of Sea Peoples in the Jordan Valley, or elsewhere in the Levant, could be detected. The interpretation of any possible relevant artefacts is

[93] Curtis 1985:18.
[94] Caubet 2000:35-36.
[95] Negev & Gibson 2001:512.
[96] Negev & Gibson 2001:512-513.
[97] Richard 1987:27, 31.
[98] Frayne 2001:224-225, 233.
[99] See earlier reference in this paragraph to a footnote in § 2.7.
[100] Levant: see footnote in § 4.3.8.
[101] See, for example, 1 Samuel 27:1-2, 5.
[102] 1 Samuel 5:8; 29.
[103] 1 Samuel 13:19-22.
[104] The reference in 1 Samuel 13:20 that 'the Israelites went down to the Philistines' is interpreted as a reference to a Philistine centre of metallurgy (Machinist 2000:58).
[105] Machinist 2000:57-58, 63.

ambiguous. One of the fundamental problems of these people is the question of their origin. Metal artefacts, which should be a reliable indicator of their cultural heritage, could equally be a luxury import item. The presence of the Philistines in the central Jordan Valley could very well have been due to the Egyptians needing them there to carry out certain metallurgical operations.[106] The Egyptians were associated with the mining of copper ore in the Timnah Valley;[107] the Sea Peoples might thus have been employed as expert metalworkers by the Egyptians.[108] It is therefore evident that these people – at best – intermingled with different nations, and were found in territories other than their traditional coastal regions. According to Machinist,[109] the biblical account of the Philistines' involvement with Israel is incomplete and sketchily regarding their history and culture. The Hebrew Bible is also apparently ignorant of Sea Peoples – other than the Philistines – who are identified by Egyptian and other texts.

Zevit[110] indicates that people – such as the Greeks and Romans who dwelt in Egypt – could live for decades, and even centuries, amongst each other without having any particular insight into the other surrounding cultures. Although he is of the opinion that a distinguishing line could be drawn between the Israelite culture and that of the local Canaanites, he does assume 'some admixture of population as well as regular, ongoing cultural contact'.[111] Internal migrations among the so-called Israelite tribes did apparently happen. According to genealogical lists, clans moved from one place to another and in this process realigned with different tribes. Similarly, tribes could be related through descent or through intermarriage. Modern Arab and Bedouin groups provide important parallels regarding genealogical traditions. Migrating groups maintained either their general tribal name, or a name that linked them to a particular ancestor. Archaeological data imply that – as a rule – those roaming groups, or "Israelites", clustered together in communities. Clans from the hinterland of Phoenicia migrating south could have integrated with people migrating west from northern Transjordan, and thereby probably established certain northern tribes, such as Asher, Naphtali, Zebulon and Issachar. These latter two migrating groups also would have been bearers of the myths and cults of the Late Bronze Age Canaanite culture. Small clusters of indigenous people, in all likelihood, joined large clans. Therefore, some ancestors of the Israelites may have originated in the north-eastern Canaanite regions where North-West Semitic languages developed.[112] The

[106] Tubb 2000:181-182.
[107] Negev & Gibson 2001:507. See footnote in § 2.14.1 on the Timnah Valley and mining activities.
[108] Tubb 2000:191.
[109] Machinist 2000:65.
[110] Zevit 2001:621-625, 685-686.
[111] Zevit 2001:116.
[112] Zevit 2001:621-625, 685-686.

process of change was complex and relatively slow, involving considerable assimilation, and entailing the overlapping of roots of both Israelite and Canaanite societies.[113]

'A genealogy expresses the perception of social relationships of the society creating it.'[114] It is, however, difficult to support a thesis that genealogy demonstrates the "degree of closeness" that existed between the Israelites and their neighbours.[115] The concept among scholars regarding nomadism and its role in Ancient Near Eastern civilisations has developed dramatically the past two or three decades. Scholars now recognise the value of anthropological and sociological data in the field of biblical scholarship. Nomads were previously perceived to be primarily responsible for the downfall of different states and cultures, and the originators of distinct cultures that followed these collapses. Tribal or ethnic groups were complex organisations that were composed of nomadic and sedentary elements. An ethnic label – such as Amorite – did not in any way describe the background or lifestyle of the member; they moved between sedentary and nomadic habits. There were complex interactions between pastoral nomads and the peasant and urban sedentary groups that surrounded them. The Amorites – for example – were made up of pastoralist, peasant and urban elements, which had existed for centuries alongside each other. Although there is evidence for population movements in the Ancient Near East, there is no clear archaeological or historical confirmation for alleged massive migrations of the Aramaeans and Amorites from their homelands.[116] Close contact between pastoralists and villagers 'provided for the mutual benefit of trading pastoral goods for agricultural necessities'.[117]

Scholars explain the cultural dependence of the Israelite tribes on the Canaanites, by theorising that close connections existed between these two groups before the twelfth century BC. 'This type of symbiosis is characteristic of the so-called culture-land nomads',[118] who stayed for long periods on the plains around the cultivated lands in search of pastures. During these periods they developed close contacts with the towns. Mari texts provide abundant documentary evidence for the existence of culture-land nomads during the second millennium BC.[119] An economic interdependence eventually leads to a political symbiosis. It thus seems that the

[113] Dever 1997a:26.
[114] Kunin 1995:199.
[115] Kunin 1995:201.
[116] Pitard 1996:293, 295-297, 301.
[117] Pitard 1996:304.
[118] Fritz 1987:98.
[119] Fritz 1987:98.

Israelites did not necessarily have their own differentiated identity, but that it was moulded by a dynamic historical process.[120]

### 7.3 Influence of co-regional Ancient Near Eastern nations

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Israelites lived in a kind of symbiosis with the Canaanites and Sea Peoples. During the Early Iron Age there was a profuse establishment of small settlements in the highlands. The identity of the settlers and the place of their origin are still debated. Some of these newcomers were probably Israelites, while others later became Israelites. They came from diverse backgrounds – agricultural and nomadic – and from great distances, or from regions close by. Palestinian highland cultures of the Early Iron Age were therefore considerably more diverse than what the material artefacts intimate.[121] It is thus reasonable to assume that these different peoples had a significant influence on the later Israelite nation, particularly regarding their cultural "wares", religion and traditions – as later compiled in the Masoretic Text. Aspects concerning the influence of the Ancient Near Eastern nations – particularly of the Canaanites – on the religion of the later Israelite nation are discussed in Chapter 3. Myths and legends of the various surrounding societies that could be identified in the Masoretic Text, are also discussed – albeit briefly – in paragraph 3.9. A number of these influences – or possible influences - are viewed cursorily hereafter, to give an indication of the impact neighbouring peoples could have had on the forging of an identity of an emerging nation. Similarly, parallels could be found amongst various other Ancient Near Eastern nations concerning their traditions, and particularly regarding cognate deities that appear in different pantheons. In this latter instance, see deliberations in paragraphs 3.2-3.7.

Different Ancient Near Eastern chronicles that are parallel to biblical narratives of the primeval history – as recorded in Genesis 1-11 – and a few other traditions have been deliberated in paragraph 3.9, as pointed out above. The inner consistency, coherence and literary design of Genesis 2-11 indicate that it is not mere collections of traditions, but the integrated work of an author. According to Wittenberg,[122] the majority of the narratives found in these chapters are indebted to Babylonian traditions. A number of Babylonian texts are also found in Ugaritic material. Peculiarities in the primeval history in Genesis 'seem to contradict the claim that the author of these chapters was an official of the court in Jerusalem'.[123] On the one hand, relationships – particularly within clans and tribal communities – are significant and form the

[120] Le Roux, M 1994:323, 326.
[121] Gibson 2001:126-127.
[122] Wittenberg 1995:440.
[123] Wittenberg 1995:442.

rural community perspective from which the narrator has structured his work. On the other hand, descendants of Cain are portrayed as prominent city craftsmen within a city culture dominated by kingship. The author of Genesis 2-11 was obviously well versed in the pronounced tradition of the Ancient Near East. The educated leading men of Judah thus presumably shared in this tradition, but not in the royal urban imperial values. The author of the primeval history in Genesis notably made use of Ancient Near Eastern traditions, and thereby also related the story of humankind in its entirety.[124] The general content and function of the primeval history in Genesis 'is very similar to the content and function of myth in the ancient Near East'.[125]

Traditions concerning *El* – head of the Canaanite pantheon – can be detected in the Masoretic Text. The words *qersū*, *qersum* – which appear in an Akkadian text from the Mari archives – refers to a large tent structure.[126] The same words occur in the description of *El*'s mountain sanctuary in the Ugaritic *Baʿal* myths. The Mountain of God might be a parallel to the Mountain of *El*. The word *ḫurpatum* for the Mari tent resembles the Akkadian word *urpatu* for "cloud" or "covering". The biblical Tabernacle construction could be related to the original Syro-Palestinian tents. Scholars contend that the description of the Tabernacle in Exodus was inspired by memory of the Jerusalem Temple. The Mari tent shrine, as well as the association of the clouds with the tent-covering,[127] most probably also had an influence on the depiction of the Tabernacle. A late eighth century BC inscription was discovered in the ruins of a temple at Deir ʿAlla[128] in Transjordan. There is a striking similarity in form and content of the text of this inscription and the words in Numbers 24:4, 16, when the seer Balaam, son of Beor, "hears the words of *El*, and sees the vision of *Shadday*". Although the inhabitants of the site have been identified as Aramaeans, Lutzky[129] maintains that the possibility of an Israelite temple cannot be excluded. She proposes that, if this was 'an El temple – as it appears to be – Yahwism may have coexisted at that time with a non-Yahwistic Israelite El cult'.

[124] Wittenberg 1995:440, 442, 444-445, 449, 452-453.
[125] Kruger 2001a:50.
[126] See description in a footnote in § 2.14.1.
[127] Fleming 2000:486-487, 491-493, 496-497.
[128] Tell Deir ʿAlla is one of the most prominent mounds in the Jordan Valley. It is situated at the junction of the Jabbok and Jordan rivers. Many scholars identify this site with biblical Succoth (see footnote in § 2.7). On account of particular ceramics – typical of the eighth to seventh century BC – the inhabitants of the site during that period have been identified as Aramaeans. The most significant discovery is the Aramaic inscription mentioning a non-Israelite prophet, Balaam (Negev & Gibson 2001:138).
[129] Lutzky 1998:26.

It is most likely that all Ancient Near Eastern peoples engaged in some form of divination. The will of the gods was determined by observing nature. It was not a magical practice, but a procedure based upon empirical observation. Mesopotamians considered omens to be more reliable than direct forms of divine communication. An example was found in the library of King Zimri-Lim[130] of Mari. According to the Hebrew Bible, lot casting – cleromancy – was among the few divination procedures allowed in Israel. It was the prime function of the high priest.[131] There is no clarity on what the Urim and Thummim[132] – which were used to ascertain the will of God in relation to particular problems – looked like. It seems that they were small objects, perhaps made of precious stones and metals, in the shape of dice.[133] Consistent with the Hebrew Bible, certain signs – interpreted as divine communication – as well as the interpretation of dreams, were allowed. Other forms of divination[134] were strictly forbidden. The Israelite society, however, preferred divine communication through an ecstatic medium. This phenomenon has been positively attested also in Canaan, Phoenicia and the western regions of Mesopotamia.[135] An inscription discovered at Karatepe[136] contains literary formulas and titles similar to those found in the Hebrew Bible, particularly regarding curses and blessings.[137]

Fisher[138] identifies the final form of the book of Genesis as being divided into "histories". The histories follow a sequential pattern. He compares the *Epic of Keret*[139] in the Ugaritic

[130] See footnote in § 2.4.
[131] Negev & Gibson 2001:142-143. Numbers 27:21.
[132] Urim and Thummim: according to Leviticus 8:5-8 the Urim and Thummim were placed in the breastpiece of the high priest. The breastpiece was attached to the ephod (incorporated in a footnote on the "number twelve" in § 3.6); in some instances the "ephod" was used as a synonym for the Urim and Thummim. There is no indication of the type of material it was made of, or of any signs or symbols impressed on it. The breastpiece was a small, square, multicoloured pocket made of twined linen. The exact meaning of the words is also not known (Mendelsohn 1962:739-740).
[133] Mendelsohn 1962:739-740.
[134] Such as, the examination of the entrails of animals, astrology, necromancy (consulting the dead) and hydromancy (interpretation of water patterns) (Negev & Gibson 2001:143).
[135] Negev & Gibson 2001:143.
[136] An eight century BC inscription was discovered at Karatepe in Turkey; this is the longest Phoenician inscription found to date. Three copies of the text are preserved; two on city gates and one on a statue of *Ba'al*. Bilingual copies of the text in hieroglyphic Luwian on the gates were also recovered. The text contains a first-person account of Azatiwada, who may have been a king or prince in Cilicia in south-eastern Turkey (Arnold & Beyer 2002:162). By the ninth century BC the Phoenicians – as result of their maritime initiatives – had colonies in Karetepe (in modern Turkey), Sardinia and Cyprus (Bimson et al 1985:88). A large number of pieces of Phoenician literature existed at one time, for example, Philo of Byblos (see footnote on *Melqart* in § 3.5) translated Sanchuniathon's history of Phoenicia into Greek (see same footnote in § 3.5 as above). Of the literary traditions, only quotations by later authors are extant. Rare historical texts – as the inscription at Karatepe – are presently known (Ward 1994:198).
[137] Arnold & Beyer 2002:162.
[138] Fisher 1973:61-65.
[139] *Keret* was the son of the supreme Canaanite god *El* and a soldier of the goddess *Sapas*. *Keret*, as king of Sidon, was ordered by *El* to resist an invasion by the moon god, *Terah* (or *Etrah*). *Keret* disobeyed *El*'s orders and shut himself up in his chamber. He dreamt that he would be the father of a son. He thus decided to depart on the

texts with the Jacob material in Genesis. There are numerous similarities in structure, content and intention.[140] Scholars indicate that there is no clarity whether ארמי אבד אבי,[141] – Deuteronomy 26:5 – should be translated as 'a wandering Aramaen was my father',[142] or, possibly, "my father was an Aramaean, a fugitive",[143] or perchance even another interpretation. The explanation thus remains inconclusive. According to tradition, famine in Canaan drove Jacob to Egypt in search of pasturage. This crisis was not unique among Israel's ancestors but presents a recurring theme: drought and famine in the land and barrenness that afflicts each ancestor. Regarding Deuteronomy 26:5, "Aramaean" may be a word that connotes a wandering style of life. The word אבד could categorise a particular type of wanderer.[144] The responsibilities of a sheep owner and a shepherd to one another are illuminated in an Old Babylonian shepherding contract. A parallel to this contract is found in the Hebrew Bible in the agreement between Jacob and Laban.[145]

According to information on tablets discovered in the royal archives at Ebla, Ebrum – *Eb-uru-um* – was one of the kings at Ebla. This name resembles Eber, the father of the Semites.[146] The name אברם – *abīrām* – is attested in an Amorite seal inscription, and on an Amorite tablet the name *a-hi-la-ba-an* – my brother is Laban – appears.[147] The *Sumerian King List*, which preserves the names of hundred and fifty early kings of southern Mesopotamia, indicates that the rulers of the antediluvian period had extraordinarily long lives. This section of the list has been compared to the long-lived biblical ancestors of Genesis 5.[148] Zevit[149] is of the opinion that, apart from being an 'intellectual heir of a historiographic tradition', the deuteronomic historian was probably also a 'beneficiary of more direct cross-cultural stimulation by Mesopotamian writers'.

Identifying comparable evidence – regarding family religion – at various sites, indicates that the pattern of domestic and official cult rituals in Iron Age Israel and Judah was not unique, as

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campaign and brought a sacrifice. The battle took place in the Negeb. When he returned to Sidon he bought a wife and she bore him a beautiful son. This son was a prodigy demanding justice for the widow, protection for the orphan and assistance against the plunderer. For a detailed description of the epic, see Guirand (1996:79).

[140] For a comparison of the *Keret* and Jacob material, see Fisher (1973:62-63).

[141] *'ărammî 'ōbēd 'ābî* (Janzen 1994:359).

[142] English Standard Version.

[143] Holladay 1971:1.

[144] Janzen 1994:359-360, 372.

[145] Arnold & Beyer 2002:73. Genesis 31:38-40.

[146] Genesis 10:21 (Pettinato 1976:47). See also footnote in § 2.3.

[147] Knudsen 1999:217-218.

[148] Arnold & Beyer 2002:150. See also footnote in § 3.9 on the Sumerian King List.

