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in Honor of
Israel Finkelstein*

edited by

ODED LIPSCHITS, YUVAL GADOT, and MATTHEW J. ADAMS

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Contents

Introduction	ix
Israel Finkelstein's Life, Work, and Publications	xvii
The Omride Annexation of the Beth-Shean Valley	1
ERAN ARIE	
Follow the Negebite Ware Road	19
SHIRLY BEN-DOR EVIAN	
A Cooking-Pot from Hazor with Neo-Hittite (Luwian) Seal Impressions	29
AMNON BEN-TOR, A. COHEN-WEINBERGER, AND M. WEEDEN	
"English Lady Owns Armageddon": Rosamond Templeton, Laurence Oliphant, and Tell El-Mutesellim	47
ERIC H. CLINE	
Is Jacob Hiding in the House of Saul?	57
MARGARET COHEN	
With a Bible in One Hand	71
PHILIP R DAVIES	
Entering the Arena: The Megiddo Stables Reconsidered	87
NORMA FRANKLIN	
The Iron I in the Samaria Highlands: A Nomad Settlement Wave or Urban Expansion?	103
YUVAL GADOT	
Jeroboam I? Jeroboam II? Or Jeroboam 0? Jeroboam in History and Tradition	115
LESTER L. GRABBE	
Rethinking Destruction by Fire: Geoarchaeological Case Studies in Tel Megiddo and the Importance of Construction Methods . . .	125
RUTH SHAHACK-GROSS	
Rethinking Amorites	131
ROBERT S. HOMSHER AND MELISSA S. CRADIC	

“Out of the Land of Egypt, Out of the House of Slavery . . .” (Exodus 20:2): Forced Migration, Slavery, and the Emergence of Israel	151
ANN E. KILLEBREW	
Was There a Refugee Crisis in the 8th/7th Centuries BCE?	159
ERNST AXEL KNAUF	
Israel Or Judah? The Shifting Body Politic and Collective Identity in Chronicles	173
GARY N. KNOPPERS	
Early Philistia Revisited and Revised	189
IDO KOCH	
Palynological Analysis of the Glacis of the Seleucid Acra in Jerusalem: Duration of Construction and Environmental Reconstruction	207
DAFNA LANGGUT	
The Future of the Past: At-Risk World Heritage, Cyber-Archaeology, and Transdisciplinary Research	221
THOMAS E. LEVY	
Bethel Revisited	233
ODED LIPSCHITS	
Rethinking the Philistines: A 2017 Perspective	247
AREN M. MAEIR AND LOUISE A. HITCHCOCK	
The Fate of Megiddo at the End of the Late Bronze IIB	267
MARIO A. S. MARTIN	
Rediscovering a Lost North Israelite Conquest Story	287
NADAV NA'AMAN	
Rethinking the Origins of Israel: 1 Chronicles 1–9 in the Light of Archaeology	303
MANFRED OEMING	
The Putative Authenticity of the New “Jerusalem” Papyrus Inscription: Methodological Caution as a Desideratum	319
CHRISTOPHER ROLLSTON	
The Rise and Fall of Josiah	329
THOMAS RÖMER	
Pax Assyriaca and the Animal Economy in the Southern Levant: Regional and Local-Scale Imperial Contacts	341
LIDAR SAPIR-HEN	
“Israel” in the Joseph Story (Genesis 37–50)	355
KONRAD SCHMID	

Psalm 29, The Voice of God, and Thunderstorms in the Eastern Mediterranean	365
WILLIAM M. SCHNIEDEWIND	
Rethinking Israel and the Kingdom of Saul	371
OMER SERGI	
Statistical Inference in Archaeology: Are We Confident?	389
ARIE SHAUS, BARAK SOBER, SHIRA FAIGENBAUM-GOLOVIN, ANAT MENDEL-GEBEROVICH, DAVID LEVIN, ELI PIASETZKY, AND ELI TURKEL	
Looking Back on the Bible Unearthed	403
NEIL ASHER SILBERMAN	
Empires and Allies: A Longue Durée View from the Negev Desert Frontier	409
YIFAT THAREANI	
New Evidence of Jerusalem's Urban Development in the 9th Century BCE	429
JOE UZIEL AND NAHSHON SZANTON	
The Final Phase of the Common "Proto-Semitic" Alphabet in the Southern Levant: A Rejoinder to Sass and Finkelstein	441
DAVID S. VANDERHOOF	
Metal Production and Trade at the Turn of the First Millennium BCE: Some Answers, New Questions	451
NAAMA YAHALOM MACK	
Resilience and the Canaanite Palatial System: The Case of Megiddo	463
ASSAF YASUR-LANDAU AND INBAL SAMET	



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Rediscovering a Lost North Israelite Conquest Story

