

## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EVIDENCE FROM RALPH HAWKINS FOR A LATE-DATE EXODUS-CONQUEST

RODGER C. YOUNG AND BRYANT G. WOOD\*

In a recent issue of *JETS*, Ralph Hawkins sidestepped the insurmountable problems associated with a late-date exodus-conquest and offered five arguments which he suggested “may open up the possibility of a renewed consideration of the Late Date Exodus-Conquest as a viable choice for evangelicals.”<sup>1</sup> Three of the arguments are textual and two are archaeological. The present paper addresses these five issues.

### I. HAWKINS’S TEXTUAL ARGUMENTS: THE 480 YEARS OF 1 KGS 6:1 ARE SYMBOLIC OR ARTIFICIAL

1. *First wrong textual argument: the 480 years are inconsistent with the chronology of Judges.* The 479 years of elapsed time indicated in 1 Kgs 6:1<sup>2</sup> are entirely consistent with the chronology of the book of Judges, as Paul Ray, Andrew Steinmann,<sup>3</sup> and other authors have shown, whereas a thirteenth-century exodus cannot be reconciled with its time spans and sequences. The various pericopes of Judges can be divided into two classes, the sequenced and those that might be called unprovenanced, to use a term familiar to

\* Rodger C. Young, who wrote section I, is a retired systems analyst residing at 1115 Basswood Lane, St. Louis, MO 63132; Bryant G. Wood, who wrote sections II and III, is Director of Research at the Associates for Biblical Research, P.O. Box 144, Akron, PA 17501.

For a presentation of the problems, see Bryant G. Wood, “The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory,” *JETS* 48 (2006) 475–89; idem, “The Biblical Date for the Exodus is 1446 BC: A Response to James Hoffmeier,” *JETS* 50 (2007) 249–58.

<sup>1</sup> Ralph K. Hawkins, “Propositions for Evangelical Acceptance of a Late-Date Exodus-Conquest: Biblical Data and the Royal Scarabs from Mt. Ebal,” *JETS* 50 (2007) 46.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kgs 6:1 states that temple construction began in year 480 *lēšēt bēnē yišrā’el mē’ereš mišrayim*: “Of the going-out (exodus) of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.” The preposition *lē* (“of”) here is often wrongly rendered “after,” but this sense is not consistent with its proper meaning and its usage in this phrase. In the Pentateuch, the exodus from Egypt is considered as starting an era. The exodus itself occurred in year one (not year zero) of the exodus-era, and Aaron’s death occurred in year forty of this era (Num 33:38), that is, thirty-nine years after the exodus. See the further discussion in Rodger C. Young, “When Did Solomon Die?” *JETS* 46 (2003) 602. In the present paper, the term exodus-era will frequently be used when referring to the 480-year figure of 1 Kgs 6:1. From this verse we learn that temple construction began in the 480th year of the exodus-era, that is, 479 years after the exodus.

<sup>3</sup> Paul J. Ray, “Another Look at the Period of the Judges,” in *Beyond the Jordan* (ed. Glenn A. Carnagey, Sr.; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005) 93–104; Andrew E. Steinmann, “The Mysterious Numbers of the Book of Judges,” *JETS* 48 (2005) 491–500.

archaeologists. Sequenced stories are those that are connected to what immediately precedes or follows by a time-sequence phrase (some are connected at only one end). An example is Judg 10:1–2 (NIV): “After the time of Abimelech a man of Issachar, Tola son of Puah, the son of Dodo, rose to save Israel. . . . He led Israel twenty-three years.”

Unprovenanced pericopes are those that are not related by a sequence-expression to either what precedes or to what follows. Examples are the story of Samson (Judges 13–16), the story of Micah and the Danites (Judges 17–18), and the final three chapters of Judges. The only chronological marker in the history of Samson states that he judged Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines (Judg 15:20; 16:31). This could have overlapped a part of the judgeships of Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, or Abdon, who also were active in the days of the wars against the Philistines.<sup>4</sup> Judges 13–16, then, provides an example of a pericope which is not in strict chronological order with what precedes and follows, and the proper way to determine the chronology of Judges is to distinguish between these unprovenanced sections and those that are sequenced. Sequences of years can be constructed from the latter, and the interpreter must then seek the most reasonable time to assign to the unprovenanced passages. It is completely improper to add all the numbers together without this consideration, as Hawkins does, in order to discredit the testimony of Judges as a chronological witness.<sup>5</sup>

For Hawkins, it is essential that the credibility of the numbers in Judges be negated, because the numbers exceed the time that proponents of a late-date exodus can afford to give to the time of the judges. This is true even with a judicious approach to the chronological data instead of Hawkins’s and Hoffmeier’s artificial adding up of everything. The proper approach to Judges, then, is to carefully study which sections are sequenced and which are unprovenanced, taking note of the exact meaning of the various bridge passages and considering whatever extra information is available, such as the 300 years of Judg 11:26. Advocates of a thirteenth-century exodus cannot afford to take this approach, and so they must discredit the data. Or, in the case of Kitchen’s treatment of Judg 11:26, he defames poor Jephthah.<sup>6</sup> But with the proper literal approach to the text, the pericopes in Judges are compatible with the 480th-year datum of 1 Kgs 6:1. They cannot be made compatible with an entry into the land in the late thirteenth or early twelfth (per Hawkins; see below, section II.2.a) century BC.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 496–97.

<sup>5</sup> “Propositions” 35: “When one seeks to reconstruct the numbers given in the biblical accounts, consistently and literally, they do not add up to the number 480 given in 1 Kgs 6:1. . . . The aggregate total of all these numbers [from the exodus to the end of Judges] is 515.” In a similar fashion, James Hoffmeier (“What is the Biblical Date of the Exodus? A Response to Bryant Wood,” *JETS* 50 [2007] 227–28) adds all timespans mentioned from Solomon back to the exodus to get a total of 633 years and then goes on to say that anyone who recognizes an overlap between some of the narratives “abandons a straightforward, literal reading of the Judges through Exodus narratives” (p. 228). But it is Ray and Steinmann, not Hawkins and Hoffmeier, who look at the texts in a “straightforward, literal” manner and do not read into them what they do not say. When the correct process is followed, it is clear that the texts are consistent with a fifteenth-century exodus and incompatible with a thirteenth-century exodus.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Kitchen, *On the Reliability of Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 209.

2. *Second wrong textual argument: the 480 years represent twelve generations.* Hawkins repeats the familiar argument that the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1 are a symbolic representation of twelve generations of forty years each. He gives as his basis van Daalen's comments in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*.<sup>7</sup> As supporting evidence for 40 years = one generation, van Daalen cites Exod 16:35; Num 14:33, 32:13; Ezek 4:6; and 29:11.<sup>8</sup> The first three of these citations refer to the forty years that Israel wandered in the desert, while the Ezekiel passages refer to other forty-year periods that are irrelevant to the discussion. For the present purposes, Num 32:13 can be taken as representative of the texts that are sometimes used to support the equation of forty years with a generation (others that can be cited are Deut 2:14; Ps 95:10; and Heb 3:9–10). These texts relate that the Lord was angry with that generation (*dôr* in Hebrew, *genea* in Greek) for forty years while they wandered in the wilderness (in Deut 2:14, thirty-eight years, i.e. from the time of leaving Kadesh Barnea).

