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PROPOSITIONS FOR EVANGELICAL ACCEPTANCE OF A LATE-DATE EXODUS-CONQUEST: BIBLICAL DATA AND THE ROYAL SCARABS FROM MT. EBAL

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The date of the Exodus-Conquest has been a subject of academic inquiry for over a century. Since the first quarter of the twentieth century the early date for the Exodus-Conquest has become more or less standard among evangelical scholars.[1] Here we will briefly review the history of the study of the date of the Exodus, how evangelicals arrived at the early date, and the burgeoning realization among evangelicals that neither the early nor the late dates are without problems. The main body of the paper will trace two lines of argument—one textual and the other archaeological—that may support the late date.

I. OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF THE EXODUS AND THE EVANGELICAL CONSENSUS FOR THE EARLY DATE

Before the Egyptian hieroglyphs were deciphered, many readers naturally gravitated towards the long-reigning Ramesses II as the pharaoh of the oppression. Ramesses is mentioned in Exod 1:11 as the name of one of the store cities that the Hebrews built for the pharaoh. Ramesses II had, indeed, produced many monuments and left behind ruins of monumental buildings in Egypt. It seemed natural, therefore, to imagine the ancient Hebrews participating in the construction of those projects. With the identification of Ramesses II as the pharaoh of the oppression, his son Merneptah, who succeeded him on the throne, naturally became the pharaoh of the Exodus. Based on this reasoning, the biblical Exodus was securely located by scholars

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[1] Random examples of scholarly works by evangelicals that defend the early date are Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (rev. ed.; Chicago: Moody, 1994) 239–52; Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, III, An *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 59–62; Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000) 83–84; Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 178–81; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "Exodus," in *EBC* Vol. 2 (ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990) 288–91; idem, *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age Through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998) 104–9; William H. Shea, "Exodus, Date of," *ISBE* 2.230–38; Leon J. Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 20, 69–86.

within the 19th Dynasty of Egypt (1293–1185 BC) throughout the nineteenth century.[2]

In 1896, this understanding came under challenge. That year, Sir William Flinders Petrie discovered a monument in the ruins of Merneptah's morturary temple at Thebes. This Merneptah Stele makes reference to Israel as a people living in Canaan by Merneptah's fifth year, which is the date of the inscription: 1209 BC. This new data appeared to require that Israel had already been settled there by the end of the 13th century BC. Placing Israel in Canaan this early in the reign of Merneptah raised obstacles for his having been the pharaoh of the Exodus. Israel obviously could not have left Egypt in the first year of Merneptah's reign, wandered in the wilderness for forty years, and then appeared in Canaan as a settled ethnic group in his fifth year. The radical reduction of the duration of the wilderness wandering that this would require presented an insurmountable obstacle for evangelicals. There were two primary responses to these difficulties.

First, some scholars continued to work toward locating the Exodus during the 19th Dynasty. In order to do this, the identification of the pharaohs involved had to be adjusted. By moving these identifications back, Seti I could then be identified as the pharaoh of the oppression, and Ramesses II as the pharaoh of the Exodus. Up until about 1925, this position was widely held by scholars, both evangelical and otherwise.

A second approach was to begin looking for a date in other periods. This approach seems to have been pioneered initially by James Jack, who challenged the 13th-century BC date in his 1925 book, *The Date of the Exodus in the Light of External Evidence.* Jack argued that both biblical and extrabiblical evidence pointed to a mid-15th century BC date. The Masoretic text of 1 Kgs 6:1 dates the departure from Egypt at 480 years before Solomon's fourth year as king. Solomon's accession date can be securely fixed at 970 BC, thanks to synchronisms between biblical and Assyrian texts.[3] This would set Solomon's fourth year of reign at 966 BC. Working backwards 480 years from 966 BC produces a date of 1446 for the Exodus.

This date seems to be supported by the statement in the historical reflections of the Hebrew judge Jephthah. Toward the end of the Judges period, probably early in the eleventh century BC, the Ammonites were making hostile advances on Israelite territory in Gilead. Jephthah argued against

[2] Bryant G. Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory," *JETS* 48 (2005) 475, attributes the idea of a 13th-centruy Exodus-Conquest to Albright. While it is true that what has come to be known as the formal "Conquest Model" essentially originated with Albright, the identification of Ramesses II as the Pharaoh of the oppression and his son Merneptah with the Exodus had been common long before the time of Albright. Kittel, Maspéro, Wiedemann, and others date the Exodus near the close of the 19th Dynasty. MacCurdy, Eerdmans, and others even go as far as locating it in the 20th Dynasty. James Jack called this position—the association of the Exodus with these later dynasties—"the traditional school." Cf. James Jack, *The Date of the Exodus in the Light of External Evidence* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1925) 18.

