

NATIONAL SECURITY IN ANCIENT ISRAEL: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF  
ISRAELITE GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION AND STRATEGY  
(13TH – 9TH CENTURY BCE)

BY

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## APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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## **DISCLAIMER**

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the impact that government organization had on Israelite national security strategy during its conquest of Canaan in the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age (13th – 9th century BCE). This research uses Joshua's campaign and six episodes of armed conflict in the period of Judges to examine validity in Israelite strategy. The Israelite government in the periods of Joshua and Judges was a tribal confederacy with God as their sovereign. During their military conquest, the Israelites transformed their government from one having a chief executive that could direct all of its nation's resources, to one without this leader. During periods of crisis, judges would be established to restore order, but with inconsistent support, amounting to only regional influence over coalitions of willing tribes. While this change in organization correlates to a declining shift in the progress of the Israelite's invasion, the findings suggest that the extent to which Israelite leaders adhered to their nation's constitution had a more substantial impact on the validity of strategy than government organization.



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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

One of the most controversial subjects in the history of the ancient Near East is the settlement of ancient Hebrews (or Israelites) in the land of Canaan (modern-day Israel-Palestine). According to the only known record of this settlement, the Israelites settled their nation in the land of Canaan by way of military conquest.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in the late Bronze Age (approximately 13th century BCE), the Israelites made steady progress in the execution of their strategy; however, after a change in Israelite government organization, they were unable to complete their conquest. Instead of a decisive victory, the Israelites found themselves in a prolonged conflict with the inhabitants of Canaan and other neighboring nations for generations.

Change in the organization of the Israelite government correlates to a declining shift in the progress of its conquest, but it is not clear if this change was causal or coincidental. Other factors may have influenced the arrested progress of Israelite settlement. The extent to which Israelite leaders adhered to their nation's constitution, which was in essence, the regulations for conduct outlined in the Ten Commandments, may have also influenced the execution of successful military strategy. This thesis will examine the influence of government organization on strategy while taking into account adherence to the nation's constitution for Israelites in the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age. The first hypothesis tested is that strategy is more often valid with a centralized government, as represented by a chief executive like Joshua. The second hypothesis is that strategy is less often valid with a decentralized government, as represented by the judges. The third hypothesis is that the degree of governmental centralization is less important of a factor in strategic validity than adherence to the nation's constitution.

#### **Why Examine Government Organization and Strategy in Ancient Societies?**

Analysis of the relationship between government organization and strategy for any period can be used to inform modern governments on ways to organize to optimize its potential to produce valid strategy. Modern historical periods that are well-documented provide practical cases for such research but are limited in value as

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<sup>1</sup> While other ancient texts refer to Israel as a nation, the only record of how it came to become a nation is in the Old Testament books, Genesis and Exodus.

standalone cases for developing broad explanatory theories. By studying the relationship between factors across a variety of historical cultures and periods, one can more fully differentiate the fundamental nature from the changing character of various phenomena.

A popular unsubstantiated assertion about periods of antiquity is that those societies were much simpler than modern ones. No evidence supports this belief. The record of this research instead illuminates the multidimensional complexity of an ancient civilization that is very much comparable with those of modern societies. Despite controversy over various interpretations of historical records, all of our human past has had a strategic dimension.<sup>2</sup> The value of studying government organization and strategy in antiquity is that it can clarify the relationship between variables within its period while being subject to the comparison of all subsequent accounts, thereby enabling scholars to differentiate the character from the fundamental nature of various phenomena such as war. Knowing what lessons to draw from both the nature and character of war is the pinnacle of military scholarship and in this case, enables strategists to determine implications regarding the interplay between government organization and strategy today. The only way to determine how ancient practices can provide insight into future strategy is to study them and experiment with those things that demonstrate potential, within reason.

### **Literature Review**

The three most significant areas of literature that concern this subject are strategy, government organization in Political Science and International Relations, and ancient Near East studies of Israelite settlement in Canaan. This thesis seeks to link these three areas of research for an analysis of the government organization and strategy in the early establishment and settlement of the Israelites.

#### **Strategy in International Relations and Military Affairs**

Within the last few centuries, strategy has become a prominent field of study and has a component of many other academic disciplines. The origin of the term, strategy, derives from classical Greek and pertains to leadership in the art of war.<sup>3</sup> The ideas of strategy trace back to the earliest emergence of competition among humans. Like with

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<sup>2</sup> Colin S. Gray, *The Future of Strategy* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2015), 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

many constructs that lack a common definition, authorities from various fields define it differently. Throughout various disciplines, people have used the term to describe ideas, objectives, plans, practices, and policies, usually with the implication of high importance.

Moving forward requires a clear definition of strategy that suits the material being evaluated. There are three sources for a definition of strategy that are useful for this study. First, Dr. Jack Kem, a professor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, provides a widely-accepted definition of strategy among military professionals as “the integration of ends, ways, and means – while accounting for risk – to meet national objectives.”<sup>4</sup> The problem with this definition is that integration does not accurately describe the relationship among ends, ways, and means, as it lends itself more to combining elements to make a whole rather than capturing the nature of design among the three elements. Strategists can integrate resources (means) and schemes for employment (ways); however, resources and schemes are not integrated with objectives (ends). Second, U.S. joint military doctrine defines strategy as “a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”<sup>5</sup> While this authoritative definition is widely accepted, it does not adequately suit all of the episodes necessary for examining this period. Several episodes important to this research involve only regional, and in some cases, local activities, which according to U.S. joint military doctrine, would only be considered tactical or operational.<sup>6</sup> Third, Colin Gray, renowned scholar in the field of strategy, most famously uses the analogy of a bridge in his definition of strategy. He states that strategy should serve as a bridge between military power and political purpose.<sup>7</sup> After combining and simplifying these definitions, strategy is herein defined as a prudent idea or set of ideas for the manner in which people intend to use resources to achieve political objectives.

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Jack Kem is cited in LTC Chris Springer, “U.S. Military Professionals’ Guide to Understanding Strategy” (unpublished course material, C203 Student Reading, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January 17, 2017), GL-15.

<sup>6</sup> According to U.S. joint doctrine, the three levels of warfare – strategic, operational, and tactical – model the relationships between national objectives and tactical actions. JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, I-12.

<sup>7</sup> Gray, *The Future of Strategy*, 21.

## **Government Organization in International Relations and Political Science**

There is a substantial amount of scholarship in the fields of Political Science and International Relations examining the link between policy and strategy using all instruments of national power. Within those fields, there is also substantial scholarship on political structure and government organization where states are the primary actors. One of the most useful references for understanding how governments organize to perform their functions is Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow's *Essence of Decision*, where they use three models from different levels of analysis to explain how governments arrive at decisions. There remains a gap, however, in scholarship on the link between government organization and strategy. One writer who comes close to this is Risa Brooks who in her book, *Shaping Strategy*, examines how civil-military relations affects strategic assessment. However, while Brooks identifies probabilities of accurate strategic assessment, she does not attempt to determine the validity of strategy.

## **Israelite Settlement in Canaan – Three Theoretical Schools**

Scholars of early Near East settlement agree that there was an ancient civilization known as the Israelites due to the name, Israel, appearing in the Bible as well as ancient Egyptian texts, but disagree on their origins and path of early development.<sup>8</sup> Points of debate revolve around the forming of the society into a polity, their geographic roots, and especially relevant to this study, their establishment in the land of Canaan. There are three prevailing schools of thought on Israelite settlement in Canaan: military conquest, peaceful settlement, and internal revolt.

The first theory of Israelite settlement in Canaan is military conquest, developed by the American biblical scholar, William Foxwell Albright. Commonly referred to as

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<sup>8</sup> The Merneptah Stele represents the earliest literary reference to Israel and the only reference from ancient Egypt. Hasel, Michael G. "Merneptah's Reference to Israel: Critical Issues for the Origin of Israel" in Richard S. Hess, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Paul J. Ray, *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2008). The Merneptah Stele states, "Israel is wasted, its seed is not." Brian G. Wood notes that the Merneptah Stele is a eulogy and, as such, extols the great accomplishments of the Pharaoh. The fact that Israel is mentioned at all indicates that, by the end of the [13th century BCE], the Israelite tribes had achieved sufficient status to be deemed worthy of being defeated by the king of one of the most powerful nations on earth. Bryant T. Wood, "From Ramesses to Shiloh: Archaeological Discoveries Bearing on the Exodus-Judges Period," *Association for Biblical Research* (April 2, 2008): 13, accessed May 21, 2018, <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/04/02/From-Ramesses-to-Shiloh-Archaeological-Discoveries-Bearing-on-the-Exodus-Judges-Period.aspx>.

the Albright school, the theory of conquest states that Israelite settlement in Canaan aligns more or less with the account reflected in the book of Joshua.<sup>9</sup> Distinguished military leader and accomplished archaeologist, Yigael Yadin, was an ardent supporter of this theory.<sup>10</sup> Albright was a pioneer in the use of archaeological materials to elucidate the Bible. Consequently, he and his followers approached archaeological findings with a firm belief in at least the overarching broad narrative of the Bible if not every detail.<sup>11</sup> Throughout much of his research, Yadin identified the disproportionately high number of skeptics without military service and asserted that in contrast, his experience showed that military professionals tend to accept the historical narrative in the biblical account, based on their understandings of principles of armed conflict.<sup>12</sup> His experience in archaeology coupled with his military perspective creates a compelling argument for the biblical account.

Other supporters of the Albright school include Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon. Highly respected for their scholarship, both Herzog and Gichon were both experts in military history, geography, and archaeology of Israel following extensive service as senior officers in the Israeli Defense Force. While there are many scholars from different nationalities and backgrounds who also support this theory, it is worthwhile acknowledging that Yadin, Herzog, and Gichon, all represent the view of Israelis heavily involved in the establishment of a modern-day Jewish state, which could present bias to support the biblical narrative. Nevertheless, their contributions to the field have demonstrated value to scholars on all sides of the debate.

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<sup>9</sup> Amnon Ben-Tor, "Who Destroyed Canaanite Hazor?" *Biblical Archaeological Review* 39, no. 4 (July/August 2013): 28, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/39/4/2>.

<sup>10</sup> Yigael Yadin served as Head of Operations in the Israeli Defense Force during Israel's War of Independence in 1948. He later rose to the position of Chief of Israeli Defense Force in 1949 where he served in that capacity for three years. Following his military career, Yadin became an accomplished archaeologist having conducted several excavations in Israel and wrote extensively for the field of archaeology.

<sup>11</sup> Albright excavated several significant sites including the Qumran Caves, Masada, and Hazor.

<sup>12</sup> Yigael Yadin, "Military and Archeological Aspects of the Conquest of Canaan in the book of Joshua," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2004): 1, accessed May 4, 2017, [http://jbq.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/321/321\\_Yadin11.pdf](http://jbq.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/321/321_Yadin11.pdf).

The second theory of Israelite settlement in Canaan is that there was no conquest, but rather a peaceful infiltration into unoccupied lands followed by expansion. This theory is referred to as the Alt School of non-military settlement/infiltration, named after German scholar, Albrecht Alt. Yohanan Aharoni was a keen supporter of this theory, which saw the process of settlement partially reflected in the book of Judges: a slow, peaceful infiltration first, followed by a second stage in which the Israelites expanded into more fruitful plains and valleys that were still occupied by the Canaanites.<sup>13</sup> This theory views the book of Judges to be in part, contradictory to the book of Joshua in the record of Israelite settlement as opposed to it being a sequel. Excavations at some sites such as Shiloh, Ai, Khirbet Raddana, Mizpah, and Gibeah suggest infiltration and uncontested peaceful settlement. There is a gap of hundreds of years between the Israelite settlement and the next earlier occupation in these locations.<sup>14</sup> This gap suggests that the land was vacant long before the Israelites settled it. While this does not disprove the conquest theory, it does strengthen the case for peaceful settlement of at least some sites.

The third theory of Israelite settlement in Canaan is an internal revolt. This model was first suggested by George Mendenhall of the University of Michigan and recently elaborated by Norman K. Gottwald.<sup>15</sup> The internal revolt theory seeks to explain how the Israelites could conquer the militarily superior Canaanites. This theory suggests that there were internal revolts that weakened the Canaanite kingdoms, not only making them vulnerable to an Israelite invasion but also cooperating, to some extent, with the Israelite invaders. Several aspects of the biblical record support this including Israelite and Canaanite lineage tracing back to a common figure, the record of Hebrew patriarchs living in Canaan before Israelite settlement, and biblical narratives that include the contributions of defectors. Examples of these dynamics will follow in subsequent

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<sup>13</sup> Amnon Ben-Tor, "Who Destroyed Canaanite Hazor?" 2.

<sup>14</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, "The Israelite Occupation of Canaan: An Account of the Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeological Review* 8, no. 3 (May/June 1982): 4, accessed May 4, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/8/3/1>.

<sup>15</sup> Abraham Malamat, "How Inferior Israelite Forces Conquered Fortified Canaanite Cities," *Biblical Archaeological Review* 8, no. 32 (March/April 1982): 24, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/8/2/3>.



chapters. Variations of this theory that reject the entire biblical account suggest that the Israelites emerged out of the population of inhabitants from within Canaan.

Each of these three theoretical schools of thought has scholarly merit and respected proponents. It is likely that each of the theories has factual elements. Careful examination of physical evidence and undisputed conclusions enable a reasonable combination of elements from each theory. A synthesis of the theories might suggest that the Israelite settlement in Canaan was primarily a military conquest that exploited the aid of defectors and also contained elements of unopposed settlement.<sup>16</sup>

### **Israel's Settlement in Canaan Research Gaps**

There is a void in the study of this historical era by military practitioners and national defense strategists. That is not to suggest that academics have not studied these events. While there are numerous published works in this historical period by authors in a variety of fields, there is a noteworthy absence of scholarship on this subject from military specialists who can leverage their professional judgment and expertise in military affairs to add to this body of knowledge. Additionally, there is also a lack of scholarship on the correlation between Israelite government organization and validity of strategy. This study seeks to fill these gaps.

### **Research Questions**

The primary research question that this study seeks to answer is what was the impact of government structure on national security strategy during the Israelite settlement in Canaan in the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age (13th – 9th century BCE)? To answer this question, other questions must first be addressed. How did the organization of Israel's government differ between the period of Joshua and the period of the Judges? Why did the Israelites change their government organization in the middle of an invasion? What were the strengths and weaknesses of each form of government concerning national security strategy? To what extent did the Israelites' government reorganization impact the execution of what started out as a successful military strategy?

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<sup>16</sup> George Gordy, "The Operational Art of Ancient Israel: Israel's Conquest of Canaan in the 13th Century BCE" (master's thesis, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2017), 96-100.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this research is limited to understanding Israelite government organization concerning its broader regional interests. Organization for domestic political activity is only discussed to the extent that it builds context or explains authorities that impacted international affairs. Throughout this thesis, military strategy is synonymous with national security strategy, again, defined as a prudent idea or set of ideas for the manner in which people intend to use resources to achieve political objectives. The period under scrutiny is limited to the beginning of Israel as a nation to the end of the period of Judges just before the dynasties of Israelite kings. While this thesis addresses the historicity of the record, proving historical accuracy of the Bible is not its objective.

### **Limitations**

The principal limitation of this thesis is that the primary literary sources are the Old Testament books and a few Ancient Egyptian texts that contain incomplete narratives. Several highly respected scholars dismiss these accounts as mere myths fabricated to bolster the image of Hebrew cultural ancestry. Other scholars accept the narratives as entirely or mostly accurate historical accounts, without reconciling the multiple seemingly contradictory pieces of evidence. Many settle somewhere between those two extremes accepting that there is sufficient evidence to make a case that the biblical record reflects a history where a theological emphasis was of the highest importance for the recorders. This limitation should not be a cause to dismiss the available material but rather should serve as a warning to proceed cautiously and to draw conclusions based on biblical records carefully as with any other historical record.

### **Assumptions**

Given the limitation on resources, this research proceeds under the assumption that the settlement of the Israelites was by military conquest with some elements of non-hostile occupation and episodes of internal revolt, broadly consistent with the existent literary record. It does not depend on the historicity of the Old Testament as much as it does the message that the writer or writers were attempting to convey through it. What the authors wanted to communicate about their views of the relationship between the



government, their constitution, and strategy through the historical account, will serve as a basis for the analysis.

Dating the biblical account is controversial. While the following description justifies the dates supported by this work, the time lapse is more important than precise dating. 1 Kings 6:1 states that 480 years transpired between the Exodus and the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel—the year in which he began to build the temple. The generally accepted date of Solomon's reign is 971-931 BCE, which places his fourth year as king at 967 BCE. These figures suggest the Exodus occurred about 1447 BCE. Accounting for the 40-year wandering before gaining a foothold in Jericho, the Israelites began their invasion of Canaan around 1406 BCE. Additionally, Judges 11:26 indicates that the Israelites had occupied Canaan for 300 years before the time of Jephthah, who is commonly dated at 1100 BCE.<sup>17</sup> What this amounts to is a chronology that starts with an Israelite invasion beginning around 1400 BCE and ends with the last episode in the period of Judges occurring sometime around 1000 BCE.

