

THE OPERATIONAL ART OF ANCIENT ISRAEL: A CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS OF
ISRAEL'S CONQUEST OF CANAAN IN THE 13TH CENTURY BCE

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Art of War Scholars

by

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ABSTRACT

THE OPERATIONAL ART OF ANCIENT ISRAEL: A CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS OF ISRAEL'S CONQUEST OF CANAAN IN THE 13TH CENTURY BCE, by Major George R. Gordy IV, 140 pages.

Israel's conquest of Canaan provides an example of how smaller military forces can overcome numerical and technological disadvantages in conventional warfare through the application of operational art. This military conquest resembles contemporary warfare in broad concepts such as offensive and defensive operations, multi-national alliance and coalition warfare, and civilian-military relations.

Israel's success depended on multiple factors, the most significant being the generalship of its national leader and military commander, Joshua. Campaign analysis through the lens of operational design elements revealed that Joshua's initial operations were linked in time, space, and purpose to set the Israelites in a position of advantage. Joshua created periods of local superiority by massing his forces and isolating elements of the Canaanite armies along single lines of operation. Using lines of effort, Joshua linked subsequent operations to his campaign by purpose only, which enabled him to exercise operational patience as he waited for the optimal conditions for battle. Periodic strategic and operational pauses ensured sufficient operational reach, and popular support enabled him to conduct a patient war effort. This reveals an ancient Israeli way of war that has implications to current U.S. military employment of operational art, which in some ways, challenges conventional wisdom.

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First, I'd like to acknowledge that this research project is my best attempt to conduct analysis of an ancient warfare campaign with implications that are relevant to contemporary war practitioners. Influenced by my professional experience as an infantry and light armored reconnaissance officer in the United States Marine Corps with 21 years of active military service, I wanted to add to the body of knowledge within my profession by providing lessons from what I believed to be an understudied historical period. While military operational art is at the core of this research, this study involved several subject areas that are not within my field of expertise. I had to rely on the research of several experts in the fields of ancient Near East culture, geography, and archaeology, and in doing so, I made my best attempt to examine opposing arguments equally. The findings are a result of a thorough examination of a variety of references and the major issues of debate.

Second, I'd like to acknowledge all of the scholars that inspired or contributed to this work, including my peers who provided me candid feedback, the many military historians who set the example through their examples of scholarship, and Dr. Paul Write and William Schlegel whose Bible atlases were of tremendous value. I'd also like to acknowledge the many scholars and archaeologists—past and present—who continue to dig up answers piece by piece. Several of them are represented in this research, but many are not, yet my work was still built on a foundation of much of their labors.

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ACRONYMS

BCE	Before the Common Era
LOC	Line of Communication
LOE	Line of Effort
LOO	Line of Operation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Israel's conquest of Canaan is a story of military victory against remarkable odds. It provides an example of how smaller military forces can overcome numerical and technological disadvantages in conventional warfare through the application of operational art. The central figure in this conquest was Israel's leader, Joshua, who served as both national leader and commander of the army. Israel's success depended on several factors with the most significant being Joshua's generalship, which was a balance of vision, character, and competence as a practitioner of operational art. Israel's conquest of Canaan provides an example of unwavering military strategy executed with sound tactics. However, more than just an expert strategist and tactician, Joshua demonstrated exceptional military acumen through his application of operational art, which provides the critical link between tactics and strategy.

Even with its antiquity, this military conquest resembles contemporary warfare in broad concepts such as offensive and defensive operations, multi-national alliance and coalition warfare, and civilian-military relations. Several elements characterize the fundamental ways that forces waged war that were unique to this period and region, which provide context to understand and analyze the operational art of Joshua's campaign. When examined in context, analysis of this campaign reveals many of the timeless attributes of war such as violence, chaos, uncertainty, fog of war and friction, thereby further demonstrating the unchanging nature of war.

In Israel's conquest of Canaan, the Israelites waged a total war of annihilation against the Canaanites.¹ In most cases throughout history, nations with superior numbers and technology invade inferior nations, thereby resulting in conquest. What makes this episode unusual is that the Israelites were numerically and technologically inferior to their Canaanite rivals, yet overcame this mismatch and prevailed in achieving much, although not all, of their strategic objective. This story provides several lessons on how a military leader can use operational art to overcome numerical and technological mismatch given the necessary time and support of the population.

In the last century, scholars have often paid particular attention to the development of operational art, which is distinguishable from strategy and tactics. Consider the following U.S. joint military doctrinal descriptions of strategy, tactics, and operational art, which distinguish the different levels of warfare.

In the context of national interests, strategy develops an idea or set of ideas of the ways to employ the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve national, multinational, and theater objectives. Military strategy, derived from national policy and strategy and informed by doctrine, provides a framework for conducting operations.

Tactics is the employment, ordered arrangement, and directed actions of forces in relation to each other. Joint doctrine focuses this term on planning and executing battles, engagements, and activities at the tactical level to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces (TFs). An engagement can include a wide variety of noncombat tasks and activities and combat between opposing forces normally in a short-duration action. A battle consists of a set of related engagements. Battles typically last longer than engagements, involve larger forces, and have a greater potential to affect the course of a campaign.

¹ For this discussion, throughout all five chapters, Israelite refers to the people of Israel (prior to it becoming a state) as an ethnic identifier or as an adjective modifier meaning of or pertaining to the people of Israel. The same applies to the use of the term Canaanite.

The operational level of warfare links the tactical employment of forces to national strategic objectives. The focus at this level is on the planning and execution of operations using operational art: the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge and experience—to plan and execute (when required) strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military capabilities by integrating ends, ways, and available means. JFCs and component commanders use operational art to determine how, when, where, and for what purpose military force will be employed, to influence the adversary's disposition before combat to deter adversaries from supporting enemy activities, and to ensure our multinational partners to achieve operational and strategic objectives. Operational art governs the deployment of those forces and the arrangement of operations to achieve operational and strategic objectives.²

While there is still some room for debate, there exists sufficient strength in the argument that despite the absence of distinct boundaries, there are some distinctions that set operational art apart from the art of unit tactics and national war strategy.

History of Operational Art

A look at the history and development of operational art provides insight into how military practitioners have dealt with operational challenges that have recurred over several generations. These challenges have produced a mix of collaboration and competition among nations seeking to gain or maintain a position of advantage. In some cases, practitioners were able to develop solutions that suited their nation's way of war; others were less effective. Additionally, examining the history and development of operational art builds a framework for recognizing how Joshua and the Israelites dealt with operational challenges that are similar to those of more contemporary times.

Early in the 20th century, as battlefields increased in size, commanders' ability to control their troops diminished dramatically. Before the 20th century, nations could wage

² Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), I-13-I-14.

war with an expectation that single battles would decide the outcome of wars. The Napoleonic wars, U.S. Civil War, and World War I demonstrated that individual battles would no longer bring decisive victory. Influential nations attempted to deal with this set of circumstances in different ways. Military theorists such as J.F.C. Fuller and Basil H. Liddell Hart, among many others, began to document theories to describe the changing character of war and prescribe principles of warfare to military practitioners.

In 2010, the U.S. Army Center of Military History republished a book called *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*. It is a collection of essays that discuss the evolution of operational art theory and practices. This collection of material provides a comprehensive look at the development of operational art as a term and important topic of study. A glimpse into the development of operational art through four nations (France, Germany, Soviet Union, and the United States) provides a reference point from which to compare Israelite operational art. The following are summaries of these nations' contributions to the study and practice of operational art drawn from essays contained within that reference.

French. In an essay titled "French Operational Art 1888-1940," Robert A. Doughty examines how the French failed to develop a sophisticated understanding of operational art. The French viewed the operational level of warfare as a transition between the tactical and strategic levels, although they did not believe it to be fundamentally different from the other two levels.³ As indicated by the 1913 French field manual, *Regulation on the Conduct of Large Units*, and the 1936 manual, *Instructions of*

³ Robert A Doughty, "French Operational Art 1888-1940," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, eds. Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2010), 69.

the Tactical Employment of Large Units, the French believed the essence of operational art, or as they termed it, grand tactics, was in the employment of large formations.

Early emphasis on maneuver as opposed to firepower, led to high casualties in World War I. The use of machine guns and improved artillery rapidly increased the lethality of defenders who could stockpile large quantities of ammunition. The high casualties of that war caused the French, and other nations, to appreciate the value of firepower more, which caused a change of focus from maneuver to fires. This shift to an emphasis on fires without equal attention to maneuver contributed greatly to the conditions of stalemate that plagued all participants.

By World War II, many nations began to develop combined arms philosophies with more balance between maneuver and fires. The French, however, went to the other extreme, placing great emphasis on fires and not on maneuver, which distorted their view of the battlefield leaving them with a relatively shallow view of depth both offense and defense as well as a lack of flexibility. Throughout the development of operational-level warfare, the French have sought out scientific formulas for conducting warfare with mostly negative results. Doughty summarizes the French contribution to operational art as follows: “In the final analysis, the French experience demonstrates why military professionals become students of the operational art, rather than students of the operational science.”⁴

Germany. “Moltke and the Origins of the Operational Level of War” by Michael D. Krause provides a summary of the German contribution to operational art. Krause writes, “Traditionally, the Germans are credited with delineating three levels of warfare:

⁴ Doughty, 103.

the strategic and tactical levels (as represented by the conduct of war and battle, respectively) and the operational level that Moltke conceptualized and situated between the conduct of war and battle.”⁵ These three levels are represented in the German General Staff’s three volume war series titled, *War Studies: The Operational Preparations for Battle, the Tactical Preparations for Battle, and The Battle*, which was primarily based on the writings of Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke. Moltke identified that certain operational objectives were necessary to achieve political objectives, and introduced the terms such as operational direction, operational concept, and operational goal.⁶ Krause makes a case for levels of warfare distinguishing the strategic and operational levels when he writes, “In most cases, the operational objective is the destruction of the enemy’s army, whereas war’s objective may be the occupation of the enemy’s capital or more limited objectives.”⁷ While there remains debate, many military historians argue that Germany’s losses in both world wars were due to failures at the strategic level as opposed to operational or tactical level.

Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union. Bruce W. Menning writes in “Operational Art’s Origins” that the Russians were distinctive in the 1920s and 1930s for many reasons. According to Menning, “They produced an entire school of thinkers that labored to build collective understanding of developments in military practices. They also undertook a systematic historical study of operations since Napoleon’s time to understand

⁵ Michael D. Krause, “Moltke and the Origins of the Operational Level of War,” in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, eds. Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2010), 114.

⁶ Ibid., 114, 119.

⁷ Ibid., 136.

what had changed and why.”⁸ In “The Imperial Russian Legacy of the Operational Art, 1878-1914,” Menning summarizes early Russian contributions to operational art.

Menning argues that the development of Soviet operational art has foundations in the experiences and study of Imperial Russian war practitioners and scholars who labored to understand the changing character of war that began to experience the impact of massive armies.⁹ Menning points out that in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, Russian theorists began to realize that “modern mass armies stubbornly resisted defeat in the single climatic battle, which during the previous century had often decided the fate of an entire campaign, or even an entire war.”¹⁰ In “The Origins of Soviet Operational Art 1917-1936,” Jacob W. Kipp provides a summary of theoretical ideas, developed by Soviet officers including the concepts of successive operations, deep battle, and deep operations. According to Menning, “By 1922, the Soviets were beginning to fill the terminological gap with something they called operational art, and they would spend much of the 1920s and 1930s developing a more complete understanding of this concept

⁸ Bruce W. Menning, “Operational Art’s Origins,” in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, eds. Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2010), 7.

⁹ Massive army is a term that military historians frequently use to describe the large national armies that contributed to and further evolved from the French revolution. While there is a technological component to the definition, it is most frequently used to describe armies with large numbers of personnel of the magnitude of hundreds of thousands. While there are records of armies this size before the Napoleonic wars, military historians most frequently use it in reference to periods after the 19th century.

¹⁰ Bruce W. Menning, “The Imperial Russian Legacy of the Operational Art, 1878-1914,” in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, eds. Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 2010), 198.

and its implications.”¹¹ The requirement was to mobilize a diverse combat array, including infantry, armor, airborne, long-range artillery, and air power, then orchestrate this array’s multiple effects through an operation both sequentially and simultaneously in three dimensions.¹² According to Menning, this meant that operational art required the practitioner to identify strategic objectives within a theater and determine what sequence of military actions—preparation, organization, support, battles, and command arrangements—would bring the attainment of these objectives.”¹³

The United States. The U.S. contribution to operational art had input from all of the military services but was institutionally driven by the U.S. Army. According to Menning, the U.S. development of operational art can be linked to four things. First, in the Vietnam War, field forces scored a series of tactical triumphs but were unable to transform them into strategic victory. Second, the technological content of possible future war pointed towards a major change in the character of war. Third, dissatisfaction with the operational concept of active defense created a demand for significant developments. Finally, open-sources materials on Soviet operational art also added to the sense of urgency. By 1982, Field Manual 100-5, *Operations* recognized three levels of war and asserted, “the operational level of war uses available military resources to attain strategic goals within a theater of war.” Under U.S. rubric, operational art was “the employment of

¹¹ Menning, “Operational Art’s Origins,” 8.

¹² Ibid., 9.

¹³ Ibid.

military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaign and major operations.”¹⁴

A look at the history and development of operational art provides insight into how military practitioners have dealt with operational challenges that have recurred over several generations. The French scientific approach to military development resulted in an inability to recognize the benefit of operational art as a framework to link tactical actions to strategic objectives. Instead, they approached it as conducting tactics with large units. The German development and practice of operational art in a flawed strategy contributed to their defeat in two major wars. The Russian development of operational art produced an entire school of thinkers and became a subject of study to explain their humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. The United States, also having suffered a humiliating defeat of its own in Vietnam, and observing the Soviet Union as a top strategic threat, began to see the importance of operational art in future warfare. All four of these nations’ experiences work together to show the operational challenges of military professionals. The Israelites wrestled with many of the same problems and out of it emerged an Israelite way of war, which included in practice, the employment of what is known today as operational art.

Why Examine for Operational Art in Ancient Warfare

The amount of ancient warfare studied in professional military education is disproportionately small as compared to other periods.¹⁵ One reason is the scarcity of

¹⁴ Menning, “Operational Art’s Origins,” 15.

primary sources. Inversely, modern history has a greater number of primary source materials and contains numerous case studies of armed conflict with variations in character, scope, and context. This broad variety provides enough diversity to separate the elements of war that remain the same from the elements of war that change, thereby revealing the nature and different characters of war. Second, ancient warfare accounts are recorded mostly in languages no longer in use, which make them the subject of considerable debate. As a matter of practicality, military history recorded in common languages by multiple sources creates an undeniably useful source of research material. The lack of primary sources and language issues makes studying ancient military history more laborious and thereby less attractive than modern history.

Many conclude that because of the diversity in the history of modern warfare, there is little need to research ancient warfare if the fundamental nature of war remains constant. The problem with this logic is that in ignoring ancient warfare, the pool of events for analysis becomes small in the light of the entire span of recorded war. Limiting the study of war to modern history leads scholars to examine an unrepresentative sample of warfare. In efforts to best prepare for future war, a more comprehensive picture is required to inform military practitioners on the realm of the possible. This applies to both the art and science of war. Specifically, the study of ancient warfare is useful to examine how military practitioners apply art in the mastery of and employment of military science during periods marked by significant technological limitations. It can also be helpful to study periods when war was a tool of mass migration as it may be in the future.

¹⁵ The evidence of this is in the programs of instruction at the service academies; basic officer courses; and career, intermediate, and top level schools, that center military theory and history study around 18th, 19th and 20th century cases.

Biblical warfare is among the ancient armed conflicts most neglected for a variety of reasons. One reason is religious taboo. In the United States, having a secular military in a society that demurs from religious discussion to avoid controversy, there is a reluctance to study and discuss history from any religious texts. While eastern religious beliefs are implanted all throughout ancient Asian war records, the unfamiliarity seems to make it less intrusive, making it among the most studied ancient warfare by several U.S. military institutions.¹⁶ A second reason deals with factuality. People regarding the Bible as solely religious scripture, as opposed to a historical reference, causes challenges of its historical accuracy. Much of this is due to a lack of familiarity with biblical text. COL (RET) David G. Hansen, Ph.D. of Trinity Theological Seminary, proposed that many military scholars overlook the Bible because they perceive it as a book of moral and spiritual lessons, not a book of military history and theory.”¹⁷ A third reason is that scholars often treat records of miraculous events and divine intervention as disqualifying factors that lead to the discount of entire narratives. Israel’s conquest of Canaan demonstrates that biblical warfare contains valuable lessons for military practitioners. To overcome these obstacles to studying Biblical wars, scholars must get acquainted with the material and formulate their opinions based on the record and the physical evidence.

¹⁶ This observation of institutional bias to study ancient Asian warfare more than other ancient periods is based on the author’s personal experiences as a United States Marine Corps officer having attended a basic officer’s course, a career-level school, and two intermediate-level schools.

¹⁷ David Hansen, “The Bible, Archaeology and the Study of Military Affairs,” *Bible and Spade* (Fall 1996), accessed May 7, 2017, <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2005/10/24/The-Bible-Archaeology-and-the-Study-of-Military-Affairs.aspx>.

History is man's record of events informed by training, education, experience, bias, and motives influence it. This applies to all reference material.

Many Bible scholars lack the insight that military professionals provide in studying biblical warfare, which limits their analysis. Military experience informs the serious study of biblical warfare. Fortunately, many military professionals have contributed significantly to biblical war scholarship. Among them are Yigael Yadin,¹⁸ Chaim Herzog,¹⁹ Mordechai Gichon,²⁰ and Dr. David Hansen.²¹ Many other Bible scholars, while using imprecise military terms, provided useful, peer-reviewed analysis that also contributes substantially to the body of knowledge in this area. The majority of studies of biblical warfare (both secular and non-secular) have been on technology, small unit tactics, leadership, and how each of them worked to shape future state of affairs. Few, if any, focus on the operational art of ancient warfare.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Major General (Retired) Chaim Herzog served in the British Army in World War II and then the Israel Defense Forces before serving in several political offices including President of Israel from 1983 to 1993.

²⁰ Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Mordechai Gichon, Ph.D. also served in the British Army during World War II and in the Israel Defense Forces in many senior intelligence billets before becoming a military historian.

²¹ Colonel David G. Hansen (Retired) is President of the Board of the Associates for Biblical Research and was formerly department head and instructor at the Army War College, Carlisle PA.

Israel's Conquest of Canaan: Gaps in Research

One of the more famous biblical war accounts is Israel's invasion and conquest of Canaan in the 13th century BCE. Of the many studies conducted, there is a void in the analysis of Israel's conquest of Canaan as a campaign through the lens of operational art and design. Unlike the study of individual battles and various isolated acts of war, campaign analysis helps scholars to evaluate how military planners link operations in time, space, and purpose in the pursuit of a strategic objective. Campaign analysis also helps to identify better and understand the military components that connect military strategy to political interests. While single battle analysis is useful in examining tactics, it is limited in its ability to analyze and evaluate military operational art. This research provides a campaign analysis of Israel's conquest of Canaan, by examining elements of campaign design and modern day operational art according to current U.S. joint military doctrine.

Apart from the general use of the term, analysis of Israel's conquest of Canaan as a campaign is very limited. This is because the general pattern of war during that period was short clashes between kingdoms, most often decided in a single decisive battle as opposed to a series of related battles or operations linked in time, space, and purpose. Multiple scholars have identified Israel's conquest of Canaan as a campaign; however, these works use the term campaign in a general way that often refers to events that military scholars would be more accurately described as an expedition. Many research projects on this subject attempt to corroborate ancient texts or improve understandings of timelines but few analyze the operational level military issues with any depth.

The preponderance of research on Israel's conquest of Canaan is on the Battle of Jericho. This initial battle attracts substantial attention due to its decisive nature and the conditions it establishes to launch subsequent actions. Additionally, of all the battles within the conquest of Canaan, the Battle of Jericho is recorded with some of the most detail. Israel's conquest of Canaan however, consisted of multiple engagements and battles, most of which Israel prevailed in as the victor. While analysis of individual battles is useful, study of these events in the context of a campaign provides different findings that would otherwise remain undiscovered if not examined in this manner.

