

Israel's "Aramean" Origins (The Iron IA Archaeological Evidence For)

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Revisions: 19 July 2003; 28 July 2003; 05 August 2003; 15 August 2003; 06 September 2003; 25 March 2004

01 September 2004 update at end of article: **Professor Baruch Halpern (1992) suggests that Arameans fleeing northern Syria in Iron Age I are settling in Transjordan and from there invading Canaan where they assimilate with resident Canaanites possessing an "Exodus from Egypt" tradition.** His views are remarkably similar to mine (expressed in the below article).

15 May 2005 UPDATE: Please be advised that I now understand that a "conflation and fusion" exists of events appearing in the Bible's Exodus narratives: first, the Hyksos expulsion of 1540-1530 BCE, secondly, Ramesside Era events in the Sinai and Arabah, and thirdly, of places existing only in Late Iron II, 640-562 BCE. Mainstream scholarship understands Israel's settling of the Hill Country is Iron I, ca. 1200-1000 BCE based on archaeological findings. Why then does the Bible's chronology have an Exodus "hundreds of years" earlier ?

The answer is very surprising and has been preserved for almost 2000 years in the writings of an Egyptian priest/historian called Manetho. He wrote a history of Egypt in the 3rd century BCE for his Hellenistic Greek overlord Ptolemy II. He noted that TWO EXPULSIONS occurred in Egypt's history, of Asiatics. The first was of the Hyksos of the mid 16th century and then another in the Ramesside era. He understood that the Hyksos fled to and settled at Jerusalem, but that 500 years later (Josephus' reckoning) "their descendants" reinvaded Egypt, resettling at the town they had been expelled from earlier called Avaris. After 13 years of "lording it" over the eastern delta, the Ramesses expelled the Hyksos' descendants a SECOND TIME, and they eventually again settled at Jerusalem. The Jewish historian Josephus (1st century CE) was adamant that the 16th century expulsion was the Exodus based on his calculations of the Bible's chronology and furious that Manetho had said the Exodus was preserved in a Ramesside expulsion! Modern archaeology has established the Israelite settlement of the Canaanite Hill Country from Galilee to the Negev as portrayed in the Bible, was in Ramesside times. [Please click here](#) for my article on *Manetho vs. Josephus on the dating of the Exodus*. If Manetho is correct, that Avaris was resettled by Canaanites in Ramesside times, and expelled again in that era, perhaps this answers the "great mystery" as to why the pottery of the IRON IA settlements is Canaanite in appearance and not Egyptian ? The answer: 13 years was apparently too short a period of time for the "reinvading" Canaanite descendants of the Hyksos to adopt Egyptian potting techniques. They probably cast their Canaanite pots in Egypt and still were casting them in the "Canaanite manner" when they settled AGAIN near Jerusalem in the Hill Country. Not until Egypt abandoned Canaan circa 1130 BCE under Ramesses VI was the land wide-open for conquest, by Philistines and Israelites. The "original" article on *Israel's Aramean Origins*, below, will remain intact, but is superseded by the above observations of Josephus and Manetho.

18 August 2006 Update:

Professor Anson Rainey has an article arguing for Israel's Iron Age I Transjordanian and Aramean origins titled "The Consensus Theory is Dead." [Please click here](#) for the article.

Rainey:

"Most significant of all, the Aramean tribes in the east flooded North Syria and surged into Mesopotamia (today's el-Jezira) and forced even the Assyrians to fight for their lives. The sudden

appearance of so many small camps and village sites in the hills of Western Palestine (Judea, Samaria, Lower and Upper Galilee and the Beth-Shean Valley) from which the Israelites emerged represents the southern extension of this Aramean movement...To summarize, every cultural trait evinced by the new settlers in the hill country of Palestine in the Early Iron Age points to the origin of these people in the steppes of Transjordan and possibly the Syrian desert (and perhaps some via the Lebanese Beqa' Valley; and settlers in Upper Galilee). Nothing supports the Mendenhall/Gottwald/Callaway/Dever theory of an alleged revolt or migration of peasants from the coastal cities of the Late Bronze Age. Inscriptions, language and archaeology all flatly contradict this theory."

Special Advisory: Websites "come and go" constantly on the World-Wide-Web (WWW), eventually this website will one day 'disappear' as well. If there are any articles or illustrations here that have been "of any use" to you dear reader, I would advise that you make a hard printout copy for your files.

The biblical narrator is adamant that Israel's ancestors are Arameans, from Aramean lands, northern Syria as well as southern and northern Mesopotamia.

Deut 26:5

"And you shall make response before the Lord your God, 'A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation great, mighty and populous."

How to account for these notions ? Are there any "historical kernels" which archaeology can illuminate ? I suspect there are.

One of the major problems facing scholars is, that to date, a scholarly, comprehensive coverage of Syria's Late Bronze- Iron Age has not been undertaken. Bits and pieces of archaeological reports and findings exist, and to a degree, I have used these in this article.

Lehmann on the "void" in Syrian archaeological studies, 700-300 BCE, but the same can be said for 1200-1000 BCE as well (Emphasis mine) :

"Until recently the material culture of Syria and Lebanon in the years between 700 and 300 BC was one of the most obscure topics in Near Eastern archaeology. While the general outline of the history of events over these centuries is known to some extent, there have been only a few studies on the local material culture, the pottery, and small finds. Although a number of studies on isolated groups of finds, such as metalwork, seals, or coins, have been published, there is still no comprehensive archaeological study of this period like Ephraim Stern's *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period, 538-33 BCE* (1982). As a step toward providing such a study, this article outlines the local pottery development of Late Iron Age and Persian period Syria and Lebanon as well as its distribution patterns and the historical and economic implications that result from these observations." (Gunnar Lehmann. *Trends in the Local Pottery Development of the Iron Age and Persian Period in Syria and Lebanon, ca. 700 to 300 BC*. [Department of Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beersheba, Israel])

Lemche "echos" Lehmann's observation on the absence of a comprehensive study of the Syrian Late Bronze and Iron Ages :

"No comprehensive description of the archaeology of Syria exists. For Palestine, see Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 BCE* (1990)..." (p.1218 Vol. 2. Niels Peter Lemche. "The History of Ancient Syria and Palestine: An Overview." pp. 1195-1218. Jack M. Sasson, editor. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, Massachusetts. Hendrickson Publishers. [1995], 2000. 4 volumes in 2 books)

Special Alert of 13 March 2004 :

Readers are advised that a book covering in a comprehensive manner, the Archaeology of Syria, has recently been released :

Peter M. M. G. Akkermans & Glenn M. Schwartz. *The Archaeology of Syria, From Complex Hunter-Gatherers to Early Urban Societies (ca. 16,000 to 300 BC)*. University of Cambridge Press. Hard Cover and Paperback. 552 pages. 79 Half-tones. 13 Maps. 112 line diagrams. ISBN 0521796660. Projected release date of December 2003. Paperback is Priced at 30 British Pounds. The Paperback, at USA \$40, is available at Barnes and Noble Book Stores on the Internet.

From the press release :

"This is THE FIRST BOOK to present a comprehensive review of the archaeology of Syria from the end of the Paleolithic period to 300 BC...All competing interpretations are set out and considered, alongside the author's own perspectives and conclusions"

Mainstream scholarship sees the sudden appearance of villages in Iron IA as the 'historical kernel' underlying the biblical portrayal of Israel's settling the land under Joshua.

Many different theories exist to explain where these settlers were coming from. Like Professors Saggs and Aharoni, I prefer to see Israel as famine driven Aramaeans from northern Syria, and Mesopotamia. Rudimentary villages exist in these areas, the people practice a seasonal migration with their herds for fodder, rather like Israel. Aramaeans are documented as west of Assyria and present in Babylonia in Assyrian and Babylonian annals of the late 2d millennium BCE. Famine drives them south from their "marginal" steppe grazing lands of Trans-Euphrates to the relatively empty lands of Transjordan and the Hill Country of Canaan in the Late 13th-12th century BCE. With Egypt no longer present to resist their incursions, they arrive enmasse after 1140/1130 BCE.

Nakhai noted that shortly after Egypt withdrew from Canaan in the days of Rameses VI (ca. 1141-1133 BCE), Megiddo was soon attacked and destroyed ca. 1130 BCE, and occupied by the Iron IA settlers.

Nakhai :

"Once again, a statue of an Egyptian monarch (in this case, the mid-twelfth century king Rameses VI) stood in the Megiddo sanctuary...When Megiddo's traditional configuration of royal, sacred and secular architecture was destroyed ca. 1130 BCE, ending centuries of Egyptian domination at Megiddo and in Canaan (Ussishkin 1997b: 464) it was soon replaced by the poorly constructed houses of the Israelite Iron Age." (p.135. "The Late Bronze Age." Beth Alpert Nakhai. *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel*. Boston. American Schools of Oriental Research. 2001)

Saggs (Emphasis mine) :

"The usual view is that both Amorites and Aramaeans had earlier been semi-nomads -the term used to distinguish them from peoples such as the Bedouin Arabs, who practice nomadism deep into the desert after the camel came into widespread use as riding animal in the late second millennium. On this view, both peoples lived primarily by sheep-rearing in the steppes centered on the highlands between Palmyra and the Euphrates. In recent decades some scholars have challenged this, and PREFER TO SEE THEM AS _IN ORIGIN SETTLED PEOPLES_ who had been set in motion by adverse circumstances." (p.128. "Aramaean and Other Migrations." H.W.F. Saggs. *Babylonians*. [Peoples of the Past Series]. Berkely & Los Angeles. University of California Press. Trustees of the British Museum Press, London. 2000)

"There must have been some particular factor or combination of factors which led the Aramaeans, who had long practised their pastoralism and trading from bases in the Jebel Bishri, to move out permanently into Mesopotamia and urban Syria. This movement began at about the same time as several other migrations in the ancient Near East; one may think of the Sea Peoples, of whom the Philistines were part, moving out of Anatolia into Palestine, AND THE HEBREWS INTO CANAAN, the 'land of milk and honey.' It seems likely that a major factor in setting the Aramean and other migrations under way was climatic change. Textual, climatological and archaeological lines of evidence all lead to this conclusion. Ancient documents allude to crop failures and famines from about 1200 BC, which point to the onset of a drier period in the Near East. Climatological studies show that between about 1500 and 1200 BC there was a relatively cool period in Europe, and that this was followed by a warmer and drier period from 1200 to 900 BC. A corresponding sequence in the Near East is proved by evidence of changes in the volume of water carried by the Tigris and Euphrates, which reached a maximum between 1350 and 1250 BC, and then began to drop, indicating reduced rainfall. The river flow rose sharply again from about 950 BC. These changes seem to have affected Assyria as well as areas further to the west, for Ashur-dan II (934-912 BC) refers to his bringing back people of Assyria who had earlier left their homes because of famine.

Archaeology tells the same story of a period of drought. Excavation at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) on the Syrian coast found in the twelfth-century stratum a yellowish-white powdery layer, distinct from normal soil, suggesting exceptionally dry conditions at the time. Since rainfall in the steppe lands of Syria, the original homeland of the Aramaeans, was, at best only marginal, a prolonged decrease in precipitation would have brought aridity so severe that the population would need to migrate to find grazing grounds for their flocks.

The Aramean migration was certainly under way before 1200 BC and may have started a century or more earlier. The migrants were by no means a homogeneous group. Although their basic way of life was pastoralism, the fact that some of them lived in towns in the Jebel Bishri region before they entered Mesopotamia, and that some quickly settled in Mesopotamian towns, shows that they included groups who were familiar with urbanism and the specialized activities and social organization which accompanied that way of life.

Some of the ARAMAEANS moved westwards into Syria SOON AFTER 1100 BC and BEGAN TO SETTLE AS FAR SOUTH AS TRANSJORDAN, ULTIMATELY FORMING IMPORTANT KINGDOMS. Both the Bible and cuneiform inscriptions provide abundant evidence of their presence in these areas. Genesis 25:20, for example, speaks of Isaac's wife Rebekah being the daughter of an Aramean of Paddan-aram (in the Haran area), and Deuteronomy 26:5 accepts that the Arameans were one element in Israelite ancestry, since on a specified cultic occasion it required the Israelites to say : 'My ancestor was a nomadic Aramean' (not 'a Syrian ready to perish' as in the Authorised Version)." (pp.129-130. "Aramean and Other Migrations." H.W.F. Saggs. *Babylonians*. [Peoples of the Past Series]. Berkely & Los Angeles. University of California Press. Trustees of the British Museum Press, London. 2000)

Professor Mendenhall on a massive migration of settlers from Northern Syria at the beginning of Iron IA migrating to Transjordan and Canaan (Emphasis mine) :

"The tumultuous and tragic events that attended the Late Bronze-Early Iron period saw the virtual depopulation of central Anatolia and northern Syria. Communities were destroyed or scattered, and new ones were formed after massive migration from the centers of the catastrophe in the North. The considerable rise in the population and populated states in Transjordan and in central Palestine are to be explained by this process. In addition to the Philistine society that was the result of a symbiotic relationship between the existing population of Canaanites, and the newcomers from Anatolia, the Midianite confederation was the result of the same process involving the indigenous Arabic speaking populations. It is not surprising that the process did not always take place without conflict, even though little was left in much later times than the territorial name. The Midianite cities of the NW Hejaz were almost certainly the result of population pressures from the North upon the non-Semitic peoples of especially the Jordan valley." (p.2. George E. Mendenhall, University of Michigan. *The Nature and History of the Midianite Confederation* . *ASOR 1999 Annual Meeting Abstracts*. Nov. 17-20 Cambridge, Massachusetts)

Professor Halpern has also suggested that Iron I Israel may be Arameans invading from Syria, as noted by Younger :

"In Baruch Halpern's estimation, since Rameses II was the pharaoh of the oppression (Exod 1:11), then Merneptah was the pharaoh of the exodus from Egypt. Thus the Israel mentioned on the Merneptah Stela was a displaced group of 'homesteaders' who migrated south from Syria through northern Transjordan. Later, a group of escaped slaves from Egypt arrived and transformed Israel's beliefs with the "myth" of the exodus, of the conquest, and of the deity Yahweh." (p. 180. K. Lawson Younger, Jr. "Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship- Theories in Which Israel Originates from Outside Canaan." David W. Baker & Bill T. Arnold, Editors. *The Face of Old Testament Studies, A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. 1999. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, Michigan; citing Baruch Halpern. *The Emergence of Israel in Canaan*. Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, No. 29. Scholars Press. 1983)

But, if, IF, Arameans are really Israel, how to account for the stories of an Exodus from Egypt ca. 1540 BCE, the Hyksos expulsion of Flavius Josephus and Manetho, or 1 Kings 6:1, ca. 1446 BCE ? How to account for Amarna era Habiru/Apiru being Hebrews ? Why would the Bible portray an Apiru/Habiru conquest of Canaan of the 14th century BCE as earlier, ca. 1446 BCE ? Why would Iron IA Aramaeans claim their ancestors were in Egypt before the Exodus (Hyksos expulsion of ca. 1540 BCE) ? Why portray Canaanites of ca. 1140 BCE as Amorites ?

