

Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Lecture 6B
Date of Deuteronomy, Joshua and the Conquest

c. Date of Deuteronomy

c. is “Date.” We touched on this earlier when we discussed the parallel between the Hittite treaty form and the covenant materials of the Old Testament and the Mosaic covenant. The form of international treaties differed over time. As you may remember from my previous discussion, Meredith Kline made the case that the book of Deuteronomy corresponds to the classic form of the Hittite treaties. Given the evolutionary development in the treaty form, the Mosaic material matches that of the Mosaic era. That’s what we talked about earlier, but let me go back and make a few more comments about the history on this discussion of the date of Deuteronomy.

In the early 1800s a German named Wilhelm de Wette proposed that Deuteronomy was to be identified with the “book of the law” which Hilkiah the priest found in the temple in the time of King Josiah of Judah. The finding of that “book of the law” led to a reformation in the time of Josiah. From 2 Kings we can date the finding of the law to 621 B.C. De Wette said that the purpose of Deuteronomy was to centralize worship in Jerusalem, and he got that from chapter 12. I don’t want to get into the details of chapter 12. There’s a lengthy discussion on that and even some conservative scholars disagree on how to interpret chapter 12. Does chapter 12 require a centralization of worship in the sense that there was to be no legitimate worship anywhere other than Jerusalem? De Wette interpreted it that way and others scholars did as well. The idea was, according to de Wette, that the religious leaders of Jerusalem were the ones who authored the book of Deuteronomy. They “found” it and attributed it to Moses to give it credentials and authority, when in reality it was not from Moses. It was from the religious leaders of Jerusalem in the time of Josiah trying to consolidate worship solely in Jerusalem.

This idea was picked up later in the 19th century by Julius Wellhausen. Julius

Wellhausen was the father of the classic formulation of the documentary source theory of the origin of the Pentateuch. He said that it was composed of these four sources of material: the J document (favoring the name Jehovah), the E document (favoring the name Elohim), the D document (for Deuteronomy) and the P document (the post-exilic Priestly document). Wellhausen combined his literary analysis with an evolutionary view of the ways in which the religious systems developed. In his view, the religious system of ancient Israel moved from polytheism (the worship of many deities) to henotheism (that is, the idea that there were other deities but our god is better than theirs), and then on to monotheism (there is only one God). The typology was the move from polytheism to henotheism to monotheism. Ultimately along with that there was an evolution within the system of worship in ancient Israel from a multiplicity of altars, taking over worship from the Canaanites. Then in the time of Josiah it moved from multiplicity of altars to one central sanctuary—the centralization of worship. He combines this literary analysis with that kind of idea, the development of Israel in the centralization of worship. Deuteronomy became the crux of Wellhausen's JEDP theory because only one of those alleged documents could be dated, and that was his D document, which he said was the heart and the core of the book of Deuteronomy beginning in chapter 12 up to 26. Chapter 12 was this chapter on the centralization of worship. If D was dated at 621 B.C., then J and E, which allowed for many altars, sanctuaries and many places of worship, must have been earlier. If you look back from 621 and the feasts that are regulated, that was after Deuteronomy. This became the fulcrum of the key points of Wellhausen's JEDP theory which was linked with this evolutionary idea of the development of Israel's religious identity. He argued that religious leaders of Jerusalem at the time of Josiah wanted to abolish all worship and sacrifice anywhere but in Jerusalem; that would give them political and religious control over all the people of the land. This theory became the dominate theory for most of the 20th century. As far as the date of Deuteronomy, JEDP is still to this day enormously influential so that the majority of people would say Deuteronomy does not come from Mosaic period, but comes much later, from the 7th

century time of Josiah.

Influence of Deuteronomy on the Historical Books

Now, having said that, the influence of Deuteronomy is reflected in all of the historic books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) as well as in the prophetic books. If Deuteronomy wasn't written until 621 B.C., that means that all of the historical books and the prophetic books must have been later than 621 B.C., because they have Deuteronomistic influence and are dependent on the book of Deuteronomy.

