Query. June 2022

Dear Katya Covrett,

I believe the most problematic issue in biblical studies is the question of how the ancient Israelites came to be in Canaan. Despite the diverse perspectives in the discussion, one conviction unites them: the belief that the Bible’s account of Israel’s origins is not historically reliable in its present form. The basis for this conclusion is the fact that projected biblical dates (e.g., the Conquest) are contradicted by the archaeological evidence. If this is the standard for judging biblical historicity, then I disagree.

I would like to send you a proposal for my book, T*he Historical Origins of Ancient Israel: The Bible and the Archaeological Evidence Reconciled.* In this book I explore the possible historicity of the Bible’s story of Israel’s origins from the time of Abraham to the monarchy*.* While surveying the story (Gen 12 to 1 Sam 10), I identify every datable event or era in this 700-year arc and evaluate those events against archaeological and other extrabiblical evidence with the following result: Using a 12th century BC chronology (keyed to an Exodus of 1175 BC) the projected date of every event aligns with or is compatible with an independent extrabiblical date.

Here is an example of what I mean by an “alignment” of a projected event date and an extrabiblical date: When Abram arrived from Haran in the southern Highlands of Canaan he encamped in the vicinity of Hebron. The excavators of the site (Tell Rumeide/Tel Hebron) have determined that Hebron was abandoned for 500 years before it was reoccupied ca. 1800 BC. If this is accurate, Abram must have arrived at Hebron sometime *after* ca. 1800 BC—the period predicted by the chronology of this study. This “no earlier than” date at Hebron represents a “synchronism.” There are more than 50 synchronisms in this study, and without exception they support a 12th century BC chronology.

The two “conservative” reconstructions (chronologies) that continue to appear in the literature project dates for Abram’s arrival in Hebron to either ca. 2090 BC (for the 15th century BC reconstruction) or ca. 1885 BC (for the 13th century BC model). (In both periods Hebron was uninhabited.) Although these dating systems are contradicted by archaeological evidence such as this at Hebron, scholars persist in hanging on to them, convinced that if there are any historical kernels in the Exodus/Conquest traditions they could not have happened later than the 13th century BC. And that is the problem. Scholars for the last hundred years have insisted on chronologies that date the key event (the Exodus) to the wrong century.

*The Historical Origins of Ancient Israel* is based on my 1988 doctoral dissertation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary—where I majored in Biblical Backgrounds and Archaeology. (Don’t worry, this book doesn’t read like a dissertation.) Because of Bruce Waltke’s encouragement I have spent the last two decades bringing the study up to date; this has allowed me to incorporate several important new archaeological discoveries. This book now offers a credible answer to the origins of Israel controversy and establishes an empirical basis for believing the early books of the Bible may be historically accurate.

I believe Zondervan Academic is the right publisher for this work. I hope you will be intrigued by its potential importance and will contact me for a proposal. You can reach me at (850) 896-8208 or [Ldeanbruce@gmail.com](mailto:Ldeanbruce@gmail.com). I look forward to hearing from you.