The Emergence of Ancient Israel: A Model of Coherence between Archaeology and the Bible

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Abstract

The emergence of ancient Israel in the land of Canaan, in the thirteenth century BC, has been debated and re-debated for at least the last one hundred years. The initial model, setting forth how Israel emerged in Canaan, was known as the conquest model (biblical model) set forth by Albright in the 1920s. This model dominated the biblical and archaeological scene until the 1960s. As the conquest/biblical model's influence diminished, two other models were proposed; the peaceful infiltration model by Alt and Noth and the peasant revolt model set forth by Mendenhall and Gottwald. Other models would follow: the symbiosis model championed by Fritz and Finkelstein and the auto-ethnogenesis model suggested by Bunimovitz and Lederman. Part of the aftermath of these ongoing debates was the archaeological world's conclusion that archaeology had received the short end of the stick—that is, the biblical texts (the Bible) had for too long set

the agenda and determined the interpretation of the material culture that was unearthed. In an attempt to correct this practice, archaeologists set forth to move the pendulum back toward a favouring of archaeology as the preeminent source in terms of setting agendas for excavations and interpreting the uncovered material. To this end, the pendulum had not only swung back in favour of archaeology over the Bible, the effect of the swinging pendulum was to sever the Bible from the discussion almost entirely. Archaeologists who gave the Bible any credibility did so with major disclaimers attached, most often noting that the stories or events were not true or historical, but did contain some memories or kernel of truth in regard to the way the people remembered, or wanted to remember, Israel's emergence in Canaan. This dissertation focuses on presenting archaeology and the Bible as separate yet equally important disciplines in the discussion of the emergence of Israel in Canaan. It seeks to present a model (an eclectic model) in which the material data from archaeology and the biblical texts cohere, in other words, the many instances of convergences do not suggest an either/or, but both. This work demonstrates a model of coherence between archaeology and the Bible.

Keywords

origin models, archaeology/Bible, convergence/coherence, eclectic model

1. Is There One Model?

Is there one model or theory that definitively demonstrates how ancient Israel emerged in thirteenth-century Canaan? The question of the origin of Israel in the land of Canaan has been debated and re-debated for at least a hundred years. The initial model (the conquest model) set forth by

W. F. Albright in the 1920s dominated the biblical and archaeology scene until the 1960s. With the diminishing influence of Albright's model, two others were proffered: (1) the peaceful infiltration model by Alt and Noth, and (2) the peasant revolt model proposed by Mendenhall and Gottwald. Others would follow: the symbiosis hypothesis championed by Fritz and Finkelstein and the auto-ethnogenesis model set forth by Bunimovitz, Lederman, and Dever.

As the debate heated and cooled over the years, the archaeological world came to the conclusion that archaeology had received the short end of the stick—that is, the biblical texts (the Bible) had set the agenda and determined the interpretation of the material culture that was unearthed. In an attempt to correct this practice, archaeologists set forth to move the pendulum back toward a favouring of archaeology as the preeminent source in terms of setting agendas for excavations and interpreting the uncovered material. To this end, the pendulum had not only swung in the direction of the preeminence of archaeology over the Bible, the Bible became severed from the discussion almost entirely. Archaeologists who still give the Bible some credence do so with major disclaimers attached to their comments, most often noting that the stories or events were not true or historical, but did contain some memories or some kernel of truth in regard to the way the people remembered, or wanted to remember, Israel's emergence in Canaan.

My dissertation focuses on presenting archaeology and the Bible as separate yet important players in the discussion of the emergence of Israel in Canaan. The many significant lines of convergence between the archaeological data and biblical texts demonstrate a clear coherence between the two. Thus, often it is not a question of either/or, but rather both. That is, neither the archaeology data nor the biblical text has the

final word, but both contribute in their own way to the interpretation of the material.

The answer to the initial question is, no, there is not one model or theory that definitively explains the emergence of ancient Israel in Canaan. Rather, it was the result of a combination of models/theories (an eclectic model) that, when viewed together, illustrate how ancient Israel eventually (over a two-hundred-year period) secured the land of Canaan given to them by God.[1]

2. The Beginning—A Worthy Project or Not?

I was first introduced to the difficult task of properly associating the material culture unearthed during an excavation project with the biblical text during my early days of excavating at Tel Beth-Shemesh, Israel.[2] Occasionally, I was privy to conversations between co-directors, the field director and supervisors discussing how to interpret items (artefacts) that surfaced during the dig. Questions often focused on whether or not the material finds were related to the Canaanites, Israelites, or Philistines. Other questions dealt with what the finds had to do with the cultural milieu of a border-town so close to the Philistines. Admittedly, some decisions were reversed after further investigation or another season of work, while others have been maintained, and will be at least until something proves different.