[149] Zevit 2001:445.

corresponding customs were widespread amongst neighbouring peoples.[150] Syria and Palestine were exposed to a complex of external influences, but the extent thereof on their beliefs and practices can hardly be determined with certainty. The Temple of Jerusalem – for instance – has analogies, regarding construction, contents and ritual in other neighbouring temples, including some in South Arabia, Crete and Cyprus.[151] As early as the end of the nineteenth century it was already apparent that similarities existed between monuments of ancient Mesopotamia and those referred to in the Hebrew Bible, and that the origin, society and religion of the ancient Israelites were not necessarily different from those of their neighbours.[152] Keel[153] agrees that the concept of the cosmic system and the institutions of temple and kingship, as well as numerous cultic practices, were borrowed by the Israelites from their neighbours. Ancient Near Eastern iconography of temple, king and cultus corresponds remarkably to statements in the Book of Psalms. Mettinger[154] mentions that, although not all cults in ancient Israel were aniconic,[155] there was notably 'a tradition of aniconic worship of YHWH with deep roots in earlier West Semitic cults'. Aniconism – as a shared feature of West Semitic cults – is demonstrated by the discovery of various aniconic stelae. Israelite aniconism is therefore not the consequence of theological reflection, but should be identified as an "inherited convention".[156]

Uffenheimer[157] indicates that 'prophecy was not an alien Canaanite-Dionysian phenomenon imposed upon the original Israelite culture', nor should the influence of West Semitic prophecy of Mari[158] be overemphasised. He is of the opinion that prophecy grew from the popular religion as reflected in the Book of Psalms, the Torah and Wisdom literatures. He, nonetheless, denotes that a close kinship exists between several psalms and Akkadian literature. Similarly, there is a striking resemblance between Psalm 29 and Canaanite literature from Ugarit, and particularly between Psalm 104 and the *Hymn of Akhenaten*[159] – dedicated to the sun – in Egyptian literature. The Book of Psalms adopted many stylistic traits from

[150] Daviau 2001:200.
[151] Bury et al 1925:426-427.
[152] Sweek 1995:404.
[153] Keel 1978:178.
[154] Mettinger 1997:228.
[155] See footnote in § 1.2 for a description of "aniconism".
[156] Mettinger 1997:228-229.
[157] Uffenheimer 1987:7.
[158] See brief discussion in § 2.4.
[159] See *Excursus 4* in § 8.8.1.

Canaan.[160] Cassuto[161] mentions that monsters, bearing the same names as those which occur in Canaanite poetry, appear in Isaiah 27:1.[162]

Cross-cultural parallels could signify that a direct or indirect relationship existed between institutions of different societies. David, for example, was dependent on Canaanite expertise to establish his kingdom. A later large increase in the rate of population growth virtually demanded an improvement in administrative control systems. Prior to the ninth century BC no actual structure of professional scribes or administrators existed. Following the later governmental need, professional administrators were systematically trained in an established neighbouring training centre.[163] The deification of a king was a belief prevalent in the Ancient Near East. Both kings David and Solomon were identified with the divine realm. They both had the ability to distinguish between good and evil.[164]

Some other influences on Israelite customs and the Masoretic Text are, for example, Lamech's revenge was seventy-sevenfold;[165] the number, or symbol, seventy-seven was a popular element in Ugaritic poetic texts.[166] The names and order of the Semitic alphabetical signs accede with a blend of Egyptian and Mesopotamian motifs that have been found on Syrian and Palestinian seals.[167] The old Hebrew alphabet, however, 'may have developed without Phoenician mediation directly from proto-Canaanite'.[168] Metallurgy which, according to my theory, had a meaningful role in the spreading of the Yahwistic faith,[169] is well known in myths of Greece, Rome and Sumer. The beginnings thereof, throughout the world, are regarded 'as of the utmost importance in the history of humankind'.[170]

### 7.4 Proto-Israelites, exodus and settlement in Palestine

The question of the origin of the Israelite nation – who they were and where they came from – the historicity or not of the exodus, and the manner of settlement or establishment of the Israelite tribes in Palestine, has been debated intermittently by scholars for many decades. There

[160] Uffenheimer 1987:7, 15-16.
[161] Cassuto 1961:50.
[162] Isaiah 27:1 mentions the Leviathan, the fleeing serpent, the twisting serpent and the dragon that is in the sea.
[163] Jamieson-Drake 1991:24, 77, 79.
[164] Kruger 2001a:66-67. 2 Samuel 14:17; 1 Kings 3:9.
[165] Genesis 4:24.
[166] Van Selms 1967:88.
[167] Bury et al 1925:426.
[168] Fritz 1987:97.
[169] Marginal groups in southern Palestine – such as the Kenites and Rechabites – practised metallurgy; they moved around to different regions where they sold their wares and practised their skills.
[170] Westermann 1984:333.

have been profuse suggestions and there are several hypotheses on these subjects, but, as yet, consensus has not been reached. This is a vast field of debate, with innumerable publications that have seen the light. It is, therefore, impossible to deliberate on these issues extensively in this thesis. Consequently, relevant matters pertaining to the emergence and settlement of the Israelites are forthwith discussed cursorily, but with the aim to give sufficient information on past and present debates, thereby to provide the reader with an overview – or outline – of this enigmatic nation.

Reconstructing the past has been compared with private investigation, psychoanalysis, and even with branches of the natural sciences. History, which is a form of investigation and reconstruction, as well as representing human events, is a "distinctive enterprise". The authors of the recognisable, so-called "historical" narratives in the Hebrew Bible, obviously had 'authentic antiquarian intentions' and meant to 'furnish fair and accurate representations of Israelite antiquity'.[171] Margalith[172] refers to five places where the name "Israel" appears in antiquity, namely a fourteenth or thirteenth century BC tablet from Ugarit, the Merneptah [Merenptah] inscription dated ca 1220 BC [ca 1207 BC], an inscription of Shalmanesar III dated 853 BC, the Mesha-inscription dated ca 840 BC and in the Hebrew Bible.[173] As discussed in paragraph 2.7, there is no clarity whether the name "Israel" in the inscription on the Merenptah Stele refers to a tribe, or any other body of that name. It is also possible that it was one of the place names where the pharaoh's supremacy was acknowledged.

Scholars speculate whether the Ugaritic spelling Išrael – and not Israel – is the original, and therefore correct one. Since the Masoretic Text was initially written without phonological marks, it is impossible to deduce whether the שׂ – in the different inscriptions – was a *sin* or *šin*.[174] It does, however, appear 'that the Ugaritic form represents the closest and most faithful rendering of the pronunciation prevalent at the time in the area',[175] thus implying that Išrael was the correct way to pronounce the name. The incident described in Judges 12:6[176] indicates that both the *sin* and *šin* were used by the Israelites in ancient times; the dialects of the North and South possibly differed.[177]

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[171] Halpern 1988:3.
[172] Margalith 1990:225.
[173] See § 2.7 regarding the Merenptah inscription, and § 4.3.8 for a discussion of the Mesha inscription. For further deliberations on the different inscriptions, see Margalith (1990:226-230).
[174] Thus, whether the Hebrew pronunciation would have been יִשׂרָאֵל or יִשׂרָאֵל.
[175] Margalith 1990:228.
[176] Judges 12:6, 'they said to him, "Then say Shibboleth", and he said "Sibboleth", for he could not pronounce it right … .'
[177] Margalith 1990:226, 228-231.

Excavations, as well as archaeological surveys of the central highlands, Judean hills, Negeb and Galilee identified hamlets, villages and several hundred farmsteads. These obviously represented self-sufficient small-scale farmers and herders in relatively unoccupied areas. The term "Galilee"[178] in the Hebrew Bible, evidently refers to the region north of the hills of Manasseh. Although no biblical distinction is made, scholars differentiate between Upper and Lower Galilee. Early and epic clashes between Israelites and Canaanites in the Galilee and Jezreel Valley[179] are recounted in the Hebrew Bible.[180] Archaeological data suggest a cultural break between the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Historical evidence refers to agents – such as the Canaanite city-states and Egypt – active in this region during the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC. Events mentioned in the Amarna Letters[181] presumably relate to the early history of the Galilean tribes, particularly with regard to activities associated with the *ẖabiru* (or *'apiru*).[182] Iron I sites in the Galilee were clustered in ways that reveal Late Bronze Age regionalism, dominated by the city-states of Akko, Tyre and Hazor. Inhabitants of some southern villages in the Lower Galilee – which had been occupied for many generations – were skilled at raising the best crops and livestock, thereby being successful to generate marketable surpluses.[183]

According to the Hebrew Bible, a large part of the Galilee was in Israelite hands from early days. However, one should question the probability that any of these groups living in the Galilee could be described as "Israelite". 'Shared cultural heritage presumes a sense of common ancestry and a commitment to a common religious heritage.'[184] It is difficult to identify an Israelite in the Iron Age I. The geographic isolation of the people living in Iron I Galilee, buffered them from events in the mountains to the south. The biblical depiction of the conquest of Canaan by unified "Israelite" tribes is unsubstantiated, but this theme was obviously

[178] The Galilee is identified as the northernmost region of the land of Israel, close to the coastal cultures of Canaan/Phoenicia, and the Syrian-Aramaean cultures to the east and north-east. Cultural and political borders between these groups fluctuated. Jerusalem, where the seat was of the Judean palace, temple, archives and scribes, was geographically distant from Galilee, with the result that events which occurred in Galilee, are rarely mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, thereby complicating a reconstruction of its history. The incidents portrayed in Exodus, and the books of Joshua and Judges are associated with the transition from Late Bronze Age to Iron Age. Excavated Early Iron Age sites in the Galilee exhibit a variation in character – from huts and tents to well-built square buildings (Frankel 1992:879, 883-884).
[179] Scholars assume that the Jezreel Valley stretched west from Jezreel to the plain of Acco (Akko) (see footnote in § 7.2), incorporating the Valley of Beth-shan. The Jezreel Valley was a vital strategic link on the route between Damascus and Egypt. The valley is fertile and that feature possibly inspired its name which could be translated as "God sows" (Hunt 1992:850).
[180] Nakhai 2003:131, 134.
[181] See § 2.5 for information on the Amarna Letters.
[182] Frankel 1992:884. See discussions on the *ẖabiru* in § 2.4, § 2.5, § 2.6, § 4.3.3 and § 4.3.7.
[183] Nakhai 2003:136, 139.
[184] Nakhai 2003:140.

employed by biblical authors in order to legitimate the territorial acquisition in the time of the Monarchy.[185]

Dever[186] denotes that recent models of "indigenous Israelite origins" should be submitted to more complex and sophisticated analyses than those previously undertaken. In order to evaluate local changes more precisely, Palestine should be placed in the context of the large upheavals in the Levant at the end of the Bronze Age. Considering archaeological data, it seems that a new ethnic identity did exist on the Canaanite highland frontier in the twelfth century BC, which could be presumed "Proto-Israelites". According to Dever,[187] archaeological evidence suggests that the Proto-Israelites – the ancestors of later Israel – emanated to a great extent from a Canaanite background. They could thus best be understood 'as an agrarian socio-economic movement – perhaps accompanied by certain visionary notions of reform'.[188] He furthermore mentions that, although the term "Proto-Israelite" is generally applied for the pre-monarchical period, there is no certainty that 'the "Israel" of the Iron I period really *is* the precursor of the full-fledged later Israel'.[189] If the material culture of a people 'exhibits a tradition of continuous, non-broken development, then it is reasonable to argue that the core population remains the same'.[190] He, therefore, suggests that the designations "Early Israel" and "Later Israel" could be employed with confidence.[191]

The patriarchal narratives portray the beginning of the formation of a new structure; the emerging community was identified by the names of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.[192] The figures of the patriarchs notably 'serve as personifications of the tribes of which they are the eponyms'.[193] According to Sasson,[194] in 'the quest for the historical Abraham … Mari[195] is there to deliver the necessary clues'. The antiquity and the wealth of material from Mari is an indication of a special link between Mari and the Hebrew Bible. Administrative texts testify to a broad network of political connections that existed amongst various cities in the Ancient Near East. By the mid-twentieth century scholars suggested that Mari legitimised Hebrew traditions; Israelite descendants of Abraham probably passed by Mari on their travels.

[185] Nakhai 2003:140, 142.
[186] Dever 1993:22, 24.
[187] Dever 1993:25, 31.
[188] Dever 1993:25.
[189] Dever 1997a:44.
[190] Dever 1997a:44.
[191] Dever 1997a:44.
[192] Janzen 1979:231.
[193] Ramsey 1981:67.
[194] Sasson 2006:198.
[195] See § 2.4 and § 4.3.3 for information on Mari.

The phrasing and structure in the speech of Mari vassals and ambassadors compare well with what we find in biblical chronicles. 'Mari letters and biblical narratives shared the same sensibilities, [for example], outrage at the abuse of hospitality';[196] likewise, the same place names appear in the Hebrew Bible and Mari texts.[197]

Interpretation of archaeological data and extra-biblical literature – such as the Late Bronze Age Amarna Letters[198] from Palestine, and some Egyptian texts – as well as the exegesis of biblical texts, all suggest that the early Israelites consisted of a variance of population groups. Some of these were probably *ḫabiru*[199] who became Israelites for ideological reasons.[200] During most of the second millennium BC the name *ḫabiru* appears in texts throughout the Ancient Near East. They were an active component of the Ancient Near Eastern society, but stood outside the established social order. They had no legal status, property or roots. According to the Amarna Letters, they were primarily involved in military activity.[201] Ramsey[202] describes them as 'uprooted individuals of varied origins, without tribal or family ties, who joined in bands which could be hired as soldiers by organized states, or acted on their own'. Some scholars have identified late thirteenth century BC biblical Hebrews with the *ḫabiru*; the origins of Israel could thus possibly be traced to such movements.[203]

The etymology of the word *ḫabiru* – or *ʿapiru* – has never been explained fully. If the correct reading of *ʿbr* or *ʿpr* is *ḫabiru*, the obvious etymological explanation would be, "to pass by", "to trespass". If the reading is *ʿapiru*, this might have been an accepted way of designating people of low social standing. There are numerous occurrences of the word in Ancient Near Eastern documents. It seems that the *ḫabiru* – as a social and political force – disappeared just before the end of the second millennium BC. There are indications that these people were employed as mercenaries during the Old Babylonian Period.[204] Archival reports from the royal palace of Mari refer to the *ḫabiru* as outlaws.[205] The *ḫabiru* are also mentioned in administrative documents from Alalakh,[206] listing persons of foreign origin. It seems that they were Amorite-speaking inhabitants of the Ancient Near East, or of West Semitic descent.

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[196] Sasson 2006:197.
[197] Sasson 2006:189-190, 193, 195, 197.
[198] See § 2.5 on the Amarna Letters.
[199] See an earlier footnote in this paragraph for references to the *ḫabiru*, in different paragraphs.
[200] Dever 1997a:40.
[201] Newman 1985:171.
[202] Ramsey 1981:90.
[203] Ramsey 1981:90.
[204] Old Babylonian Period is dated 2000-1595 BC (Arnold 1994:47).
[205] See § 2.4.
[206] See several footnotes in § 4.3.7.

However, different ethnic groups from any society could be identified as *ḫabiru*. The wave of fugitives seems to have increased during the Late Bronze Age; they probably left their own countries to find ways of survival elsewhere. The numerous small states and uncontrollable territories and territorial borders were suitable for the lives of brigands. These territories were normally found in the steppes between the desert and cultivated areas, as well as in the mountains. There is no reference to the activities of the *ḫabiru* after 1000 BC.[207]

The deed of Rahab, as explained in Joshua 2, clearly indicates that she and her clan were not part of the royal establishment. She – in a sense – rejected the existing social and political order and responded to the ideology of the invaders – even by acknowledging *Yahweh*'s power to act in history.[208] Her attitude could very well classify her as a *ḫabiru*.[209] De Moor[210] is of the opinion that the *ḫabiru* resembled the *Shasu*[211] in many respects, and he is 'doubtful whether the two terms designated different groups'. It is also possible that there were Proto-Israelites among the *Shasu* and *ḫabiru*. Information gleaned from Egyptian texts links the *Shasu* to Edom and Seir in southern Palestine – and thus to those tribes who, according to the Kenite hypothesis, venerated *Yahweh*. Ramsey[212] disagrees with scholars – such as Mendenhall – who equate the *ḫabiru* with the Hebrews, and therefore also with the Israelites, and finds it untenable to read *ḫabiru* traits into texts that refer to the Hebrews or Israelites.