If the Israelites employed elements of operational art and design as defined by current U.S. joint doctrine in its conquest of Canaan, then campaign design analysis may reveal lessons on campaign design and operational art from which current military practitioners can profit. This also points to other ancient applications of operational art. Additionally, campaign analysis may even reveal other elements of campaign design that military leaders could incorporate into U.S. joint doctrine.

Assumptions

This campaign analysis relies on the assumption that the ancient record of events that describe Israel's conquest of Canaan in the 13th century BCE are historically factual. Accordingly, this research will use the Bible as a historical reference, supported by other ancient texts, as well as archaeological evidence from several excavations.

Limitations

The most significant limitation is the small amount of primary reference material. The Bible is the only source of narrative of the events. Unfortunately, there is no

scholarly consensus on the factual accuracy of the Bible's account of the conquest of Canaan. While other ancient texts and archaeological evidence support the biblical account, there are no other primary sources for the sequence of events, limiting the number of perspectives to one unknown or disputed writer.

Scope and Delimitations

This campaign analysis will examine the facts pertaining directly to the military activities, which are involved in the conquest of Canaan, starting with the Battle of Jericho and ending with the Battle of Hazor. Each battle is examined for elements of campaign design and operational art. Additionally, this analysis is limited to Joshua's campaign. It does not include analysis of the campaigns of Moses, which precede this period or the campaigns of the Judges of Israel that follow.

The Operational Art of Ancient Israel

The analysis of this research reveals that scholars can characterize Israel's conquest of Canaan as a campaign as defined by current U.S. joint doctrine and that ancient Israelites applied what is in modern-day terms, operational art. Additionally, this research revealed that Israel's conquest of Canaan provides examples of additional elements of operational design that have significant implications to the potential for improvements in operational art practice. Some of these elements fit neatly in modern U.S. military thought; others are more foreign and pose several challenges to contemporary warfighting wisdom.

This introductory chapter provided background to the study of operational art and ideas on how analysis of Israel's conquest of Canaan can further develop its evolution.

Chapter 2 frames the major arguments surrounding the historiography of Israel's conquest of Canaan. Chapter 3 contains the chronological narrative of events beginning with the preparation for the initial contact and ending with the suspension of hostilities, final disposition, and intentions for follow-on operations. Chapter 4 reveals the analysis and of the research. Chapter 5 contains a summary of findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Overview

This chapter will frame the major arguments surrounding the historiography of Israel's conquest of Canaan. Bible scholars, archaeologists, historians of ancient Israel, and military theorists have all contributed to the body of knowledge on this topic of Israelite settlement in the land of Canaan. These scholars have analyzed Israel's conquest of Canaan, often arriving at different conclusions. This chapter will identify the major arguments and points of debate, as well as the points where there is a consensus.

The cumulative nature of knowledge in any given field of study suggests that previous assumptions must remain subject to reexamination. In many cases, scholars have proved theories false after subsequent discoveries revealed that they were based on erroneous data. This is unquestionably the case in this area of biblical archaeology throughout the last two centuries. This chapter will discuss the sources of narrative for this story, the three major theories that attempt to explain Israelite settlement in the land of Canaan, and the major points of debate.

PART ONE – Source Material

The Bible as History

Israel's conquest of Canaan is recorded in six of the first seven books of the Bible, but primarily in the book of Joshua and the book of Judges. The first two books of the Bible, Genesis and Exodus, provide contextual background to the story, including the cultural history, geography, and driving factors that motivated the Israelites to invade

Canaan, which they believed to be promised to them by God. Exodus also provides the first mention of Joshua, who would become the leader of Israel's conquest of Canaan. The fourth book of the Bible, Numbers, contains events that led up to the invasion, including the first reconnaissance of Canaan. Additionally, both Exodus and Numbers provide some of Joshua's military experiences, which prepared him to lead the conquest. The fifth book of the Bible, Deuteronomy, describes the transition of authority from Moses to Joshua as the leader of the Israelites and future conquest leader. The sixth book, Joshua, provides the majority of the narrative of the campaign. While the authors of these books are unknown, the language of the narrative in the Book of Joshua suggests that its author recorded it near the time of the conquest, which is indicated later in chapter 3.

Having dozens of translations across more than 600 different languages, the Bible is among the most translated sources of literature in the world. It is important to understand that the purpose of each translation is to communicate the intent of the original ancient Hebrew text. Over time, and across different cultures, words often have slightly different meanings or uses. Translators adapt their translations to the audiences for whom they service. Therefore, in determining accuracy, time and culture provide meaningful context. This research used the New King James Version for all Bible scriptures because of its general acceptance by biblical scholars for accuracy in contemporary U.S. culture. However, this research is not dependent on the New King James Version. Readers can reference any translation and apply it to examine the arguments within this thesis.

Other Ancient Texts: Support of the Biblical Account

While the Bible is the only source for a complete narrative, other ancient texts support the biblical account of Israel's conquest of Canaan. The most notable source would be the Amarna Letters, a 14th to 12th century BCE archive of letters written on clay tablets, primarily consisting of diplomatic correspondence between the Egyptian administration and its representatives in Canaan.²² In the late 1800s, natives of the area found the tablets in el-'Amarna, a plain on the east side of the Nile about 190 miles south of Cairo.²³ According to William L. Moran, latest translator of the Amarna Letters, "we will never know how many tablets may have been found and later lost or destroyed, or all the ways, perhaps many and devious, by which more than 300 tablets came into the possession of antique dealers and private collectors."²⁴ Some of these letters contain requests for material and personnel support to assist in defending against invaders, which many Ancient Near East scholars believe to be the Israelites based on the absence of any

²² Schlegel writes in *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, "in addition to the biblical record, a glimpse of life in Canaan at this time is derived from letters of correspondence sent from Canaanite princes to the pharaohs in Egypt, both Amenhotep III (1417-1379 BC) and Amenhotep IV (1379-1362 BC)." William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016).

²³ William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xiii.

²⁴ Currently, the Amarna Letters are located at the Arkeoloji Müzeleri (Istanbul), the Ashmolean Museum (Oxford), the British Museum (London), the Egyptian Museum (Cairo), the Louvre (Paris), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Musées royaux d'Art and d'Histoire (Brussels), the Oriental Museum (Chicago), and the Vorderasiatisches Museum (Berlin). Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible* (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 2006), x.

other known people groups in the area.²⁵ Others are requests for guidance on how to handle the invaders.²⁶ These requests demonstrate the political affiliation between the Canaanites and Egypt.²⁷ They also demonstrate that while many of the Canaanites were well-equipped including iron chariots, many other Canaanite kingdoms were ill-equipped and less organized. Many of the cities and events from the Amarna Letters correspond to cities in the biblical narrative.

Several Egyptian ancient sources provide clues as to Egyptian-Canaanite relations and interaction with the Israelites. The reliefs of Seti I, 1300 BCE, depict a series of fortifications protecting a major line of communication in the region showing the strategic importance of the land.²⁸ Seti I was a 13th century BCE Egyptian Pharaoh. Of

²⁵ EA #286 records the request for assistance with the following excerpts, “Lost are the lands of the King . . . The ‘Apiru plunder all the lands of the king . . . but the war against me is severe...archers of the king, my lord, come forth. The king has no lands. ‘Apiru has plundered all the lands of the king. If there are archers this year, the lands of the king, my lord will remain. But if there are no archers, lost are the lands of the king, my lord.” EA #286 in William L. Moran, ed. and trans., *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 326-327. Several scholars argue against the idea that the Apiru (or Habiru), frequently named in the Amarna Letters represents the Israelites. In some cases, Apiru (or Habiru) the connotation is social, not ethnic. Anson Rainey, “Sashu or Habiru: Who Were the Early Israelites?” *Biblical Archaeological Review* 34, no. 6 (November/December 2008): 51-59, accessed May 13, 2017, <http://www.baslibrary.org/biblical-archaeology-review/34/6/9>.

²⁶ EA #287 records the request for advice with the following excerpt, “Are we to act like Lab’ayu when he was giving the land of Sakmu to the Hapiru? EA #287 in Moran, 332-333.

²⁷ Many of the Amarna Letters corroborate other Egyptian sources that record an Egyptian conquest of Canaan that started prior to the 14th century BCE. Others indicate a significant amount of political chaos in Canaan and weakening Egyptian control.

²⁸ Abraham Malamat, “How Inferior Israelite Forces Conquered Fortified Canaanite Cities,” *Biblical Archaeological Review* 8, no. 2 (March/April 1982): 2, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/8/2/3>.

note, these reliefs depict the conflict of the Egyptians to regain or maintain sovereignty over the Hittites, who resided in Canaan at the time.²⁹ This is one reason—discussed later in detail—the Israelites avoided assaulting along that line of operation. The Merneptah Stele is another ancient Egyptian source. Dated to the last decade of the 13th century BCE, the Merneptah Stele records that the Israelites were present in Canaan at the time.³⁰ In his article “When Did Ancient Israel Begin?” Hershel Shanks points out that Merneptah boasts that “Israel is laid waste; its seed is not,” is clearly a gross exaggeration.³¹ Even if this was an exaggeration and Egypt had not actually laid waste to Israel, the record confirms that in the 13th century BCE, there were conflicts between Israelites and Egyptians or allies of Egypt, likely the Canaanites.

While not a source that tells the entire account, it is noteworthy that the story of Israel’s conquest of Canaan appears in the Qur’an and other Islamic literature, as indicated in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. The Qur’an does not mention Joshua by name, but it alludes to him in records concerning Israel’s conquest of Canaan. The *Encyclopedia of Islam* states, “When Moses wished to lead his people into the holy land, and Israel was afraid to fight with the giants, they were encouraged by two God-fearing men (V, 20-6)

²⁹ University of Chicago, *The Battle Reliefs of King Seti I* (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1986).

³⁰ Malamat, 2.

³¹ Hershel Shanks, “When Did Ancient Israel Begin?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 1 (January/February 2012): 1, accessed May 4, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/38/1/11>.

who may be recogni[z]ed as Joshua and Caleb.”³² There are also additional features of Joshua in Islamic literature that are not in the Bible; however, these accounts do not concern the conquest of Canaan. Despite the lack of by name identification of Joshua in the Qur’an and the alternative features of Joshua in other Islamic literature, it is likely that these accounts are based on the biblical account and are not independent sources.

Archaeological Evidence

Archaeological excavations have been the primary means that scholars use to examine the factual accuracy of biblical accounts. Archaeologists have excavated Jericho, Ai, Gezer, Lachish, Hazor, and other ancient cities that were a part of the Israelite settlement. In some cases, the archaeological evidence clearly supports the biblical account. In other situations, it seems to be either contradictory or inconclusive.

Among the various types of sites that archaeologists excavate are tels. A tel is an archaeological mound created by repeated human occupation and abandonment of a geographical site over many centuries, thus building layers of accumulated debris. A classic tel looks like a low, truncated cone with a flat top and sloping sides. They are often located near water sources. Over time, as societies build on top of the remains of previous societies, layers form wherein archaeologists can examine the layers (or strata) and the artifacts found within the layers. By the condition of the archaeological remains and artifacts discovered, archaeologists can determine various cultural aspects of the society from which they can draw conclusions. Tels play a significant part in helping

³² Peri. J. Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford E. Bosworth, Emeri van Donzel, and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 11. W—Z (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2002).

archaeologists locate ancient city sites with precision. Usually built on dominating terrain features, many of the ancient cities relevant to the conquest were tells. By examining the layers of tels, archeologists can approximate dates based on the artifacts found within the layers. Additionally, they are often able to conclude the circumstances from which city occupation discontinued. Figure 1 is a depiction of a tel.

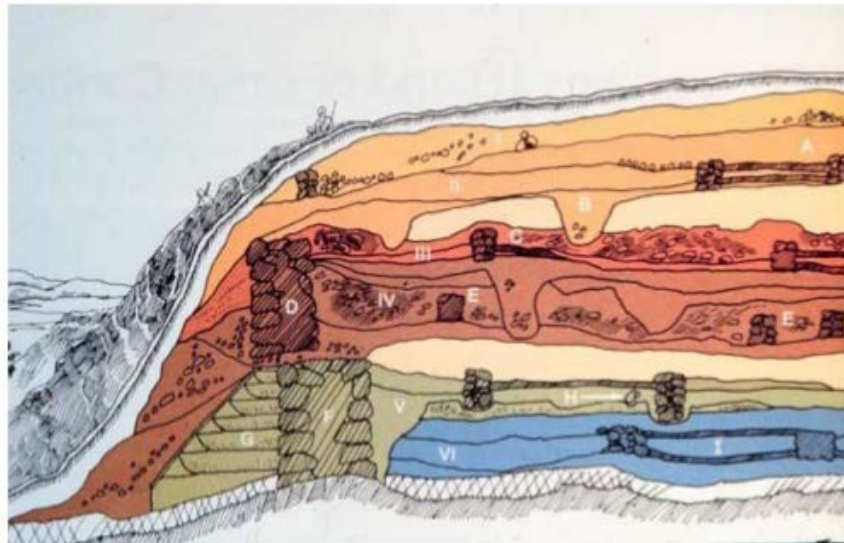


Figure 1. Cross Section of a Tel

Source: Steve Ulrich, “Introduction to Biblical Archaeology: The Bible and Archaeology,” SlideShare, July 29, 2014, accessed May 4, 2017, <https://www.slideshare.net/smulrich/introduction-to-biblical-archaeology>, slide 15.

PART TWO – Major Theories: Israelite Settlement in the Land of Canaan

Despite overwhelming evidence that supports the biblical account, there remain arguments that challenge the factuality of the narrative, which researchers must understand before proceeding with this analysis. These challenges are due to perceived contradictions in the biblical account and differing interpretation of some of the

archaeological evidence. Many of the discrepancies have been resolved due to improvements in excavation techniques and procedures. However, the absence of scholarly consensus has resulted in both continued theoretical debate and challenges of the biblical narrative that range from measured speculation to complete rejection.

There are three major schools of thought concerning Israelite settlement in the land of Canaan. The first is of conquest by war, much like the biblical account in the book of Joshua, which describes the Israelites as invading and conquering much of the land of Canaan by military conquest. The second is a mostly peaceful settlement or infiltration that is derived from interpretations of the book of Judges. The third, while not as popular, is a revolt where defecting Canaanites allowed for Israelite settling and eventual overthrow of Canaanite leadership.

Theory 1: Albright School of Military Conquest

The first major theory is the conquest theory. Yigael Yadin was an ardent supporter of the so-called Albright school (named after its founder) the great American biblical scholar, William Foxwell Albright. Conquest theory states that Israelite settlement in Canaan aligns more or less with the conquest account reflected in the book of Joshua.³³ William Albright was a pioneer in the use of archaeological materials to elucidate the Bible. Consequently, he and his followers approach archaeological findings with a firm belief in at least the overarching broad approach of the Bible if not every detail.

³³ 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>.

Yadin was the second Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Force in 1949. After leaving the military, he became a very accomplished archaeologist. He excavated several significant sites including the Qumran Caves, Masada, and Hazor. Throughout much of his research, Yadin compared Canaan as a military conquest and a peaceful settlement. Also in his analysis, he identified the disproportionately high number of skeptics without military service and asserted that his experience showed that military professionals tend to accept the biblical account based on their understandings of principles of armed conflict.³⁴ His experience in archaeology and understanding of the archaeological evidence supporting the Bible, coupled with his military perspective creates a compelling argument for the biblical account.

Other supporters of this theory include Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon. Highly respected for their scholarship, both Herzog and Gichon following extensive service as senior officers in the Israeli Defense Force, were both experts in military history, geography, and archaeology of Israel. Among Herzog and Gichon's most valuable contributions to this body of knowledge is the co-authored book, *The Battles of the Bible*, which provides an evaluation of military practices of biblical warfare accounts including Israel's conquest of Canaan. After framing the major debates that existed at the time, they analyze biblical armed conflict in basic but modern military language, demonstrating a reasonable factual basis for the account.

³⁴ 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.

Theory 2: Alt School of Non-military Settlement/Infiltration

The second theory is that there was no conquest, but rather a peaceful infiltration into unoccupied lands followed by expansion. Yohanan Aharoni was a keen supporter of the Alt School, which saw the process basically as the one 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 Canaanite cities.³⁵ 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.³⁶ This suggests that the land was vacant long before the Israelites settled it. This does not disprove the conquest theory but does strengthen the case for peaceful settlement of some sites. The Alt School is best summarized by Professor Manfred Weippert in *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine* where he argues that the Israelites were not even a unified nation of tribes until well after settlement into the land of Canaan.³⁷

³⁵ Ben-Tor, "Who Destroyed Canaanite Hazor?" 2.

³⁶ 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>.

³⁷ Yigael Yadin, "Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan Historically Reliable?" *Biblical Archaeological Review* 8, no. 2 (March/April 1982): 1-2, accessed May 4, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/8/2/2>.

Theory 3: Internal Revolt

The third theory is an internal revolt. This model was first suggested by George Mendenhall of the University of Michigan and recently elaborated by Norman K. Gottwald.³⁸ There are some indicators of this in the biblical account including the information and protection that Rahab provided the team of Israelite spies, the alliance of the Gibeonites, which will be explained further in the narrative in chapter 3, and an account of a Canaanite guide that assisted an Israelite attack after the conquest under Joshua's leadership.

Neither of these three theoretical schools of thought is unbiased. They each have scholarly merit and respected proponents. It is likely that elements of each hold true. Careful examination of physical evidence and undisputed elements of each theory enable for a reasonable theory that combines elements of each. The theory stated might suggest that the Israelite settlement in Canaan was largely a military conquest that exploited the aid of defectors and to a lesser extent, contained elements of unopposed settlement. Because the Book of Joshua is the primary record of Israel's conquest of Canaan, it will be the basis for the narrative while taking into account the credible challenges in opposing theories.

PART THREE – Major Points of Debate

There are numerous points of debate that result from disagreements in the historical authenticity of the Bible and discoveries of archaeological excavations. These issues are complex and have produced volumes of research. Some of the most significant

³⁸ Malamat, 1.

debates concern archaeological excavations of sites relevant to Israelite settlement in the land of Canaan. In some cases, new discoveries have settled disagreements; in other cases, they have created new debates. Despite the areas where there remains a lack of scholarly consensus, there are points of universal agreement that give credibility to all of the major theories, suggesting the possibility for elements of each being correct. The point of this section is not to provide an exhaustive summary of all points of debate, but rather to reveal the nature of some of the most relevant arguments, past and present and to form an attempt at combined narrative to support this thesis.

Jericho Debate: Dating the Event

Jericho is the first Canaanite city of conquest, and according to the Book of Joshua, the Israelites initiated the invasion in the spring around the time in the Levant of the first harvest.³⁹ After seven days of Israelite forces marching around the city, the walls of Jericho collapsed outward allowing the Israelites to assault up the slope of wall fragments into the city.⁴⁰ The Israelites' assault included the destruction of all of Jericho's inhabitants except for a defector that assisted them and her family.⁴¹ Then, the Israelites burned the city with all of its goods in place.⁴² The Israelites did not keep anything, nor did they rebuild on top of the tel during this period.⁴³ The sequence

³⁹ Josh 5:10 (New King James Version).

⁴⁰ Josh 6:1-20.

⁴¹ Josh 6:25.

⁴² Josh 6:24.

⁴³ Josh 6:26.

indicated by archaeological evidence for the destruction of Jericho then is an event causing walls to collapse followed by destruction by fire. This sequence took place after the harvest with no evidence of rebuilding during the time of conquest or following period.

In 1907-1909, Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger first excavated Tel Jericho. In the 1930s, archaeologist, John Garstang excavated Jericho as well. “Garstang concluded that the archaeological evidence he found matched the Biblical account.”⁴⁴ However, Kathleen Kenyon, a colleague of Garstang, excavated Jericho in the 1950s and recorded that there was neither a city nor walls at Jericho at the time that the Bible says Jericho was destroyed.⁴⁵ Her findings caused significant conflict and debate among scholars of several disciplines, despite the fact that each of the excavations had far more in common than differences.