Working at a site (Tel Beth-Shemesh) where an array of tenth-century material architecture has been surfaced, my interest in the topic of

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1 I am deeply thankful for the patient guidance provided by Dr. Bill Domeris. His sage advice transformed my work into a well-ordered presentation.

2 My first year working at Tel Beth-Shemesh was 2000; the summer of 2019 marked my 16th season.

when and how Israel emerged in Canaan was fuelled. However, the tipping point was a lecture presented by Tel Beth-Shemesh Field Director, Dr Dale W Manor, at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama in 2012.[3]

Manor's presentation covered the major proposals for the origin of Israel in Canaan: Albright's biblical model that eventually came to be known as the conquest model, the peaceful infiltration model, the peasant revolt model, the symbiotic model, and the auto-ethnogenesis model. It was during Manor's remarks on the auto-ethnogenesis model that my decision to pursue a detailed study of the origin of Israel was formulated. Manor quoted Faust, who noted that "the consensus today is that all previous suggestions have some truth regarding the origins of the ancient Israelites … [although] the percentage and weight given to each process varies" (Faust 2006, 173). Manor went on to say that Faust had failed to integrate biblical elements into the narrative (2013, 102).

After hearing Manor quote from Faust, I decided it would be a worthy project to integrate relevant biblical texts into archaeological data and note lines of agreement (convergences) as well as areas where neither offered any light on the question of Israel's emergence in Canaan. I discovered that the relationship between the Bible and archaeology is fluid, not static. Both can help understand the other, and neither can, nor should, be used as a critique of the other. Merling correctly notes, "They must live separately and be blended and amended together cautiously" (2004, 29–42). It has been a profitable and worthy journey.

The journey began with a brief introduction of the models for Israel's emergence in Canaan set forth by scholars over the past ninety-plus

3 Manor's topic was The Emergence of Israel: The Bible and Archaeology (2013, 90–110).

years. A full treatment of each model, and the role it played, if any, in the emergence of Israel in Canaan, was left until later in the thesis.

Dever (2001, 7) pointed out that the mainstream European biblical scholarship had virtually given up on writing a satisfactory history of ancient Israel. Halpern (2010, 279) noted that the investigation of the Israelite settlement and the discussion of textual-archaeological correlations had grown sterile and stale. This led Dever (2001, 76) to observe that judging by the scant discussions in the literature, the notion of "theory" was met with apathy at best and often with open hostility.

My research revealed that most American archaeologists have shown some interest in what is usually called "theory and method"; however, their understanding of method has generally been only improved digging and recording techniques. This lack of inquiry into the very intellectual foundations of the discipline, basically absent in American archaeological circles, causes Israelis to view the few attempts at theory-building by Americans with scepticism (Dever 2001, 76).

It is exciting to find that the relationship between the archaeological world and the realm of biblical history seems at times to work more closely than in past years. At least the language of some influential archaeologists reflects a desire to find some role for the biblical texts in the discussion of the history of Israel. Particularly Bunimovitz and Faust have offered a positive view toward the integration of archaeology and the Bible, noting that using the Bible as a cultural document to answer questions will restore its central place in the archaeological discourse of the biblical period:

> Conceiving of both the biblical text and the ancient material artifacts as cultural documents, we believe that their inspection will be fruitful and enlightening. Words and artifacts can give

> us access to the mindset of the people of the biblical period. (Bunimovitz and Faust 2010:43)

The position suggested by these two fine scholars is very interesting for those of us who consider the Bible to be more than just a "cultural document." I do not consider it a problem that they suggest a new archaeological agenda lead the way, rather than the agenda being dictated by the biblical texts (Bunimovitz and Faust 2010, 44). However, I do find it discouraging that the majority of scholarship, not just the minimalists, continue to view the biblical texts as non-historical. Murray wrote in 1988:

> It does not matter whether the stories ... are true ... And even a forgery is an important piece of evidence for the period that perpetrated it.... This principle of unconscious revelation through representation ... is one of the most powerful tools in the modern historian's study of mentalities. (1988, xxxi).

Bunimovitz and Faust's positive statement concerning the relationship of the Bible and the archaeological agenda is essentially negated in their agreement with Murray's statement from some ten years earlier (2010, 48).