In the passages cited, the word "generation" is not equated with forty years, nor is it equated to the thirty-eight years in Deut 2:14. Instead, the forty or thirty-eight years are given as the time necessary for that *dôr* to die, excepting those under twenty years of age (Num 14:29). The word *dôr* in these passages does not refer to a lapse of time, such as the time from the birth of a father to the birth of his son, although that is one of its meanings elsewhere. This could not be the meaning in the case of Israel in the wilderness, because every parent who had children twenty years old or older died together with those children; this would have been two generations dying in the wilderness if the meaning were a time lapse between the birth of the parent and the birth of the child.

The lexicons recognize that there is another meaning of *dôr*, which is "simply 'contemporaries.'"<sup>9</sup> An example is Gen 6:9, where Noah was a righteous man among his *dôr*. In the NT, the *genea* that tempted God in the wilderness in Heb 3:10 and the *genea* that sought a sign in Matt 12:39 indicate the same meaning: a group of contemporaries, not a measure of elapsed time. By failing to recognize the specific meaning of "generation" in these passages and taking it to mean a period of elapsed time, rather than a group of people, van Daalen and others have reached an erroneous conclusion. Moreover, Hawkins fails to deal with the arguments previously presented showing the incorrectness of this conclusion.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> David H. van Daalen, "Number Symbolism," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 561–63.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 562–63.

<sup>9</sup> *TWOT* 1.187.

<sup>10</sup> Wood, "Rise and Fall" 484, 486. Neither Hoffmeier ("Response to Wood") nor Hawkins has produced any evidence to show that the author of 1 Kgs 6:1 intended his readers to understand that the 480 years were twelve generations, nor did they address the statement on page 486 of Wood's article that 1 Chr 6:33–37 gives nineteen generations from Korah, who opposed Moses, until the time of Solomon, thus indicating a more reasonable twenty-five years per generation. If the exodus were in approximately 1270 or 1260, the nineteen generations to the time of Solomon (300 years) would require less than sixteen years per generation for the family line of Heman (1 Chr 6:33). This is entirely unreasonable, especially when we consider that this is not a genealogy of all the

The reduction of the 480 years into twelve generations of forty years fails because of this wrong practice of equating the “generation” with a period of forty years. This does not mean that the number forty in general, and a forty-year time span in particular, are not significant in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, there is no indication in the text of 1 Kings 6 that the reader was supposed to derive a hidden meaning by dividing 480 by forty to get twelve generations. When 1 Kgs 6:1 states that temple construction began in the 480th year of the exodus era, the only conclusion that the reader was intended to draw was that 479 years had passed, and unfortunately many commentators and translators miss even this meaning of the verse.<sup>11</sup>

3. *Third wrong textual argument: the 480 years are an artificial construct designed to put the temple at the center of Israelite history.*

a. *The attempt of Burney to show that the 480 years are artificial.* In a further attempt to discredit the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1 as unhistorical, Hawkins appeals to the work of Charles Burney, published in 1903.<sup>12</sup> Burney repeated the notion of earlier writers that the author of 1 Kgs 6:1 artificially constructed the 480 years based on a “known” period from a later time in Israelite history: “[T]he author of our verse [1Kgs 6:1] . . . may thus have purposely approximated the length of the little-known period from the Exodus to the building of the Temple to the chronology of some subsequent period for the knowledge of which he possessed available sources.”<sup>13</sup>

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first-born, such as we might expect for kings; Heman’s grandfather Samuel was born several years after Elkanah’s first-born (1 Sam 1:2–8).

<sup>11</sup> Hawkins ends these years in 966 BC, apparently unaware of the careful demonstration (Young, “Solomon” 589–603) that Thiele’s dates for Solomon are one year too late, based on his unwarranted assumption that Solomon died after Tishri 1 in the fall of 931 BC, instead of allowing for the possibility that he died in the months immediately preceding. Making this adjustment puts Solomon’s years one year earlier by Judah’s Tishri-based reckoning. This one-year correction dates the start of temple construction to the spring of 967, not 966 as accepted by Hawkins. The correction resolved problems that Thiele had with the reigns of Jehoshaphat, Ahaziah, and Athaliah. In addition, it is important in showing the exactness of the data for the Jubilee and Sabbatical years. The demonstration of this exactness provides one of the strongest arguments against a late-date exodus and in favor of the accuracy of all the chronological data of the books of Kings, as will be discussed further below.

<sup>12</sup> “Propositions” 35–36.

<sup>13</sup> Charles F. Burney, *The Book of Judges, with Introduction and Notes, and Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings, with an Introduction and Appendix* (New York: KTAV, 1970); *Judges* first published London: Rivingtons, 1918, Kings first published Oxford: Clarendon, 1903) 59–60. Burney is following Wellhausen, who apparently conceived this theory about the origin of the 480 years (Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* [New York: World, 1961; first published Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885; German original Berlin: G. Reimer, 1878; trans. J. Southerland Black and Allan Menzies]). See the remarks of Rodger C. Young, “When Did Jerusalem Fall?,” *JETS* 47 (2004) 28–29, n. 13, regarding the artificiality of Wellhausen’s construction. Other authors who have followed Wellhausen in his faulty reasoning include Bernhard Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* 1 (Berlin: G. Grote, 1887) 89; Emile F. Kautzsch, *Abriß der Geschichte des alttestamentlichen Schrifttums: nebst Zeittafeln zur Geschichte der Israeliten und anderen Beigaben zur Erklärung des alten Testaments* (Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr, 1897) 65; Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990) 2.

The theory that the 480 years are derived from the regnal data contradicts Hawkins's first argument that they symbolize twelve generations of forty years each, but he seems to want it both ways. Whichever derivation is chosen, the main point is that the 480 years cannot be trusted because according to Wellhausen, whom Burney and Hawkins are following here, the regnal data for Solomon and his successors were manipulated to produce a fictitious 480 years.<sup>14</sup> Hawkins apparently agrees with Wellhausen's assessment that the regnal data have been falsified, because he writes, "When the books of 1–2 Kings are viewed as a whole, therefore, it seems clear that its author(s) wanted to place the building of the Temple at the center of the biblical history."<sup>15</sup> The implication is that the regnal data of Kings are not genuine history and cannot be used to create a proper chronology of the kingdom period.