All three of the excavations revealed the same four significant finds. First, all three found piles of collapsed mud bricks while excavating at the base of the stone retaining wall. The mud brick walls would have been the primary protection walls built on top of the heavier retaining wall at the base.⁴⁶ The biblical account states that after the city walls had collapsed, “the people went up into the city, every man straight before

⁴⁴ Expedition Bible, “Jericho Unearthed,” YouTube, accessed September 14, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYrSkikZhxI>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Bryant T. Wood, “Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16, no. 2 (March/April 1990): 42-43 accessed May 7, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/16/2/5>.

him,”⁴⁷ which would have been impossible without the collapse of the mud brick walls. Figure 2 depicts the likely initial position of the mud brick wall and the disposition of the collapsed mud bricks found at the base of the retaining wall that would have created a ramp to enable easy access. Second, all three excavations revealed a three-foot burn layer with numerous jars of grain, which would mean that the city was destroyed soon after the wheat harvest time in the spring and that for whatever reason, the grain was left in place unused, which is consistent with the biblical record. Third, there was a collapse of building walls that preceded the fire indicating that there was a seismic event that caused the collapse of the mud brick walls and the walls of dwellings before the destruction by fire.⁴⁸ Finally, there was an erosion layer in the tel, which indicates that no one rebuilt the city for a long time after its destruction.

⁴⁷ Josh 6:20.

⁴⁸ Some scholars attribute the collapse of the walls as a result of an earthquake as well as the reverse flow of the Jordan which would have enabled the Israelites to cross on dry ground. While the cause is still unknown, the facts remain that both the city walls and interior walls collapsed prior to the destruction by fire.

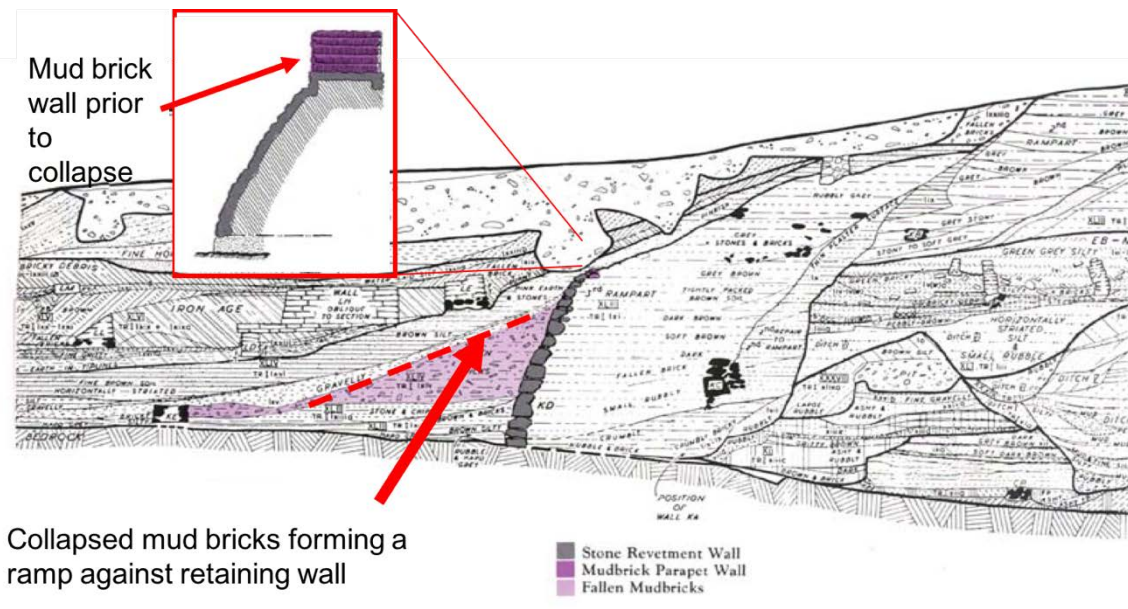


Figure 2. Jericho Collapsed Walls Diagram

Source: Bryant T. Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16, no. 2 (March/April 1990): 42-43 accessed May 7, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/16/2/5>. Note: Enhancements added by author.

The biblical chronology suggests that the destruction of Jericho took place around 1400 BCE. I Kings 6:1 talks about the 4th year of King Solomon's reign, 480 years after the Israelites left Egypt. Most biblical scholars agree that King Solomon started construction of the temple in 966 BCE, which means 480 years earlier would be 1446 BCE. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before the conquest, which would date the initiation of Israel's conquest of Canaan at 1406 BCE.⁴⁹

John Garstang recorded that he found pottery that dated to around 1400 BCE in agreement with the Bible, but Kenyon's conclusion was different. Kenyon dated the

⁴⁹ Josh 5:6.

destruction of Jericho 150 years earlier to around 1550 BCE. Although most of Kenyon's findings were consistent with the biblical record, the debate about the 150-year discrepancy had a huge implication because if Kenyon's dating were correct, it would mean that there would have been no city to destroy at the time the Bible's timing.

Pottery is among the few artifacts from ancient civilizations available to archaeologists for the dating. Much like modern day technologies evolve, pottery has changed over time. In his doctoral thesis, "Ancient Canaanite Pottery in the Late Bronze Age," archaeologist, Dr. Bryant Wood analyzed the pottery from Garstang and Kenyon's excavations. When attempting to date pottery, archaeologists often use pottery from different sites in which archaeologists agree on the dating called parallels. The parallel serves as a reliable dating reference point. The archaeologists can then compare the pottery in question to the parallel. Bryant dated the pottery of the time of Jericho's destruction to the end of the 15th century BCE. Rather than use parallels examining the local Canaanite pottery, Kenyon examined for a more distinguishable type of pottery that was commonly imported from Cyprus, which she did not find. This caused her to misdate the destruction of Jericho.

Despite the majority of her findings supporting the biblical account, the dating discrepancy is what caused Kenyon to disagree with the historicity of the Bible. Her findings went on to influence the research and conclusions of numerous other scholars and experts in archaeology that would build theories of Israelite settlement in the region based on her conclusions, which caused many to discount the biblical narrative. In fact, the disbelief in the biblical account became the prevailing view and majority opinion. Of note, even archaeologist, Peter Parr, who worked under Kenyon during her Jericho

excavation and accompanied Dr. Wood in his excavation of Jericho commented that Wood has a strong argument for his dating of the pottery. In addition, while he still sees there may still be some room for debate, Parr now suggests that there is no reason that something similar to the biblical account could not have taken place.⁵⁰

Scholars attempting to discount the Bible often cite Kenyon as a reference to support their arguments. Other scholars who believe in the biblical record cite her as being unsupportive of the Bible. Examination of her work recorded in *Digging Up Jericho* reveals that she did not argue against the Bible's record of events in whole, but rather the accuracy of dating and event details. She writes, "Traditional, verbal, history is incomplete, striking events alone being remembered, and its chronological framework is very loose, for it must be remembered that the Israelites had no fixed calendar."⁵¹ Amazingly, many still cite Kenyon's conclusions to support arguments against the biblical account, which demonstrates the magnitude of her work.⁵²

Ai Debate

A second significant debate is centered on the destruction of Ai. The Bible records Ai as the second city of the Israelite's conquest of Canaan. After the destruction of Jericho, the Israelites launched a failed assault on Ai, but followed up later with a

⁵⁰ Expedition Bible.

⁵¹ Kathleen M. Kenyon, *Digging Up Jericho: The Results of the Jericho Excavations 1952-1956* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger), 257.

⁵² On a 2017 battlefield survey, the author witnessed a tour guide citing Kenyon's incorrect conclusions as evidence that the conquest of Canaan did not occur as recorded in the book of Joshua.

successful attack, resulting in the destruction of Ai by fire.⁵³ The point of debate for scholars concerning Ai is if the event ever took place at all as described in the Bible.

In the late 1920s, John Garstang excavated et-Tell. In the 1930s, Judith Marquet-Krause excavated at what she believed to be Ai and concluded that there was no Late Bronze Age city there.⁵⁴ The site she excavated was et-Tell. Joseph A. Callaway conducted extensive excavations at et-Tell in the 1960s and came up with the same conclusions. Yigael Yadin provides an example of how some have responded to confrontations with the Bible's account of events:

Faced with the conflict between the evidence of Marquet-Krause and Callaway, on the one hand, and the Biblical account of Ai's destruction on the other, Albright suggested that the Biblical description referred not to the conquest of Ai, but to the conquest of nearby Bethel. No destruction of Bethel is referred to in the Bible, but a late Bronze Age city was destroyed there. Others argued that the Biblical description of Ai was purely etiological, that a late Biblical author had attributed an earlier conquest to the Israelites in order to glorify Israelite history.⁵⁵

Albright's theory is understandable considering the overwhelming evidence that supports the biblical account of Israelite conquest of Canaan. However, it is an example of how some scholars either distort facts or change interpretations of records to fit their beliefs, rather than except not being able to reconcile questions before the discovery of sufficient evidence. In this case, Albright's theory seemed to introduce even more confusion and debate.

⁵³ Josh 7-8.

⁵⁴ Yadin, "Is the Biblical Account of the Israelite Conquest of Canaan Historically Reliable?" 6.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 7.

William Schlegel offers new insight with the following excerpt from the Satellite

Bible Atlas:

While the Ai of Abraham's time (Gen. 12:8, 13:3) can be confidently placed at the large Early Canaanite ruin called et-Tell, there are (apparently) no archaeological ruins there dating to the days of Joshua (the LB Age). It is possible the name "Ai" shifted to a smaller site nearby. Several sites in the vicinity with LB Age ruins have been excavated. The best candidate so far is Khirbet et-Maqatir, about one kilometer (6/10 mile) west of et-Tell, where LB Age ruins have been discovered.⁵⁶

Discoveries at Khirbet et-Maqatir or perhaps another nearby site could go far to resolving this significant source of conflict between the biblical text concerning the destruction of Ai and the archaeology.

Lachish Debate: Dating of Conquest

A third significant debate concerns the destruction of Lachish. The Bible records that during Israel's conquest, five Canaanite kings formed an anti-Israelite coalition.⁵⁷ After mobilizing to attack an Israelite ally, the Israelites defeated them before initiation of their attack.⁵⁸ The king of Lachish was one of the five kings in the Canaanite coalition, and after killing all of the kings in the Canaanite coalition, the Israelites seized Lachish along with several other cities.⁵⁹

In the 1930s, James L. Starkey led a British expedition to excavate Lachish that ended uncompleted due to Starkey's untimely death. However, his assistant, Olga

⁵⁶ Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas*.

⁵⁷ Josh 10:1-5.

⁵⁸ Josh 10: 9-20.

⁵⁹ Josh 10:22-32.

Tufnell, worked extensively to report the finds from the excavation.⁶⁰ Starkey was able to find six levels, from I to VI, beginning at the top. He identified level VI as the last Canaanite city, destroyed by a violent fire. In the 1980s, David Ussishkin's excavation revealed a seventh layer, also a Canaanite city destroyed by fire. Ussishkin also found a cartouche bearing the name of Ramesses III, a powerful Pharaoh of the 20th Dynasty, which Egyptologists date as 1182-1151 BCE. This implies that the destruction of level VI had to have occurred sometime around 1150 BCE or later, which contradicts the biblical account of a swift conquest. Also according to Ussishkin, "the Biblical tradition of the Israelite conquest is firmly dated on archaeological grounds to about the middle of the 12th century, 1150 B.C., or even later."⁶¹ This is only partially correct. There are many issues of uncertainty in biblical dating, and the events of the conquest continue well beyond the years of Joshua's leadership.

Albright dated Lachish destruction to 1230 BCE. Most scholars have since dated the events of the conquest to 13th century BCE. This is important when comparing the destruction of Lachish to the destruction of Hazor, the last city of conquest under Joshua's command. As Ussishkin writes:

All authorities agree on the basis of internal archaeological evidence, that Canaanite Hazor was destroyed in the 13th Century BCE. If we believe that the Israelite tribes also conquered Canaanite Hazor, as related in Joshua 10:10-11, then we must conclude that the Biblical concept of a swift campaign by Joshua's forces is incompatible with the archaeological evidence, because this evidence discloses that two major Canaanite cities, Lachish and Hazor, were destroyed

⁶⁰ David Ussishkin, "Lachish—Key to the Israelite Conquest of Canaan?" *Biblical Archaeological Review* 13, no. 1 (January/February 1987): 3, accessed May 4, 2017, <http://members.bib-arch.org/biblical-archaeology-review/13/1/1>.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

about a century apart; the Israelite conquest must have been, therefore, a much more drawn out affair than is described in the Book of Joshua.⁶²

There are several factors that could account for the discrepancy between Ussishkin's evidence of Canaanite Lachish VII destruction and the destruction of Hazor according to the Bible's account. What is important to recognize is that Canaanite Lachish shows evidence of being destroyed, resettled by more Canaanites, and destroyed again likely by Israelites, which aligns with the biblical narrative of events.

Hazor Debate: Joshua versus Judges

There are three major points of debate concerning the destruction of Canaanite Hazor. The first issue is with what appears to be contradictions within the biblical accounts. According to the book of Joshua, Hazor is the last city conquered under the leadership of Joshua in his campaign to conquer Canaan. In response to increased settlement of the Israelites, Jabim, the king of Hazor, organized a northern Canaanite coalition to defeat the Israelites.⁶³ In response to this, Joshua mobilized his army against the Canaanites and conducted a spoiling attack in which the Israelites prevailed.⁶⁴ After the defeat of the northern Canaanite coalition, Hazor was destroyed by fire.⁶⁵ The book of Judges describes a different sequence of events involving different Israelite leadership

⁶² Ussishkin, "Lachish—Key to the Israelite Conquest of Canaan?", 14.

⁶³ Josh 11:1-5.

⁶⁴ Josh 11:7.

⁶⁵ Josh 11:11.

defeating King Jabim of Hazor.⁶⁶ Determining which record is correct is the first issue of debate.

The second issue comes from a dismissal of either biblical account and deals with who is responsible for the destruction of the city if not the Israelites. There have been many different proposals to this question. In “Who Destroyed Canaanite Hazor?” Amnon Ben-Tor writes the following: “An array of publications by various scholars over the years, trying to determine who was responsible for the downfall of Hazor, indicates a tendency to attribute the site’s destruction to anyone except the ones specifically mentioned in the Bible as having done so.”⁶⁷ Archaeologists agree that Hazor was not destroyed by an accidental fire, but rather by the result of human activity, as indicated by a large number of statues of deities and rulers that were disfigured.⁶⁸

John Garstang was first to excavate Hazor in the late 1920s. In the 1950s and 1960s Israel’s then-leading archaeologist, Yigael Yadin and Yohanan Aharon conducted large-scale excavations of Hazor.⁶⁹ Despite having opposing views on Israelite settlement in Canaan (discussed in the next section), they both agreed that the Israelites destroyed Hazor.⁷⁰ Later after examining the case for every other group known to have been in the

⁶⁶ Judg 4.

⁶⁷ Ben-Tor, “Who Destroyed Canaanite Hazor?”, 9.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 9.

area at the time and leading his own excavations of Hazor, the Ben-Tor agrees with early excavators Yadin and Aharoni.⁷¹

The third issue of debate is the dating of the last Canaanite city of Hazor. Yadin dated it to the last quarter of the 13th century, which according to the timeline of Joshua, would have been too late. This is not an issue for debate for those who believe that the conquest took place in the mid to late 13th century. For others who prescribe to a 14th century conquest, dating remains an issue.

All three of these issues are reconciled by the acceptance of Joshua and Judges being written about related but different events, rather than two perspectives of the same event concerning Hazor. It is likely that Jabim was a patriarchal name that was used for multiple generations thereby appearing as if it were the same character discussed in both accounts when in fact they were different rulers. Described in detail in chapter 3, the conquest of Canaan was incomplete. In some cases, the Israelites were unable to displace the Canaanites completely, and in other cases, they did not resettle some of the cities that they conquered. This means that it is plausible that after the Israelites under the command of Joshua destroyed Hazor, Canaanites resettled it only for Israelites to reconquer again during the period of the Judges.

Conclusion

While several elements remain inconclusive and some contrary, the archaeological evidence largely supports the biblical account. Archaeological evidence supports the Bible's timeline that Canaan existed during the Late Bronze Age, with

⁷¹ Ben-Tor, "Who Destroyed Canaanite Hazor?", 10.

subsequent settlements occurring throughout the following centuries. Some scholars attempt to date more precisely than the materials support, but most scholars accept the overall timing.

The combination of the archaeological evidence and the additional non-biblical ancient texts support the main elements of the biblical account to examine operational art. Malamat put it best when he stated, “at the core, a military conquest remains . . . this ancient tradition reflects an intimate and authentic knowledge of the land, and a knowledge of its topography and demography—all as they relate to military strategy—which strongly supports the conclusion that the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan was accompanied by substantial military operations.”⁷² Based on all of the available evidence, this analysis will use the Bible as a historical reference supported by archaeological evidence as well as other non-biblical ancient texts. Since the Bible is the only account of Israel’s conquest of Canaan, and since the details in the text match so well with the archaeological evidence, then the best conclusion to draw is that it is a factual eye-witness account.

While challenging, the Bible and other ancient texts combined with the field of archaeology provide insights that begin to answer many of the mysteries of ancient Near East sociology and history. However, with the limited resources available, there remain various points of debate that prevent consensus of all the experts. The previous major points of debate surrounding Israelite settlement in the land of Canaan were not all inclusive, but they reveal the types of issues that scholars must confront before formulating an informed position.

⁷² Malamat, 2.

This chapter identified the major arguments surrounding the historiography of Israel's conquest of Canaan. It included the primary source of narrative and corroborating ancient texts, the influence that archaeological excavations have on broadening and deepening understanding, the three major theoretical explanations of Israel's settlement into the land of Canaan, and challenges to the biblical narrative. The next chapter will discuss three key elements that provide context for understanding Israel's conquest of Canaan along with a summary of the main events.

CHAPTER 3

EVENT NARRATIVE

Overview

This chapter discusses three key elements that provide context for understanding Israel's conquest of Canaan along with a summary of the main events. The first element is the physical geography, which sets the foundation for framing the strategic environment. The second element is the cultural history of the Israelites, which explains their development into a unified nation. The third element is the political agenda of the Israelites, which explains the sequence of events that led to the conquest. With context established, this chapter also provides a chronological narrative of events beginning with the preparation for battle and ending with the suspension of hostilities, final disposition, and intentions for follow-on operations.

PART ONE – Contextual Framework

Building context for deeper understanding is critical when examining historical events through modern frameworks, especially when attempting to identify implications across significantly different cultures. Understanding complex events becomes increasingly difficult the further one is removed in time and space from the events in question. While countless factors can be taken into account for constructing a contextual framework, this research focuses on three specific factors: physical geography, cultural history, and political agenda. The geography reveals fundamental aspects of the physical environment and conditions that weighed in on tactical, operational, and strategic decisions. Cultural history shows some of the influential factors that guided intentions

and shaped the conduct of battle. Political agenda shows how national interests contributed to the cause and shaped the conduct of warfare. Together, these three elements help to build a suitable context in which to examine the preparation for and execution of Israel's conquest.

Geography

The geography involved in this conquest is centered on what are now modern day Israel and the disputed territory of Palestine, a region that has slightly greater than 8,000 square miles and is comparable to the size of the state of New Jersey. It includes territory as far north as the Litani River in southern Lebanon and as far south as the northern region of the Sinai Peninsula. Its west boundary is the Mediterranean Sea, and its east boundary is the Jordan River. Other areas of significant activity, which affect Israel's conduct of the conquest, extend slightly beyond these points. The heartland of the region, depicted in figure 3, shows where most of the events took place. North to south, its total distance is approximately 150 miles. East to west its distance is approximately 45 miles.