### **Methodology**

There are four major components to this thesis methodology. First, the research design provides insight into the approach of this project. Second, the case study selection justifies the use of Israelite settlement as the central subject of historical analysis. Third, the Bible translation provides the method of dealing with conflicting translations that might impact the analysis. Finally, analytical framework describes the methodology for analyzing the independent, dependent, and intervening variables.

### **Research Design**

This research is a subjective historical analysis of a case study broken into seven individual episodes. To answer the research questions, this thesis compares and contrasts Israelite governmental structures and national strategies from Joshua's period (Late Bronze Age) with that of the Judges (Late Bronze/Early Iron Age). In answering these questions, the aim is to evaluate the validity of strategy with a subjective assessment of the ends, ways, means, and risks.

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<sup>17</sup> Bimson, John J., Livingston, David, "Redating the Exodus," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13, no. 5 (Sep/Oct 1987): 40-48, 51-53, 66-68, accessed May 21, 2018, <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=bsba&Volume=13&Issue=5&ArticleID=2>.

### **Case Study Selection**

The establishment of Israelites in Canaan was chosen to examine the relationship between government organization and strategy because it represents a period of intense armed conflict with not only changes in the government executive, but also the government structure, which would appear to go against conventional ideas for maintaining political continuity. Specific episodes of this case study were selected to illustrate the significant dynamics of interest while maintaining contextual continuity. The next logical step before testing the findings across other polities and time periods will be to see if the results hold up with the inclusion of episodes not represented in this study.

### **Bible Translation and Supporting Evidence**

This thesis draws from biblical text as the primary historical narrative supported by other ancient texts and archaeological evidence. This research uses the New King James Version (NKJV) in the text, footnotes, and citations. To mitigate the risk of mistranslation, this research made extensive use of the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, which clarifies the NKJV with extensive references to the original ancient Hebrew text.

### **Analytical Framework**

Strategy. To assess the strategy of the two periods, this thesis uses former U.S. Army War College professor, Harry Richard Yarger's validity test. Yarger's validity test requires a subjective determination of the following three questions: (1) Suitability – will attainment of the objective accomplish the desired end? (2) Feasibility – can the action be achieved by the means available? (3) Acceptability – are the consequences of cost justified by the importance of the effect desired or, said another way, is the method proposed justified by the end achieved? If the answer to any of these questions is, "no," then the strategy is not valid. For an invalid strategy, adjustments must be made to modify the objectives, strategy, resources, or some combination of these factors to make the strategy valid.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the Yarger test, this analysis also includes a risk

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<sup>18</sup> Richard Yarger is cited in LTC Chris Springer, "U.S. Military Professionals' Guide to Understanding Strategy" (C203 reading, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), 2. For Yarger's original work, see J. Boone, ed., "Toward a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the U.S. Army War College Strategy Model," *The U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, Volume I: Theory of War and Strategy, 4th ed.

assessment, which does not directly impact validity evaluation, but serves to inform the potential for failure.

Government. Government organization is measured as centralized or decentralized. While there can be degrees of centralization, for simplicity, this study considers the government to be centralized when it has one chief executive as an authority figure for the entire nation. Single leaders with only regional influence do not meet this criteria, although the analysis will account for regional centralization separately.

Constitution. For the Israelites during the periods of Joshua and Judges, their monotheistic religious beliefs were at the foundation of the laws that comprised their constitution, represented by the Ten Commandments as delivered to Moses from God.<sup>19</sup> All other Israelite law outlined throughout the Torah was built on these foundational statutes. Adherence to the constitution is measured as yes or no. Like with centralization, there can be degrees of adherence and divergence. However, again, for simplicity, this study considers the Israelite chief executive or authority figures acting on behalf of the nation (in whole or part) to be either in full compliance or not. In addition to a re-examination of this case to include the episodes not covered in this study, it would also be useful to conduct a re-examination with degrees of decentralization and divergence.

### **Chapter Outline**

The following chapter provides the background information required to understand the setting, the principal actors, and the events that led up to the point of conflict between the Israelites and inhabitants of Canaan. Chapter 3 provides the event narrative, which includes Joshua's campaign and six episodes of armed conflict from the period of Judges that inform this research. Chapter 4 is the comparative analysis of the national security strategies of Israelite regimes and contains the findings on the relationship among the variables in question. Chapter 5 provides a summary with implications to the U.S. and other contemporary nations.

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<sup>19</sup> Exod. 20: 1–17 NKJV.

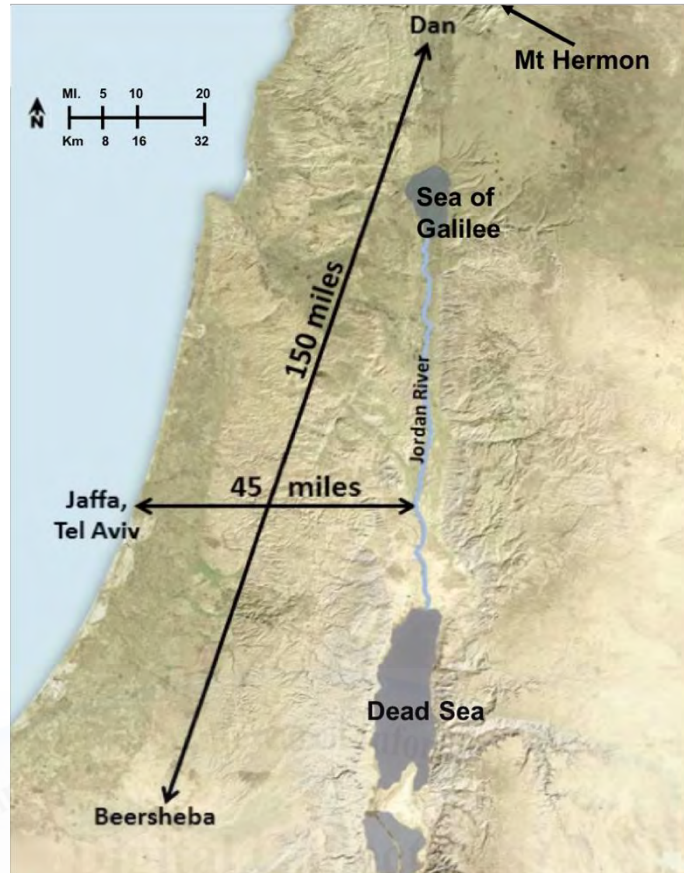
## **Chapter 2**

### **Background**

Before introducing the episodes that this thesis uses as the basis for analysis, it is necessary to establish a suitable context. This chapter provides the background information required for understanding the setting, principal actors, and events that shape the episodes this research uses as the case study for examination. It begins with an overview of physical geography, cultural history, and the political interests of the Israelite government. The chapter concludes with an overview of the events that led up to the point of conflict.

### **Geography**

Throughout its history, Canaan had been a land of strategic importance as the link between three continental land masses: Europe, Asia, and Africa. Canaan contained the major trade routes that connected Egypt with Mesopotamia during the period of Israelite settlement. The geography of the Israelite settlement is centered on what is now modern-day Israel and the disputed territory of Palestine but also includes neighboring territory north to the Litani River in southern Lebanon, south to the northern region of the Sinai Peninsula, and east including much of modern-day Jordan. Figure 1 depicts the heartland of the region where most of the military activities took place. A region slightly greater than 8,000 square miles, it is comparable to the size of the state of New Jersey and its total distance is approximately 150 miles north to south and 45 miles east to west.



**Figure 1. Heartland of Canaan**

*Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, "02 Land of the Bible: Basic Regions and Regional Variety," SatelliteBibleAtlas Video, YouTube, January 9, 2013, accessed May 9, 2017,*

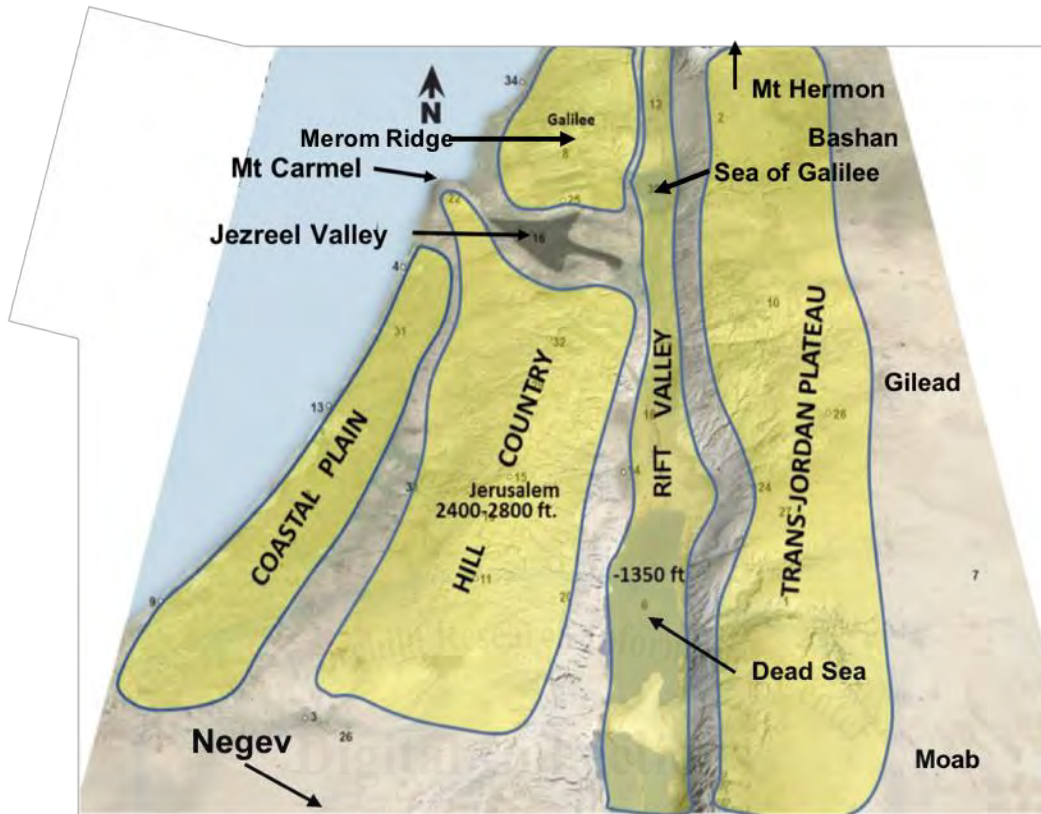
*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3ltBtObmmQ&index=3&list=PL8T4gePAqz-slRlsqya3EJMjyMAC7LfHS>.*

### **Topography**

Topographically, the terrain is among the most diverse of any region of its size in the world. It has mountains, desert highland plateaus, fertile valleys, lowlands, and coastal plains. The region is bisected north to south by the Jordan River Valley, with Mount Hermon and the Sea of Galilee to the north and the Dead Sea to the south. The region can be divided into four major longitudinal zones: the coastal plain, the central highlands (also known as the hill country), the Jordan Rift Valley, and the Transjordan



Plateau.<sup>1</sup> It also has an additional desert topographical zone to the south called the Negev. Figure 2 depicts the topography with the four major longitudinal zones.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 2. Topography**

Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, "03 Major Routes in the Land of the Bible," *SatelliteBibleAtlas Video*, YouTube, January 11, 2013, accessed May 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DH4PC9BBkLE>.

Coastal Plain. The coastal plain is a strip of agriculturally productive land some eight-to-twelve miles wide that runs parallel to the Mediterranean Sea coast. The jagged-edged shoreline makes it mostly unsuitable for maritime use, with exceptions being a few small ports including one located at modern-day Tel Aviv. Eastward, it rises gradually

<sup>1</sup> The name Transjordan means "on the other side of the Jordan" and refers to the region east of the Jordan River as opposed to Cisjordan, which means "on this side of the Jordan" and refers to the region west of the Jordan River.

<sup>2</sup> William Schlegel, "02 Land of the Bible: Basic Regions and Regional Variety," *SatelliteBibleAtlas Video*, YouTube, January 9, 2013, accessed May 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3ltBtObmmQ&index=3&list=PL8T4gePAqz-slRlsqya3EJMjyMAC7LfHS>.

into the hill country. This region provided ideal maneuver space for Canaanite chariot force employment.

Central Highlands. Moving east from the coastal plains, the central highlands is rough terrain with deep valleys and high ridges.<sup>3</sup> The central highlands is like a giant staircase leading up from the Mediterranean Sea to the central watershed plateau and down again, though in much steeper steps, towards the Jordan Valley.<sup>4</sup> It extends north and includes Mount Carmel, which is a mountain ridge that juts out into the Mediterranean Sea and Galilee. Galilee may be likened to a huge wheel, with its hub at the Merom Ridge, which makes it accessible from multiple directions. From this central watershed, the rains have carved out valleys that fan out like spokes in all directions.<sup>5</sup> One of the most prominent terrain features in the central highlands is the Jezreel Valley. Shaped like a westward facing arrowhead, it is a vast triangular plain that separates the hill country from Galilee. East-west movement in the central highlands, other than via the great lateral valleys, is confined to the wadis descending the watershed. This region, being more favorable to dismounted infantry, served in some ways as a force equalizer, rendering the Canaanites unable to employ their mobile forces in such steep terrain. It would become the region that would succumb quickest to Israelite conquest.

Jordan Rift Valley. The Jordan Rift Valley is a ten-mile wide plain that separates the central highlands to the west from the Transjordan plateau in the east. Most of the surface of the rift valley is below sea level. It connects the Sea of Galilee, which is 700 feet below sea level, with the Dead Sea, which at 1,380 feet below sea level, is the lowest point on earth. This region would prove to be critical in providing a location for the Israelites to gain their foothold and expand a lodgment from the east. It would also accommodate the Israelite army's need for staging and onward movement to their first territorial objective.

Transjordan Plateau. The Transjordan Plateau refers to the mountainous highland plateau east of the Jordan Rift Valley. It has distinct high mountain relief in parts up to 3,000 feet in elevation. Currently located in the modern nation of Jordan, it includes

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<sup>3</sup> Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible* (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 2006), 33.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

what was formerly known as the Moab, Gilead, and Bashan and extends all the way up to Mount Hermon. While the ascent east from the Jordan is steep, the descent further east is gentle and almost unnoticeable from the plateau to the Arabian Desert.<sup>6</sup> This region is significant to Israelite settlement because it provides the space necessary for organizing and from which to mobilize and deploy forces.

Negev. The Negev is a triangular shaped geological depression in the desert reaching inland from the southern coastal plain to the Dead Sea, extending south 120 miles to the inlet port cities of Eilat and Etsion-geber. The significance of this area is that despite the broad front that it provides granting access to the southern regions of Canaan, Joshua did not use it as maneuver space in his campaign. Using the Negev as a jump-off point to launch the invasion would have exposed the Israelites to Canaanite chariot forces in the coastal plains. Additionally, although he needed to get his forces into the central highlands, which proved to be more favorable terrain for his dismounted army, the ascent up into the central highlands from that approach was difficult and presented few options. It was from there that the Israelites conducted an unsuccessful attempt to gain a foothold discussed later in this chapter. Figure 3 provides a depiction of the Negev.



**Figure 3. Negev**

*Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 75.*

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<sup>6</sup> Herzog and Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, 33.



### Maneuver Corridors and Lines of Communication

The longitudinal zones become natural maneuver corridors for armies operating in the region. Each of the longitudinal zones has a major route that extends through it. First, the Way of the Sea (more commonly referred to as the Coastal Highway) runs unimpeded through the coastal plains up to Mount Carmel. An unnamed roadway proceeds through a mountain pass along the Jezreel Valley and continues further north past the Sea of Galilee. The sections combine to form what in later periods became known as the Great International Highway.<sup>7</sup> Second, the Way of the Patriarchs, named for its use by Hebrew patriarchs, was a north-south local route on the watershed or ridgeline of the hill country.<sup>8</sup> Third, the Rift Valley contains roads along either side of the Jordan River providing convenient travel between the Dead Sea and Sea of Galilee and further beyond to the north. Finally, the King's Highway ran along the Transjordan Plateau to Damascus. The most desirable lands upon which to build cities were along these lines of communication.