To demonstrate this supposed artificiality in the regnal data, Burney added the balance of the years of Solomon's reign after the initiation of the construction of the temple (37), to the lengths of reigns of the succeeding kings of Judah (393), to the duration of the exile (50, presumably from the fall of Jerusalem in 587 to the first return in 537), thus obtaining an interval of 480 years.<sup>16</sup> In Burney's summation there are three mistakes: First, the

<sup>14</sup> Wellhausen, *Prolegomena* 272. Wellhausen's attack on the historical validity of the regnal data in Kings and Chronicles was effective in destroying faith in the integrity of the Scriptures. Liberal scholarship was quick to press the argument. "Wellhausen has shown, by convincing reasons, that the synchronisms with the Book of Kings cannot possibly rest on ancient tradition, but are on the contrary simply the products of artificial reckoning" (Rudolf Kittel, *A History of the Hebrews* 2 [Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1896; German original Gotha, Germany: Perthes, 1892; trans. John Taylor] 234). "Wellhausen is surely right in believing that the synchronisms in Kings are worthless, being merely a late compilation from the actual figures given" (Theodore H. Robinson, *A History of Israel* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1932] 1.454). Yet, by one of the ironies of history, the same chronological data that these scholars cited as showing the fallibility of the Scriptures have been demonstrated by conservative scholarship to have all the earmarks of authenticity, once the presupposition-based approach of liberal scholarship was replaced by a careful study of the chronological methods used in the ancient Near East. These later findings are therefore consistent with a high view of the inspiration of Scripture. "[T]he apparent authenticity of the chronological details of Scripture is precisely what would be expected if the doctrine of limited inspiration is false and that of inerrancy is true" (Rodger C. Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Records," *JETS* 48 [2005] 244). There is also a pragmatic side to this: the Thiele/McFall chronology that is based on a conservative approach to the Scriptures has been widely accepted as reflecting the true history of the times, whereas no chronological consensus has been attained by starting with the various theories that postulate artificiality in the records of Kings and Chronicles.

<sup>15</sup> "Propositions" 36.

<sup>16</sup> *Kings* 60. The rationale for choosing this particular timespan to insert in 1 Kgs 6:1 is not explained by Burney. Hawkins, however, provides a reason, as given earlier by Nahum Sarna. Sarna suggests, "[T]he biblical writer [of 1 Kgs 6:1] wanted to place the Temple at the center of biblical history" (Nahum M. Sarna "Israel in Egypt: The Egyptian Sojourn and the Exodus," in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* [ed. Hershel Shanks; Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999] 42). Hawkins understands Sarna's "biblical history" to mean "Israelite history," and he writes, "Israel's history on either side of the construction of the Temple is summarized as having encompassed 480 years, thereby placing the construction of the Temple in the center of history" ("Propositions" 36). This concept is not found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, and it assumes that Israelite history ceased with the first return

thirty-seven years assigned from Solomon's fourth year to his fortieth year should be thirty-six. Second, six years are assigned to Athaliah, from 2 Kgs 11:3, which is the accession equivalent for the seven years of non-accession reckoning that is given to her in the next verse, and which should have been used in keeping with the non-accession system being used at that time in Judah.<sup>17</sup> Third, fifty years are assigned from the exile to the decree of Cyrus, instead of the proper forty-nine years (587 to 538 BC).

Moreover, we know from modern investigations that this whole procedure is fallacious, a fact Hawkins acknowledges.<sup>18</sup> Time spans in Judahite history cannot be determined simply by adding the lengths of reigns of kings, due to co-regencies and non-accession reckoning.<sup>19</sup> The actual duration from Solomon's fourth year (967 BC)<sup>20</sup> to the end of Zedekiah's reign (587 BC) was 380 years, not 430, and the total to the decree of Cyrus in 538 BC (Ezra 1:1) was 429 years, not the artificial 480 years calculated by Wellhausen and Burney and cited by Hawkins. It is Wellhausen and Burney who are playing games with the numbers, not the authors of 1 and 2 Kings.

The thesis of Wellhausen and Burney that Hawkins follows is premised on an exilic or post-exilic authorship of 1 Kgs 6:1 and depends upon the further presupposition that an author who was recording chronological data in the time of Solomon, or shortly thereafter, had no way to accurately compute long periods of time over the course of Israelite history. This presupposition and the presupposition of exilic or post-exilic authorship of 1 Kgs 6:1 are both false. This will be demonstrated in sections c and d below.

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from exile. If the historical data had been manipulated in the way theorized by Sarna and Hawkins, the authors of Kings would be writing propaganda, not history. Such an approach to the authorship of the Scriptures destroys all confidence in anything presented in the written text, whether it be matters of history or of doctrine. But imaginative theorizing of this sort has no explanation for why sound scholarship has shown that the reign length data have all the characteristics of authenticity, so that a coherent and rational chronology has been constructed from them.

<sup>17</sup> Non-accession reckoning means that the calendar year in which the king came to the throne is reckoned as his "year one," while at the same time it is reckoned as the last year of the king he was succeeding. When reckoning is by the non-accession method, a year must therefore be subtracted from the given accession length when calculating elapsed time. Under the accession method, the calendar year in which the king came to the throne is counted as his "zero" year, and consequently elapsed time can be calculated by a simple addition of reign lengths.

<sup>18</sup> "Propositions" 36, esp. n. 25. Hawkins writes, "If the number is literal, then they returned 53 years after Cyrus's accession to the throne." But there is no record, biblical or otherwise, of any return of exiles in 487 BC, 480 years after the start of temple construction in the spring of 967 BC. (Hawkins takes 966 for the start of temple construction and ends the 480 imaginary years in 486.)

<sup>19</sup> Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths" 225–48. After the division of the kingdom, Judah continued its practice of using accession reckoning, whereas Israel made a deliberate break from Judean practice by adopting a Nisan-based regnal year, non-accession reckoning, and a non-canonical festival in the eighth month. Later, both kingdoms changed from their initial choice regarding accession or non-accession reckoning, and the lack of understanding of these important principles is one of many reasons why Wellhausen and those who followed him were incompetent in determining a chronology from the data given us by the Hebrew court recorders.

<sup>20</sup> In the present paper, the authors use dates for Solomon and the other kings of Judah taken from *ibid.*, 246 (Table 2).

b. *The attempt by Barnes to show that the 480 years are artificial.* Another attempt to demonstrate an artificial span of 480 years is given by William Barnes. By examining his approach, we can see how arbitrary these schemes are. Like Wellhausen and Hawkins, Barnes does not seem to be aware that the Hebrew text of 1 Kgs 6:1 means that 479 years, not 480, had passed between the exodus and Solomon's fourth year. He writes:

As the reader will no doubt recall, the book of Kings ends on a rather quiet note: in the 37th year of the exiled king Jehoiachin, the Judahite monarch was freed from prison by the Babylonian king Evil-merodach (= Amel-marduk); every day, we are then told, he dined at the king's table. Now, it is undoubtedly not coincidental that according to the Judahite regnal totals as extant in Kings, exactly 480 years separated this event from the original coronation of King David over Judah. (Once again, the actual historical situation need not concern us at this point, although it would seem that only some 449 years actually separated these two events.)<sup>21</sup>