There's another scholar named Martin Noth who wrote a history of Israel that became enormously influential in the latter part of the 20th century and still is today. He came up with a thesis that is called "the deuteronomistic history" or "the concept of the deuteronomistic historian." He said that Joshua to Kings was the product of an anonymous writer living in the time of the exile, who cast Israel's history into the categories of the theology of Deuteronomy. That Deuteronomistic history, Joshua to Kings, was a unified work of one author living late in Israel's history as a nation.

Deuteronomistic Historian (DtrH) – Deuteronomy Influence

The Deuteronomistic historian, abbreviated DtrH, is in the mainstream of biblical studies, universally accepted and hardly questioned. You can see what that does—it just turns the relationship around in the sense that it means that everything reflects Deuteronomistic influence. (I'm going to use different words than Deuteronomistic, which was Noth's word, in order to distinguish what I'm trying to say from his constructions. I prefer to speak of Deuteronomistic influence.) Obviously there is Deuteronomistic influence in Joshua; there's also Deuteronomistic influence in Judges, and in Samuel and Kings. There is Deuteronomistic influence in all of the prophetic books, but that comes, it seems to me, from the foundations of Israel that were laid by Moses in the days of the beginning of Israel as a nation. (Remember those addresses on the plains of Moab to that second generation, as they crossed over into the land of Canaan.) Yes, there's influence of

Deuteronomy, but not in the sense in which Noth was saying—that some individual living in the exile recast Israel’s history from the theology of the book written in 621 into the categories of those theological ideas, and in doing so, readily distorted what the real history was. In other words, is the cycle, for example, in the book of Judges something that actually happened, or is that someone just trying to rewrite a revisionist history of Israel in the categories of the theology of the book of Deuteronomy? That’s quite a different thing. That discussion is ongoing, but it seems to me that the date of the book of Deuteronomy is an enormously important issue. Yes, there is what I would call a Deuteronomic history, although I don’t think of it as Noth sees it. Each book stands on its own and is historically reliable. I don’t think they were written long after the events they describe by anonymous writers. They were describing what actually happened, and what actually happened fit the categories of Deuteronomy because Moses had said in advance, speaking for the Lord, “If you obey—blessing; if you disobey—curse and judgment.” That is embedded in Israel, who was told to choose the way of life or choose the way of death; the options were before them. That was the thrust of the book of Deuteronomy. This becomes a big issue. I think the argument that Kline fixed on is important because, while it doesn’t prove the date of Deuteronomy (I don’t think that’s possible), it certainly points in that direction. I think ultimately you have to accept the date of Deuteronomy on the basis of what it says about itself. But the historical data fits with or corroborates what is purported in the text of Deuteronomy.

2. The Death of Moses

Number 2. is “The death of Moses” which is chapter 34. Chapter 34 is twelve verses. You read in verse 7, “Moses was 120 years old when he died.” He was up on Mount Nebo where he could look across into the land of Canaan. The Lord said to him, in verse 4, “This is the land I promised in an oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I will give it to your descendents. I have let you see it with your eyes but you will not cross over into it.” Then the narrator added in verse 10 and following, “Since then, no prophet

has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt.” It is quite clear that that chapter was added to the book of Deuteronomy as a conclusion. In his commentary on the book of Deuteronomy, *Treaty of the Great King*, Meredith Kline mentions that one of the big things in the book of Deuteronomy is the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua, and you see a fair amount of reference to that here. This is the conclusion of the book; the transitioning to Joshua is then complete in the Old Testament.

The next book in the Old Testament is the book of Joshua. Joshua 1:1 begins, “After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: ‘Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River.’” So that is the transition from the Moses on the plains of Moab to Joshua.

III. Joshua

A. Introductory Remarks

1. The Basic Theme and Structure

Let's go on to Roman numeral III. “The book of Joshua.” A. is “Introductory Remarks” and 1. under A. is “The Basic Theme and Structure.” I think the theme that gives unity to the various parts of the book of Joshua could be put this way: it describes the establishment of Israel in the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. The establishment includes three elements: the entrance (crossing of the Jordan River), the conquest (first there was a southern campaign and then a northern campaign), and the division of the land. At the end of the book, Joshua describes the borders of each particular tribe. So the main theme is the establishment of Israel in the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua with the establishment, including the entrance, the conquest and the division of the land.