[3] Jack, *Date of the Exodus* 199–202.

the Ammonites' aggressive moves on the basis that Israel had a right to the land because they had already occupied it for 300 years (Jdg 11:26–27). If 1100 BC is taken as an approximate date for Jephthah's activities, this would place the taking of the Transjordan under Moses (Numbers 21) around 1400 BC, about 40 years after the departure from Egypt.[4]

Since Jack's work in the 1920s, many scholars, particularly evangelicals, have continued to argue for a 15th-century BC Exodus. For many evangelicals, it has come to be perceived as the "biblical date" of the Exodus.[5] This early date, as such, is often held very dogmatically by evangelical scholars. For example, two recent books on the history of Israel—both by evangelical scholars—have been criticized by other evangelicals for postulating a late date. In a review of the first book, K. A. Kitchen's *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, evangelical scholar E. Merrill generally gives the book a positive review but writes that Kitchen's treatment of the date of the Exodus could "threaten his credibility as a historian."[6] In the second example, *A Biblical History of Israel*, the reviewer G. Reid simply assumes that the authors are mistaken about any possibility of a 19th Egyptian Dynasty date for the Exodus.[7]

II. A NEW EVANGELICAL AWARENESS OF THE DIFFICULTIES WITH THE EARLY AND LATE DATES

During the past three decades, a great deal of archaeological work has been carried out, producing much new data that was not available at the time of the publication of *The Date of the Exodus* in 1925. Much of the new data came from surface surveys carried out by Israeli archaeologists working in Judea and Samaria—the heartland of early Israel. This new data was first synthesized and published in English by Israel Finkelstein in his 1988 book *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement,* in which he described the nearly 300 new settlements in (mostly) the Central Hill-Country that appeared in Iron Age I (1200–1000 BC). The implication seemed clear that a new population group had arrived in the Central Hill-Country during the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age I. During the almost twenty years since the release of Finkelstein's synthesis, much of the survey and excavation work he reported has been published, so that now both biblical scholars and archaeologists can assess for themselves what new implications there may

[4] See, e.g., the discussion by John J. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* (JSOTSup 5; Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1978) 92–93.

[5] For example, a chronological chart listing the Exodus as having occurred in 1446 appears in the *Life Application Bible*, New International Version (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1991) xvi.

[6] Eugene Merrill, "Review of *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*," *JETS* 48 (2005) 119.

[7] Garnett H. Reid, "Review of *A Biblical History of Israel*," *JETS* 48 (2005) 118. In fact, the authors suggest a sixteenth-century date for the oppression and a fifteenth-century date for the Exodus (p. 132).

be for the understanding of the Israelite settlement.[8] While this material has seemed to point toward a late date for Israel's emergence in Canaan,[9] it has largely gone unnoticed by evangelical scholars writing histories of Israel[10] or commentaries on Joshua.[11]

In trying to work out an evangelical understanding of the emergence of Israel, Mark Chavalas and Murray Adamthwaite have recently noted that certain conditions in the archaeology of Palestine appear to mitigate against the traditional early date positioning of the Exodus/Conquest.[12] They note that, at a series of sites all over Palestine, "the clear picture is that Egyptian occupation continued until the end of the Late Bronze Age (1200 BC)." At Lachish, Megiddo, and Beth-Shean there are some indications of at least partial Egyptian occupation of these sites. The presence of sherds, inscribed in hieratic, at least indicates that a system of Egyptian taxation remained in place during this time.[13] The Late Bronze Age, therefore, continued to be a period of Egyptian presence and occupation. Chavalas and Adamthwaite conclude that "this picture is so pervasive that on present historical-chronological schemes an Israelite presence much before 1150 BC is hard to reconcile with it. Therefore, to harmonize this with a coherent conquest *a la* Joshua 1–11 is well-nigh impossible."[14] The picture of Egypt's role in Palestine in the Late Bronze Age, among other factors, lead Chavalas and Adamthwaite to the conclusion that either the Late Bronze Age must be ruled out "as a chronological context for the exodus-conquest" or else that the biblical record must be discounted. Chavalas and Adamthwaite[15] join Bimson, Livingston, and Wood in turning back toward the Middle Bronze Age as a setting for the

[8] For summaries and bibliography, see A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990); idem, "The Iron Age I," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (ed. A. Ben-Tor; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) 258–301; L. Stager, "Forging an Identity: The Emergence of Ancient Israel," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (ed. M. D. Coogan; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 123–75.

[9] Randall W. Younker, "The Iron Age in the Southern Levant," in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* (ed. Suzanne Richard; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003) 367–72.

[10] E.g. Kaiser, *A History of Israel*; Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*; Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001). The most recent history of Israel by evangelical authors, and as far as I am aware one of the first to attempt to synthesize Israel's history with the new archaeological data, is Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003) 138–92.

[11] Daniel C. Browning, Jr., has sought to synthesize the new archaeological data with the book of Joshua in "'The Hill Country is Not Enough for Us': Recent Archaeology and the Book of Joshua," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 41 (Fall 1998) 25–43. Cf. also Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), which is exceptional in its copious use of new survey and excavation data available at the time of his writing.

[12] Mark W. Chavalas and Murray R. Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light on the Old Testament," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 79–80.

[13] Ibid. 80–81.

[14] Ibid. 80.

[15] Ibid. 84.

Exodus-Conquest,[16] while others turn toward the later period of the early Iron Age.[17]

III. IS THE EARLY DATE REQUIRED OF EVANGELICALS? ALTERNATIVE TEXTUAL PROPOSALS

The question must be asked whether the biblical data requires that evangelicals hold to the early date. When one seeks to reconstruct the numbers given in the biblical accounts, consistently and literally, they do not add up to the number 480 given in 1 Kgs 6:1.[18]

- After the Exodus, a 40-year period of wandering is reported (Num 32:13).
- Joshua then led Israel in battle for 5 years (Josh 14:10).
- Israel was then oppressed and delivered by Judges for a total of 470 years.[19]
- The aggregate total of all of these numbers is 515.