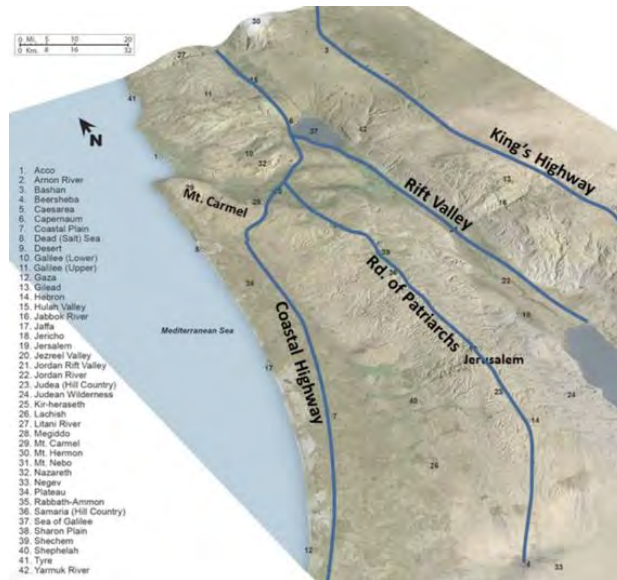
Despite the land's relatively small area, its significant terrain features create several key choke points that impact longitudinal and lateral transit. These choke points have become points of contention, which many nations have competed to control. Important to all of the major empires of the region, the land of Canaan was highly contested territory. Figure 4 depicts the major routes of the region. Besides the initial use of the King's Highway in the Transjordan and the Jordan Valley as an entry point into Canaan, the Israelites conducted the preponderance of their major troop movements on the Road of the Patriarchs along the central highlands watershed.<sup>9</sup> However, to conquer all of Canaan, the Israelites would have to figure out how to control all of these major routes through the territory.

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<sup>7</sup> William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>9</sup> William Schlegel, "03 Major Routes in the Land of the Bible," *SatelliteBibleAtlas* Video, YouTube, January 11, 2013, accessed May 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DH4PC9BBkLE>.



**Figure 4. Major Routes**

*Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, "03 Major Routes in the Land of the Bible," SatelliteBibleAtlas Video, YouTube, January 11, 2013, accessed May 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DH4PC9BBkLE>.*

### **Weather Influences on Military Strategy**

The climate varies significantly depending on the region, primarily as a result of the differences in topography between the sea and desert wilderness.<sup>10</sup> Most of the rain falls on the west side of the hill country, the majority occurring during five months between November and March, creating a wet and dry season, which would have impacted mobility, especially for Canaanite chariot forces. The prevailing wind direction is from west to east. The gradually rising terrain elevates moist air, and the clouds dissipate and descend into the Jordan Valley containing relatively little moisture. Generally, rainfall is greater in the north than it is in the south, in the west than in the east, and in the highlands than lowlands.<sup>11</sup> Extreme differences in elevation create an environment of extraordinary diversity where climates can have dramatic differences within just a few miles of one another. The topography and climate vary significantly

<sup>10</sup> William Schlegel, "02 Land of the Bible: Basic Regions and Regional Variety."

<sup>11</sup> This summary of rainfall is derived from Paul H. Wright, *Holman QuickSource Bible Atlas* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2005), 29-30 and Herzog and Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, 33.

over relatively small distances. Armies defending or projecting combat power to this land had to be competent in warfare in diverse conditions.

### Who Were the Israelites? A Cultural History

The history of the Israelites is complex. Much of the debate about the origin of a Hebrew nation depends on the selection of the starting point for investigating Israelite heritage. This research uses the first mention of the name, Hebrew, to describe the ethnicity of people, referring to the Israelite patriarch, Abraham who is known for his faith in a monotheistic God.<sup>12</sup> According to Genesis, God promised the land of Canaan as an inheritance for future Hebrew generations through Isaac, one of Abraham's four named sons.<sup>13</sup> Figure 5 depicts the boundaries of this territory.



**Figure 5. Promised Land**

*Source: Reprinted from William Schlegel, Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 37.*

<sup>12</sup> Gen. 14:13.

<sup>13</sup> Gen. 17:21.

The second born of Isaac's twin sons was named Jacob. Despite being the younger of Isaac's two sons, Jacob became the patriarch of the family, and his name was later changed to Israel.<sup>14</sup> The descriptions herein use the name Jacob to distinguish the person from the nation of Israel. Jacob had twelve sons, who each became the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin. During the time of the conquest, Josephs' descendants, Ephraim and Manasseh represented two of the twelve tribes in place of Joseph.<sup>15</sup>

Around the 21st century BCE, Abraham moved from Ur, an ancient town along the Euphrates River in modern-day Iraq, to the ancient city of Haran, located in modern day Turkey, then to Canaan, the land he believed to be promised to his descendants from God. Abraham and his family settled among the Canaanites. After famine had stricken the land, Abraham moved his family south to Egypt but eventually returned to settle back in Canaan.<sup>16</sup> Abraham's son, Isaac, would have lived most of his life in Canaan as well as his son, Jacob, although Jacob had lived in Egypt for a short while as well. Jacob's youngest son, Joseph, was enslaved by Egyptians and through a series of events, ended up becoming vice-premier under an unnamed Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph's political status enabled the rest of his brothers to move to Egypt after a famine broke out throughout the land of Canaan, which established the twelve tribes of Israel in Egypt.<sup>17</sup> After the death of Joseph, another unnamed Pharaoh came to power and became threatened by the increasing population of Hebrews, so he subjected the Israelites to harsh slavery.<sup>18</sup> After the Pharaoh became increasingly cruel towards the Israelites, Moses arose as the Hebrew

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<sup>14</sup> Gen. 35:10. Throughout the Bible, Jacob is referred to as both Jacob and Israel.

<sup>15</sup> During the time of conquest, the tribe of Levi was not allocated territory but rather cities within each of the other tribe's territories because of its priestly responsibilities to the rest of the tribes. Throughout the story of Israelite settlement in Canaan, reference to the twelve tribes includes Ephraim and Manasseh in place of Levi and Joseph. Josh. 14:4.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. 12:1–11; 13:1–4.

<sup>17</sup> Gen. 37; 41–45; Exod. 1:1–5.

<sup>18</sup> Exod. 1.

leader who would lead the Israelites out of bondage into the land, which they believed was promised by God to them.<sup>19</sup>

Now Moses, having been spared from a life of slavery via adoption by Pharaoh's daughter, fled from Egypt to Midian after the Pharaoh sought to kill him for having murdered an Egyptian.<sup>20</sup> While in Midian, Moses had a divine encounter where God appointed him to lead the Israelites out of bondage into the land of Canaan.<sup>21</sup> In response to Moses' concerns of gaining recognition from the people, God directed that he take his brother, Aaron, to be his spokesman and to perform a series of supernatural miracles in concert with a public demand to Pharaoh to set the Israelites free. The performance of these bold acts caused the Israelites to accept that God in fact appointed Moses as the one that would lead their nation to freedom.<sup>22</sup>

### **Who Were the Canaanites? A Cultural History**

Determining what people comprised the inhabitants of Canaan is challenging due to the differences in people that the Bible attribute to being occupants of the land over different time periods. The land of Canaan derives its name from its patriarch, Canaan. According to biblical chronology, the Israelites and Canaanites had a common ancestry tracing back to the figure, Noah, who saved a remnant of mankind from a great flood. While many details of the ancestral affiliation between descendants of Noah are unclear, the Israelites and Canaanites descend from two of Noah's three sons (Shem and Ham respectfully), although Jacob was born several generations after Canaan.<sup>23</sup> Among the descendants of Canaan were the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, and Hivites.<sup>24</sup> The fact that Israelites and Canaanites trace back to a common heritage is one factor that supports the arguments for a peaceful Israelite settlement of the region, implying that familial ties could have factored into diplomatic interactions among the Israelites and indigenous people of Canaan.

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<sup>19</sup> The books of Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers record the family lineage of the twelve tribes of Israel and their interest in the land of Canaan prior to the Israelite invasion.

<sup>20</sup> Exod. 2:11 – 15.

<sup>21</sup> Exod. 3:2 – 10.

<sup>22</sup> Exod. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Gen. 10:1–18; 11:10–27; 21:1–3; 25:21–26; 1 Chron. 1:1 – 28.

<sup>24</sup> Gen. 10:15–16. There are other descendants of Canaan; however, according to Joshua 7:10, these are the ones that still resided in the land of Canaan during the period of Israelite settlement.



Most ancient Near East scholars agree that by the time of Israelite settlement, the land of Canaan was multiethnic. At the time, the Canaanite cities were somewhat unified under Egyptian control but were not very well interconnected politically. Egypt had internal difficulties and was limited in its ability to exercise influence in the land of Canaan. Egyptian support and control of Canaan were both weakening around the 14th century BCE, which likely contributed to the difficulty in mounting a unified defensive strategy.

While Canaan is the term used to describe the land settled by the Israelites, its population consisted of several ethnic groups. In addition to all of the different ethnic groups of the Canaanites, the Bible also says that the Amalekites and Perizzites occupied the land.<sup>25</sup> Amalekites were descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau, and dwelled in the Negev.<sup>26</sup> There are no non-biblical references of Perizzites, so their origin is unknown. For the sake of simplicity, this argument frequently refers to all inhabitants of the subject area as Canaanite although the land of Canaan may have included occupants that would not have considered themselves to be Canaanites. This research distinguishes specific ethnicities of people groups when possible as it pertains to the narrative.

### **Political Interests**

To examine military strategy, it is essential to understand the political interests that shaped the strategic environment. The primary Israelite national interest was settlement in the land of Canaan as a result of perceived direction from God. Prior to the invasion, the Israelites had already demonstrated the ability to live nomadically for nearly half of a century and had no other compelling reason to invade. Israelite laws for conducting warfare allowed for foreigners to submit to forced labor; however, the Israelites were not to cohabit with the occupants of Canaan.<sup>27</sup> This meant that from the Israelite perspective, the only suitable outcome for the Canaanites would be death, displacement, or only in exceptional cases, slavery.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the land was not to be destroyed or rendered useless. For example, fruit-bearing trees were not to be cut down

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<sup>25</sup> Josh. 3:10.

<sup>26</sup> Num. 13:29.

<sup>27</sup> Exod. 23:32–33; Deut. 20:10–18.

<sup>28</sup> There are a few cases of defectors assisting the Israelites throughout the period of Joshua and Judges that appear to be acceptable exceptions.

for resources during a siege and crops were not to be destroyed. These were to be preserved for later Israelite subsistence.<sup>29</sup> This policy would ensure that the Israelites would be able to preserve the cities for occupation, free from the influence of its previous occupants.

The prevailing national interests of the Canaanites were retention of their land and maintaining the status quo. It drove the policy that consisted of two foundational principles based on the unfolding of events. The first was to defend with coalition partners, if possible. The Canaanite kingdoms could not achieve overwhelming numerical superiority individually but could do so collectively. The second was to displace, consolidate, and regain lost territory when the situation permitted. This policy did not require annihilation of the Israelites. It only required defeating Israelite aggression and defending the territory of Canaanite cities. There is no evidence to indicate whether or not the Canaanites would have tolerated living peacefully among the Israelites.

Canaanite settlements in the region took on several different forms. Some were permanently established cities of various sizes, often fortified behind city walls and usually ruled by a king as the political authority who served as head of government and head of state. Other Canaanite settlements were villages in between major cities. Given the geographically compartmentalized nature of much of the terrain across the region, many cities were physically isolated and thereby not in a position to support neighboring cities. City walls served a critical role in defense. The walls served as a layer of physical security which also reduced the number of soldiers required to defend the city. However, massive city walls also contributed to defenders becoming contained by attacking forces. The diversity of the settlements meant challenges for the Canaanites to mount a unified defense and for the Israelites to seize the territory completely.<sup>30</sup>

What is essential to understand in this clash of political will, is that, before this period, Israel may not have existed as a state, but under the executive command of a

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<sup>29</sup> Deut. 20:19–20.

<sup>30</sup> In addition to Numbers 13:28–29, Canaan city construction is recorded in the findings from ancient Near East archaeological excavations. A concise description of Canaan is provided in Wayne T. Pitard, “Before Israel: Syria-Palestine in the Bronze Age” in Michael D. Coogan, ed. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 55-77.

single leader, it was very much a nation of tribes unified in the political interest of conquest. Canaan, on the other hand, was a collection of city-states that despite sharing similar interests of maintaining their territory, lacked the leadership and cohesion necessary to do so. In the end, neither got what they set out to achieve completely.<sup>31</sup>

### **Road to War**

The story of Israel's invasion of Canaan begins with the Israelites as a newly unified nation of Hebrew tribes, and their quest to escape a life of bondage and oppression in Egypt. Their pilgrimage referred to as the Exodus, headed by Moses led them out of Egypt and into the Arabian Desert in pursuit of a land that they would inhabit. In the process of seeking out this land, the Israelites lived a nomadic lifestyle in the Negev.

### **Israelite Reconnaissance of Canaan**

Shortly after the Exodus, Moses sent out twelve men—a leader from each of the tribes—from the Wilderness of Paran in the Negev to reconnoiter the land of Canaan. Among these men was Moses's assistant, Joshua, from the tribe of Ephraim. Moses's reconnaissance objectives are recorded in the following quotation:

go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.<sup>32</sup>

The reconnaissance team returned 40 days later to report their findings to Moses. They brought back a sample of crops and reported the disposition of the occupants of Canaan by region. Among the group's findings was that the land was inhabited by people who were exceptionally strong and that the cities were heavily fortified. The prevailing opinion of the reports was that the occupants throughout the land of Canaan

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<sup>31</sup> The most significant literary source for politics in Canaan is the Amarna Letters, a 14th to 12th century BCE cuneiform archive of letters written on clay tablets, primarily consisting of diplomatic correspondence between the Egyptian administration and its representatives in Canaan. The most widely accepted translation is William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

<sup>32</sup> Num. 13:17–20.



were too strong to conquer. Joshua was one of only two who reported that the occupants of Canaan could, in fact, be conquered.<sup>33</sup> As a penalty for demonstrating a lack of faith and following rebellion against their leader, Moses, the Israelites were subjected to 40 years of wandering in the desert, denied the approval to commence seizure of their promised land.<sup>34</sup>

### **Failed Invasion**

Without the leadership of Moses, several of the Israelites, in an attempt to make up for their previous lack of faith, moved into the mountains of the central highlands from the south to conquer the Canaanites and Amalekites. This unorganized and unsanctioned assault resulted in a quick and disastrous defeat for the Israelites. The Canaanites and Amalekites came down from the hills and defeated the Israelites, driving them back down to Hormah.<sup>35</sup>

After the devastating defeat by the Canaanites and Amalekites, Moses led the Israelites through a series of minor clashes with opposing nations on the periphery of Canaan. Eventually, the Israelites would travel to the Transjordan from the south after being denied transit through the territory of Edom in the Moab desert.<sup>36</sup> Figure 6 depicts the reconnaissance of Canaan, failed attempt to gain a foothold from the south and the route that the Israelites took to settle in the Transjordan.

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<sup>33</sup> Numbers 13:17–20, 26–33 records the reconnaissance of Canaan and intelligence report.

<sup>34</sup> Num. 14: 20 – 35.

<sup>35</sup> Numbers 13–17 records the failed Israelite invasion of Canaan from the south.

<sup>36</sup> Deuteronomy 2:8–9 records what Moses understood to be God's instructions to not make war with Edom or the Moabites. Edomites were descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother.



**Figure 6. Setting the Force in the Transjordan**

*Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 33.*

### Setting the Force and Commissioning of Joshua

At the time that the Israelites arrived in the Transjordan, the Amorites occupied a portion of land adjacent to Moab. Moses sent messengers to request passage west through the Amorite territory but was denied, which led to a battle where the Amorites attacked the Israelites and were defeated. The Israelites fought and defeated the Amorites in successive battles seizing several Amorite cities in the Moab desert, eventually

establishing a camp in Acacia Grove, across from Jericho.<sup>37</sup> Over time, the Israelites began to violate their constitutional statutes by engaging in idolatrous worship practices as a result of the influence of Moabite and Midianite women.<sup>38</sup>

Near the end of his service as leader of the Israelites, God directed Moses to commission Joshua as the next leader to replace him, which he did in the presence of the congregation, thereby establishing Joshua as his legitimate successor.<sup>39</sup> Shortly after commissioning Joshua, Moses sent warriors to attack the five kings of Midian in retaliation for the cultural influx from Moab. The Israelites killed the five kings of the Midian alliance along with all of the men, burned the cities, and kept a portion of the women, children, livestock, and goods as spoil of the land. They brought all of the spoils back to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.<sup>40</sup>

After the defeat of the Midianites, Moses assigned the tribes of Gad and Reuben their inheritance east of the Jordan where the Israelites were currently located because by that time, those tribes had abundant livestock and the land was suitable pastureland. The children of Machir, son of Manasseh, later went to Gilead and expelled the Amorites who were in it. The record is void of detail concerning this early demonstration of a tribe's ability to conduct independent combat operations. After that victory, Moses gave Machir the land they had seized.<sup>41</sup> The tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Machir, already occupying their allocated territory, were still pledged to fight along the side of the other tribes for their inheritance west of the Jordan.<sup>42</sup>

After the death of Moses, Joshua ascended to his appointed place as leader of the twelve tribes. By this time, Joshua had already proven himself as a respected leader as Moses's assistant. The next phase of the conquest continued with the Israelites camped in Acacia Grove, from which they prepared for their invasion under the leadership of Joshua.