That theme is anticipated and initiated in the first chapter of the book. In the first chapter, you have reference to the crossing of the Jordan River in verse 2: “Moses my

servant is dead. Now then, you and all this people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them, to the Israelites.” Verse 2 anticipates 1:10 through 4:24, because in Joshua 1:10 to 4:24 you have descriptions of events that surrounded the actual crossing of the Jordan River. In verse 5 of chapter 1 you read, “No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, I will be with you. I will never leave you or forsake you.” Verse 5 anticipates chapters 5-12, which are the chapters that describe the conquest. Verse 6 says, “Be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.” Inherit the land—Joshua 1 verse 6 anticipates chapters 13-22 where you have the detailed description of the division of that land among the various tribes. And then verses 7-8 of chapter 1: “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it, to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” That anticipates the last two chapters of the book, chapters 23 and 24, where Joshua, much like Moses before him, calls Israel together to challenge them to remain faithful to the covenant, because Joshua is about to die. We get another transition of leadership, and another occasion in which the renewal of the covenant is appropriate, to care for covenant continuity through that transition of leadership—much like you had at the end of Deuteronomy going from Moses to Joshua. So, much of what follows in the book of Joshua is already anticipated in the first chapter in the verses we looked at.

a. Land as a gift from God

There’s another theme that recurs frequently in the book. That is also found in the first chapter, and that is that the land is a gift of God to his people and it will be possessed only by means of God’s help and his grace. Look at verse 2 of chapter 1: “Get ready to cross the Jordan River into that land I am about to give to them;” the Lord is giving the

land to his people. Verse 3, “I will give you every place where you will set your foot.” Verse 6, “You will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.” Verse 11, “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving you for your own.’” Verse 13, “Remember the command Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: ‘The Lord your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.’” Verse 15, “Until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you and until they too, have taken possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them.” Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh were going to reside on the eastern side of the Jordan River. So that language is typical in the book. The land is a gift of God to his people and it is possessed by the grace of God and by God’s help.

Go over to chapter 6 where the taking of Jericho is described. Notice verse 2. “The Lord said to Joshua, ‘See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands along with its kings and fighting men.’” How is Israel supposed to take that first city? The Lord was going to give it to them. “I have delivered Jericho into your hands.” Look at Joshua 10:42: “All these kings [these are kings of the southern part of the land of Canaan] and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign [Why?], because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.” Look at Joshua 21:43—this is kind of a summation: “So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. Not one of all the LORD’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.” Joshua 23:1, “After a long time had passed, and the Lord had given Israel rest from all the enemies around them.” Joshua 24:8, “I brought you to the land of the Amorites, who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them...” Then 24:10, “But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.” Verse 13 of chapter 24, “So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not

build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.” Did you see that?—the theme that the land is a gift from God to his people.

b. Joshua as a Transition Book

I think the book forms a transition, you might say, between the Pentateuch and the remainder of the Old Testament. Retrospectively, looking back, it shows how they settled in the land of Canaan in agreement with what God had promised to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, and more recently to Moses. So retrospectively you see the fulfillment of those promises. You notice verse 3 of chapter 1: “I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.” Joshua 21:43 (we already looked at this), “So the Lord gave Israel all the land that he had sworn to their forefathers”—that’s to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So retrospectively, you see the fulfillment of that promise.

Prospectively, looking forward, we find the detailed descriptions of the tri-fold possessions that for the most part remained intact from Joshua through the remainder of the Old Testament period. It describes the beginning of Israel’s life in the Promised Land, something that had been promised centuries before and now was a reality. So in a sense Israel is at the high point of her history, but at the same time Israel is at a crossroads because there’s an open question. Moses had set out the options: you can live in blessedness as a result of obedience, or you can live in judgment as a result of disobedience. Israel’s obligation is to love the Lord and to serve him, as Moses said in Deuteronomy.

c. Serve Theme

That word “serve” is another theme that runs through the book. Israel is to serve the Lord. Joshua challenges Israel repeatedly with that word in chapter 24, where it occurs 16 times. He says in Joshua 24:15, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” “Who are you going to serve?” is the question. What we find is that Israel remains for the most part faithful through the days of Joshua. In Joshua 24:31 right at the end of

the book, you read, “Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel.” So during the time of Joshua things went quite well, although you have some exceptions as in the case of Achan who took some of the devoted things for himself and was judged.