These chronological difficulties have been recognized by evangelicals. In his recent commentary on Judges, for example, Block reaches an aggregate total of 593 years.[20]

In light of the difficulties in working out the addition of the literal numbers, the often suggested understanding of the number 480 as bearing the marks of a symbolic number may still provide a valid alternative. The number 40, of which 480 is a multiple, does have its conventional uses in the Bible.[21] The wilderness wandering lasted 40 years (Num 14:33–34; 32:13; see also Deut 2:7; 8:2; 29:4; Josh 5:6; Amos 2:10; 5:25; Ps 95:10). The number 40 is also used repeatedly in the period of the Judges (Jdg 3:11; 5:31; 8:28; 13:1; etc.) and describes the incumbency of Eli the priest (1 Sam 4:18) and the reigns of David (2 Sam 5:4; 1 Kgs 2:11) and Solomon (1 Kgs 11:42; 2 Chron 9:30). 40 and its multiples are used throughout Scripture—even in the NT—to show a limited period of time.[22] It was also used generally for the length of a generation.[23]

In addition to this conventional use of the number 40, there is an interesting use of the number 480 in the books of Kings. According to the

[16] Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* 308–16; J. J. Bimson and D. Livingston, "Redating the Exodus," *BAR* 13/5 (1987) 45.

[17] G. A. Rendsburg, "The Date of the Exodus and the Conquest/Settlement: The Case for the 1100s," *VT* 42 (1992) 510–27.

[18] The LXX reads 440 rather than 480.

[19] See the chart in Mordecai Cogan, "Chronology," *ABD* 1.1005.

[20] Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth* (NAC 6; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999) 61.

[21] J. B. Segal, "Numerals in the Old Testament," *JSS* 10 (1965) 10–12.

[22] David H. van Daalen, "Number Symbolism," in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 562–63.

[23] Ibid. 563.

writer(s) of the books of Kings, exactly 480 years elapsed from the time of the Exodus to the beginning of the building of the Temple. Moreover, according to the reconstruction made by C. F. Burney over 100 years ago, the writer of Kings also reports that the number of years that elapsed from the time of the building of the Temple to the return of the Israelites from Exile was also 480 years.[24] The exiles returned from the Exile in around 539 BC under Cyrus, once he had defeated the Babylonians and inaugurated the Persian Empire.[25]

When the books of 1–2 Kings are viewed as a whole, therefore, it seems clear that its author(s) wanted to place the building of the Temple at the center of the biblical history.[26] The construction of the Israelite Temple was the most important piece of Israelite history; it was the apex of the nation's history. And in order to stress that, the writer summarizes Israel's history prior to its construction with 12 generations of 40 years each. Following its construction, Israel experiences 480 more years of history prior to returning from Exile. Israel's history on either side of the construction of the Temple is summarized as having encompassed 480 years, thereby placing the construction of the Temple in the center of history.

IV. NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

In 1980, during the survey of the territory of Manasseh,[27] Israeli archaeologist Adam Zertal discovered a site on Mt. Ebal dating to the period of Iron I, during which the Bible claims that the Israelites entered Canaan. The site is known in Arabic as el-Burnat and lies on a mountain ridge high above sea level and far from any roads. The site was excavated over eight seasons, from 1982 to 1989, under the auspices of the University of Haifa and the Israel Exploration Society. The site consisted of a main structure, a surrounding complex of walls, courtyards, a double wall between the courtyards, and a number of installations around the structure. The main structure is a large, rectangular structure built of unhewn stones, with its corners oriented towards the four points of the compass.[28]

[24] See Charles F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Book of Kings* (London: Oxford, 1903) 60–61.

[25] The edict of Cyrus is recorded in Ezra 1:1 and 2 Chron 36:23. 480 years after the date of 966 would be 486 BC Cyrus defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC If the number is literal, then they returned 53 years after Cyrus's accession to the throne.

[26] Nahum M. Sarna and Hershel Shanks, "Israel in Egypt: The Egyptian Sojourn and the Exodus," in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (ed. Hershel Shanks; Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1999) 41.

[27] For an overview of the survey see Adam Zertal, "The Mount Manasseh (Northern Samarian Hills) Survey," in *NEAEHL* 4 (ed. Ephraim Stern; Israel: Israel Exploration Society and Carta, Israel: 1993) 1311–12.

[28] For an overview of the site and its excavation, see Adam Zertal, "Ebal, Mount," in *NEAEHL* 1 (ed. Ephraim Stern; Israel: Israel Exploration Society and Carta, 1993) 375–77.

In 1985, Zertal published an article in which he suggested that the main structure on Ebal may have been the altar of Josh 8:30–35.[29] His article evoked little reaction, aside from being dismissed as either a watchtower[30] or a barbecue site.[31] This may in part be because the common assumption in biblical scholarship today is that Israel emerged from the indigenous people of Canaan,[32] and that the biblical books of Joshua-Judges were written in the Josianic period as political propaganda to solidify Israel's national identity.[33] Since Martin Noth first proposed his theory of the "Deuteronomistic History,"[34] it has become more or less standard for theories of Israel's origins to be built on these foundations, and even archaeologists—pointing to continuity in material culture—have argued that the idea of an early Israel must have been a later fabrication, and that later Israelites originated from the autochthonous population.[35]

If Zertal's Iron I structure on Ebal is the altar of Josh 8:30–35,[36] there could be important implications for the understanding of Israelite origins and for the Documentary Hypothesis. Aside from the question of whether the site is cultic in nature, there seem to be strong indications that the site may be identified as Israelite.[37] In this respect, its dating may have an important

[29] Adam Zertal, "Has Joshua's Altar Been Found on Mt. Ebal?" *BAR* 1 (1985) 26–43.