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Figure 3. Heartland of Canaan

Source: 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 mountainous regions, desert highland plateaus, fertile valleys, lowlands, and coastal plains. The region is bisected lengthwise north to south by the Jordan River Valley, with Mount Hermon and the Sea of Galilee on one end to the north and the south, the Dead Sea, which at 1,380 feet below sea level, is the lowest point on earth. The

country west of the Jordan can be divided into four major longitudinal zones: the coastal plain, the central highland massif (also known as the hill country), the Jordan Rift Valley, and the Transjordan Plateau. It also has an additional desert topographical zone to the south called the Negev. Figure 4 depicts the four major longitudinal zones.⁷³

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Figure 4. Topography

Source: 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

⁷³ 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>.

edged shoreline makes it mostly unsuitable for port use, with exceptions being a few small ports including Joppa, modern day Tel Aviv. Eastward, it mostly has a gradual rise into the hill country. This region, dominated by Canaanite chariot forces, would prove to be the most difficult region to conquer by the invading Israelite dismounted infantry forces.

Central Highlands. Moving east from the coastal plains, the central highlands are rough terrain of deep valleys and high ridges.⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵ It extends north and includes Mount Carmel, which is a mountain ridge that juts out into the Mediterranean Sea and Galilee. Further north, the central highlands also includes Galilee. Galilee may be likened to a huge wheel, with its hub at the Merom ridge. From this central watershed, the rains have carved out valleys that fan out like spokes in all directions.⁷⁶ There is a break that separates the hill country including Mount Carmel from Galilee. The break is a wide triangular plain called the Jezreel Valley. East—west movement in the central highlands other than the great lateral valleys are confined to the wadis descending the watershed. As a point of reference, Jerusalem is perched on the watershed of the hill country at 2,400 to 2,800 feet above sea level, which gives an indication of the eastern rise in elevation from the coastal plains. This region, being more favorable to dismounted infantry, served in some ways as a force equalizer, rendering the

⁷⁴ Gichon and Herzog, 33.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Canaanites unable to employ their chariot forces in such steep terrain. It would become the region in which the Israelites would thrive as well as the region that fell to Israelite conquest more completely.

Jordan Rift Valley. The Jordan Rift Valley is a 10-mile wide plain that separates the central highlands to the west from the high Transjordan plateau in the east. Most of the surface of the rift valley is below sea level. The Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level. The Jordan River descends another 650 feet to the Dead Sea. This region would prove to be critical in providing a point for the Israelites to gain their foothold and expand a lodgment from the east. It would accommodate the Israelite army's needs for relatively easy staging and onward movement to their first objective while remaining somewhat isolated by the terrain of the adjacent central highlands.

Transjordan Plateau. East of the Jordan Rift Valley is the Transjordan Plateau. Transjordan, meaning across the Jordan refers to the mountainous highland plateau with distinct high mountain relief in parts up to 3,000 feet in elevation. It includes the Moab, Plateau, Gilead, and Bashan all the way up to Mount Hermon. While the ascent east from the Jordan is steep, the descent further east into the Arabian desert is gentle and almost unnoticeable from the plateau to the Arabian desert.⁷⁷ This region is significant to the conquest because it provides valuable operational maneuver space enabling the Israelites to avoid Canaanite strong points before initiating the assault.

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 Eilat and Etsion-geber, port cities on an inlet to the Red Sea. This area's

⁷⁷ Gichon and Herzog, 33.

significance is in the fact that the Israelites did not use it in Joshua's campaign. Despite the broad front that it provides granting access to the southern regions of Canaan, Joshua did not use it for several reasons. First, Joshua did not want to expose his forces to Canaanite chariot forces in the coastal plains. Fighting from the northern Negev presented a similar risk. Second, although he needed to get his forces into the central highlands, which would be more favorable terrain for his dismounted infantry-based 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.

Major Routes

Throughout its history, Canaan was a land of strategic importance as the link between three continental land masses: Europe, Asia, and Africa. Limited in the number of roads that connected the regions, Canaan had several major trade routes that connected Egypt with Mesopotamia. Each of the longitudinal regions has a major route that extends through it. The first is the Coastal Highway that runs relatively unimpeded through the coastal plains up to Mount Carmel. It connects with a mountain pass through Mount Carmel and proceeds through the Jezreel Valley and further north past the Sea of Galilee. All of the sections combined forms what is known as the Great International Highway. The second route, which was more of a local route, travels north-south on the watershed or ridgeline of the hill country. It is called the Road of the Patriarchs because Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph frequently traveled on it. The third route is the Rift Valley. Roads along either side of the Jordan River provide convenient travel between the Dead Sea and Sea of Galilee and further beyond to the north. The fourth route, known as the King's

Highway, runs along the Transjordan Plateau to Damascus. The most desirable lands upon which to build cities were along much of these limited lines of communication.

Despite its 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 over which many nations have competed to control. Important to all of the major empires of the era, the land of Canaan was highly contested territory and the constant subject of competition for control. Figure 5 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 preponderance of major troop movements was conducted on the Road of the Patriarchs along the central highlands watershed. However, in order to conquer all of Canaan, the Israelites would have to figure out how to control all of these major routes through the territory.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ 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>.

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Figure 5. Major Routes

Source: 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>.

Climate

The climate varies significantly depending on the region, largely as a result of the differences in topography between the sea and desert wilderness.⁷⁹ 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. The prevailing wind direction is from west to east. Moist air is elevated by the gradually rising terrain, 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

⁷⁹ Schlegel, “02 Land of the Bible: Basic Regions and Regional Variety.”

east, and in the highlands than lowlands.⁸⁰ Extreme differences in elevation create an environment of extreme diversity where climates can have dramatic differences within just a few miles of one another.

The geography of this land including the topography and climate show significant variations in relatively small distances. Armies fighting in this land had to be competent to defend their own land as well as the ability to project combat power to other lands in a variety of physical geographical conditions. For the Israelites, settling conquered territory following conquests must have required adherence to the demands of the agricultural cycle to sustain life. This means that there were likely fighting seasons as opposed to year-round fighting, which would have likely been a factor that prolonged the war.

Who Were the Israelites? A Cultural History

The Israelites came into existence in the 21st century BCE with ancestry traced back to the patriarch, Abraham, who became famous for his faith in God. According to the Bible, God promised the land of Canaan as an inheritance for future Hebrew generations through Isaac, one of Abraham's four named sons. The second born of Isaac's twin sons was named Jacob. Despite being the younger of two sons, Jacob became the patriarch of the family and his name was later changed to Israel. Throughout the Bible, Jacob is referred to as both Jacob and Israel. This and the following chapters use the name Jacob to distinguish the patriarch from the nation of Israel. Jacob had 12 sons, who each become the patriarchs of the 12 tribes of Israel: Ruben, Simeon, Levi,

⁸⁰ Paul H. Wright, *Holman QuickSource Bible Atlas* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2005), 29-30; Gichon and Herzog, 33.

Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin.⁸¹ The Bible then refers to every generation of Hebrews up until the birth of Jesus as children of Israel also known as Israelites.

In the 21st century BCE, Abraham moved with his father from Ur, an ancient town along the Euphrates River in modern-day Iraq, to the ancient city of Haran, located in modern day Turkey. It was when he moved out of his father's house that he came to Canaan, the land he believed to be promised to him from God. Abraham moved his family and settled among the Canaanites between the Canaanite cities of Bethel and Ai. After famine had stricken the land, Abraham moved his family south to Egypt but eventually returned to settle back in Canaan. 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 sold into slavery to Egyptians and through an unexpected chain of events, he ended up second in command under the Egyptian Pharaoh. Joseph's status, coupled with another famine throughout the land of Canaan, caused the rest of his brothers to move to Egypt, which established the 12 tribes of Israel in Egypt. After the death of Joseph, another Egyptian Pharaoh came to power and became threatened by the numbers of Hebrews so he subjected the Israelites to a life of slavery. Egyptian slavery became increasingly cruel towards the Hebrews and out of

⁸¹ During the time of conquest, because of its priestly responsibilities, the tribe of Levi was not allocated territory but rather cities within each of the other tribe's territories. However, the tribe of Joseph was divided into two tribes: Ephraim and Manasseh. Throughout the story of conquest, reference to the 12 tribes includes Ephraim and Manasseh in place of Levi and Joseph. Josh 14:4.

the oppression rose Moses, the Hebrew leader that would lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage into the freedom of a land to which they were promised by God.⁸²

Who Were the Canaanites? A Cultural History

Among the descendants of Canaan were the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, and Hivites.⁸³ According to the Bible, all of mankind descended from Noah after a worldwide flood that killed everyone on earth except Noah's family, which sought refuge on an ark that he constructed. Many details of the ancestral affiliation between descendants of Noah to include Canaanites and Israelites is uncertain. However, according to the Bible, the Israelites and Canaanites descend from two of Noah's three sons, although Jacob was born several generations after Canaan. This enables understanding the arguments for peaceful settlement, if in fact Israelites and Canaanites trace back to common heritage.

By the time of the conquest, the land of Canaan was multiethnic. The Canaanite cities were somewhat unified under Egyptian control but were not very well connected 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 during this period, which likely contributed to difficulty in mounting a unified defensive strategy. There is evidence that suggests each city was secure in its individual

⁸² Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers record the cultural history regarding family lineage of the 12 tribes of Israel and their interest in the land of Canaan prior to the Israelite invasion.

⁸³ 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.

status quo prior to disruption from the Israelites, and thus the Canaanites were not very organized as an alliance.⁸⁴

While Canaan is the term used to describe the land conquered 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 land was occupied by Amalekites and Perizzites.⁸⁵ Amalekites were descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau, and dwelled in the Negev.⁸⁶ Origination of the Perizzites is unclear to Ancient Near East scholars. There are no non-biblical references of Perizzites, so their origin is unknown. The Bible states that the Perizzites lived in the central highlands but is silent on ethnic affiliation.

Political Agenda

To examine operational art and campaign design, it is important to understand the political interests that shape the strategic environments. The Israelite prevailing national interest was settlement in the land of Canaan. It drove a policy that consisted of three foundational principles. First, the Israelites would not share land with the Canaanites, with one exception being that by Hebrew law, foreigners could submit to a condition of forced labor.⁸⁷ This meant that from the Israelite perspective, the only suitable outcome for Canaanites could be death, displacement, or only in exceptional cases, slavery.

⁸⁴ Joshua 9 records the alliance with the Gibeonites discussed later in this chapter. The Amorite kings' reaction to the Gibeonite alliance with the Israelite suggests preference for status quo.

⁸⁵ Josh 3:10.

⁸⁶ Num 13:29.

⁸⁷ Deut 20:19-20.

Second, the land was not to be destroyed or rendered useless. For example, fruit bearing trees were not to be cut down for resources during a siege and crops were not to be destroyed.⁸⁸ These were to be preserved for later Israelite use. Third, buildings and artifacts were to be preserved, except those that were associated with the worship of foreign gods. This policy would ensure that the Israelites would be able to preserve the cities for the Israelites own use without the ungodly influence of foreigners.

The prevailing national interest of the Canaanites was retention of their land. It drove the policy that consisted of three foundational principles based on the unfolding of events. The first was to defend unilaterally if possible. The second was to defend with coalition partners if necessary. The third 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 the Israelites and to every extent practical, defending the territory of neighboring Canaanite cities.

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. Given the compartmentalized nature of much of the terrain across the region, many societies, despite alliances or other affiliation, may have been physically isolated and thereby not mutually supporting of its neighbors. City walls served a critical role in city defense. The walls served as a layer of physical security which limited the number of defenders required to defend the city. However, massive city walls also contributed to defenders becoming contained by attacking forces.

⁸⁸ Deut 20:11-12.

The diversity of the settlements meant challenges for the Canaanites to mount a unified defense and challenges for the Israelites to clear the territory completely.

What is important to understand in this clash of political wills, is that prior to this period, Israel may have not existed as a state, but under the executive command of a single leader, it was very much a nation of tribes unified in 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 necessary to do so. In the end, neither got what they set out to achieve completely and one could make the case that the conflict still continues to this day.

PART TWO – Road to War

The story of Israel's conquest of Canaan starts with the Israelites, a unified nation of 12 Hebrew tribes, and their quest to escape a life of bondage and oppression in Egypt. Their pilgrimage, headed by Moses, led them out of Egypt and into the Arabian desert in pursuit of a land that would become their own. In the process of seeking out this land believed to be a promise from God, Moses and the Israelites wandered in the desert wilderness for 40 years living a nomadic lifestyle.⁸⁹

Reconnaissance of Canaan

After leading the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses started the conquest off by sending out 12 men—a leader from each of the tribes—from the Wilderness of Paran in the Negev on a zone reconnaissance mission to reconnoiter the land of Canaan. Among these men was Joshua, from the tribe of Ephraim, who was Moses's assistant and would

⁸⁹ Deut 2:7.

become the leader of Israel's conquest. Moses's reconnaissance objectives amounted to what could be considered priority information requirements in modern military doctrine:

go up 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 the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; whether 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.⁹⁰

The spies returned forty days later to report their findings to Moses. Along with evidence of the land yielding rich crops, the spies reported that the land was inhabited by people who were exceptionally strong, and that the cities were heavily fortified. Additionally, they reported the disposition of the occupants of Canaan by region.

The prevailing report was that the occupants throughout the land of Canaan were too strong to conquer. The only two who reported that the occupants of Canaan could be conquered were Joshua and Caleb (Caleb will later play a significant role at the end of the conquest). The men who gave the negative report were rebuked by Moses for their lack of faith. According to the writer, as a punishment for their lack of faith, their generation was sentenced to wander in the wilderness one year for every day of reconnaissance of Canaan, 40 years in total. Furthermore, that generation was sentenced to die in the wilderness never being allowed to enter Canaan except for Joshua and Caleb.⁹¹

Failed Invasion

As a result of this devastating sentence to not be among those destined to settle in Canaan, many of the Israelites, in desperation, set out on an assault without their leader,

⁹⁰ Num 13:17-20.

⁹¹ Numbers 13-14:34 records the Israelite reconnaissance of Canaan.

Moses, up into the mountains of the central highlands to conquer the Canaanites and Amalekites from the south. The Canaanites and Amalekites came down from the hills and defeated the Israelites, driving them back as far as Hormah. This unorganized and unsanctioned assault resulted in quick defeat for the Israelites. Figure 6 depicts the reconnaissance of Canaan and failed attempt to gain a foothold from the south.⁹²

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Figure 6. Failed Invasion of Canaan

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

⁹² Numbers 13-17 records the failed Israelite invasion of Canaan from the south.

After the devastating news from Moses and disappointing defeat from the Canaanites and Amalekites, tensions grew between the Israelites and their leader. Over the course of the following years in the wilderness, there was an uprising against Moses and his leadership team, which failed. The leaders of the revolt were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who had 250 prominent Israelite leaders in support. The Bible states that after confrontation by Moses, “the ground split apart under them [referring to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram], and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households” and their sympathizers were struck by fire.⁹³ Moses and the rest of the Israelites attributed this event to be punishment from God. Additionally, through a series of miraculous events, Moses and his leadership team were reaffirmed as the God-appointed leadership for the Israelite tribes. With reestablished trust in his appointment as leader, Moses led the Israelites through a series of conflicts with Canaanites. Eventually, the Israelites would travel to the Transjordan from the south after being denied transit through Edom’s territory in the Moab desert.⁹⁴ Figure 7 depicts the route that the Israelites took to get established in the Transjordan.

⁹³ Num 16:1-35.

⁹⁴ Deut 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 brother.

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Figure 7. Setting the Force in the Transjordan

Source: 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 of the Israelite's arrival 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.⁹⁵ The Amorites attacked the Israelites and were defeated. The Israelites took several Amorite cities in the Moab desert, eventually establishing camp in Acacia Grove, across from Jericho. The Israelites defeated the Amorites, but did not fight the people of Moab, who shared a border with the Amorites.⁹⁶ Over time, the Israelites began to compromise their cultural values as a result of Midianite influence in the land of Moab through. Most notably, after engaging in relationships with Moabite and Midianite women, the Israelites began to engage in idolatrous worship practices.⁹⁷

Near the end of service as leader of the Israelites, Moses commissioned Joshua as the next leader as his replacement. Shortly after commissioning Joshua, Moses sent 12,000 warriors (1,000 from each of the tribes) to attack the five kings of Midian as an act of vengeance from earlier episodes where Midianite women caused the Israelites to compromise their values and disobey Hebrew laws. 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 and children and 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.

⁹⁵ This shows that the enemy status of the Amorites in Canaan was based on territory, not ethnicity.

⁹⁶ Num 21:13.

⁹⁷ Num 25

After the defeat of the Midianites, Moses assigned the tribe of Gad, Ruben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh their inheritance east of the Jordan where the Israelites were currently located because by that time, those tribes were rich in livestock and the land was very suitable for raising livestock. However, the tribes of Gad and Ruben were still pledged to fight along the side of with the other tribes for their inheritance west of the Jordan. The tribe of Manasseh later went to Gilead and expelled the Amorites who were in it. This was an early demonstration of individual tribe's ability to conquer land. In the quest to settle this new land, Moses died and his servant, Joshua, became the new leader. By this time, Joshua had already proven himself as a respected leader as Moses's assistant. After the death of Moses, the next chapter of the conquest continues with the Israelites, camped in Acacia Grove, from which they prepare for their invasion under the leadership of Joshua.⁹⁸

PART THREE – Campaign Overview

The concept of operation for the conquest was a military campaign that would consist of multiple parts with initial operations deliberately planned and follow-on operations linked together by purpose. The only orders that were recorded were to prepare provisions and go into the land and conquer.⁹⁹ To do this, Joshua needed a plan to start things off. He would plan and execute a deliberate attack to gain a foothold and expand a lodgment in the land of Canaan and patiently wait for additional opportunities for further conquest.

⁹⁸ Num 21-32.

⁹⁹ Josh 1:10-11.

Bible scholars and ancient Near East warfare scholars often describe the Israelite conquest of Canaan under the command of Joshua as being three separate campaigns.¹⁰⁰ However, there is no evidence of a plan to conduct three separate campaigns. Instead, this conquest was a campaign comprised of a series of battles and engagements that systematically placed the Israelites in positions of relative advantage. The detailed planning of the first battles coupled with exploitation of emerging opportunities did lead to Joshua's campaign being executed in three distinct parts. The first part, further referred to as the Central Operation, included the initial battles of Joshua's conquest, starting with gaining a foothold at Jericho and ending with the conquest of the majority of the central highlands from the Valley of Jezreel to the Bersheeva Valley. The second part, referred to as the Southern Operation, was initiated by an enemy mobilization and included the destruction of the Amorite coalition (Canaanites in the southern regions). It ended with the further conquest of the central highlands, extending all the way south to the Negev. The third part, referred to as the Northern Operation, also was initiated by an enemy mobilization. It included the destruction of the largest Canaanite coalition of the campaign and ended with the complete conquest of the central highlands. The following is a description of each part of the campaign in the order in which they occur.

Central Operation

The Central Operation, the only part of the conquest with evidence of deliberate or detailed planning by Joshua, was planned and conducted in two parts. Part 1 was gaining a foothold and Part 2 was expanding the lodgment. Part 1, preceded by a

¹⁰⁰ This is the author's observation from discussions with Bible scholars and examination of numerous secondary references.

reconnaissance mission, started with the assault on the Canaanites at Jericho and ended with the destruction of the city by fire. Part 2, also preceded by a reconnaissance mission, started with a failed attack on Ai and included a follow-on successful attack on Ai. It ended with the destruction of Ai and the seizure of livestock and property as plunder. Figure 8 depicts the Central Operation from the Israelite perspective.

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Figure 8. Gaining a Foothold

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

Battle of Jericho: Gaining a Foothold

The Israelites were camped at Acacia Grove on the east side of the Jordan River. Joshua sent out two men on a reconnaissance mission across the river to reconnoiter the first city in the conquest, the Canaanite city, Jericho. The Bible states that the two men lodged in the home of a prostitute named Rahab, who provided them with actionable intelligence. She informed them of the low morale of the people and fear of the Israelites that was prevalent throughout the land, following the Israelite defeat of the Midianites and Amorites.¹⁰¹ Specifically, she reported that all the Canaanite kings who were by the sea in the coastal plains and those of the Amorites on the west side of the Jordan, feared Israel. In addition to intelligence, Rahab provided Joshua's men sanctuary from the city ruler's messengers who found out about the Israelite's reconnaissance and sought to capture them. She also provided the men a means to escape in return for the safety of her family upon the Israelite's invasion. Seeking refuge in Rahab's home was wise for two reasons. First, it was a likely source of valuable human intelligence.¹⁰² Second, it was built into the city wall so it made for an excellent escape point from the city. The reconnaissance team returned three days later and reported their findings to Joshua.

