Dr. Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Session 7B,
Joshua – Jericho and Ai
Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Session 7B, Joshua – Jericho and Ai, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture transcript analyzes the biblical accounts of the Israelite conquest of Canaan, focusing on the capture of Jericho and Ai as described in the Book of Joshua. It explores the miraculous taking of Jericho and the concept of *herem*, where things were devoted to the Lord through destruction or placement in the treasury. The lecture addresses the subsequent failure at Ai, attributed to Achan's sin, and examines the challenges in correlating these biblical narratives with archaeological findings, including those by Garstang, Kenyon, and Wood. **The identification of Ai with the mound known as Et-Tel is questioned, with scholars like Livingston suggesting alternative sites.** The lecture also touches on the archaeological difficulties of identifying biblical sites and interpreting the lack of evidence, advocating for careful consideration of both biblical and archaeological data.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Session 7B – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Exodus to Exile).

Vannoy_ExtoExile_Session07B.mp3

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Session 7B, Joshua – Jericho and Ai

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpt of Robert Vannoy's lecture on Joshua, specifically focusing on the conquest of Jericho and Ai.

Briefing Document: Robert Vannoy on Joshua: Jericho and Ai

I. Main Themes:

- **Divine Gift vs. Human Achievement:** The lecture emphasizes that the conquest of Canaan, particularly Jericho, was intended to demonstrate that the land was a gift from God, not a result of Israel's military prowess.

- **The Significance of "Herem":** The concept of *herem* (devoted/accursed) is central. It highlights the idea that conquered cities and their spoils were to be set apart for God, either through destruction or placement in the Lord's treasury. This underscores God's ownership of the land.

- **Obedience and Consequences:** The narrative underscores the importance of obedience to God's specific instructions. The failure at Ai is directly linked to Achan's disobedience in taking "devoted things," leading to divine judgment.

- **The Challenge of Archaeological Interpretation:** Vannoy directly addresses the complexities and controversies surrounding the archaeological evidence related to Jericho and Ai. He presents conflicting viewpoints and highlights the difficulties in correlating archaeological findings with the biblical account.

- **Site Identification Issues:** The briefing highlights an important issue in biblical archaeology. The lack of definitive evidence at traditional sites requires new approaches to site identification.

II. Key Ideas and Facts:

- **The Conquest of Jericho (Joshua 6):**

- The Lord delivered Jericho into Israel's hands. "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men." (Joshua 6:2).

- The unconventional method of taking Jericho (marching around the city, blowing trumpets, and shouting) was a deliberate act of God to show his power and claim over the land.

- The city and its contents were *herem*, "devoted to the Lord."

- Rahab and her family were spared because she hid the spies.

- A curse was pronounced on anyone who rebuilt Jericho: "Cursed before the LORD is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho. At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates." (Joshua 6:26)

- Ahab's rebuilding of Jericho in 1 Kings 16:34 is presented as an act of defiance and a sign of his unfaithfulness.

- **The Meaning of *Herem*:**

- The Hebrew word *herem* means to set something apart for the Lord, either through destruction or dedication to the treasury.

- Francis Schaeffer: "The city of Jericho was a sign of the firstfruits; in all things the firstfruits belonged to God. Jericho was the firstfruits of the land; therefore everything in it was devoted to God."

- **Archaeological Evidence at Jericho:**

- Excavations at Jericho have revealed a very long history, dating back to 9000 B.C.

- Key figures in the archaeology of Jericho: Ernst Sellin, John Garstang, and Kathleen Kenyon.

- Conflicting interpretations of the evidence, particularly regarding the dating of the destruction layer relevant to the Joshua narrative.

- Kathleen Kenyon's work suggested a destruction around 1580 B.C., with little remaining from the Late Bronze Age. "From the time of this period, almost nothing remained."

- Bryant Wood argues for a destruction in the 1400s based on Kenyon's own reports.

- James Kelso: "One of the major tragedies of Palestinian archeology is that the Germans excavated Jericho when archeology was still an infant science."

- **The Failure at Ai (Joshua 7-8):**

- The initial attack on Ai failed due to Israel's sin.

- Achan's sin: He took forbidden items from Jericho (a Babylonian robe, silver, and gold).

- Achan and his family were stoned as a consequence of his disobedience.

- The subsequent successful attack on Ai followed after Achan's sin was dealt with.

- **Archaeology of Ai:**

- The traditional site of Ai is identified with Et-Tel, but archaeological findings there conflict with the biblical narrative (destruction around 2200 B.C. and little occupation afterward).