Mendenhall,[213] however, defends 'the equation of *ʾApiru* and Hebrew on (this) nonethic but legal and political ground'. He indicates that, had it not been for the identification of the Amarna *ḫabiru* with biblical *ʾIvri* – Israel, 'it is inconceivable that the Amarna letters should ever have been used as materials for the reconstruction of Israelite history'.[214] Scholars assumed that these letters sketched nomadic invaders attacking Canaanite cities. Biblical traditions have repeated instances of similar phenomena to that depicted in the Amarna Letters. An example is that of David when he fled from Saul. He gathered other refugees around him; all were without legal protection and maintained themselves by forming a band under the leadership of David.[215] Dever[216] denotes that most archaeologists agree that evidence points

[207] Lemche 1992:7-9.
[208] Joshua 2:9-11.
[209] Newman 1985:173.
[210] De Moor 1997:117, 120.
[211] See § 2.6 and § 4.3.4 for discussions on the *Shasu*.
[212] Ramsey 1981:96.
[213] Mendenhall 1973:135.
[214] Mendenhall 1973:122.
[215] Mendenhall 1973:122, 135-136.
[216] Dever 2003:153, 181, 194.

to a population surge in Iron Age I – particularly in the hill country. These settlers were not foreign invaders, but emerged predominantly from Canaanite society. He depicts the Proto-Israelites as Iron I hill country colonists, composed of different groups – all dissidents of one sort or another; the *ḫabiru*, evidently, would have been among them. Although these highlanders were – at that stage – not yet citizens of an Israelite state with fixed boundaries, Dever[217] argues 'that these were the *ancestors* – the authentic and direct progenitors – of those who later became the biblical Israelites'.

Friedman[218] mentions that 'it is a strange fact that we have never known with certainty who produced the book that has played such a central role in our civilization'. Information concerning the connection between the author's life and the world the author depicts, is largely lacking in the Hebrew Bible. Variations in detail could be observed in biblical narratives. In most cases of a doublet the divine name *Yahweh* occurs in the one version, and the name *Elohim* in the other, thus indicating that two old source documents were woven together to form a continuous story in the Pentateuch. Biblical stories with variant detail often appear in two different places in the Hebrew Bible. In the instance of the narratives concerning the birth of Jacob's sons – each of whom became the ancestor of a tribe – there is usually a reference to either the Deity *Yahweh* or the Deity *Elohim*, as they name the child.[219]

The biblical chronicle of the Israelites that recounts dramatically how their nation established themselves in Canaan commences with the exodus from Egypt. This national epic is composed of the Pentateuch[220] and the Deuteronomistic History,[221] which were skilfully woven into a composite work, written and edited by anonymous authors and redactors. As literacy was not widespread in ancient Israel until the eighth century BC, scholars tend to date the Pentateuch in the eighth or seventh century BC. The Deuteronomistic History seems to be the work of a school of Mosaic reformers under Josiah,[222] with final additions during the Exile in the sixth century BC. The question arises as to the historical trustworthiness of these narratives which probably rest on documentary sources – now lost to us – and even older oral

[217] Dever 2003:194.
[218] Friedman 1987:15.
[219] Friedman 1987:22, 63. The name *Yahweh* is mentioned with the birth of the following sons: Reuben (Gn 29:32), Simeon (Gn 29:33) and Judah (Gn 29:35). The name *Elohim* is called out at the birth of Dan (Gn 30:4-6), Issachar (Gn 30:17-18) and Zebulon (Gn 30:19-20). In the case of the birth of Joseph – whose sons Ephraim and Manasseh (Gn 41:50-52) became tribal chiefs (Jos 16:4) – both names, *Yahweh* and *Elohim* are mentioned (Gn 30:22-24). At the births of Levi (Gn 29:34), Naphtali (Gn 30:7-8), Gad (Gn 30:10-11), Asher (Gn 30:12-13) and Benjamin (Gn 35:17-18), there is no reference to a deity.
[220] See § 8.2.
[221] See § 8.3.
[222] King of Judah; ca 640-609 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:197).

traditions. A large part of the exodus is devoted to the crossing of the Sinai Desert. A further question is thus whether there is any evidence from either textual or archaeological data that can substantiate the historicity of the Sinai epic. Attempts have been made to explain the different miracles during the exodus as natural phenomena.[223]

Davies,[224] likewise, poses the question whether there was an exodus at all. He indicates that such an argument would have been unthinkable a generation ago.[225] New theories regarding a Canaanite origin for the Israelites – based on archaeological data – indicate that it is not possible that all ancestors of Israel came from both the cities of Canaan and from Egypt. Textual testimony, however, cannot be ignored; 'the textual evidence purports … to give a different view from that which archaeologists now tend to favour'.[226] Countless references in the Book of Exodus, as well as elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, support the exodus tradition. The impact of this tradition could be observed in the historical narrative, worship, ritual, prophecy and law; it has a central place in the pre-exilic period, particularly in documents and traditions handed down from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. However, some scholars regard the traditions concerning Israel's sojourn in Egypt and the exodus of these people as "legendary and epic" in nature.

Thompson[227] denotes that scholars have attempted to link the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt with the Hyksos of the Fifteenth Dynasty.[228] During this time frame Egypt was ruled by foreigners, which, accordingly, 'offered a favourable climate for Semitic migration into the Delta region'.[229] Scholars also assume that it is more likely that a non-Egyptian – such as

[223] Dever 2003:7-8, 18, 21. See Dever (2003:15-21) for a discussion of the various miracles and possible explanations thereof.
[224] Davies 2004:23, 25-27.
[225] Davies (2004:23) quotes John Bright (*A history of Israel,* 1960:110. London: SCM Press), who wrote, inter alia, 'there can really be little doubt that ancestors of Israel had been slaves in Egypt and had escaped in some marvellous way'.
[226] Davies 2004:25.
[227] Thompson 1977:151-153.
[228] "Hyksos" is the Greek form of an Egyptian word meaning "ruler(s) of foreign land(s)" (Redford & Weinstein 1992:341). As the Fifteenth Dynasty (1663-1555 BC) they ruled during the Second Intermediate Period; the latter is dated 1782-1570 BC (Clayton 1994:93). The Hyksos power takeover in Egypt is described as a "destructive invasion". An Asiatic assumption of power is supported by evidence that a reasonably large proportion of the Egyptian population in the Thirteenth Dynasty comprised an Asian immigrant element. The Hyksos rulers established their capital at Avaris on the east of the Delta. Little is known about the government of the Hyksos. Seals suggest that they worshipped *Ba'al*-type – identified with the Egyptian *Seth* – and *Qudšu*-type deities. Long after their expulsion the Hyksos invasion lived on in written and oral traditions, both in Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean. A Canaanite version of the events may have inspired the Hebrew "exodus" legends. Hyksos material culture is a mixture of Syro-Palestinian and Egyptian features. Data on fortifications in Egypt are minimal. Hyksos rulers are known mainly from the appearance of their names on small objects, such as scarabs (Redford & Weinstein 1992:341, 343-345). See also "Hyksos" in a footnote in § 3.3, and incorporated in a footnote in § 4.3.13.
[229] Thompson 1977:151.

Joseph – could have risen to prominence under the Hyksos rule, rather than under Egyptian rulers. However, most extra-biblical sources support a later date than the Hyksos Period – namely, the thirteenth century BC – for a possible sojourn and exodus. Forced labour in Egypt linked to the capital Pi-Ramesse, 'establishes a nearly certain thirteenth-century date for the enslavement of the Hebrews in Egypt'.[230] Ramsey[231] considers the possibility that the exodus could be tied in with the departure of the Hyksos from Egypt.[232] Scholars traditionally dated the exodus during 1440 BC; this date was derived by dating backwards from the date attributed to the building of the Solomonic Temple – dated ca 960 BC. However, the older date was challenged and the exodus placed at ca 1290 BC. Based on archaeological and historical evidence most scholars lately support the later date.[233] Finegan[234] indicates that the only reference to "Israel" in an Egyptian inscription[235] establishes a probable date for the exodus at 1250 BC. The comment in Exodus 1:8, that 'there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph', could allude to a new dynasty. The Eighteenth Dynasty[236] was the first Egyptian dynasty after the expulsion of the Hyksos. Pi-Ramesse is the great East Delta residence and capital city built by Ramesses II[237] of the Nineteenth Dynasty; the family of Joseph was brought to the "land of Goshen", 'the land of Rameses'.[238] It therefore seems that an exodus date during the thirteenth century BC should be considered.

Thompson[239] argues that the name "Goshen" is neither Egyptian, nor found in Egyptian texts. During times of famine Semitic shepherds were allowed to enter Egypt; Israel's entry into Egypt, thus, might well have happened in this manner. Semites were, from as early as the third millennium BC, indigenous to Egypt. Although the Egyptians consistently distinguished themselves from Semitic peoples, West-Semitic loan-words did enter the Egyptian language. Numerous periods in the Egyptian history could have provided a background for the pentateuchal narratives. If the so-called "historical events" behind the Joseph and Moses traditions had to be reconstructed from extra-biblical evidence concerning analogous occurrences in the Egyptian and Semitic worlds, an historical migration – parallel to movements recounted in the

[230] Thompson 1977:153.
[231] Ramsey 1981:75.
[232] This argument contradicts proposals by scholars for a later date for the exodus. See discussions in this paragraph.
[233] Drinkard 1998:176-177.
[234] Finegan 1998:202-203, 227, 232.
[235] The inscription is by Ramesses II's successor, Merenptah. See discussion in § 2.7 of this inscription.
[236] Dated 1570-1293 BC (Clayton 1994:100).
[237] Ramesses II is dated 1293-1185 BC (Clayton 1994:146). Finegan (1998:232) dates Ramesses II, 1279-1212 BC.
[238] Genesis 47:6, 11.
[239] Thompson 1977:156-158.

biblical narratives – should be suggested. Scholars have, for instance, identified migrations of *Shasu* tribes who left the Arabian Peninsula and Edom to enter Egypt.[240]

Davies[241] examined a few elements of the exodus tradition that might provide an historical core to the chronicle. He draws the conclusion that the historicity of some kind of "exodus event" could be estimated positively; 'that the tradition is a priori unlikely to have been invented; the biblical evidence is widespread and can be followed back to a respectable antiquity'.[242] Some elements have a "particular claim to authenticity", corresponding closely to the actualities in Egypt during the period of the New Kingdom. He discusses, inter alia, the Egyptian cities Pi-Ramesse and Pithom;[243] Moses' Midianite connections, which is unlikely to have been fabricated; the term "Hebrew" as an alternative name for the people mentioned in Exodus 1-10; the antiquity of the *Song of Moses*[244] and the *Song of Miriam*;[245] numerous references in Egyptian New Kingdom[246] texts to people called *'pr(w)*, probably vocalised as *'apiru* (*ḫabiru*).[247] The oppression of the Israelites in Egypt – as mentioned in Exodus, and referred to numerous times in the Hebrew Bible – has some general credibility in the way foreign prisoners of war were exploited in the New Kingdom Period. The exodus-group might thus have consisted mainly of prisoners of war.[248] Lemche[249] discusses the plausibility that the storage cities Pithom and Raamses could be considered an historical background to the Exodus narrative. While the site Pi-Ramesse dates from the late New Kingdom Period, Pithom – as a name of a city – was used only from the seventh century BC onwards. It therefore seems that the ancient historians manipulated their sources to create the impression that the "people of Israel" worked as slaves in Egypt at an early point in their history.

Malamat[250] emphasises that, although there might be Egyptian material analogous to the biblical account in Exodus, 'none of the Egyptian sources substantiates the story of the Exodus'. Scholars therefore face the dilemma that the chronicle, which is mainly of a theological

[240] See also discussions in § 2.6 and § 4.3.4.
[241] Davies 2004:27,36. See Davies (2004:28-36) for a discussion of some elements that might support the authenticity of an "Egypt" and "exodus" tradition.
[242] Davies 2004:36.
[243] Compare Exodus 1:11, ' … . They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses'.
[244] Exodus 15:1-17.
[245] Exodus 15:21.
[246] New Kingdom dated 1570-1070 BC (Clayton 1994:99).
[247] Egypt was apparently not the place of origin of the *'apiru*; some texts refer to them as being brought to Egypt as prisoners of war from Palestine. The Egyptian texts generally refer to them as workmen on state projects (Davies 2004:32).
[248] Davies 2004:28-33.
[249] Lemche 1994:172-174.
[250] Malamat 1997:15.

nature, might be 'merely the product of later contemplation'.[251] However, the absence of any direct extra-biblical evidence does not necessarily negate any of the biblical accounts, but could be simply an indication that neither the exodus, nor the conquest, shook 'the foundations of the political and military scene of the day'.[252] A number of indirect sources, which could be regarded as circumstantial evidence, could afford greater authority to the biblical chronicle.[253] Some of these sources, for instance, refer to *'apiru* (*ḫabiru*) who had to transport stones for construction work commissioned by Ramesses II.[254] Furthermore, a stele from Elephantine of Pharaoh Sethnakht reflects the final years of the Nineteenth Dynasty and the first two years of Sethnakht.[255] During that time Asiatics were bribed with silver, gold and copper by a faction of the Egyptians who revolted against Sethnakht and those loyal to him. The Asiatics were, however, driven out of Egypt and a type of exodus, which led them to southern Palestine, were forced upon them.[256] Passages in the Book of Exodus refer to precious metals appropriated by the Israelites from the Egyptians,[257] and a statement by the pharaoh that the Israelites might join his enemies.[258]

Archaeological research in Egypt and Palestine has not revealed anything that can be directly linked to the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt or a large-scale migration by them from Egypt. Despite absence of archaeological "evidence", religious conservatives continue to search for signs of Semitic peoples in Egypt during the New Kingdom. The historicity of the exodus could not, however, be demonstrated by such an approach. The effort by scholars to change the date of the exodus from the thirteenth century BC back to the late fifteenth century BC, cannot be supported on archaeological grounds. It is, furthermore, unlikely that relevant sites along the principal exodus routes – at which Egyptian artefacts might be found – have not been discovered. Surveys have been conducted along these routes, and excavations have been undertaken at a number of these sites. There is no sign of activity during the earlier Hyksos Period.[259] Weinstein[260] concludes that there is no archaeological evidence for an exodus as

[251] Malamat 1997:15.
[252] Malamat 1997:16.
[253] See Malamat (1997:17-25) for a discussion of Egyptian sources that might contribute indirectly to substantiate the biblical narrative in the Book of Exodus.
[254] Papyrus Leiden 348, and an undated ostracon in hieratic script (Malamat 1997:18).
[255] Nineteenth Dynasty is dated 1293-1185 BC; Sethnakht is dated 1185-1182 (Clayton 1994:140, 160).
[256] Malamat 1997:22-23.
[257] Exodus 3:21-22, ' … and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, … . So you shall plunder the Egyptians'. See also Exodus 3:11-12; 12:35-36.
[258] Exodus 1:10, ' … , if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land'.
[259] See arguments earlier in this paragraph concerning the possibility that Joseph rose to prominence during the Hyksos Period, and the ensuing expulsion of Semites at the end of the Hyksos' reign.
[260] Weinstein 1997:97-98.

described in the Hebrew Bible, and 'if such an event did take place, the number of people involved was so small that no trace is likely to be identified in the archaeological record'. If there had been an historical exodus, it probably consisted of only several hundreds of Semites migrating out of Egypt during the late thirteenth or early twelfth century BC.[261]

Dozens of sites are listed in the biblical narrative of the wandering of the Israelites in the Wilderness. Only a few sites have been identified, of which one is Kadesh-barnea, the place where the Israelites are said to have sojourned for more or less thirty-eight years.[262] Tell el-Qudeirat near the oasis at ʿAin Qudeis in the north-eastern Sinai, is linked to biblical Kadesh-barnea. Not a single artefact from the thirteenth to twelfth century BC – the time frame for the exodus – has been recovered from this site. Therefore it appears that Kadesh-barnea was not occupied at an early stage, but became a site of pilgrimage during the Monarchy, at which time it became associated with the biblical tradition. Hundred years of exploration and excavation in the Sinai Desert yielded little about the "route of the exodus".[263] According to archaeological data of southern Transjordan, it is clear that sedentary people, including all those that the biblical texts report the incoming Israelites to have encountered – particularly the Edomites and the Moabites – were not yet settled in the Late Bronze Age. 'They were simply not there to be conquered.'[264]

Kallai[265] examines the origin of the appellations "Judah" and "Israel", and their function in Israelite historiography. The genealogical structure of the people of Israel – the latter which was later divided into the states of Judah and Israel – who were regarded as brothers had a distinct prehistory. Scholars cite *The Song of Deborah* to support the theory that a ten-tribe league existed before the twelve-tribe system that reflects a unified Israel. He refers to a thesis advanced by Aharoni,[266] suggesting that David attempted to unify Israel on the pattern of twelve tribes, while Israel actually consisted of only six tribes. Apart from this six-tribe Israel during the period of the settlement, there was also a southern group – consisting of Judah and its confederates – as well as a Transjordanian group. Kallai,[267] however, finds this view "entirely unacceptable". He indicates that it is difficult to judge the nature of the pre-monarchical tribal league. He concludes that the terms "Judah" and "Israel", as well as the concept of the

[261] Weinstein 1997:87, 93, 95, 97-98.
[262] Numbers 13, 14, 20.
[263] Dever 2003:19-20.
[264] Dever 1997a:22.
[265] Kallai 1978:251, 254-255, 261.
[266] Aharoni, Y 1966. *The land of the Bible*, 233-235, 267. London (Kallai 1978:254).
[267] Kallai 1978:254.