More than thirty years ago (in the 1980s), Dever (2010, 349) argued for the separation of what was then popularly referred to as "biblical archaeology" from biblical studies in general, and theological studies in particular. Later in the 1990s, Dever, one of the most vocal advocates in favour of a secular Syro-Palestinian archaeology, called for a "new biblical archaeology" (1993, 706–722). Disappointingly, Dever's plea for a new biblical archaeology along new lines of construction went generally unheeded (Bunimovitz and Faust 2010, 47).

Bunimovtiz and Faust applauded the effort to bring to the forefront a new biblical archaeology. However, they suggested that the this would

not directly address the need for a more sophisticated integration between the biblical texts and archaeological finds, nor would new methodologies necessarily transform an old agenda (2010, 47; Clarke 1973, 11). The positive rhetoric suggesting that the Bible once again be at the heart of the archaeological discourse (Bunimovitz and Faust 2010, 50) is quickly diminished by a critical analysis of the language used in regard to this so-called return.

While the state of the relationship between archaeology and biblical history is encouraging, there is still a wide gulf between men and women of faith and the true adherent to the preeminence of archaeology over the Bible. Although noting that the Bible is valuable in the new archaeological agenda, it is especially disheartening to read Bunimovitz and Faust's description of the Bible as an "unconscious revelation" (2010, 50).

3. Joshua and Judges

A critical aspect of the research hinged on an examination and application of two important sources—the biblical books of Joshua and Judges. In fact, Dever (1990, 40) notes that the first category of evidence for the emergence of Israel in Canaan comes from the biblical texts themselves. Butler (2014a, 337) notes that the literary unity of Joshua 24, 29–32 is a major indicator that the book of Judges is presented as a sequel to the book of Joshua. Judges begins with the death of Joshua and the question of who would lead the nation against the Canaanites. Both Judges and Joshua provide the historical picture of how God intended the Israelite nation to secure the land promised to Abraham, and what was actually accomplished by the Israelites in the process. Both stories reveal the Lord God of Israel as faithful to his promises, even in the face of Israel's failures to comply fully with his directives.

The chief question, in regard to the biblical text and the origins of ancient Israel, is how the biblical texts pertaining to the emergence of Israel in Canaan are to be understood, and how they are to be illumined by the archaeological data. Coote and Whitelam (2010, 14) point out that the Bible has been the most influential source of the prevailing ideas about the nature of Israel from its inception to the present—ultimately functioning as a document of faith that preserves the life, shape, and identity of many communities of faith. Ben-Tor's (1992, 9) powerful statement that "if one eliminates the Bible from the archaeology of the land of Israel in the second and first millennia BCE, you have deprived it of is soul," should be considered by every archaeologist working in the land of Israel.

Without going into a detailed analysis, it has been suggested that the book of Judges presents a significantly different and more accurate picture of the taking of the land of Canaan by the Israelite tribes than the book of Joshua (Bloch-Smith and Nakhai 1999, 65; Dever 1990, 79). After the demise of Albright's conquest theory, Joshua was viewed as problematic history, and attention was directed to Judges, which seemed to tell a story that at least did not contradict the archaeological evidence (Moore and Kelle 2011, 107). The two accounts definitely offer a striking contrast in places as to the emergence of Israel in Canaan and the extent to which the Israelites initially possessed the land.

Clearly, the purpose of the book of Judges is to portray the unfolding of Israel's history from the death of Joshua down to the advent of the monarchy—an era referred to as "the period of the judges" (Goslinga 1986, 196). The biblical text has little to say about the day-to-day activities of many of the judges, although it does seem to distinguish the activities of major judges who saved the people from imminent dangers, as opposed to judges with no such deeds attributed to them (Isserlin 2001, 68). Judges

primarily presents a general picture of an essentially rural society linked by a common faith living in turbulent times where "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Isserlin 2001:67; Judg 21:25, KJV).[4] The first three chapters of Judges broadly outline the conduct of the Israelites during the period of the judges with regard to the Canaanites and their gods, and with regard to the Lord himself (Goslinga 1986, 197).