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Scholars have acknowledged that most of the biblical historiography was written in Judah and that the early history of the non-Judahite regions is related in an episodic, nonlinear manner. Thus, for example, in contrast to the detailed conquest story of the Kingdom of Judah's territory (Josh 2–10; see below), the book of Joshua ignores the Israelite occupation of the central highlands. The books of Judges and Samuel relate few episodes of the history of the central highlands in the pre-monarchical period, but no linear continuity exists between these episodes, with each story related to a different region at a different time. Given the absence of detailed sources, researchers can do no more than analyze these stories in isolation, each story in its own right, and combine the minute historical data extracted from them with the wealth of information obtained from archaeological research. An illuminating example of a scholarly effort to write the history of early Israel appears in the honoree's recent book (2013), which he aptly called "*The Forgotten Kingdom*" / "*Le Royaume biblique oublié.*" In this book, Finkelstein collected the textual and archaeological evidence and presented his own reconstruction of the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the early Iron IIA period and the first stage in the emergence of the monarchy in Israel (2013: 13–61).¹

In an effort to contribute to the study of the early Israelite traditions, I here examine some episodes that I propose we identify as fragments of a lost North Israelite conquest story. These episodes are imbedded now in various biblical narratives that relate the early history of Israel, and I suggest combining and treating them as pieces of a lost story, reflecting the way in which the conquest of the Land was memorialized in the Northern Kingdom. Needless to say, the reconstruction of a lost story confronts enormous difficulties and uncertainties; hence the many uncertainties and extensive speculation that appear in my discussion. Despite these doubts, I consider it worth presenting this pioneering reconstruction to enable other scholars to consider it as a possibility and discuss it in the context of the historiography of ancient Israel.

1. Finkelstein and I hold contrasting interpretations of the role of Saul and Ish-Ba'al, his son, in the emergence of the institute of monarchy in Israel and Judah. Whereas Finkelstein (2002: 122–29; 2006; 2011; 2013: 37–61) considered Saul and his son to be North-Israelite kings whose history was written in Israel, I suggest that the histories of Saul and his son are no less Judahite than those of David and Solomon. The Kingdom of Judah emerged as a union of Benjamin and Judah, whose tribal leaders first competed for the throne of the emerging kingdom and later, under the reign of David's dynasty, comprised the backbone of the established state of the late tenth–early sixth centuries BCE (Na'aman 2009; 2014).

An Enigmatic Conquest Story of the Central Highland

Jacob's final blessing to Joseph refers to a remarkable conquest tradition (Gen 48:22):

וַאֲנִי נָתַתִּי לְךָ שְׁכֶם אֶחָד עַל-אַחֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר לָקַחְתִּי מִיַּד הָאֱמֹרִי בְּחַרְבִּי וּבַקֶּשֶׁתִּי.

I have given you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.²

In this statement, Jacob presents himself as a warrior who conquered the land, divided its territory among his children, and gave Joseph a double portion (Skinner 1910: 507). The noun *šakem* possesses a double meaning: that of a city name (Shechem) and that of a portion. The text refers to the combined allotments of Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's children, as a double portion, compared to the single allotment that each of Jacob's other sons received.

According to this tradition, the Amorites formerly held the conquered land. In the conquest story of the book of Joshua, the decisive war with the inhabitants of the Judean hill country was waged against the five kings of the Amorites (Josh 10:5–6, 12). The Transjordanian plateau was also conquered from Sihon, an Amorite.³ Finally, Amos, who prophesied in the mid-eighth century in the Kingdom of Israel, explicitly states that the land was conquered from the Amorites: "Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of cedars, and who were as strong as oaks" (Amos 2:9a). Regardless of the historicity of these traditions, the reference to Jacob's conquest of the land from the Amorites accords well with these conquest traditions.

Like Abraham, to whom a late author ascribed a military victory and conquest of the land of Canaan to its farthest limits (Gen 14), the author of Gen 48:22 ascribed to Jacob a military victory over the autochthonous population and conquest of their land. Biblical scholars agree that the story of Abraham's victory over the kings of the four quadrants was composed in the post-exilic period and has no root in biblical historical memory (for recent analyses of Gen 14, see Granerød 2010; Na'aman 2015). It remains to be seen what tradition underlies the short account of Jacob's conquest of the land from the Amorites and its division among his sons.

The picture of Jacob as leader and conqueror is alien to canonical biblical historiography. In light of the reference to Joseph and Shechem, some scholars compared this text to biblical texts that relate episodes concerning the latter city. Among these episodes are Jacob's purchase of a plot of land near Shechem and the erection of an altar there (Gen 33:18–20); the story of Dinah's rape and Simeon's and Levi's

2. For the textual problems involving this interpretation, see Skinner 1910: 507; Gunkel 1917: 474–75; Nielsen 1959: 283–84; Speiser 1964: 358; Westermann 1986: 192; Sarna 1989: 330.

3. Roskop (2013) recently suggested that the Sihon episode in Deut 2 and related texts in Numbers and Deuteronomy are late interpolations. The insertions stem from the efforts of late redactors to incorporate the Transjordanian plateau into the territory of the Promised Land of Canaan. For a post-Dtr date of Judg 11:12–28 and related texts, see Gross 2009: 584–94. It remains to be seen whether other scholars will accept this innovative, bold analysis of the biblical text.

conquest of Shechem (Gen 34); Joshua's conclusion of an alliance at Shechem (Josh 24); and the story of Abimelech and Shechem (Judg 9).