"Ten Tribes" were used in scribal tradition and had a deep-rooted place in the national consciousness.

According to the biblical account in Numbers 1, the twelve tribes of Israel appear for the first time as such when Moses orders a census of the people of Israel at Sinai. The men of the tribe of Levi – which would have totalled the tribes to thirteen – were not registered. The number twelve was far more important in the Hebrew Bible than was the actual reality of the Israelite tribes. The choice of the number twelve – linked to the months of the year – probably had its basis in rituals connected to worship in the Temple. Its origin should, therefore, in all likelihood, be found in the liturgical sphere; it took on particular importance among the priesthood in Jerusalem in the Achaemenid Period.[268] Although a division of ten tribes in the formation of the Northern state of Israel, and two tribes linked to the Southern state of Judah, is affirmed in the biblical text, it has little foundation.[269]

The scheme of the twelve tribes of Israel occupies a central position in the Hebrew Bible; the concept is employed extensively, particularly in biblical historiography. The order of births and the matrilineal relationships probably reflect, and are related to, the establishment of the tribes and their major clans in the country. Scholars suggested that an early Israelite amphictyony[270] had existed, which could have been instrumental in the formation of a tribal league. It is generally assumed that the grouping of the tribes, according to the mothers of the eponymous ancestors, represents a special bond among the member tribes. Apart from two major genealogical arrangements, the tribal systems also included definite geographically orientated lists. The pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah is obvious in its prime position to the Tabernacle on its east side;[271] Judah's relation to the priesthood and Temple is thus emphasised. The Tabernacle was built by a Judahite.[272] Joshua 13-19 presents a detailed description of the allotment of the land to the different tribes according to a geographical system, which could be defined on the basis of territorial descriptions. 'The order of the tribes is governed by a combination of geographical and genealogical patterns, undoubtedly also influenced by theoretical considerations.'[273] Points of contact between the genealogical representation of the tribal interrelationships and the geographical distribution of the tribes substantiate the suggestion that

[268] See footnote in § 4.3.13 regarding the Achaemenids.
[269] Garbini 1988:121-124.
[270] Amphictyony: 'a political system in which six or twelve clans or tribes are bound together by some interest common to them all, usually a shared religion with a central shrine'. Such a system constitutes a weak political and military unity (Deist 1990:10).
[271] Numbers 2:2-3.
[272] Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur (Ex 31:1-12). See also the genealogy of Judah in 1 Chronicles 2:4-5, 9, 18-20.
[273] Kallai 1997:79.

all schemes stem from one formalised structure. It is therefore clear that no historical situation created the different schemes; literary formulations were thus applied in these systems to reflect a particular emphasis. Tribal lists feature in different contexts from Genesis to Judges, and thereafter only in 1 Chronicles and Ezekiel. Sporadic genealogical data 'indicate a highly complex and variegated process of the settling in the land that involves movement of clans and tribes'.[274] Certain historical aspects may be gleaned from tribal lists that indicate developments in ancient Israel.[275]

Newman[276] suggests that it was the Rachel-group – which was the nuclear root of the Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) and Benjamin tribes – 'which made a decisive penetration into the land of Canaan across the Jordan river in the latter part of the thirteenth century'. The group was under leadership of Joshua. Joshua's theophorous[277] name probably had its origin in Mosaic circles. There were clearly many groups in Canaan who responded favourably to these invaders with their radically new religion. Dever[278] denotes that elements of the old tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh – "the house of Joseph"– may indeed originally have been slaves in Egypt, making their way to Canaan independently. On their way they could have made contact with nomadic tribes in southern Transjordan, who worshipped a deity *Yahweh*. Textual tradition in the Hebrew Bible was shaped disproportionately by southern groups in Judah, who were centred around Jerusalem. Descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh were probably among these groups. Dever[279] presupposes 'a complex, multifaceted process for the formation of the later literary tradition of the origin stories'. Biblical writers and editors interpreted events, never claiming that the ancient literature was historical – as in a modern sense. It was probably only the "house of Joseph" who had been in Egypt; they told the story, and, as a matter of course, eventually included all those who considered themselves part of biblical Israel. 'In time most people no doubt believed that they had been in Egypt'.[280]

The Book of Joshua continues the story line that started in the Book of Exodus. It recounts a classic theme in biblical tradition, describing how Israel came to be settled in the land of Canaan – land that *Yahweh* gave to them. The "conquest" was a recurring motive in narratives, which was explained to children and worshippers. Although the name of the book elicits

[274] Kallai 1997:88.
[275] Kallai 1997:53, 55, 57, 64, 72, 79, 86, 88.
[276] Newman 1985:175.
[277] For an explanation of "theophorous", see "theophoric name" incorporated in a footnote in § 2.3.
[278] Dever 1997a:46.
[279] Dever 1997a:47.
[280] Dever 1997a:47.

mental images of a massive invasion by a unified army, a substantial part of the book is devoted to the crossing of the Jordan and preparations for the first battle. The second major segment of the book relates a number of warfare stories, while chapters 13-21 give an account of the allotment of the land to the different tribes, as well as the cities and pasturelands allotted to the tribe of Levi. The book concludes with a renewal of the Covenant at Shechem.[281]

Coats[282] suggests 'that the exposition to the narrative in the book of Joshua plays a double role'. It introduces narratives about Joshua, as well as about the conquest of the land, confessing about God's powerful deeds. The book therefore 'appears as both the conquest theme with its emphasis on God's mighty act and a heroic saga with its emphasis on the mighty acts of Joshua'.[283] The image of Joshua – the heroic leader – had been modelled on the image of Moses.[284] Drinkard[285] refers to current debates that focus on the definition of history, the construction thereof, and the relationship between history and the actual events of the past. Archaeology is a legitimate component of history; alongside literary remains, the archaeological record is often the only feature on which the perception of the history could be based. Archaeology has produced some evidence that seemingly support the account of the conquest, but at the same time several key sites have yielded conflicting data. However, the biblical record should not be discarded as unreliable, although there are problems to interpret the biblical material. Historiography in the biblical period was not as rigid as it is in modern times – yet, even now, reporting is never unbiased. Nakai[286] denotes – as also mentioned earlier in this paragraph – that the biblical portrayal of the conquest by a "unified" Israel is unsubstantiated; the theme was probably employed to legitimise territorial acquisition in the time of the Monarchy.

According to Yadin,[287] at the end of the Late Bronze Age many fortified cities were destroyed; archaeological evidence indicates that the destructions cannot be attributed to earthquakes of famine. The biblical narrative relates how nomadic Israelites destroyed Canaanite cities and set them on fire. These cities were replaced by unfortified cities or settlements. He emphasises, however, that, although the archaeological record – in its broad outline – supports the narratives in Joshua and Judges, he is not of the opinion 'that the entire conquest account

[281] Boling 1992:1002-1003, 1007.
[282] Coats 1987:21.
[283] Coats 1987:21.
[284] Coats 1987:26.
[285] Drinkard 1998:171, 175, 177, 181.
[286] Nakai 2003:142.
[287] Yadin 1982:18-19, 21.

in Joshua and Judges is historically accurate in *every detail* or that it is historically *worthless*.'[288] Should the biblical narratives and archaeological data correspond, it is reasonable to accept the particular biblical source. At the end of the Late Bronze Age there was a marked decline in political and economic stability in Canaan; it is therefore not surprising that semi-nomadic tribes were able to conquer fortified cities.

Malamat[289] denotes that biblical historiography explained historical events theologically. Yet, this ancient conquest tradition reflects military strategy, and an intimate and authentic knowledge of the topography and demography of the land. The Canaanites lacked a basic territorial defence system and made no attempt to stop the Israelites from crossing the Jordan. Nonetheless, despite their military knowledge, it is difficult to explain how semi-nomadic Israelite tribes could successfully conquer fortified Canaanite cities that had formidable chariotry, as well as well-trained forces familiar with superior technology.

The traditional biblical account of the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan localises it as across the Jordan River opposite Jericho. Joshua 6 relates how the city was conquered by Joshua's men, and 'they burned the city with fire, and everything in it'.[290] Scholars have lately suggested that the principal entry into Canaan from the Transjordan occurred in the northern part of the Judean Valley through the Damiyeh pass, and elsewhere opposite Shechem, and thus not at Jericho. According to Deuteronomy 27:4, Moses commanded the Israelites to build an altar on Mount Ebal[291] as soon as they had crossed the Jordan. An historical memory was probably preserved by a group of northern tribes who entered the land from Gilead and the Succoth Valley.[292] Mount Ebal is some distance north of Jericho; it is totally unlikely that a large number of people could have reached this site from Jericho in a short period of time. The altar site uncovered at Mount Ebal conforms to the biblical accounts in Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8.[293] Zertal[294] denotes that archaeological data indicate that the Israelites came from outside Canaan, from the east; evidence that is 'clearly inconsistent with the theory currently [1991] fashionable in some circles that Israel emerged out of Canaanite society'.

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[288] Yadin 1982:19.
[289] Malamat 1982:26-28.
[290] Joshua 6:24.
[291] Mount Ebal is a large mountain located just north of Shechem in the central Samaria mountains. It was the site of an important Israelite ceremony associated with the instruction of Moses (Dt 27:4-8) concerning the building of an altar of unhewn stones, sacrifices and a special liturgy. Many scholars accept the authenticity of the event, as described in Deuteronomy (Dt 27:4-8) and Joshua (Jos 8:30-35) (Zertal 1992:255, 258).
[292] Succoth Valley: see footnote in § 2.7.
[293] Zertal 1991:37-38, 45.
[294] Zertal 1991:46.

According to Kenyon,[295] excavations during the early twentieth century at Tell es-Sultan – universally accepted as the site of ancient Jericho – uncovered remains of a town wall that could have collapsed "at the sound of the trumpet and shouting". Scholars were keen to demonstrate that archaeology could "prove" the truth of the biblical text. However, some decades later excavations revealed that the wall in question had surrounded an Early Bronze Age town, dated ca 2350 BC. Due to erosion it is unlikely that any evidence would be uncovered that could be connected with defences of Jericho. Recovered pottery at the site is linked to a settlement on the tell, dated 1400-1325 BC. Thereafter, the earliest date for inhabitants on the site was from the eleventh to tenth century BC.[296] Ramsey[297] mentions that later excavations at Jericho 'revealed nothing to indicate a habitation of any significance in the thirteenth century'. Walls which have been attributed to a fourteenth century BC destruction – during earlier excavations – were later identified as structures which were brought down before the end of the third millennium BC.

After the "fall of Jericho", Ai was attacked.[298] Dever[299] indicates that extensive excavations revealed that both Jericho and Ai[300] were deserted much earlier than the date attributed to the conquest. There is no evidence of occupation of Ai during the thirteenth century BC. It had been completely abandoned since ca 2000 BC, apart from phases of domestic activity from the late thirteenth into the tenth century BC. Thus, 'contrary to the biblical tradition, this "Proto-Israelite" village is not founded on the ruins of a destroyed Canaanite city'.[301] Ramsey[302] agrees that Ai was uninhabited during the period ascribed to the attack by Joshua's men. Zevit[303] denotes that 'two major archaeological expeditions have been conducted at the site of Khirbet et-Tell, between Jericho and Bethel'. According to the archaeological evidence – which is apparent – an unwalled village existed on the tell ca 3100-3000 BC. This village developed to a major walled city ca 3000-2860 BC. The city was destroyed between 2550-2350 BC. Thereafter the site remained unoccupied; no evidence of a Middle Bronze Age[304]

[295] Kenyon 1987:72-75.
[296] Scholars generally date the exodus ca 1290 BC or later; the conquest therefore would have been a few decades later, thus during the thirteenth or twelfth century BC.
[297] Ramsey 1981:69-70.
[298] Joshua 7 and 8.
[299] Dever 1997a:23, 30.
[300] The name Ai – in Hebrew and Arabic – means "the ruin-heap". It was a prominent landmark (Dever 1997a:30).
[301] Dever 1997a:30.
[302] Ramsey 1981:70.
[303] Zevit 1985:58. Khirbet et-Tell is linked to biblical Ai.
[304] Middle Bronze Age, 2200-1500 BC (Zevit 1985:58).

or Late Bronze Age[305] settlement has been found at the site. Zevit[306] supports Albright,[307] who concluded that Ai was destroyed centuries before the alleged invasion by Israel. There is also the possibility that the site Khirbet et-Tell[308] has been designated erroneously as biblical Ai. Yet, Zevit[309] mentions that 'in the course of my visits to et-Tell, I have been struck by the astounding extent to which the topographic details of the battle of Ai stated or implied in the Biblical accounts can be identified on the ground at Khirbet et-Tell and the immediate vicinity'. However, although these topographical and geographical details reinforce the consideration to identify et-Tell with Ai, it does not prove that the "Ai story" actually occurred. Ancient historians who interpreted the event presumably believed that the account of the conquest of Ai was true.[310] Boling[311] denotes that scholars often regard the battle of Jericho as mainly liturgical, while the story of Ai is entirely aetiological.

Joshua 10:31 relates that Joshua and his men laid siege to Lachish and fought against it. Lachish was a central biblical city in the Shephelah,[312] and one of the key sites in the biblical account of the Israelite conquest of Canaan. According to Joshua 10:32, 'the LORD gave Lachish into the hand of Israel'. Ussishkin[313] refers to archaeological excavations that were carried out at Tel Lachish, 'which is almost certainly the site of ancient Lachish'. Level VI – twelfth century BC – was a large and prosperous Canaanite city, which was destroyed by a "terrible" fire, sometime around 1150 BC, or even later. This Canaanite city maintained important connections with Egypt. Although Egypt apparently still had effective jurisdiction over most of southern Canaan during the latter part of the twelfth century BC, the sudden destruction of Lachish Level VI is an indication that Egypt had lost control; unfortified Lachish – without Egypt's protection – was an easy prey to the enemy. Despite the fact that archaeological data have no evidence as to who the enemy was, it does indeed fit the biblical description.[314] The motive for the destruction remains unclear since the Israelites did not occupy the

[305] Late Bronze Age, 1500-1250 BC (Zevit 1985:58).
[306] Zevit 1985:61.
[307] American biblical archaeologist William F Albright.
[308] Khirbet et-Tell is its modern Arabic designation. This Arabic name – literally meaning "the ruin of the tell" – has been used to support the identification of the site as biblical Ai (Zevit 1985:61-62).
[309] Zevit 1985:64.
[310] Zevit 1985:58-59, 61-62, 64-65, 68.
[311] Boling 1992:1009.
[312] Shephelah: see footnote on Lachish in § 2.13.
[313] Ussishkin 1987:20.
[314] The absence of fortifications enabled the Israelite army to seize the city on the second day. The completely deserted city explains the annihilation of the inhabitants (Jos 10:31-33) (Ussishkin 1987:38).

site or settle in the vicinity. It remained unoccupied until the tenth century BC.[315] Ussishkin[316] indicates that 'the conquest of Lachish stands out as a unique event in the Biblical story of the Israelite conquest of Canaan and the archaeological data fit the Biblical text in every detail'. Therefore, if the destruction of Canaanite Lachish is attributable to Joshua and his men, the biblical tradition of the conquest is dated – on archaeological grounds – to about 1150 BC, or even later.[317]