Professor Clay noted that the Middle Bronze IIC Hyksos were chased all the way into Amurru, that is, the "later homelands" of the Iron Age Arameans. Is it possible that the Iron IA Arameans of what had earlier been called "Amurru," but later Aram, still "recalled" the expulsion of their Hyksos ancestors ?

Clay (Emphasis mine) :

"In the first half of the second millennium BC, an Asiatic people called the Hyksos completely dominated Egypt for a century...The late traditions of Manetho call them Arabians and Phoenicians, while Josephus, in his diatribe against Apion, calls them Hebrews. When Ahmose I (1580-1557 BC) captured Avaris in the eastern part of the Delta, he drove them northward into Amurru. He even pursued them as far as the land of Zahi (Phoenicia). It was not until more than a half century later that Thutmose III was able to break up finally the coalition of the Amorite kingdoms, which had their center at Kadesh on the Orontes." (pp.138-139. "Egypt and Amurru." Albert. T. Clay. *The Empire of the Amorites*. New Haven. Yale University Press. 1919)

Redmount noted that Pottery might be a way of identifying the "ethnicity" of the Delta dwelling Hyksos, and in passing has observed some of the pottery appears to suggest Syrian as well as southern Canaanite forms.

Redmount (Emphasis mine) :

"Everyday household wares predominate in the Hyksos corpus, plain wares are very rare, and decorated fine wares are notable for their comparative scarcity. Forms include Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian, and independently evolving eastern Delta traditions...Imported pottery at Tell el-Maskhuta comes from Cyprus, Palestine, Upper Egypt, and possibly Syria. Of particular importance is a group of two-handed store jars, probably imported (presumably along with their contents of olive oil or wine) from Syria-Palestine...Taken as a whole, the assemblage of Hyksos pottery from Tell el-Maskhuta bears closest resemblance in form and manufacture techniques to Middle Bronze Age Syria-Palestine...Moreover, both the geographical and temporal affiliations of these Hyksos pottery are eclectic. Northern, Syrian forms appear side by side with southern, Palestinian forms..."(cf. the 7 page article by Carol A. Redmount. "Ethnicity, Pottery, and the Hyksos at Tell el-Maskhuta in the Egyptian Delta. *Biblical Archaeologist*. Vol. 58. No. 4. Dec. 1995)

Manetho, an Egyptian priest, as noted by Josephus, claimed that the Hyksos settled at Jerusalem after their expulsion from Egypt. We are told in the Bible that Jebusites lived at Jerusalem in Joshua's and David's days, and Judges 3:5-7 tells us that Israel married Jebusites and worshipped their gods. If

Manetho or Josephus are correct about Hyksos returning to Jerusalem, it may be possible that memories of an Exodus (Hyksos) before Iron IA (ca. 1200-1130 BCE), were passed on to the Iron II "Israelite" great, great, great-grandchildren at Jerusalem from their Iron I forefather's traditions, Iron IA Canaanites and Arameans INTERMARRYING EACH OTHER according to Judges 3:5-7.

Judges 3:5-7 (RSV)

"So the people of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and they took their daughters to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they served their gods. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord their God, and served the Baals and the Asheroth."

Professor Redford suspected that the memory of the Hyksos expulsion had been kept alive in southern Canaan, to later become merged with Hebrew origins traditions.

Redford (Emphasis mine) :

"There is only one chain of historical events that can accommodate this late tradition, and that is the Hyksos descent and occupation of Egypt...And in fact it is in the Exodus account that we are confronted with the "Canaanite" version of this event...the memory of the Hyksos expulsion did indeed live on in the folklore of the Canaanite population of the southern Levant." (pp.412-413. "Four Great Origins Traditions." Donald B. Redford. *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*. Princeton University Press. 1992)

Bietak noted that the Asiatics at Tell ed-Daba, believed to be the Hyksos capital of the eastern delta, were a mixed group. Some of the pottery and building styles suggested for him migrants arriving via ship from ports in northern Syria, such as Ugarit, and Phoenicia. Other pottery forms suggested migrants from south Canaan. In the biblical narratives Israel's patriarchs are from North Syria (Haran and Damascus) and South Canaan (the Negev). When the Hyksos were expelled, they fled back to their homelands. The Hyksos were not confined to southern Canaan, evidently some returned to northern Syria. When Ahmose and his successors followed up on the Hyksos expulsion they followed their enemy all the way to the Euphrates and Ugarit, making the former Hyksos empire an Egyptian empire. The bible's claim that Israel's patrimony would extend from the river of Egypt (wadi el Arish) to the Euphrates, may be recalling the Hyksos world lost to New Kingdom Egypt. The Hyksos of northern Syria evolved into "Arameans" who, in the late 13th-12th centuries BCE began the re-claiming of the former Hyksos empire. They may have seen the Canaanites as "Amorites and Hittites" recalling the area had allied itself with the Amarna era state of Amurru who was in turn allied with Hatti, who allied themselves with Apiru in Syria, Transjordan and Canaan, to win back Hyksos lands against Pharaoh Akhenaten.

Apiru/Habiru are mentioned in 2d millennium BCE documents for not only Canaan, but also Syria and Mesopotamia.

Lemche noted that Syria-Palestine went through phases of Urban control vs. Rural Tribalism, and that when urban centers collapsed the native tribal traditions in the area succeeded in asserting control over the land. He understands that the Arameans of the first-millennium BCE are such an example, the Late Bronze Age Urban civilizations collapsed and rural areas with their tribal networks came to the fore. I suspect that the Arameans are the descendants of the so-called "Amorite" tribes appearing in the 18th century BCE Mari annals. Amorite is really a "mis-nomer," as it is not the description of a tribe or nation but originally a geographical term coined by the Babylonians, amurru, meaning "westerners." That is anybody west of Babylonia, usually equated with nomadic peoples (although archaeology has revealed these "westerners" had villages and towns and cities). Lemche noted that the biblical traditions of the tribe of Benjamin being from Trans-Euphrates might be recalling the Banu-Yamina who appear in the Mari archives. I think he is right !

Lemche (Emphasis mine) :

"The Mari documents testify to various such tribal groups, some of them easy for the state to handle, others extremely unruly, such as the tribe or tribal coalition of THE BANU-YAMINA. The latter group is of special interest because in them we see a pastoral society that, in the course of its yearly migrations, CAME INTO CONTACT not only with the territory of Mari itself, but also WITH the territory of Yamkhad to the west, as well as other STATES IN UPPER MESOPOTAMIA. It is also possible that parts of the Banu-Yamina migrated to Palestine, later to become the Benjaminites of the Hebrew Bible. The note in the book of Genesis (35:26), Paddan-Aram (a late name covering part of the territory once controlled by the kings of Mari), could be a reminiscence of this migration." (p.1203. Vol.2. Niels Peter Lemche. "The History of Ancient Syria and Palestine: An Overview." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. Civilizations of the Ancient Near East. [2 vols.] Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson. [1995], 2000)

Lemche on States vs. Tribes (Urban vs. Rural) :

"Since ancient times two political systems have been prominent in Syria and Palestine : decentralized tribal societies and centralized states...the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine had to make their minds up whether they wanted to be reckoned as members of a tribe or citizens of a state. Although we get the impression that tribes and states have existed in the same area and at the same time -as at Mari (19th-18th centuries) or in early Israel (12th-11th centuries)..." (pp.1198-1199. Vol.2. Niels Peter Lemche. "The History of Ancient Syria and Palestine: An Overview." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. Civilizations of the Ancient Near East. [2 vols.] Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson. [1995], 2000)

I would add to Lemche's observation that nothing has changed since the days of Mari, today, in the 21st century, we still have nation states in the Near East, ruling vast territories from urban centers, whilst in the rural areas, tribalism still prevails !

Dion noted that 11th-10 century BCE Arameans occupying the Jebel Bishri highlands just south of the middle Euphrates, a location associated with "Amorites" in 18th century BCE Mari annals. In passing Dion mentions that an Aramaean word for clan or community is *hibrum*. Could *hibrum* be related to the earlier, Mari era, *hibru* (cf. Whiting's observations below)? Could the *ibri* or "Hebrews" be a reflection of a north Syrian/Trans-Euphrates "Amorite"/Aramean background ?

Dion :

"...Aramean nouns *ummat hibrum* (clan), (community), and *kaprum* (village) suggest affinities between the ancestors of the Arameans and the non-urban societies reflected in the 18th century cuneiform tablets of Mari..."(Vol. 2. p. 1281. Paul E. Dion. "Aramean Tribes and Nations of First-millennium Western Asia." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. Civilizations of the Ancient Near East. [2 vols.] Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson. [1995], 2000)

Whiting's observations on the Amorites of the Mari documents suggest to me, another possible origin for *ibri* rendered in English as Hebrews. He mentions in passing Amorites being called in their native language *hibru*. Could the Amurru/Amorites of the Mari 2d millennium BCE archives be the ancestors of the Aramaeans, who appear in the same area, in a later time-frame, in Assyrian annals ? Thus the Pentateuchal narrator confused terms ? That is, he correctly noted his ancestors dwelling in the northern Syria-Trans-Euphrates area in the 3rd and 2d millenniums BCE, but in error, he called them Arameans, they were in reality, the "Amorites" of the Mari annals, whose descendants in late 2d millennium BCE times evolved into Arameans. The "Amorites" Joshua waged war against ca. 1130 BCE in Transjordan and Canaan was another confusion. Either the Pentateuchal narrator (ca. 562 BCE) was recalling this area being led as a coalition against Akhenaton by the Amurru/Hatti/Apiru coalition of the Amarna era, or he was using the Neo-Assyrian term "Amurru-Hatti," which referred to ALL petty kingdoms west of the Euphrates.

Whiting :

"In Egyptian documents Amurru refers only to the Syrian kingdom of the Amarna period...The kingdom called Amurru...was formed when originally independent small city-states joined (or were forced into) a confederacy. It occupied a small area between Byblos (modern Jubayl) and Ugarit, but had few or no

ethnic Amorites living within its borders." (Vol.2. p. 1236. Robert M. Whiting. "Amorite Tribes and Nations." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. [1995], 2000)

"After the collapse of the kingdom of Amurru, *amurru* and MAR.TU continue to be used in cuneiform sources either anachronistically or as a compass point. While in the Neo-Assyrian period (first millennium) Amurru could still refer geographically to the small kingdoms in Syria, Palestine and Arabia, only in the Hebrew Bible does the term Amorite (*`emori*) continue as an ethnic designation, primarily for the population of Palestine that was to be displaced by the Israelites when they conquered Canaan." (Vol. 2. pp.1237-1238. Whiting. "Amorite Tribes and Nations" [1995], 2000)

"Another typically Amorite title is *abu*, "father," referring to tribal rulers." (p. 1239. Whiting)
I note that Abraham is portrayed as meaning "father of many nations" (Ge 17:5), might this recollect Amorite/Aramean titles of northern Syria and Trans-Euphrates, *abu*, a tribal ruler or chief ?

"The Mari documents...the nomadic character of Amorite life...certainly included the seasonal movement of sheep and goats to and from traditional tribal pasturage along the middle Euphrates and the valley of the Khabur. A number of Amorite words in the Mari documents refer to this pastoralism: *nawu* "movable encampment of people and herds;" *hallatu*, "transhumant herd;" *hibru*, "transhumant people;" *nighu*, "traditional pasturage;" *merhu*, "an official in charge of pasturage;" and *hasiratu*, "enclosure for sheep." There is also considerable evidence of Amorites living in villages and practicing agriculture in the Mari texts. In many such cases, such villages tended to be inhabited largely by members of a particular tribe or clan...Amorite society around Mari included two elements: pastoralists and sedentary agriculturalists." (p.1240. Whiting. "Amorite Tribes and Nations")

Stiebing noted some scholarly objections to Professor Callaway's and others proposals that the Iron I villages had been built by Canaanite refugees.