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<sup>37</sup> Numbers 21:21–32 records Israel's battles with the Amorites in the Cisjordan.

<sup>38</sup> Num. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Num. 27:18–23.

<sup>40</sup> Numbers 31 records the Israelites' war against the Midianites.

<sup>41</sup> The half tribe of Manasseh that settled in the Transjordan is often referred to as Machir, the name of Manasseh's son. See Num. 32. Throughout this thesis, Manasseh refers to the half tribe of Manasseh west of the Jordan River and Machir as the half east of the Jordan River.

<sup>42</sup> Numbers 32 records the land allocation and conquest commitment for Gad, Reuben, and Machir.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Event Narrative**

In most protracted wars, goals evolve. The war in Canaan was no exception. In settling in the land of Canaan, the Israelites partially achieved their initial war aim, which was to possess a specified geographic territory, with all Canaanites expelled. After the first stage of conquest under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites reorganized their war effort and eventually abandoned their aim of expelling all Canaanites and possessing all of the territory. This chapter answers the following secondary research questions: (1) How did the organization of government differ between the period of Joshua and the period of the Judges? (2) Why did the Israelites change their government organization in the middle of an invasion?

#### **Period of Joshua – Organization of Government**

The Israelites organized, trained, and equipped for conquest according to tribal affiliation. First, the Israelites conducted a census of all men between the ages of 20 and 50 years old to form the basis of manning the army by tribe. Forty years earlier, the total force had been 603,550 during Moses's tenure before reconnaissance of Canaan. This census recorded 601,730 just prior to the invasion.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence of integrated training and equipping of forces across the tribes. During this period, calls to mobilize military forces extended to all the tribes, which suggests that the Israelite tribes were organized, trained, and equipped according to tribal preferences. Later episodes during the period of Judges describe the tribes fighting individually, which suggests that each tribe was able to conduct all necessary warfighting functions.

The first constitutional period after the Exodus was the founding of the Israelite tribal confederacy, which came simultaneously with the founding of the nation. Exodus 19:5 – 6 records God's instructions to Moses establishing a covenant with the Israelites that if they obey His commandments, the Israelites would be special above all the people

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<sup>1</sup> The census and other personnel numbers from the biblical record are a matter of dispute. Many Bible scholars believe that the census numbers in particular are excessively high based on the feasibility of the land to meet subsistence requirements, unreconciled conflicts between other scriptures dealing with population, and questions on matters of translation. A summary of the conflicts with population can be found in Ben Zion Katz, "Recounting the Census: A Military Force of 5,500 (not 603,550)," *The Torah.com*, accessed on May 6, 2018, <https://thetorah.com/recounting-the-census-a-military-force-of-5500/>.

of the earth and would be a holy nation. This covenant was the transformation of the Hebrew tribes into a national entity. The covenant established a divine provenance and a constitution that laid the foundation for the first Israelite polity, which was organized around a union of twelve tribes. The constitution specified that God Himself was to be considered the direct leader of the nation as a whole, assisted by an *Eved A-donai* (“Servant of God”), who was to be God’s representative.<sup>2</sup> This Eved A-donai maintained a core of civil servants to administer governmental services.<sup>3</sup>

During the first two generations of the tribal confederacy, the Eved A-donai referred to through the remaining chapters as chief executive, exercised authority over all the tribes. Moses and Joshua were the only two figures to bear that title and exercise such authority. As the chief executive, Joshua was responsible for the execution of government activity in domestic and international affairs. His domestic authorities included overseeing the rule of law as the chief judge, legislating law, and property allocation. His international authorities included the declaration of war, direction of military actions, and entrance into treaties.<sup>4</sup> The chief executive also served as the nation’s prophet, regarded as the one with direct revelation from God to lead the domestic and international affairs of the nation.<sup>5</sup> However, once the nation had been formed by Moses and settled in the land of Canaan by Joshua, no single national leaders of this kind emerged until the very end of this constitutional period with the eventual establishment of Israelite kings.

The Israelite government consisted of other key figures. Each tribe had a single leader or patriarch; however, they governed with an assembly of elders.<sup>6</sup> The congregation was a council of tribal leaders that represented the interests of the people of

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. 8:4–7.

<sup>3</sup> The notion of a core of civil servants to administer governmental functions is derived from the appointments to office, instructions to officials, and political activities recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua record examples of each of the chief executive authorities.

<sup>5</sup> The chief executive’s judiciary powers also included the executive power to appoint regional and local judges as indicated by the record of Moses appointing a hierarchy of rulers with judiciary powers in Exodus. 18:13–26. Numbers 12:5–8, records Moses’ appointment as prophet; Joshua 4:4 records Deborah’s appointment as prophetess.

<sup>6</sup> Activities of the assembly of elders are recorded throughout nearly all of the Old Testament.



their respective tribes and clans.<sup>7</sup> While the record is unclear as to how members of the assembly of elders and congregation were appointed, this gave the nation the resemblance of a republic. Priests were appointed by the chief executive to perform legal, medical, and religious services as civil servants as well as legal, moral, and spiritual services in warfare.<sup>8</sup> Judges were leaders that enforced the rule of law. The specifics to the hierarchy of judges is unclear; however, judges did serve in each tribe at various echelons as indicated by Moses' appointment of rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens to judge the people.<sup>9</sup>

### **Period of Joshua – National Security Strategy**

Policy Objectives. The Israelite strategy under the leadership of Joshua was a brute force strategy of annihilation that consisted of two unlimited policy objectives. The first objective was to settle the entire Israelite population in the land of Canaan according to tribal allotment. The second objective was to expel all inhabitants from the land. These two objectives had a profound impact on strategy during Joshua's tenure. The record of events during the period of Joshua suggests that while related, achievement of one objective would not always correlate to success of the other.

National Resources. The unlimited nature of the Israelites' two objectives meant that Joshua had all of his nation's resources at his disposal, both military and non-military. Key military resources included a conscripted, infantry-based army, individual and crew-served weapons, and (albeit to a lesser extent) allied forces. Key non-military resources included the domestic economy and industries for agriculture, textiles, and war-making materials among other things. Perhaps the most important civil resource was the population designated to settle in the seized terrain and begin to plant their society.

Strategic Approach. To bring the totality of Israelite resources to bear on the pursuit of its national security objectives, the Joshua conceived a strategy centered on around a military campaign that was comprised of one line of operation and three lines of

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<sup>7</sup> Larger and more inclusive than the assembly of elders, the activities of the congregation are recorded throughout nearly all of the Old Testament.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 40:12–14 records the first appointment of Israelite priests. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, all contain instructions for and authorities of Israelite priests.

<sup>9</sup> Exod. 18:13–26.

effort. The line of operation consisted of gaining a foothold in Jericho, expanding a lodgment into the central highlands, and continuous expansion throughout the region. The first of the three line of effort was the destruction of enemy fielded forces. As long as the Canaanites demonstrated the capability and will to resist, this would be a necessary effort. The second line of effort was the destruction of Canaanite civilization. This destruction included civilians and elements of Canaanite culture considered to be a threat to Israelite culture. The third line of effort was the settlement of the territory. While not directly military, the occupation of territory extended operation reach.<sup>10</sup>

### **Period of Joshua – Event Narrative with Timeline**

Israel's invasion of Canaan under Joshua's leadership is best explained in four parts, which include initial actions to set the force, followed by three major operations separated by strategic pauses. The first two parts were operations that indicate deliberate planning. The second two parts were major operations that, while consistent with Joshua's strategy, were triggered by Canaanite initiatives, which presented the Israelites with opportunities to exploit.

### **Setting the Force – Israel Postures for Conquest**

The first major operation was to set the force, which took place after the victories over the Amorites and Midianites in the Transjordan under the leadership of Moses. It was here that Joshua allowed the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Machir to settle. The remaining tribes that were to penetrate deeper into Canaanite territory settled temporarily in the plains of Moab, headquartered out of Acacia Grove on the east side of the Jordan across from Jericho. This operation to set the force concluded with the two-and-one-half tribes, and all of Israel's fighters settled and staged for initial combat operations in Canaan. Figure 7 depicts the staging of forces and subsequent central operations to gain a foothold and begin expanding the lodgment.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> George Gordy, "The Operational Art of Ancient Israel: Israel's Conquest of Canaan in the 13th Century BCE" (master's thesis, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2017), 96-100.

<sup>11</sup> Numbers 32 and Joshua 1–5 records the setting of Israelite forces.



**Figure 7. Gaining a Foothold**

Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 39.

### Central Operations – Israelites Gain a Foothold

The second major operation was to gain a foothold and expand the lodgment in Canaan. This operation began with the area reconnaissance of Jericho, the first city that the Israelites would go to conquer. Shortly after conducting reconnaissance, the Israelites attacked and destroyed Jericho to include its defenders, non-combatant occupants, and materials. Jericho and its immediate surrounding areas, namely Gilgal, would then serve as an assembly area and jump off point for follow-on operations as well as the first line of defense for their society mostly still established in the plains of Moab against counterattacking forces.<sup>12</sup> The Israelites continued their assault deeper into Canaanite territory by attacking Ai to expand the lodgment and secure a firmer position from which to continue projecting combat power. After suffering one tactical defeat, the Israelites

<sup>12</sup> Joshua 6 records the Israelite's battle of Jericho.



prevailed in obtaining victory throughout the center portion of the hill country, which split the Canaanites of the central highlands in half. This operation concluded with the Israelites conducting a strategic pause where they focused on consolidating gains and turning to domestic affairs.<sup>13</sup>

### **Southern Operations – Israelites Defeat the Amorite Coalition**

The third major operation of Joshua's campaign was the conquest of the southern portion of the hill country, which was a conflict that was enemy initiated. After gaining the foothold, the Israelites formed an alliance with the people of Gibeon who were Amorite defectors. Believing that their survival depended on aligning with the Israelites, the Gibeonites deceived the Israelites into establishing a treaty with them by pretending to be a people from outside the region, as opposed the Israelites' declared enemy. Despite the pretense, the Israelites considered the treaty to be legally binding, which is demonstrated in their commitment to the Gibeonites' defense.<sup>14</sup>

As an act of retribution against the Gibeonites, the Amorites within the region organized a five-kingdom coalition for an attack on Gibeon. In response to a Gibeonite request for military assistance, the Israelites assisted their ally, defeating the Amorite coalition in an offensive operation that achieved tactical surprise from the use of a bold night maneuver. The Israelites exploited their success by pursuing the withdrawing forces and destroyed several Amorite cities in the southern portion of the central highlands. This southern operation concluded with the Israelites taking another strategic pause. Figure 8 depicts the southern operations.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Joshua 7–8 records the Israelites battles of Ai.

<sup>14</sup> Joshua 9 records the Israelites' treaty with the Gibeonites.

<sup>15</sup> Joshua 10 records the Israelites' southern operations.



**Figure 8. Joshua's Central and Southern Operations**

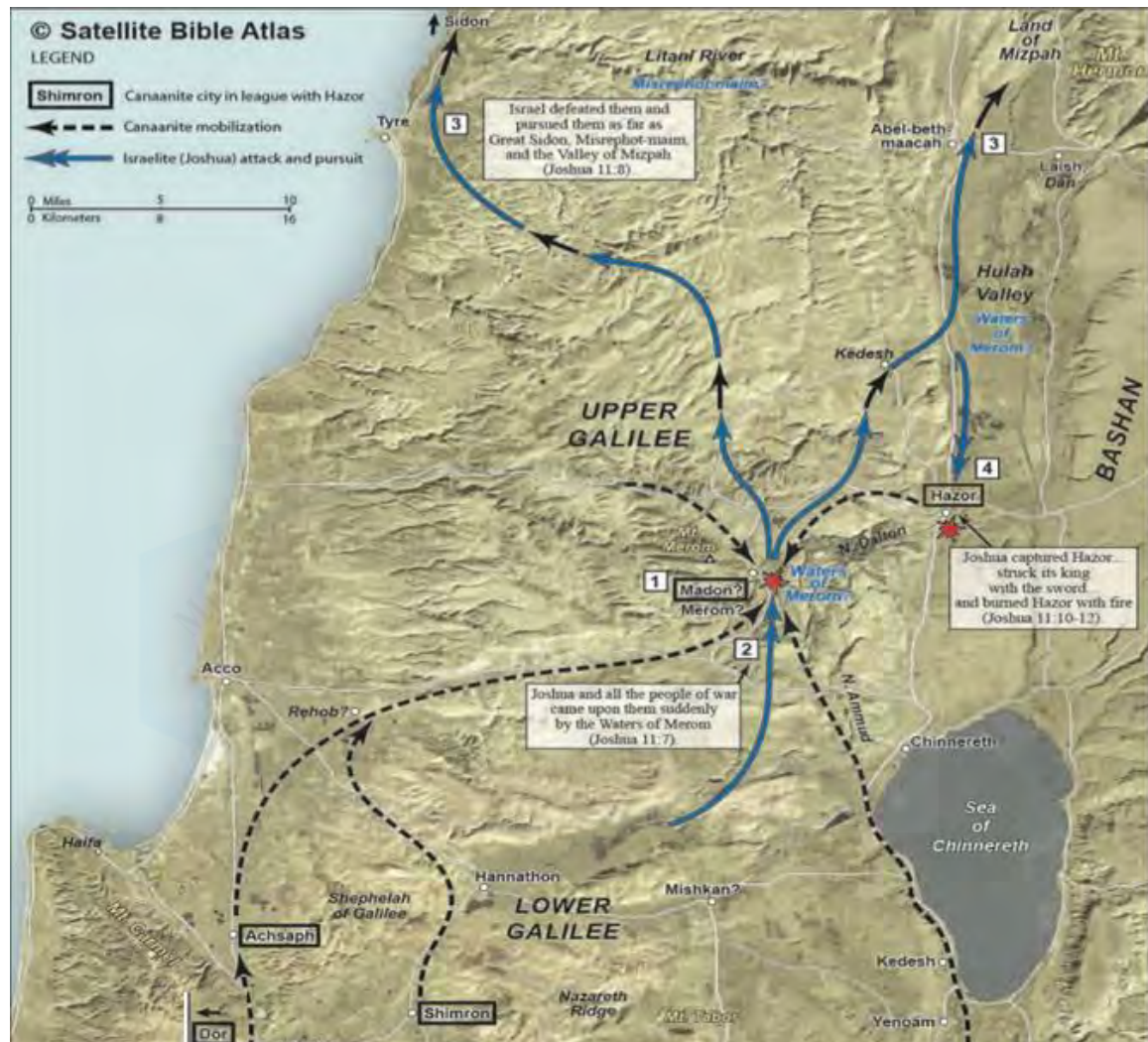
Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 41.

### Northern Operations – Israelites Defeat the Northern Canaanite Coalition

The fourth major operation of Joshua's campaign was the conquest of the northern portion of the hill country, which like the previous episode, was Canaanite initiated. The Canaanites formed another coalition against the Israelites in the northern region of Galilee. While the Israelites were not able to achieve local numerical superiority, they were able to achieve operational surprise by conducting a spoiling attack, which rendered the Canaanites unable to employ their horse-drawn chariot forces as planned.<sup>16</sup> Upon the Canaanite attempt to withdraw, the Israelites exploited their success by pursuing them north and defeating a substantial portion of Canaanite forces. The northern operations concluded in another strategic pause with a significant portion of

<sup>16</sup> Joshua 11:9 records that the Israelites hamstrung the Canaanite horses. One explanation for this is that this action could have been done as a result of battle success in exploitation. Another more likely explanation is that the Israelites disabled the horses at night, while the Canaanite Coalition's chariot forces were camped at the Waters of Merom as a place to provide water for their men and horses, which would suggest that the Canaanites were not in their order of battle.

Canaanite forces destroyed and the Israelites in a position of relative security having dominated the entire central highlands and everything east to the Transjordan. Figure 9 depicts the northern operations.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 9. Joshua's Northern Operation**

Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 47.

### Final Disposition

After the victory over the Northern Canaanite coalition, Joshua allocated land to the tribes and gave his final instructions as chief executive. Rather than appoint a successor, Joshua charged the elders in a council to carry on with the conquest by each

<sup>17</sup> Joshua 11 records the Israelites' northern operations.



seizing their allocated territory.<sup>18</sup> This event marks the point of change in the organization of Israelite government. For the first time since their organization under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites would have no standing chief executive to lead governmental affairs. Instead, they would continue as a tribal confederation, with their sovereign as God. According to the record, the Israelites still considered their tribes to be a part of one nation as indicated by the erecting of an altar on the east side of the Jordan, which was to serve as a witness to future generations that the people of Reuben, Gad, and Machir were Israelites.<sup>19</sup>

Under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites achieved the first objective of settling their entire population in Canaan to include the extended territory in the Transjordan. The Israelites did not accomplish the second objective of expelling all Canaanites from the land because they were unable to complete the seizure of the entire territory. By the end of Joshua's tenure, the Israelites firmly established their population in the land of Canaan, but without having occupied all of the designated territories according to tribal allocation. Figure 10 depicts the allocations of land by tribe. Figure 11 depicts the conquered and unconquered territory. Table 1 provides a proposed timeline of events.