Burney (1918a: 43) suggested that Shechem was once occupied by Simeon and Levy and later became an Ephrathite city. In this light, he interpreted Gen 48:22 as an etiological tradition written to manifest the present status of Shechem as a Josephite city. Rowley (1950: 124–29) elaborated on this hypothesis and suggested that the episode of Simeon and Levy and their close relations with Shechem (Gen 34) reflects the reality of the Amarna Age. The older tradition of the alliance was later transferred to Joshua (as indicated by Josh 24), whereas the old conquest of the Amarna Age was transferred to Jacob. However, Gen 34 is a very late post-exilic literary-ideological work and certainly is not the source of the Gen 48:22 tradition.⁴

The story of Jacob's peaceful purchase of a plot of land near Shechem and the erection of an altar there (Gen 33:19) is entirely different from the conquest tradition of 48:22. In this light, commentators correctly emphasized that no literary or "historical" connection exists between the Jacob stories in Gen 33–34 and the tradition of Shechem's conquest in Gen 48:22 (Skinner 1910: 507; Gunkel 1917: 474–75; Speiser 1964: 358; von Rad 1973: 412; Westermann 1986: 193). Blum (1984: 219 n. 39) raised the possibility that "hinter der Notiz in 48,22 und der Erzählung in Kap. 34 letztlich *eine* Tradition von der Einnahme Sichems durch Israel (= Jakob bzw. Die Söhne) steht." However, the differences between the accounts of Shechem's conquest related in Gen 34 and in 48:22 are so great that we should best set these stories apart.

Meyer (1906: 110–11, 227, 414–15) suggested connecting the tradition referred to in Gen 48:22 both to the traditions of the E source in which Jacob is presented as a warrior (e.g., Gen 32:25–30), and to Jacob's blessing of Joseph, his elder son (Gen 49:24–26). However, the similarity between the three episodes is vague and Meyer's suggested reconstruction is unlikely. Other scholars (Gunkel 1917: 475; de Vaux 1978: 637–40) observed a literary-historical connection between Gen 48:22 and the Abimelech story in Judg 9. Recently, Farber (2013: 17–26) revived this old hypothesis. Within the story of Judg 9, he boldly reconstructed an early story in which Jerubaal, father of Abimelech, captured Shechem, subjugated Hamor, its ruler, and ruled the city. Under the reign of Abimelech, the city rebelled and he conquered and destroyed it. Farber then hypothesized that the Jerubaal and Abimelech subjugation of Shechem and its conquest were later associated with Jacob, Israel's ancestor. However, no literary connection exists between the Gen 48:22 tradition and the Abimelech story in Judg 9. Whereas the former describes a conquest tradition of the land from the Amorites and its division among the tribes, the latter relates an episode from the history of the central highland in the mid- or late 11th century BCE. The two episodes share hardly any element in common, and analysis of the two texts does not support the assumed transfer of tradition from the Abimelech story to Jacob.

4. For the late dating of Gen 34, see Diebner 1984; Blum 1984: 210–23; Amit 2000: 189–211; Van Seters 2001: 239–47.

In sum, none of the episodes examined to date is connected in any way to the Gen 48:22 tradition. Although Shechem is the focus of several episodes recounted in biblical historiography, none of them relates a conquest tradition of the land. Moreover, the stories differ in all literary and/or historical elements from the Jacob tradition. Some other solution must be sought for the exceptional tradition under consideration.

In an effort to uncover this evasive tradition, I will first analyze the account of Judg 1, a source not yet examined in this context, and then discuss some additional conquest and allotment accounts. Notably, I must emphasize that I am not dealing with the historicity of the texts but rather with the manner in which the past was memorialized in the biblical tradition.

Judges 1 and the Conquest of the Central Hill Country

Judges 1 may be considered a complete conquest story—an alternative and a supplement to the detailed conquest story of the book of Joshua. The text is divided into two parts: vv. 1–21 and 22–35. The first part relates the conquest of the tribal territory of Judah, including the victory over Adoni-bezek in Bezek, his capture, and the conquest of Jerusalem (vv. 1–8); the conquest of the highland of Judah and the Negev as well as Philistia (vv. 9–18); the assignment of Hebron to Caleb (v. 20); the failure of Judah to inherit the lowland (v. 20); and Benjamin's failure to conquer Jerusalem (v. 21). The second part relates the Josephites' conquest of Bethel (vv. 22–26) and the failure of the Northern tribes to inherit the Canaanite cities located in their allotments (vv. 27–35).⁵

A closer look at Judg 1 reveals that the chapter is comprised of originally independent episodes that the author combined in an effort to provide them with an overall meaning. His source material included the episode of the war with Adoni-bezek, the conquests of Hebron, Debir, Hormah, and Bethel, the peaceful settlement at Arad, and the detailed list of "conquest lacunae." Part of the material has remarkable parallels in the book of Joshua whereas the rest—in particular, the episodes of the war at Bezek, the conquest of Bethel, and the settlement at Arad—have no clear parallels in biblical historiography.