On the one hand, Judges 2:11–23 evokes an era in which the Israelites and Canaanites lived side by side, sometimes amicably and at other times antagonistically (Bloch-Smith and Nakhai 1999, 65). On the other hand, Joshua reflects a more theologically-based document, highlighting the direct involvement of the Lord in the eventual securing of the land of promise. A superficial reading of Joshua can give the impression that the Israelites occupied Canaan by means of a divinely-enabled blitzkrieg that put them in control of the entire country and encouraged all the Canaanites to leave (Goldingay 2011, 90). However, Judges clearly shows this was not this case. In fact, Judges 1 presents a very human process in which the Israelite occupation of Canaan was actually quite piecemeal (Goldingay 2011, 90).

Goldingay notes that an examination of how Joshua works as a narrative is important, if one is to truly understand the message of the book:

> The whole is put together as a sequence: the introductory challenge, the taking of the land, the allocation of the land and the closing challenges. The book gives much weight to certain stories (notable Rahab, Jericho, Ai) and skips over the detail of many of the other events. (Goldingay 2015, 148)

4 All subsequent scripture references, are from the ESV unless otherwise stated, but this one is from the KJV.

Goldingay's (2015, 149) comments give credence to the fact that Joshua's account is highly theological rather than giving the chronological historical details of Israel's emergence in Canaan. While maintaining that the stories are not fictional, Goldingay contends that they are basically factual stories that use the techniques of their culture, which are different from those of modern Western storytelling.

The twelfth and eleventh centuries BC in Palestine are usually labelled as either the period of the judges, following biblical historiography, or the pre-monarchical period (Ahlstrom 1993, 371). Chronology is vague in Judges concerning single events and the total length of the period (Isserlin 2001, 67). In general, the material found in the book of Judges demands exhaustive critical analysis on a par with the book of Joshua (Bloch-Smith 1999, 65). Judges begins with a flashback into the book of Joshua when Judah and Simeon had generally exterminated their enemies and relatively secured their allotments (Judges 1:1–21; Manor 2005, 14). However, the remaining tribes had failed to secure their allotments, and they are pictured as living as neighbours with the Canaanites (Judges 1:22–36). Judges presents a picture of the occupation of Palestine that makes it clear it was a long process, accomplished by the efforts of individual clans, and only partially completed (Bright 2000, 129). This process is best seen in the first chapter of the book of Judges.

Judges obviously deals with leadership or a crisis in leadership (Judg 2:10). The crisis was born out of the failure of Joshua's generation to properly train the next generation (Butler 2009, lxxvii). Judges also deals with the fact of Israel's disobedience to the will of God, which is defined twice (Judg 2:11; 3:7). The people never passed God's test (Judg 3:4), which resulted in their limited occupation of the land of Canaan. In some sections of Judges, God's guidance and specific intentions are clearly spoken of, while

in others it is as if God left the nation to itself for a time: this is especially true of chapters 17 to 21 (Goslinga 1986, 201). Here, Israel's political and social troubles can be traced directly to the people's failure to follow the example of Joshua's generation (Judg 2:17). Judges 2:11–19 presents a deliberate sketch of the course of Israel's history during this period (Goslinga 1986, 199).

Rather than attempting a strict chronology, Judges presents a theological history with a geographical and moral framework (Butler 2009, lxvi). As a source for examining the emergence of Israel in Canaan, opinions differ as to the usefulness of Judges. The traditional view is represented by Keil (2001, 248), who maintains that Judges was written during the time of Samuel based on oral and written documents. Ahlstrom (1993, 375) represents the postmodern Scandinavian approach, noting that the author of Judges did not intend to describe actual events, since such a literary pattern cannot be used for writing history. Butler (2009, lxxi) views Judges as a necessary historical construct by the editor, who collected and combined the hero stories.

Halpern (1988, 276–277) argued in his work The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History that a historical core in Judges is evident and recoverable. Moore and Kelle (2011, 107–108) wrote:

> Halpern's defense of Judges was the most complete and systematic expression of the nonminimalist position, and most historians have continued to use Judges as a historical source. Few have included specific scenarios or people from Judges in history, but most at least note that Judges and archaeology do not appear to contradict each other.

Moore and Kelle (2011, 108) further argued that Judges exhibits exactly the kind of society that would produce monarchical states such as Israel under Saul, David, and Solomon, and should not be discounted.

It is clear that the book of Joshua highlights only three military campaigns (Josh 6–8; 10; 11). Merling (1996, 210) asks whether it is possible that Joshua was written, not so much as a book of conquest, but rather as a book of confirmation. In other words, perhaps the primary goal of the book of Joshua was to confirm and reaffirm the uniqueness of Israel, as evidenced by the presence and guidance of God (Merling 1996, 155). The first half of the book of Joshua tells of the military exploits of Israel, with special emphasis on the work of God, rather than providing details of the battles and the extent of the devastation of the cities. The material gleaned from a study of the source books, Joshua and Judges, is very important when comparing the archaeological data with the biblical texts.