Barnes shows how he gets this calculation of 480 years in a table on page 145 of his book. Here, each reign length is reduced by one in order to conform to the non-accession reckoning of rabbinic scholarship. Thus David is given 39 years, Solomon 39 years, Rehoboam 16, down to 10 years for Jehoiakim. He then adds thirty-six years to get to the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin. The sum is indeed 480 years, even though, as Barnes notes, this does not represent actual elapsed time. In his view, however, it shows that the numbers have been manipulated to give an artificial total. This approach is similar to that of Wellhausen cited earlier, as followed by Burney and Hawkins, even though the methods of Wellhausen and Barnes contradict each other: one uses accession years, the other non-accession years; one starts with the construction of the Temple, the other with David's accession; one ends with the return from exile, the other with Jehoiachin's release from prison. But both conclude to their own satisfaction that they have shown that either someone has manipulated the reign lengths so that they do not reflect historical reality, or that the 480-year figure of 1 Kgs 6:1 is contrived and artificial.

c. *The integrity of the chronological data of 1 and 2 Kings shows they are authentic, not artificial.* A problem with these schemes is that they are just too clever. The late-date deuteronomists that these scholars posit as the authors of Kings would lack any motive to put together a scheme like this, since it took until the nineteenth century AD (for Wellhausen's scheme) or the twentieth century (for Barnes's scheme) for someone to figure it out. And it is not because no one was trying to find numerical schemes in the Scriptures. An example of such searching for patterns is found in the *Seder 'Olam* (second century AD), where Rabbi Yose calculated 850 years from the entry into Canaan to the exile. He did this by starting with the 439 years

<sup>21</sup> William H. Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991) 146.

from the entry to Solomon's fourth year, and then adding, in a non-accession sense, all Judean reign lengths from that time to the last year of Zedekiah. The sum comes to 851, but Rabbi Yose adjusted this to the round number of 850, which he interpreted as seventeen times fifty.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps he got rid of the extra year by taking six years for Athaliah instead of seven, as Burney did.

The *Seder 'Olam's* 850-year figure is accepted as authoritative at several places in the Talmud, where no explanation is given for how it was derived. Indeed, the *Seder 'Olam* itself does not explain the derivation, nor does Guggenheimer in his recent translation and commentary.<sup>23</sup> It shows that Rabbi Yose was looking for patterns to impose on the Scriptures, but he failed to see the scheme of either Wellhausen or Barnes that covers the same time period. If schemes like this were inherent in the text, why did the *Seder 'Olam*, the most extensive and detailed document from antiquity devoted to OT chronology, fail to recognize them?

But the main, indeed insuperable, obstacle that confronts the idea that the regnal data of Kings and Chronicles are artificial and late is the fact that these data have all been successfully integrated into a chronology that has every indication of reflecting the actual history of the times. This is more than can be said for the chronologies of Wellhausen and Barnes. Their chronological schemes (which are different between the two scholars) have not found any wide acceptance among historians, whereas the Thiele/McFall chronology that accepts these data as authentic is the most widely accepted of any chronology of the divided kingdom.<sup>24</sup> In particular, Thiele's date of 931 BC for the beginning of the divided monarchy is accepted by the majority of scholars who are influential in this field, including Jack Finegan, Kenneth Kitchen, T. C. Mitchell, Gershon Galil, Leslie McFall, and Eugene

<sup>22</sup> *S. Olam* 11. Rabbi Yose assigned this period to seventeen Jubilees, yet the 850 years are seventeen years more than seventeen Jubilee cycles of forty-nine years each. Rabbi Yose then asks how it is possible that there is an excess of seventeen years over the 833 years that he apparently expected for the seventeen Jubilee cycles. He gives no answer. The reason is evident: his 850 years is an artificial number that does not represent real elapsed time, similar to the artificial constructs of Wellhausen and Barnes, and there is no reason to try to correlate it with the seventeen Jubilee cycles that Rabbi Yose states as terminating fourteen years after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Neither is there any reason to relate Judean reign lengths to the 479 years between the exodus and the building of the Temple. When artificial arrangements such as these are imposed on the data, it creates confusion in any chronological scheme and leads to wrong conclusions.

<sup>23</sup> Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005; first published Northvale, NJ, 1998) 117–18.

<sup>24</sup> Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Kregel, 1983); Leslie McFall, "A Translation Guide to the Chronological Data in Kings and Chronicles," *BSac* 148 (1991) 3–45. Thiele's book should be the starting place for anyone seeking to understand the methods of the Hebrew court recorders and scribes whose figures are recorded in the chronological notes of Kings and Chronicles. These methods were not understood by Wellhausen, Burney, and some others even to the present day. Thiele's problems with the chronology of the eighth-century kings of Judah are entirely resolved in McFall's article.



Merrill.<sup>25</sup> This date was derived by accepting the chronological data of Kings and Chronicles as genuine history, not the manipulations of a late-date deuteronomist and his kin to come up with an artificial and obscure numerological puzzle. In addition, it is established by two independent methods: the agreement with the Sabbatical and Jubilee data and the evidence of the Tyrian king list.<sup>26</sup>

Granted, then, that the reign length data of Kings and Chronicles are historically accurate, could it be that some ancient editor was astute enough to add up the numbers and derive a 480-year figure in a fashion somewhat like that of Wellhausen or Barnes, and then project this 480-year figure back into the time between the exodus and the start of temple construction? In other words, those who are seeking ways to show that the Bible is not to be trusted in historical matters could say that the 480 years were deduced somehow from the regnal data, which can be accepted as historically correct. They would claim that the editor decided to stop counting either after the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity (Barnes) or after the return under Cyrus (Wellhausen, Burney, and Hawkins). Then this late-date redactor, once he or she had discovered a 480-year sum in the regnal data, imposed it on the time between the exodus and the start of construction of Solomon's temple. One would wonder what purpose this might serve, since the pattern had to wait to modern times to be discovered. It would also imply that this editor knew nothing about the proper methods of interpreting the dates, but merely added numbers from various starting and stopping places until a nice sum was found. But let us, for now, consider this option as a possibility: namely, that the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1 were extracted somehow from the regnal data.

This idea cannot be right because it cannot be reconciled with what has just been established. Since the regnal data of Kings and Chronicles, covering a period of over four centuries, have been demonstrated by careful scholarship to have every mark of authenticity,<sup>27</sup> then how could it be that when we come to 1 Kgs 6:1, the chronological data there are suddenly no longer historical, but contrived and mythical? For those who prefer redaction criticism, if we grant that the surrounding numerical figures, including the "fourth year" of Solomon, are to be taken literally, then could any judicious approach that deals with literary genre say that the 480 years in the same verse are to be taken as unhistorical? This is particularly pertinent if we

<sup>25</sup> Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (rev. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998) 246, 249; Kitchen, *On the Reliability* 83; T. C. Mitchell, "Israel and Judah until the Revolt of Jehu (931–841 B.C.)," in *CAH* 3.1.445–46; Gershon Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 14; McFall, "Translation Guide" 12; Eugene H. Merrill, "Fixed Dates in Patriarchal Chronology," *BSac* 137 (1980) 241.

<sup>26</sup> Rodger C. Young, "Three Verifications of Thiele's Date for the Beginning of the Divided Kingdom," *AUSS* 45 (2007) 163–89. For the Tyrian data, see Barnes, "Studies" 29–55. For more on the verification from the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles, see below, section I.3.d.