The conquest account in Judg 1 is written with an unconcealed pro-Judahite tendentiousness. It conveys the message that the tribe of Judah took possession of its allotment, whereas the northern tribes (including the tribe of Benjamin) failed to gain control over theirs. Later, when they grew stronger, they did not expel the Canaanites but rather enslaved them (vv. 21, 27–33, 35). The picture emerging from the account Judg 1 provides, a negative image the idolatrous Canaanites living alongside the Israelites, introduces well the period of the Judges. This era is presented as a cycle of Israel's subjection to its neighbors as punishment for idolatry, followed by Israel's repentance and its forgiveness and deliverance from its oppressor's yoke.

5. For comprehensive discussions of Judg 1, see recently Mareike 2006; Butler 2009: 3–34; Gross 2009: 98–154, with earlier literature.

In the early days of modern research, scholars regarded Judg 1 as a better source for the early history of Israel than the book of Joshua. This assumption resulted from the episodic nature of the descriptions in Judges and the author's emphasis on the failure to dispossess the autochthonous Canaanite population. However, since the second half of the 20th century, scholarly evaluation of the chapter has drastically changed. It is clear now that Judg 1 was written in the post-exilic period, hundreds of years after the time related in the biblical text. Its author composed his work by collecting some episodes not included in the book of Joshua and supplementing them with source material extracted from Joshua (de Geus 1966; Auld 1975; Mullen 1984; Younger 1995; Fritz 2004; Gross 2009: 104–18, 152–54; contra Becker 1990: 57–62, 302–3; Mareike 2006: 29–73).⁶

Two conquest stories that take place in the territory of the Josephites and potentially might be connected to the tradition of Gen 48:22 appear in the account of Judg 1: (a) the campaign of Judah and Simeon against Adoni-bezek and the capture of the king and his city (vv. 4–8); and (b) the Josephites' conquest of Bethel (vv. 22–26). Each of the two accounts comprises a complete literary entity and should be analyzed in its own right.

The War with Adoni-bezek

I have already treated at length the episode of Adoni-bezek (Na'aman 1988). Since then, however, several detailed studies have been published (Becker 1990: 35–39, 57–62, 302–3; Niemann 1993; Mareike 2006: 74–80, 85–89; 96–98, 156; Gross 2009: 108–9, 118–25), calling for a reconsideration of the episode.

In my article (Na'aman 1988: 45–46), I suggested that the original oral or written story encompassed vv. 5a, 6–7a, whereas the author of Judg 1 composed the rest of the narrative in vv. 1–8. Becker (1990: 37–38) suggested that the old tradition was preserved in vv. 5–7a, whereas the redactor added vv. 1–2, 4, and 7b, thereby integrating the old source into his work. Mareike (2006: 83–89, 156) did not discuss the assumed source underlying the text in its present form and posited a reconstruction according to which the *Grundschrift* included vv. 1*, 2a, 4a, 5–6, 8b. Gross (2009: 108–9, 121–24) suggested that the *Traditionsstück* included vv. 5a, 6–7a, whereas the redactor added vv. 1, 4, 5b, 7b–8. Thus, scholars generally agree about the scope of the early source, although they debate the originality of v. 5b, which mentions the Canaanites and Perizzites.

In my article, I examined the pair of Canaanites and Perizzites referred to in several biblical texts (Gen 13:7; 34:30; Josh 16:10 [LXX]; Judg 1:4–5) and suggested that the pair should be attributed to a late stratum in the biblical tradition (Na'aman 1988: 42–44). The “Canaanites” in this pair refers to the town population, whereas the “Perizzites”—whose name is derived from the verb *PRZ*—refers to the rural population.⁷ Jointly, they form an overarching designation that includes town and

6. Mareike suggested that for the most part Judg 1 served as the source for the Joshua parallels. Note, however, that Mareike (2006, 60–62, 154–56) suggested that the text of Judg 1 does not comprise a unified literary unit and that a major part of the “conquest lacunae” (vv. 30–33) did not comprise part of the original account.

7. For the verb *PRZ* in the Amarna tablets, see Na'aman 1991a.

country dwellers. Niemann (1993) posited that Perizzites was an artificial ethnonym and that no ethnic group carried this name. In this light, we should avoid seeking a concrete place or region for the mentioned population group. Lemaire (2006: 220–22, with earlier literature), however, suggested that originally the Perizzites were an ethnic group named after Pirindu/Piriddu, the land of their origin. Gross (2009: 122) examined the pair Canaanites and Perizzites and concluded that the combination appears only in late texts.⁸ In this light, he posited that v. 5b was written by what he called the “projudäischen Bearbeiter” and does not belong to the early story.