Based on archaeological data, scholars agree that Canaanite Hazor was destroyed in the thirteenth century BC.[318] If the Israelite tribes conquered Hazor – as related in Joshua[319] – 'then we must conclude that the Biblical concept of a swift campaign by Joshua's forces is incompatible with the archaeological evidence, because this evidence discloses that two major Canaanite cities, Lachish and Hazor, were destroyed about a century apart'.[320] Ben-Tor[321] indicates that the fall of Hazor – according to the biblical narrative – was one of the most significant events in the process of conquest and settlement. Excavations at the site clearly indicate that the city was violently ravaged. Archaeologically, the version in the Book of Joshua enjoys precedence over the account as presented in the Book of Judges.[322] Four groups[323] could be considered responsible for Hazor's final disaster. All of these groups have been ruled out, except for the "Israelites". Thus, seemingly the city was destroyed by the latter people.[324]

The Book of Joshua, thus, relates how the powerful kings of Canaan were defeated in a "lightning military campaign", so that Israel's destiny could be fulfilled when the tribes inherited their land. However, the general political and military scene of Canaan intimates that a "lightning invasion" by the group under the leadership of Joshua 'would have been impractical and unlikely in the extreme'.[325] Nonetheless, the book is not a total "imaginary fable"; the campaigns followed a logical geographical order and reflect the geography of the land of Israel accurately.[326] The core of the Hebrew Bible, therefore, could be described as an "epic

[315] Ussishkin 1987:20-22, 34-35, 38.
[316] Ussishkin 1987:38.
[317] Ussishkin 1987:38-39.
[318] Ussishkin 1987:39.
[319] Joshua 11:1-13.
[320] Ussishkin 1987:39.
[321] Ben-Tor 1998:456.
[322] Judges 4:2, 17.
[323] Suitable candidates responsible for the disaster could be, the Sea Peoples, a rival Canaanite city, the Egyptians, or the "Israelites" (Ben-Tor 1998:465).
[324] Ben-Tor 1998:456, 465. For a discussion on the probability that the "Israelites" conquered Hazor, see Ben-Tor (1998:456-466).
[325] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:76.
[326] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:72, 76, 78.

story" that relates 'the rise of the people of Israel and their continuing relationship with God'.[327]

Wessels[328] identifies two portrayals of the "conquest of the land". Firstly, the Book of Joshua sketches great military victories – which could be compared to the invasions by the Assyrians and the Babylonians into Palestine – in which the whole country is conquered in a relatively short time. In contrast to this type of onslaughts, the Book of Judges describes the conquering of the land as a gradual and incomplete process. It is evident that at least more than one author/redactor worked on the text of Judges, each of whom viewed the events from a different perspective. It is thus inevitable that the integration of various sources would have caused discrepancies in the accounts concerning the conquering of Canaan.[329] Craig[330] reviews research done on the Book of Judges during the last decade of the twentieth century. Apart from the discussion of major characters, feminist interpretations and literary treatments of the book are also examined. He concludes that, despite the tremendous interest amongst scholars, he 'was unable to find an article that applied the tools of multiple approaches to a single text'.[331]

Since the early years of the twentieth century, scholars have postulated various models to interpret and clarify the so-called settlement process of those tribes who later called themselves the Israelite nation. No consensus has, as yet, been reached. Lengthy debates have been ongoing for many decades, and innumerable publications have seen the light on this enigmatic question. This thesis comprises different disciplines, which – to my mind – is relevant to my research problem. It is, therefore, not possible to include extensive discussions and analyses of these aforementioned debates. The particular models and what they entail are thus referred to only cursorily, and not deliberated in depth.

Gnuse[332] denotes that scholars' perception of the formative period in Israel's history influences their discernment of the biblical theological message. Consequently, different scholarly models have been developed. These models, in their turn, inspire particular theologies or ideologies; the revolutionary model, for instance, advocated ideas which encouraged liberation and

[327] Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:8.
[328] Wessels 1996:184.
[329] Wessels 1996:184, 187-188.
[330] Craig 2003:159, 170-171, 174-175. See Craig (2003:159-175) for a discussion of research done during the period 1990-2003 on the Book of Judges. Craig surveys a large number of relevant articles and monographs.
[331] Craig 2003:174-175.
[332] Gnuse 1991a:56.

social reform. Traditionally, three different theories have been advanced for many decades, namely peaceful infiltration, violent conquest, or social revolution. As from the 1980s, scholars – who now had new conceptions – proposed several variations on the traditional models. 'This new alternative builds upon more thorough archaeological research and a reassessment of many sociological and anthropological theories used previously by scholars.'[333] Gnuse[334] is of the opinion that 'one could almost speak of a "paradigm shift" … for much of the same data is now being interpreted in a new fashion.'

In the 1920s Albrecht Alt postulated that the Israelites infiltrated gradually and peacefully from the Transjordan into the Cisjordan. Martin Noth incorporated this theory a number of years later into an historical survey. This model suggests that the process took place in two stages. Firstly, pastoral nomads had repeatedly entered the land, settled down and took up agriculture. In the second stage their increased numbers came in conflict with the Canaanites; these encounters eventually stimulated the development of the Joshua and Judges chronicles. Tribal identity emerged gradually, reaching final unity during the time of David.[335] The Israelite amphictyony[336] theory, formulated by Martin Noth, was advanced to explain how tribes of various origins, settling under different circumstances, 'became united in the worship of Yahweh and eventually developed into the nation of Israel'.[337] Noth based his study on the tribal lists in the Hebrew Bible. Israel is described as a community of twelve tribes, descended from the twelve sons of Jacob; the Leah group of tribes represents an older amphictyonic formation of six tribes. By comparing his proposal with the classical amphictyony,[338] Noth suggested that the 'reality of premonarchic Israelite life might be clarified'[339] by this analogy. Since the 1970s this theory, however, has been criticised, particularly considering 'the historical and geographical distance which separates premonarchic Israel from the classical amphictyony'.[340] It is, nevertheless, not impossible that amphictyonic relationships had existed between groups of tribes, or other social units, united on particular grounds.[341] Drinkard[342] denotes that the Israeli archaeologist, Yohanan Aharoni, promoted the peaceful

[333] Gnuse 1991a:56.
[334] Gnuse 1991a:56.
[335] Gnuse 1991a:56-57.
[336] See an earlier footnote in this paragraph.
[337] Ramsey 1981:88.
[338] See Mayes (1992:212) for an explanation of the classical amphictyony. From the fourth century BC the term was applied to a sacred league, which later had its centre at the shrine of Apollo at Delphi, in Greece (Mayes 1992:212).
[339] Mayes 1992:213.
[340] Mayes 1992:214.
[341] Mayes 1992:216.
[342] Drinkard 1998:179.

settlement model, based mainly on his surveys and excavations in the Negeb. A number of new settlements – dated the thirteenth century BC - were uncovered on previously uninhabited sites. These communities were attributed to Hebrew tribes who gradually settled down. Weinfeld[343] indicates that the intention of the migrating tribes were to settle in unoccupied territories in the "promised land", rather than in the inhabited cities. They resorted to warfare and conquest only after confrontation with the residents of the cities.

American and Israeli archaeologists – led by William Albright – challenged the above German theories. They declared that a systematic, unified, military conquest took place, which could have been even more extensive than the description in the Book of Joshua. According to these scholars, they determined that important Canaanite cities had been destroyed in the late thirteenth century BC and subsequently apparently had been occupied by Iron Age Israelites; similarly – according to these scholars – surveys in the Transjordan 'reinforced the picture of a violent invasion by the Israelites'.[344] Drinkard[345] mentions that, although archaeological data support the conquest model in some instances, there is conflicting evidence at several key sites. According to him, 'archaeology is a legitimate component of history'[346] and has a rightful place alongside literary remains. However, the biblical record should not be discarded as unreliable, despite problems interpreting the biblical material. Dever[347] indicates that the conquest model has been drawn directly from the Book of Joshua.

A third model – advanced by the American School[348]– developed during the 1960s and 1970s. George Mendenhall formally constructed the social revolutionary theory, which was later developed, particularly by Norman Gottwald. According to this model, impoverished Canaanites, oppressed by Egyptian taxation and the burden of a political city-state system, revolted; they burned the cities and fled to the highlands where they created an 'egalitarian state by the process of retribalization'.[349] Terracing enabled living in the highlands; these artificially built terraces over exposed bedrock dominate the highland landscapes of Palestine. This practice was intimately connected with the Iron Age I expansion of settlements in the highlands.[350] Mendenhall believed that a group of *Yahweh* worshippers from Egypt were the source of the

[343] Weinfeld 1988:325.
[344] Gnuse 1991a:57.
[345] Drinkard 1998:174, 177, 181.
[346] Drinkard 1998:174.
[347] Dever 1997a:22.
[348] See paragraph above – School of American and Israeli archaeologists.
[349] Gnuse 1991a:57.
[350] Gibson 2001:113-114. For a detailed description of the Iron Age I highland terraces, see Gibson (2001:113-140).

revolt. Peasants from the cities, and *ḫabiru* – already in the highlands – grouped together to worship this new god, *Yahweh*; they 'continued to wage war on the Canaanites'.[351] Gnuse[352] denotes that Gottwald 'de-emphasizes the importance of the Yahweh group from the Transjordan', and that his 'use of Marxist categories distances him from Mendenhall's emphasis upon covenantal religion'. Bimson[353] is of the opinion that Mendenhall's theory proffers the best explanation for the origin of the biblical tradition.[354]

According to Chikafu,[355] the influence of the various scholars – who developed the models under discussion – on biblical studies, should not be underestimated. However, he emphasises that the presuppositions of exegetes inevitably direct their interpretation of a text; a text could thus be 'manipulated in order to fit into a predetermined framework of the interpreter'.[356] These traditional models were also developed on the premise of different types of audiences to whom they are directed.[357] All three models have been criticised by scholars.

Only a few points of criticism, concerning the three traditional models, are mentioned hereafter. Considering the extent of matter discussed in this thesis, it is hardly possible to deliberate on, and refer to, the many different comments and critique expressed by numerous scholars.

Gnuse[358] mentions that the main criticism of the "peaceful infiltration model" is the proponents' inability to exhibit that Israel emanated from outside Palestine – as they have suggested. Alt, furthermore, assumed that settlement was preceded by nomadism; the biblical text, however, implies that the Wilderness was a difficult and unaccepted place for the Israelites to survive, or to follow a nomadic lifestyle by choice. Furthermore, the general perception of scholars that the Israelite and Late Bronze Age Canaanite cultures had much in common is inconsistent with the view of Alt who proposed that the Israelites were aliens to the land. This model, likewise, discredits the conquest chronicles on the presumption that they

[351] Gnuse 1991a:57.
[352] Gnuse 1991a:57.
[353] Bimson 1989:9.
[354] Mendenhall proposed that a group that had migrated out of Egypt and became a covenant community at Sinai, subsequently entered Canaan. These people were later joined by larger groups; the latter who identified themselves fully with the deliverance from Egypt. 'The original historic events with which all groups identified themselves took precedence over and eventually excluded the detailed historical traditions of particular groups who had joined later' (Bimson 1989:9).
[355] Chikafu 1993:11, 18.
[356] Chikafu 1993:18.
[357] See Chikafu (1993:18-21, 23-24) for an exposition of the audiences to whom the models would have been directed.
[358] Gnuse 1991a:57.

were created to function as aetiologies. Ramsey[359] confirms that Alt and his followers have been criticised for these "unwarranted conclusions" regarding the biblical conquest narratives. There is also no archaeological evidence that indicates the arrival of newcomers in Canaan in the vicinity of 1200 BC. According to Bimson,[360] although this theory takes specific biblical traditions into consideration, 'it clearly rejects the overall picture of Israel's origins found in the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua'. Dever[361] agrees with Ramsey[362] that archaeological discoveries have not confirmed peaceful infiltration of urban Canaanite society; however, a few archaeological traces of pastoral nomads have been found. Scholars lately judge the desert origins of the Israelites as a "romanticised fiction" of later writers; possibly there were only a few of their ancestors who had ever been nomads. 'This model has fallen into neglect or disrepute'.[363]

Proponents of the "violent conquest" model 'were challenged for their assumption that archaeology might be used to verify biblical texts';[364] archaeological evidence is, however, ambiguous.[365] Further criticism of this theory indicates that there is also the possibility that the cities were ravaged by either the Egyptians or the Sea Peoples;[366] incomprehensibly, the Israelites did not settle in their so-called "conquered" regions,[367] but established themselves 'mainly in areas removed from the sites of the Canaanite cities in the Galilee'.[368] Some of the cities – claimed to have been destroyed by the Israelites – were uninhabited during the time when the Israelites supposedly invaded the land.[369] Bimson[370] indicates that since Kathleen Kenyon's excavations at Jericho in the 1950s, scholars have accepted that there are no traces that the city was destroyed by Joshua.[371] According to Dever,[372] 'the model has fared so badly archaeologically that it has been almost entirely abandoned by biblical scholars in the last two decades'. [Dever's article was published in 1997]. An external origin of the Israelites is also unlikely, considering a continuity of material culture between them and the Canaanites.[373]

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[359] Ramsey 1981:79, 88-89, 92.
[360] Bimson 1989:7.
[361] Dever 1997a:24-25.
[362] Ramsey 1981:92.
[363] Dever 1997a:25.
[364] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[365] Ramsey 1981:69.
[366] See footnote in § 2.7 incorporating the "Sea Peoples".
[367] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[368] Fritz 1987:92.
[369] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[370] Bimson 1989:5.
[371] See earlier discussions in this paragraph about cities supposedly attacked and destroyed by Joshua and his men.
[372] Dever 1997a:22.
[373] Gnuse 1991a:58.

Fritz[374] describes this hypothesis as a 'naive adoption of the traditional interpretation of the book of Joshua'. He indicates that the downward trend of the Canaanite cities stretched from at least 1200 BC to 1150 BC, and was, therefore, not a rapid event. Their decline coincided with the dwindling Egyptian hegemony. He, furthermore, mentions that, according to archaeological analyses, the Canaanite culture of the Early Iron Age was markedly dependent upon the culture of the Late Bronze Age, thereby precluding an invasion of the country by new peoples.[375]

The "social revolution hypothesis" 'has drawn the most extensive response'.[376] The proponents of this model have been unable to justify their suggestion that a peasants' revolt took place in ancient Israel, or elsewhere. They tend to impose modern ideologies – particularly Marxist – upon the ancient Israelites. These scholars are also not well versed in anthropological and sociological theory; they lack knowledge about tribal structures and nomads, as well as the interrelationship of pastoral and sedentary manners of existence. Their background in biblical studies, including acquaintance with prevailing archaeological data and familiarity with the question of the *ḫabiru*, is inadequate. Their emphasis on the importance of iron in the settlement process does not take into account that the general use of this metal was not before the tenth century BC, or even later.[377] Gnuse[378] concludes that these scholars 'unconsciously rely upon outmoded intellectual paradigms taken from biblical studies scholarship of a previous generation. The notion of early covenantal relationships and an amphictyonic league are presumed without justifying the use of these now discredited biblical images'.

In the introduction to his comprehensive and classic *The Tribes of Yahweh*, Gottwald[379] denotes that, according to Exodus 1-24, 'a religious revolt and a social revolt clearly go hand in hand'. The people in Exodus decided that they no longer passively accepted their undesirable social situation as a – previously unknown – God intended to change their general position. This new religion revolutionised the perception of the people; they were convinced that they should break with an intolerable or unsatisfactory contemporary past, as something more worthy was not only possible, but necessary. In his exposition, Gottwald[380] declares, inter alia, that the "revolt model" could account for a significant volume of the contents of narratives

[374] Fritz 1987:84.
[375] Fritz 1987:90, 97.
[376] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[377] Gnuse 1991a:59.
[378] Gnuse 1991a:59.
[379] Gottwald 1979:xxi. See also bibliography in this thesis.
[380] Gottwald 1979:210.

describing Israel's entry into Canaan, considering that Israel was composed of a large sector of the Canaanites – those who had revolted against their overlords – who joined forces with invaders – or infiltrators – from the desert. Gottwald[381] mentions, nonetheless, that 'not only are all the accounts of Israel's origin highly problematic to date, but the models so far proposed are increasingly seen not as totally separate models in all respects but as constructs along a continuum that simultaneously share some interpretations of the evidence and disagree on other interpretations'. He does, however, have 'grave doubts about the biblical accounts of a mass exodus and conquest'.[382]

Key terms in Gottwald's "*Tribes*" are "religion", "liberated" and "sociology". Dever[383] states that he cannot do justice in his publication[384] to 'Gottwald's bold, controversial programmic statement, which many now regard as one of the most seminal works of 20th-century American biblical scholarship'. Ironically, it was initially hailed as revolutionary, then subjected to criticism – partly owing to its Marxist orientation – and then overlooked. Dever,[385] furthermore, denotes that some biblical scholars were not familiar with Gottwald's particular discipline and 'dismissed its heavily anthropological discourse as jargon'. His model projected "class struggle" and "peasant revolts". Few scholars appreciated his emphasis on indigenous origins, which later proved to be correct – most early Israelites were "displaced Canaanites". Despite the affinity between the theories of Mendenhall and Gottwald, the latter's "revolt" model was "violently opposed" by Mendenhall.

