

WAKE FOREST COLLEGE

WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA

BAPTIST STUDENT UNION

History of Israel

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As far as we know, the tribes of Israel never acted for a longer time in history as a unit, apart from the quite temporary phase of the monarchy of Saul, which was, on their ground, obviously incapable of surviving for long.

The tribes which formed the greater whole of Israel did not all combine together until the occupation of the land on the soil of Palestine and it is only from that point that the real History of Israel can take its departure.

Revolts of A.D. 66-70 and 132-135 brought to close history of Israel.

What sprang from this decline of Israel was the phenomenon which we usually call Judaism.

The Amarna tablets were the first document to reveal clearly the historical background of the beginnings of Israel in Palestine and they are still one of the direct sources for the history of Israel. Also the Ras-Shamra texts.

It was only when the Hyksos established themselves in the country, from which they finally conquered Egypt, that Syria-Palestine began to play its part as a bridge between the ancient civilizations on the Euphrated-Tigris and on the Nile.

The fragment of a stele of Ramses IV circa 1150 B.C. which was found during the excavations in Megiddo, is the last tangible evidence of Egyptian rule in Palestine.

Habiru- same word as Hebrew (people who performed military service)

The Israelite tribes entered into a land which in certain areas was crowded with cities which, owing to a stormy past, were inhabited by a far from uniform population, made up of the most diverse elements living in a highly differentiated society, and which, after the cessation of Egyptian rule and the emergence of the new ruling class of the maritime peoples, were moving into a period of tumultuous military conflicts with one another.

When one looks at the whole range of the Israelite settlements in Palestine it is immediately obvious that the tribes of Israel entered those parts of the country that had only been inhabited sparsely or not at all in the Bronze Age. They occupied the various parts of the mountains west of the Jordan as well as the central section of the highlands east of the Jordan whilst the plains on which nature had bestowed its blessings remained in the hands of the older Canaanite population which was concentrated in cities and alongside which the tribes now lived as a new element in the population.

It is clear to begin with the occupation of the land by the tribes took place fairly quietly and peacefully on the whole and without seriously disturbing the great mass of the previous inhabitants..

The Israelites were land hungry semi-nomads so that kind before their occupation of the land.

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That the O.T. took too simple a view of the events which led to the development of Israel as a totality is obvious from the fact that the tribes of Israel did not all settle on the soil of Palestine at the same time.

The tribes were not given their names until their arrival on the soil of Palestine, which means that they were not finally constituted until their arrival there.

It is no accident that the Benjaminite tradition contained in Jos. 1-12 was later used as the basis of the description of the combined Israelite conquest of the land west of the Jordan,

Before the tribes we have mentioned established themselves in the central part of Palestine, the tribes of Reuben, Simeon and Levi had settled somewhere in the central territory west of Jordan, and had then for reasons which are uncertain migrated and dispersed and thereby made room for the tribes that came later.

Beginnings of occupation of Palestine in second half of 14th century, lasted at least a hundred years before the accession of Saul, it was not a deliberately and planned process.

Number 12 is an artificial system used by Israel and outside forces.

~~Some~~* Shechem, Bethel, Gilgal and Shiloh were old Canaanite cult places taken over by the Israelites.

Divine law at the beginning at these cult places, first offices were those of judicial, not priestly.

At the beginning the local center of the Israelite amphictyony was an ancient Canaanite shrine. At the offering of the first fruits of the field in the sanctuary it was the custom to recite a religious formula the main theme of which was the bringing forth out of Egypt. This was based on an historical event. The incident itself, which the Israelites experienced as an unexpected and mighty act of deliverance of their God, remains veiled from our sight.

As historical personalities the patriarchs did not, if that description was correct, really belong to Palestine at all but only to its vicinity. These figures belonged to the Aramaic migration. The whole tradition of the Patriarchs was like the tradition concerning the exodus from Egypt, presumably a later contribution to the stock of Israelite traditions, though it should be borne in mind specifically Judaeon traditions appear to be almost completely lacking in the Pentateuch.

The Sinai tradition was an independent tradition on its own sustained by a festival for the renewing of the covenant which was regularly observed by the Israelite tribes. All that can be said is that the divine revelation of Sinai was imparted to clans which later became incorporated in the tribes of Israel. The encounter on Sinai may be assigned to a comparatively early date and those who took part in it may be regarded as members of a fairly ancient stratum of what later became Israel, while the participants in the events which took place in and around Egypt belonged to later generations.

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Since the Pentateuch narrative was compiled step by step from a series of originally independent themes, the regular appearance of Moses in most of these themes cannot be original but must be the result of later manipulation; and the inevitable question is to which theme or tradition Moses was originally attached and where we must look for his historical roots., a suggestion that Moses had no historical connection with the event which took place on Sinai. The unity of Israel and its faith did not suddenly appear one fine day but grew by degrees from a nucleus on the soil of Palestine.

The fact that a monarchy was finally established in Israel thereby deflecting Israel from the line to which it had kept so strictly heretofore, on the road toward political power, was a result of the historical situation in Palestine, which threatened the continuity and existence of Israel as a whole --The philistines. --dominated land west of the Jordan.

David's election was purely a political act-- a new emphasis. David set back the Philistines once and for all. He ruled Judah and Israel and subdued Moab, Ammon, Edom. Solomon entered upon a great inheritance.

Divine activity is spoken of in quite a new way; They no longer see God intervening directly in the course of events with isolated mighty actions. In the foreground they see men acting with their human desires, their wisdom and successes, their follies and wickedness, and the events of their age seemed to them to be completely determined by human actions and their varied activities* motives. Yet God still remained the Lord of History.

Solomon died autumn of 926-925.

The disintegration of the Empire of David and Solomon turned Judah and Israel into minor States within the political world of Syria and Palestine.