Stiebing (Emphasis mine) :

"Some archaeologists dispute Callaway's claim (and that of supporters of the peasant-revolt model) that there was a direct connection between Canaanite groups of the Late Bronze Age and the Israelite villagers of Iron I. The pillared (four-room) houses characteristic of the Iron I villages and the practice of grouping houses to form a defensive belt around many of those villages ARE FEATURES VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN IN LATE BRONZE AGE CANAANITE CITIES." (p. 161. "Interpretations of the Israelite Settlement in Canaan." William H. Stiebing. *Out of the Desert ? Archaeology and the Exodus/Conquest Narratives*. Amherst, New York. Prometheus Books. 1989)

Lemche noted that Late Bronze Age Syria was a land of villages whilst Canaan in this same era possessed only a few villages:

"In population and territorial extent, the small states of Syria and Palestine varied enormously. The Syrian states were far bigger than their Palestinian counterparts, though when compared to those of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, or Egypt they were small and inconspicuous...In comparison, the territory of a Palestinian state rarely exceeded an area of more than a few hundred miles, with perhaps less than one-tenth the population of one of the Syrian states. Another difference between the Syrian and Palestinian states of this time was that most of the population of Syria lived in villages spread out all over the territory, whereas the Palestinian population almost exclusively lived inside their walled hometowns. Village culture seems to have been almost totally absent in Palestine during this period." (p.1207. Vol. 2. Neils Peter Lemche. "The History of Ancient Syria and Palestine: An Overview." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, Massachusetts. Hendrickson Publishers. [1995], 2000, 4 volumes in 2 books)

All this was to change in the coming Iron Age IA, when Aramaean invaders, due to war and famine, abandoned their villages ca. 1130 BCE and settled the Hill Country of Canaan, bringing their "villages" with them, after Egypt's withdrawal from Canaan under Pharaoh Ramesses VI. Hundreds of villages exploded throughout Canaan and Transjordan in Iron IA whilst hundreds of villages in Syria and Trans-Euphrates were abandoned, according to archaeological surveys.

Stager noted that the archaeological record showed urbanism in decline in the Aegean, but blossoming in Philista, as the Sea Peoples recreated the urban centers they had abandoned in an Iron I Aegean world. There is an interesting "parallel" here, two waves of invaders strike Canaan in Iron I, Philistines and Israelites. The former leave an urban world and recreate this urban world over the Canaanite towns they had destroyed. By contrast, the invading Iron IA Israelites (who's traditions claim they are Arameans, and whose ancestors attacked Canaan from Transjordan according to the same traditions), build rude villages of stone, similar to the rude stone villages they left in Late Bronze Age Syria and Trans-Euphrates.

Stager :

"Archaeological surveys of Philista have revealed few Iron Age settlements in the countryside. During stage one most of the Philistines, including farmers and herders, lived in the five major cities...As urbanism dissolved in Greece and Anatolia, some members of Aegean society transplanted their urban life and values to a new but similar setting, along the coast of the eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus..." (pp. 344 & 348. Lawrence Stager. "The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185-1050 BCE)." Thomas Levy. Editor. *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*. New York. Facts on File. 1995)

Professor Stiebing on the abandonment of parts of lower Mesopotamia in Iron I, suspecting Famine as the cause :

"Mesopotamia also suffered a significant loss of population in the period just after ca. 1200 BC. Archaeological surveys of southern Mesopotamia indicate that in the old Sumerian heartland just north of the Persian Gulf the population declined by about 25 percent during this era. But the situation was much worse further to the north. In the Diyala region the loss in population appears to have been about 75 percent." (p.182. "The End of the Late Bronze Age." William H. Stiebing, Jr. *Out of the Desert ? Archaeology and the Exodus/Conquest Narratives*. Amherst, New York. Prometheus Books. 1989)

If the Diyala region, northeast of Baghdad, experienced an abandonment of the land due to famine reaching 75% of the population, one can appreciate the devastation and abandonment of the more "marginal" steppe regions to the northwest of Baghdad, inhabited by the Aramaeans !

Dion noted that the beginning of the Iron Age witnesses Arameans on the move, invading new lands.

"Aramaean Expansion-

For the Aramaeans, the beginning of the Iron Age was a time of forceful expansion, and Tiglath-pileser did not succeed in curbing their progress. For more than a hundred years, the shadowy figures that succeeded him were unable to cope with this situation, and the same was true of Babylonia after Nebuchadnezzar I. In Babylonia the Aramaeans were to remain a major ethnic ingredient, alongside the related Chaldeans and the longstanding Akkadian population; 8th century Assyrian sources list 36 of their tribes. Like unsubmitive elements of all times, in resisting imperial authorities they are branded as bandits. In a text in which Sargon II boasts of having successfully hacked his way through to Babylon, he names Aramaeans in one breath with lions and wolves as sources of insecurity." (Vol. 2. p. 1282. Paul E. Dion. "Aramaean Tribes and Nations of First-Millennium Western Asia." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson. 1995)

"In southern Syria too, Aramaean penetration was anything but a straight forward process. Egypt maintained important strongholds in Canaan until the mid-twelfth century, but no source tells us what became of its possessions in the hinterland of Lebanon and southern Syria (Upi) after the reign of Merneptah." (P.1284. Paul E. Dion. "Aramaean Tribes and Nations of First-Millennium Western Asia." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson. 1995)

"The populations of northern and middle Syria and of northern Mesopotamia retained many pre-Aramaic ethnic features deep into the Iron Age...In northern Mesopotamia, the onomastic sample

available in former Hurrian territories, around Haran (ancient Carrhae) on the Balikh river and Tell Halaf on the Khabur shows a high degree of Aramaization in the 8th and 7th centuries..." (P.1285.Vol.2. Paul E. Dion. "Aramaean Tribes and Nations of First-Millennium Western Asia." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, Mass. Hendrickson. 1995)

Hyksos, Arameans, Covenants, Circumcision and Divine Marriage

According to the bible, God makes a covenant with Abraham, he promises his descendants all the land of Canaan. To confirm to Abraham his commitment, God is portrayed as a "flaming torch" that passes between the cut-up bodies of several animals (Ge 15:7-18). According to Professor Stager, the village-pastoralist Amorites of Trans-Euphrates concluded covenants by cutting up the foal of an ass, or killing a puppy or a goat. Stager noted that the Hebrew phrase *kerat berit* means "to cut a covenant." According to biblical traditions Israel's ancestors were from Trans-Euphrates (Haran and Damascus, Ge 12:4;15:2), and the "cutting of a covenant" seems to parallel the Trans-Euphrates customs recorded at Mari on the Euphrates in the 18th century BCE.

Stager :

"A second major discovery in the courtyard of the Canaanite tripartite temple at Avaris, in Egypt, highlights another important role these temples played : They served as the sites for covenant and treaty ratification ceremonies. In front of the Avaris temple, near the altar, pairs of sacrificed donkeys were buried in pits. This temple may have been dedicated to Baal Saphon, the Canaanite storm god and protector of sailors. He is later identified with the Egyptian god Seth. A cylinder seal found in the 18th century BCE palace at Avaris shows Baal Saphon striding from mountain to mountain (just as Yahweh does in the Bible) with Sea (the god Yam, represented by a snake) below, a bull and a lion on one side and a ship and a dolphin on the other. In the temple courtyard at Tel Haror [in south Canaan] many sacred pits (called *favissae*) were filled with ritually slaughtered animals, such as birds, puppies and donkeys. Finding the remains of animals in temples is no surprise, but the animals were not only used as sacrifices to the gods. They were also played an essential role in treaties between various peoples. One well-known tablet from 18th century BCE Mari reads:

"I went...in order to kill a donkey foal between the Haneans and Idamaraz. They brought me a puppy and a goat, but out of respect for my lord I would not allow a puppy or a goat, so I insisted on sacrificing a donkey foal, the offspring of a female donkey. Thus I made peace between the Haneans and Idamaraz."

"The notion of killing a donkey foal (or some lesser sacrifice) in order to seal a treaty between two parties gave rise to the Hebrew phrase *kerat berit* (literally, "to cut a covenant"), meaning "to make a treaty." Frank M. Cross has shown that the divine name *El-berith*, "God of the Covenant," is attested already in a Hurrian hymn from the 2d millennium BCE." (p.66. Lawrence Stager. "The Shechem Temple, Where Abimelech Massacred a Thousand." *Biblical Archaeology Review*. July/August 2003. pp.26-35,66-68)

Perhaps God's request of Abraham to circumcise himself and all males in his household, reflects a type of "cutting a covenant" ? That is, Abraham's descendants bind themselves to God by a "cutting" of the foreskin.

Other biblical texts portray God as "married" to Israel, she being portrayed as his "harlot" bride. Moses leads Israel into the Sinai wilderness to meet God who renews his covenant, taking Israel to be his bride. Shortly after entering the Promised Land under Joshua, a new generation goes through a ritualistic circumcision at Gibeath-haaraloth, the "hill of the foreskins" (Josh 5:3).

Of interest here is the observation by Muller that circumcision was practised in Egypt, but as an act preparatory to marriage. Could the Hebraic notion of a God "marrying" Israel, be, what is -in part- behind Israel's having to circumcise themselves ? That is, two traditions may lie behind Hebraic circumcision, 1) the "cutting a covenant," binding one's self to an oath, of Syrian/Trans-Euphrates derivation, fused with 2) Egyptian notions of circumcision as a precursor to marriage ?

Muller:

"Circumcision existed in Egypt from time immemorial, but had no religious character and was merely a preparation for marriage; it applied to girls as well as to boys." (p.186. "Ethics and Cult." W. Max Muller. *The Mythology of All Races, Egyptian*. Vol. XII. Boston. Marshall Jones Company. 1918)

My research suggests that the Primary History, Genesis-Kings was composed in the Exile ca. 562 BCE by one author-redactor, who brought together earlier traditions and compositions. He understands that Israel's patriarchs are Aramaeans of Trans-Euphrates in the late 3rd millennium or early 2d millennium BCE. In this era, according to scholars, a nation calling themselves "Arameans" DID NOT YET EXIST.

Aram appears earliest in an Egyptian text of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390-1352 BCE) which mentions "one of Aram," another text about 1210 BCE mentions a colleague arriving from a town " in the district of Aram," and at Ugarit (which came to end ca. 1175 BCE) mention is made of the "fields of Arami" (cf. p. 348. Vol. 1. A. R. Millard. "Arameans." David Noel Freedman. Editor. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York. Doubleday. 1992).

Arameans are first attested to in Assyrian documents of the late 12th century BCE, by Tiglath-Pileser I, ca. 1114-1076 (cf. p. 345. Vol. 1. A. R. Millard. "Arameans." David Noel Freedman. Editor. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York. Doubleday. 1992). They are portrayed as attacking the western borders of Assyria. Scholars have noted that the Haran area was under Hurrian control in 14th century BCE, then when their state of Mittani came to an end by the 12th century BCE, the rise of Arameans began. By the 8th century BCE the predominate names in the Haran area are Aramaean.

The Hebrew language uses 22 consonants, so too, does Aramaic. But scholars understand that the Arameans earliest alphabet was borrowed about 1100 BCE from Canaanite and Phoenician forms, apparently by the middle of 8th century BCE true Aramaic script begins to appear. A statue found at Tell Fekheriye, near Gozan, is written in 11th century BCE Proto-Canaanite script (cf. pp.342-343. Vol. 1. Joseph Naveh. "Aramaic script." David Noel Freedman. Editor. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York. Doubleday. 1992). The study of the evolution of Aramaic script is important for the light it sheds on Israel's origins. The Pentateuchal narrator understands that Israel's patriarchs are Aramaeans. Hebrew is related to Aramaic, but differs from it. The bible is written with an alphabet consisting of 22 consonants.

Naveh:

"About 1100 BC the Aramaeans adopted the alphabetic script which was employed at that time by the Canaanites and Phoenicians. They wrote in this same script until the mid-8th century BC...The impact of the Phoenician script on people who wrote in Aramaic was so strong that they took over the set of 22 letters employed by the Phoenicians without adding to it a single character, even though the phonetic system of the Aramaic language was much richer than that of the Phoenician...After 732 BC, the year of the Assyrian conquest of Damascus (the southernmost Aramaic city-state), the Aramaic script ceased to be a national script, and people of various national or ethnic origins began writing in it. Therefore the Aramaic script, not being restricted by the conservativeness which characterizes national writing traditions, was used for purely practical purposes. This phenomenon enabled the evolution of a cursive script which did not preserve the older letter forms, and any unnecessary strokes were dropped from the letters. as early as the end of the 7th century BC, the Aramaic script looked like shorthand in comparison with the Phoenician and particularly, with the Hebrew script." (p.343. Vol.1. Vol. 1. Joseph Naveh. "Aramaic script." David Noel Freedman. Editor. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York. Doubleday. 1992).

"References in various Assyrian inscriptions mention Aramean tribes taking control of these areas at the end of the 11th century...Other Aramean groups settled along the lower course of the Euphrates and further east, all the way into Babylonia." (p.345. Vol. 1. A. R. Millard. "Arameans." David Noel Freedman. Editor. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York. Doubleday. 1992).