<sup>27</sup> Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths" 232–33, 239–44. See also the discussion in n. 15 above.

accept Cassuto's argument that the very form in which the number is written is meant to convey exactness.<sup>28</sup>

Some numbers in the Bible clearly are not to be taken in a strictly literal sense (the "seventy times seven" of Matt 18:22, for example). The context and literary convention being followed are usually plain enough in such cases, however, to show that a non-literal interpretation is intended. For 1 Kgs 6:1, similarly, the context and literary convention being followed dictate that the 480 years must be taken as literal in intention. There is no indication that ancient readers would have understood it in any other sense. To treat it as other than literal would open the door to the radical revisionism that no interpreter with a high view of the inspiration of Scripture could accept: the forty years of Israel in the desert would not be literal, nor the forty days of the temptation of Jesus, nor his three days in the tomb, and so on without end, so that we would no longer be able to understand the plain meaning of any factual statement in Scripture.

d. *The Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles show that the 480 years are literal years.* Redaction criticism, such as would seek to impose a non-literal 480 years in the midst of an otherwise historical account, has been shown by its practitioners to be a subjective methodology. It can be, and has been, bent to favor propositions that fly in the face of archaeological or historical facts. Fortunately, we do not need to use this unreliable method in order to investigate whether the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1 are authentic. A proper way of determining their validity is to examine their agreement with the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles. Once we accept the small adjustment that Solomon died before Tishri 1 of 931 BC, instead of on or after Tishri 1 as Thiele assumed, then we not only have a correction for Thiele's problems with the reigns of the Judean monarchs that he was never able to resolve,<sup>29</sup> but also, by placing the start of temple construction in 967 BC instead of 966 BC, the Sabbatical and Jubilee years all fall into place with precision and harmony. This precision and harmony cannot be explained as the interpolations of a late-date deuteronomist and his supposed daughters (dtr1, dtr2, etc.) who were interspersing into their account the various allusions to these events in order to fool readers into thinking that the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles were observed in Israel's past. Although interpolations by a "deuteronomist" are the standard wisdom of rationalist scholarship, it is clear that any deceiver who was interspersing allusions in this fashion could never have gotten all the dates right.

<sup>28</sup> Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961) 52, cited in Wood, "Rise and Fall" 486. Neither Hoffmeier nor Hawkins, in their responses to "Rise and Fall," deal with the statement that Cassuto's study shows that the manner in which the 480-year figure in 1 Kgs 6:1 is given shows that it is "to be understood as a precise number according to standard Hebrew usage, not as a schematic or symbolic number as some would have it" (Wood, "Rise and Fall," 486).

<sup>29</sup> Young, "Solomon" 599 n. 10.

The principle of the Jubilee years, first presented in *JETS* in 2003,<sup>30</sup> was cited in Wood's "Rise and Fall" article (pp. 477, 488) and by Steinmann in the same issue of *JETS*<sup>31</sup> as an important argument in favor of the early date for the exodus. It is also important in demonstrating the integrity of all the chronological data of Kings and Chronicles and in establishing the date for the composition of Leviticus. The argument, however, has never been addressed by advocates of a thirteenth-century exodus, even though there have been several expansions of the basic thesis and additional information in its support since the original presentation in *JETS*. These later articles have provided new evidence to show that Israel's priests were keeping track of the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles during the entire time that Israel was in its land, and that the start of counting must have been in 1406 BC.

Since these various later articles dealing with the Sabbatical and Jubilee cycles may not be readily available to all readers, a summary will be given here of their findings. This will be a brief summary only; for more complete information the articles referenced must be consulted. The reader may also wish to compare the dates that will be given with the dates for the kings of Judah given in Young's "Tables of Reign Lengths" article.<sup>32</sup> The simple thesis that Israel's priests began counting for the Sabbatical and Jubilee cycles when they entered the land in Nisan of 1406, as they were commanded to do in Lev 25:1–10, explains the following facts:

First, for the Jubilee years: the Hebrew text of Ezek 40:1, by saying that it was both *Rosh HaShanah* (New Year's Day) and the tenth of the month, establishes that Ezekiel saw his vision at the beginning of a Jubilee year. Only in a Jubilee year did the year start on the tenth of the month (Lev 25:9). The date was the Day of Atonement, Tishri 10 of 574 BC.<sup>33</sup> Since the Jubilee year was identical to the seventh Sabbatical year,<sup>34</sup> the first year of this cycle must have been forty-eight years earlier, starting in 622 BC. 1406 BC, the year that Israel entered Canaan that can be derived from the chronological note of 1 Kgs 6:1, was 784 years, or sixteen Jubilee cycles earlier than this date, thus showing that 1406

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 599–603.

<sup>31</sup> Steinmann, "Mysterious Numbers of Judges" 491 n. 2.

<sup>32</sup> "Tables of Reign Lengths" 246 (Table 2).

<sup>33</sup> For the date, see Young, "Jerusalem" 25–28, in which the dates for the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and Ezekiel's vision in 574 are established by examining all relevant texts, independent of any argument based on the Jubilee cycles.

<sup>34</sup> This has been amply demonstrated by historical, textual, and practical considerations. See Young, "The Talmud's Two Jubilees and their Relevance to the Date of the Exodus," *WTJ* 68 (2006) 75–77; idem, "Ezekiel 40:1 as a Corrective for Seven Wrong Ideas in Biblical Interpretation," *AUSS* 44 (2006) 275 n. 15. That the Jubilee was identical to the seventh Sabbatical year is also the conclusion of Jean-François Lefebvre, *Le Jubilé Biblique: Lv 25—Exégèse et Théologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) 154–66. Lefebvre's book is the most thorough analysis of the Jubilee legislation that has yet appeared in print. Prior to this, the two most important publications on the Jubilee were Benedict Zuckermann, *A Treatise on the Sabbatical Cycle and the Jubilee* (New York: Hermon, 1974; German original Breslau, Poland: W. G. Korn, 1857; trans. A. Löwy), and Robert North, *Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1954). Zuckermann and North both concluded that the Jubilee cycle was forty-nine years, although their reasoning in this matter differs somewhat from that of Lefebvre.

would have been the first year of a Jubilee (and Sabbatical) cycle. This is in agreement with an entry into Canaan in that year, since Israel was to start counting the cycles when they entered the land of Canaan (Lev 25:1–10).<sup>35</sup>

Second, entirely consistent with this, the Talmud and the *Seder 'Olam* explicitly state that Ezekiel's Jubilee was the seventeenth Jubilee.<sup>36</sup> The *Seder 'Olam*, the older of these sources, does not cite the fact that *Rosh HaShanah* was on the tenth of Tishri in Ezek 40:1 as an argument establishing that it was a Jubilee year. Rabbi Yose simply states that Ezekiel saw his vision at the beginning of the seventeenth Jubilee, apparently based on historical remembrance.