[30] Aharon Kempenski, "Joshua's Altar or an Iron Age I Watchtower?" *BAR* 1 (1986) 42–49.

[31] William G. Dever, "How To Tell an Israelite from A Canaanite," in *The Rise of Ancient Israel* (ed. Hershel Shanks; Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1997) 34.

[32] K. Lawson Younger, "Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies* 176–206.

[33] J. Alberto Soggin, *Joshua* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 131.

[34] Martin Noth articulated these ideas in *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (trans. and intro. B. W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972) and *The History of Israel* (trans. P. R. Ackroyd from the 2d ed. of *Geschichte Israels*; New York: Harper and Brothers). Noth believed that, since the books immediately following Deuteronomy shared its theology and style, the same author or authors must have composed them. By this theory the entire section from Deuteronomy through 2 Kings has come to be known as the "Deuteronomistic History." I do not mean to imply that late authorship for the Book of Joshua within the Deuteronomistic history requires Israel to have been indigenous. The Deuteronomistic history may or may not have relevance for theories about the emergence of Israel in Canaan. Many biblical scholars, however, did understand the Deuteronomistic history to be late and based on aetiological traditions (e.g. S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960] 294–95).

[35] E.g. J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller, eds., *Israelite and Judean History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) 252–84.

[36] It may be worth noting that no other site between the Early Bronze Age and the Persian Period has been found on Mt. Ebal. This is the only site on the mountain dating from the MB, LB, or Iron Ages. This detail is noted and discussed in Richard S. Hess, "Early Israel in Canaan: A Survey of Recent Evidence and Interpretations," *PEQ* 126 (1993) 125–42.

[37] Understanding the Ebal site within its context in the Manassite territory lends itself to this conclusion. Cf. Adam Zertal, *The Manasseh Hill Country Survey* Vol. 1: *The Shechem Syncline* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 21; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004) 532–33. Zertal marshals eleven kinds of data from the survey of Manasseh to argue for a distinction between the Manasseh population and the other Central Hill-Country and Galilean populations. These are: settlement pattern, site size, architecture, continuity from LB into Iron II, limited pottery inventory,

bearing on the question of the date of the Exodus-Conquest. Of particular interest here are two scarabs discovered at Ebal, their parallels, and whether they can be relied on to date the Ebal site securely to Iron I.

1. *Two Egyptianized scarabs from Mt. Ebal.* During the course of the Ebal excavations, two Egyptian style scarabs were found. These have been used to aid in establishing the Iron I date for the site. Before examining the scarabs themselves, a word of introduction about scarabs and their use in dating may be in order.

a. *Background, function, and potential role of scarabs in dating.* Scarabs, of Egyptian origin, were stone images of the black dung-beetle (*Ateuchus sacer*). The scarab was a representative of the sun-god, since the dung-beetle rolled a ball of dung across the ground in a way that recalled the way the sun-god moved the sun disk across the sky. In the hieroglyphic script, the picture of the scarab served to convey the idea of "being," "becoming," or "coming into existence." This probably explains why the scarab-shaped seal continued to be very popular as jewelry, talismans, and seals, for centuries after they first appeared in the Sixth Dynasty. Scarabs used as private seals would be inscribed with the name and title of the owner, often an official, and may therefore be useful for dating purposes. However, there are complicating factors. Elizabeth Platt explains:

> The seal does not necessarily bear the name of the owner but can indicate relationship such as subordinate officer or servant. Also, jewelry items can be heirlooms and their styles can be replicated in commemoration or in archaizing effect along with the modern and creatively contemporary in the same workroom. This is especially true for the most popular single kind of scarab in Palestine and Egypt: that with inscriptions relating to Thutmos III, the New Kingdom pharaoh during the greatest period of Egypt's empire, in LB I. His name was evidently regarded as potent centuries after his death and scarabs were treasured and made with his inscriptions for many years.[38]

In addition, many scarabs appear to have been inscribed with royal names because of protective powers assumed to be inherent to those names. The name of the 15th-century pharaoh, Thutmose III, mentioned by Platt above, serves as an example:

> That name, *Mn-hpr-R'* meaning "May (the sun-god) Re continue to bring into existence," expressed the meaning of the beetle so well that scarabs with that name were copied thousands of times for centuries. During his excavations

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size and inner division, diet, metallurgical finds, cult and possible cult sites, place names, population size, and cultural connections. Cf. Adam Zertal, "The Iron Age I Culture in the Hill-Country of Canaan—A Manassite Perspective," in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE* (ed. Seymour Gitin, Amihai Mazar, and Ephraim Stern; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998) 242–43.

[38] Elizabeth E. Platt, "Jewelry, Ancient Israelite," *ABD* 3.829.