¹⁰¹ This was under the command of Moses which would have occurred just a year or two (one or two war seasons) prior to the encounter with Rahab.

¹⁰² Herzog and Gichon state, "There is no doubt that in later Hebrew usage the word *zonah* meant harlot. But the verb from which it was derived, *zan*, means to feed and to provide with victuals. Rahab might well have been a hostess, who kept an inn for wayfarers passing through Jericho. This seems to fit her standing as householder, an accepted member of a large family to whom even the messengers of the ruler of the town spoke with a certain civility. Inns have always been an excellent source of information. The careless talk of guests and the sharp ears of hosts have combined to make them a coveted intelligence objective." Herzog and Gichon, 45.

After three days, Joshua and the Israelites set out from Acacia Grove to prepare for the invasion. The Israelites crossed the Jordan River and established an attack position at a place they called Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. They would likely have had all the dismounted infantry capabilities of the time including swordsmen, pike men, and archers. It is uncertain how many of the Israelite's men mobilized for this attack given the need for rear area security and other community sustainment requirements back in Acacia Grove.¹⁰³ However, it is reasonable to assume that the Israelites mobilized a massive assault force and while the Israelites were numerically inferior to the entire combined Canaanite coalition, Joshua would have had an army with relative numerical superiority over Jericho's defenders.¹⁰⁴

Before commencing the attack, the Israelites took the time to circumcise all of their men. The Israelites considered this a sacred spiritual tradition that the people had neglected due to a generational gap. After the men had healed from the circumcision, they conducted their attack on Jericho. This physical act of obedience to God (which many might not understand today) demonstrates a belief in a spiritual domain of warfare, which appears to have contributed to the morale of the Israelites, which begins to point to one unique element of an Israelite way of war: spiritual right standing.

In anticipation of the Israelite attack, Jericho was on lock down. No one entered or exited the city. There is no report of any active defensive measures conducted outside

¹⁰³ Numbers 26:1-51 records a census that numbered 601,7030 men twenty years old or older who were able to serve in Israel's army.

¹⁰⁴ Personal site survey in 2017 led the author to believe that there would not be sufficient room to employ more than approximately 5,000-6,000 soldiers in the attack directly, with the majority of them serving in support roles as opposed to direct combat. This estimation can be increased significantly with the inclusion of a robust reserve.

of the city walls. For the start of the attack, Joshua led his army on a march around the city as a show of force, once each day for six days and seven times on the seventh day.¹⁰⁵ This was a very disciplined movement. The Israelites were directed to not say a word during the march, but only after the signal of the ram horn trumpet blasts were they to shout. After the seventh time on the seventh day, on the signal of trumpet blasts, the Israelites sounded off a shout collapsing the city walls, enabling the Israelites to assault the city stepping over the fallen mud bricks.¹⁰⁶

The Israelites, following God's command, destroyed virtually everything in the city, including men, women, and children; food and animals; and dwellings and they burned the city down with fire. Only silver, gold, bronze, and iron articles were kept for the treasury and only Rahab and her family were spared for having provided the Israelites with valuable intelligence at great risk. Of note, the Bible states—referring to Rahab—that “she dwells with Israel to this day”¹⁰⁷ indicating that the writer recorded the narrative sometime within her lifetime, which at most, would be decades after the destruction of Jericho.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ There are many theories as to the purpose of this march. Rather than add to the speculation, discussion herein is limited to likely effects of this activity.

¹⁰⁶ This account has generated countless theories as to what physically caused the walls to collapse. The prevailing theory for those who accept the biblical account is that it was likely an earthquake that caused the collapse as it would explain the collapse of interior walls as well prior to the destruction by fire. Additionally, seismic activity has been associated with causing disruption to the flow of the Jordan River, which could explain how the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

¹⁰⁷ Josh 6:25.

¹⁰⁸ Joshua 2-6 records the Battle of Jericho.

Battles of Ai

The First Battle of Ai: Defeat at Ai

With Jericho burned and in ruins, the Israelites may have used it for an observation post, but they did not rebuild on it during the period of this conquest. It is likely that the Israelites maintained a large rear area in Acacia Grove, but moved resources west to expand the bridgehead and build up Gilgal as a new base from which they could launch subsequent operations. This would ensure that the Jordan River would not be an obstacle for them to have to overcome later.

To expand their lodgment further into Canaan, during an operational pause, Joshua sent another reconnaissance team from Jericho to reconnoiter Ai, which is near modern day Baytin in the West Bank. Upon their return, they reported that the people of Ai were few. Additionally, they recommended that Joshua deploy only two to three thousand men to prevent from wearing down all the people there.¹⁰⁹ Joshua sent 3,000 men to attack Ai, but their attack was repelled, causing the Israelites to flee in defeat. It is uncertain if Joshua was among the 3,000, but based on the record that states Joshua sent men to Ai and the absence of any description of his participation, it is doubtful that he was present. There are several uncertainties as to how the battle unfolded such as the exact number of fighters at Ai and what circumstances that caused the Israelites to flee.

The soldiers of Ai chased the Israelites from the city gate all the way to Shebarim (precise location unknown) which would have been along the axis of attack from the east

¹⁰⁹ The timing of this mission relative to the destruction of Jericho is uncertain, only that it was a deliberate time of Joshua's choosing. While it could have been the following year, it is more likely that it occurred in the same year shortly after the destruction of Jericho due to concerns from the Ai reconnaissance team to prevent wearing out the Israelites.

of Ai, far enough to be a point of significance worthy of recording, but not so far as to push them into contact with the Israelites main body at Gilgal. Perhaps after having heard of the Israelite's destruction of Jericho, the King of Ai concealed his defenders in order to achieve surprise in a spoiling attack. Of note, the Israelites were attacking uphill into Ai, which placed them at a tactical disadvantage.¹¹⁰

The writer states that the men of Ai killed 36 Israelites in total. This is interesting because it is the first and last time that Israelite casualties are recorded during Joshua's campaign, which implies that the Israelites were unaccustomed to casualties at this point. The devastation caused by the casualties not only had tactical implications for matters of mortuary affairs, but it also had operational and strategic-level implications on the morale of his entire army and nation. This is the one account during Joshua's campaign when support of the nation began to weaken.

The Second Battle of Ai: Destruction of Ai

Concerned with the reputation of Israel, Joshua devised a plan to quickly convert Israel's previous defeat into victory before word of the defeat could spread throughout the land. Before developing the plan for a follow-on attack, during a tactical pause, Joshua first needed to determine the cause of the previous defeat. Joshua determined two causal factors. The first factor was that according to Joshua, the Israelites were not in good spiritual standing. Through an investigation, Joshua determined that one of the Israelites kept articles that were forbidden according to Israelite policy, which removed the favor of God from them. Although centered around a spiritual matter, Joshua's

¹¹⁰ Joshua 7 records the first Battle of Ai.

reaction and subsequent actions demonstrate how much leaders depended on individual soldiers to preserve moral right standing and support from the people for whom the warfare is conducted. In this case, Joshua ensured that the Israelites made atonement for the wrongdoing and re-established high morale through the restoration of spiritual right standing.

The second factor was an underestimation of the enemy. Joshua once again, like during the Battle of Jericho, recognized the importance of massing his forces at the decisive point. Joshua returned to Ai, this time, with an army of 30,000 by night, 10 times the force that he sent to Ai previously.¹¹¹ This time, he arrayed his forces in three elements: a security force, which likely had a guard mission, a deception force, which would turn into a counterattacking force, and an ambush force, which actually was in ambush to seize the fortified city of Ai. Figure 9 depicts Phase 1 of the second Battle of Ai.

¹¹¹ Regardless of any debate as to the exact numbers mobilized, it is reasonable to conclude that Joshua's initial attack on Ai was with a tenth of the force that he believed was necessary at the time of the second attack on Ai. Also, like the time between the destruction of Jericho and initial reconnaissance of Ai, there is no certainty as to the time lapse between the first and second attacks on Ai. However, as stated, it appears as if it would have likely been relatively sooner than later.

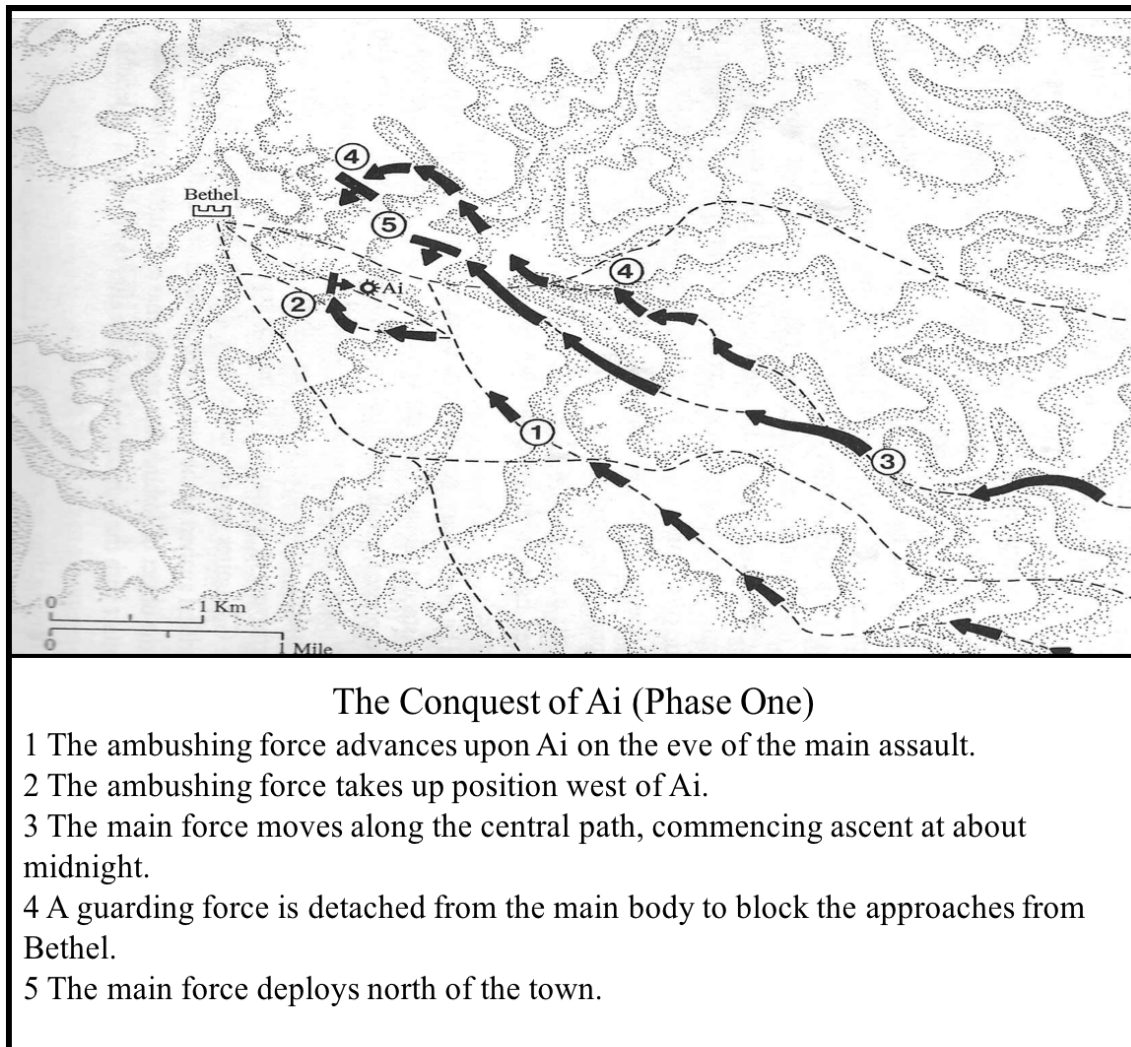


Figure 9. Victory at Ai (Phase 1)

Source: Mordechai Gichon and Chaim Herzog, *Battles of the Bible* (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 2006), 50.

In a ruse of military deception, Joshua had a 5,000-man element wait in ambush in the back of the city between Bethel and Ai on the west side of Ai with a rear guard to their flank on the west side of the city blocking along an avenue of approach for Bethel. Joshua went up with his deception force and camped on the north side of Ai with a valley in between them and Ai. Joshua used his deception element to conduct either a

demonstration or a faint appearing as if they were attempting to launch a single-pronged attack as they had before. The defenders of Ai, thinking they were familiar with what they thought to be the same assault tactic the Israelites used previously, set out to pursue Joshua's men. Once they had emptied the city, on Joshua's signal of raised spear, the ambush force seized the city and burned it to the ground.

Upon seizure of the city, Joshua redirected his support element to turn back on their pursuers and the others from the ambush force, who had seized the city came out of the city and joined in attacking the men of Ai from the opposite direction. The Israelites destroyed the people of Ai. Total number of Canaanites killed was 12,000, both men and women, which when accounting for noncombatants, suggests that once again, the Israelites were able to establish relative numerical superiority. The Israelites took the livestock and spoil but did not build on the city. Figure 10 is a depiction of Phase 2 of the second Battle of Ai.¹¹² At the conclusion of the second Battle of Ai, the Israelites conduct a strategic pause to build up their forces and await optimal conditions to continue in the offense.

¹¹² Joshua 8 records the second Battle of Ai.

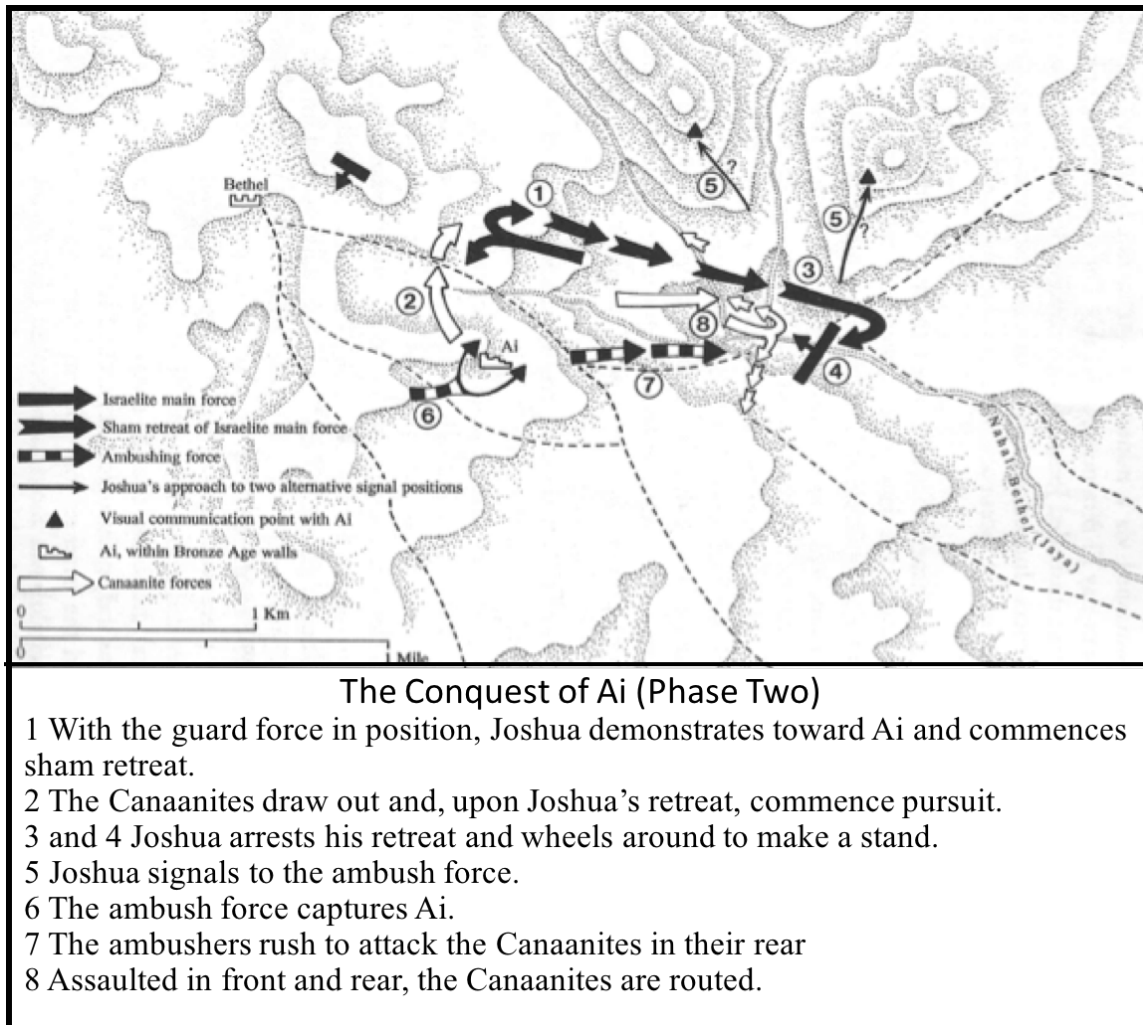


Figure 10. Victory at Ai (Phase 2)

Source: Mordechai Gichon and Chaim Herzog, *Battles of the Bible* (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 2006), 52.

The Central Operations, leading off the invasion into Canaan, has evidence of detailed planning throughout all three of its major battles: the Battle of Jericho, the first Battle of Ai, and the second Battle of Ai. By the end of the Central Operation, the Israelites would have a firm establishment in the land of Canaan with its people likely split across both banks of the Jordan River but with its expeditionary military forces

firmly established on the west bank with sufficient territory to enable settlement for more of the Israelite tribes.

The tactical details of the Battle of Jericho and Battles of Ai provide evidence for the deliberate and detailed planning of the Central Operation. This does not mean that all of the details of the plan were complete. The attack on Jericho and the initial attack on Ai both had reconnaissance components to them, which shows that there was still a need to collect information to complete the plan. However, the actions to seize the initiative in both accounts shows that operationally, there was a plan to establish a firm foothold and expand a lodgment as the initial phase in the operational design.

Southern Operation

The Southern Operation started with the Amorites forming a coalition and their subsequent mobilization for attack against an Israelite ally in the central highlands. This act of Canaanite initiative causes Joshua to mobilize his army. The Southern Operation included a series of battles and engagements conducted in the southern regions of the central highlands and ended with the elimination of Canaanites throughout that region and seizure of livestock and property as plunder.

Alliance with Gibeon

After Israel's victory in the second Battle of Ai, all the kings on the west side of the Jordan throughout Canaan began to gather to prepare for war against Israel. However, the inhabitants of Gibeon, who were Hivites,¹¹³ crafted a scheme to trick Israel into an

¹¹³ Hivites, descendants of Heth, son of Canaan were one tribe of Canaanites. *Genesis 10:15-18* identifies descendants of Canaan. This means that Gibeonites were as much Canaanites as any other Canaanite tribe or clan.

alliance so that they might be spared. The Gibeonites went to Joshua at Gilgal pretending to be ambassadors from a land afar off—in other words, not in Canaan. They proposed to establish a treaty, on account of hearing of the fame of the God of Israel, whereby they would agree to submit themselves to the Israelites as servants. The Gibeonites presumed that it was only a matter of time before they and the rest of their Canaanite allies would be killed if they could not establish an alliance with the Israelites. Eventually, Joshua and the Israelites found out that they were tricked but were bound by their treaty to be at peace with Gibeonites, only Gibeon would serve them as servants. The Gibeonites had four cities in Canaan: Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. This bolstered the Israelite's image even more among the rest of the Canaanites because Gibeon was a great city, greater even than Ai with many men in their army.¹¹⁴

Battle of Gibeon: Defense of Gibeon Against the Amorite Coalition

After hearing of the Israel-Gibeon Alliance, the King of Jerusalem formed an anti-Gibeon coalition with the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon to attack Gibeon for making peace with Israel. This five-kingdom Amorite coalition mobilized their armies and camped outside of Gibeon in preparation for war, which prompted the Gibeonites to send messengers down to Israel's camp at Gilgal and request assistance from Joshua and the Israelites.

Joshua responded to the request with a swift mobilization and night movement of 18 miles ascending 3,500 feet in a spoiling attack against the Amorite coalition.¹¹⁵ This

¹¹⁴ Joshua 9 records the treaty with the Gibeonites.