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<sup>18</sup> Josh. 18:1–10.

<sup>19</sup> Josh. 22:25–29.



### Figure 10. Israelite Tribal Territory Allocation

Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 47.



**Figure 11. Conquered and Unconquered Territory**  
 Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 49.



**Table 1. Timeline – Period of Joshua**

Approx Date BCE	Event
1446	Reconnaissance of Canaan
	Israel's Failed Invasion
	Joshua Commissioned
	Israel Defeats Midianites and Amorites
	Ruben, Gad, Machir Settle Transjordan
	Joshua Sets the Force - Acacia Grove
1406	Start Central Operations - Battle of Jericho
	Israel Southern Operations
	Israel Northern Operations
	Joshua Final Security Council

*Source: Author's original work.*

### **Period of Judges – Organization of Government**

Bible scholars consider the start of the period of Judges to be immediately following the death of Joshua when there was no single chief executive appointed over all of Israel. The record does not explicitly state the reason for this shift; however, based on the record of how both Moses and Joshua were appointed, it is reasonable to conclude that God established chief executives to get the Israelites settled into Canaan. One can only presume that the transition from Egypt to Canaan was too dynamic for the relatively newly formed nation to execute without a central figure.

In this period, God appointed special judges in response to crises to restore order to Israel.<sup>20</sup> Their exact authority is questionable; however, it extended beyond their tribes, unlike the judges as previously discussed under the leadership of Moses and Joshua with only local authority. From a national standpoint, a regional crisis affecting any of the tribes could be considered a national crisis. Therefore, even if judges were most influential in particular regions during crises, they still achieved national strategic effects.

During this period, the Israelites organized, trained, and equipped for continued conquest according to tribal interests. They raised armies to defend against geographic rivals bordering on the fringes of Israelite territory, internal security threats from previous inhabitants of Canaan, and rogue actors within the tribes. Calls to mobilize military

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<sup>20</sup> Judg. 2:18.



forces extended to the tribes based on relationship and shared interests, which means that each tribe was organized, trained, and equipped according to tribal preferences. In some cases, manning was on a volunteer basis for military leaders.<sup>21</sup>

Since the Exodus, the Israelites had in their governmental structures judges and officers who were lesser figures with authority that may have been parallel to that of the later judges, though limited by the existence of a national leader. Only after a departure of this leader did the judges acquire a leading role of their own.<sup>22</sup> Sphere of influence varied among the judges. The following section provides a narrative to describe Israelite armed conflict during the period. Table 2 depicts the timeline for the period and a list of each of the named judges.<sup>23</sup>

**Table 2. Timeline – Period of Judges**

	Approx. Date BCE	Event	Judge	# of Years	Reference
1	1350	Episode 1 - Israel's Transition (Interregnum)	None		
2		Slavery under Cushan-Rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia		8	Judg 3:8
3		War with Cushan-Rishathaim and subsequence period of peace	Othniel	40	Judg 3:9-11
4		Slavery under Moabites		18	Judg 3:12-14
5		War with Moab and subsequence period of peace	Ehud	80	Judg 3:16-30
6		War with the Philistines	Shamgar	1	Judg 3:31
7		Slavery under Jabin, King of Hazor		20	Judg 4:2-3
8	1200	Episode 2 - Israel vs. King of Hazor	Deborah	40	Judg 4:4 - 5:31
9		Slavery under the Midianites		7	Judge 6:1
10		Episode 3 - Israel vs. Eastern Coalition	Gideon	40	Judg 8:28
11	1150	Episode 4 - Abimelech Illegitimate Rule & Civil War		3	Judg 9:22
12			Tola	23	Judg 10:1-2
13			Jair	22	Judg 10:3
14		Slavery under the Ammonites and Incursion of the Philistines		18	Judg 10:7
15	1100	Episode 5 - Gilead vs. Ammon & Civil War with Ephraim	Jephthah	6	Judg 12:7
16			Ibzan	7	Judg 12:9
17			Elon	10	Judg 12:11
18			Abdon	8	Judg 12:13-14
19		Slavery under the Philistines		40	Judg 13:1
20		Slavery under the Philistines	Samson	20 of 40 above	Judg 16:30-31
21	1050	Episode 6 - Israel's Civil War with Benjamin			
22		Slavery under the Philistines	Eli		
23		War with Philistines	Samuel		1 Sam 7:15
Legend: Items in red are referenced but not described in detail in this paper.					

*Source: Author's original work.*

<sup>21</sup> Judg. 1:12–13; 5:9.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, “Government in Biblical Israel,” 108.

<sup>23</sup> Note: the dates are approximate. The references for time elapse recorded as number of years in Table 2 don't provide starting or completion dates. For example, most biblical scholars believe that Deborah judged Israel for 40 years, but there is no record of how many of those years were during slavery under the King of Hazor. The record is clearer in the case of Samson. For this reason, scholars are unable to rely solely on biblical chronology to date the events of Israelite settlement in Canaan.

### **Period of Judges – National Security Strategy**

Policy Objectives. The Israelite strategy during the period of the Judges was a strategy that consisted of two objectives. The Israelite tribes maintained the first objective from Joshua to settle the entire population in the designated territory. However, over time, the tribes abandoned Joshua's second objective to expel all Canaanites from the land. Instead, having failed to retain previously conquered territory, the tribal leaders' second objective became to regain lost territory.

National Resources. The nature of the Israelites' new objectives meant that the judges had many of the same types of resources available as Joshua had previously, but much less in quantity now that participation was based on the willingness of individual tribes to contribute. During this period, the Israelites went to war as coalitions of the willing within their confederation of tribes. This dynamic was primarily due to the differences in security threats that were both within their new borders and adjacent to those tribes that were positioned on the periphery of the nation.

Strategic Approach. To bring the available Israelite resources to bear in the accomplishment of objectives, this Israelite strategy was composed of multiple lines of operations to conquer designated territories and were arranged in three lines of effort similar to those of Joshua. The first two lines of effort that carried over from Joshua's period were the destruction of military forces and the settlement of the territory. The third line of effort, developed over time, was the subjugation of Canaanite civilization to forced labor. This line of effort was derived from a combination of inability to expel the Canaanites from the land and the intermarrying of Canaanite women, resulting in the assimilation of Canaanite culture into the culture of the Israelites. The cultural assimilation contributed to the Israelites conducting idolatrous practices.

### **Period of Judges – Event Narrative**

Israelite settlement in Canaan during the period of Judges is best explained through examination of six episodes of armed conflict that capture various aspects of the Israelite experience. The first episode shows how the Israelites transitioned from Joshua's leadership to having no chief executive. The second and third episodes show the extent of the judges' influence and increases in tensions among the tribes. The remaining episodes show a declining trend in unity among the twelve tribes. This

collection of episodes illustrates the difficulties of decentralized government organization, the impact that constitutional adherence had on Israelite strategy, and the declining trend in the cohesion among the twelve Israelite tribes, which accounts for the halt Israelite conquest.

### **Episode 1: Initial Campaigns during Transition to Period of Judges**

The first episode is the transition to the new government organization, which takes place several decades after the death of Joshua around 1350 BCE. It provides the best illustration of how the government was to continue functioning in the absence of a chief executive.

Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, “Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?” And the LORD said, “Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.” So Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory.” And Simeon went with him.<sup>24</sup>

The preceding block quotation reflects the inquiry of a council of tribal leaders to God on what their next step in the conquest should be. This narrative demonstrates a clear direction with no objections indicating that there was a consensus among the tribal leaders. The next step in conquest was a military campaign for the tribe of Judah to conquer the Canaanites and Perizzites in its allocated territory.

Rather than each tribe mobilizing forces in pursuit of Judah’s campaign, Judah formed a coalition with the tribe of Simeon. The first military objective was seizure of Judah’s territory followed by Simeon’s. This episode was the first record of the Israelite wars after Joshua as coalitions of the willing tribes. Refer back to Figure 10 for tribal territorial boundaries.

In the first operations of the campaign, Judah and Simeon defeated the Canaanites at Bezek. Judah fought Jerusalem and captured it.<sup>25</sup> Then Judah fought the Canaanites in the southern region of the central highlands, the Negev, and the lowlands. The Judah-

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<sup>24</sup> Judg. 1:1–3.

<sup>25</sup> The Canaanites must not have been completely destroyed in Jerusalem during Joshua’s southern operation or the Israelites failed to retain it.

Simeon coalition defeated the inhabitants of several Canaanite cities and in follow-on operations, captured several more cities and took possession of the central highlands. Despite Judah's victories in the lowlands, they were unable to expel the Canaanites from the plains because the Canaanites were too strong, being equipped with a robust chariot force. The Israelites expelled the people of Anak but did not destroy them.<sup>26</sup> Several other operations failed to achieve complete victory over the local inhabitants.<sup>27</sup>

The record does not state when the following operations took place in relation to Judah and Simeon's. However, all of these operations illustrate the shift in policy objective from expelling Canaanites from the land entirely to settling amongst the Canaanites under various conditions. Initially, this shift was as a result of failures in execution. Eventually, it became an adjustment to their strategic design.

### **Episode 2: Unconventional Leader in Israel**

Following the initial operations during the transitional period between Joshua and Judges, multiple former inhabitants of Canaan continued to contest the Israelites for control of the land. Periodically, the Israelites in whole or part would become subject to the rule of reconstituted Canaanite kingdoms and other neighboring nations, sometimes for several years, even decades. Whenever judges were in place, the affected Israelite tribes prevailed in their efforts of conquest and defense; however, success was limited by the life of the judge. Between the first and second episodes, Israel had three judges. This following episode illustrates the role of the judge in Israelite politics.

The story of Deborah and Barak versus Jabin, the Canaanite king of Hazor, illustrates the role of the judge in military operations.<sup>28</sup> Deborah was the fourth judge over Israel and Barak was a prominent Naphtali tribal leader. Before the start of this episode, around 1200 BCE, Jabin defeated the Israelites in battle and oppressed Israel for 20 years. Even after Joshua's campaign and follow-on operations led by previous judges,

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<sup>26</sup> Judges 1:1–20 records Judah's early battles.

<sup>27</sup> Judges 1 records the initial campaigns during the transition to the period of Judges.

<sup>28</sup> The author does not believe that this is the same Jabin, King of Hazor that Joshua defeated in the early stages of conquest during his northern operations. Instead, Jabin is a patriarchal name that represents the Canaanites reestablishing who they believed was the rightful heir of the throne in Hazor. The records of the Israelites' wars with King Jabin from both accounts are part of the source of the challenge to the historicity of these two accounts of Israelite settlement.

the northern Canaanites would have been superior in set battle based on their robust chariot forces and regular infantry forces, which included heavily armored pikemen.<sup>29</sup> The biblical record states that Jabin had 900 chariots.<sup>30</sup> Conversely, Deborah reports that the Israelites were not well equipped.<sup>31</sup>

This story demonstrates that the judges had the authority to instruct the mobilization of forces for war but somehow managed to gain only regional support. It also shows that the judges' role was to lead and direct operational and tactical activities of battle presumably by insight believed to be revealed to them by God. This role in warfighting overruled the convention for warfighters to be selected from the census of men ages 20-50. As judge, Deborah was obligated to serve in war just like her predecessors, reinforcing the role of judge as a director and leader of combat operations.<sup>32</sup>

According to the record of events, Deborah devised a three-phase plan for a battle to defeat King Jabin's Canaanite army, led by its commander, Sisera.<sup>33</sup> The first phase was a shaping operation consisting of contingents primarily from Naphtali and Zebulun on Mount Tabor. Mount Tabor provided a position of advantage with excellent visibility that was easily defended against chariot forces and from which an assault could be mounted in any direction, providing the ability to launch flanking attacks against opposition forces staged below. Other tribes provided additional contingents including people from Benjamin, rulers from Machir, and princes of Issachar.

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<sup>29</sup> Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible* (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 2006), 66.

<sup>30</sup> The number of Canaanite chariots is corroborated by comparing it with the number of chariots quoted by Pharaoh Thutmose III as making up the armored forces of his northern Canaanite foes during the Battle of Migiddo in 1468 BCE. 924 chariots were in the booty from the Migiddo battle when the Canaanite coalition was somewhat larger and more prosperous. Herzog and Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, 67.

<sup>31</sup> Judg. 5:8.

<sup>32</sup> Judg. 4:8–9 records a dialog between Barak and Deborah where Barak refuses to go to battle without Deborah. This dialog indicates Barak's skepticism of Deborah's willingness to go to war being a woman. Deborah's response which included that "the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman", later revealed to be a woman other than herself, indicated her intention to declare that there was a place for women in war.

<sup>33</sup> The idea of Deborah's developing a three-phased plan is derived from Herzog and Gichon, *Battles of the Bible*, 33.

The second phase was based on the assumption that Sisera would concentrate forces to contain Barak and his element at Mount Tabor to force Barak into battle on the open plain. This phase was also a shaping operation to use forces gathered in Ephraim in a feint or demonstration to draw Sisera from his position opposite Mount Tabor and reorient towards the swampy area of the Kishon River in the western part of Jezreel Valley.<sup>34</sup>

The third phase was the decisive operation consisting of a two-pronged attack from Mount Tabor in the north and hill country of Ephraim. The object of the attack was to destroy King Jabin's forces in the swampy terrain that would hinder infantry, horses, and chariots near the Kishon River. Forces from Mount Tabor first engaged Sisera's rear, then the troops from Ephraim joined attacking them from the front. The Song of Deborah and Barak emphasized the impact of the rain, indicating that Deborah waited for the rain to trigger the initiation of battle.<sup>35</sup> Even in modern times, mud-slides will cover roads in the Jezreel Valley during heavy winter rains.<sup>36</sup> The Battle of Deborah and Barak versus the king of Hazor is depicted in Figure 12.

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<sup>34</sup> The record does not state what the forces initially staged at Mount Ephraim did to draw away Sisera's forces however, it must have been something that posed a significant threat to Jabin or one of his vulnerable allies in order for Sisera to reorient away from Mount Tabor. It is not likely that the threat from Ephraim solely against Sisera's forces would have been sufficient to trigger such a massive reorientation. The forces from Ephraim did engage in battle in the south at the waters of Migiddo.

<sup>35</sup> In Judg. 5:21, Debora and Barak's song talks about river rising sweeping away chariots.

<sup>36</sup> William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 54.





**Figure 12. The Battle of Deborah and Barak Versus the King of Hazor**

*Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 55.*

Throughout the Song of Deborah and Barak, several noteworthy aspects of the Israelites' experience provide insight into the mobilization and organization of Israelite military forces, the relationship among the tribes as a confederation, and some of the unique capabilities that each of the tribe's militaries developed.<sup>37</sup> According to

<sup>37</sup> The Song of Deborah and Barak serves as an after action report from Deborah that provides insight into several dynamics of the episode.



Deborah's report, commanders volunteered to lead expeditions, which resembles a similar request for combat command leadership generations earlier.<sup>38</sup> Although the reasoning is unstated, the fact that some tribes chose not to assist indicates the beginning of a decline in the unity among the tribes, which will eventually cascade into civil war in later episodes. Also in the song, Deborah acclaims those she calls, "rulers of Israel who offered themselves willingly for the people" and scorns Reuben, Gad, Dan, and Asher for not offering assistance. As far as capabilities, the tribe of Dan is recorded to have some maritime capability by this point, which aligns with its territory allotment that included the port of Joppa (modern-day Tel Aviv).<sup>39</sup> These factors combined suggest that each tribe developed capabilities to suit their individual tribal interests.

This episode illustrates how under the decentralized government organization of the period (marked by the absence of a chief executive), the Israelites failed to adhere to the Ten Commandments and demonstrated an inability to retain previous military gains. The appointment of Deborah as judge re-established order to some degree and provided organized leadership over enough of the nation to enable the Israelites to overcome the king of Hazor. After Deborah and Barak's victory, the Israelites had a 40-year period of relative peace.

### **Episode 3: Gideon versus the Eastern Coalition**

The first two episodes illustrated the changes in government organization the expanded role of the judge, and the coalition-of-the-willing dynamic. This third episode reveals the increasing tension between the tribes, more of the coalition-of-the willing dynamic, and reinforcement of the theocratic notion of sovereignty among the Israelites. Together, these dynamics not only further illustrate the challenges associated with the decentralized government organization, but also emphasize that constitutional adherence was the primary means to mitigate the risk of strategic failure.