- Vincent's suggestion that Ai was a military outpost of Bethel is dismissed because scripture indicates that both cities had their own king.

- Finegan suggests a confusion between the stories of Ai and Bethel. That is, the account in Joshua is actually about Bethel but misattributed to Ai.

- Free and Kitchen suggest that Et-Tel may not be the correct site for Ai. "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

- Livingston's alternative site identification: He proposes relocating Bethel to El-Bireh and Ai to either Khirbet el-Macatir or Khirbet El-Bireh.

- Bryant Wood's excavation at El-Machatir has revealed a fortified site dating to the 1400s B.C.

III. Quotes Highlighting Key Points:

- **On Divine Gift:** "The significance of the way in which Israel took Jericho is that this is the first city in the land of Canaan that they took, and the way that was done was intended by the Lord to give a clear example to them that they would receive the land as a gift from his hand, and that ultimately the land belonged to the Lord, not to Israel."

- **On the meaning of Herem** "The Hebrew word means both "accursed" and "devoted"—that is, given to God. Here it clearly means the latter. The city shall be devoted, which is the way the NIV translates it: "The city and all that is in it are to be to the Lord.""

- **On Archaeological Interpretation** "The biblical account of conquest was written late in the 7th century BC...and fails to link the conquest to any events that external sources permit us to date."

- **On Site Identification Issues** "When mounds and literary records fail to agree, in other cases topographers and archeologists do not panic, but simply use their common sense and recognize they are probably mistaken in their identification and proceed to search elsewhere in the region. The problem of Ai should be regarded in exactly the same way."

IV. Implications and Further Considerations:

- The lecture presents a balanced view of the biblical text and archaeological evidence, acknowledging the challenges in harmonizing the two.

- The ongoing debate about the dating of the Exodus and Conquest has significant implications for how one interprets the archaeological record.

- The lecture encourages critical thinking about site identification and the limitations of archaeological interpretation.

- The ethical implications of the *herem* command, and the nature of divine justice, are implicit, though not explicitly discussed.

This briefing document should provide a comprehensive overview of the main points covered in the provided excerpt.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Session 7B, Joshua – Jericho and Ai

Joshua: Conquest and Archaeological Considerations

Study Guide Outline

I. The Conquest of Canaan (Joshua 5:13-12:24) * **A.** The Taking of Jericho (Joshua 6) * God's instruction for taking the city * The miraculous fall of Jericho's walls * **Herem**: Definition and application in Jericho * Significance of Jericho as the "firstfruits" * The curse on rebuilding Jericho * Fulfillment of the curse during Ahab's reign (1 Kings 16:34) * Archaeological Evidence Related to Jericho * The significance of the mound's location * Early excavations by Sellin, Garstang, and Kenyon * Kenyon's conclusions regarding the Late Bronze Age occupation * Bryant Wood's recent work and reinterpretation of the data * Dating debates and the early vs. late Exodus theories * Arguments against re-dating the Exodus * **B.** The Failure at Ai and Achan's Sin (Joshua 7-8) * The initial failed attack on Ai * Joshua's lament and God's response * Achan's sin: Taking "devoted things" (herem) * Consequences of Achan's disobedience and its impact on the Israelites * The successful second attack on Ai * Archaeological Debate Surrounding the Site of Ai * The identification of Et-Tel as Ai and the problems it presents * Vincent's theory of Ai as a military outpost of Bethel * Finegan's suggestion of confusion between Ai and Bethel * Simons' objections to the identification of Et-Tel as Ai * Livingston's alternative site identification * Wood's archaeological findings at El-Machatir * Identifying Bethel as Beitin or El Bireh

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. What was the significance of the way Israel conquered Jericho, according to the lecture?

2. Explain the meaning of the Hebrew term "herem" as it relates to the conquest of Jericho and provide examples from Joshua 6.

3. What curse did Joshua place on anyone who would rebuild Jericho, and how was it later fulfilled?

4. Summarize Kathleen Kenyon's findings regarding the occupation of Jericho during the Late Bronze Age, the time period of Joshua.

5. What was Achan's sin, and how did it affect Israel's military campaign?

6. How did the Israelites atone for Achan's sin and what lessons were learned?

7. What challenges do archaeologists face in connecting biblical place names with modern sites?

8. What problem arises when the archaeological findings at Et-Tel are compared to the biblical account of the conquest of Ai?