¹¹⁵ Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas*, 40.

was a sudden attack after a long, unexpected and undetected night movement which took the Amorites by surprise. The Israelites killed the Amorites at Gibeon and along the road that goes to Beth Horon and as far as Azekah and Makkedah, a 20-mile stretch. As the Amorites fled from Israel, on the decent of Beth Horon, they were pummeled by hailstones for the last 15 miles to Azekah. The Bible states that “more died from the stones than the sword.”¹¹⁶ This may have been the first time that the Israelites faced a numerically superior or better-equipped army, even with the Gibeonites, because the writer makes mention that Joshua received divine encouragement that he would be able to defeat them.¹¹⁷ This faith in divine favor led to an audacious move that caught his enemy off guard.

With the fast mobilization and long uphill night movement, the Israelites likely packed light for the battle at Gibeon. The movement, battle, and subsequent pursuit, would have left Israel’s forces exhausted. After the pursuit, Joshua and the Israelites returned to camp at Gilgal for an operational pause. Figure 11 depicts the Central and Southern Operations.

¹¹⁶ Josh 10:11.

¹¹⁷ Josh 10:8.

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Figure 11. Joshua's Central and Southern Operations

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

Later, the five kings were found hiding in a cave at Makkedah. Joshua sent men to seal the entrance with large stones while the Israelites and Gibeonites continued to attack the Amorite's rear guards. Even if the kings would have desired to, they were rendered unable to resurface to provide any command and control or guidance of their forces. Some of the Amorites who managed to escape entered various fortified cities throughout the Amorite's land. Joshua and the Israelites struck down Makkedah and its king and destroyed everything in the city. They did the same with Libnah and Lachish one by one.

In an attempt to take the initiative back from Israel, the King of Gezer attacked the Israelites at Lachish but his army was defeated. Later, Israel defeated Eglon followed

by Hebron and all its cities and Debir.¹¹⁸ Of note, these Amorite armies, regardless of their preparation and level of organization, were likely unable to overcome command and control challenges with the absence of their kings who were separated from their armies still trapped in the cave at Makkedah. The five kings were eventually killed and put on display for a short period.¹¹⁹ Depicted in figure 11, this was either an operation of sequential battles, or a battle with sequential engagements. It is uncertain as to the length of time that the Israelites conducted the Southern Operation. The fact that the Israelites returned to Gilgal after the pursuit but prior to the destruction of the cities means the break in events could have been as short as one day and as long as one or more years (or war seasons). Regardless of the time lapse, given the closely related nature of the battles or engagements, it appears as if there was an operational pause between the pursuit and the following attacks on the five southern cities.

Following the defeat of the southern kings, Joshua conquered most of the southern territories throughout Canaan including the central highlands, the south, the lowlands and the wilderness slopes. He conquered from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen as far as Gibeon. Then Joshua and the Israelites again, returned to camp at Gilgal for the second strategic pause.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Josh 10:34-39. Once again, the time lapse between these actions is unknown; however, of note, the King of Gezar mounting an attack on the Israelites at Lachish, provides one example of the Israelites in the defense.

¹¹⁹ In addition to the killing of noncombatants, the display of dead leaders marks another significant difference in culturally acceptable behavior in the conduct of war.

¹²⁰ Joshua 9-10 records the events of the Southern Operation.

The Southern Operation developed only as a response to Canaanite initiative. By the end of it, the Israelites would have a significant footprint in the land of Canaan with its people likely continuing with settlement throughout all of the central highlands from the Jezreel Valley south to the Negev. The extent of Israelite settlement at this point is unknown; however, based on the disposition of the Israelite tribes at the end of Joshua's time in command, discussed at the end of this chapter, settlement was likely sparse.

Northern Operation

Like the Southern Operation, the Northern Operation also started with a response to Canaanite initiative. The Canaanites formed a coalition of a large multitude from virtually all remaining Canaanite kingdoms (most of which from the coastal plains and northern regions), and mobilized to defeat the invading Israelites. The Northern Operation included the initial dismantling of the Canaanite coalition, the destruction of Hazor (the head Canaanite city), and the seizure of cities and property throughout the northern regions of the central highlands. Figure 12 is a depiction of the Northern Operation.

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Figure 12. Joshua's Northern Operation

Source: William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 43.

Battle of Merom: Spoiling Attack Against Hazor Coalition

After the King of Hazor heard about the Israelite victories to the south, he sent to the kings of Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph; the kings from the north in the mountains; in the plain south of Chinneroth; in the lowlands and in the heights of Dor on the west;

and the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Hivites below Hermon in the land of Mizpah. This coalition created a large number of soldiers many of which were equipped with horses and chariots.¹²¹ They assembled and camped at the waters of Merom (exact location still in dispute today). However, based on its name, it is likely that this camp would have been near a body of water from which both men and horses could access.

While the Canaanites were still conducting assembly area activities, Joshua and the Israelites came on them suddenly and attacked them by the waters of Merom, which led to a Canaanite retreat and Israelite pursuit. The Israelites chased them to Greater Sidon, the Brook Misrephoth, and to the Valley of Mizpah eastward. Joshua and the Israelites burned the chariots and hamstringed the horses to prevent anyone from believing that the Israelites prevailed on account of acquiring superior equipment as opposed to reliance on God's divine providence.¹²² Joshua turned back from the pursuit and killed the king of Hazor and all of its inhabitants and burned it with fire. However, they kept the animals as spoils.¹²³

Like the Southern Campaign, the Northern Operation developed as a response to Canaanite initiative. By the end of it, the Israelites would have complete dominance of the central highlands throughout all of Canaan with its people likely beginning settlement throughout all of the central highlands. The disposition of Israelites in the coastal plains

¹²¹ Joshua 11:4 states, "So they went out, they and all their armies with them, as many people as the sand that is on the seashore in multitude, with very many horses and chariots."

¹²² This is an act that involves rendering an animal so that it can no longer walk properly or run at speed by severing the hamstring tendons.

¹²³ Joshua 11 records the events of the Northern Operation.

is uncertain, but evidence suggests that contenders remained in the region or migrated to the region prior to the Israelites settling there. Following the Northern Operation, the Israelites conduct their second strategic pause.

Conquest Termination and Final Disposition

After the defeat of Hazor's Canaanite Coalition, Joshua divided Canaan among the remaining nine and one-half tribes according to their population. Each territory was conquered sufficiently to settle each tribe in their respective land. However, the Canaanites were not completely destroyed or displaced at this point. This period of Israel's development into a nation state transitioned the emphasis from foreign to domestic policy. There would still be continued acts of warfare, but the primary effort was in settlement of the land. This time, instead of Joshua leading a unified national effort to conquer the Canaanites regionally, it would be up to the tribes individually or through alliances among themselves to conquer or displace the remaining Canaanites from their newly assigned territories.

Joshua divided the land as an inheritance to the remaining tribes. His instructions were to continue with conquest as required to settle each inheritance. After the defeat of the Hazor coalition, only two tribes continued to conquer Canaanite cities and settle in their conquered territory. One was Caleb's tribe, Judah. Caleb continued to conquer territory defeating Canaanites in battle as do the generations that followed. This demonstrated the ability for independent tribes to continue conquest.

The remaining seven and a half tribes mostly stayed in Gilgal. Upset with their reluctance to settle their territory, Joshua sent a team of men comprised of representatives from each of the remaining tribes on a mission to survey the remaining land to finalize

the allocation. After the men had returned, Joshua finalized the allocations and the tribes moved out of Gilgal to continue settlement. There were differences in success, but many were not able to displace the determined Canaanites out of the land, so Canaanites lived among them. Figure 13 depicts the conquered and unconquered territory in the land of Canaan.

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Figure 13. Conquered and Unconquered Territory in the Land of Canaan

Source: William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas: Historical Geography of the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Self-published, 2016), 49.

After Joshua's death, the tribes were inconsistent in their ability to displace the remaining Canaanites and resist new opposition. In some cases, the Canaanites returned and resettled cities that the Israelite tribes failed to establish themselves in. One example of this is Hazor. Despite a decisive victory over the Canaanites at Hazor, other Canaanites resettled it causing following generations of Israelites to have to reconquer it later, which occurs in the period of the Judges of Israel, when Israel was without a unifying leader.¹²⁴ The majority of the areas that the Israelites were unable to conquer were the coastal plains, Jezreel Valley, and Jordan Rift Valley north of the Sea of Galilee. Additionally, with Egyptian influence weakening in the region, other foreigners such as the Philistines and Assyrians began to compete for control and influence in the region. The conquest ended with Joshua deceased and no replacement leader but the Israelite tribes had instructions on how to proceed. This period marks Israel's breaking down as a nation at the beginning of its establishment as a state.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed three elements that provided context for understanding Israel's conquest of Canaan along with a summary of the main events. The physical geography provided a means for the Israelites to offset Canaanite technological advantages and forced the Canaanites into a series of isolated and poorly coordinated actions. Based on the Israelite disposition following Moses's campaigns, the Israelites were able to launch their invasion from favorable terrain, expand a lodgment and conquer

¹²⁴ As discussed in chapter 2, there is disagreement as to the relationship between the records of the destruction of Hazor in Joshua and Judges. This reflects one of the views of Israelite conquest of Hazor.

sufficient territory to settle each of their tribes as planned, focusing on domination of the central highlands, which was more suitable for their dismounted infantry force.

Strategically, the Canaanite strategy was defensive; however, their operational approach was offensive. Having a past of internal conflict, the Canaanites were unable to mount an effective, coordinated operational approach. On the other hand, the Israelites were able to mass forces achieving sufficient relative combat power at decisive points. A breakdown in unity among the Israelites, following the death of their conquest leader, led to a weakening of the Israelite alliance as they began to fight as individual tribes with differing results. This created a situation where unification of the Canaanites became less important to succeeding Canaanite kings.

The strategic importance of Canaan as a link between several major empires, meant that even if Israel were able to achieve complete conquest, they would have to quickly figure out how to control the major routes flowing through the territory. They would also to be prepared for substantial competition from foreigners looking to contest them for it. The following chapter provides analysis of the preparation for and execution of Joshua's campaign through the lens of four operational design elements.

CHAPTER 4

CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

Overview

Chapter 3 described the strategic and operational environment, the sequence of events that led to war, and the major events of the conquest. This chapter, divided into three parts, will provide analysis of the preparation for and execution of the campaign. Part 1, Campaign Design, analyzes the strategies and operational approaches of both the Israelites and the Canaanites. Part 2, Operational Art and Elements of Design, analyzes Joshua's campaign through elements of design. Part 3, Joshua's Generalship, discusses the significant role of Joshua as campaign leader and his impact on the outcome.

PART ONE – Strategy and Operational Approach

Joshua's Military Strategy

Although Moses set the foundation for conquest, there is no evidence that he provided Joshua a detailed invasion plan before his death. However, as Moses's assistant, it is likely that Joshua discussed strategy for the conquest with him regularly. The initial failed attempt at conquest from the south during Moses' tenure, combined with the establishment of the Israelites in the Transjordan, led Joshua to visualize an approach from the east. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that Israel's conquest of Canaan was largely the product of Joshua's vision, shaped by his experiences with Moses.

Joshua's strategy for conquest consisted of an invasion by offensive military force in a total war of annihilation with the unlimited objective of complete destruction or displacement of Canaanites with Israelite tribes settled in their newly acquired territories.

Joshua did not mandate any time restriction to complete the conquest. This ensured he could wage war for as long as necessary to achieve his nation's objectives. The Israelites were set on a conquest with no possibility for coexistence despite having sufficient territory to survive in the Transjordan.

If there were any weakness to the strategy, it would appear to have been in three critical resources: personnel, technology, and only as events would reveal, time—or more specifically, the length of Joshua's leadership. First, the Canaanites had numerical superiority, provided they could mass their combined forces. Additionally, by this time, all of Israel's soldiers, trained in the best practices of Egyptian warfare, had died during the years of Moses's leadership.¹²⁵ The Israelites, while having some experience in warfighting from their victories over the Amorites and Midianites in the Transjordan, were likely not as experienced as the Canaanites, who by evidence of the Amarna Letters, were constantly having to defend their territory in internal Canaanite as well as external struggles to control key terrain in the region. Second, the Israelites would not have been as well-equipped as many of the Canaanites, who were supported by the Egyptian Empire. One of the key factors that enabled the Israelites to overcome these first two disadvantages and helped to restore balance to Joshua's strategy was public support, which provided freedom from time constraints. Unfortunately for the Israelites, the terminal shortcoming of the strategy was the lifetime of Joshua's leadership. The Canaanites as the defenders ended up still having time on their side. For the Israelites to overcome this, they would have to ensure some means of continuity in leadership, which they would prove unable to do.

¹²⁵ Num 26:63-65.

There is no indicator of how long Joshua thought the conquest would take. Although never explicitly recorded, a likely national strategic end state would have been Canaanites destroyed or completely displaced and Israelites settled in their new territories. A critical element of this strategy was the complete annihilation of any Canaanites that chose to stay in the land. Certainly, Joshua would have remembered how the women of Moab and Midian influenced the Israelite men to compromise their spiritual right standing by committing idolatry following the defeat of the Midianites. The Israelites considered this a threat to their existence.¹²⁶ This led to reproach from Moses and demonstrated the risk associated with not following through with complete annihilation.

Canaanite Military Strategy

The Canaanites did not develop a coordinated strategy before the Israelites invaded. There are indications from Rahab's intelligence that the Canaanites were aware of the Israelite intentions of conquest and anticipated the invasion; however exactly how much time they had to prepare is unknown.¹²⁷ Over time, the Canaanite strategy eventually evolved into a strategic defense with operational offensive operations that sought to defeat the Israelites and their allies through decisive battle. It would require the

¹²⁶ Deut 20:16-18.

¹²⁷ Num 13:27-33 describes the report from the reconnaissance of Canaan that Moses ordered, ending with the phrase, "and so we were in their [Canaanites'] sight" indicating that the Israelites had direct contact with some of the Canaanites during the recon mission. Josh 9:9-10, 24 records the reason that the Gibeonites give Joshua for their desire to establish an alliance. Somehow, eventually, word of Israelite intentions got out to the Canaanites.

mobilization of forces in mass on a large scale.¹²⁸ Canaanite limits for the pursuit of fleeing invaders is unclear. However, there are indications that the Canaanites eventually sought the destruction of Israelite forces. The strength of the Canaanite strategy, which can be seen through weaknesses of the Israelite strategy, was its resources. Collective numerical superiority along with the enhanced shock and mobility that came with chariot forces provided significant advantages. Additionally, as the Canaanites were fighting against a threat to their existence in their land, time was less of a factor.

One weakness of the Canaanite strategy was the lack of mutual support of city defenses, which were likely located to facilitate individual city security and to control key terrain features. Another weakness was a lack of interoperability between the elements. Despite achieving what appears to be unity of effort and even unity of command in some cases, the lack of interoperability likely contributed to internal friction, especially with large coalitions that may have even shared enmity with one another at some point in time.

Joshua's Operational Approach

Joshua's initial operational approach was to conduct an offensive campaign comprised of sequential attacks on objectives along a single line of operation, making use of time and space to offset the Canaanite technological advantages and create local numerical superiority. This portion of the operational approach applied to the Central Operation only. Subsequent operations would use an approach that consisted of strategic

¹²⁸ Josh 10:1-5, 16, records the forming of the Amorite coalition. Although initiated by the King of Jerusalem, the record does not reflect him or any other king as a commander of the entire coalition. Josh 11:1-3 records the forming of the Hazor Coalition. Although Joshua 11:10 states, "for Hazor was formerly the head of all those [northern Canaanite] kingdoms," but does not confirm the King of Hazor as coalition leader during the time of the Israelite conquest.

pauses to wait for the Canaanites to mass at the operational level then strike to destroy large numbers of Canaanite forces. In situations where it was not possible to achieve relative numerical superiority, such as the attacks against the Amorite coalition in the Southern Operation and the Canaanite coalition in the Northern Operation, Joshua would use surprise and the terrain to render the enemy unable to deploy all of its forces in mass tactically. During each of the major operations, operational pauses enabled Joshua to ensure his forces maintained the ability to project combat power. These operational approaches depended on a thorough understanding of mission variables and the ability to employ tactics that would make extensive use of terrain, military deception, and surprise. As such, intelligence gathering was a critical element of developing the operational approach.

Canaanite Operational Approach

The Canaanite operational approach was to conduct offensive set-piece battles to defeat or deter Israelite aggression through regional coalition warfare. While some of the Amarna Letters indicate weakness in several individual Canaanite kingdoms, the Canaanites had confidence in their ability to prevail as a coalition. This assessment is based on their repeated attempts to seize the initiative by attacks with large coalitions. Unfortunately for the Canaanites, they would be unable to fight at the time and place of their choosing once the Israelites were able to get firmly established in the central highlands.

PART TWO – Operational Art and Elements of Design

This analysis uses the U.S. joint doctrine definition for operational art and design. Operational art is the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience—to plan and execute (when required) strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military capabilities by integrating ends, ways, and available means. Commanders use operational art to determine how, when, where, and for what purpose military forces will be employed, to influence the adversary's disposition before combat, to deter adversaries from supporting enemy activities, and to assure multinational partners to achieve operational and strategic objectives.¹²⁹ Operational design is the conception and construction of the framework that underpins a campaign or major operation plan and its subsequent execution.¹³⁰ Up until recent revision, U.S. joint doctrine specified that the elements of operational design were termination, military end state, lines of operation (LOO) and lines of effort (LOE), arranging operations, objective, and operational reach. Current joint doctrine suggests that these terms, defined in the glossary, are examples of elements of operational design, which help leaders visualize and describe the broad operational approach to achieve objectives and accomplish the mission. Together, operational art and operational design strengthen the relationship between strategic objectives and the tactics employed to achieve them.¹³¹ The following is an analysis of Joshua's campaign using four elements of operational design.

¹²⁹ JCS, JP 3-0, I-13.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Termination and Military End State

In modern U.S. joint doctrine, termination criteria are the specified conditions approved by the President or Secretary of Defense that must be met before a named operation or campaign can be concluded. These termination criteria help define the desired military end state, which normally represents a point in time or a set of conditions beyond which the President does not require the military instrument of national power as the primary means to achieve remaining national objectives. This period or set of circumstances usually signals a transition from military to civilian lead of subsequent activities.¹³² Military end state is the set of required conditions that defines achievement of all military objectives.¹³³ The termination criterion was the settlement of each Israelite tribe in its designated portion of land.¹³⁴ The military end state (defeated or displaced Canaanites), was directly linked to the national strategic end state (Israel established in its new territory without the presence of any Canaanites). The Israelites were to wage war as long as Canaanites retained terrain within prescribed boundaries.¹³⁵

As discussed previously, in several cases, Israelite tribes settled their land but failed to completely displace the Canaanites who occupied nearby settlements, which was contrary to the unlimited objective of complete annihilation or displacement. This

¹³² JCS, JP 3-0, I-13.

¹³³ Ibid., I-8.

¹³⁴ Joshua 1:11 records in very simple language the strategic objective, “to go in and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.”

¹³⁵ Joshua 1:14-15 records Joshua’s instructions to the Israelites that would settle on the already conquered east side of the Jordan. In those instructions, he states that they were to expect to be required to fight until the remaining tribes were given rest from war.

ultimately led to an incomplete conquest and prevented the desired military end state from ever fully materializing. However, with Israel's tribes established in their new territories, termination criteria for Joshua's campaign had been met.

After the completion of the Northern Operation, Joshua ended Israel's military operations as a nation and transitioned to military operations by individual tribes. After having ensured that each tribe could establish itself in their new territory, Joshua directed them to continue conquest within their designated boundaries. There is no equivalent in modern U.S. military doctrine that aligns with this practice. On the one hand, this transition is similar to a military organization transitioning to subordinate units continuing operations. On another hand, the authority that each tribe had to decide when, where, and by what means to engage remaining Canaanites resembles individual state authority. What is important to understand regarding termination, is that Joshua achieved only part of his military and national strategic objectives (defeated or displaced Canaanites and Israel established in its new territory without the presence of any Canaanites). There is no way to know if he had aspirations to lead his nation through the complete destruction or displacement of Canaanites or if he only intended to get each of the tribes established in their territories. The termination criterion for his campaign (settlement of each Israelite tribe in its designated portion of land) fell short of his strategic objectives.