Assuming that the Judahite author of Judg 1 introduced v. 5b, the early story (vv. 5a, 6–7a) relates the defeat of Adoni-bezek, his flight and capture, and his mutilation, which he himself presented as a retribution for his earlier deed (v. 7: “Seventy kings, the large digits of their hands and feet cut off, used to pick up food under my table. As I have done, so God has repaid me”). The number “70” is clearly typological and does not accurately reflect the ancient reality. Nonetheless, in light of the high number of captured and mutilated kings, the old story must have referred to a strong local king that the Israelites defeated in battle near Bezek and then captured and mutilated.⁹

What might have been the reality behind the old story of a war against a strong Canaanite king that subjugated so many local rulers? The obvious (in fact, the only) candidate is the King of Shechem (Welten 1965: 144–45; Na’aman 1988: 45). The territory of Late Bronze Shechem encompassed the central highlands from the margins of the Jezreel and Beth-shean valleys in the north to the Bethel highland in the south, and from the ‘Aruna pass in the west to the Jordan Valley in the east (Na’aman 1992: 284, 288–89; Finkelstein 1996: 234–36; 2013: 15–21; Finkelstein and Na’aman 2005: 173–80). The name of the defeated ruler did not survive in the oral story, and the author called him Adoni-bezek (“Lord of Bezek”), after the name of the battlefield and in analogy to the name Adoni-zedek, the King of Jerusalem.¹⁰ The intentional similarity of names enabled him to carry the plot beyond the limits of the old story and connect it to Jerusalem. Thereby, he supplemented the story of Josh 10, which failed to illuminate the fate of the King of Jerusalem after the battle of Gibeon, and combined the Adoni-bezek episode with the rest of the conquest account, which relates how Judah and Simeon took over the rest of the territory of Judah (vv. 8–20).

The author of Judg 1 referred to Bezek as a station along the route of Judah and Simeon, who arrived from the east, clashed with, and defeated Adoni-bezek, the local king, and proceeded to conquer Jerusalem and the Judean highlands. Bezek is located on an ancient road leading from the Jordan Valley and the plain of Beth-shean to the city of Shechem and the eastern valleys of the Manasseh highlands (Welten 1965: 145–63; Zertal 1992: 717; Gass 2004: 18–20). But what might have

8. Moore (1895: 13) and Burney (1918b: 4) already suggested this.

9. For mutilation of captured enemies, see Timm 2007: 376–78; Sasson 2014: 131–32.

10. The element *bezeq* in the name might have referred to either a noun or a verbal form. See discussions in Gass 2004: 9; Sasson 2014: 131.

been the outcome of the victory in the original early story? Given Bezek's location, we might assume that the late account of Judah's and Simeon's campaign replaced an early account of the Israelite tribes who arrived from the east, defeated the strong local king of Shechem, and conquered his city. According to this hypothesis, the account of the conquest of Jerusalem (vv. 7b–8) replaced the original account of the conquest of Shechem. Unfortunately, however, logical as it may be, this reconstruction cannot be confirmed.

The Josephites' Conquest of Bethel

The second part of Judg 1 (vv. 22–26) opens with the conquest of Bethel by the Josephites, followed by a list of the unconquered Canaanite cities located in the inherited regions of the northern tribes (vv. 27–35). The sequence of episodes related in the second part runs from south to north—the opposite direction to the sequence of episodes in the first part (vv. 1–20), which runs from north to south. The episode in vv. 22–26 interrupts the connection between vv. 21 and 27–35, which indicates its independent place in the sequence of events.

In the introduction to the Bethel episode (v. 22) we find the words *gam hēm* (“they also”), which refers to *wayaʿal yāhūdā* (“Then Judah went up”) in v. 4. These words were added to emphasize the continuity between the two introductions to the two parts of the story. Clearly, thus, v. 22 was written by the late author of the chapter. Hence, the early story of the Bethel conquest encompassed vv. 23–26 (Becker 1990: 47).¹¹

Scholars have observed several thematic parallels between the story of the conquest of Bethel and that of Jericho (Josh 2; 6) (for detailed comparison, see Becker 1990: 47). The common elements of the two stories include the sending of spies to prepare the conquest, the meeting with a local person, the promise to deal kindly with him provided that he agrees to help the spies perform their mission, the conquest of the city, the fulfillment of the promise, and the etiological notation at the end of the story. Yet, the two stories differ considerably in genre, plot, internal structure, and ideology; no direct literary connection exists between them.

Some scholars have considered the account of Judg 1:23–26 an independent early story that shares some motifs with other conquest stories (Soggin 1981: 29; Lindars 1995: 50–51; Gomes 2006: 111–12). Others have posited that the Bethel episode was composed on the basis of the Jericho episode in Joshua (Fritz 2004: 381; Gross 2009: 142). In my opinion, the latter assumption is unlikely because biblical stories usually tend to grow and expand rather than to be reduced to a very short account and because the two stories differ so substantially.

A third possibility has not yet been examined—namely, that the ancient (oral or written) Israelite account of the conquest of Bethel was the source that inspired the modeling of the Jericho conquest story. The assumed relations between an early, short account and a long, detailed later story have several biblical parallels. Note,

11. Scholars who suggest that the Bethel story comprises a later addition and was first composed by the author of Judg 1 attribute v. 22 to the original account. See Fritz 2004: 381; Gross 2009: 142.