9. Summarize Bryant Wood's recent archaeological findings at El-Machatir.

10. What are some difficulties involved in excavating the proposed site of Bethel at El-Bireh?

Quiz: Answer Key

1. The manner in which Israel conquered Jericho demonstrated that the land was a gift from God, not the result of Israel's military strength. The miraculous taking of the city showed the Israelites they would receive the land as a gift from God's hand.

2. "Herem" means to set something apart from personal use, devoted to the Lord, either by being destroyed or placed in the Lord's treasury. In Jericho, the inhabitants and cattle were to be killed, while the gold and silver were to be put in the Lord's treasury (Joshua 6:17-19).

3. Joshua cursed anyone who would rebuild Jericho, saying that they would lay its foundations at the cost of their firstborn son and set up its gates at the cost of their youngest son. This curse was fulfilled in 1 Kings 16:34 when Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho during Ahab's reign.

4. Kenyon concluded that there was very little left on the mound from the Late Bronze Age due to significant erosion. She argued that much of the level was eroded away because the city was largely uninhabited after its fall to Joshua.

5. Achan sinned by taking some of the "devoted things" (herem) from Jericho, specifically a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold. This act of disobedience violated God's covenant and led to Israel's defeat at Ai.

6. To atone for Achan's sin, Achan and his family were stoned, and a large pile of rocks was heaped over him as a reminder of divine judgment against sin. The Israelites learned the importance of obedience and the consequences of disobeying God's commands.

7. It is difficult to connect biblical place names with modern sites, because there are mounds all over the land of Canaan, often covered in rubble. Without clear signposts, archaeologists must rely on limited literary records and other circumstantial evidence to connect the place names with the mounds.

8. The archaeological findings at Et-Tel indicate that the city was destroyed around 2200 B.C. and not occupied again (except for a small Iron Age settlement), which conflicts with the biblical account of the Israelites conquering Ai in Joshua 7-8. The biblical account places this event much later.

9. Wood found that El-Machatir was a fortified site dating back to the time of Joshua in the 1400s B.C. This is the only fortified site of the Late Bronze Age between Jerusalem and Shechem, which suggests this may be a viable alternative identification for Ai.

10. The proposed site of Bethel at El-Bireh is located in a Palestinian town on the West Bank. No excavations have been done there to find evidence of the high place that was constructed by Jeroboam I, and the town's highest point where one might find Jeroboam's altar, is the site of the house of the mayor of the town.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the theological significance of the conquest of Jericho, focusing on the concept of "herem" and the idea of the land being a gift from God.

2. Compare and contrast the archaeological evidence for and against the historicity of the conquest of Jericho, addressing the different interpretations of the data.

3. Analyze the story of Achan's sin and its consequences in Joshua 7, exploring the themes of obedience, covenant, and divine justice.

4. Critically evaluate the various proposed solutions to the problem of the archaeological findings at Et-Tel in relation to the biblical account of the conquest of Ai.

5. Assess the role of archaeological evidence in confirming or challenging the biblical narrative of the conquest of Canaan, using specific examples from the book of Joshua.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ai:** A Canaanite city attacked by the Israelites after the conquest of Jericho. Its location is debated among archaeologists.

- **Achan:** An Israelite who violated God's command by taking devoted things (herem) from Jericho, leading to Israel's defeat at Ai.

- **Ahab:** King of Israel in the 9th century B.C., during whose reign Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho, fulfilling Joshua's curse.

- **Beitin:** The traditional site identified as the biblical city of Bethel.

- **Bethel:** An important city in the land of Canaan, located near Ai, whose capture is described in the book of Judges.

- **El-Bireh:** A proposed alternative site for the biblical city of Bethel.

- **Et-Tel:** A tell (archaeological mound) traditionally identified as the site of the biblical city of Ai.

- **Garstang, John:** An archaeologist who worked at Jericho in the 1930s and initially dated the city's destruction to around 1400 B.C.

- **Herem:** A Hebrew term meaning something devoted or set apart to God, often through destruction or placement in the treasury.

- **Hyksos:** A group of foreign rulers who controlled Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1750-1570 B.C.).

- **Jericho:** An ancient city in Canaan, the first city conquered by the Israelites under Joshua.

- **Kenyon, Kathleen:** An archaeologist who conducted excavations at Jericho in the 1950s and challenged Garstang's dating of the city's destruction.

- **Khirbet el-Macatir:** A proposed alternative site for the biblical city of Ai.

- **Livingston, David:** An archaeologist who has proposed alternative site identifications for Bethel and Ai.