Third, the *Seder 'Olam* and the Talmud state that another Jubilee was observed in the eighteenth year of Josiah.<sup>37</sup> According to Judean Tishri-based reckoning, Josiah's eighteenth year began in Tishri of 623 BC, which was forty-nine years, or exactly one Jubilee cycle, before Ezekiel's Jubilee. Rabbinical calculation methods were not capable of correctly calculating that there were forty-nine years between Josiah's eighteenth year and Ezekiel's vision,<sup>38</sup> so this also must have been based on historical remembrance, not rabbinic calculation.

By correctly dating these sixteenth and seventeenth Jubilees, it is evident that a calendar of Jubilee and Sabbatical years can be constructed that extends over all the time that Israel was in its land, starting in 1406 BC. In what follows, each reference that alludes to activities associated with a Sabbatical year will be consistent with this calendar. There is a simple explanation of the harmony of these data with such a calendar: the scriptural chronological data are authentic, and these data show that the times for the Jubilee and Sabbatical years were known all the time that Israel was in its land. Furthermore, they are all in harmony with the start of counting in Nisan of 1406 BC.

First, that a Sabbatical year was due to begin in Tishri of 588 BC is implied by Zedekiah's release of slaves in that year (Jer 34:8–10). Later Jewish practice was to associate a Sabbatical year with the release of slaves, in keeping with that year being called a year of release (*šmittāh*) in Deut 15:9.<sup>39</sup> This was fourteen years (two Sabbatical cycles) before Ezekiel's Jubilee.

Second, it is a well-documented Jewish tradition that the First Temple was burnt by the Babylonians in the "latter part" (*motsae*) of a Sabbatical year.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Young, "Solomon" 601.

<sup>36</sup> *S. Olam* 11; *b. Arak.* 12a.

<sup>37</sup> *S. Olam* 24; *b. Meg.* 14b; Young, "Talmud's Two Jubilees" 71–75.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 77.

<sup>39</sup> Rodger C. Young, "Seder Olam and the Sabbaticals Associated with the Two Destructions of Jerusalem: Part II," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34 (2006) 252–54.

<sup>40</sup> *S. Olam* 30; *t. Ta'anit* 3.9; *y. Ta'anit* 4.5; *b. 'Arakin* 11b; *b. 'Arakin* 12a; *b. Ta'anit* 29a. Some translations of these passages into English mistranslate the passage to say that the burning of the First and Second Temples occurred in the year after a Sabbatical year. For a discussion of the proper translation of the Hebrew of the *Seder 'Olam* and the Aramaic of the Talmud, see Rodger C. Young, "Seder Olam and the Sabbaticals Associated with the Two Destructions of Jerusalem: Part I," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34 (2006) 176–78.

This provides additional evidence that the year beginning in the fall of 588 BC was a Sabbatical year, since Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians before that year was out, in the following summer.

Third, the reading of the Law in the eighteenth year of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:2) was an activity that was commanded for a Sabbatical year in Deut 31:10–13.<sup>41</sup> Josiah's eighteenth year coincided with the Jubilee and Sabbatical year that started in Tishri of 623 BC.

Fourth, the second year of Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 37:30 and 2 Kgs 19:29) was a Sabbatical year. After the crop of the current year had been destroyed or eaten by the besieging Assyrians, Isaiah nonetheless said that the people were to eat the volunteer growth (*šāhîs*) in the following year, after the Assyrians had left. This has no explanation unless that year was a Sabbatical year. The "second year" here is consistent with the calendar of Sabbatical years that can be constructed by measuring back from the Jubilees in 623 BC and 574 BC.<sup>42</sup>

Fifth, another public reading of the Law took place in Jehoshaphat's third year (2 Chr 17:7–9). Jehoshaphat's third year of sole reign began in Tishri of 868 BC, which was 294 years, or forty-two Sabbatical cycles, before Ezekiel's Jubilee. The measurement is to be done from the start of his sole reign, consistent with the synchronisms to his reign given in 1 Kgs 22:51 and 2 Kgs 3:1. It was also the eleventh Jubilee.<sup>43</sup>

The realization that the times for the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles were known all the time that Israel was in its land provides a deeper understanding of the several circumstances that have just been cited as pertaining to these times. We have a new appreciation for the faithfulness of the good kings Jehoshaphat and Josiah, who fostered the public proclamation and teaching of the Law in a Sabbatical year, knowing that only when there was a high respect for the Word of God would there be healing in the land. At the very end of the Assyrian siege, Isaiah's prophecy reinforced the will of the king and people to let the ground lie fallow in the coming Sabbatical year (Isa 37:30), despite all the hardships and loss of crops occasioned by the Assyrians in the current year.<sup>44</sup> In the days of Ezekiel, we get a small

<sup>41</sup> Young, "Seder Olam and the Sabbaticals, Part II" 256.

<sup>42</sup> For the details, which are complicated by the perennial question of whether there were one or two invasions of Sennacherib, see Young, "Seder Olam and the Sabbaticals, Part II" 256–57. Under the one-invasion theory, the invasion would have ended some time after the fall planting in 701 BC and the "second year" of the prophecy would have started in Tishri of 700 BC. Under the two-invasion theory, the invasion would have ended some time after the fall planting of 687 BC and the "second year" of the prophecy would have started in Tishri of 686 BC.

<sup>43</sup> Young, "Three Verifications" 175–76. In 1869, Ferdinand Hitzig (*Geschichte des Volkes Israel* [Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1869] 1.9 and 198–99) stated that the occasion for Jehoshaphat's proclamation was because it was a Jubilee year.

<sup>44</sup> In spite of the miraculous deliverance from the Assyrian host, it still would have been a trial of faith for the king and people to believe that, after the difficulties of the siege, they would be able to survive in the following year if there were no sowing or harvest. This would make it very tempting to plant a crop in the coming Sabbatical year. The meaning of the "sign" of Isa 37:30 must be that the people were to keep the Sabbatical year in spite of the perceived difficulty, and their needs would be met. The way the provision was made seems to be indicated in 2 Chr 32:22–23, where the Lord, after the destruction of the Assyrians, "took care of them on every side. Many

glimpse into the psychological background for the prophet's great eschatological vision when we realize that it was not only the time of fasting and penitence always associated with the Day of Atonement, but it was also the commencement of a Jubilee. For Ezekiel, as for Isaiah before him, the Jubilee would have had strong eschatological overtones.

Our understanding of these events is therefore enriched when we have the correct chronology of the kingdom period and can relate the events to the calendar of Jubilee and Sabbatical years. Accepting Ezekiel's Jubilee as the seventeenth Jubilee gives dates for the exodus, entry into Canaan, and Solomon's reign that are compatible with Thiele's date for the beginning of the divided monarchy. Since Thiele made no use of the Jubilee data in determining when the kingdom divided, the Jubilee calendar is a powerful and independent testimony to the correctness of Thiele's methodology in arriving at that date. Those who have struggled with the Bible's chronological data can also see the simplicity and supreme elegance of the interlocking system of Sabbatical and Jubilee years—a system that, as long as it was observed in even an apathetic fashion, was a more reliable way of keeping track of the years over a long period of time than was afforded by the Assyrian eponym lists, usually regarded as the backbone of ancient Near Eastern chronology. We can only regret that the people of Israel and their kings were not more careful in observing the stipulations of the Jubilee and Sabbatical years, so that we would have more allusions to their observance than those just listed. But these have been sufficient to demonstrate that Israel's priests (one of whom was Ezekiel) knew the time of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years all the time that Israel was in its land.