Two Assyrian kings, Tiglath-pileser I (ca. 1114-1076 BCE) and his son, Asshur-bel-kala (ca. 1073-1056 BCE) both mention places where they engaged Aramaeans in war, "...along the Euphrates from the Babylonian frontier at Rapiqu to Carchemish, in Mount Bishri, Tadmor (Palmyra) in Amurru, as far as the foot of the Lebanon mountains. Asshur-bel-kala met them in the mountains to the north, around the sources of the river Habur..."(p.345. Vol. 1. A. R. Millard. "Arameans." David Noel Freedman. Editor. The Anchor Bible Dictionary. New York. Doubleday. 1992).

Millard noted that most scholars thought that the biblical term Arameans as an early 2d millennium BCE descriptor of the Patrarchs was anachronistic, and observed that Noth had attempted link the Arameans with the Amorites of the 2d millennium BCE Mari documents. I suspect Noth was correct, they are the same people. The words are similar, both dwell in the same general area.

Millard:

"The eruption of the Aramean tribes into upper Mesopotamia and their expansion into Babylonia is comparable with the spread of the Amorites along the same routes a millennium earlier. Kinship of Arameans and Amorites is possible, but the attempt by Noth (1961) to prove the Arameans originated from the Amorites was disproved by D. O. Edzard (1964). Certainly there are a few similarities, such as names beginning with ya and ending with -an..." (p.348. Vol. 1. A. R. Millard. "Arameans." David Noel Freedman. Editor. The Anchor Bible Dictionary. New York. Doubleday. 1992).

"The Arameans were seminomadic pastoralists, based in villages set in the countryside near good sources of water. Some of the populace remained in the villages throughout the year, while others took the flocks to find pasture. In this, they followed the style attested for the Amorites a millennium before, for Laban and his family (Ge 29:30), and for others since. The term kaprum, "village," known in the Mari tablets, continued as a designation for Aramean settlements (Aramaic kepar). The Aramean lifestyle affected the Assyrian language, which took over their terms for steppe and hill country (*mudabiru*, cf. Hebrew *midbar*, and *gab`ani*, cf. Hebrew *gib`a*).

Assyrian lists of booty taken from Aramean towns include grain, cattle, and sheep and from about 700 BC the area about Harran was occupied by small farmers raising livestock, grain, and vines, according to the "Harran Census" (Fales 1973)." (p. 349. (p.345. Vol. 1. A. R. Millard. "Arameans." David Noel Freedman. Editor. The Anchor Bible Dictionary. New York. Doubleday. 1992).

"Aramean Culture and Religion-

The Aramean states were centered around existing cities and absorbed the remnants of Late Bronze Age populations. Although many cities in the west suffered in the upheavals of the 12th century, knowledge and skills survived. Aramean tribesmen assimilated much of the material culture of their predecessors and the continuing traditions of the Hittites. Of prime importance was the adoption of the Phoenician alphabet for writing Aramaic dialects even though the phonemes did not correspond exactly." (p. 349. (p.345. Vol. 1. A. R. Millard. "Arameans." David Noel Freedman. Editor. The Anchor Bible Dictionary. New York. Doubleday. 1992).

Aramean gods were El, Baal-Hadad, Reshep, Baal-Shamem (Lord of heaven), Baalat, Atar/Athar, Atta (Anat). (p.350. Vol. 1. A. R. Millard. "Arameans." David Noel Freedman. Editor. The Anchor Bible Dictionary. New York. Doubleday. 1992).

If I am correct that the Primary History was written ca. 562 BCE, then perhaps its narrator is preserving ancient hoary traditions of a late 3rd, early 2d millennium BCE origin of Israel's ancestors, but in ERROR calling them Aramaeans, in other words, he is employing what is called in scholarly language an "anachronism" ? That is, by the 8th century BCE the area of Israel's 3rd/2d millennium BCE ancestors is now known as being Aramean !

Thus Israel is, in a sense, CORRECTLY preserving ancient traditions of her ancestors being of northern Syria, and Trans-Euphrates ca. the early 2d millennium BCE in an area originally called Amurru (Akkadian for "the west"), but identified as Aramean by the 11th-8th century BCE.

The Israeli scholar Benjamin Mazar challenged Genesis-Judges as reflecting a Bronze Age world, suggesting rather that it was an Iron Age world, another scholar Amihai Mazar, disagrees. Amihai has argued that although Benjamin is correct about some details being of the Iron Age era, there are other details which suggest a Bronze Age provenance. I find myself in agreement with Amihai.

Amihai :

"Various scholars have suggested that the cultural environment of Middle Bronze II provides the most suitable background for the patriarchal sagas in the book of Genesis...Various phenomena in the book of Genesis which apply to a later period (such as the extensive use of the camel and the appearance of arameans and Philistines) were considered by scholars as anachronisms, introduced by later editors and compilers of the old oral traditions. The essential stories were considered as reflecting traditions which go back to the Middle Bronze II Age. This approach, which was common during the sixties and early seventies, has been severely opposed by some current authors who believe the stories themselves reflect a much later period, closer to their time of compilation. Thus Benjamin Mazar has suggested that the book of Genesis was compiled by the court of David and Solomon...Others, such as Thomas L. Thompson and John Van-Seters...suggesting much later dates for the patriarchal traditions. I find the similarities between the Middle Bronze II culture and that illustrated in the Genesis stories too close to be ignored. The patriarchal narratives known to us from the book of Genesis must have been very old traditions which were orally passed on from generation to generation until they were written for the first time, perhaps during the time of the United Kingdom of David and Solomon. To substantiate this theory and identify the earliest nucleus of these traditions, we should note the many details which do not correspond to the period of the Israelite settlement and monarchy. As is the nature of oral transmission, many features have been added, yet the origin of the traditions might go back as early as Middle Bronze II." (pp.225-226. "The Patriarchal Narratives and the Middle Bronze Age." Amihai Mazar. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000-586 BCE*. New York. Doubleday-Anchor. 1990)

My research substantiates Amihai's supposition about the traditions' hoary antiquity, I have traced some elements in the biblical narratives back to Early Bronze Age times.

I understand that the Hyksos expulsion of ca. 1540 BCE, Middle Bronze IIC, is what, is -in part- behind the bible's Exodus traditions. According to archaeologists, the Hyksos' cultural background is Syria and Palestine. Redmount suggested that a number of the cultural features associated with the Hyksos in Egypt originated in early Middle Bronze IIA Syria, then penetrated south into Palestine, and thence into Egypt. To a degree this cultural development parallels somewhat Israel's origins, Syria, Canaan, Egypt.

Muller noted that the Hyksos god, Baal (Baal Hadad or Baal Zephon/Saphon) was assimilated to the Egyptian god Seth. In Ugaritic myths, Baal wars with and defeats his brother Yam, also called Yaw. Also of note is that the sea is also at times associated with a serpent called Lotan. The Egyptians also portrayed Seth as the god of thunderclouds, like Baal. In Egyptian myths Seth, on the solar bark of Re, spears the sea monster, Apep (Greek Apophis, the great serpent who tries to devour the Sun-god as he arises each day), paralleling somewhat Baal's victory of the 7-headed sea-serpent, called Lothan (just as Yahweh in the bible triumphs over the sea serpent, Leviathan). Seth's wives were Anat and Astarte, daughters of the sun god Atum-Re according to one Egyptian myth (cf. p. 67 "The Feud Between Horus and Seth [the Chester Beatty Papyrus]. Fred Gladstone Bratton. *Myths and Legends of the Ancient Near East*. New York. Barnes & Noble. [1970], 1993), whilst Baal's lovers were Anat and Athtart (p.110. Bratton. 1970).

There appear to be parallels between Egyptian and Syrian/Canaanite myths about Seth and Baal. Both contend with their brother to be ruler, Baal vs. Yam/Yaw (the sea) whilst Horus contends with Seth for rulership. Atum-Re allows Horus to be ruler, but announces that Seth will be a god of thunder and be feared by all of mankind (cf. p.71. Bratton). In Egyptian myths an ass is associated as an animal sacred to Seth; the ass is shown being attacked by a serpent in one Egyptian scene, an Egyptian coming to its aid lancing the serpent (cf. fig. 106. p. 107. W. Max Muller. *The Mythology of All Races, Egyptian*. Vol. XII. Boston. Marshall Jones Company. 1918). I note donkeys were ritually sacrificed and buried near the altar of the Canaanite/Hyksos temple at Avaris (Tell ed-Daba), and a

donkey is slain near Mari to bring about peace between warring Amorites. Was the ass or donkey also sacred to Baal in Syria ? When Israel assembles at Mt. Sinai God tells his people that the male firstling of an ass is to either be redeemed with a lamb or have its neck broken, as a memorial to God's slaying all the male firstborn of Egypt, both man and animal (Ex 13:13). Could perhaps the donkeys found buried in the temple courtyard at Avaris be what is being recollected, if the Hyksos expulsion is being recalled as the Exodus ? In other words perhaps donkeys or asses dedicated to the stormgod Seth/Baal at Hyksos Avaris are reformatted as dedications to the stormgod Yahweh, recalling the Exodus from Egypt in Hyksos times ?

In Ugaritic myths Baal's prowess with a lance/spear is alluded to (p.75. line 49. "Baal and Mot." J.C. L. Gibson. *Canaanite Myths and Legends*. Edinburgh. T & T Clark. 1956, 1978). A stele shows Baal with a lance whose heel suggests for some lightning, he treads upon the sea, suggesting he has mastery over the sea god with his lance. This parallels Seth, whose lance subdues the sea serpent Apep at the sun's rising each day. I note also scarabs showing a winged Seth lancing a serpent at his feet, the other shows a winged Reshef in the same act and posture. In the Rameside 400 year stela, a wingless Seth is shown wearing the garb of Reshef. Baal has several epithets that appear to have been assimilated to Yahweh, like aliyn Baal meaning "mighty," (cf. Hebrew Elyon), and "rider of the clouds" (p.69. line 7. "Baal and Mot." J.C. L. Gibson. *Canaanite Myths and Legends*. Edinburgh. T & T Clark. 1956, 1978).

Gibson noted that the Ugaritic myths mention that the supreme god El (Bull-El) summons the gods to a new-naming ceremony for his son Yam, who earlier was also called YAW, but whose new name, a coronation name evidently, is to be "darling of El," Ugaritic mdd.il (mdd, alternately rendered ydd, 'darling, beloved' p. 150 Ugaritic Glossary. Gibson; compare with Hebrew David, meaning "beloved" *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*, #1730, #1732), all this is in preparation for Yam's coming battle with his brother Baal for dominion of the earth (cf. pp. 4, 39,150. J.C. L. Gibson. *Canaanite Myths and Legends*. Edinburgh. T & T Clark. 1956, 1978). A number of scholars have suggested that Yahweh may have evolved from Yaw, a notion Gibson expresses reservations about (cf. p. 4. note 2. Gibson. 1978).

I understand that the Bible's story of Yahweh contending with Baal for rule of the earth, is but an Iron Age recollection and transformation of the Late Bronze Age myths of the brother gods who contended with each other for dominion of the earth, the Ugaritic and Hyksos Baal/Seth vs. Yaw/Horus. Yahweh has assimilated the feats and epithets of all the above gods.

If I am correct in identifying the Hyksos expulsion of ca. 1540 BCE as what is being recalled in the Exodus narratives, it follows that the Hyksos Storm and Thundercloud god, Baal, is the "God of the Exodus." Of note, is that the prophet Amos states that Israel in his day still called Yahweh-Elohim, BAAL (Hos 2:16). And Yahweh is portrayed at Mount Sinai manifesting himself to the nation as a Stormcloud god, LIKE BAAL, who's thunder frightens the people (Ex 19:16). In the southern Sinai at the Egyptian mining camp of Serabit el Khadim exists a stele of Seth/Baal. Perhaps Seth/Baal of the Hyksos and of the Southern Sinai is behind Yahweh's appearance at Mount Sinai ? Hyksos Tell el Yehudiyeh wares and scarabs have also been found at the Egyptian Hathor shrine at Serabit el Khadim, perhaps linking the southern Sinai with the Hyksos expulsion and the Hebrew Exodus ? Also of interest is that the so-called 400 year anniversary stele erected by Ramesses to the god Seth, shows this god in the garb of the Canaanite plague god Reshef (the same costume appears on the Canaanite plague god, Mekal at Beth-shean, honored by two Ramesside era Egyptians). So, Yahweh-Elohim as a God who can assume the form of a Storm-cloud, who subdues the great serpent of sea, and who is famed as a God of plague, striking down not only Egyptians but his own people in the Sinai, appears to be a fusion of Baal-Hadad/Saphon, Reshef and Mekal. His monuments exist in the eastern delta from which Israel departed in the Exodus, at Serabit el Khadim in the southern Sinai where Israel encounters Yahweh, and in Canaan, where Israel eventually settles.

Secular scholars understand Yahweh is but a fusion of Canaanite gods and goddesses, El, Baal and Yaw.

I also understand Egyptian gods have also been fused to Yahweh.

Avaris, the capital of the Hyksos in the eastern delta of Egypt, is believed to be modern Tell ed-Daba. Bietak has unearthed there Canaanite temples and houses whose earlier parallels are from Middle Bronze II Syria. Some of the pottery looks to be similar in style to Syria as well as southern Canaan. Donkeys were buried in temple courtyards, evidently as some ritualistic act. To the degree that Mari records slain donkeys as part of a covenant act amongst dwellers of the Trans-Euphrates area, perhaps this is evidence of Syrian customs penetrating Canaan and Egypt. Bietak understands that some of the arrivals were by ship from ports in northern Syria, Phoenicia and Ugarit, as well as Cyprus. Others came from ports in south Canaan (Gaza ? and Tell el-Ajjul).