> at Giza, G. A. Reisner found scarabs of this king on mummies of the second century A.D. on which they had been used as protective amulets sixteen centuries after the death of Thutmose III.[39]

For this reason, scarabs "are a poor criteria for chronological purposes."[40] Siegfried Horn explains:

> At best they may serve to indicate the earliest date that can be given to the archaeological context in which they were found. Many archaeological reports suffer from the misconception that dated scarabs can help to settle historical questions of archaeological remains.[41]

For the aforementioned reasons, we must exercise caution in assessing the contribution of the two Egyptianized scarabs to the date of the Mt. Ebal site.

b. *Scarab 1.* Scarab 1, found in Area A of the Ebal excavation, measures 17.5 mm in length, 13 mm. in width, and 7.5 mm. in height. It is a mould formed of faience with a yellowish glaze, and has been described as careless in its workmanship. Typical of scarabs, this one was pierced through prior to having been fired and, while it has a chip in its base, it is in an otherwise excellent state of preservation.

The outline of the beetle on the back is simplified—"a bare outline of the anatomy of the beetle it is intended to represent" (Fig. 1)—and, according to the report, is common from the 12th to 26th dynasties and later.[42] The execution of the side of the scarab helps to narrow the time frame. It seems to have been "carelessly executed, with only two vertical lines representing the three legs."[43] This pattern is reported to have been characteristic of the 19th Dynasty in particular.

The base has a symmetrical pattern enclosed within an oval frame. The pattern is comprised of a four-petal rosette, two of which are decorated with diagonal striation. Between each of the four petals is a cobra suspended from a coiled branch. Two of the cobra heads are well formed, while the other two are more stylized.

This pattern may be important for dating the scarab, as it has few parallels. The locations of the finds and their parallels are as follows:

1. Egypt. Tomb 202 in Cemetery E at Riqqeh produced a matching scarab.[44] Despite some mixing of the contents of Tomb 202 with those of an adjacent tomb, the scarab is still believed to date to the 19th

[39] Siegfried H. Horn, "Scarab," in *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (ed. Charles F. Pfeiffer; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966) 509–10.

[40] Ibid. 510.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Baruch Brandl, "Two Scarabs and A Trapezoidal Seal from Mount Ebal," in *Tel Aviv* 13–14 (1986–1987) 166. The following examination of the content of scarabs 1 and 2 is based on Brandl's analysis.

[43] Ibid.

[44] R. Engelbach, *Riqqeh and Memphis VI* (London: School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1915) Pls. XVIII:92; XLVI; XLVIII.

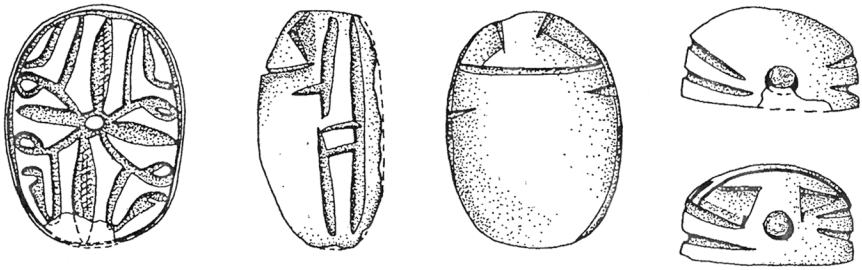

Fig. 1. Scarab No. 1. Brandl, "Two Scarabs from Mount Ebal," 167. Used by permission.

Dynasty, "as all five scarabs in Tomb 202 are dated to Ramesses II whereas the scarabs of adjacent Tomb 201 have a greater range."[45]

2. Israel. A parallel was found in Tomb 914 at Tell el-Far'ah, which is dated to the 19th Dynasty by two scarabs.[46] One of these bears a shortened form of the name of Ramesses II, while the other bears the name of Merneptah, his son.
3. Israel. A second parallel was discovered at Tell el-Far'ah, this one from Tomb 960, and spans the 19th and 20th Dynasties, as shown by scarabs with the names Ramesses II and Ramesses IV. This scarab is included in A. Rowe's 1936 catalogue of Egyptian scarabs, which dates it to the 19th Dynasty.[47]
4. Israel. This parallel comes from Megiddo,[48] and is also dated to the 19th Dynasty.
5. Israel. Tomb 4 at Yavneh, dated to the 19th Dynasty by four additional scarabs characteristic of that period, produced another parallel. Two of the four additional scarabs bear the name of Ramesses II—one in full and another in an abbreviated form.[49]
6. Cyprus. This final parallel comes from a tomb in Kition, in Cyprus, the end of which has been dated to ca. 1225 BC[50]

Brandl's criteria for dating Scarab 1 are "its side type and the parallels to the motif on its base," which, according to Rowe, "is dated exclusively to the 19th Dynasty."[51] Brandl concludes:

[45] Brandl, "Two Scarabs" 168.

[46] E. Macdonald, J. L. Starkey, and L. Harding, *Beth-Peleth II* (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1932) Pl. XLVIII:23.

[47] A. Rowe, *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1936) No. 796.

[48] G. Loud, *Megiddo II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) Pl. 152, 169.

[49] Unpublished; Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums Reg. Nos. 60–950 to 60–954.