Boer[386] mentions that "everyone" seems to know that Gottwald is a Marxist. He devoted his major work "*Tribes*" to the reconstruction of the new society and ideology of early Israel. Any idealist construction, however, 'cannot avoid the implications of a mythical or theological core'.[387] He judges this work of Gottwald as 'a Marxist text, a socialist work of biblical scholarship',[388] In response to Boer, and other scholars' criticism, Gottwald[389] contends that the "*Tribes*" challenges traditional biblical scholarship, opening "Pandora's box" of problems and possibilities with regard to the social critical study of the Hebrew Bible. He indicates that,

[381] Gottwald 1993:165.
[382] Gottwald 1993:173.
[383] Dever 2005:40.
[384] Dever, W G 2005. *Did God have a wife?* See bibliography in this thesis.
[385] Dever 2003:54.
[386] Boer 2002b:98.
[387] Boer 2002a:1-2.
[388] Boer 2002a:2.
[389] Gottwald 2002:173-174.

despite criticism by scholars, these academics acknowledge particular accomplishments of "*Tribes*".[390]

The three different theories or models provide the foundation to consider a new model concerning the establishment of an Israelite nation. The effectiveness of both the peaceful infiltration model and the peasants' revolt model is manifest on account of the view of the proponents that early Israel emanated, to a great extent, from the indigenous population of Canaan. Overwhelming archaeological evidence signifies an inherent Canaanite origin of most early Israelites.[391] In this regard Dever[392] proposes to adopt Volkmar Fritz's term "symbiosis", which denotes 'common, local, overlapping roots of both Canaanite and Israelite society (and religion as well) in the thirteenth - eleventh centuries BCE'. The process of change, which was relatively slow and complex, involved a great deal of assimilation.[393] Fritz[394] explains that the cultural dependence and adoption of the Canaanite culture by the Israelite tribes could have been possible only by the supposition that close relations existed between these two groups before the twelfth century BC, hence the term "symbiosis hypothesis". Bimson[395] discusses a number of theories according to which the Israelites are indigenous to Canaan.

Gnuse[396] indicates that out of discussions involving the traditional three models, new perceptions are beginning to take root amongst scholars. Several variations have been proposed on, what might be called, the peaceful internal model. He suggests a more complex typology of "peaceful withdrawal" that could be a new approach to the settlement process. Gnuse,[397] furthermore, indicates that archaeologists lately realise the importance of continuity of Israelite material culture with that of Canaanite antecedents. Evidence obtained from unfortified, peaceful Israelite highland villages links them to urban centres in the lowlands. New perspectives emerged revealing that there was no uniformity in the total picture of settlement history. Highland culture was seemingly an "outgrowth" of urban culture in the lowlands; examples are that highland farming techniques acquired from Late Bronze Age Canaanite prototypes – and the use of and particular forms of bronze tools – reflect Canaanite origins. Certain sites – previously classified as Israelite – are now regarded to be Canaanite highland villages. The

[390] See Gottwald (2002:173-174) for a synopsis of achievements accomplished in the publication of *The Tribes of Yahweh*.
[391] Dever 1997a:25-26.
[392] Dever 1997a:26.
[393] Dever 1997a:25-26.
[394] Fritz 1987:98.
[395] Bimson 1989:10-13.
[396] Gnuse 1991a:59.
[397] Gnuse 1991a:59-60.

general feeling amongst scholars is that a satisfactory distinction cannot be drawn between the Israelites and Canaanites in the early period of settlement. Archaeologists are therefore regarding 'Israelite settlement as an internal process which was peaceful'.[398] This view – termed peaceful withdrawal – could be a combination of Alt's perception and the internal origin of the "social revolution" theory. The proposal 'perceives that the Israelites were really Canaanites who quietly left their cities and moved to the highlands where they gradually evolved into Israelites'.[399]

According to Gnuse,[400] an extensive evaluation of highland Israelite settlements in Iron Age I was offered by David Hopkins, whose work is a thorough and objective analysis of the Iron Age highland agriculture; it comprises abundant information supportive of the peaceful settlement model. 'Social factors – the cooperation of many people networking in a developing tribal or kinship system – actually led to a successful settlement of the highlands. The cause of state formation was social, not technological. Survival required cooperation … .'[401] The dispersion of villages testifies to a population increase, mainly due to new people joining the villages. These newcomers were pastoralists and agriculturalists who relocated in response to the demand for survival; there was no invasion or outside infiltration. Hopkins' research thus reinforces the theory that the Israelite settlement was a peaceful process which occurred internally, within Canaan.

In the light of the view of many scholars lately that the Israelites were indigenous to the highlands – even before the collapse of the Canaanite city states – Gnuse[402] reviews a contemporary trend, which emphasises the 'evolutionary nature of cultural and religious development'. The Israelites – who were pastoral nomads – were indigenous to the land of Canaan, where they had originated centuries prior to the conquest. They were ethnically different from the Canaanites, but interacted culturally and therefore achieved similarity in material culture. Although primarily a sedentarised people, they also comprised families who had been internal nomads or *ḫabiru* who settled down. Gnuse[403] evaluates models advanced by different scholars and draws the conclusion that these models emphasise Israel's internal and peaceful origin. They are in diametric opposition to the violent conquest and social revolution models. The

[398] Gnuse 1991a:60.
[399] Gnuse 1991a:60.
[400] Gnuse (1991a:60-62) discusses the development of the theory and the contributions – in this regard – by various scholars. Gnuse (1991a:60-61) views the contribution by David Hopkins as the 'most extensive evaluation of highland settlements in Iron Age I'.
[401] Gnuse 1991a:60.
[402] Gnuse 1991b:109-110.
[403] Gnuse 1991b:109-116.

new proposals necessarily have theological and ethical implications. Scholars previously stressed the contrast between Israelite and Canaanite values. He proposes 'that in the future we ought to perceive Israel's worldview as a transformation or reconfiguration of existing values which already existed in the ancient world, but not as unique or in opposition to these values'.[404]

In contrast to the general assessment by scholars, Zevit[405] states that traditions reflected in biblical narratives, historiographic observations and archaeological data indicate 'that Iron Age Israelites of the central mountains did not originate or derive from the preceding Late Bronze population of the local Canaanite city-states and, therefore, were not traditionists bearing and passing on some form of the antecedent, local Canaanite culture'. He furthermore denotes that 'the data do not support an inference that local Canaanites became Israelites'.[406]

### 7.5 Masoretic Text narratives

It is reasonably apparent from discussions in this chapter that biblical narratives – in many instances – are not consistent with results from archaeological discoveries, or from conclusions drawn from literary, historical and archaeological research. Ramsey[407] corroborates this assessment and denotes 'that the findings of archaeology do not provide clear and compelling support for biblical stories … the evidence is exceedingly ambiguous in several ways'. In addition hereto, Dever[408] mentions that what archaeology 'has virtually forced upon all of us', is profoundly different to the biblical chronicles of an exodus and conquest.

Despite the above assessment, ancient north-western Syrian toponyms suggest a connection with proper names appearing in the patriarchal Abraham narrative in Genesis 11 – particularly regarding the city and countryside of Haran [Harran], which was an important crossroad city and is extremely well attested in the cuneiform record. Scholars agree that there is a correlation between the site and the name Haran mentioned in the Abraham chronicle. There also might be some connection with the personal name Haran – brother of Abraham – which appears in the biblical account. Similarly, the proper name Nahor – in Genesis 11 – might be associated with the city name Naḫur, which occurs frequently in the Old Babylonian Mari texts.[409]

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[404] Gnuse 1991b:116.
[405] Zevit 2001:113-114.
[406] Zevit 2001:115.
[407] Ramsey 1981:69.
[408] Dever 1997a:45.
[409] Frayne 2001:216, 224-225.

Janzen[410] denotes that the patriarchal narratives 'portray the rise and the first stages of formation of a new structure of actuality in the emergent community identified by the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'. An important parallel between 2 Samuel 24 - 1 Kings 1, and Genesis 23-24, concerning Abraham and king David,[411] is pointed out by Rudman.[412] He indicates that historical writing often entails communication through a narrative in order for the reader to draw appropriate theological, or other, lessons. Barton[413] discusses the dating of the "succession narrative" in 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2. There are lately severe doubts about the date of this material, although earlier scholars regarded it as a source with many historical names. In recent years this material has been dated later than the historical period itself. The Deuteronomist portrayed David as the ideal king; it is therefore inconceivable that he would have included negative stories about him – particularly the Bathsheba episode. Scholars thus deduce that the "succession narrative" was added later to the Deuteronomistic History. Generally, many scholars lately estimate biblical narratives as stories, rather than history.

The Book of Genesis is divided into sequential histories,[414] and not into primeval history and a history of the patriarchs. The arrangement of these narrations is important, as it seems to be related to a final stage in the tradition. It is clear that the different cycles were later merged – probably in the interest of national unity. The northern group of Israelites implemented the cycles to establish their identity and their claim on the land. The history, or epic, of Judah in Genesis 38, secured the royal line of David. The David-Zion tradition of Jerusalem was therefore united with the patriarchal-exodus-Sinai traditions of the North. It thus seems that the patriarchal cycles had preceded the Monarchy, and that David re-used them – with additions – 'in order to maintain his own line and to unite it with Israel'.[415]

Despite the emergence of new sources of information on the Philistines, the Hebrew Bible contributes the most extensive and diverse information on the Philistines – or the so-called

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[410] Janzen 1979:231.
[411] 2 Samuel 24 - 1 Kings 1 describes how king David – "old and advanced in years" – purchased a threshing floor from Araunah. In Genesis Abraham – "old, well advanced in years" – bought a cave at Machpelah as a burial site. Scholars often interpret this deed of Abraham as 'the first step in the fulfillment of the divine promises made to him concerning Israel's possession of the land of Canaan', while David's purchase from a Jebusite – a member of the last Canaanite people to be disposed – is the final fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham (Rudman 2004:239).
[412] Rudman 2004:239, 248-249.
[413] Barton 2004:95.
[414] The history of the patriarchs is divided into the accounts of Terah and Abraham (Gn 11:27-25:11); Ishmael (Gn 25:12-18); Isaac (Gn 25:19-35:29); Esau (Gn 36:1-37:1) and Jacob (Gn 37:2-50:26) (Fisher 1973:61).
[415] Fisher 1973:61, 64.

Sea Peoples. However, many scholars have had doubts to utilise Genesis as a source for potential historical references to the Philistines.[416] Extra-biblical data indicate that the Philistines in the Levant are dated only toward the end of the Late Bronze Age, or in the Iron Age I – a period identified with the exodus and settlement in Palestine. There are thus problems to locate the Philistines in the era of the patriarchs.[417]

The biblical account of the conquest[418] is the primary source of information regarding the Israelite occupation of Palestine. The biblical text, however, reflects certain internal inconsistencies. Critical literary analyses have revealed that the narrative is based on different ancient traditions, which represent diverse literary genres, and which have been subjected to changes during the transmission process.[419] Ramsey[420] mentions that 'the leading role played by Joshua in the narratives of Joshua 1-12 was considered a fiction' by proponents of the "peaceful entry" hypothesis. According to Dever,[421] the narratives describing the exodus and conquest never happened the way the Hebrew Bible claims. The influence of archaeological data on the reliability of the biblical account, or the rejection thereof, has been discussed in paragraph 7.4.

Although only a few examples of biblical narratives and their credibility have been referred to in this paragraph, this is an indication of the complexity with regard to the historical value of the Hebrew Bible.

### 7.6 Israelite Monarchy

Smith[422] mentions that 'until relatively recently, a typical description of Israel's history would essentially follow the outline of the Bible, supplemented by archaeological information and texts outside the Bible'. Archaeology and extra-biblical texts were thus applied to complement the biblical narratives. Material in the books Joshua to Kings provided information for an historical picture, and at the same time, 'the basis for delineating the periods of Israel's past'.[423] Scholars initially identified four different sources underlying the Pentateuch.[424] Although some scholars still support the idea of four separate sources, most scholars now

[416] See, for instance, Genesis 20-21, 26; with particular reference to Genesis 21:32, 34; 26:1, 17-18.
[417] Machinist 2000:53-55.
[418] Numbers 13 - Judges 1.
[419] Miller 1977:213.
[420] Ramsey 1981:79.
[421] Dever 1997a:45.
[422] Smith 2004:7.
[423] Smith 2004:8.
[424] See § 8.2 for a brief discussion of the different sources.

acknowledge associated editorial activity during the late Monarchy and the Exile. However, to interpret the so-called historical books[425] remains problematic. It is, furthermore, evident that the Monarchical Period probably preserved narratives about Israel's identity rather than to conserve a great deal of its history. Although the Hebrew Bible is not, as such, "being dismissed as historically worthless", it no longer holds a privileged position to reconstruct Israel's past. Results procured from archaeological data have been subjected to many scholarly debates, and often to different interpretations; the latter which are obviously influenced by the archaeologists' presuppositions.[426]

More abundant "historical-looking" material – biblical and extra-biblical – is available for the time of Israel's Monarchy, than for the earlier period of its history. Apart from biblical collections, profuse documents and literature from contemporary Ancient Near Eastern nations had been preserved, and have been excavated subsequently, supplementing biblical information. The biblical history in Genesis could actually be the memoirs of a family, extending across generations, to transmit an image of Israel's identity and its place within the world of monarchies. The extent of non-Israelites related to Israel is signified to various degrees. The books of Samuel – that continue the chronicles of Judges – trace the intricate road from tribal leadership to a monarchy.[427] 'The Iron Age I cultures of the hill-country of Canaan are controversial in [the] light of the problem of the origins of Israel.'[428] According to Zertal,[429] to analyse this complex historical dilemma, objective criticism of the biblical narratives should be combined with archaeological data. The question arises, who shared the hill country area and from where did they originate. The territory of biblical Manasseh in the central hill country is the largest among the tribal allotments.[430] Archaeologists excavated the site of Mount Ebal, which overlooks eastern Manasseh and parts of the Gilead. Results achieved from this survey suggest that early Israelites had settled there, and, as stated by Zertal,[431] they were already aware of their national identity in the twelfth century BC.

A tradition of a close bond between the Edomites and the Israelites may be reflected in the monarchical period story of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, that also involved an important cultural memory concerning the Edomites, Midianites, and other groups south of Judah. The

[425] Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings.
[426] Smith 2004:7-11, 13-14.
[427] Smith 2004:28-30.
[428] Zertal 1998:238.
[429] Zertal 1998:238-239, 243, 248.
[430] See Joshua 17:1-13.
[431] Zertal 1998:248.

idea of friendly contacts between the Edomites and the Israelites during the pre-monarchical and early-monarchical periods is portrayed in Deuteronomy 23:7. Further positive relations appear rooted in the archaic level of Israelite poetry.[432]

Many biblical works – such as 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings – contain monarchical period collections. Extra-biblical material also provides information regarding this time in Israel's history – particularly from the beginning of the ninth century BC. During this term there was no real change in the society of ancient Israel; family lineages remained the basis for community organisation. The extended family was maintained as the basic social unit. 'The patriarchal model of society prevailed, extending to the level of the royal household and its administration.'[433] Until Saul was introduced as the first king of an Israelite Monarchy,[434] Samuel was the focus in the first eight chapters of 1 Samuel.[435]

Finkelstein[436] mentions that, as a consequence of a wave of settlement in the highlands during the Iron Age, territorial national states of the Iron Age II emerged. 'This was a revolutionary development.'[437] However, many characteristics of the Israelite and Judean monarchies had its foundation in the long political history of the highlands in the third and second millennium BC. According to the biblical description, the central highlands were occupied by the House of Joseph in the North, and Judah – and associated tribes – in the South. At the end of the eleventh century BC, external pressures and internal processes compelled the hill country groups to unite, establishing one highlands state. Ramsey[438] speculates on the occurrence that tribes of disparate origins and backgrounds settled in Canaan under different circumstances, to develop eventually into the nation of Israel. According to Dever,[439] considerable archaeological evidence substantiates the premise that the Israelite Monarchy was a continuation of the Proto-Israelites. He, furthermore, mentions that centralisation resulted in the transformation of the Israelite society. As a consequence of the onslaught of urbanisation and nationalisation, the economy and the society gradually became more diverse and specialised – and eventually more segregated.[440] Wittenberg[441] agrees that the introduction of the

[432] See Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4; Habakkuk 3:3, as well as discussions in § 5.3.
[433] Smith 2004:28.
[434] 1 Samuel 9.
[435] Smith 2004:27-28.
[435] 1 Samuel 9.
[436] Finkelstein 1998:361-362.
[437] Finkelstein 1998:361.
[438] Ramsey 1981:88.
[439] Dever 2003:201.
[440] Dever 1998b:419.
[441] Wittenberg 1995:452.