for example, the relations between: (a) Jacob's testament to Simeon and Levi in Gen 49:5–7 and the story of Dinah's rape and the conquest of Shechem in Gen 34; (b) the anecdote of Dan's migration and conquest of Leshem/Dan in Josh 19:47 and the detailed late story of Dan's migration and conquest in Judg 17–18; and (c) the Elhanan short account in 2 Sam 21:19 and the dramatic David and Goliath story in 1 Sam 17. Scholars may contest this conclusion by claiming that the story of the conquest of Jericho was written before the composition of Judg 1. This, of course, is true, but the episode of the conquest of Bethel, like that of the battle of Bezek, was probably an early Israelite story, transmitted for a long time in either oral or written form. The author of the conquest stories in the Book of Joshua might have heard the story and worked it into his composition, whereas later, the author of Judg 1 integrated the northern story into his composition. As noted in the introduction, we know very little about the literary works composed in the Kingdom of Israel, so the paucity of Israelite works known to us from the Bible does not indicate that such works did not exist.¹²

The short account in vv. 23–26 relates how Bethel was conquered by a stratagem that is unique in the biblical conquest narratives: penetration by way of *mābô' hā'îr* (“the entryway of the town”) into the fortified city. The narrator refers to a secret passage, a kind of postern rather than a city gate that all can see (Malamat 1979: 48–49, with earlier literature). After entering the city, the invaders killed its inhabitants, except for the family of the man who helped the conquerors capture the city. The author probably observed the similarity between the ancient name of the city (Luz) and that of a Neo-Hittite city of his time and added the etiological note at the end of his story (v. 26: “And the man went to the land of the Hittites and built a city, and called its name Luz, that is its name to this date”).¹³

The Bethel episode in the conquest account of Judg 1 was included so as to address a lacuna in the conquest stories of the book of Joshua. Only the capture of Ai, Bethel's southeastern neighbor, appeared in the Joshua conquest story, whereas the better-known city of Bethel was missing. By relating the story of Bethel's conquest, the author filled in the “gap” in the biblical account, just as he filled in another gap with the reference to the conquest of Jerusalem (v. 8).

The Battle at the Waters of Merom and Hazor's Conquest

Can we discover some other episodes that originally might have formed part of the Israelite conquest tradition? In considering this question, the episode of Joshua's campaign to the north, his victory over Jabin at the Waters of Merom, and

12. The assemblage of inscriptions unearthed at Kuntillet 'Ajrud exhibits the wealth of inscriptions written in the Kingdom of Israel at its peak, during the era of Jeroboam II (ca. 786–746). Similar inscriptions from the early 8th century have not been discovered to date in the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah—a fact that clearly indicates the limitation of our knowledge. This reality demonstrates the need to be careful in drawing conclusions on the basis of negative evidence.

13. “The Land of the Hittites” consistently appears in ancient Near Eastern and biblical sources as a geographical term for north Syria and south Anatolia. It is never applied to the Samaria highlands (for references to the Land of Hatti, see Zadok 1985: 157; Cogan 2002; Bagg 2007: 95–100). Hence, I cannot accept Jericke's (2008: 184–89) identification of Luz referred to in v. 26 with Khirbet Lōze, a site located on Mount Gerizim.

the conquest of Hazor all come to mind (Josh 11). Of all the conquest stories in the book of Joshua, this is the only campaign that takes place outside the territory of pre-exilic Judah. Moreover, the acquaintance of Judahite scribes with the north was minimal (see Naʾaman 2012: 89–91, 97), whereas the conquest account in Josh 11 reflects a fair geographical and historical knowledge of the north. This inconsistency raises the question: where did the author of ch. 11 obtain this conquest account?

The author's familiarity with the far north can be illustrated by the following examples. (a) The King of Hazor, presented as the leader of a strong coalition, was indeed the strongest king in north Canaan in the second millennium BCE. (b) I recently examined in detail the problem of the memory of historical Canaan in biblical historiography and concluded that the note in Josh 11:10 on Hazor's leading status among the Canaanite kingdoms ("for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms") is the only genuine memory that survived from the reality of Late Bronze Canaan (Naʾaman 2016: 135, 140 and n. 18). (c) The exceptional note of the burning of Hazor by fire (v. 13: "However Israel did not burn any of the cities which stood on their mounds, except that Joshua burned Hazor alone") corresponds well with the results of the archaeological excavations of the site. Such an occurrence might possibly reflect a remote memorialization of the end of the powerful Canaanite city (Yadin 1972: 108–9, 129–32; 1979: 60–63, 66–67; Ben-Tor 2013; 2016: 113–26). (d) Madon/Maron (Tel Qarnei Ḥiṭṭin), Shimron/Shimʿon, and Achshaph, situated along the southern border of the Galilee, were the three most important Canaanite cities on the border of Upper Galilee (Naʾaman 1986: 122–27). (e) The battle at the Waters of Merom, probably identified at the spring of Wādi el-Ḥamam, northeast of Marom/Tel Qarnei Ḥiṭṭin, was conducted on the main route leading to Hazor (Naʾaman 1986: 126).¹⁴

Where did the Judahite author of ch. 11 obtain this topographic and historical knowledge of the reality in the far north? I suggest that the kernel of the story was an Israelite (oral or written) conquest story and that the author of Joshua expanded and edited this early story and integrated it within his literary-theological work of the conquest of Canaan.