[50] J. Leclant, "Les scarabees de la tombe 9," in V. Karageorghis, *Excavations at Kition I: The Tombs* (Nicosia, 1974) 149–50.

[51] Brandl, "Two Scarabs" 168.

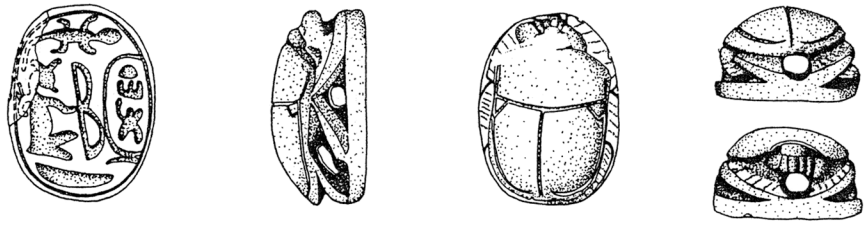

Fig. 2. Scarab No. 2. Brandl, "Two Scarabs from Mount Ebal," 167. Used by permission.

> The parallels are all dated to Ramesses II and his 19th Dynasty successors, except for the scarab from Tomb 960 at Tell el-Far'ah (S), which would, *prima facie*, indicate the continued production of the type into the reign of Ramesses IV of the 20th Dynasty. However, since there are no objects in this tomb datable to any of the kings between Ramesses II and Ramesses IV, we assume there was a gap in the use of the tomb. Of the two periods in which the tomb was used, the parallels indicate that the scarab is to be attributed to the first. In conclusion, Scarab No. 1 from Mount Ebal should be dated to the second half of the 13th century B.C.[52]

c. *Scarab No. 2.* Scarab No. 2, found in the fifth season of excavation, measures 14.25 mm. in length, 11 mm. in width, and 6.5 mm. in height, and is a mould formed of faience, coated with a white glaze, made with mediocre workmanship. Like Scarab No. 1, Scarab No. 2 was also pierced through lengthwise prior to having been fired. A chip has partly damaged the design but is otherwise well preserved.

The back of Scarab 2 appears to have been "carefully executed in a highly naturalistic manner" and, according to Rowe, matches a type "common between the 12th and 25th Dynasties" (Fig. 2).[53] A cartouche on the right side of the scarab encloses the name *Mn-hpr-R'*, the prenomnen of Thutmos III of the 18th Dynasty. An archer, squatting with a bow in hand and two ostrich feathers adorning his head, is depicted on the left side. The figure is the hieroglyph for "army," "troop," or "soldier."[54] A lizard is located above the archer, which reads "much," or "multitude."[55] Beneath the archer is the sign for "lord."[56] Brandl therefore translates the scarab title as follows: "Thutmos III, lord of many troops."[57] He concludes, "The scarab thus belongs to the class of Royal scarabs, and specifically to the subgroup of scarabs commemorating an event or title related to the king or to the royal family."[58]

[52] Ibid. 168–69.
[53] Ibid. 169.
[54] A. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (3d ed.; London: Oxford, 1973) sign list A-12.
[55] Ibid. sign list I-1.
[56] Ibid. sign list V-30.
[57] Brandl, "Two Scarabs" 169.
[58] Ibid.

Brandl identifies four parallels, only one of which shares the same exact details. Three of the parallels are unprovenanced. The location of the finds and their parallels are as follows:

1. The Timins collection. This collection contains an exact parallel in both form and text, though its provenance is unknown.[59]
2. British Museum. This scarab contains a royal name dating to the 18th Dynasty, along with an archer and a lizard.[60] Unlike Ebal's Scarab No. 2, in this case the cartouche is above the archer and the lizard is behind him.
3. British Museum. This scarab is also unprovenanced and, like the previous example, dated to the 18th Dynasty on the basis of the royal name appearing on it.[61]
4. Israel. A scarab was found in Tomb 935 at Tell el-Far'ah (S) featuring a lizard, an archer holding a simple bow, and the sign for "lord" appearing above the archer.[62] Two other scarabs in the tomb, as well as a seal, bear the name of Ramesses II, and two additional scarabs bear an abbreviated form of his name. These artifacts, as well as a characteristic 13th-century BC ceramic assemblage, securely date Tomb 935 to the reign of Ramesses II.

In collating the data, Brandl concludes:

> Three types of data may be used to date Scarab No. 2 from Mount Ebal: (1) the most common date of scarabs with similar formal details; (2) the most common date for commemorative scarabs of Thothmes III, and (3) the date of Tomb 935 at Tell el-Far'ah (S). All these dates fall within the same range—the latter part of the reign of Ramesses II, or the second half of the 13th century B.C.E.[63]

Brandl's dating of these rare decorative motifs is independent of the dating of the local pottery, and is based on parallels from Israel, Egypt, Cyprus, and Transjordan, and seems to point to a date in the second half of the 13th century BC. In light of the aforementioned cautions related to using scarabs in dating, the least one could say is that the mid-to-late 13th-century date can be taken as a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the Ebal site—the site could not have been built any earlier than the 13th century BC.

2. *The Provenance of the Ebal Scarabs.* In 1992 Brown University hosted a scholarly conference on the Egyptian evidence for the Exodus. In his paper "Exodus and Archaeological Reality," James Weinstein discussed the two

[59] P. E. Newberry, *The Timins Collection of Ancient Egyptian Scarabs and Cylinder Seals* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1907) P. VIII:26.