4. Excavations of Canaanite Mounds and Regional Surveys

The major source of archaeological data used to research and present evidence for the early models suggested for the emergence of Israel in Canaan came from the excavation of significant Canaanite mounds during the twentieth century. Obviously, the mounds were excavated prior to the advent of modern procedures and protocols that began to develop and continue to be honed even into the twenty-first century. Several of the major sites such as Hazor, Jericho, Ai, Lachish, Dan, and Jerusalem were investigated by studying conclusions drawn by the major excavators at each of these sites and by reading the analysis of major scholars in the field.

As one might surmise, there are a variety of opinions as to whether or not the evidence, or lack of evidence, favors an Israelite conquest of these sites or whether some other nation attacked these cities. In the early stages of discussing the large mounds, an argument for or against is not presented, just the major tenets offered from the excavation reports. Later in my thesis, I dig deeper into the results and make application and

demonstrate convergences, or at least possibilities, of destruction brought upon these cities by the nation of Israel.

The importance of the large Canaanite mounds excavation is pertinent to the question of the origin of Israel in Canaan; however, these excavations only tell part of the story. A significant development, a missing part of the puzzle, is added when the regional surveys are analyzed and the results added to the total data gathered from the mounds. I intentionally refrained from a full discussion of the results of the excavations at the mounds and the regional surveys until later in my thesis. At that point a more thorough description of the results at such sites as Jericho, Ai, Hazor, and others was presented in view of how the material finds concur with the biblical text along with conclusions as to how this evidence contributes to the understanding of ancient Israel emergence in Canaan.

5. The Emerging Models

As my thesis moved closer to its conclusion, I necessarily included some repetition of material, such as the five major models, in order to bring the reader up to speed without them having to refer back. However, I also expanded the dialogue to include the reasons to reject each model as the definitive primary theory explaining the origin of Israel in Canaan.

For example, Albright recognized the "elusive" difficulty associated with the task of determining the origin of ancient Israel (Albright 1935, 10). Despite acknowledging some difficulties with the conquest model, he defended it from the 1920s until his death in 1971 (Dever 2003, 41). However, with the onslaught of new archaeological data, the question of Israelite origins grew more and more intractable.

A few years prior to his death, Albright recognized the need for a revision of the conquest model, since the emerging archaeological picture

was difficult to mesh with the biblical account. In his own words, Albright (1965:95) noted, "at present we cannot propose any safe reconstruction of the actual course of events during the period of the Israelite settlement in Palestine." In addition, Wright, who earned his PhD under Albright's supervision and who is probably the best spokesman for the conquest model, said:

> It has now become necessary, however, to modify the common scholarly view. For one thing, a closer reading of the Deuteronomic historian's work in Joshua makes it quite clear that while he claims spectacular success in overrunning the country for Joshua, he is quite aware of much left to be done (cf. 11:13, 22). (Wright 1962,69)

It should be noted that tempering or adjusting the conquest model did not mean redefining what conquest meant—it remained just that, a belief that Israel acquired the land of Canaan by means of war. As late as 1982, Yadin (1982, 18) said that "in its broad outline the archaeological record supports the narrative in Joshua and Judges as Albright said."

I followed the same line of reasoning in examining the peaceful infiltration model, peasant revolt model, symbiosis hypothesis, and auto-ethnogenesis model. In each case, the individual models failed to offer a conclusive explanation of the emergence of ancient Israel in Canaan.

6. A New Perspective

In preparation for the presentation of a new model, I set forth to present a new perspective, a new way of looking at and thinking about how ancient Israel emerged in Canaan in the twelfth century BC. I showed that the preponderance of evidence in favor of there being a significant 'tightness of

fit' or convergence in so many scenarios substantially supported my thesis and will play a role in future enquiries regarding the manner in which ancient Israel emerged in Canaan.

In the process, I took each of the models and compared them with source material (Joshua and Judges), the excavation data from the large Canaanite mounds, and the findings from the regional surveys. During this final in-depth look at the models, other contributory subjects were intermingled with the analysis—subjects such as the importance of the Merneptah Stele (the Israel Stele), ethnic markers (the four-room house, cisterns, collared-rim jars, silos, the cessation of eating pork), and the question of the continuity of Late Bronze Age culture (particularly pottery assemblages) into the Iron Age I period.