Jabin "King of Canaan" is also mentioned in Judg 4:2, 7, 17, 23–24, a story that originated in the Northern Kingdom. Yet, the originality of the references to Jabin in the pre-deuteronomistic story is controversial; most scholars concede that the Deuteronomist first introduced such references (Richter 1963: 29–65; 1964: 6–9; Becker 1990: 126–39; Lindars 1995: 172–73; Gross 2009: 255–63, with earlier literature). Because the originality of Jabin in the Israelite early story requires a lengthy discussion, it remains beyond the scope of this article.

Was Joshua the Champion of a North Israelite Conquest Story?

Biblical historiography relates that Joshua, the prominent Israelite leader and successful war commander, was an Ephrathite. His grave was identified as being

14. The Ḥulah Lake, northeast of Hazor, is another candidate for identification with the Waters of Merom.

at Timnath-heres (Josh 19:49–50; 24:30; Judg 2:9),¹⁵ a site identified with Khirbet Tibneh, in the western highlands of Ephraim.¹⁶ Some scholars have discussed Joshua's historical role in the early history of Israel and the antiquity of his traditions (e.g., Elliger 1934; Alt 1936; Seebass 1985; Rofé 2004). I limit my discussion here to merely one aspect: Joshua's prominent position in the biblical account of the conquest.

According to the account offered in the book of Joshua, the Israelite campaign passed from Jericho to Ai and Gibeon. This line of conquered and surrendered cities overlaps with the northern border of Judah, as demarcated by the Benjaminite town lists of Josh 18:21–28. Jericho is mentioned in Josh 18:21; Bethel, located northwest of Ai, is registered in 18:22; and Gibeon appears in 18:25. Following the pioneering work of Alt (1925), scholars agreed that the town list of Judah and Benjamin in Josh 15:21–62 and 18:21–28 was written in the 7th century BCE, most likely during the reign of Josiah (639–609 BCE), and reflects the scope of the Kingdom of Judah in his time (Na'aman 1991b: 5–33; Nelson 1997: 190–91; de Vos 2003: 9–171, 311–530, with earlier literature)¹⁷—hence, the conclusion that the conquest account in Josh 2–10 overlaps with the territory of Judah at the time of writing.

How can we explain the fact that Joshua, the Ephrathite, is presented as leader of the conquest of the Judahite territory, whereas the territory of the Josephites, including that of his tribe, Ephraim, is missing from the conquest story? This remarkable discrepancy leads me to suggest that originally Joshua was the champion of the (oral or written) North Israelite conquest story. Later, in the late 7th century, the Judahite author of the conquest story adopted Joshua's name and made him the leader of the Israelite troops. As against the early Israelite conquest story, whose scope remains unknown but must have included the central highlands, the late author omitted from his work the conquest of the Josephites' territory. In its place, he related the conquest of the Kingdom of Judah's territory up to its extreme borders (Josh 2–10). In addition to the figure of Joshua, he also “borrowed” the Israelite conquest account of north Israel (Josh 11), reworked it, and integrated the expanded story into his account (see above). In this manner, he transformed the limited account of Judah's conquest into a story of the taking over of the Land of Canaan up to its extreme borders and integrated his work into the traditional North Israelite memory of the conquest of the Land.

Josh 17:14–18: Expanding the Allotment of the Josephites

Can we uncover more accounts of the putative lost Israelite conquest story? A prominent candidate is the short anecdote in Josh 17:14–18 that relates the dia-

15. For discussion of the alternative readings of the toponym as either Timnath-heres or Timnath-serah, see recently Farber 2012: 307–10, with earlier literature.

16. Khirbet Tibneh, the burial site of Joshua, is located about 7 km southeast of Zeredah, Jeroboam's birth-place. The latter city is identified at Khirbet Bant Bar, north of Naḥal Shiloh (Wādi Seridah) (Kochavi 1989).

17. This conclusion contradicts Blum's inference (2012: 156) that the author of the conquest story considered Jericho and Ai as North Israelite towns and hence, “hierzu past der Ephraimite Josua als Heros.”

logue between Joshua and the Josephites. This text interrupts the sequence of the tribal allotments between chs. 16–17 and 18–19 and forms an isolated literary unit that differs from the preceding and succeeding accounts. Note also the obvious contradiction between the complaint of the Josephites that they received only one lot (17:14) and the tribal inheritances according to which Ephraim and Manasseh received two allotments (Josh 16:4–17:13). Moreover, the personal involvement of Joshua in this allotment process is unparalleled in other accounts of tribal inheritances in Josh 15–19. These exceptional characteristics call for discussion of this episode in its own right.

The passage in vv. 14–18 describes a dialogue between Joshua and the Josephites about the extent of their allotment. Some scholars suggest that this literary unit consists of two originally parallel units: an older version in vv. 16–18 and a supplement in vv. 14–15 (Schmitt 1970: 90–97; Seebass 1982, with earlier literature); others support the unity of the passage (Kallai 1990). In my opinion, the suggested division of the passage into two units is untenable. The Josephites complained in v. 14 that they received only one lot (“Why have you given me but one lot and one part for my inheritance, although I am a numerous people”), and Joshua replied to this specific complaint in v. 17 (“You are a numerous people and have great power. You will not have only a single lot”). Thus, it is clear that vv. 14 and 17 belong together, and hence that vv.14–18 form a coherent single unit, composed of two claims and two responses.