Following the period of peace after Deborah (around 1150 BCE) the Midianites – once defeated by the Israelites in the eastern outskirts of Canaan under the leadership of Moses – overtook and subdued the Israelites. For seven years, the Midianites forced the

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<sup>38</sup> Judges 1:12 records Caleb soliciting a volunteer to lead an attack on Kiriath-sepher.

<sup>39</sup> Judg. 5:17 and William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 47.

Israelites to seek refuge in caves and other strongholds in the mountains. During this period, the Midianites regularly plundered the Israelite's harvest and livestock. Also, the Amalekites – another previously defeated group – would join in and do the same.<sup>40</sup>

The Midianites and Amalekites formed an eastern coalition and assembled their forces in the Jezreel Valley, deep within Israelite territory. Initially, Gideon gathered forces from the Abiezrites Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali totaling in excess of 30,000 troops.<sup>41</sup> In response to direction from God, Gideon reduced the force by two-thirds, dismissing those who had reservations about battle, and further cut the force to 300 sending the rest back home. According to the writer, the purpose of the force reduction was to prevent the Israelites from thinking that they could prevail without God.

Gideon's 300, divided into three companies, conducted a night attack surprising the eastern coalition. The record states that the eastern coalition forces began to attack one another. A reasonable explanation to this is that the Israelites awoke them out of slumber into a panic in low visibility conditions and, in the uncertainty of the moment, the mixed coalition force experienced confusion and began attacking one another. While not the first of its kind for the Israelites, night attacks were still unconventional for the time during this period, where belligerents would more commonly declare war and invite opponents to a pitched battle to settle political disputes. Those Canaanites that were not caught up in the frenzy fled southwest and were pursued by the men of Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh. Eventually, Ephraim mobilized and joined the fight and seized watering places.<sup>42</sup>

Following Gideon's initial success, in anger, the leaders of Ephraim reprimanded Gideon for not calling them earlier to the fight. Gideon's response defused the tension by calling into discussion the accomplishments of the men of Ephraim, which were greater in comparison to those of Abiezer, Gideon's clan.<sup>43</sup> Military service and battlefield

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<sup>40</sup> Judg. 6:2–3.

<sup>41</sup> Abiezrites were descendants of Abiezer, the son of Gilead. Gilead was the son of Machir. Machir was the son of Manasseh. This mention of Abiezrites distinguishes the clan from the rest of Manasseh in the Cisjordan.

<sup>42</sup> Judges 7 records Gideon's battle with the Eastern coalition.

<sup>43</sup> In Judg. 6:15, Gideon, who was of the clan of Abiezer names his family as being the weakest of Manasseh. This probably contributed to Ephraim's response to Gideon's success initially considering it to be shameful that a weak clan demonstrated valor and military acumen close to Ephraim's territory.

accomplishments were a significant matter of honor, which in this case, ended up being another early indication of increased tension between tribes. In Deborah's episode, there was a refusal to assist, but this was a record of confrontation.

Gideon and the 300 continued to pursue the fleeing forces of the eastern coalition. While in pursuit, men of Succoth and Penuel in the land of Gilead between Gad and Machir, refused to provide sustenance for Gideon and the 300 men who pursued with him. Israelite tribal leaders from the two towns ridiculed Gideon in disbelief that Gideon would be able to prevail. This refusal to provide sustenance support was the second indicator of rising tension between tribes.<sup>44</sup> Gideon's victory marked the beginning of another interwar period of 40 years. While it is unclear if it was due to Israelite obedience, the record suggests that during this period, no known crisis called for the intervention of a judge, which means that relative peace was still possible without the presence of a leader with either national or regional influence. Gideon's campaign is illustrated in Figure 13.



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<sup>44</sup> Judges 8 records Gideon's pursuit of withdrawing Eastern coalition forces and the refusal of support from the leaders of the two Gilead towns.



**Figure 13. Gideon's and Abimelech's Campaigns**

*Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 57.*

#### **Episode 4: Abimelech's Illegitimate Rule and Civil War**

This episode (occurring several years after Gideon's death) records an attempt by an Israelite to usurp national authority and the first Israelite civil war. When compared to Joshua's campaign and the previous episodes during the period of Judges, this episode demonstrates how the absence of a chief executive was not the problem with Israelite strategy as much as the failure to adhere to the nation's constitution.

Gideon was recorded as having 70 sons from his many wives and one from a concubine who lived in Shechem whose name was Abimelech. Abimelech conspired with his mother's family to take the throne as king and later killed all 70 of his half-brothers, naming himself as king. With no king over Israel, Abimelech's plan was to rule Israel from a throne in Shechem, which was where his primary supporters were located. Abimelech reigned over Israel for three years before his throne was contested by way of an insurrection that was led by members from his support base that, unlike Abimelech, did not have any relation to Gideon. In the end, both the opposing men within the uprising and Abimelech were killed in the conflict and whatever influence Abimelech had over Israel was lost.<sup>45</sup>

This account reinforces the conclusion that the Israelite constitution declared God as ruler over Israel and the sole authority to appoint leaders of government. Not only did Abimelech disregard this declaration, but he violated several commandments by committing the unsanctioned killing of fellow Israelites and acts of deceit to establish himself as king to sit on an illegitimate throne. Abimelech's campaign is also depicted in Figure 13.

### **Episode 5: Jephthah versus Ammon and Civil War with Ephraim**

In the decades after Abimelech, there were two other judges followed by an 18-year period of Israelite oppression from the Philistines and Ammonites.<sup>46</sup> This episode further illustrates the failings of the Israelites' decentralized government and how the establishment of a judge in a regional crisis created internal strife sufficient to cause armed conflict between tribes, further illustrating the fracturing of the Israelite tribal confederation. When the Ammonites encamped in Gilead for war against Israel, the Israelites of the Transjordan looked to the men of Gilead to lead the opposition, likely due to geography.<sup>47</sup> The elders of Gilead sought out Jephthah, one of Gilead's sons because of his reputation for being a warrior. Jephthah's half-brothers, with the support of the elders, had previously expelled him from the land of Gilead because he was the son of a prostitute, but the Gilead elders eventually sought him out to be their leader to

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<sup>45</sup> Judges 9 record's Abimelech's rise to power and end to his limited reign.

<sup>46</sup> Judg. 10:7–8.

<sup>47</sup> Gilead was the mountainous region divided up by Reuben, Gad, and Machir. In most cases, the name Gileadite refers to any Israelite inhabitant that was from that region.



deliver them from the threat of the Ammonites.<sup>48</sup> The elders brought Jephthah back to Gilead before the appropriate authorities to appoint him as their leader, when at some point, he attained the legitimacy and support from God.<sup>49</sup>

The political intercourse between Jephthah and the king of Ammon started out with diplomatic talks where the king of Ammon demanded that the Israelites restore the land that they wrongfully appropriated from the people of Ammon and Moab centuries prior during the settlement of Israel in the Transjordan. In reply, Jephthah gave the Israelites' historical account of how they took possession of the land only after Ammonite and Moabite aggression. The diplomatic exchanges were to no avail and eventually escalated into an armed conflict where the Gileadites prevailed.<sup>50</sup>

After the Gileadite victory, leaders of the tribe of Ephraim accused Jephthah of committing an act of war against them, claiming that it was wrong for him to go to war with the Ammonites without them, seeing that Ephraim shared a border with the Ammonites. Jephthah explained first, that it was a local dispute and second, that he did, in fact, ask for help but did not receive it. Ephraim accused the men of Gilead of being fugitives of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. In response, the Gileadites attacked Ephraim and seized the fords of the Jordan River. This episode, in a similar fashion to Gideon's, provides another example of increased tension among the tribes. However this time, tensions escalated to armed conflict between tribes demonstrating a turn towards fracturing of the confederation. Following this conflict, Jephthah judged Israel for six years. Jephthah's campaign is illustrated in Figure 14.<sup>51</sup>

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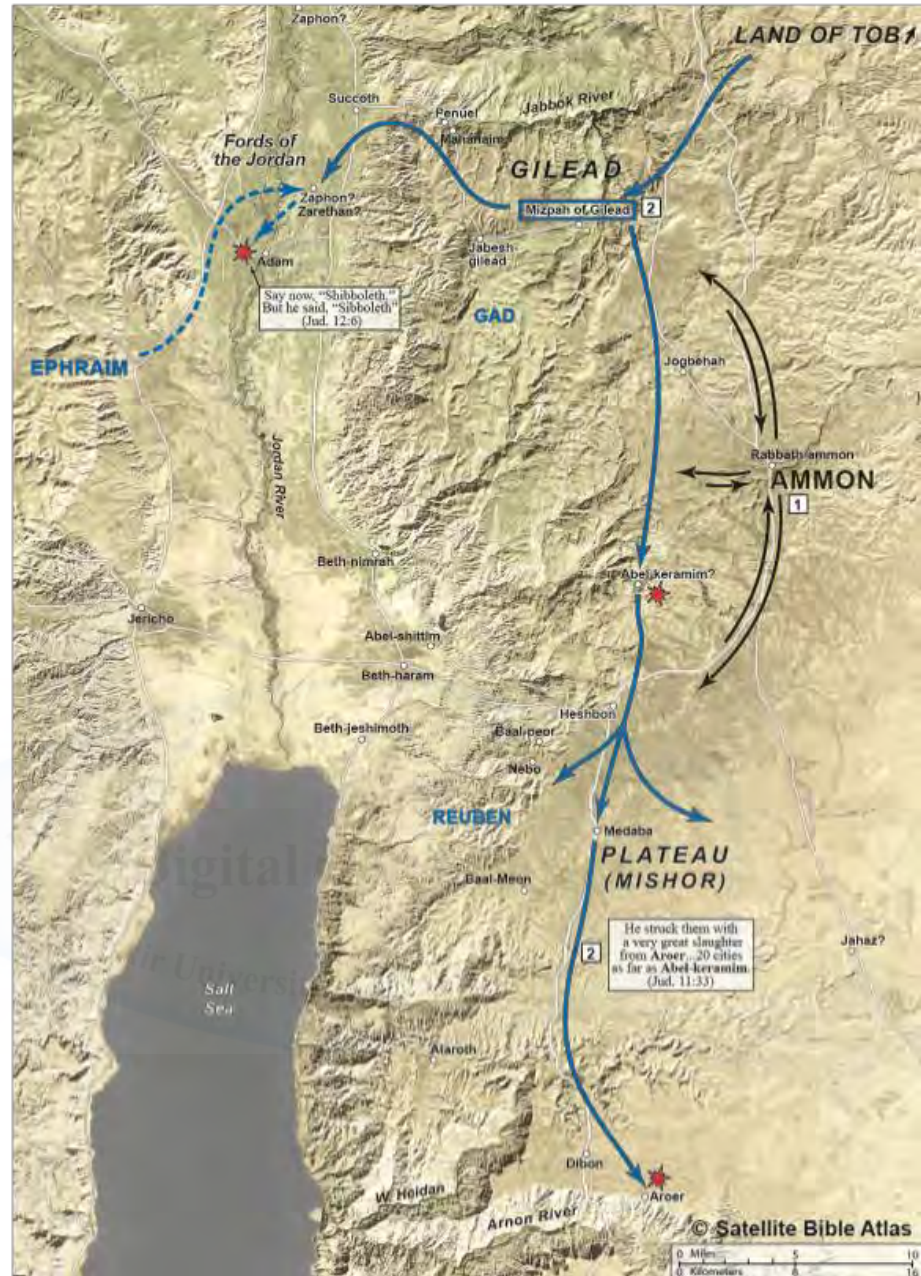
<sup>48</sup> Judges 11 records Jephthah's war with the Ammonites.

<sup>49</sup> Judg. 11:1 – 11, 29.

<sup>50</sup> The diplomatic exchange recorded in Judges 11:12–28 indicates lineage between Ammonites and the Amorites and/or Moabites of the preceding events that both Jephthah and the King of Ammon reference.

<sup>51</sup> Judges 12 records Jephthah's civil war with Ephraim.





**Figure 14. Jephthah's Campaign**

Source: Adapted from William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 59.

### Episode 6: Israel's Civil War with Benjamin

This episode (occurring likely several decades after the war with the Ammonites) illustrates the escalation of a domestic policing matter into a full-blown civil war, which was the apex of failure for the Israelite confederation. The conflict started after men from the city of Gibeah, of the tribe of Benjamin, committed crimes against a Levite who later

informed all of Israel of the transgressions of the men of Gibeah. In response to the Levite's accusations, the Israelites assembled the congregation to determine what to do about these alleged crimes. The congregation decided that the sentence for the men of Gibeah was to be capital punishment as retribution and demanded that the elders of Benjamin surrender the men. Benjamin's leaders refused and instead, they began to mobilize their army in anticipation of war against the rest of their nation.<sup>52</sup>

The congregation assembled, much like the council following the death of Joshua, to determine how they should proceed with the conflict. This is the first record of a national council since Joshua, which suggests a well-established norm for the Israelite tribes to focus political attention within their own regions. Israel's plan was to send its tribes to battle against Benjamin one at a time starting with Judah. Israel lost the first two battles but in a third battle, used deception tactics similar to those that Joshua used in the Israelites' second Battle of Ai and prevailed decisively against Benjamin. The record is unclear as to the involvement of each tribe in battle; it simply records Benjamin's opponent as Israel.<sup>53</sup>

After initial hostilities, the assembly vowed that no one would allow their daughters to marry a Benjamite as retribution but later regretted the vow, which had the potential to decimate the entire tribe. The record states that men of the assembly proclaimed, "There must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe not be blotted out from Israel."<sup>54</sup> This conclusion further reinforces the recognition of Israel as a nation. While the record lacks many details, it is clear that the survival of Benjamin as a tribe depended on its survivors from the war with the rest of Israel being able to marry Israelite women.

The congregation implemented two plans to save the Benjamites. The first was to wage war with one of its own people, one that was not represented in the assembly that made the vow. They identified that no one from the camp of Jabesh-gilead was

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<sup>52</sup> Judges 19 records the crimes of the men of Gibeah against the Levite and the reaction of the Israelite council of elders.

<sup>53</sup> Judges 20 records Israel's civil war with Benjamin.

<sup>54</sup> Judges 21:17.

represented at the assembly.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, they attacked men of Jabesh-gilead and seized the virgin women to give to the men of Benjamin as wives. Still having a deficiency in wives for the surviving Benjamites, they counseled the men of Benjamin to seize women that were participating in the annual feast at Shiloh. The seizing of the women ensured that their fathers would not be in violation of the vow to prohibit giving daughters to the men of Benjamin. The episode ended with the tribe of Benjamin reconciled to the nation.<sup>56</sup>

### **Final Disposition**

The period of Judges culminated with the life of Samuel, the anointed prophet and at the time, the principal authority figure in Israel, having influence that resembled that of Moses and Joshua.<sup>57</sup> While the Old Testament books do not record Samuel as directing the activities of all of the tribes, in the same way, they suggest that his reputation and influence extended well beyond those of the previous judges. During his lifetime, the nation of Israel was engaged in a prolonged conflict with the Philistines, a nation that many scholars believe arrived in Canaan from outside of the region during the period of Judges. The Philistine-Israelite War led to the congregation of Israel requesting that Samuel anoint a king over Israel to lead them in defense against the Philistines. After initial resistance, Samuel anointed the first legitimate king of Israel. This concludes the period of Judges.

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<sup>55</sup> This response means that the congregation that conducted the council meeting had clan or smaller regional representation and not just the senior members from each tribe.

<sup>56</sup> Judges. 21 records Israel's reconciliation with Benjamin.

<sup>57</sup> 1 Sam 7. Additionally, 1 Samuel 8 records that Samuel's two sons served as judges over Israel in his old age towards the end of his tenure but were crooked. The complaints to Samuel from the elders of Israel suggest that Samuel's sons judged on a more local level and lacked Samuel's broader influence.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Analysis**

Chapter 3 reviewed the invasion of Canaan by Joshua and six of the episodes of armed conflict during the period of Judges. The episodes were selected because they offer a sufficient variety of circumstances suitable for identifying how government organization and constitutional adherence influenced the validity of Israelite strategy. Joshua's campaign depicts Israel on an upward trajectory towards achieving all its strategic goals. The first three episodes during the period of Judges depict seasons of episodic success in the face of reoccurring opposition. The last three episodes illustrate the trend towards internal conflict and threat to national unity that led to the end of the period of Judges with the establishment of a kingdom fashioned after those of the Israelites' surrounding enemies. This chapter provides the analysis of the Israelites' government organization, constitutional adherence, and strategy under the leadership of Joshua and select leaders during the period of Judges.

Given the timeline of both periods, comparing the period of Joshua with that of the Judges is an unbalanced comparison. The period of Joshua lasted several decades, while the period of Judges spanned several centuries. From a temporal perspective, a more balanced comparison would be to compare Israel's government and strategy under the leadership of each leader, whether it was an Eved A-donai or judge. However, that approach would still not account for the time periods when there was no standing judge in the nation of Israel. This analysis attempts to balance comparison by of the periods with comparison of the leaders to account for the temporal disparity.