7. The Emergence of Israel in Canaan: An Eclectic Model

Writing as a man of faith, the biblical text is very important in all arenas of my life, whether during worship or during excavations in Israel at Tel Beth-Shemesh. It never crossed my mind to write this thesis in order to convince archaeologists such as Faust and Bunimovitz, and others, to embrace the word of God, the Bible, as fully inspired and without error;[5] rather, my argument centers upon asking that the Bible be given its just due in terms of what it can and cannot do in regard to the study of the origin of ancient Israel in Canaan.

5 While the author of this thesis believes by faith that the Bible is the inerrant, inspired Word of God—recognition is also made concerning places where obvious exaggeration has occurred and texts reflect theological reality and not necessarily the current reality—it has been noted several times that the book of Joshua has a theological component that emphasizes God's role in giving the land of Canaan to the Israelites—not that they followed his command to take it and destroy the Canaanite population.

I noted early on in my thesis that I am at ease with allowing the archaeological data to set the agenda for excavators, as noted by Bunimovitz and Faust (2010, 43):

> We envision a different integration between archaeology and the Bible. On the one hand, an archaeological agenda, independent of the biblical text, will open a much wider range of social and cultural questions. On the other hand, using the Bible as a cultural document to answer these questions will restore its central place in the archaeological discourse of the biblical period. Conceiving both biblical texts and ancient material artifacts as cultural documents, we believe that their inspection will be fruitful and enlightening.

However, I am absolutely against the tendency of modern archaeologists to dismiss the Bible completely, except when it seems to confirm or bolster their particular viewpoint or conclusion.

Bunimovitz and Faust (2010, 43) speak of the Bible, as well as artefacts, as cultural documents. A cursory reading of this could lead one to believe that the two entities are equals. However, this is not the case, as can be seen in further extracts that clearly reflect their position:

> While 'liberating' the research agenda from the 'shackles' of the Bible, it is rather the new approach to biblical archaeology suggested here that reinstates the Bible at the heart of the archaeological discourse of the Iron Age.... We propose to reverse the usual scientific procedure in biblical archaeology.... From a cultural perspective, the Bible as an 'unconscious revelation' is invaluable. (Bunimovitz and Faust 2010, 50)

Bunimovitz and Faust (2010, 48) are in agreement with Murray, whom they quote as saying:

> As Murray (1998, xxxi) wrote: 'It does not matter whether the stories ... are true ... This principle of unconscious revelation through representation...is one of the most powerful tools in the modern historian's study of mentalities.

Statements referring to the Bible as "unconscious revelation" do not compute. Further, it is hard to fathom how one can propose that the Bible be returned to its central place in the study of archaeology and then refer to the Bible as an unconscious revelation that has shackled the field of archaeology for years. According to Bunimovitz and Faust (2010, 48), the biblical text is problematic as a source for comprehensive historical reconstruction.

8. Final Thoughts

The appeal of my thesis is for readers to give serious consideration to the numerous, clearly demonstrated lines of convergence and some that are highly likely. In so doing, it is my hope and prayer that a plausible case is successfully made for an eclectic model that demonstrates the coherence of the archaeological data and the biblical text—a model showing the emergence of Israel as a complex journey carried out over a lengthy period of time—some two hundred years.[6]

I am cognizant of the fact that the proposed eclectic model is not the end to all questions concerning the origin of ancient Israel in Canaan;

6 From their entry into the land around 1207 BC or a bit earlier, to the time of David's kingship over Israel in the tenth century BC.

however, it may serve as a starting point for future conversation about this slippery topic. Perhaps it is fitting to close out this brief article, as I did in the larger thesis, reflecting on the words of William Dever. He noted that when biblical and archaeological lines converge, one arrives at what historians often refer to as "the balance of probability," or what is known in jurisprudence as "a preponderance of evidence" (Dever 2017, 44). He continues by correctly pointing out that these convergences may not provide iron-clad proof for either the archaeological data or the biblical texts; but, they do offer what can be known and what we need to know in order to get on with our lives (Dever 2017, 44).

I intend to move on with life while continuing to contemplate and study the complex questions of how ancient Israel emerged in the land of Canaan. If my work has contributed anything worthwhile to the subject of Israel's emergence in Canaan, may it be that whoever continues the search will always be even-handed with both the archaeological data and the biblical text allowing each one to play its role, if any, in the pursuit of truth.

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