- **Sellin, Ernst:** A German archaeologist who began excavations at Jericho in the early 1900s.

- **Wood, Bryant:** A contemporary archaeologist who has reexamined the evidence from Jericho and supports an earlier date for its destruction, as well as excavating at El-Machatir.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Session 7B, Joshua – Jericho and Ai, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions About the Conquest of Canaan in Joshua

1. What is the significance of the way the Israelites conquered Jericho?

The conquest of Jericho, as described in Joshua 6, was miraculous and unusual. Its significance lies in God's intention to demonstrate that the land was a gift from Him, not something the Israelites acquired through military might. The seemingly senseless instructions (marching around the city, blowing trumpets) emphasized their reliance on God's power. God delivered Jericho into their hands (Joshua 6:2).

2. What does the Hebrew word *herem* mean in the context of Jericho and the conquest?

The Hebrew word *herem* is translated as "devoted" or "accursed." It refers to setting something apart for God, either by destruction (killing inhabitants, destroying cattle) or by placing valuable items (silver, gold, bronze, iron) into the Lord's treasury. It signified that the conquered city was entirely God's, either through complete destruction or appropriation of wealth for sacred purposes. Violating the *herem* resulted in becoming liable to destruction or bringing trouble to the camp of Israel.

3. Why was there a curse placed on rebuilding Jericho, and how was this curse fulfilled?

The curse on rebuilding Jericho (Joshua 6:26) served as a memorial to God's grace in giving the land to Israel. The ruined walls were meant to perpetually remind them that they received the land as a gift, not through their own strength. This curse was fulfilled during the reign of Ahab (1 Kings 16:34), when Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho at the cost of his firstborn and youngest sons. This was interpreted as a sign of Ahab's apostasy and disregard for God's covenant.

4. What are the main archaeological findings at Jericho, and how do they relate to the biblical account of its destruction?

Archaeological excavations at Jericho reveal a long history dating back to 9000 B.C. The city experienced multiple destructions and reconstructions throughout the Bronze Age. Garstang initially argued for a destruction around 1400 B.C. (Late Bronze Age), aligning with an early date for the Exodus. Kathleen Kenyon, however, suggested a destruction around 1580 B.C., with little remaining from the Late Bronze Age. Bryant Wood has contested Kenyon's dating and argued for evidence of a destruction in the 1400s. The lack of substantial remains from the Late Bronze Age has created debate about the historicity of the biblical account.

5. Why did the Israelites initially fail in their attack on Ai, and what does this episode illustrate?

The Israelites initially failed in their attack on Ai (Joshua 7) due to Achan's sin of taking forbidden items ("devoted things," *herem*) from Jericho. This disobedience violated God's covenant and resulted in the withdrawal of His blessing, leading to defeat. The episode illustrates the importance of obedience to God's commands and the consequences of sin, which can affect the entire community. It serves as a reminder of divine judgment against sin.

6. What are the challenges in identifying the archaeological site of Ai, and what are some proposed solutions to reconcile the archaeological findings with the biblical account?

Identifying the archaeological site of Ai has been challenging because excavations at Et-Tel, the traditionally identified site, show a destruction around 2200 B.C. with little occupation until an Iron Age settlement around 1200-1050 B.C., which conflicts with the biblical timeline. Some proposed solutions include:

- **Ai as a military outpost of Bethel:** Ai was not an important city but rather a military outpost.

- **Confusion between Ai and Bethel:** Suggests the biblical account confused the destruction of Bethel with that of Ai.

- **Faulty site identification:** Proposes that Et-Tel is not actually Ai and that Ai should be sought elsewhere. David Livingston has suggested alternate sites (Khirbet el-Macatir or Khirbet El-Bireh)

7. What alternative location for Ai has been proposed and what evidence supports it?

David Livingston proposed relocating Ai to Khirbet el-Macatir or Khirbet El-Bireh, instead of the traditional Et-Tel. Bryant Wood's excavations at El-Machatir revealed it was a fortified site that dates back to the time of Joshua, in the 1400s B.C.

8. What are the difficulties in correlating biblical place names with archaeological sites, and what principle does K.A. Kitchen suggest in light of these difficulties?

Correlating biblical place names with archaeological sites is difficult because there are many mounds in the land of Canaan, and it is not always clear which mound corresponds to which biblical city. K.A. Kitchen's principle is that "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." Just because archaeologists haven't found evidence to support a biblical account at a particular site doesn't necessarily mean the account is false. It might indicate that the site identification is incorrect or that the evidence has been lost or destroyed.