I cautiously suggest that the narrative sequence in this unit runs as follows. The Josephites first complained that they received a single lot, although given their great number, they deserve more than one lot (v. 14). Joshua replied that they should expand their territory, which until then was confined to the area from Mount Ephraim up to the neighboring forested regions (v. 15).¹⁸ In response, the Josephites claimed that, even after this expansion, the hilly country is insufficient for their vast numbers, because the Canaanites have blocked their expansion to the surrounding plains (v. 16). Joshua reacted by promising that they will receive two allotments (“You will not have only a single lot”), elaborating further that the double lot will be achieved by clearing the forested region and by a future conquest of the plains (vv. 17–18). I posit that the dialogues reflect a picture of the expansion of the Josephites from Mount Ephraim northward (v. 15) to the highlands of Manasseh and envisage the future conquest of the plains and its annexation to Manasseh’s allotment (see Josh 17:11–13).

As noted above, the passage in vv. 14–18 is isolated within the description of the tribal allotments and deals with the territory of the Josephites—a territory whose occupation is missing from the account of the book of Joshua.¹⁹ Moreover, it describes a situation in which the settlement process in Manasseh’s highlands has not yet been completed and—contrary to the conquest story of the book of Joshua—the

18. The reference to the Perizzites and Rephaim is missing in the LXX and is probably a late interpolation (Holmes 1914: 65).

19. In the early stages of biblical research, some scholars attributed Josh 17:14–18 to the J source, the early work that described the conquest and settlement of the land. See Budde 1890: 32–44; Burney 1918b: 49–50.

Canaanites still dominate the plain. Collectively, these factors might indicate that the episode was “borrowed” from the Israelite conquest and allotment story and integrated into the book of Joshua after the description of the Manasseh allotment.

Remarkable in the passage is the active role of Joshua in the allotment process, which differs from his more limited role in the Judahite allotment account. Assuming that the episode originated in Israel, it supplies an important addition to the lost Israelite conquest story and the role of Joshua in it.

Conclusion

It is always difficult to demonstrate the existence of a lost work on the basis of inferences drawn from an existing literary work. This difficulty certainly emerges when dealing with a biblical text whose authors and redactors were directed by literary and theological motivation, made extensive alterations in the received texts, and frequently did not find it necessary to name their sources. Under such conditions, we can only present circumstantial evidence that, by cumulative force, might partly corroborate the existence of the presumed lost work.

In my discussion, I noted several accounts that might have come from a lost North Israelite oral or written conquest story. Among these putative old accounts are: (a) the victory of the Israelites over a local powerful king, most probably the King of Shechem, near Bezek, a site located on the way from the Jordan Valley to the Manasseh hill country; (b) the conquest of Bethel by stratagem; (c) the battle at the Waters of Merom against the King of Hazor and the conquest and destruction of his city; and (d) the account of Joshua allotting the vast territory of Ephraim and Manasseh to the Josephites. I further suggested that Joshua himself might have been the champion of the North Israelite conquest story who led the campaign and divided the conquered land among the Israelite tribes. If this (admittedly speculated) reconstruction is true, it indicates that the author of the conquest stories in the Book of Joshua “borrowed” some important elements of his work from the Israelite conquest story and imbedded them into his literary-ideological composition. In his work, he deliberately delineated Joshua and his army’s line of conquest along the northern border of the Kingdom of Judah, leaving Bethel, a city that the Josephites conquered according to the North Israelite story, outside the conquered territory.

Assuming this reconstruction’s viability, it might help explain the account of Gen 48:22, which opened the discussion. The author of this account was probably acquainted with the conquest and allotment story of the North Israelite tribes and attributed to Jacob, their ancestral father, the role of conqueror of the land and its division among the tribes. This author further noted that the land was conquered from the Amorites, who must have played the role of enemy in the early Israelite story. Amos 2:9, a mid-eighth century Israelite prophecy that explicitly declares that the Land of Israel was conquered from the Amorites, confirms the antiquity of this tradition. Thus, it is possible that the author of Josh 10 borrowed this element as well from the Israelite story and applied it to his description of the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the highland and lowland of Judah (Josh 10:5–6, 12).

Scholars have long emphasized that isolated traditions that do not conform to the national narrative might contain old stories excluded from the biblical canon and that elucidating these traditions might enrich our knowledge of the history, religion, and culture of the ancient Israelite society. I suggest that the episode in Gen 48:22 should be viewed in this light and reflects a lost conquest and allotment tradition, remains of which might be uncovered in various parts of the biblical text.

This article is dedicated to Israel Finkelstein, a long-time colleague and a very dear friend. Professor Finkelstein contributed important comprehensive books and many original papers to the ongoing scholarly discussion on the history and archaeology of ancient Israel and Judah. We agree on many issues and differ on many others. In fact, this article, written in his honor, may set the ground for another stormy debate on biblical interpretation. However, the gap in our readings of the evidence is bridged with mutual respect and intellectual enrichment and is anchored in the understanding that there will never be a “last word” in this continuous dialogue.

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