[60] H. R. Hall, *Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Etc., in the British Museum. Vol. I: Royal Scarabs* (London: British Museum Press, 1913) No. 671.

[61] Ibid. No. 672.

[62] *Beth-peleth II*, Pl. LIII:220.

[63] Brandl, "Two Scarabs" 170.

design scarabs from Mt. Ebal. The scarabs under discussion here were attributed by Zertal to Stratum II of the Ebal site, which dates to the 13th century BC. The later strata of the site, Stratum I, dates to the 12th century BC. Weinstein states that "the attribution of the two scarabs to Stratum II seems less than a certainty."[64] Because of this lack of certainty, Weinstein suggests that "there is little reason to favor the late-13th-century B.C. date over the early 12th century B.C. for the beginning of the Mt. Ebal site."[65] He concludes that, "Precise dating of the Mt. Ebal building on the basis of the two design scarabs is not feasible."[66] While the previous discussion on the form and content of the Ebal scarabs does establish a *terminus post quem* for the site, the question of provenance could raise doubts about the 13th-century BC date. While Weinstein does not give any reasons to justify his criticisms of the dating of the Ebal site, a word about the locations in which the two scarabs were found may help to establish the date.

a. *Scarab No. 1.* The main structure at Ebal was filled with layers containing earth, stones, ashes, animal bones, and potsherds—each in different combinations. Four distinct layers were recognized and labeled A–D from bottom to top.[67]

- Layer A. Pure black ash, containing numerous animal bones and sherds. This material made up a thin, evenly spread layer over the floor of Stratum II, primarily in the western and eastern parts of the structure.
- Layer B. Primarily made up of stones and earth, with a few bones and sherds, and measuring about 60 cm. thick.
- Layer C. This layer, consisting of 60 cm. of pure black ash, had a large concentration of animal bones and pottery.
- Layer D. The final layer was primarily comprised of stones, possibly a rough paving designed to seal the contents of the structure.

Zertal has concluded that "[t]he layers inside the structure were apparently all laid at the same time, since they are evenly spread throughout (except at the sides from which they were poured), and the sherds in all of them are homogeneous."[68] Outside, near the eastern corner of the main structure (Fig. 3), an accumulation of material was found which was "identical in nature to Layer C of the fill inside the structure, and likewise containing many cattle bones."[69] It seems, therefore, "that this deposit originated from

[64] James Weinstein, "Exodus and Archaeological Reality," in *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence* (ed. Ernest S. Frerichs and Leonard H. Lesko; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997) 88–89.
[65] Ibid. 89.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Adam Zertal, "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mount Ebal: Excavation Seasons 1982–1987. Preliminary Report," *Tel Aviv* 13–14 (1986–1987) 113–14.
[68] Ibid. 114.
[69] Ibid. 115.

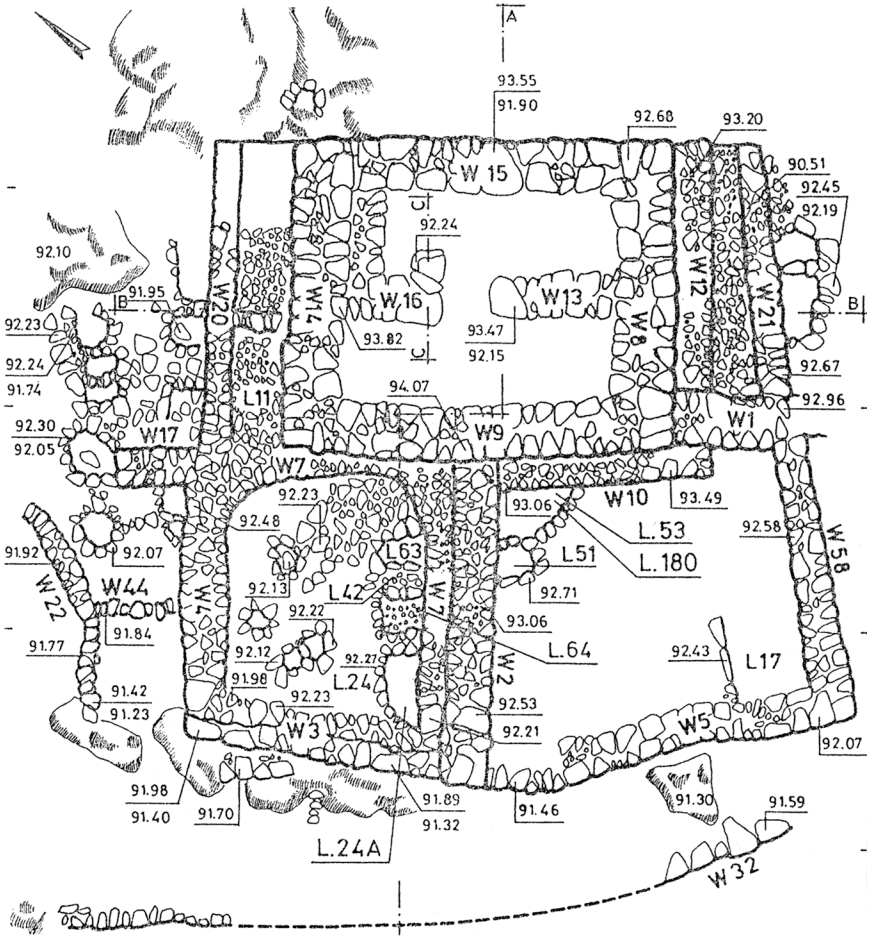

Fig. 3. Central structure (Area A). Zertal, "Iron Age Cultic Site," 114. Used by permission.