Arranging Operations

There is no current joint doctrine definition for this design element. Previous versions of Joint Publication 3-0, *Operations* state, "By arranging operations and activities into phases, the JFC can better integrate and synchronize subordinate operations

in time, space, and purpose.”¹³⁶ Arranging operations refers to the organization of activities in relation to some reference point, usually other environmental variables or other operations. The goal of campaign design is to arrange operations in time, space, and purpose to achieve a strategic objective. As previously discussed, Joshua arranged initial operations in time, space, and purpose, but follow-on operations in purpose only.

Joshua chose to initiate the invasion at a time when the Israelites would be able to live off the land easily, during harvest season. He timed the assault even more precisely, after confirming through reconnaissance, the low morale of the Canaanites. Following the initial assault at Jericho, Joshua timed his efforts to expand the lodgment by attacking to destroy Canaanites at Ai in the central highlands to maintain critical momentum. This is made even more evident by his decision to quickly reattack after the first failed attempt. Joshua chose Jericho as the point of entry because it provided quick access to the central highlands in a location that also split the Canaanite kingdoms in half from north to south. This ensured that future battle would limit the total size of the Canaanite armies. It also would ensure equal operational reach in either direction from the main base camp at Gilgal. Joshua chose to expand the lodgment by attacking Ai because it was the closest Canaanite city to Jericho and the Israelites would have been vulnerable to attacks from Ai if left unconquered.

After the Israelites were able to build up a base of operations at Gilgal, Joshua conducted a strategic pause enabling him to build up sustainment capability, increase capacity to continue with offensive operations, and settle part of the Israelite tribes. Here, Joshua exercised strategic patience waiting for opportunities to meet the Canaanites in

¹³⁶ JCS, JP 3-0, V-6.

set-piece battle in locations of his preference. Thus, after gaining the foothold at Jericho and expanding the lodgment with Ai, Joshua linked subsequent operations to the campaign by purpose only, not by time and space.

Keeping a clear purpose in mind was critical to Joshua's campaign because it would be the glue that linked all of the operations together allowing the Israelites to benefit from their ability to take long strategic pauses. Joshua was able to wait patiently for the ideal situation to exploit opportunities initiated by Canaanite actions. This was a very economical application of force, which enabled the time for the Israelites to grow accustomed to their new land and build strength throughout the conduct of the conquest.

A key component of a campaign design with operations linked by purpose only is the commitment to pursuing objectives regardless to the amount of time required. This implies that popular support can influence how commanders and planners arrange operations. In the case of Israel's conquest of Canaan, popular support enabled a campaign design that depended on operational patience and long-lasting support of the Israelite population. Any success that was to be realized depended on the people's willingness to believe in and commit to the cause of conquest. After the completion of Joshua's campaign, it was the will of the people, which varied considerably from tribe to tribe, which prevented complete conquest. Several of the tribes lost focus of the goal and displaced Canaanites only to the extent necessary to allow the tribe to settle, but without following through with the complete annihilation or displacement of the Canaanites. In some cases, some of the tribes seemed to be very reluctant to continue the cause beyond what the Israelites achieved under Joshua's leadership.

Line of Operation and Line of Effort

A LOO 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).¹³⁷ Given the nature of the geography as discussed in chapter 3, there were limited lines of communication (LOCs) and maneuver corridors that the Israelites could use. The Coastal Highway was heavily trafficked and guarded at checkpoints by the Egyptian and Canaanite coalition armies.¹³⁸ Additionally, this corridor, running through the coastal plains, was ideal terrain upon which the Canaanites could employ their chariots, which could have been problematic for the Israelites.

The sea was not an available LOC because the Israelites had no maritime forces at this point. Interestingly, other nations such as the Philistines, who would soon later strip control of the coastal plains away from the Canaanites, did have a significant maritime capability, which indicates the potential for the sea as a LOC upon which invaders could use to build LOOs.

For Joshua to be successful, he would have to develop a maneuver scheme that would make use of the LOCs and maneuver corridors that would be advantageous to his force and allow him to gain operational surprise to start the invasion. Joshua identified the only suitable LOO to start the campaign and also positioned his forces for exploitation of emerging opportunities. Joshua inherited his starting point from Moses, who established the camp in the Moab Desert at Gilgal. However, Joshua considered and

¹³⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), III-27.

¹³⁸ Malamat, 2.

selected his LOO for his campaign as indicated by his selection in the first two objectives and subsequent decisions on how to proceed. For the start of the Central Operation, as depicted in chapter 3 figure 8, Joshua's LOO included gaining a foothold at Jericho and extending the lodgment along the Way of the Wilderness by destroying Canaanites at Ai, the next closest Canaanite threat to Jericho.¹³⁹

From this point, Israelite offensive actions appear as episodes of exploited opportunities that develop from enemy mobilizations. It is, therefore, difficult to make the argument that Joshua linked all of the operations that the Israelites would conduct in time, space, and purpose before initiating the invasion. The events instead demonstrate that keeping in mind a clear military end state, Joshua was unwavering in his strategy and operational approach, which enabled him to link operations in purpose as desired conditions from emerging opportunity materialized.

Joshua's LOO in the Southern Operation results from the retreat of the Amorite Coalition, which fled to the west then south from Gibeon, presumably to return to their respective cities or any familiar city of refuge to the south. The LOO was a pursuit following the Amorites west along the Beth-horon road then south to Aijalon and Makkedah. Joshua's Southern Operation LOO depicted in chapter 3, figure 11 continued with the Israelite exploitation that followed in a single zigzag-shaped trek from Makkedah to Debir.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ The Way of the Wilderness was one of the few east-west routes that traversed the mountainous central highlands. Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas*.

¹⁴⁰ Josh 10:10-39.

In the Northern Operation, as depicted in chapter 3, figure 12, Joshua's LOO was a single spoiling attack north out of the central highlands to the Waters of Merom, then onward north in pursuit of fleeing Canaanites as far as Sidon and Mizpah.¹⁴¹ While the Northern Operation LOO was mostly the result of their pursuit of fleeing Canaanite forces, it is noteworthy that there was no attempt to break up forces in an operational maneuver to force the Canaanites to fight on multiple fronts. That would have prevented the Israelites from being able to mass their forces and could have led to a situation of under match.

While the Southern and Northern campaigns demonstrate reasonable decision making with the pursuit of a retreating enemy and subsequent exploitation, the Central Operation is the best phase of conquest for examining LOOs as a design element. The Central Operation was an excellent application of this design element because it enabled Joshua to match Israelite strengths with Canaanite weaknesses. The single LOO enabled Joshua to mass his forces and achieve relative numerical superiority, and the geography of the LOO prevented the Israelites from having to combat Canaanite chariots. Multiple LOOs would have likely over complicated operations and could have left the Israelites with insufficient combat power as demonstrated in the first Battle of Ai.

A LOE links multiple tasks and missions using the logic of purpose—cause and effect—to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions.¹⁴² There

¹⁴¹ Given the locations that Bible scholars believe are Sidon and Mizpah, it appears that there is a possibility for a pursuit along two separate LOOs. However, the exact routes are unclear, and the text does not indicate the timing if in fact simultaneous actions were conducted along different LOOs.

¹⁴² JCS, JP 5-0, III-28.

is no evidence of this framework being used in the design of the campaign; however, the actions of the Israelites before, during, and after Joshua's campaign were similar enough to make the case that they could be considered distinct efforts. There is an argument for three LOEs. The first LOE was the destruction of enemy military forces. Any action that contributed to this helped the Israelite cause. There was no concern about collateral damage or international community support to temper the conduct. This does not imply that there was no moral code to guide the Israelites in the conduct of warfare, but rather any regulations governing their conduct were not as a result of outside influence.

The second was the destruction of Canaanite civilization to include the destruction of non-military personnel or repossession of property and infrastructure. Anything of use belonging to the Canaanites that could be repurposed for Israelite use contributed to Israelite settlement. The general laws concerning the conduct of warfare required the Israelites to kill all of the men in a siege, but to keep the women, children, and livestock as spoils. However, for the conquest of Canaan required the destruction of all of the Canaanites with minor exceptions.¹⁴³

The third, although not a direct military responsibility, was the settlement of the land. After enemy forces had been defeated or displaced from the land, the tribes of Israel were to settle in their designated territories and assume the responsibility of maintaining security. While the conquest was largely sequential, activities along these three LOEs likely had significant overlap from location to location, particularly, the settlement effort.

For reasons subject to debate, there were three exceptions to these efforts: the complete destruction of Jericho, the destruction of Ai, and the destruction of Hazor.

¹⁴³ Deut 20:12-17.

However, throughout all three phases of the campaign, this assessment seems to hold true. The fact that the first phase was the only one planned deliberately helps make a case for planned LOEs. LOEs would ensure all activities contributed to the final national objective and demonstrates how operations were linked together by purpose as opposed to time or space. Keeping LOEs in mind was critical to the design because, without them, it would be difficult to link operations together in any way at all.

Operational Reach

Operational reach is the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities and is inextricably tied to LOOs and the capacity and ability to throughput logistics to the point of destination. Consequently, the joint force must protect LOOs to ensure freedom of action.¹⁴⁴ Joshua arranged operations along a single LOC, which enable simplified sustainment activities. The regionally sequential destruction of Canaanite cities and combat forces allowed the Israelites to project combat power progressively deeper into the Canaanites' territory and enabled them to immediately settle on or adjacent to seized terrain, thus establishing a secure connection.

The initial design of the Central Operation demonstrates an excellent understanding of operational reach and how operational or strategic pauses can increase capabilities and operational capacity. Joshua needed to gain a foothold and expand a lodgment, but he also needed to be able to build up a base at Gilgal (adjacent to Jericho). An operational pause after victory at Jericho enabled a quick re-setting of the force and

¹⁴⁴ JCS, JP 5-0, III-33.

time to develop the situation further. A strategic pause following victory at Ai enabled the increase in capacity to project combat power in the future when the Canaanites would provide optimal conditions for the Israelites to attack. This enabled the initial settlement of the populous, which included planting and harvesting crops between major operations. It is likely that if Joshua were to continue his assault beyond Ai, he would have risked overextending his operational reach.

PART THREE – Joshua’s Generalship

So far, an examination of Joshua’s military strategy, operational approach, and campaign design show how disadvantages can be mitigated and even transformed into advantages through the application of operational art. There are numerous historical examples of tactical, operational, and strategic excellence, but far fewer examples of leaders displaying excellence on all three levels. Many leaders who have provided such examples, demonstrated excellence at the various levels as they increased in influence and responsibility throughout their time of service.

Many of the details of Joshua’s professional development are unknown. However, at the time of Joshua’s campaign, he demonstrated excellence on all three levels simultaneously. During Joshua’s time of leadership, the Israelites were able to successfully conquer all of the Canaanites that they encountered, which enabled Israelite settlement in Canaan. However, his death and the subsequent failure of the Israelite tribes to continue and complete the conquest indicate that Joshua was a key factor in the conquest of Canaan. Therefore, much of the success of the conquest must be attributed to Joshua’s generalship.

Joshua was a master at achieving tactical surprise by using terrain and time, and the use of speed and tempo. While this may have less to do with arranging operations than applying the principles of war,¹⁴⁵ it still shows how his efforts to exploit opportunities are made to further gains from previous operational successes. The defeat of the Canaanites at Ai demonstrated the use of night movement and deception to achieve tactical surprise during the Central Operation. The quick reaction to assist the Gibeonites, set up with an unanticipated and undetected night movement surprised the Amorites, which enabled a stunning spoiling attack at Gibeon in the Southern Operation. The rapid night time movement to the waters of Merom created surprise in the defeat of the Hazor Coalition in the Northern Operation.

Joshua also arranged operations in spaces along a single LOO, which simplified his plan and enabled him to focus effort. Additionally, the sequential operations enabled Joshua to mass his forces in compartmentalized regions, which in some cases isolated the Canaanites, and in others, denied certain lines of enemy retreat, which severely limited Canaanite options once they began to lose in battle. Both tactically and operationally, throughout the conduct of the campaign, Joshua used space to his advantage by using terrain to offset the technological and experiential advantages of the Canaanites.

While tactically, Joshua employed simultaneity of actions, such as in the second attack on Ai, operationally, he avoided this, ensuring not to have to fight on multiple fronts, a mistake that many leaders have made as demonstrated in multiple military

¹⁴⁵ The principles of war are objective, offensive, mass, economy of force, maneuver, unity of command, security, surprise, and simplicity. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1-0, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), I-3.

campaigns. Joshua demonstrated the potential advantage of sequential operations in circumstances of numerical and technological disadvantage. This is in contrast to current U.S. military doctrine, where simultaneity is the preferred technique for employing forces.¹⁴⁶

While there is no specific mention of Joshua describing his understanding of the operational environment and problem statement before designing an operational approach, there are signs that tell some of what he was thinking. First, as previously mentioned, by his reconnaissance and perhaps reports of others, Joshua had a very thorough understanding of the operating environment. Based on the design of the campaign and decisions that Joshua made throughout the campaign, it is reasonable to conclude that he had a reasonable if not thorough grasp of all operational variables.¹⁴⁷

Second, consider Joshua's understanding of the problem from the exchange that he and Caleb had with the congregation of Israelites following the Canaan reconnaissance report. The other 10 spies identified the problem as the occupants of the land who were great in stature and the fortifications of many of the cities. Joshua and Caleb did not refute the assessment concerning the stature of the Canaanites and fortifications; however, they identified a different problem. They identified the problem as the Israelite's will to seize the land. Interestingly, neither mission variables¹⁴⁸ nor operational

¹⁴⁶ JCS, JP 3-0, V-16.

¹⁴⁷ In U.S. joint doctrine, the operational variables are political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, information, physical environment, and time.

¹⁴⁸ Mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations (known as METT-TC) are the mission variables that commanders and their staffs use to estimate situations. Headquarters, Department of the

variables¹⁴⁹ directly account for the will of an army's soldiers. This is what Joshua identified as the linchpin to success. Even as a follower of God, he believed that without the faith of the people, any attempt of conquest would be futile.¹⁵⁰

Conclusion

This chapter provided analysis of the preparation for and execution of the campaign. It provided analysis of the strategies and operational approaches of both the Israelites and the Canaanites, elements of Joshua's campaign design, and Joshua's generalship. Despite disadvantages in personnel numbers, technology, and time, Joshua's strategy of a total war of annihilation was able to overcome the Canaanite limited defensive war. However, as stated in earlier in this chapter, after reaching termination criteria (settlement of each Israelite tribe in its designated territory), the Israelites had not achieved their military or strategic end states (defeated or displaced Canaanites and Israel established in its new territory without the presence of any Canaanites).

Joshua's campaign design was oriented on the strategic objective. With a clear military end state, he arranged his initial operations in time, space, and purpose to gain a foothold and expand the lodgment in a way that would divide the Canaanite kingdoms. Using single LOOs, he was able to mass his forces at decisive points, achieving local

Army (HQDA), Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 3.

¹⁴⁹ Political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information (PMESII) are the operational variables that U.S. Joint military planners use as a framework for analyzing operational environments. JCS JP 5-0, III-8-III-10. The U.S. Army adds physical geography and time to operational variables. HQDA, ADP 3-0, 3.

¹⁵⁰ Num 14:9.

numerical superiority and containing isolated enemy elements. Having focused LOEs, Joshua exercised operational patience waiting for the Canaanites to present an opportunity to which he could exploit in set-piece battles that were within the operational reach of the Israelite forces.

As a practitioner of operational art, Joshua demonstrated skill, knowledge, and experience to plan and execute his strategy, campaign, and operations to organize and employ Israelite military capabilities by integrating ends, ways, and available means. It was his expertise that enabled him to determine how, when, where, and for what purpose his forces would be employed to achieve operational and strategic objectives. As a leader, at key points in the campaign, Joshua was able to take his understanding of the human dimension and turn a devastating tactical defeat into a tactical and operational victory protecting the reputation of his force and preserving the morale of his men.

Joshua succeeded in his goal of conquest to the extent that each of the Israelite tribes could settle in their land of inheritance. As a nation, the war was in fact over. From an Israelite tribal perspective, territorial wars were still on the horizon. To prepare the Israelite tribes, Joshua provided both an example through his campaign as well as clear instructions on how to continue with conquest. The following chapter will provide conclusions and recommendations based on the findings throughout each of the previous four chapters with implications for contemporary war practitioners.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

After a thorough examination of a variety of references and archaeological evidence, this analysis reveals that Israel's conquest of Canaan was a campaign as defined by current U.S. joint doctrine and that Joshua applied what is in modern-day terms, operational art, to achieve his strategic objectives. This research also revealed that Joshua's campaign design demonstrates possibilities for potential improvements in operational art for the modern military practitioner. Some of these elements align with modern U.S. military practices; others are more foreign and pose several challenges to contemporary warfighting wisdom.

Operational Art in Ancient Near East Warfare

Strategy, operational art, and tactics are all important elements of military success. Nations need masterful practitioners in each of these areas. While decisions on any of these affect the options of the other two, strategy is the most important. Most military practitioners and theorists will argue that good strategy does not guarantee success but it is extremely difficult to overcome bad strategy with operational art or tactics. While tactical actions can have operational and strategic effects, bad tactical actions are less likely to derail sound operational concepts and balanced strategy. Examining historical accounts for operational art forces strategic and tactical considerations, thereby leading to more comprehensive research. It ought not to be the

only thing studied, but for commanders and staff officers, it should be an increasingly important area of study.

Military practitioners can study operational art from many historical military conflicts throughout time. While it may be convenient to study operational art in contemporary warfare, this represents a very small fraction of recorded human activity. There is also value in examining operational art in non-contemporary, even ancient periods. Complex political, social, and technological structure can often conceal some of the most basic human issues that prove to be inherent elements of the nature of war. Unlike the character of war that identifies the principal ways that war is waged, the nature of war identifies timeless features that prove to be consistent throughout time. Of the many less studied periods of warfare, ancient Near East warfare provides numerous case studies for examining operational art with sufficient historical records of events from which one can draw reasonable conclusions. The Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Roman empires all have records of war that can contribute to understanding operational art.

Operational art in ancient Israel is one of the most convenient subjects for studying ancient operational art because of the volume of warfare that is recorded in the Bible, which is one of the most widely published and accessible books in the world today. With so many translations and an enormous number of scholars and critics to examine, confirm, and dispute translation accuracy, the Bible is an excellent source to use in concert with other ancient texts to develop understanding of war principles.

The Bible as History and Navigating the Issues of Debate

In studying ancient Near East operational art, the Bible is a critical historical source. The potential lessons on warfare are worth navigating through the many points of debate that come from questions of Bible historicity and archaeological evidence. There will be times when assumptions and opinions are necessary in order to progress in formulating arguments. However, scholars must not present opinions and assumptions as facts. In studying biblical warfare, scholars must be comfortable leaving room for debate. Debate on issues of importance helps to arrive at more accurate conclusions over time.

One of the keys to understand the many issues of biblical history and archaeology is to pay particular attention to scholar bias, times of publishing, and the research upon which scholars build their findings. As revealed in chapter 2, scholars must be careful to not build arguments on the conclusions of an authority figure based on his or her status in an occupational field. This can lead to incorrect findings. These are no different from the requirements of scholarly research for contemporary warfare. What is unique is that in ancient Near East warfare the subject matter experts are often not military historians or practitioners.

Summary of Israel's Conquest of Canaan

It is noteworthy that Joshua's strategy never changed throughout the conquest. By modern standards, a total war of annihilation would seem unacceptable to some and unethical to others. However, given the Israelite national interests, no strategy of limited objectives would have been successful. The Canaanites were established in their land and were forced into a bitter fight for existence.

Joshua developed an operational approach that clearly accounted for the strengths and weakness of his and the Canaanites. To overcome the numerical superiority and technological advantages, Joshua's approach was to conduct offensive operations in set-piece battles where he would seek to achieve local superiority by containing and isolating small elements of Canaanite coalition forces. When unable to achieve local superiority, he would attempt to achieve operational or tactical surprise in order to place his force at a position of advantage. Additionally, Joshua would operate primarily in the central highlands, the geographic region that favored dismounted infantry.