The chronological information in 1 Kgs 6:1 could not have originated in exilic or post-exilic times. No writer or editor from a period that late could have successfully synchronized Solomon's fourth year with the 480th year of the exodus-era unless that editor's source documents were early and authentic. We know that the synchronism is correct because of its agreement with the Jubilee and Sabbatical year data. Also, the final redactors of Kings and Chronicles must have had access to authentic records that were contemporaneous with the events described. Otherwise, it could never have happened that, once the methods of counting used by the Hebrew court recorders were understood, all the precise chronological data found in these books could be incorporated in a rational and believable chronology. Therefore the premise of Wellhausen, followed by Burney and Hawkins, that the 480-year figure of 1 Kgs 6:1 dates from the exilic or post-exilic era, is false.

Finally, Hawkins, and those before him, assumed that the author of 1 Kgs 6:1 would have no way to measure a long span of years, such as the 480th-

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brought offerings to Jerusalem for the Lord and valuable gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah" (NIV). Those offerings could have included grain and other food from Egypt, because Egypt had not been ravaged by the Assyrians. Egypt would have been grateful for the defeat of the Assyrians by the God of Israel; their remembrance of the event persisted, in garbled form, until the days of Herodotus (*Hist.* ii.141). Gifts of monetary value could have been exchanged for food during the Sabbatical year, so that God's people were provided for "on every side."

year datum in that verse, and so the 480 years could not be taken in a literal and exact sense. But the cycles of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, which were being counted by the priests all the time that Israel was in its land, provide just such a long-term calendar, one by which the 479 years from the exodus to the fourth year of Solomon could be measured exactly. At the time when Temple construction began, the priests, if not the general populace, would have known that it was the fifth year of the seventh septennate of the ninth Jubilee cycle, and that the ninth Jubilee was only one and a half years away. From this knowledge, a straightforward calculation would show that 439 years had elapsed since the entry into the land and 479 years since the exodus. This explains why the author of 1 Kgs 6:1 could write that it was the 480th year of the exodus era. If the author of 1 Kgs 6:1 had lived in exilic or post-exilic times, that author would not have known this information unless it had been handed down from an authentic earlier source—in other words, this “author” was not really the author of the information.

Therefore the information in 1 Kgs 6:1 could not have originated in exilic or post-exilic times, as held by Wellhausen, Burney, Hawkins, and a host of other scholars. Only a writer that had access to genuine chronological data could have calculated a time from the exodus to the start of temple construction that was compatible with the Jubilee calendar as constructed from the Jubilees in the days of Josiah and Ezekiel. It is this calendar that provides a date for the entry into Canaan that is in precise agreement with the 480th-year datum of 1 Kgs 6:1. When Thiele’s date for the division of the kingdom is combined with a literal reading of 1 Kgs 6:1, the resulting dates for the exodus and conquest are in perfect accord with the multiple phenomena that have been cited related to the Jubilees and Sabbatical years. All this is explained by a thesis that is the quintessence of simplicity: Israel entered the Promised Land in 1406 BC with the only credible source for the Jubilee and Sabbatical year legislation that has ever been postulated, the book of Leviticus, in its possession.

## II. HAWKINS’S ARCHAEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS

1. *First wrong archaeological argument: new settlements in the central hill country in Iron Age I (1200–1000 BC) signal the arrival of the Israelites.* Surface surveys over the last four decades have revealed many new settlements in the central hill country in Iron Age I, ca. 1200–1000 BC. Hawkins reasons, “The implication seemed clear that a new population group had arrived in the Central Hill-Country during the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age I.”<sup>45</sup> He believes this to be evidence for the initial arrival of the Israelites in Canaan.<sup>46</sup> The Iron I settlement data, however, undermine Hawkins’s thesis since the material culture of the Iron I settlers exhibits continuity with the previous Late Bronze culture,<sup>47</sup> indicating they

<sup>45</sup> “Propositions” 33.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>47</sup> To which Hawkins alludes (*ibid.* 37).

were not newcomers at all, but had been in the land for a considerable period of time.<sup>48</sup> This continuity is best seen in the pottery, but includes other material culture items as well. Mazar views the situation as follows: "The settlers had no traditions of their own in the realm of architecture, pottery, crafts, and art. These were adopted from their Canaanite neighbors. . . . Later, when the manufacture of such objects began in the settlement regions themselves, the Canaanite tradition continued to make itself felt in the forms of the tools and vessels."<sup>49</sup>

The evidence indicates a long period of contact between the Iron I settlers and the previous Canaanite culture:

The objects of the early Iron Age indicate complete dependence on the culture of the Late Bronze Age. Because the early Iron Age settlement cannot be regarded as an offshoot of the former Canaanite cities, this continuity is best explained by intensive, prolonged contact with the Canaanite culture. This contact must have already occurred in the Late Bronze Age before the beginning of sedentary life. . . . The results of archaeological research indicate early Iron Age culture was highly dependent upon Late Bronze Age culture and they preclude conquest of the country by new immigrants.<sup>50</sup>

These observations accord with the biblical model based on an early exodus. The Israelites arrived in Canaan in 1406 BC and initially continued the lifestyle they had followed the previous forty years, that of semi-nomadic pastoralists: "Your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness" (Num 14:33; NASB). After ca. 200 years they became sedentary around 1200 BC, as illustrated by the story of Gideon,<sup>51</sup> possibly due to economic factors.<sup>52</sup>

2. *Second wrong archaeological argument: an Iron Age I structure found on Mt. Ebal is the altar of Josh 8:30–31.* In the 1980s a structure was excavated on Mt. Ebal which the excavator, Adam Zertal, believes was the altar of Josh 8:30–31.<sup>53</sup> Hawkins avers, "If Zertal's Iron I structure on Ebal is the altar of Josh 8:30–35, there could be important implications for the

<sup>48</sup> William G. Dever, "Cultural Continuity, Ethnicity in the Archaeological Record and the Question of Israelite Origins," *EI* 24 (1993) 22\*–33\*.

<sup>49</sup> Amihai Mazar, "The Iron Age I," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (ed. Amnon Ben-Tor; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 295.

<sup>50</sup> Volkmar Fritz, "Conquest or Settlement? The Early Iron Age in Palestine," *BA* 50 (1987) 97.

<sup>51</sup> Judges 6. Steinmann dates the Midianite oppression to 1178–1172 BC ("Mysterious Numbers of Judges" 499), while Ray dates it to 1185–1178 BC ("Another Look" 99).