the fill material inside the structure and spilled out when its eastern corner collapsed."[70] Scarab No. 1 was discovered in this accumulation. If its association with Layer C in the main structure is correct, then Scarab No. 1, dated by Brandl to the second half of the reign of Ramesses II, can be regarded to accurately reflect a *terminus post quem* of the mid-to-late 13th century BC.

b. *Scarab No. 2.* Scarab 2 was found in association with 70 to 80 installations that were uncovered to the north, south, and east of the central com-

[70] Ibid.

plex, consisting of circles, squares, and rectangles dug into the ground and bordered with crudely arranged stones (see Fig. 3). In some cases, these installations are intermixed and built one upon the other, and "their stratigraphic relation to each other is not always clear."[71] Many of these installations are connected to the central complex by walls. Walls 17, 44, and 22, encompass several gift installations, and it was in one of these that Scarab No. 2 was discovered (Fig. 3). Zertal explains that "[t]he stratigraphical position of the scarab could not be fixed, because of the mixture of the Strata II and I installations, but its deep location hints at Stratum II."[72] More recently, Zertal has explained that while "the installations north of the altar were in use in both strata . . . there seems to be stratification in levels for these little constructions. So I believe there is little doubt, if at all, about its (the scarab's) dating."[73]

The provenance of Scarabs 1 and 2 seems relatively well established. It seems, therefore, safe to associate them with Stratum II, which points to a mid-to-late 13th-century BC date for the founding of the Mount Ebal site. Even Israel Finkelstein—at least in 1988—concluded that,

> Unless later parallels to these scarabs will be found, they constitute the single, direct, definite piece of archaeological evidence for the existence of an Israelite Settlement site as early as the late 13th century BCE. (The theoretical possibility that these scarabs were heirlooms brought to the site later is exceedingly remote).[74]

The dating of the Mt. Ebal site to Iron 1 does not rest solely on the two scarabs, but also on the pottery—which differs in the two strata. Also, it must be recalled that, in using the scarabs to aid in establishing a time frame for the site, Zertal and Brandl settle on a date within the last half of the 13th century, c. 1250–1100. Weinstein's insistence that the site may date to the 12th century rather than the 13th is rather innocuous. Zertal has responded, "I don't see the big difference in time (maybe 20 years!). If you show me an Iron Age I site with more accurate dating, it will surprise me."[75] While Weinstein seems to suggest that a 12th-century date would discredit Zertal's hypothesis, the margin between a late 13th-century date and a 12th-century date is indeed small. Most scholars—even those who dispute Zertal's cultic identification of the site—accept a late 13th-century date for the Mt. Ebal installation.[76]

[71] Ibid. 117–18.

[72] Ibid. 118.

[73] November 12, 2003 letter, in the writer's files.

[74] Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988) 321.

[75] November 12, 2003 letter, in the writer's files.

[76] Amnon Ben-Tor, ed., *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) 293–94; William G. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990) 132–33; Finkelstein, *Archaeology* 82–85; Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, ca. 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 348–50; Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001) 196–201.

If the inhabitants of Ebal are identified as Israelites,[77] then the Egyptianized scarabs, along with other Egyptianized materials found at the site,[78] may hint at an Egyptian heritage, possibly "giving some support for the Exodus version of the origins of the nation of Israel."[79] This would accord well with a 13th-century BC Exodus.[80]

V. CONCLUSION

Due to the ambiguous nature of the evidence, the date of the Exodus-Conquest has been one of the most debated topics in OT studies for many years. In the introduction to his classic article on the date of the Exodus in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, W. Shea noted that "although the biblical texts seem to require a date in the middle of the fifteenth cent. B.C., archaeological evidence seems to point to a date in the 13th century B.C."[81] Evangelicals have, for about the last eighty years, generally tended to defend the 15th-century BC as the only viable context for the events of the Exodus-Conquest. This paper has sought to show that a thoughtful analysis of the biblical material, along with the new archaeological data, may open up the possibility of a renewed consideration of the Late Date Exodus-Conquest as a viable choice for evangelicals.

[77] See n. 34. Cf. also the discussion of Adam Zertal, "'To the Land of the Perizzites and the Giants': On the Israelite Settlement in the Hill Country of Manasseh," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy* 61–69; Ralph K. Hawkins, "The Survey of Manasseh and the Origin of the Central Hill-Country Settlers," paper presented at the conference on "Critical Issues in Early Israelite History," Andrews University, March 26–28, 2004.

[78] One of the finds was a basalt bowl, standing on a leg, made in an Egyptian style.

[79] Adam Zertal, quoted in Milt Machlin, *Joshua's Altar: The Dig at Mount Ebal* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991) 155.

[80] Nahum M. Sarna, "Israel in Egypt: The Egyptian Sojourn and the Exodus," in *Ancient Israel: A Short History from Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (ed. Hershel Shanks; Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1988) 38–40.

[81] Shea, "Exodus," *ISBE* 230.