Monarchy transformed the Israelite segmentary society into a centralised state 'with attendant traumatic changes in all spheres of life'.

Steiner[442] denotes that, based on archaeological evidence, Jerusalem of the tenth and ninth centuries BC, could be described as a small town with no more than two thousand inhabitants.[443] Significantly, no trace has been found of a settlement on the site of Jerusalem in the latter part of the Middle Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age – there was no city on the particular site that could have been the Urusalim of the Amarna Letters.[444] Building started only during the twelfth century BC; at that stage a fortification had been erected on top of the hill. A new town was founded later – during the tenth or, more likely, the ninth century BC – with impressive public buildings, but without a large residential area. It thus seems that this town 'functioned as a regional administrative centre or as the capital of a small, newly established state', and, that it is 'unlikely that this Jerusalem was the capital of a large state, the capital of the United Monarchy of biblical history'.[445] It probably acted as a 'politically dominant centre of commerce and trade for the small agricultural settlements nearby'.[446] Based on the analysis of archaeological data it seems that the seventh century BC Jerusalem 'became an urban centre of exceptional dimensions'.[447] According to Ofer,[448] during the twelfth to mid-eleventh century BC, Jebusites – probably of Anatolian origin – were settled in Jerusalem. He also refers to the "Bronze Age kingdom of Jerusalem", and denotes that 'it is well attested that during the Amarna period[449] Jerusalem had strong influence in the inner Shephelah, around Keilah'.[450]

Mazar[451] indicates that the evaluation of tenth century BC Jerusalem as a city is a critical question in the ongoing debate concerning the United Monarchy. Archaeologists – such as Kathleen Kenyon and Yigal Shiloh – have affirmed that it could have been a sizeable city

[442] Steiner 2001:283.
[443] David, who took Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:6-9) – 'the stronghold of Zion' (2 Sm 5:7) – is dated 1011/10-971/70 BC (Kitchen & Mitchell 1982:196), thus the eleventh to tenth century BC.
[444] The question arises about the identity of Melchizedek, king of Salem, who met Abram after the latter defeated Chedorlaomer (Gn 14:17-20). According to Kitchen & Mitchell (1982:194), Abram/Abraham is dated ca 2000-1825 BC. This period is classified as the Middle Bronze Age (Negev & Gibson 2001:556).
[445] Steiner 2001:283.
[446] Steiner 2001:280.
[447] Steiner 2001:281.
[448] Ofer 2001:26, 29.
[449] The Amarna Period or Amarna Interlude is dated mainly during the reign of pharaoh Akhenaten (1350-1334 BC) (Clayton 1994:120, 123, 126).
[450] Ofer 2001:29.
[451] Mazar 2006:256, 267, 269.

during that time. Other scholars, however, have advanced a more negative view.[452] Disparate evaluations have led to the conclusion that tenth century BC Jerusalem was a small town of some importance, but could not have been the capital of a developed state. Biblical descriptions of David and Solomon's state and all the building operations in Jerusalem were probably imaginative and overemphasised historiographical accounts. Excavations indicate that tenth century BC Jerusalem was spread over the entire hill of the City of David.[453] Lack of archaeological data for the Temple Mount area questions the historical validity of Solomon's building projects. However, although the biblical account might be exaggerated and unrealistic, it probably retains some historical truth at its core. One should, notwithstanding, keep in mind that this period was a formative time for the Israelite political entity, which was only starting to take shape with Jerusalem at its centre.

Steiner[454] denotes that, since the latter part of the 1960s, Israeli archaeologists conducted several large-scale excavations at Jerusalem, which indicated that, at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, a town had been built on the south-east hill of Jerusalem. Only fragments of houses of this town have survived. According to finds excavated at the site, Jerusalem could be considered the centre of political, military, economic and religious power of the region, although it was too small to exist on its own. As mentioned earlier in this paragraph – 7.6 – no trace has been found of a fortified Late Bronze Age town; it thus seems inevitable that no "city" existed in Jerusalem during the period of the Amarna Letters. These letters, however, do refer to Urusalim and, consequently, various pieces of information should be reconciled. There is also the possibility that the origin of the letters was not Jerusalem, or, alternatively, that Urusalim – and not Jerusalem – is a real city; Urusalim could even have been the "estate" or fortified house of the Egyptian king.

Philip Davies[455] is of the opinion that it is not possible to reconstruct the "limits" of the Israelite kingdom, or any sovereignty uniting the territories of Israel and Judah. This kingdom exists exclusively in the biblical literature. It, furthermore, seems unlikely that any association existed originally between the settlers of Judah and those of Israel. Dever,[456] on the other hand, argues that the idiom of the Deuteronomistic History – the principal biblical "historical"

[452] Mazar (2006:256) denotes that the archaeologist David Ussishkin wrote in 1998 that 'during 150 years of research no evidence was found for a settlement [in Jerusalem] dating to the United Monarchy … the archaeological evidence clearly contradicts the biblical evidence'.
[453] An area of approximately 4 hectares (Mazar 2006:267).
[454] Steiner 1998:144, 146, 148-149.
[455] Davies 1992:68-69.
[456] Dever 2004:66-67, 76, 86.

source – comprises 'the actual language of the biblical writers'; it is 'genuinely archaic'.[457] He refutes arguments by the "revisionists" who disclaim the existence of an historical king David, or an historical United Monarchy.[458] Centralisation is regarded as the essential criterion to define "statehood" – thus 'the emergence of centralized administrative institutions for decision-making and the distribution of goods and services'.[459] However, this does not necessarily imply a state consisting of a relatively large territory or population. He concludes that, although "hard evidence" towards an early Israelite statehood is not conclusive, it is not negligible either. Dever[460] also denotes that statehood in Palestine was achieved only ca 1000 BC with the United Monarchy of Israel; there are, however, scholars who regard this "state" merely as a "chiefdom". Jamieson-Drake[461] indicates that there is little evidence that Judah functioned as a full-scale state before the eighth century BC; the extent of production and population of tenth century BC Judah was just too small, and it therefore seems more appropriate to refer to a chiefdom.

Gelinas[462] supports scholars – such as T L Thompson – who propose that no kingdom of Israel existed during the tenth century BC. A rapid transformation from a segmentary tribal society to statehood under David and Solomon – as purported in the biblical text – should have left some significant traces in the material remains of the archaeological record. Such evidence is, however, scanty and at best fragmentary. There is hardly any testimony for the time of Saul, and any archaeological finds that could corroborate the reign of David, is ambiguous. It is significant that, according to the biblical account of the early monarchical period, the entities Judah and Israel are depicted as decidedly having separate identities. Regarding the reign of Solomon, Muhly[463] discusses current theories and controversies concerning the probability of metal trade into the "Far West" – particularly Spain – and the historical reality of Solomon, as well as the Ophir and Tarshish fleets of Solomon and Hiram of Tyre. Ezekiel 27:12 refers to silver, iron, tin and lead that came into Tyre from the land of Tarshish.[464] Muhly[465] also summarises textual confirmation that trade between the eastern and western Mediterranean could be traced back to at least the tenth century BC. He incorporates

[457] Dever 2004:66-67.
[458] See Dever (2004:65-86) for a discussion of the arguments by the revisionists concerning, inter alia, the question of a United Monarchy, and the counter arguments by Dever.
[459] Dever 2004:76.
[460] Dever 2005:15.
[461] Jamieson-Drake 1991:138-139.
[462] Gelinas 1995:228, 231.
[463] Muhly 1998:314-324.
[464] See also 1 Kings 10:22; 22:48, mentioning maritime trade undertaken by Solomon, king of Israel, and Hiram, king of Tyre, with Tarshish and the land of Ophir (Muhly 1998:315).
[465] Muhly 1998:318-320.

scientific evidence, particularly provided by lead isotope[466] analysis, ' a technique currently creating the sort of contention long associated with the reign of Solomon'.[467]

The Judean highlands comprise the southern area of the Palestinian central hill country. The entire territory has a climatic marginal character.[468] During Iron Age I pastoral elements, which had always been present in the region, disappeared and the highlands became substantially settled land. Archaeological finds from the Judean hills do not support a theory that these settlers migrated into the area from the North; at the same time these data give no indication from where the new inhabitants came. Archaeologically there is thus no justification to distinguish between the newcomers and the original inhabitants. This process probably started during the latter part of the thirteenth century BC, and may have lasted until the ninth century BC. The Judean hill country is not mentioned in the narratives concerning the founding of the Israelite Monarchy. The Philistines probably took control of this region following their takeover of certain areas of the central hills.[469] The groups that settled in this part of the country were of diverse origin and had disparate relations among themselves, as well as with families throughout the entire southern and central territory in Palestine. No concrete evidence of an organisation bearing the name "Judah" – apart from family ties – appears in early sources concerning the establishment of the Davidic Monarchy; the name therefore indicates a region wherein different families settled.[470]

The divided Kingdom of Judah included the two different settlement areas of Judah and Benjamin; their 'inhabitants belonged to small subtribal units on the one hand, and to the broader Israelite nationality on the other hand'.[471] Jerusalem – as capital of the Monarchy – did not belong to either of them. The Kingdom of Judah gradually formed its own identity. 'With the destruction of the Northern Kingdom, Judah became the sole successor of the pan-Israelite nationality.'[472] Finkelstein[473] mentions that, although the Hebrew Bible portrays Israel and

[466] Spanish silver was not obtained from the usual source of silver in the ancient world, but from complex ores known as jarosites – decomposition products of other ore minerals. In order to extract silver from these jarosites, lead – that had to be imported – was added to absorb the silver. Thus, silver produced in Spain has a lead isotope signature (Muhly 1998:317).
[467] Muhly 1998:314.
[468] The east and southern half of the region consist of steppe zones; springs can be found in the northern and central parts; it has a southern desert fringe, as well as a southern mountainous block completely devoid of perennial water sources (Ofer 1994:93).
[469] 1 Samuel 4:1-11.
[470] Ofer 1994:92, 106, 108-109, 112, 117.
[471] Ofer 1994:121.
[472] Ofer 1994:121.
[473] Finkelstein 1999:48.

Judah as one demographic and cultural body,[474] this theological and ideological intention does not fit the image depicted by archaeological data. Based on notable geographical differences the central hill country was divided into two territorial-political entities. On the assumption that the United Monarchy did exist, 'the unification of the central hill country in the 10th century BCE was a short-lived exception in the history of the highlands, while the contrasting circumstances and political systems of the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, better reflect the deeper, pervasive, and long-term structures of Levantine regional history'.[475]

## 7.7 Résumé and conclusion

As indicated earlier, and at the beginning of this chapter, I theorise that the Kenites and related marginal groups – who were later mainly affiliated to the tribe of Judah – were primarily involved in the spreading of the Yahwistic faith. In preceding paragraphs[476] of this chapter, I briefly deliberate on the emergence and settlement of those tribes who, in the course of time, established themselves as an Israelite nation and who, in all likelihood, included marginal groups.

Revisionist scholars – such as Philip Davies[477] – argue that biblical Israel not necessarily had an historical existence; they question the origin of the biblical literature that produced the history of such an Israel. Dever[478] denotes that, although archaeological data cannot "prove" the contents of the Hebrew Bible, there are, notwithstanding, certain datable Iron Age archaeological witnesses that converge with literary references in the Masoretic Text. It is thus unlikely that a post-exilic editor could have invented such narrative passages in the text. The application of the results of material evidence to the questions regarding the origin of Israel, is, however, extremely complex. Yet, according to Davies,[479] revisionist scholars reached a consensus 'that there was no patriarchal period, no Exodus and no conquest'. Biblical readers have lately become 'alarmed by what they perceive as a concerted, hostile attack on the Bible',[480] by a number of reputable biblical scholars as well as a few biblical archaeologists.

It is a problem to identify an Iron Age I site as a place occupied by early Israelites, as other ethnic entities – particularly Canaanites, but also Philistines – were active in the same areas.

[474] Both Israel and Judah worshipped *Yahweh*, shared the same narratives of a common past, spoke similar languages or dialects and wrote in the same script (Finkelstein 1999:48).
[475] Finkelstein 1999:48.
[476] Particularly § 7.4 and § 7.6.
[477] Davies 1992:16-18, 22, 46, 49.
[478] Dever 1997b:301.
[479] Davies 2000:117.
[480] Dever 2003:2.

'The formation of the Israelite identity was a long, intricate, and complex process',[481] which was probably completed only at the beginning of the Monarchy. The emergence of ancient Israel proceeded simultaneously with an intricate process of socio-economic change in Palestine. Archaeological data seem to suggest that the early Israelite peoples were a motley group. Finkelstein[482] deduces that the material culture from this particular period and region is not sufficient to draw clear ethnic boundaries.

The conundrum of the transformation of a society of isolated tribes into a structured monarchy has been debated intermittently by scholars from viewpoints of the biblical narrative, historical geography and archaeology. Analysis of genealogies reveals that six of the Israelite tribes were not part of the original group of federated tribes. They only later became associated with, and accepted as part of Israel. Scholars maintain that Israel evolved mainly out of local conditions; therefore, most Israelites had Canaanite ancestors. Archaeologists generally agree that, should there be archaeological evidence for the emergence of Israel in Canaan, such an occurrence should be dated at the beginning of the Iron Age, ca 1200 BC. However, new increased archaeological data brought more questions than answers. Any attempt to identify peoples in the archaeological record remains problematic.

The phenomenon of interaction among nations, and the influence of co-regional Ancient Near Eastern nations on one another – and thus also on the entity "Israel" – is obvious in a number of aspects.

It seems that "pure" cultures never existed in the Ancient Near East, but that hybrid cultures were the norm. The Israelites probably lived in a kind of symbiosis with the Sea Peoples and Canaanites. Inscriptions with Phoenician personal names have been found inland, demonstrating that these people – as well as their culture – penetrated deep into the Israelite society. An early connection of the Phoenicians with the interior is also evident in the adoption of the Canaanite script by a number of other nations. As the Proto-Canaanite alphabet – which was a Canaanite invention – developed, it was no longer called Proto-Canaanite, but Phoenician. The alphabetical script evidently appeared widespread in the western areas of the Ancient Near East – including Judah, Moab, Edom and the Philistines – indicating interaction among various nations in these regions. The Philistines were seemingly also present in the Jordan

[481] Finkelstein 1988:27.
[482] Finkelstein 1997:216, 230.

Valley; it is thus evident that they intermingled with different nations, and were found in territories other than their traditional coastal regions.

Various documents and epigraphic material demonstrate that a network of relations existed among ports, harbours and cities along the Canaanite coast. Even though Palestine did not have good natural harbours at its disposal, it played an important role in international exchange. Long-distance trade was dependent upon individuals and groups who took up residence elsewhere. Hittites exploited ports and overland trade routes that linked Anatolia with the Levant, while Egyptian commerce capitalised on regions of the southern Levant and the highlands. An Arabian trade diaspora connected Amorites in the most southern Levantine coastal regions with, inter alia, South Arabia and India. Long-distance trade also involved early "Israelite" settlers, who were present in northern Syria, regions of the Euphrates and the southern Shephelah. Consequently, the various nations interacted with one another through trade.

Salt, as an essential mineral – obtained in the Levant along the Mediterranean coast and along the shores of the Dead Sea – was an important commodity for trading purposes. Likewise, iron and copper ores, or manufactured articles, were employed in the trading business. Eastern Anatolia was known for its rich iron ores; none of the ores was locally available in Mesopotamia, with the result that trade routes developed and gateway cities progressed along these routes. Similarly, Tyre was well known for its production of the greatly valued purple marine dye. Due to its exceptional commercial importance, the dye was highly in demand – also in the sense of tributes. Tolls collected from trade routes were significant for Palestine's economy. Cuneiform records attest to important crossroads at the biblical city of Haran in the Baliḫ region; scholars generally accept that the latter could be linked to the patriarchal narrative of Abraham.