<sup>52</sup> This is the period of the transition from the urbanized Late Bronze Age to the small agricultural villages of the Iron Age I. The collapse of urbanism was experienced throughout the Mediterranean, but its cause is not well understood. For a review of the situation in Greece, see Christos G. Doumas, "Aegeans in the Levant: Myth and Reality," in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE* (ed. Seymour Gitin, Amihai Mazar, and Ephraim Stern; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998) 129–30.

<sup>53</sup> Adam Zertal, "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mount Ebal: Excavation Seasons 1982–1987," *Tel Aviv* 13–14 (1986–1987) 157–58; idem, "Has Joshua's Altar Been Found on Mt. Ebal?," *BAR* 11/1 (1985) 26–43.



understanding of Israelite origins.”<sup>54</sup> He then devotes eight pages of his paper to justifying the use of two scarabs to date the earliest phase of the site. This is not the main issue, however, as there is general acceptance of the excavator’s dates for the site.<sup>55</sup> The question is, can the structure excavated by Zertal be associated with the altar of Josh 8:30–31? We shall examine three problems associated with this identification: date, location, and size.

a. *The chronological problem.* There were two phases to the Mt. Ebal complex. Str. II was founded on bedrock, and consisted of fragmentary structures and installations, with evidence of cultic activity (intensive use of fire on the bedrock, ash, and many animal bones). This early phase is dated by the two Egyptian scarabs discussed in detail by Hawkins, and pottery, to 1240–1200 BC, that is, the very end of the Late Bronze Age. In the early twelfth century, the beginning of the Iron Age I period, a large stone construction, interpreted as an altar, related structures, and a low encircling wall were built over Str. II. This phase, Str. IB, is dated by pottery to 1200–1130 BC.<sup>56</sup>

In order to relate Zertal’s altar to Joshua, Hawkins, by necessity, must date the entry of Israel to ca. 1200 BC, the time when the altar was constructed.<sup>57</sup> This is later than most evangelicals who favor a late date would place the event.<sup>58</sup> Hawkins’s dating, in fact, cannot be sustained, since Israel was well established in Canaan long before 1200 BC as demonstrated by the Iron I settlement data discussed above, and documented by the Merenptah Stele.<sup>59</sup> Thus, there is a chronological disconnect between the Israelite entry into Canaan and Zertal’s altar.

b. *The location problem.* Prior to crossing the Jordan into Canaan, Moses gave these instructions to the Israelites:

So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime. Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron tool on them. You shall build the altar of the Lord your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the Lord your God; and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and rejoice before the Lord your God. You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very

<sup>54</sup> “Propositions” 37.

<sup>55</sup> Adam Zertal, “Ebal, Mount,” *OEANE* 1.180.

<sup>56</sup> Zertal, “Cultic Site” 109–123.

<sup>57</sup> “Propositions” 36.

<sup>58</sup> Kitchen, for example, dates the exodus to 1260 BC and the conquest to 1220–1210 BC, the end of the Late Bronze Age (*On the Reliability* 159, 307, 359). James Hoffmeier favors slightly earlier dates, with the exodus at 1270–1260 BC and the entry into Canaan 1230–1220 BC (“Response to Wood” 243). Richard Hess places the entry in the 13th century, sometime prior to 1207 BC (*Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary* [TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996] 139).

<sup>59</sup> Bryant G. Wood, “From Ramesses to Shiloh: Archaeological Discoveries Bearing on the Exodus–Judges Period,” in *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using Old Testament Historical Texts* (ed. David M. Howard, Jr. and Michael A. Grisanti; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003) 273–75.

distinctly. . . . Moses also charged the people on that day, saying, "When you cross the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. For the curse, these shall stand on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. The Levites shall then answer and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice . . ." (Deut 27:4–8, 11–14; NASB).

Following the conquest of Jericho and Ai, Joshua carried out the commands of Moses:

Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. He wrote there on the stones a copy of the laws of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them (Josh 8:30–35; NASB).

It is clear from these passages that the people were gathered in the narrow Shechem pass between Mt. Gerizim on the south and Mt. Ebal on the north for this covenant ceremony, and that they were able to see and hear all that was going on. Joshua constructed the altar Moses commanded on the north side of the pass, at/on Mt. Ebal.<sup>60</sup> Zertal's altar, on the other hand, is located on the other side of the mountain, 3.2 km map distance north-northeast of the Shechem pass,<sup>61</sup> "on a low, stony ridge, on the so-called second step of the mountain."<sup>62</sup> An altar at this location could not have been part of a covenant ceremony in the Shechem pass, since it was too far away and completely out of view.<sup>63</sup>

*c. The size and shape problem.* Zertal's altar is of monumental proportions. It is rectangular in cross-section, 9.0 × 6.8 m,<sup>64</sup> not square as prescribed by Mosaic law, and 3.27 m high.<sup>65</sup> In comparison with two contemporary Israelite altars, that of the tabernacle and one discovered in a sanctuary in Arad, it is much larger. The Lord told Moses in Exod 27:1 to make the tabernacle altar

<sup>60</sup> *bēhar 'ēbāl* in both Deut 27:4 and Josh 8:30.

<sup>61</sup> Zertal, "Cultic Site" 106 Fig. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Zertal, "Joshua's Altar" 30.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>64</sup> Zertal, "Cultic Site" 114 Fig. 5.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 113.

5 × 5 cubits, ca. 2.5 × 2.5 m,<sup>66</sup> and 3 cubits, ca. 1.5 m, high (cf. Exod 38:1). The Arad altar, erected in Str. XII, the late twelfth–early eleventh century, conforms to these dimensions, 2.5 × 2.5 m,<sup>67</sup> and 1.5 m high.<sup>68</sup> It makes little sense that Joshua would erect an altar as large as Zertal's for a one-time ceremony, particularly in view of the fact that it would have been totally out of keeping with known Israelite altars of the period.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

Hawkins's arguments for a late date for the exodus-conquest do not hold up to critical analysis. The 480th-year datum of Exod 6:1 has been demonstrated to be a valid historical figure, not a symbolic number. The Iron Age I settlement data point to the Israelites having been in the land for a considerable length of time, rather than arriving ca. 1200 BC. Hawkins's "new archaeological evidence," the presumed altar found on Mt. Ebal, the centerpiece of his arguments for a late date, cannot be related to the altar erected by Joshua in Josh 8:30–31. It was built in the wrong time period; it is too far from the ceremony site; and it is too large.

Hawkins's paper provides no support for a late date exodus-conquest. The theory is dead. Let us bid it *adieu* and relegate it to the place it deserves—an interesting footnote in biblical scholarship, no more. It is time to move on to more productive research, recognizing that the biblical data are true and correct as they stand and should not be manipulated—the Israelites left Egypt in 1446 BC and, after forty years in the Sinai, began the conquest of Canaan in 1406 BC.

<sup>66</sup> One cubit is approximately equivalent to 0.5 m (Marvin A Powell, "Weights and Measures," in *ABD* 6.899).

<sup>67</sup> Miriam Aharoni, "Arad: The Israelite Citadels," *NEAEHL* 1.83.

<sup>68</sup> Ze'ev Herzog, "Arad: Iron Age Period," *OEANE* 1.175.