Moscato has commented that "Canaan" in the Bronze Age was ALL of Syria-Palestine. The area was HOMOGENEOUS in culture. It was the Iron Age which witnessed the break-up into differing states, Aram, Israel, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab.

All the above suggests to me that the bible is CORRECTLY recalling Middle Bronze and Late Bronze events of Israel's origins in Trans-Euphrates and northern Syria and her ancestors penetrating south to Canaan and thence to Egypt, to become the Hyksos who were expelled at the end of Middle Bronze II C. Yahweh-Elohim is a fusion of Syro-Canaanite gods and goddesses as well as Egyptian gods and goddesses.

The Pentateuchal narrator understands not only are the Patriarchs from Trans-Euphrates and Damascus, but that they invaded from the east, that is from Transjordan, the Hill Country of Canaan. Archaeologists have determined that IRON I A best fits this description. The problem ? Some scholars think Israel is just locals moving into the sparsely settled land. I suspect, like Saggs, that Iron I A Aramaeans are settling from Trans-Euphrates, driven out of their ancestral lands by famine and war. They enter a nearly empty Transjordan and Hill Country Canaan AFTER Egypt as left the area ca. 1130 BCE. They settle the land and eventually intermarry with local Canaanites. The Canaanite mothers pass on to their Israelite sons, the Bronze age traditions of their ethnic origins, which become fused to Iron I Aramaean origins traditions. Thus two different origins traditions, Canaanite Bronze Age and Aramaean Iron I, become by late Iron II, Israel's origins. There is a "twist" however. When the Hyksos were expelled, they returned to their homelands. Some of those homelands were Syria. As Egypt came to expand her empire to the Euphrates, the HOMOGENEOUS BRONZE AGE world of Syria-Palestine, remembered in tradition their ancestor's expulsion as Hyksos and their ancestor's 400+ year oppression by Egypt (1540-1140 BCE). So, to a degree, the invading Iron IA Arameans of Trans-Euphrates and Syria (the Aramaean homelands extended from northern Syria, Damascus, Tadmor, Jebel Bishri and the foothills of northern Lebanon to Haran in northern Mesopotamia), may have brought with them traditions of their Hyksos ancestors being expelled from Egypt.

One of the mysteries about the Iron IA settlement of the Hill Country of Canaan is that the new arrivals built villages. Some scholars, like Israel Finkelstein, have argued that Israel was nomadic in the Late Bronze Age and suddenly became agrarian settlers in Iron I. Stiebing doubted that nomads would suddenly give up their nomadic ethos and settle down. The villages of Iron I A Israel suggested to him that whoever the Israelites were, they had a previous tradition of making villages and brought that tradition with them, nomads were not in the habit of constructing villages.

The 18th century BCE Mari annals, however, as well as archaeological surveys of Trans-Euphrates, reveal that the peoples, from Early Bronze times through Iron I, were village dwellers who practised sheep herding. That is, they migrated seasonally with their flocks back and forth from Jebel Bishri south of the Euphrates to Haran, but they also had villages to return to. Thus the villages appearing in the Canaanite Hill Country of Iron IA "proto-Israel" are probably to be linked to the same villages appearing in the Trans-Euphrates area which came to be abandoned according to archaeological surveys, in Iron I, due to a lengthy and severe famine, recalled perhaps in the biblical narratives of the patriarchs, Abraham and Jacob, who both wander to Egypt to escape famine.

It is my understanding that Noth was correct about the 2d millennium BCE Amorites of Trans-Euphrates appearing in the Mari annals, being the ancestors of the 1st millennium BCE Aramaeans, and that these people are, -in part- Israel's ancestors.

Archaeologists have determined that pigs were raised and consumed in the Ancient Near East. Their remains have been found in various contexts in Bronze Age Egypt, Canaan, Syria and Mesopotamia.

What was a surprise, was that pig remains tended to be absent in the Iron IA Hill Country of Canaan where an Aramaean Israel settled, whilst they appear frequently in Iron Age Philista.

Hesse:

"Much of the variability in pig abundance is correlated with rainfall, with wet climate being a favorable indicator for finding remains...both southern Mesopotamia and Khuzestan, as well as northern Mesopotamia and Anatolia, have relatively abundant pig remains...The linkage of pig remains with wet conditions also describes the distribution of pigs in Syro-Palestine through the Chalcolithic. In the Early Bronze Age, an additional principle came into play. Based on samples from Lahav, it appears that pig remains are less abundant in periods and places of urban development. This is even clearer in Middle Bronze Age samples from the same region, where the evidence shows that site size is inversely correlated with pig abundance...In Canaan we have no archaeological evidence for the cultic use of pigs after the Bronze Age, unless the partial pig skeleton from Hazor is so interpreted. The oft cited evidence of pig sacrifice from Megiddo and Ta'anach is spurious; the bones were misidentified. The only incidence of intensive swineherding until the Hellenistic period is associated with the arrival of the Philistines..." (p.215. Vol.1. Brian Hesse. "Animal Husbandry and Human Diet in the Ancient Near East." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, Massachusetts. Hendrickson Publishers. [1995], 2000)

Hesse further noted :

"One considerable advantage of pigs is their exceptionally rapid herd growth. Thus, they are a good choice at an initial settlement in a region, which may partly explain their abundance in early Philistine deposits." (p.216)

The bible understands that Israel is forbidden to eat pork. Archaeological investigations of the Iron IA Hill Country of Canaan reveal an absence of pig remains, yet this same era reveals pig remains in abundance in Philista. The bible is adamant that Israel's ancestors are wandering Arameans. Of interest here is an observation made by Dion, in describing the animals raised by the first-millennium BCE Arameans of Syria, he noted the absence of pig remains.

Dion :

"Sheep and oxen are almost ubiquitous in native inscriptions, and much more common in the documentation than any other domestic species; ovines were about ten times as common as cattle. PIGS ARE AS GOOD AS MISSING. Among domestic fowl, only ducks and geese are documented..." (p.1287. Vol. 2. Paul Eugene Dion. "Aramean Tribes and Nations of First-Millennium Western Asia." Jack M. Sasson. Editor. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, Massachusetts. Hendrickson Publishers. [1995], 2000)

Lev-Tov on the rarity of pigs in the Near East (which would include Canaan) prior to the arrival of the Philistines (Emphasis mine) :

"The starting point for the pig discussion is that while swine were generally quite rare in the Near East during the Late Bronze Age, they were common in the contemporary Aegean world and at Iron Age Philistine sites. Pork in the Aegean area was an important supplement to a diet where most of the meat, as in the Near East, came from sheep and goats." (Justin Lev-Tov, Research Fellow, AIAR Ph.D. Candidate, University of Tennessee. "The Social Implications of Subsistence Analysis of Faunal Remains from Tel Mique-Ekron." *ASOR Newsletter*. Spring 1999. Vol. 49, No. 1. pp. 13-15. "Papers Presented at the Albright Appointees' Colloquium at ACOR in Amman, Jordan. Jan. 1999)

If I am correct that Arameans from Northern Syria and Mesopotamia are the "Village builders" of Iron IA Hill Country Canaan and Transjordan, it follows then, that the Hebrew language is itself an amalgum of Canaanite and Aramaic. That is, over a course of about 500 years (1200-586 BCE), the Arameans, via intermarriage with the Canaanites, adopted many Canaanite words, to such a degree,

that the original Aramaic was lost, as noted by the biblical narrator himself, when he portrays the people of Judah as NOT understanding their "mother language", Aramaic (recalling Israel's Patriarchs are called Wandering Arameans), and having Hezekiah's envoys asking the Assyrian envoy to speak to them in Aramaic .

2 Kings 18:26-28

"Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, said to the Rabshakeh, "Pray, speak to your servants in the Aramaic language, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." But the Rabshakeh said to them, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine ?" Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah" "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria."

Just such also happened to the Philistines ! Their Aegean language, by the time of the fall of Philista to Nebuchadrezzar revealed they wrote in a Semitic language akin to Hebrew, they too had lost contact with their mother tongue over a 500 year acculturation period (an inscription being found in a burned out Philistine tell, destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar). The late Cyrus Gordon argued that the Philistines had spoken a Semitic language, because when he studied the biblical texts he found no indication that translators were needed between Philistines and Israel, each is portrayed carrying on conversations without need of a translator. Gordon was right and wrong ! The Philistine language was originally Aegean, but they acculturated to Canaan like the Iron IA Arameans, in fact the bible suggests marriages between Israelites and Philistines (Samson and Deliah)- oh the power of acculturation ! "The conqueror had become the conquered."

Stiebing on the Alt-Noth proposal that Israel is indigenous to the periphery of Canaan, noting the anomalies of the proposal (Emphasis mine) :

"Alt and Noth saw the establishment of Israel in terms of a gradual settlement of seminomadic tribes who, with their flocks of sheep and goats, moved peacefully back and forth from the adjoining steppes and desert fringes to the largely unoccupied central hill country of Palestine...Archaeological discoveries still produce a major problem for the Alt-Noth thesis -the same problem they produce for the Conquest model. Where did the Israelites come from ? THERE IS NO ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THEIR PRIOR EXISTENCE IN SINAI OR IN THE STEPPES AND DESERT FRINGES OF CANAAN. Another problem with the peaceful-infiltration model is that it unconsciously views the seminomadic or nomadic way of life as a temporary stage of existence between that of primitive hunting, fishing, and gathering and that of sedentary agriculture and civilization. It assumes a "land hunger" on the part of the incoming Israelites that led them to become sedentary as soon as possible. Yet we know that pastoral groups are usually well adapted to their environments and seek to maintain their free existence, not to settle down. When the various tribes spread over the hill country of Palestine, why did they build small agricultural villages rather than continue their seminomadic way of life ?" (pp.154-155. "Interpretations of the Israelite Settlement in Canaan." William H. Stiebing. *Out of the Desert ? Archaeology and the Exodus/Conquest Narratives*. Amherst, New York. Prometheus Books. 1989)

"...the sedentary Iron I "Israelite" population has been estimated at only about 55,000 or less." (p.156. Stiebing)

Stiebing noted that Mendenhall and Gottwald had proposed that Israel's origins were to be sought not in semi-nomadic peoples from outside of Canaan, but disaffected peasants who rebelled against the city states, who fled to the Hill Country and became Israel (p. 57 Stiebing). As noted by Stiebing, Finkelstein challenged this notion, claiming the archaeological evidence was against it.

Stiebing (Emphasis mine) :

"...Israel Finkelstein has objected that the evidence from the Iron I hill country settlements does NOT support the internal-revolt hypothesis (or "the Sociological School" as he calls it)...ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF SMALL, OUTLYING VILLAGES

AROUND THE LARGE LATE BRONZE AGE CITY-STATES AS POSITED BY SUPPORTERS OF THE REVOLT HYPOTHESIS. Furthermore, the most densely settled area during the Late Bronze Age era was the southern coast and foothills adjacent to the Judean Hills. Peasants revolting against the Cananite cities in this southern region should have fled eastward into the Judean Hills for refuge. But archaeology indicated that they did not. The Iron I "Israelite" villages were concentrated in the central hill country; very few have been found in the Judean Hills...Moreover, there is little support for the internal-revolt model in the biblical traditions themselves.

As J. Maxwell Miller has observed:

"There is not the slightest hint in the biblical traditions regarding the revolution which supposedly brought Israel into existence. Surely one would expect to find some allusion to it in the book of Judges if such a revolution had in fact occurred."