Internal migrations among the so-called Israelite tribes did apparently happen. According to genealogical lists, clans moved from one place to another and in this process realigned with different tribes; they could also be related through descent or intermarriage. Small groups of indigenous people probably joined large clans. The process of change was complex and relatively slow, involving considerable assimilation, and entailing the overlapping of roots of both Israelite and Canaanite societies. Tribal or ethnic groups were intricate organisations that were composed of nomadic and sedentary elements. Scholars explain the cultural dependence of the Israelite tribes on the Canaanites by proposing that close connections existed between

these two groups before the twelfth century BC. It, furthermore, seems that the Israelites did not necessarily have their own differentiated identity, but that it was moulded by a dynamic historical process.

During the Early Iron Age there was a profuse establishment of small settlements in the highlands. Some of the settlers were probably Israelites, or later became Israelites. These different peoples came from diverse backgrounds; it is therefore reasonable to assume that they had a significant influence on the later Israelite nation, particularly regarding religion and traditions. Various Ancient Near Eastern chronicles that are parallel to biblical narratives are recorded in the Masoretic Text. Comparable evidence – regarding family religion – at various sites indicates that the pattern of domestic and official cult rituals in Iron Age Israel and Judah was not unique, as corresponding customs were widespread amongst neighbouring peoples. Likewise, the origin, society and religion of the ancient Israelites were not necessarily different from those of their neighbours.

The question of the origin of the Israelite nation, the historicity – or not – of the exodus, and the manner of settlement of the Israelite tribes in Palestine, has been debated intermittently by scholars for many decades. Several hypotheses have been advanced – particularly on the emergence and settlement of the Israelites. No consensus has, as yet, been reached.

The patriarchal narratives portray the beginning of the formation of a new structure. A wealth of material from Mari indicates that a special link existed between Mari and the Hebrew Bible; Israelite descendants of Abraham probably passed by Mari on their travels. The *ḫabiru*, who probably became Israelites – possibly for ideological reasons – appear in texts throughout the Ancient Near East. Archival texts from the royal palace of Mari refer to them as outlaws. There are indications that they were employed as mercenaries during the Old Babylonian Period,[483] but, as a social and political force, disappeared before the end of the second millennium BC. Scholars have disparate opinions whether the *ḫabiru* should be equated with the Hebrews, or not. A wave of fugitives probably left their own countries during the Late Bronze Age to find ways of survival elsewhere. The numerous small states and uncontrollable territories and territorial borders were suitable for the lives of brigands. De Moor[484] is of the opinion that the *ḫabiru* resembled the *Shasu*, who were linked to Edom and Seir in southern Palestine – and thus to those tribes who, according to the Kenite hypothesis, venerated

[483] The Old Babylonian Period is dated 2000-1595 BC (Arnold 1994:47).
[484] De Moor 1997:117, 120.

*Yahweh*. Archaeological evidence points to a population surge in the hill country in Iron Age I. Although these settlers emerged predominantly from Canaanite society, the hill country colonists were composed also of different other groups; the *ḫabiru* probably would have been among them.

Several hamlets and villages have been identified in the central highlands, Judean hills, Negeb and the Galilee. These clearly represented small-scale farmers and herders. Early clashes between the Israelites and Canaanites in the Galilee and Jezreel Valley are recounted in the Hebrew Bible. Events mentioned in the Amarna Letters[485] possibly relate to the early history of the Galilean tribes, particularly with regard to activities associated with the *ḫabiru*.[486] It is unlikely that groups living in the Galilee could be described as "Israelites". Authors of the Hebrew Bible obviously depicted the conquest of Canaan by unified "Israelite" tribes to legitimise the territorial acquisition in the time of the Monarchy.

The biblical chronicle of the Israelites that recounts dramatically how their nation established themselves in Canaan, commences with the exodus from Egypt. This national epic is narrated in the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History. The historical trustworthiness of these narratives is questioned. Countless references in the Hebrew Bible, however, support the exodus tradition, despite archaeological data signifying a Canaanite origin for the Israelites. Scholars, furthermore, indicate that – according to an analysis of the genealogies of those tribes associated with the exodus events – at least six of the Israelite tribes were not involved. Scholars connect a possible Egyptian sojourn of some Israelite tribes with the Hyksos reign in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period.[487] It is more likely that a non-Egyptian – such as Joseph – could have risen to prominence under the Hyksos rule; they were Semitic-speaking people from the Levant who infiltrated Egypt. Based on archaeological and historical evidence, most scholars support a date for an exodus during the thirteenth century BC.[488] Scholars such as Graham Davies[489] and Malamat,[490] contend that some elements and particular Egyptian sources might indirectly afford credibility to an "Egypt" and an "exodus" tradition. Malamat,[491] however, emphasises that, despite possible analogous Egyptian material, 'none of the Egyptian sources substantiates the story of the Exodus', and scholars therefore

[485] See § 2.5 for information on these letters.
[486] See discussions on the *ḫabiru* in § 2.4, § 2.5, § 2.6, § 4.3.3 and § 4.3.7.
[487] Dated 1782-1570 BC.
[488] Probable dates of ca 1290 BC, as well as 1250 BC, have been suggested.
[489] Davies 2004:28-36.
[490] Malamat 1997:17-25.
[491] Malamat 1997:15.

face the dilemma that the chronicle, which is mainly of a theological nature, might be 'merely the product of later contemplation'.[492]

Archaeological research in Egypt and Palestine has not revealed anything that can be directly linked to the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt or a large-scale migration by them from Egypt. Weinstein[493] is of the opinion that 'if such an event did take place, the number of people involved was so small that no trace is likely to be identified in the archaeological record'. Kadesh-barnea is one of the few sites listed in the biblical narrative of the wandering of the Israelites in the Wilderness that has been identified. Although the Israelites are said to have sojourned there for more or less thirty-eight years, not a single artefact from the time frame of the exodus – the thirteenth to twelfth century BC – has been recovered from this site. During the Monarchy it probably became associated with the biblical tradition.

The scheme of the twelve tribes of Israel occupies a central position in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in biblical historiography. Scholars have suggested that an early Israelite amphictyony had existed, which could have been instrumental in the formation of a tribal league. The pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah is obvious in its prime position to the Tabernacle;[494] the tribe's relation to the priesthood and Temple is thus emphasised. Points of contact between the genealogical representation of the tribal interrelationships and the geographical distribution of the tribes substantiate the suggestion that all schemes stem from one formalised structure; literary formulations were thus applied in these systems to reflect a particular emphasis. Biblical writers and editors interpreted events, never claiming that the ancient literature was historical. It was probably only the "house of Joseph" – the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh – who had been in Egypt; they told the story, and, as a matter of course, eventually included all those who considered themselves part of biblical Israel. Eventually, most "Israelites" obviously believed that they had been in Egypt.

The Book of Joshua continues with the story line that started in the Book of Exodus. It describes how Israel became settled in the land – Canaan – that *Yahweh* gave to them. Yadin[495] mentions that, according to archaeological evidence, many fortified Canaanite cities were destroyed at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The biblical narrative relates how nomadic Israelites ravaged Canaanite cities and set them on fire. As there was a marked decline in political

[492] Malamat 1997:15.
[493] Weinstein 1997:97-98.
[494] Numbers 2:2-3.
[495] Yadin 1982:18-19, 21.

and economic stability in Canaan during that period, it is not surprising that semi-nomadic tribes were able to conquer fortified cities. Although the biblical narrative explains events theologically, the ancient conquest tradition reflects military strategy, and an intimate and authentic knowledge of the topography and demography of the land. Yet, it is difficult to explain how semi-nomadic Israelite tribes could successfully conquer fortified Canaanite cities that had a formidable chariotry, as well as well-trained forces familiar with superior technology.

The principal entry into Canaan from the Transjordan probably occurred at a site opposite Shechem, and not opposite Jericho, as stated in Joshua.[496] Excavations at the site of ancient Jericho indicate – apart from an Early Bronze Age town – a settlement dated 1400-1325 BC; the earliest date for inhabitants thereafter was from the eleventh to tenth century BC. It therefore seems that there was no significant habitation at Jericho during the period of the narrated biblical conquest of the city. After the "fall of Jericho", the city Ai was attacked – according to the biblical description. Extensive excavations revealed that Ai – as Jericho – was deserted much earlier than the date attributed to the conquest. Some scholars regard the battle of Jericho as mainly liturgical, while the story of Ai is entirely aetiological. Joshua 10:31 relates that Joshua and his men laid siege to Lachish and fought against it. Excavations at the site of ancient Lachish revealed that this large and prosperous Canaanite city was demolished by fire, sometime around 1150 BC. Archaeological evidence also indicates that Canaanite Hazor was ravaged in the thirteenth century BC – data, which is, therefore, inconsistent with the biblical account of a swift campaign in Canaan by Joshua's forces; excavations thus indicate that Lachish and Hazor were destroyed about a century apart. In contrast to the Book of Joshua that describes the land invasion as a "lightning military campaign", during which the whole country is overpowered in a relatively short time, the Book of Judges relates the conquering of the land as a gradual and incomplete process.

Since the early years of the twentieth century, scholars have proposed various models to interpret and clarify the so-called settlement process of those tribes who later called themselves the Israelite nation. No consensus has, as yet, been reached. For many decades three different hypotheses have been advanced to explain the settlement process of the Israelites, namely peaceful infiltration, violent conquest, or social revolution. As from the 1980s, scholars – who then had new conceptions – advanced several variations on these traditional models.

[496] Joshua 3:16.

Initially, as early as the 1920s, Albrecht Alt postulated that the Israelites had infiltrated gradually from the Transjordan into the Cisjordan. This model suggests that the process took place in two stages. Firstly, pastoral nomads had repeatedly entered the land, settled down and took up agriculture. In the second stage, their increased numbers came in conflict with the Canaanites; these encounters eventually stimulated the development of the Joshua and Judges chronicles. Martin North formulated the Israelite amphictyony theory to explain how tribes of various origins 'became united in the worship of Yahweh and eventually developed into the nation of Israel',[497] which is described as a community of twelve tribes. American and Israeli archaeologists – led by William Albright – challenged the German theories and suggested that a systematic, unified, military conquest took place, as described in the Book of Joshua. These scholars denote that archaeological surveys at sites of key Canaanite cities, as well as in the Transjordan, support the description of a violent invasion by the Israelites, while other scholars point out conflicting evidence at several important sites. The third model – advanced by the American School – developed during the 1960s and 1970s. George Mendenhall formally constructed the social revolutionary theory, which was later developed, particularly by Norman Gottwald. This model proposes that impoverished Canaanites, oppressed by Egyptian taxation and the burden of a political city-state system, revolted; they burned the cities and fled to the highlands. These rebels included peasants from the cities and *ḫabiru* who were already in the highlands. Mendenhall believed that a group of *Yahweh* worshippers from Egypt were the source of the revolt.

All three models have been criticised by scholars. The main objection against the "peaceful infiltration model" is the proponents' inability to exhibit that Israel emanated from outside Israel. This model, likewise, discredits the conquest chronicles on the presumption that they were created to function as aetiologies. The possibility that Canaanite cities were ravaged by either Egyptians or the Sea Peoples, challenges the "violent conquest model". Incomprehensibly, the Israelites also did not settle in their so-called "conquered" regions, but established themselves in areas removed from these cities. Excavations at, inter alia, Jericho and Ai, indicate that these places were uninhabited during the supposed Israelite invasion of the land and subsequent demolishing of these cities. The downward trend of the Canaanite cities stretched from at least 1200 BC to 1150 BC and was, therefore, not a rapid event – as implied in the Book of Joshua. The "social revolution hypothesis" 'has drawn the most extensive

[497] Ramsey 1981:88.

response'.[498] Proponents of this model tend to impose modern ideologies – particularly Marxist – upon the ancient Israelites. These scholars are criticised for their lack of knowledge concerning, inter alia, tribal structures and nomads, background in biblical studies, prevailing archaeological data and the question of the *ḫabiru*.

In the introduction to his comprehensive and classic *The Tribes of Yahweh*, Gottwald[499] denotes that, according to Exodus 1-24, 'a religious revolt and a social revolt clearly go hand in hand'. He suggests that the Canaanites who revolted against their overlords joined forces with the invaders from the desert. He is, however, of the opinion that a mass exodus and conquest was unlikely. Gottwald – who is recognised as a Marxist – devoted this major work to the reconstruction of the new society and ideology of early Israel.

The three different theories or models provide the foundation to consider a new model concerning the establishment of an Israelite nation. Volkmar Fritz suggests a "symbiosis hypothesis" in the light of the cultural dependence on and adoption of the Canaanite culture by the Israelite tribes; this could have been possible only by the supposition that close relations existed between these two groups before the twelfth century BC. The process of change, which was relatively slow and complex, involved a great deal of assimilation. Scholars have also proposed several variations on, what might be called, the "peaceful withdrawal model". As no satisfactory distinction can be drawn between the Israelites and Canaanites in the early period of settlement, this was probably a peaceful internal process, combining Alt's perception and the internal origin of the "social revolution" theory. Gnuse[500] proposes 'that the Israelites were really Canaanites who quietly left their cities and moved to the highlands where they gradually evolved into Israelites'. Although the Israelites – who also comprised families who had been nomads or *ḫabiru* who settled down – were ethnically different from the Canaanites, they interacted culturally and therefore achieved similarity in material culture.

A few examples of biblical narratives and their credibility indicate the complexity of the historical value of the Hebrew Bible. It is apparent – in many instances – that biblical chronicles are not consistent with results from archaeological discoveries, or from conclusions drawn from literary, historical and archaeological research. Findings of archaeology, therefore, 'do not provide clear and compelling support for biblical stories'.[501] Lately, many scholars assess

[498] Gnuse 1991a:58.
[499] Gottwald 1979:xxi.
[500] Gnuse 1991a:60.
[501] Ramsey 1981:69.

biblical narratives as stories, rather than history. Until relatively recently, Israel's history was described following the outline of biblical narratives, supplemented by archaeological information and extra-biblical texts. Scholars now acknowledge associated editorial activity during the late Monarchy and the Exile; the Monarchical Period probably preserved narratives about Israel's identity rather than to conserve a great deal of its history. To interpret the so-called historical books therefore remains problematic.

During the ninth century BC there was no real change in the society of ancient Israel; family lineages remained the basis for community organisation. Many characteristics of the Israelite and Judean monarchies had its foundation in the long political history of the highlands in the third and second millennium BC. According to the biblical description, the central highlands were occupied by the "house of Joseph" in the North, and Judah – and associated tribes – in the South. Dever[502] argues that considerable archaeological data substantiate the premise that the Israelite Monarchy was a continuation of the Proto-Israelites.

Based on archaeological evidence, scholars generally conclude that tenth century BC Jerusalem was a small town of some importance, but that it could not have been the capital of a developed state. Probably during the ninth century BC a new town was founded that seemingly functioned as a regional administrative centre. Archaeological data indicate that the seventh century BC Jerusalem 'became an urban centre of exceptional dimensions'.[503] The evaluation of tenth century BC Jerusalem as a city is a critical question in the ongoing debate concerning the United Monarchy. Biblical descriptions of David and Solomon's state and all the building operations in Jerusalem were probably imaginative and overemphasised historiographical accounts. The Urusalim referred to in the Amarna Letters could thus not have been the city Jerusalem; there is the possibility that Urusalim was another city, or the estate or fortified house of the Egyptian king.

Scholars have disparate views concerning an Israelite United Monarchy, or the statehood of Israel and Judah. On the one hand, revisionists refute the existence of a sovereignty uniting the territories of Israel and Judah – indicating that this kingdom exists exclusively in the biblical literature – while, on the other hand, other scholars purport that, although "hard evidence" towards an early Israelite statehood is not conclusive, it is not negligible either. There are, however, scholars who regard this "state" merely as a "chiefdom"; the tenth century BC

[502] Dever 2003:201.
[503] Steiner 2001:281.

kingdom of Judah was just too small to be referred to otherwise than a chiefdom. Judah gradually formed its own identity.

Considering the preceding discussions in this chapter, it is hardly possible to ascertain to what extent and at which stage, southern marginal groups – such as Kenites, Jerahmeelites, and others – had contact with, and merged with tribes that later comprised the Israelite nation. According to genealogical lists, they are associated with particularly the tribe of Judah. The *ḫabiru* – linked to the *Shasu*, who are connected to the southern regions and thus to the marginal groups – probably formed part of the early Israelites. It could therefore be deduced either that these marginal clans and tribes were assimilated into the tribe of Judah, or that they – as *ḫabiru*, or groups migrating into the land of Canaan – eventually merged with "Israelite" tribes.

The following chapter – concluding the research pertaining to this thesis – briefly deals with the literary material available concerning the Israelite nation, as reflected in the Masoretic Text, as well as the establishment of an exilic *Yahweh*-alone monotheistic Judaic movement.