Joshua's campaign design included several elements that would be familiar to contemporary U.S. campaign planners, but it also featured some significant deviations. Joshua employed termination and end state, LOOs and LOEs, arraying operations, and operational reach. His military end state was clear: defeated or displaced Canaanites, as was his termination criteria: to enable each tribe to settle in his designated territory. This did not call for the complete annihilation or displacement of Canaanites, only defeat and displacement. Annihilation was a component of the national strategic objective (Israel established in its new territory without the presence of any Canaanites) that individual tribes were to continue to execute if the Canaanites would insist on fighting in place. Israel's LOOs were simple. Joshua chose a single LOO in the central highlands that enabled him to mass his forces at decisive points and prevented him from having portions of his forces isolated. LOEs were important because they enable the freedom from any specific timeline for potential operations, which proved to be an essential element in Joshua's campaign design.

Joshua arrayed initial operations in time, space, and purpose, but successive operations by purpose only. Initially, Joshua chose a critical time when the morale of the Canaanites was low to start the invasion. He chose to gain a foothold and expand a lodgment at a location that would split the Canaanite kingdoms in half. After being established in Canaan, Joshua conducted a strategic pause, which allowed him to build up his logistical capabilities and consolidate gains at Gilgal while adjusting to living off their new land. Exercising strategic and operational patience, with no specific time requirement, Joshua waited until the Canaanites massed their forces presenting opportunities for set-piece battles in the central highlands that would enable him to mass his forces and destroy large numbers of Canaanite forces.

Also as a leader, Joshua's development of mind, body, and spirit was evident. Contemporary leaders frequently make claims of the importance of developing mind, body, and spirit, but they often take very little responsibility in the spiritual development of service members. Instead, they direct them to a small number of sources for spiritual direction and often place too great of emphasis on chaplains or civilian clergymen in hopes that the individual service member will just figure it out for him or herself. This creates an institution with a disproportionate amount of resources and directives to regulate mental and physical conditioning compared to those to regulate spiritual conditioning. This being by design, would require a huge paradigm shift in the role of spiritual health in U.S. government institutions.

The Israelite Way of War

National ways of war framework can be useful to characterize the fundamental ways that specific nations wage wars, especially in a time where the trend appears to be

increased globalization and increased likelihood for alliance and coalition warfare.

National ways of war can help with understanding the perspectives of coalition partners, belligerent nations, and other nations of influence. The following are five key elements that contribute to characterizing an Israelite way of war.

Intelligence. The Israelites make extensive use of intelligence to develop situations and understanding of the operating environment. While many of the details of reconnaissance operations are not revealed, the fact that virtually every biblical record of deliberate military operations includes a reconnaissance component. In many cases, there are accounts of leader's reconnaissance. This occurred during the campaign of Moses as well as Israelite operations following Joshua's period. While intelligence is arguably important for any military force, the fact that there are so many records of intelligence collection, implies a significant degree of importance to the Israelites.

Surprise. Surprise was a critical element in Israelite offensive operations to overcome Canaanite technological and numerical superiority. They often achieved it through audacious night maneuver making contact with the enemy in unpredictable places and at unpredictable times. The Canaanites were unsuccessful at anticipating Israelite actions and proved incapable of converting their initiative to success. Like intelligence, surprise is a something that military commanders attempt to always achieve over their adversaries. In the case of Israel's conquest of Canaan, it is a principle that is employed in every successful battle of the conquest.

Deception. The Israelites used deception in a number of their operations. While there is only one record of a deception operation in this portion of Israel's conquest of Canaan, there were several other episodes of deception operations following Joshua's

campaign. This suggests that deception operations were significant enough to remain a key feature in Israelite combat operations. Reflexive control and other forms of deception operations depend on both mastery of the operational environment as well as knowing the enemy's understanding of the environment.

Population support. During the time of conquest, Joshua was able to maintain popular support despite the length of time that military operations were being conducted with no clear time estimation for termination. His support was nearly unwavering which provided him with the maximum amount of options for strategy development, campaign design, and tactical warfighting. Strategic pauses also enabled the population to cope with the many years of being at war. This converts to an energetic nation that responds quickly to the call to arms.

Spiritual dimension. While this research purposefully examined Joshua's campaign through records of human activity, it is impossible to draw conclusions ignoring the spiritual domain as it was understood by Joshua and the Israelites. Spiritual right standing was very important to the Israelites to include preparation for and in the conduct of battle. There were multiple episodes where according to the author, spiritual right standing was lost, which brought distrust, uncertainty, and a negative effect on morale. Additionally, the Israelites had a universal belief in God that served as the source of cohesion between the people and those in authority. Moses and Joshua did not always have the support of the people, but as soon as their authority was reaffirmed by some event attributed to divine intervention, unity was restored.

This demonstrates the power of unity of the people with the military through a mutually recognized absolute authority. The Israelite experience begs the question if

there is any comparable source of unity and cohesion to ensure population support of military operations other than a universal belief of a single absolute authority. The people of the United States would likely argue that a strength of its democratic values is the freedom that it grants individual citizens. The Israelites would argue that the strict acceptance of a single national religion was its strength.

This research does not suggest that multi-cultural militaries cannot be successful or that military service members and civilians must share the same worldview. Instead it presents the question of the degree to which shared worldview promotes cohesion. For the Israelites, universal belief in God was a unifying element to provide an unwavering popular support of the war effort. Secular societies will struggle to achieve this degree of cohesion except in the most desperate conditions of threat to existence.

Challenge to U.S. Military Doctrine

This examination of ancient Israel operational art does not indicate a need for drastic change to current U.S. application of operational art, but it does reveal insight into perspectives that call to question U.S. operational art biases that are represented in doctrine. Campaign planners should not look for templated solutions to the complex challenges of warfare. Instead, they should be open to learning alternative ways to approach challenges that are uncommon within their own culture.

The lesson in this could be to not look at this absence of detailed planning as a design flaw or failure, but rather to look at it as a potential model for campaign design. It would appear as if the U.S. military suffers from a lack of strategic and operational patience with its bias for action. Joshua's campaign, on the other hand, demonstrates the

potential value of strategic and operational patience where great emphasis was in setting the force, consolidating gains, and developing of the situation.

Detailed Beginnings—Conceptual Endings Model. This model is an approach that Joshua used whereby he planned the initial operations of his campaign in great detail, and likely only had conceptual plans for subsequent operations. This idea is based around the requirement to establish the force at a position of advantage from where commanders can take operational or strategic pauses to wait for optimal conditions prior to continuing offensive operations.

For an operational planner today to develop a campaign that only had initial operations planned would be unlikely. The current practice is to plan every branch plan imaginable given the time for development. These are plans that call for extensive coordination between multiple capabilities, which is sometimes not possible. The size of orders can be reduced tremendously through standard operating procedures. If standard procedures are not detailed, but rather conceptual or functional, then commanders of operational forces can build the flexibility and agility into their force that is required to be positioned to exploit opportunities that the enemy provides or that we force him to create. This enables the commander to consolidate gains and establish forces in positions of advantage.

This is not a call to give up on planning full campaigns to completion, but rather a call to re-examine the flexibility that planners build into operational plans. Usually addressed through the development of branch or sequel plans, counteractions to multiple enemy reactions are beneficial, but can lead to a false sense of preparedness. With all bases covered, commanders proceed to execution with confidence that can lead to a

devastating realization when their expectation meets an unanticipated reality. In complex systems, influence by any element can cause significant change to how the system functions. When commanders design campaigns, they often are designed with the complex system in mind, but only at a singular point in time. As stated by former director of the School of Advanced Military Studies, Dr. Kevin Benson, “Once a commander starts planning an operation, he has already started to alter the operational environment in which he intends to operate in.”¹⁵¹ While there certainly is no indicator that Joshua was thinking about the intricacies of systems theory, he demonstrates an appreciation for patience and understanding his operational environment not just prior to operations, but continually through the conduct of his campaign. Perhaps much of the effort that goes into detailed planning beyond what can be predicted, given the influence of opposing forces in complex social systems, should go towards developing the situation. This means introducing into the campaign design ample time to develop situations and exploit opportunities when desired conditions are met.

Initiative and Bias for Action versus Patience and Bias for Understanding.

Seizing, retaining, and exploiting initiative does not mean always moving in offensive operations. It means understanding the environment better than the enemy does. It can also mean positioning the force in a way in which it can exploit opportunities that the enemy presents from exercising his initiative. Our application of maneuver warfare attempts to break down an enemy’s system by creating multiple dilemmas and situations

¹⁵¹ Dr. Benson stated this during a 2017 lecture for the Art of War Scholars Program seminar on Red Teaming. Dr. Benson currently serves as a contract professor, at the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies.

faster than he can cope. There is a relative component in that definition that frees us from having to force a high operations tempo.

Strategic and Operational Patience. Strategic and operational patience enables experimentation space and time, which is especially useful during times requiring significant adaptation to unanticipated conditions. An example of this is in the case of the first attack on Ai, one of the only deliberately planned battles. The first attempt failed miserably and Joshua was able to regroup and do something significantly different, which succeeded. This was made possible because his plan was conditions based and not time based. In order to create conditions that allow for failure, operations must become less dependent on time. This does not mean that every campaign should follow this example or even that there ought to be a bias towards it. It only suggests that it should be a consideration in the design process. In addition, this does not refer to time as a means to synchronize simultaneous or near simultaneous actions.

Strategic and Operational Pause. Strategic and operational pauses enabled sufficient time for developing understanding of the operational environment and for reflection. Speed and tempo certainly have their place as do timely adequate solutions over untimely optimal solutions. However, an operational approach that provides time for commanders to understand their operational environment more comprehensively is beneficial. This would require a new level of operational and strategic patience. In the United States, achieving strategic and operational patience is very difficult due to the high turnover rate with its civilian and military leadership.

Recommendations for Future Study

There are several related Master of Military Arts and Science thesis topics that will expand upon the findings of this research. The following are topics that relate to ancient Near East operational art:

1. Examine ancient Israel operational art as conducted by Moses leading up to Israel's conquest of Canaan.
2. Examine ancient Israel operational art through the rest of the Israel's conquest of Canaan as conducted by the Israelites during the period of the Judges.
3. Examine Egypt's conquest of Canaan: operational art in ancient Egypt.
Canaan played a significant role in linking Egypt to the continents of Europe and Asia.
4. Examine ancient Near East amphibious warfare. Egypt's conquest of Canaan had an amphibious component. The Philistines are believed to be among the Sea Peoples that came to Canaan from islands in the Mediterranean.
5. Examine the impact that Israelite way of war had on Israeli way of war.

These subjects will each add significant value to further understanding of ancient Near East strategy and operational art.

GLOSSARY

Actionable intelligence. Intelligence information that is directly useful to customers for immediate exploitation without having to go through the full intelligence production process.¹⁵²

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. See also coalition; multinational.¹⁵³

Battle. A set of related engagements.¹⁵⁴

Branch. The contingency options built into the base plan used for changing the mission, orientation, or direction of movement of a force to aid success of the operation based on anticipated events, opportunities, or disruptions caused by enemy actions and reactions. See also sequel.¹⁵⁵

Campaign. A series of related major operations aimed at achieving strategic and operational objectives within a given time and space. See also campaign plan.¹⁵⁶

Coalition. An arrangement between two or more nations for common action. See also alliance; multinational.¹⁵⁷

Conquer. To gain or acquire from force of arms.¹⁵⁸

Conquest. The act or process of conquering.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² 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), 1.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵⁴ JCS JP, 3-0, I-14.

¹⁵⁵ JCS, JP 1-02, 2.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 18.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 35.

¹⁵⁸ Merriam-Webster, "Conquering," accessed May 17, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conquering>.

¹⁵⁹ Merriam-Webster, "Conquest," accessed May 17, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conquest>.

Culminating point. The point at which a force no longer has the capability to continue its form of operations, offense or defense.¹⁶⁰

Decisive point. A geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a marked advantage over an adversary or contribute materially to achieving success. See also center of gravity.¹⁶¹

Defeat. A tactical mission task that occurs when an enemy force has temporarily or permanently lost the physical means or the will to fight. The defeated force's commander is unwilling or unable to pursue that individual's 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. Defeat can result from the use of force or the threat of its use.¹⁶²

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.¹⁶³

Doctrine. Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application. See also multinational doctrine; joint doctrine.¹⁶⁴

End state. The set of required conditions that defines achievement of the commander's objectives.¹⁶⁵

Engagement. A tactical conflict, usually between opposing lower echelons maneuver forces. See also battle; campaign.¹⁶⁶

Expeditionary force. An armed force organized to accomplish a specific objective in a foreign country.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁰ JCS, JP 1-02, 57.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 61.

¹⁶² Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-90-1, C1, *Offense and Defense* Volume 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2015), B11.

¹⁶³ JCS, JP 1-02, 64.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 71.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 79.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

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.¹⁶⁸

Interoperability. The ability to operate in synergy in the execution of assigned tasks.¹⁶⁹

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.¹⁷⁰

Joint publication. A compilation of agreed to fundamental principles, considerations, and guidance on a particular topic, approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that guides the employment of a joint force toward a common objective. Also called JP. See also Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff instruction; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff manual; joint doctrine; joint test publication.¹⁷¹

Line of communications. A route, either land, water, and/or air, that connects an operating military force with a base of operations and along which supplies and military forces move. Also called LOC.¹⁷²

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.¹⁷³

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.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ JCS, JP 1-02, 83.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 118.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 123.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 130.

¹⁷² Ibid., 141.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 142.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Lodgment. A designated area in a hostile or potentially hostile operational area that, when seized and held, makes the continuous landing of troops and materiel possible and provides maneuver space for subsequent operations.¹⁷⁵

Military end state. The set of required conditions that defines achievement of all military objectives.¹⁷⁶

Operation. 1. A sequence of tactical actions with a common purpose or unifying theme. (JP 1) 2. A military action or the carrying out of a strategic, operational, tactical, service training, or administrative military mission.¹⁷⁷

Operational approach. A description of the broad actions the force must take to transform current conditions into those desired at end state.¹⁷⁸

Operational art. The cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge and experience—to plan and execute (when required) strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military capabilities by integrating ends, ways, and available means.

Operational design. The conception and construction of the framework that underpins a campaign or major operation plan and its subsequent execution.¹⁷⁹

Operational design element. A key consideration used in operational design.¹⁸⁰

Operational level of war. The level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas. See also strategic level of war; tactical level of war.¹⁸¹

Operational pause. A temporary halt in operations.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ JCS, JP 1-02, 142.

¹⁷⁶ JCS, JP 3-0, I-8.

¹⁷⁷ JCS, JP 1-02, 174.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ JCS, JP 3-0, I-13.

¹⁸⁰ JCS, JP 1-02, 175.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 176.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Operational reach. The distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities.¹⁸³

Sequel. The subsequent major operation or phase based on the possible outcomes (success, stalemate, or defeat) of the current major operation or phase. See also branch.¹⁸⁴

Set-piece battle. A precisely planned and conducted military operation.¹⁸⁵

Strategic level of war. The level of war at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) strategic security objectives and guidance, then develops and uses national resources to achieve those objectives. See also operational level of war; tactical level of war.¹⁸⁶

Strategy. 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.¹⁸⁷

Tactical level of war. The level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces. See also operational level of war; strategic level of war.¹⁸⁸

Tactics. Tactics is the employment, ordered arrangement, and directed actions of forces in relation to each other. Joint doctrine focuses this term on planning and executing battles, engagements, and activities at the tactical level to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces (TFs).¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ JCS, JP 1-02, 142.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 215.

¹⁸⁵ Merriam-Webster, "Set piece," accessed May 17, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/set%20piece>.

¹⁸⁶ JCS, JP 1-02, 227.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 234.

¹⁸⁹ JCS, JP 3-0, I-14.

Termination criteria. The specified conditions approved by the President or Secretary of Defense that must be met before a named operation or campaign can be concluded.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ JCS, JP 1-02, 240.

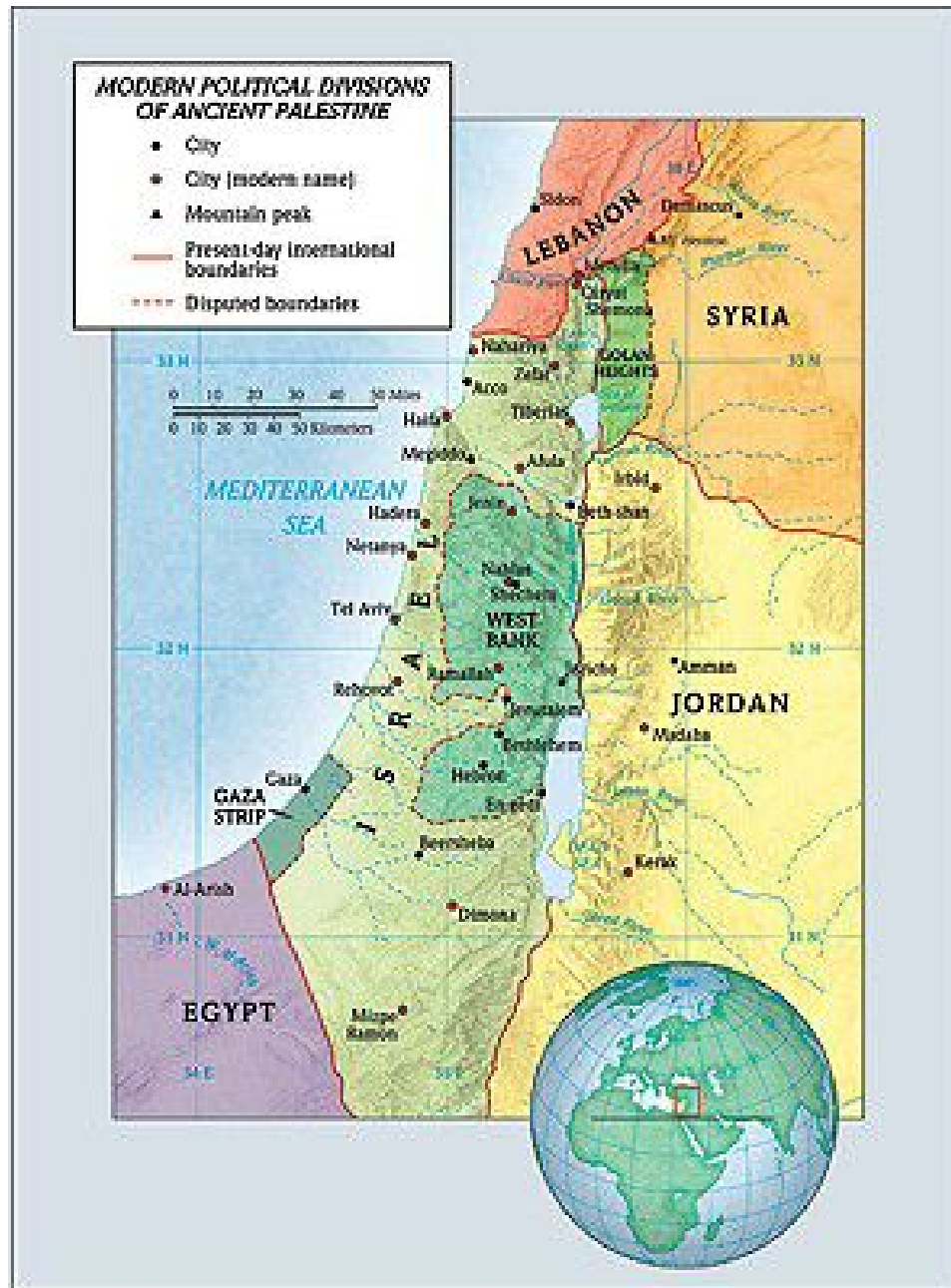
APPENDIX A
BOUNDARIES OF THE PROMISED LAND

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IN THIS ELECTRONIC EDITION.

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

APPENDIX B

MODERN POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF CANAAN



Source: Paul H. Wright, *Holman QuickSource Bible Atlas* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2005), 25.

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