Like the peaceful-infiltration hypothesis, the peasant-revolt theory MUST EXPLAIN THE BIBLE'S INSISTENCE THAT ISRAEL CAME INTO CANAAN FROM THE OUTSIDE AND CONQUERED THE CANAANITE CITY-STATES." (pp. 158-159. Stiebing)

Finkelstein refuting Mendenhall and Gottwald (Emphasis mine), notes the "dis-similarities" between Cananite and Iron I village culture and expresses doubts that the impoverished city-states had the population to sustain the settlement of the Hill Country (45,000 settlers by 1000 BCE) :

"Unfortunately, this theory has no archaeological evidence to support it -and indeed, much of the evidence flatly contradicts it. As we have seen, THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE NEW VILLAGES WAS COMPLETELY DISTINCT FROM THE CULTURE OF THE CANAANITE LOWLANDS; IF THE SETTLERS HAD BEEN REFUGEES FROM THE LOWLANDS, WE WOULD EXPECT TO SEE AT LEAST MORE SIMILARITY IN ARCHITECTURE AND POTTERY STYLES. More important, it has become clear in recent archaeological studies of the Late Bronze Age cities that the rural sector of the Canaanite society had begun to be impoverished as early as the 16th century BCE. In fact, this weakened and less populous countryside- and the consequential drop in agricultural production- may have played a role in the collapse of the urban culture. BUT IT SURELY COULD NOT HAVE SUPPLIED THE ENERGY BEHIND A NEW WAVE OF SETTLEMENT IN THE HIGHLANDS. Finally, even after the end of the Late Bronze Age and the destruction of the Canaanite urban centers, most of the lowland villages -FEW AS THEY WERE- managed to survive and continued their existence much as before...Hence we really do not see hordes of uprooted people leaving their villages in the lowlands in search of new life on the highland frontier." (pp.104-105. "Who Were the Israelites ?" Israel Finkelstein & Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed, Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. New York. The Free Press. 2001)

"...major Canaanite cities were located along the coastal plain and in the valleys -far from the wooded hill country regions where early Israel emerged..." (p.105. Finkelstein & Silberman)

"...a dramatic social transformation had taken place in the central hill country of Canaan around 1200 BCE...In the formerly sparsely populated highlands from the Judean Hills in the south to the hills of Samaria in the north, far from the Canaanite cities that were in the process of collapse and disintegration, about 250 hilltop communities suddenly sprang up. Here were the first Israelites...Most surprising of all was the tiny scale of these settlements. In most cases they were no more than a single acre in size and contained according to estimates, about 50 adults and 50 children. Even the largest settlements in the highlands reached only three or four acres in size with a population of a few hundred people. The entire population of these hill country villages at the peak of the settlement process, around 1000 BCE, could not have been much more than 45,000. In contrast to the culture of the Canaanite cities and villages in the lowlands, the highland villages contained no public buildings, palaces, storehouses, or temples. Signs of any sophisticated kind of record keeping, such as writing, seals, and seal impressions, are almost completely absent. There are almost no luxury items: no imported pottery and almost no jewelry...The amenities of life were simple. Pottery was rough and basic, with no fancy or highly decorated vessels. Housewares included mainly storage jars and cooking pots -the basic utensils for everyday life...The early Israelites appeared around 1200 BCE, as herders and farmers in the hills. Their culture was a simple one of subsistence." (p. 107-110. Finkelstein & Silberman)

"Archaeological surveys carried out in Jordan have revealed that the settlement histories of Ammon, Moab and Edom was broadly similar to those of early Israel. We could take our archaeological description of a typical Iron I Israelite village in the highlands west of the Jordan and use it as a description an early Moabite village with almost no change. These people lived in the same kind of villages, in similar houses, used similar pottery, and led an almost identical way of life." (p.119. Finkelstein & Silberman)

Stager found fault with Finkelstein's notion that Nomads wandering the periphery of Canaan settled down in Iron IA and become sedentary. His concern was that the archaeological data suggested a massive influx of peoples and he couldn't accept that such numbers could come from the impoverished Canaanite city-states or Nomads on Canaan's periphery.

Stager (Emphasis mine) :

"The Israeli archaeologist has adapted and updated Alt's nomadic hypothesis to explain the hundreds of new settlements that have been recorded in archaeological surveys. But it is difficult to believe that all of these new founded, early Iron I settlements emanated from a single source, namely, sheep-goat pastoralism. In symbiotic relations the pastoral component rarely exceeds 10 to 15 percent of the total population. Given the decline of sedentarists in Canaan throughout the Late Bronze Age, it seems unlikely that most of the Iron Age settlers came from indigenous pastoralist backgrounds." (p. 139. Lawrence E. Stager. "Forging An Identity, The Emergence of Ancient Israel." M.D. Coogan, editor. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*. New York. 1998)

"In the nine areas surveyed, 88 Late bronze Age sites occupy a built-up area of more than 200 hectares (500 acres), for an estimated total population of about 50,000. In the same areas there are 678 Iron Age I settlements, each site being a hectare or less, for a total of about 600 hectares (nearly 1,500 acres), with an estimated 150,000 inhabitants...633 or 93% of these Iron Age I sites are new foundations, usually small, unwalled villages. Most of these new settlements are located in the highlands or plateaus on both sides of the Jordan river. Settlement is especially dense in the territories of Manasseh and Ephraim in the west and in Gilead and Moab in the east, both "frontiers" having been sparsely settled in the Late Bronze Age. This extra-ordinary increase in occupation during Iron I cannot be explained only by natural population growth of the few Late Bronze Age city-states in the region: there must have been a major influx of people into the highlands in the 12th and 11th centuries BCE." (p.134. Lawrence E. Stager. "Forging An Identity, The Emergence of Ancient Israel." M.D. Coogan, editor. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*. New York. Oxford University Press. 1998)

Yohanan Aharoni on the Iron I villages being Israelite and reflecting Aramean migrations (Emphasis mine) :

"The invasion is not an isolated phenomenon; it is related to the great wave of expansion by Hebrew and Aramean tribes which exerted pressure in this period on all the lands of the Fertile Crescent from the Euphrates to the Jordan. In about the same period the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites settled in Transjordan; and the various Aramean tribes took extensive areas in Transjordan, Syria, and the Euphrates region. The Israelites belonged to this broad ethnic migration..." (p.195. "Israelite Conquest and Settlement." Yohanan Aharoni. *The Land of the Bible, A Historical Geography*. Philadelphia. Westminster Press. 1967, 1979)

Aharoni notes that the pottery found in the earliest Iron I villages is NOT identical to Canaanite pottery, it is a COPY of Canaanite forms, a very crude copy with "modifications," in other words this pottery is not being made by Canaanites fleeing eastwards from their cities to settle in the Hill Country.

Aharoni :

"Archaeological research has proved that the Israelites did not bring a consolidated tradition of material culture with them. Instead, they borrowed everything from the previous inhabitants. This is expressed in building construction, in weapons, in art objects and especially in pottery. The Israelite

craftsman imitates the Canaanite product, and in the beginning creates more primitive vessels but in the same style. Along with this, unique vessels were soon developed in a characteristic and clearly definable style found only among Israelite tribes. This phenomenon was quite apparent in the Galilee survey. When we compare the vessels found on the various Israelite settlements of Galilee and those from the earliest occupation at Hazor (stratum XII) with the Canaanite culture that preceded them (especially Hazor strata XIV-XIII), we see the similarity and the difference quite clearly. The cooking pot, for example, resembles the Canaanite cooking pot exactly in form; however, the rim is much longer and straight on the Israelite pot, while the rim of the Canaanite vessel turns outward; thus it is quite easy to distinguish between them. Not one short (triangular) rim was found in stratum XII or in the Israelite settlements of Galilee. The same holds true for the storage jar. Its general form is a clear imitation of the Canaanite pythos, of which many were found in Hazor XIII and XIV; but nevertheless it differs in fabric, in the shape of the rim and in the execution of plastic decoration. Most typical of the Israelite settlements are the "collared rim" jars, which have a ridge beneath the broad rim. The adoption of Canaanite culture coupled with rapid crystallization of independent forms is a theme which runs like a secondary thread through all phases of Israelite tribal life. Such a development is easily explained against the backdrop of their settlement in closed, independent units, working their lands and building their villages in the vicinity of the cities and the strong well-developed Canaanite district." (pp.240-241. "Israelite Conquest and Settlement." Yohanan Aharoni. *The Land of the Bible, A Historical Geography*. Philadelphia. Westminster Press. 1967, 1979)

Amihai Mazar on Iron IA pottery being "a copy" of Canaanite forms :

"A characteristic of the material culture in the hill country settlements is the poor pottery repertoire limited to types essential for basic subsistence...The assemblage as a whole differs widely from that of the Canaanite-Philistine culture of the coastal plain and the valley of Jezreel...It appears that the Israelite settlers in the hill country lacked their own pottery-making tradition, and that initially they obtained the most necessary pottery vessels from their Canaanite neighbors. When they did begin producing pottery, they manufactured a limited repertoire of forms based on Canaanite prototypes, without adopting the Canaanite decoration." (pp.345-346. "The days of the Judges." Amihai Mazar. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 BCE*. New York. Doubleday. 1990)

The observations made by Finkelstein, Silberman, Stiebing and Aharoni, force me to conclude that the Iron I villages are NOT being built by disaffected Canaanites fleeing eastwards into the Hill Country of Canaan, these are INVADERS from without Canaan, possessing a rudimentary "village culture," which also practiced herding as well as agriculture. The speed in which they adopt Canaanite pottery forms with some modifications, suggests a rapid assimilation is taking place. The Bible appears to attest to this to some degree. While the book of Joshua suggests Canaanite cities under attack and bloodshed as Israel settles into the Hill Country, the book of Judges flatly declares that Israel did not obey God, she did not ethnically cleanse the land of ALL its indigenous inhabitants, Israel dwelt amongst the Canaanites and assimilated to their ways, marrying their sons and daughters, and worshipping Canaanite gods (cf. Judges 3:5-7). The rapid adoption of Canaanite pottery forms by Israel, to a degree "parallels" the situation in Philista. Shortly after their arrival, the Philistines begin to decorate their pottery with new painting techniques under Canaanite influence. Eventually Philistine pottery in decoration and shape almost becomes indistinguishable from Canaanite forms in Iron II. The Conquerors, Philistines and Israelites, had become the Conquered, via assimilation to Canaanite ways.

Amihai Mazar :

"Throughout Iron I the Canaanite culture continued to survive in the coastal plain and in the northern valleys of the country. In Philista, Canaanites probably lived under Philistine control, and the Philistines absorbed many of the Canaanite cultural traits." (p.355. "Days of the Judges." Amihai Mazar. *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 BCE*. New York. Doubleday. 1990)

"We also have to conclude that the newcomers did not replace the local population, but rather became a numerically limited military and civil aristocracy which dominated it. The bilateral relations between the two populations produced an eclectic culture archaeologically expressed by phenomena such as the Philistine bichrome pottery. Isolated from the source of their culture, the Philistines were inspired by the indigenous population and were assimilated into it. This was a long and gradual process...The

Philistines' cultural assimilation, however, did not bring an end to their identity. The independence of their city-states was retained throughout Iron Age II, as demonstrated by both their political history and their distinct material culture." (pp.327-328. "The Days of the Judges." Amihai Mazar. Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 BCE. New York. Doubleday. 1990)

A number of archaeologists and scholars have remarked on the "rapidity" in which the Philistines became acculturated to Canaanite ways, within a hundred years they had acculturated so thoroughly that it is difficult at times to distinguish them from the Canaanites and Israelites !

Bauer (Emphasis mine) :

"Even the excavators of Philistine sites have noted the swift acculturation of 'Philistines' into local southern-Levantine ('Canaanite') culture over their first hundred years in the region..." (p. 151. Alexander A. Bauer. "Cities of the Sea : Maritime Trade and the Origin of the Philistine Settlement in the Early Iron Age Southern Levant." Oxford Journal of Archaeology. 17.2. 1998. pp.149-168)

"As the period continues, however, the Philistine settlements seem to undergo a process of 'acculturation,' so that by the end of the eleventh century, 'Philistine' culture ceases to exist as an entity unique and separate within the southern Levant...The swiftness of this process has interesting ramifications for the present argument..." (p. 155. Bauer. 1998)

"Another characteristic that has been noted about the 'Philistine' settlement in the southern Levant is its swift acculturation into the region, so that by the end of the eleventh century 'Philistine' sites are barely distinguishable from 'Canaanite/Israelite' ones.(T. Dothan 1982, 2296; 1989; Stager 1995)." (p.161. Bauer. 1998)

If the Philistines, who left an urban tradition, rebuilding their cities in Canaan, were not immune to a swift acculturation to Canaanite ways, why should we expect that the rude village dwellers of the Canaanite Hill Country -the Israelites- would be any different ? They, too, probably acculturated just as fast. Aharoni has remarked about how "quickly" they acculturated in making crude copies of Canaanite wares in the Iron IA phase of their settlements in the Galilee.

Akkermans and Schwartz have noted that Iron Age Syria under the Arameans appears to share some "similarities" in regards to ceramics and ivory production, and that they, like Israel were a pastoralist peoples, driven by famine from their homelands :

"Especially characteristic of the Late Bronze Syrian pottery assemblages...continuing from later Middle Bronze assemblages are...large vessels with inverted upper bodies and everted or collared rims, sometimes with combed decoration, and large jars with tall necks and everted or ribbed rims." (p.331. "Pottery and Chronology." Peter M. M. G. Akkermans & Glenn M. Schwartz. The Archaeology of Syria, From Complex Hunter-Gatherers to Early Urban Societies (ca. 16,000-300 BC). 2003. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, England)

I wonder if the large pithoi with collared rims found at many Israelite Iron IA sites might be from the above Late Bronze Age Syrian exemplars ?

"If we consider the evidence of archaeological surface survey from western Syria, we encounter a general trend of decline in the number of occupied tell sites in the Late Bronze Age..." (p.333. "Empires and Internationalism." 2003. Akkermans & Schwartz)

"Although the Jezireh was the heartland of the Mitannian state, survey results from this region (west Jezireh, Balikh, Bi`a vicinity, upper and lower Khabur) resemble those from western Syria in the decreasing number of tell occupations. Along with reduced urbanization, Wilkinson's work in the Balikh notes a trend towards rural settlement in small short-lived hamlets." (p.346. "Empires and Internationalism." 2003. Akkermans & Schwartz)

"The Aramaeans first appear historically as enemies of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser I (ca. 1100 BC); a significant component of this group appears to have included pastoral sheep/goat nomads...The significance of 'tribal' organization in Aramaean society is inferred from the nomenclature of their new states, with names such as Bit Bahiani ("House of Bahiani"), Bit Adini, Bit Agusi, etc., referring to eponymous group ancestors.