The completion of Joshua's tenure marks the last commitment to the two original Israelite objectives. During the period of Judges, there was an apparent abandonment of the objective to expel all Canaanites from the land. Additionally, during the period of Joshua, the tribal confederation trended towards unity. During the period of Judges, even with episodes of unified action under the leadership of a judge, the tribal confederation trended towards disunity, ultimately leading to episodes of civil war. Even during the times when the judges were most influential, their influence was mostly regional, and they were unable to harness the participation of all the tribes.



The analysis for the seven episodes is divided into three parts. The first part of the analysis is an examination of the Israelite government organization and the impact that it had on the design of strategy during the two periods. The second part of the analysis is an evaluation of Israelite strategy. The evaluation of each strategy draws from the Yarger Validity Test, examining the suitability, feasibility, and acceptability, as well as risks to each strategy. For each episode, the object is to determine if the strategy was valid. The third part of the analysis is to determine to what degree was adherence to the nation's constitution a factor in strategic validity.

### **How Government Organization Impacted Strategic Choices – Period of Joshua**

Chief Executive Influence on Strategy. The chief executive was an authority figure who could exercise complete executive authority over the entire nation of Israel. While there were incidents of rebellion and insurrection attempts, the chief executive was able to maintain order. This figure had a unifying influence that enabled the tribes to function as a single nation, especially when there were threats to vital interests. This government organization enabled consistency in policy objectives that would lead to an unchanging alignment of strategic political activities.

Relationship of Israelite Tribes. The confederation aspect of Israel's government was most apparent during this period. While each tribe had its own interests, shared interests among tribes prevailed. Much of the cohesion among the tribes can be attributed to shared experiences of conquest, especially for the tribal leaders. These were the leaders that served during the settling in the Transjordan and during the three major operations of Joshua's campaign. The fact that the record indicates tribal activities less frequently during this period suggests that the shared identity was prevalent at that time. This relationship among the tribes ensured a high degree of cooperation for pursuing the policy objectives of Israel's strategy.

### **How Government Organization Impacted Strategic Choices – Period of Judges**

Judge Influence on Strategy. The period of Judges marked the expansion of authority for special God appointed judges, but with their influence being regionally and usually during times of war. In several ways, these special judges exercised the similar authorities over the tribes as the chief executive, just over a smaller, more localized

region. There is no record of judges directing activities in the same way that the two chief executives did.

Relationship of Israelite Tribes. The relationship among the Israelite tribes was one of increased tension as their separate territorial allowances introduced variations in threats and divergence in interests based on geography. Each tribe experienced pressures caused by contesting nations, both from within and outside of their newly established borders. Additional pressures resulted from internal domestic issues. This arrangement impacted strategy by limiting the resources available and the degree of cooperation for the pursuit of political objectives. Episode 1 with the Israelites determining how to proceed with their conquest without Joshua's leadership and Episode 6 with the Israelites response to allegations against the men of Gibeah were illustrations of how they were still able to achieve unity on shared matters of national interests.

### **Summary of Government Organization**

The Israelite conquest, while incomplete, is recorded as being successful under the leadership of Joshua but not under the period of Judges. The episodic military victories and subsequent periods of peacetime during the period of Judges can be primarily attributed to effective leadership at the time and location of a crisis. The absence of a judge often led to periods where the Israelite tribes were overcome by previous inhabitants of Canaan or neighboring nations. Of note, Episode 1 of the period of Judges illustrates partial success without a seated judge and may be the best example to shed insight as to how God intended for the Israelite government to function. This outcome brings to question whether or not government organization or the presence of a judge were the most prominent factors to impact the strategy.

To evaluate the influence that government organization had on strategy, the analysis records government organization as centralized or decentralized. The existence of the chief executive is what made Israel's government centralized during the period of Joshua. After Joshua, the judges did not have the same influence and centralized control over the entire nation. Table 3 records the findings on government organization. Later, the analysis will account for centralized regional influence to determine if the effects of government organization can be observed more definitively through a regional examination.



**Table 3. Findings on Government Organization**

Form of Government (Centralized or Decentralized)	
Episode	Government Organization
Joshua's Campaign	Centralized
Episode 1 - Transitional Campaign - No Established Judge	Decentralized
Episode 2 - Unconventional Leader in Israel	Decentralized
Episode 3 - Gideon Versus the Eastern Coalition	Decentralized
Episode 4 - Abimelech's Illegitimate Rule and Civil War	Decentralized
Episode 5 - Jephtha's War Against Ammon	Decentralized
Episode 6 - Israel's Civil War with Benjamin - No Established Judge	Decentralized

*Source: Author's original work.*

### Strategy Analysis

Validity is the quality of being logically or factually sound; the state of being legally or officially binding or acceptable.<sup>1</sup> The strategy validity tests do not aim to determine a value judgment on the quality of strategy as if on a sliding scale from worst to best. This research accounts for the fact that there are countless factors other than strategy that weigh in on outcomes to include tactical execution, training, the genius of leaders, friction, and chance to name a handful. In this analysis, the outcome is not a contributing factor to the calculation of validity, but instead only the suitability, feasibility, and acceptability from the Yarger Validity Test. The additional evaluation of risk following the validity test does not affect the determination of validity but rather only serves to inform on the potential for failure.

#### Period of Joshua

**Suitability.** The first question in the validity test answers will attainment of the objective accomplish the desired end? In this case, the answer is, yes. Attainment of the objectives would accomplish the desired end. The desired end was that the Israelites be established in the land of Canaan with no Canaanites living among them. The military objective was to defeat all Canaanite resistance and expel all previous occupants, which directly impacted the strategic objective of settling the entire Israelite population.

**Feasibility.** The second question in the validity test answers can the action be achieved by the means available? In this case, the answer is, yes. The action could be achieved by the means available; however, being numerically and technologically under

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. "validity," accessed May 21, 2018, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/validity>.

matched, it would require measures to offset Canaanite military strengths. The Israelites had the totality of resources across their entire society to dedicate towards the achievement of their objectives.

Acceptability. The third question in the validity test answers will the consequences of cost be justified by the importance of the effect desired? In this case, the answer is, yes. The consequences of cost were justified by the importance of the effect desired. The objectives were unlimited, and the nature of the war they would wage was total in the form of both, unlimited objectives and unlimited resources.

Assumptions and Risk. A final consideration involves the assumptions and risks associated with the strategy. In this case, Joshua designed his entire strategy to include objectives, resources, and a strategic approach based on the confidence in a victory assured by God. The risk that Joshua undertook if his assumption was incorrect was complete, or at least partial mission failure.

While the outcome of Joshua's campaign does not impact the validity assessment, the incomplete conquest does bring to question whether or not the partial failure should be ascribed to Joshua or if it should be ascribed to the next generation of leaders that continued where Joshua left off. The position of this research is that the incomplete conquest at the end of Joshua's campaign should be attributed to the tribal leaders that followed him because his strategy was both valid and effective up to the end of his tenure.

### **Period of Judges Episode 1 – Transitional Campaign**

Suitability. In this episode, the strategy was suitable. The attainment of the tribal leaders' objectives would have accomplished their desired end. The objectives were for the tribes to seize allocated territory and expel the inhabitants, which was consistent with Israel's objectives under the leadership of Joshua. The attainment of those objectives would have accomplished the desired end of having settled each tribe in its assigned territory with no surviving influence of Canaanite culture.

Feasibility. This strategy was feasible. Israelite tribes could have achieved the action by the means available. Although none of the individual tribes had the full might of all Israelite resources available for their campaigns, they chose to develop coalitions, when required, as a means to harness sufficient combat power. The localized nature of

the campaigns made the accomplishment of the objectives feasible with the available resources. During these first transitional campaigns, no single Israelite tribe had to face the combined full might of the inhabitants from across all of Canaan.

Acceptability. This strategy was acceptable. The consequences of cost were justified by the importance of the effect desired. The objectives were still unlimited and the nature of the war they were waging remained total in the form of both, unlimited objectives and unrestricted resources committed.

Assumptions and Risk. Like with the case of Joshua, the Israelite tribal leaders continued with a strategy that was based on the confidence of victory assured by God. As in the case of Joshua, the risk that the Israelite tribes undertook if their assumption was incorrect was complete or partial mission failure as well. The result of this episode is that the Israelite tribes would settle in their allocated territories but not displace all of the previous inhabitants. In some cases, they forced inhabitants into subjugation; in others, the inhabitants were effective in resisting and retained territory.

This was a valid strategy that still produced undesired results. There was a continuation of assimilation of Canaanite culture into that of the Israelites that should have been odious to the Israelites, seeing that the original objective was complete expulsion. Not only did they fail to expel the Canaanites, but they began taking up their ways, culturally, which included acts of idolatry.

### **Period of Judges Episode 2 – Unconventional Leader in Israel**

Suitability. This strategy was suitable. Attainment of Deborah and Barak's objective would have accomplished the desired end. The object was to destroy King Jabin's fielded forces rendering him unable to continue his rule and oppress the Israelite tribes. Specific territorial objectives are not in the record, and there is no indication of a renewed objective of expelling all Canaanites from the territory. It appears that by this point, expelling all Canaanites officially ceased to be an Israelite objective.

Feasibility. This strategy was feasible. The action was achievable by the means available. While the successful outcome would appear to support this assessment of feasibility, it is important first to highlight that the Israelites were still militarily at a disadvantage, in terms of the number of troops, equipment, and tactical skill. This does not mean, however, that they were at a total net disadvantage. Deborah's plan enabled

the Israelites to choose the time and location for battle, drawing from inherent advantages of the defense, making this strategy feasible.

Acceptability. Acceptability of this strategy is inconclusive. Whether or not the importance of the effect desired justified the consequences of cost is uncertain based on the refusal of so many Israelite tribes to participate and support the war effort. Before their revolt, the Israelites had been subjugated by the Canaanite, who had reconstituted their forces, for 20 years. For the Israelites to continue with the status quo for a more extended period was an option that is not discussed in the narrative. The fact that some tribes chose to participate while others did not indicates that there was a lack of consensus on acceptability among the Israelite tribes. While it is not possible to determine that the Israelites' costs were acceptable without the use of the outcome, it is reasonable to conclude that it was acceptable to at least some of the tribes, especially those closest to the center of the Canaanite kingdom in Hazor.

Assumptions and Risk. Deborah and Barak assumed the same risks as Joshua and the first tribal leaders that continued conquest after him, which was mission failure if her assumption that God would enable them to prevail was wrong. Barak's refusal to go into battle without his judge is an indicator that the presence, support, and guidance of the judge was sufficient risk mitigation to proceed with the course of action. Despite lacking a conclusive result for acceptability, this too was a valid strategy.

### **Period of Judges Episode 3 – Gideon versus the Eastern Coalition**

Suitability. This strategy was suitable. Attainment of Gideon's objective would have accomplished the desired end. The object was to destroy the Midianite, and Amalekite fielded forces rendering them unable to continue to oppress and plunder of the Israelite tribes. This episode followed a period where the Israelites were driven out of lands that they had previously seized. The Israelites' failure to retain this territory indicated the determination and military superiority of the neighboring kingdoms. As in the previous episode with Deborah, specific territorial objectives are absent from the record, and there is no indication of an objective requiring the complete displacement of all Midianites and Amalekites. However, seizure of previous Israelite-occupied land was likely an objective.

Feasibility. This strategy was not feasible. While the actions turned out to be successful, it was not reasonable to conclude that the objectives could be achieved by the means available based solely on the final strategic design. While not Gideon's initial design, the forces he ended up using would require an outside intervention to destroy the Midianite and Amalekite armies. His force was a hand-selected, 300-man special operations unit that was up against a much greater-sized force of conventional soldiers. In execution, the incorporation of nighttime and psychological operations into Gideon's scheme provided some asymmetric advantage, but it was not until the self-destructive acts of mass fratricide that occurred in the Midianite camp that the tide turned fully to Gideon's favor. The writer attributes Gideon's success to divine intervention.

Acceptability. Acceptability of this strategy is inconclusive. Whether or not the importance of the effect desired justified the consequences of cost is uncertain. Before Gideon's revolt, the Israelites had once again fallen under the rule of another nation, this time, the Midianites for seven years. Similar to Deborah and Barak's case, the fact that some tribes chose to contribute to the war effort while others refused assistance indicates a divergence in the opinion of acceptability among the Israelite tribes. While it is not possible to determine that the Israelites' costs were acceptable without the use of the outcome, it is reasonable to conclude that the costs were acceptable to some of the tribes, especially those farthest away from the Midianite center of power in Gilead.

Assumptions and Risk. Gideon assumed the same risks as the leaders in the other episodes. He initiated the Israelites' revolt on the basis of confidence in victory assured by God. The refusal of the leaders of Succoth and Peniel to assist Gideon indicates that among the Israelites closest to the Midianite power center, there was less acceptance, likely due to fear of Midianite backlash. Gideon's strategy was invalid because it failed the feasibility requirement of the validity test. However, the theocratic nature of Israelite politics was enough to inspire Gideon to proceed. Of note, nothing about the strategy conflicted with any Israelite constitutional statutes, and Gideon's instruction from God to proceed was sufficient to rally sufficient support to back the otherwise invalid strategy.

#### **Period of Judges Episode 4 – Abimelech's Illegitimate Rule and Civil War**

Suitability. This strategy was suitable. It is difficult to assess the validity of this strategy because the record does not provide sufficient detail to determine Abimelech's

strategic design. His desired end state was to be king, which did not align with or represent Israel's interests. Abimelech's motivation was strictly to attain power and influence. The object of his war aim was to defeat a local insurrection effort. Attainment of this objective would have accomplished the desired end, which was to retain the power that he had usurped previously. From what is available in the record, mobilizing a defensive force to defeat opposing field forces was a suitable approach.

Feasibility. This strategy was not feasible. While it may be reasonable to conclude that Abimelech's approach could be achieved by the means available, there was no indication that battlefield success would have any lasting result considering the source of the revolting force. There is nothing in the record that indicates that Abimelech had the influence to harness additional personnel resources or support from the rest of the Israelite tribes. If his objective was to defeat the opposing forces and retain his position as king, this approach was not feasible because it never addressed the broader issue of declining favor from the very people that helped him to usurp power in the first place.

Acceptability. This strategy was not acceptable. For Abimelech, the consequences of cost were justified by the importance of the desired effect desired. His objective was limited in that he did not need to destroy the opposing forces, only their will to continue to revolt. If the ultimate aim was to retain power, Abimelech would have done so at any cost and his followers would have committed to that cause for whatever their incentive was for supporting him in the first place. It appears that in this case, the end state was questionable but given it, Abimelech's approach was apparently acceptable to him and the men of his army. Ultimately, what makes this strategy unacceptable is that the desired end was unjust, built on a foundation of violations of the Israelite constitution.

Assumptions and Risk. Besides the risk of failure, Abimelech assumed the risk of a short-lived success that would demand a continued and more robust and potentially unsustainable policing effort to maintain his political influence. To mitigate this risk, he would need to either implement measures to reduce the likelihood of future revolt or the severity of the impact of a follow-on attempt. His focus on destroying the fielded forces committed to revolt would have provided only temporary measures to address these risks. Based on failures in feasibility and acceptability, Abimelech's strategy was invalid.



## **Period of Judges Episode 5 – Jephthah's War with Ammon and Civil War with Ephraim**

This episode has two related but separate dynamics involving Jephthah that have the potential for assessment: the war with Ammon and the civil war against Ephraim. While the war against Ammon only involved a portion of the nation, it qualifies as an Israelite international conflict against an opposing nation and is thereby relevant for analysis. Concerning Jephthah's civil war with Ephraim, the record has very little detail of this account. In this civil war, it is difficult to determine precisely which force is the aggressor. According to the writer, Ephraim was first to mobilize an army against the Israelite tribes in Gilead and was also first to provoke a conflict by declaring the men of Gilead fugitives of Ephraim. On the other hand, the men of Gilead were first to attack. The most valuable strategy to assess would be Jephthah's war with Ammon there is insufficient evidence to determine the validity of the strategy against Ephraim. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the strategy for Jephthah's war with Ammon only.

Suitability. Jephthah's strategy against the Ammonites was suitable. While the record does not provide much detail on Jephthah's strategic design, some clues illuminate certain useful elements. The desired end state of the first war against Ammon was to retain the land of Gilead in the Transjordan. The objective was to defeat Ammonite fielded forces in battle. The objective was limited because they were not trying to seize additional territory or property from Ammon, nor were they trying to annihilate the Ammonites. Attainment of this objective would have accomplished the desired end, which was to retain territory and maintain the status quo.

Feasibility. This strategy was feasible. It was reasonable to conclude that Jephthah's action could be achieved by the means available. The approach, which consisted of a unilateral attack from the men of Gilead, would have been stronger had they had the support they allegedly requested from Ephraim. Nevertheless, the record has no evidence to refute that Jephthah's forces were capable of achieving his objective.