Once again the success of a group with a large pastoral component requires explanation. According to Assyrian sources, conflicts between the Assyrian kings and Aramaean groups began during a period of famine; the drying up of the pasture lands may have compelled aramaean pastoralists to move into sedentary zones, leading to a confrontation with the Assyrian authority. Since the extent of pastoralism was already significant in the Late Bronze Age, the decline in sedentary society may have allowed pastoralist leaders to assume control in the sedentary sphere." (p. 367. 2003. Akkermans & Schwartz)

The urban revival of the Iron Age occurred together with a proliferation of small communities...In the Jabbul, Balikh and Khabur regions, most Iron Age sites were small and rural in character." (p. 368. "Iron Age Syria." 2003. Akkermans & Schwartz)

"The rise of small regional ('national') states in the southern Levant in this period is presumably analogous to the emergence of the Luwian-Aramaean states in Syria, and there are some points of material culture similarity between them, such as in the production of carved ivories and ceramics. However, the public structures in southern Levantine cities (e.g. Samaria) were not ornamented with monumental guardian figures or carved orthostats." (p. 377. "Iron Age Syria." 2003. Akkermans & Schwartz)

Amihai noted the failure of a number of proposals to address the origins of Yahwehism and the Sinai Exodus traditions :

"Finkelstein...proposed that the MBII sedentary population, after having been forced to adopt a pastoralist and seminomadic existence in the Late Bronze Age, exploited the opportunity of changing conditions in Iron I to return to sedentary life. This interpretation can be linked with the theory that the Israelites emerged from local unsettled Late Bronze groups, such as the Habiru and Shasu known from Egyptian sources. Such a theory perhaps explains the origin of most of the components of the Israelite confederation, BUT IT STILL DOES NOT ELUCIDATE THE IDENTITY OF THAT CONFEDERATION'S NUCLEAR GROUP, WHICH INITIATED YAHWEHISM AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TRADITIONS CONCERNING SLAVERY IN EGYPT, THE EXODUS, MOUNT SINAI, AND THE ROLE OF MOSES. At present archaeology can contribute nothing to answering this question." (pp.354-355. "The Days of the Judges." Amihai Mazar. Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000-586 BCE. New York. Doubleday. 1990)

Conclusions :

It is my understanding that the hundreds of villages suddenly appearing in the Hill Country of Canaan and Transjordan are invading Arameans from Trans-Euphrates in Iron IA, DRIVEN BY FAMINE, principally after 1130 BCE when Egypt had withdrawn from Canaan, leaving it "wide open" for invaders. The famines that drove the Philistines from their Aegean homelands, drove the Arameans from their "marginal" pasturages near the Euphrates. They abandoned their "villages of stone," and rebuilt them in the Hill Country of Canaan and Transjordan. The reason for their pottery "resembling" that of the Late Bronze Age Canaanites, was that the peoples of Syria-Palestine "shared a common culture," including, apparently, similar pottery forms. The Iron Age would lead to the rise of "differentiation" and "distinction" between Syria, Moab, Edom, Ammon and Israel. As regards pottery forms in Iron IA villages, the Philistine example may be helpful, they brought Aegean forms, initially, but within a few generations adopted painting techniques similar to the Canaanites. Perhaps the same holds for Aramean Israel, they too adopted Canaanite forms ?

The Pentateuchal narratives may be recalling two histories, South Canaanite and North Syrian (Amorite/Aramean) which in the course of Iron IA- Iron II became fused together into one national origins story. That is, the Iron IA Arameans eventually married Canaanite wives, and the Canaanite mothers taught their Israelite sons, the Middle and Late Bronze Age Canaanite traditions of an Exodus from Egypt (the Hyksos expulsion) and Covenants used to wrest Canaan from Egyptian control at a period when ONE GOD, the Aten, weakened Pharaoh's hold on Syro-Canaan.

Of interest here, is what happened to the Philistines. They arrived about the same time as the invading Arameans, Iron IA. Scholars have noted that the Philistines by the time of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Philistia, were speaking a Canaanite language akin to Hebrew. The earliest pottery was Aegean in form and decoration but after arrival, they began to adopt Canaanite motifs and painting techniques. The wall reliefs of Ramesses III showed him fighting Sea Peoples and Canaanites. The Canaanites are bearded and wear long flowing robes, the Philistines are clean-shaven, and in short kilts coming no lower than the knee. Yet, Neo-Assyrian reliefs show Philistines completely acculturated, they are no longer clean-shaven, but bearded, and they wear long robes like the Canaanites. "What is sauce for the Goose is sauce for the Gander," it is my "suspicion" that as the Iron IA Philistines "acculturated" over a period of 500 years to Canaanite ways, adopting hairdos, clothing, language and pottery, just the same thing happened to the invading Arameans from Trans-Euphrates/Syria. They too adopted Canaanite ways. Their language was transformed by the Canaanite, such that Hebrew came to be distinct from Aramaic, and by Hezekiah's days, only educated men understood Aramaic (cf. 2 Kings 18:26). This "aligns" with the biblical presentation- the bible "describes" ISRAEL'S CANAANITE ACCULTURATION in NEGATIVE TERMS, from a RELIGIOUS POINT OF VIEW, **Israel does NOT obey God**, she enters into Covenants with the Canaanites (Joshua 9), worships their gods (Judges 2:13), and marries their daughters (Judges 3:5-7) and give their sons in some cases BAAL names (Gideon is called Jerubba'al, Judges 7:1). Iron II urban Israel is probably a fusion of Canaanite Late Bronze and Iron I with Aramean Iron I.

I understand Judges 3: 5-7 to be CRUCIAL to understanding the 'Pre-biblical Origins' of the Bible.

Judges 3:5-7 (RSV)

"So the people of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and they took their daughters to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons; and they served their gods. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord their God, and served the Baals and the Asheroth."

What we have here, is a description of Arameans from northern Syria and Mesopotamia (Damascus-Haran) settling Canaan and Transjordan in Iron IA and MARRYING CANAANITES, worshipping their gods, and ABSORBING FROM these Canaanites, Canaanite "origins" traditions of the Late Bronze Age, that is, the Hyksos expulsion of 1540 BCE, the 400 year oppression of Canaan by the Egyptian New Kingdom, 1540-1140 BCE, FUSED to Aramean "origins" stories of Haran-Damascus ! It would be the great-great-great-grandchildren of the unions of Canaanites and Arameans, who, in Iron II would combine two different origins traditions into one story of the Exodus and settlement of the land which we have in today's Bible.

Bible scholars who accept that Iron IA is Israel settling the land under Joshua have been "bewildered" and "puzzled" by the Bible's insistence that the Exodus took place ca. 1446 BCE and the Conquest ca. 1406 (cf. 1 Kings 6:1). They have also been "bewildered" by the Bible's insistence that Israel's ancestors suffered a 400 year oppression before Conquering Canaan.

Archaeologists have determined Egypt left Canaan and the Sinai by 1140/1130 BCE in the days of Pharaoh Ramesses VI. The Bible knows nothing of Israel engaging Egypt in Canaan, so I suspect the Bible is recalling the Iron I period invasion of Arameans. Now, add 400 years of oppression to 1140/1130 BCE and we have 1540/1530 BCE, which marks the Expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt and the OPPRESSION of ALL PEOPLES of SYRO-CANAAN by New Kingdom Egypt. During this 400 year oppression they carry off into slavery, to Egypt, Canaanites, that is, the ancestors of Iron II Israel's Iron I Canaanite grandfathers !

So, I understand that the Bible is CORRECTLY recalling Israel's _presence in Canaan _BEFORE the 12th century BCE invasion from Aram (Trans-Euphrates) ! That is, the Bible is recalling the presence of Israel's Canaanite FOREFATHERS, who's descendants in Iron I INTERMARRIED WITH INVADING IRON I ARAMEANS !!!!

What about the stories of Abraham passing off his wife Sarah as his "sister" ? Scholars have noted the "parallels" of brother-sister marriages at Nuzi. I suspect that the invading Arameans of Iron I are recalling certain Middle Bronze Age II-Late Bronze Age conventions of their ancestors (the so-called 2d-millennium BCE "Amorites" in the scholarly literature) and fusing these traditions with Bronze Age traditions of the Iron I Canaanites that they married into.

How does one explain Abraham "the Aramean" being of Ur of the Chaldees in Babylonia ? Saggs and Dion noted that the Aramaeans, driven from their marginal steppe lands by famine, also SETTLED IN BABYLONIA, ca. the 13th-12th centuries BCE. Evidently the Bible is recalling Arameans in Babylonia who later left due to famine in the area, as noted by Stiebing (25% of the population in the Babylonia area witnessing a sudden decrease and abandonment of the land). Stiebing also noted a 75% depopulation north of Baghdad as well, so Abraham is evidently "returning" to his Aramean Homeland, and thence to Canaan ! The Bible mentions his going to Egypt, famine also gripping Canaan. The Iron I Aramean invaders of Canaan are then CORRECTLY recalling the effects of famine on Abraham in an Iron I world, but transposing them to MBI and fusing them chronologically with Bronze Age Canaanite traditions.

Archaeologically, the CRUCIAL link establishing "Who" the Iron IA sttlers of Transjordan and the Hill Country of Canaan "are," is the HUNDREDS OF VILLAGES OF STONE, a phenomena UNKNOWN in Late Bronze Age Canaan according to Lemche, but attested for Late Bronze Age Syria/Aram.

As regards the pottery of IRON IA, as noted by Yohanan Aharoni and Amihai Mazar, the very "crudeness" of the forms reveals that is not being made by native Canaanites, its being "copied" with some modifications added.

The "final Nail" will be driven into the coffin when a comprehensive petrographic analysis is undertaken of the pottery appearing in the earliest levels of the Iron IA villages to determine if some of the clays are foreign, that is, of Syria and Mesopotamia, or they are ALL 100% local Canaan/Transjordan clays. It is highly unlikely that large cumbersome to transport pottery forms would accompany the invaders from Trans-Euphrates. It would most likely be "smaller" forms which would accompany the invaders, especially cooking pots. The technology, Petrography, exists and has been used to some degree on the Philistine wares, it merely needs to be applied to the Iron IA villages. The Philistine wares reveal that shortly after settling in Canaan, wares began to be made of local clays. The use of local clays does not imply the Philistines are "Canaanite" natives. So, Iron IA pottery of the "Israelite" Hill Country, indicating local clay being used does not suggest that the Israelites are indigenous Canaanites. If they were, their pottery would be identical to the Canaanite pottery of the coastal plain and valleys- but it isn't, as noted by Aharoni and Mazar.

A number of scholars have had "reservations" about equating Hebrews (Hebrew *ibri*) with the "Apiru/Habiru" of the Amarna era. Perhaps their reservations are "justified" ? Could it perhaps be that *ibri* is instead to be related to *hibru*, "transhumant people" as noted by Whiting, and/or *hibrum*, "Clan, Community," noted by Dion ? That is, the *ibri* are indeed the Iron IA Arameans of the Trans-Euphrates steppe lands, and the Apiru/Habiru is a "false etymology" ?

Afterword :

For greater details regarding the Hyksos expulsion being -in part- behind the Exodus, click on the following article

[Dating the Exodus, The Hyksos Expulsion of 1540 BCE ?](#)

For an explanation of how and why Israel is portrayed as wandering the Sinai, Arabah, and Negev for 40 years in the Late Bronze Age (and the archaeological evidence) click on the following article

[Exodus Memories of Southern Sinai
\(Linking the Archaeological Data to the Biblical Narratives\)](#)

Warning- when reading the above two articles, please keep in mind that it is my understanding that events from Early Bronze II to Late Iron II have been fused together in the Exodus/Conquest narratives.

15 August 2003 Update

How does my proposal account for the mention of Israel in Canaan in the Merneptah stele ???

Many scholars understand that the Pharaoh Merneptah stele provides a terminal date for Israel's presence in Canaan of ca. 1210 BCE.

The biblical narrator is apparently unaware that the Philistines did not arrive in Canaan until ca. 1175 BCE in the reign of Ramesses III. He has them cutting deals with Abraham ca. 2100 BCE at Beersheba, and blocking Israel's entry into Canaan from Egypt in an Exodus dated ca. 1446 BCE (cf. 1 Kings 6:1).

This narrator also has no knowledge of Israelites encountering and doing battle with Egyptians in Canaan, ca. 1446-1210 BCE. I understand the biblical narratives to be a mix of fiction and historical kernels which have been telescoped, fused, and embellished for religious-polemical purposes. In my understanding of a "historical kernel being preserved" of no Egyptians being encountered, I identify the "major" Aramaean settlement of the land as after Egypt has withdrawn ca. 1133 BCE (Rameses VI). As revealed by Merneptah, Israel was encountered before 1130 BCE, but we do not know if this was an Aramaean raid that was repulsed and sent scampering back to Aram to lick their wounds, to try again after 1130 BCE, or this was an "entrenched" peoples in Canaan since 1406 BCE (1 Kings 6:1). Seeking a "historical kernel," a time when Egypt is not in Canaan to resist Israel's invasion, I date the major invasion to ca. 1130 BCE, perhaps Merneptah's 1210 encounter was only an early failed (and forgotten) Aramean attempt ?

I understand that the Exodus Conquest narratives telescope and fuse events from differing eras, the Hyksos expulsion, the Apiru wars for freedom, the monotheism of Atenism, the Rameside miners wanderings in the Sinai and Arabah, the Aramean invasions of 1210-1130 BCE. The Arameans after some initial destruction, eventually came to settle amongst the indigenous inhabitants of Canaan and Transjordan in Iron I and the descendants of these intermarriages in late Iron II, wanting to preserve the "origins traditions" of their forefathers, both Canaanite and Aramean, fused them together into one Origins story.

06 September 2003 Update

An Israelite invasion ca. 1130 BCE from Aram ?