Acceptability. This strategy was acceptable. For Jephthah, the consequences of cost were justified based on the importance of the desired effects. His objective was limited in that he did not need to destroy the opposing forces, only their will to attempt to reconquer lost territory. The fact that Jephthah was willing to continue with his

operation, despite not receiving assistance from the leaders of Ephraim, suggests that the consequences of cost were worth the desired effect.

Assumptions and Risk. The most significant risk to Jephthah was like the others, mission failure. For Jephthah, a battlefield loss would have resulted in a loss of territory for the people of Gilead, which would have hurt the rest of the nation of Israel. Western tribes that enjoyed a buffer between them and the nearest hostile forces would have to cope with new neighboring rivals or mobilize a campaign to re-seize the territory lost by the men of Gilead. Jephthah's strategy was valid.

### **Period of Judges Episode 6 – Israel's Civil War with Benjamin**

Suitability. The Israelites' strategy was suitable. In this episode, despite it being a civil war, Ephraim's position is clearly in direct opposition to that of the nation of Israel. The desired end state was to attack the city of Gibeah as retribution for the offenses of its leaders. The objective was to destroy an unspecified number of the city of Gibeah's men. The objective was unlimited because there was nothing short of punishment that would satisfy the Israelites. Attainment of this objective would have accomplished the desired end, which was to restore national domestic honor.

Feasibility. This strategy was feasible. It was reasonable to conclude that the Israelites' action could be achieved by the means available. Despite the record reflecting that Benjamin had a very robust military force, initially, the Israelite congregation planned on armed conflict with the men of Gibeah, not the entire tribe of Benjamin. It was not until the entire tribe mobilized that the full extent of the nation's opposition would be revealed.

Acceptability. This strategy was acceptable. To the nation of Israel, the consequences of cost were justified by the importance of the desired effect desired. This was a matter of national honor and justice among the tribes. It is hard to understand for some, but to let this offense go unanswered was not an option for the nation. It would have been a critical event in the moral decline of the nation.

Assumptions and Risk. The most significant risk to Israel was nearly realized, which was the devastation and ultimately, annihilation, of one of its tribes, which would have a destructive impact to the fabric that connected the tribes. God directed the decision for the majority of the nation to battle with the tribe of Benjamin. Based on the

validity test, this was a valid strategy. However, the pledge to deny Israelite wives to the remaining Benjamites was an additional unsanctioned punishment that was ruinous to the entire national structure. While not a part of the military strategy analysis, this decision was not suitable, feasible, or acceptable, demonstrating that the same governments can make valid and invalid choices.

### Summary of Strategy Analysis

The results from the application of the Yarger Validity Test are recorded as either valid or invalid and scored as yes or no. Table 4 is a record of the findings. It reflects that validity does not trend in one single direction across the entirety of periods examined, but instead has mostly valid strategies with only a couple episodes of invalid strategy. Nevertheless, up to this point, 100 percent of the centralized governments produced valid strategy compared to 66 percent of the decentralized governments, which would support the statement that centralized governments have a higher probability of producing valid strategy than decentralized governments. However, the sample size of one centralized government versus six decentralized governments prevents this from being conclusive evidence at this point without and requires a more in-depth examination.

**Table 4. Findings on Government Organization and Validity of Strategy**

Form of Government and Strategy (Validity = Yes or No)		
Episode	Government Organization	Validity of Strategy
Joshua's Campaign	Centralized	Yes
Episode 1 - Transitional Campaign - No Established Judge	Decentralized	Yes
Episode 2 - Unconventional Leader in Israel	Decentralized	Yes
Episode 3 - Gideon Versus the Eastern Coalition	Decentralized	No
Episode 4 - Abimelech's Illegitimate Rule and Civil War	Decentralized	No
Episode 5 - Jephtha's War Against Ammon	Decentralized	Yes
Episode 6 - Israel's Civil War with Benjamin - No Established Judge	Decentralized	Yes

*Source: Author's original work.*

### The Missing Link That Changed the Course of Israelite Conquest?

Founding Principles as an Intervening Variable. Throughout the period of Judges, the Israelite tribal leaders did not consistently adhere to the Ten Commandments. These commandments established the foundation of Israelite law, which among many things, forbade idol worship. Of all of the commandments, idolatry was the one most frequently violated. Every time that the Israelites departed from this constitutional commandment, there were negative consequences. In the most severe of those occurrences, the result

was social disorder that eventually led to political disorder, which necessitated the raising up of judges. The judge would achieve military victory, which would renew the Israelites' faith in their God. This restored faith would re-energize obedience to God re-establishing social order. Of note, in his final address to the Israelite leaders, Joshua renewed the covenant with the tribal elders to follow traditional Israelite theocratic statutes.<sup>2</sup>

Table 5 depicts the findings after applying adherence to the constitution as an additional variable. The table does not account for the periods between the tenure of each judge where the Israelites reverted to idolatrous practices. However, it is reasonable to conclude that during those times, there was either no strategy or an ineffective strategy among the Israelite leaders to pursue national interests. These findings demonstrate that as a whole, the centralized government from the period of Joshua was more effective at developing valid strategy than the decentralized one of the period of Judges despite the fact that individually, several judges demonstrated the ability to create valid strategy.

**Table 5. Findings on Government Organization, Adherence to Constitution, and Validity of Strategy**

Summary of Findings - Government, Constitution, & Strategy			
Episode	Government Organization	Adherence to Constitution	Validity of Strategy
Joshua's Campaign	Centralized	Yes	Yes
Episode 1 - Transitional Campaign - No Established Judge	Decentralized	Yes	Yes
Episode 2 - Unconventional Leader in Israel	Decentralized	Yes	Yes
Episode 3 - Gideon Versus the Eastern Coalition	Decentralized	Yes	No
Episode 4 - Abimelech's Illegitimate Rule and Civil War	Decentralized	No	No
Episode 5 - Jephtha's War Against Ammon	Decentralized	Yes	Yes
Episode 6 - Israel's Civil War with Benjamin - No Established Judge	Decentralized	Yes	Yes

*Source: Author's original work.*

As previously mentioned following the strategy validity results captured in Table 4, the small sample sizes do not produce the best evidence from which to make conclusions. However, with a minor modification to a criterion for qualifying as a centralized government, the analysis becomes more useful. Judges exercise centralized authority within their regions of influence, so we can carefully treat those cases as representing centralized government. With this approach, only two episodes did not

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<sup>2</sup> Josh. 23–24:25.

involve established judges. Therefore five of the seven total episodes reflected a form of centralized government. Of the governments that produced invalid strategy, both were centralized. Table 6 depicts the adjustment to government type.

**Table 6. Findings on Government Organization (Modified for Regional Influence), Adherence to Constitution, and Validity of Strategy**

Summary of Findings - Government, Constitution, & Strategy (Adjusted for Judge Regional Influence)			
Episode	Government Organization	Adherence to Constitution	Validity of Strategy
Joshua's Campaign	Centralized	Yes	Yes
Episode 1 - Transitional Campaign - No Established Judge	Decentralized	Yes	Yes
Episode 2 - Unconventional Leader in Israel	Centralized	Yes	Yes
Episode 3 - Gideon Versus the Eastern Coalition	Centralized	Yes	No
Episode 4 - Abimelech's Illegitimate Rule and Civil War	Centralized	No	No
Episode 5 - Jephtha's War Against Ammon	Centralized	Yes	Yes
Episode 6 - Israel's Civil War with Benjamin - No Established Judge	Decentralized	Yes	Yes

*Source: Author's original work.*

### Findings

In summary, the above analysis resulted in three findings. First, centralized governments tend to produce valid strategies. Second, decentralized governments also tend to produce valid strategies, but to a lesser degree. Finally, the degree of governmental centralization tends to be a less important variable in strategic validity than the influence of constitutional adherence.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

The expectation going into this research was to find that government organization had a direct and prominent impact on the Israelites' national security strategy during the Israelites' conquest of Canaan. Instead, the findings were that while government organization had an impact on the Israelites' strategy, adherence to the nation's constitution had a more profound impact. This applies to both the periods of Joshua and Judges.

#### **Resolution on Contest of Historicity**

Until archaeologists find undisputable evidence supporting the biblical account of Israel's conquest of Canaan, the founding of the nation of Israel and its settlement in the Near East will remain contested. Regardless of its historical accuracy, the Bible's account of Israelite settlement in Canaan tells us a great deal about how its writers viewed the relationship between government, constitutional adherence, and strategy. The message they communicate is that adherence to its constitution was the most significant factor to shape national strategy. Moreover, because theology was inseparable from constitutional decree, to the writers of the Bible, there was no separation between theology and governance.

#### **Summary of Findings**

In summary, the above analysis resulted in three findings. First, centralized governments tend to produce valid strategies. Second, decentralized governments also tend to produce valid strategies, but to a lesser degree. Finally, the degree of governmental centralization tends to be a less important variable in strategic validity than the influence of constitutional adherence.

The absence of a chief executive over the nation created a distinct difference in the government organization for the period of Judges. A comparison of periods indicated that the centralized government from the period of Joshua was more effective at developing valid strategy than the decentralized government of the period of Judges. However, a comparison of the leaders of each episode individually revealed that several of the judges were effective at developing valid strategy despite the challenges to harnessing national support. Of the two episodes of Judges where leaders developed invalid strategy, only Abimelech, who was never a legitimate authority figure in the first



place, actually designed an invalid strategy from the start. Gideon's invalid strategy was attributed to direction from God for Gideon to follow.

If it is true that centralized governments are more likely to produce valid strategy, it is likely due to having fewer stakeholders whereas, in a more decentralized government, organizational processes and governmental politics provides more potential points of deviation.<sup>1</sup> With scalable measuring criteria, as opposed to just a binary measurement, it would be useful to determine if increases in degrees of centralization and constitutional adherence both increase the probability of strategy being valid in any predictable way.

While adherence to the constitution cannot make an otherwise invalid strategy valid, bold acts displaying national resolve that adhere to the constitution can still garner popular support, especially for cases that concern vital interests. In these cases, the Israelites demonstrated a willingness to pay extraordinarily high costs and assumed the risk of an unbalanced strategy, despite a low probability of success.

The validity of strategy does not translate directly to effectiveness. The episode of transition from Joshua's leadership revealed partial failures, as did the episode of Israel's civil war with Ephraim. Inversely, invalid strategy does not necessarily guarantee a path to failure, which was illustrated in Abimelech's initial seizure of power, which went uncontested for three years.

### **Implications**

The findings support the notion that there is an unchanging nature of war and an ever-changing character of war. This case illustrates elements such as violence, uncertainty, and friction, which military professionals and scholars unanimously attributed to being part of the fundamental nature of war. These attributes are recognizable in virtually every record of armed conflict throughout history. Accordingly, lessons can be learned about how the writers of the Joshua and Judges believed that

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelickow propose that decisions can be explained as outputs of rational actors, political processes, or governmental politics. Their thesis implies that decisions are influenced by a variety of actors, which could suggest that decreasing the number of actors that weigh in on decisions will decrease potential negative influences. Graham Allison and Philip Zelickow, *Essence of Decision* (New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, 1999).

leaders could prevail through these challenges. It is reasonable to conclude that the writers of these narratives intended to suggest three things regarding leadership during crises. The first, being in right standing with God was a strategic necessity. Second, given right standing with God, faith in His ability and willingness to ensure victory was necessary to realize success. Third, extraordinary faith is a powerful resource that can foster unity and build morale. There is something noteworthy about populations rallying behind their leaders even when on the verge of extremely high costs or with low probability of success. Based on the episodes of this research, achieving this support will be much easier when the crisis concerns existential threats as opposed to those matters that do not involve this degree of threat or some other vital interests. A lack of popular support can manifest itself as anything from resource denial as in the case with Gideon and the leaders from the Israelite cities of Succoth and Peniel, to insurrections and civil war as in the examples of Abimelech, Jephthah, and the Benjamites. National leaders would be wise to understand the potential for unity, cost acceptance, and risk tolerance that exists in a population supported the war effort.

Nations differ in how theology and religion as cultural institutions impact their societies and political action. The findings from this research indicate that governments will need to develop and maintain some unifying body of foundational principles for connecting with its populations in order to develop a resilient will capable of persevering through the challenges of armed conflict. According to U.S. military doctrine, defeat occurs when an enemy force has temporarily or permanently loses the physical means or will to fight. The defeated force's commander is unable or unwilling to pursue his adopted course of action, thereby yielding to the friendly commander's will and can no longer interfere to a significant degree with the actions of friendly forces.<sup>2</sup> Governments must pay attention to both the physical means and the will of its people, not just its armed forces, to fight.

A final implication is that validity testing may confirm a reasonable and balanced approach to achieving a political objective, but it does not measure the strength of the

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<sup>2</sup> Headquarters Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 1-02 *Terms and Military Symbols*. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 16, 2016), 1-26.

strategy to indicate a likelihood of success. Nevertheless, it is the beginning of ensuring that government officials and civil servants are being responsible stewards of the resources entrusted to their care. A strategy that is invalid depends on the enemy's strategy failing as opposed to it defeating the enemy.

### **Research Shortfalls**

The most significant shortcoming of this thesis is the small sample size of a single case of centralized government. Additionally, the level of detail varies from each account. Besides the only source for narrative being the Bible, this research was also limited by the selection of episodes examined. To get more data points, the next logical step would be to use the same methodology to examine the relationship between government organization and strategy using the remaining episodes from the period. After examining the remaining Israelite cases, the next step would be to test the findings from the Canaanite perspective.

After a complete analysis of Israelite and Canaanite polities and strategy, this methodology could be extended to other ancient Near East polities and then to other societies from different regions and time periods. It would be interesting to determine if an examination of a broad variety of polities will reveal that the influence that government organization has on strategy varies based on the degree of adherence to its constitution.

Ancient Near East politics is an important area of study for political scientists, government officials, and military practitioners to better understand strategy. One of the oldest records of law known to the modern world was the Ten Commandments recovered from Near East archaeological excavations. The role that it played in its society is important to understand how current constitutions can influence future national strategies and political outcomes.

## Glossary

**alliance.** The relationship that results from a formal agreement between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives that further the common interests of the members.<sup>1</sup>

**Bronze Age.** The period of human culture characterized by the use of bronze that began between 4000 and 3000 B.C. and ended with the advent of the Iron Age.<sup>2</sup>

**campaign.** A series of related major operations aimed at achieving strategic and operational objectives within a given time and space. See also campaign plan.<sup>3</sup>

**coalition.** An arrangement between two or more nations for common action. See also alliance; multinational.<sup>4</sup>

**confederation.** A group of independent states or organizations working together for common aims. A confederation is a less centralized form of government than a federation.<sup>5</sup>

**constitution.** The laws under which a country is ruled, which give the people rights and responsibilities, and which give the government powers and duties.”<sup>6</sup>

**demonstration.** In military deception, a show of force in an area where a decision is not sought that is made to deceive an adversary. It is similar to a feint but no actual contact with the adversary is intended.<sup>7</sup>

**feint.** In military deception, an offensive action involving contact with the adversary conducted for the purpose of deceiving the adversary as to the location and/or time of the actual main offensive action.<sup>8</sup>

**Iron Age.** The period of human culture characterized by the smelting of iron and its use in industry beginning somewhat before 1000 B.C. in western Asia and Egypt.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010, as amended through 15 February 2016), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. “Bronze Age.”

<sup>3</sup> JCS, JP 1-02, 18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>5</sup> Dictionary of Politics and Government, 3rd ed., s.v. “constitution,” accessed on May 23, 2018, <http://cnqzu.com/library/To%20Organize/Books/Colin%20-%20Dictionary%20Of%20Politics%20And%20Government.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, s.v. “constitution.”

<sup>7</sup> JCS, JP 1-02, 64.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. “Iron Age.”

**joint doctrine.** Fundamental principles that guide the employment of United States military forces in coordinated action toward a common objective and may include terms, tactics, techniques, and procedures. See also Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff manual; doctrine; joint publication; joint test publication; multinational doctrine.<sup>10</sup>

**kingdom.** A politically organized community or major territorial unit having a monarchical form of government headed by a king or queen.<sup>11</sup>

**line of effort.** In the context of joint operation planning, using the purpose (cause and effect) to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions by linking multiple tasks and missions. Also called LOE.<sup>12</sup>

**line of operation.** A line that defines the interior or exterior orientation of the force in relation to the enemy or that connects actions on nodes and/or decisive points related in time and space to an objective(s). Also called LOO.<sup>13</sup>

**republic.** A state that is not a monarchy, but which is governed by elected representatives headed by a President.<sup>14</sup>



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<sup>10</sup> JCS, JP 1-02, 123.

<sup>11</sup> Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. “kingdom.”

<sup>12</sup> JCS, JP 1-02, 142.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., s.v. “republic.”

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