The biblical narrator appears to be unaware of any Egyptians contesting with Israel for the control of Canaan. This "clue" has suggested for me that the Conquest under Joshua might have occurred AFTER Egypt had withdrawn from Canaan in the days of Rameses VI (he reigned ca. 1141-1133 BCE). The biblical narrator also is adamant that the Philistines are settled in the land and are blocking Israel's Exodus from Egypt via the "Way of the Philistines", a track from the eastern delta to Canaan, near the Mediterranean sea, the fastest way, in fact, to get to Canaan from Egypt. The Philistines have been identified with the Pleset, a tribe of Sea Peoples who invaded and settled the Philista in the days of Ramesses III who mentions his defeat of their attempted invasion of Egypt. Again, the Bible's mention of Philistines blocking Israel's Exodus from Egypt is another valuable clue for some scholars that some of the elements of the Exodus narratives are drawing from events after 1175 BCE.

So, if the Philistines are NOT in Canaan prior to 1175 BCE and Egypt withdraws from Canaan ca. 1133 BCE, where does this "fit" with many scholar's notions that Israel was IN Canaan before 1208 BCE as she is mentioned as being defeated by Pharaoh Merneptah ca. 1208 BCE ?

I understand that Merneptah's defeat of Israel, need not necessarily be IN Canaan, he could just as well have defeated her in Transjordan or even Syria, near Damascus (as this was Egypt's border in the 13th century BCE). That is, perhaps an early attempted invasion by Aramean tribes from northern Syria (north of Damascus) was met and repulsed by Merneptah ? Perhaps Israel withdrew to northern Syria to lick her wounds and wait for more auspicious time to invade Canaan, after Egypt had withdrawn ca. 1133 BCE ? The defeat of Israel in Canaan or Transjordan is unknown by the Bible.

I was surprised to learn recently (28 Nov. 2003) that my proposal of two different origin traditions of Israel's Exodus, Aramean and Canaanite, was in some respects similar to one made earlier in 1983 by Professor Halpern as noted by Young :

"In Baruch Halpern's estimation, since Ramesses II was the pharaoh of the oppression (Exod. 1:11), then Merneptah was the pharaoh of the exodus from Egypt. Thus the Israel mentioned on the Merneptah stela was a displaced group of "homesteaders" who migrated south from Syria through northern Transjordan. Later, a group of escaped slaves from Egypt arrived and transformed Israel's beliefs with the "myth" of the exodus, of the conquest, and of the deity Yahweh." (p. 180. K. Lawson Younger Jr. "Early Israel in Recent Biblical Scholarship." in David W. Baker & Bill T. Arnold. Editors. *The Face of Old Testament Studies, A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Grand Rapids, Michigan. Baker Books. 1999. citing Baruch Halpern. *The Emergence of Israel in Canaan*. pp. 117, 216. Scholars Press. 1983 [Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series #29]; Baruch Halpern. "The Exodus from Egypt: Myth or Reality ?" in Hershel Shanks, William G. Dever & Baruch Halpern. Editors. *The Rise of Ancient Israel*. Washington DC. Biblical Archaeological Society. 1992 [A Symposium at the Smithsonian Institution 26 Oct. 1991])

Professor Bietak, a prominent Egyptologist, has suggested a similar explanation. He found a "four-room" house within the precincts of an Egyptian Temple at Medinet Habu which resembles similar houses usually identified as Israelite in the Hill Country of Canaan in Iron I (ca. 1200-1000 BCE). He thus argues that if this is truly an Israelite house, that the Exodus had to have been in the 20th dynasty when he believes this worker's house to have been constructed :

"Reed huts more than 3,000 years old belonging to workers -perhaps slaves- and with the same floor plan as ancient Israelite four-room houses have been identified at Medinet Habu, opposite Luxor in Egypt. These reed huts may represent extra-biblical evidence of Israel in Egypt. If true, Israelite -or proto-Israelite- workers were in Egypt in the second half of the 12th century BCE, more than a half century later than has been previously thought. This evidence, in turn, would have important implications for the historicity of the biblical narrative." (pp. 41-42. Manfred Bietak. "Israelites Found in Egypt, Four-room House identified in Medinet Habu." *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Sept/Oct 2003. vol 29. no. 5)

"The famous Merneptah Stele that mentions Israel in Canaan, not as a city or a state or a land, but as a people, can be dated to the late 13th century BCE and is therefore sometimes cited as evidence for an Exodus at some time in the earlier 13th century. But Israel is mentioned along with Ashkelon, Gezer and Yinoam. These names follow a progression from the coast to the interior (Yinoam is southwest of the Sea of Galilee). The stele may indicate that the people Israel were still east of the Jordan at this time...All this, I believe, supports an assumption that the settlement in Canaan took place no earlier than the early 12th century BCE- in the 20th Dynasty. This was followed by the sojourn in Egypt (at least by some of the proto-Israelites). If there was a historical Exodus, it was probably a group of these people who left Egypt in the 20th Dynasty...If Israel's stay in Egypt and the so-called Exodus occurred in the 20th Dynasty, say about the middle of the 12th century BCE (and it may have occurred a little later- Ramesses IV's reign [ca. 1151-1145 BCE] is the earliest that the Temple of Ay and Horemheb could have been destroyed), and if the accounts of the Exodus were written down in the mid-tenth century BCE, this puts us just within the limits of historical reliability...Dating the Exodus to the 20th Dynasty (mid-12th century BCE) brings us significantly closer to the composition of the biblical writings that incorporate the Exodus tradition. Moreover, a date so late would be consistent with the description of the "Way of the Philistines" in the book of Exodus

(what the Egyptians called the "Way of Horus"). By the 20th Dynasty, the Philistines were already settled in their pentapolis- Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron and Gaza - on the southern Canaanite coast. The term "Way of the Philistines" is no longer an anachronism. It would make sense for the Israelites to avoid this route." (pp.41-49, 82-83. Manfred Bietak. "Israelites Found in Egypt, Four-room House identified in Medinet Habu." *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Sept/Oct 2003. vol 29. no. 5)

In my earlier above article arguing that the Iron I villages of stone of Canaan's Hill Country are in fact, Arameans from northern Syria and Trans-Euphrates, something which eluded me was the establishment of a historical pedigree for Iron IA four-room houses, that is, if they were from Aram, where is the evidence _in_ Aram ?

I am pleased to report, that Bietak has in his above recently released article, has provided for me "the missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle," that is, he noted that the earliest four-room houses, dating back to the 4th millennium BCE, appear to come from Syria and Mesopotamia ! This is the very area that I have argued, Iron IA Aramean Israel is from ! And, this is the very area that the biblical traditions have as the homeland of the Patriarchs! Abraham is portrayed battling Philistines over Beersheba's well, an event which could not have happened before the 1175 BCE arrival of the Philistines in Canaan, in Rameses III's days. This anomaly supports Bietak's observation that Israel's descent into Canaan and later Egypt, might be in Dynasty 20, after 1175 BCE, her Exodus being ca. 1140 BCE or later.

Bietak :

"In scholarly circles today, the four-room house is often called the "Israelite house" because it is ubiquitous in the Israelite period and at Israelite sites, with only a few appearances elsewhere. The late Yigal Shiloh called the four-room house "an original Israelite concept." Two Israeli archaeologists recently concluded in these pages that the four-room house may safely be called the Israelite house. I am not so sure. First, there is a very old prototype from Mesopotamia and Syria, called the "Mittlesaal Haus" (middle-room house), which goes back to the fourth millennium BCE. Second, the four-room house can also be found outside the settlement area of the proto-Israelites." (p. 46. Manfred Bietak. "Israelites Found in Egypt, Four-room House identified in Medinet Habu." *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Sept/Oct 2003. vol 29. no. 5)

01 September 2004 Update :

Professor Baruch Halpern (1992) suggested that Israel's conquest of Canaan is recalling Arameans fleeing Northern Syria in the 13th-12th centuries BCE, settling in Transjordan and then invading Canaan from that location. Eventually they assimilate with south Canaanites who have an "Exodus from Egypt tradition" and eventually adopt this for their own origins :

"This brings us to the crux of the matter, which is the relationship of the Exodus to the conquest...in the 13th century, as just noted, a series of peoples emerge along the King's Highway in Transjordan. Edom and Moab are mentioned in Egyptian documents. So are the Shasu, or pastoralists. The Bible recalls the existence of a Midianite league, and of Amalek, at about this time. The people of Ammon, too, must have been in formation. Not very long afterward, Aramean kingdoms begin to arise in Syria, and Arameans are attested in northern Syria at the same time (with antecedents stretching back to the reign of Shalmaneser I [1274-1245 B.C.E.]). To these peoples the Ammonites, the Moabites and especially the Arameans and the Edomites the Israelites felt a close kinship. And the first Israelite settlements in the hills of Canaan probably stem from the latter part of the 13th century, too. These share their material culture with that of the Transjordanian populations, including not just pottery traditions and family organization, but also glyptic and naming traditions.*

The inference I draw is that a new population spread down from Syria along the King's Highway over the course of the 13th century. This is the population the Bible identifies as Hebrew, an ethnicon, it will be recalled, that is used in the Bible only when foreigners are referring to Israelites. At least at the end of the Iron Age, the Bible portrays the Hebrews as the rightful successors of an indigenous population of Canaanites, Amorites or Rephaim.*

What could have impelled the new population to settle among the non-Hebrews in Transjordanian and Cisjordanian Canaan ? The 13th century was a period of extreme turmoil in northern Syria and the

Balikh basin the plain of Aram in south-central Turkey and northern Syria to which Israelite folklore traces Israel's roots. In that century, Assyria gradually dismantled the indigenous Mitannian states and turned them into provinces. A considerable element of West Semitic speakers lived in the region north of the Euphrates along the Balikh and Habur rivers. Some of them were pastoralists or dimorphic agrarians in background, associated with hill territory and later referred to as Arameans.* No doubt many converted their assets into livestock and migrated away from heavy taxation.

Some of the migrants found their way not just into southern Syria and Transjordan, but into the central hills of Cisjordan.* Merneptah mentions this group in the celebrated Israel Stele. Some of the evidence from the material culture suggests that the early Israelites enjoyed some familiarity with Canaanite culture.* Still, most of the evidence linking the collared-rim jar, for example, to Canaanite towns, is susceptible to explanation on the basis of trade. Continuity in the pottery tradition between the Hebrew elements including those in Transjordan is susceptible to the same explanation if we adopt a model of gradual homesteading from Syria rather than of unified invasion. From differences in social organization and its architectural articulations, from differences in household economy and from differences in economic strategies, I would conclude that Israelites, and their Transjordanian counterparts in Ammon, Moab and Edom, and farther north in Aram, were not indigenous to Canaan, and that their background lay in a combination of agriculture and husbandry, in many cases in a mountainous environment.

But it is inconceivable that all these new elements, who shared a common culture, should have participated in an Exodus from Egypt. The Arameans, Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites, at any rate, are not understood by the Israelites to have shared the Exodus experience: This indicates that they had no such national myth. And this, in turn, leaves us with the question whether earliest Israel in Canaan was itself the product of the Exodus, or whether, like the Jamestown colony in the United States, it was the beneficiary of a national myth formed from a subsequent experience... We might even envision an instance in which a small group of pastoralists, tending sheep in the Wadi Tumilat, migrated out of Egypt, legally or illegally, in order to evade corvée. Such pastoralists, with no tradition of state labor, would regard Egyptian forms of taxation as nothing less than slavery. Yet, after a sufficient time in Egypt, they would also have assimilated some of the history of the Delta and may even have identified themselves with the viceroy of a Hyksos king named Jacob. Of their own illustrious ancestry they had no doubt.

Escaping into the desert, too, was a sign that they had been touched by a god, and it is no coincidence that somewhere in the regions through which they migrated there was a "land of the Shasu (or, pastoralists) of YHWH," attested in Egyptian texts of the 14th or 13th century.* Nor, for that matter, is it in any way coincidental that it is from the same regions Seir, the field of Edom that Israelite liturgists of the Iron I period thought YHWH had come to conquer Canaan (Judges 5:4; Exodus 15:15; Deuteronomy 33:23, 29; Psalm 68:89, 18; later, Habakkuk 3:3 and 1 Kings 19). The very modest beginnings of a cult of YHWH associated with an exodus from Egypt can thus be divined in some incident, or series of incidents, that would be invisible to us archaeologically and historically as the Exodus is.

So far we have a cult located somewhere in the southern steppe of Canaan and related to an exodus from Egypt. Were this the end of the development, it is safe to say that the Exodus would have left no imprint whatever on what the poet calls "the sands of time." But it was not the end. For, somehow, the Exodus myth, and the community responsible for preserving it and here, we should think in terms of a number of years, not of decades came into contact with elements that were homesteading down the King's Highway in Transjordan.

The mechanics of this step are impossible to stipulate, and here we are essentially doomed to remain forever in the dark. What we know is that the group responsible for introducing the Exodus story into the culture of Cisjordanian immigrants from Syria (whom we may call the Israelites) found a compatible culture in these immigrants, a culture that was receptive to the notion that the Israelites were immigrants in the land, whose property had been converted into livestock in the 13th and 12th centuries. The affinity was in no way coincidental: The Israelites (the migrants from Syria and those with whom they established connubium in the central hills) felt this affinity for Edomites in general* (and for the nomadic Kenites*), and their folklore identified Esau, the ancestor of Edom, as the full brother of Jacob/Israel (Genesis 25:21-34; Deuteronomy 23:8; Hosea 12:4; Jeremiah 9:3; Amos 1:11).

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