What Joshua does in those last two chapters is warn Israel, much as Moses had done, that if they break the covenant they will ultimately be driven from this land which they had been given. If you look at Joshua 23:12, Joshua says, “But if you turn away and ally yourselves with the survivors of these nations that remain among you, and if you intermarry with them and associate with them, then you may be sure that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you. Instead, they will become snares and traps for you, whips on your backs and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land, which the LORD your God has given you.” If you go down to chapter 23 verse 15, Joshua says “But just as every good promise of the LORD your God has come true, so the LORD will bring on you all the evil he has threatened, until he has destroyed you from this good land he has given you. If you violate the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, the LORD's anger will burn against you, and you will quickly perish from the good land he has given you.” So these are the same alternatives that Moses gave in the book of Deuteronomy.

Israel is at a crossroads. What is Israel going to do? At the time of Joshua they did quite well, but very quickly when we come to the book of Judges after the death of Joshua, you get the repeated cycle of apostasy, oppression, repentance and deliverance. The book itself, however, gives a noble impression of optimism and success. I think in a lot of respects it is similar to the book of Acts in the New Testament where the early church is pictured at a high point in its spiritual life. In the book of Acts you have certain problems like Ananias and Sapphira that parallel the problem with Achan in the book of Joshua. In the foreground, the book of Acts is the worship of the Holy Spirit and the

spreading of the gospel. So those are some comments about the basic theme and structure of Joshua.

2. The Primary character or Personality of Joshua

“The primary character or personality” which is number 2 of Joshua. I want to call your attention to something here. If you go to Numbers 13 (this is in the chapter when the spies are being selected at Kadesh Barnea), you read in verse 8, “from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun.” And if you look at that in the Hebrew, it reads “Hoshea” which means “salvation” or “help” from the Lord. But if you go down to verse 16 of Numbers 13 you read: “These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.)” So Moses changed Joshua’s name from Hoshea to Joshua. In the Hebrew that is from *Hoshea* to *Yihoshua*. Now what’s the difference? *Yihoshua* is “the Lord is salvation.” That “Yi” at the beginning is a shorten form of Yahweh. So “Yahweh is salvation.” If you trace the use of that name further, the Septuagint translates *Yihoshua*, or “Joshua,” as “Jesus,” which you immediately recognize when you come into the New Testament as the name given to Jesus in the Greek. So, the Hebrew that stands behind “Jesus” is the name “Joshua.” “Joshua” in Hebrew is really the same name as “Jesus” in Greek. So Joshua is the primary character. He is the leader who replaces Moses and leads Israel across the Jordan and into the conquest and division of the land.

3. External Evidence for the Historical Events Recorded in Joshua

Number 3 is “External evidence for the historical events recorded in Joshua.” I want to make just a few very brief comments on archaeological findings that relate to the time of the book of Joshua. There is not a great deal that is exactly applicable. There are just three. We’ve already talked about that in connection with our discussion of the date of the Exodus.

a. Amarna Letters

The first is the Tel el-Amarna tablets. The Amarna tablets are correspondence between Egyptian Pharaoh and certain city-states in the land of Canaan. They were written about 1400-1350 B.C. They were discovered in the late 1800's. It is in those tablets that you have reference to those people called the Habiru we talked about earlier. The question arises: Are the Hebrews Habiru? The king of Jerusalem says, "The Habiru are attacking and I need your help," requesting aid from the Egyptian Pharaoh. You remember the Hebrews may have been considered Habiru, but not all Habiru are Hebrews. The Habiru were more a social class than an ethnic group.

b. Merneptah Stela

The second I want to mention is the "Israel Stela" or the "Merneptah Stela." That's that stela of Merneptah that mentions "Israel in the land of Canaan." The list of peoples he cites contains the name "Israel." That Merneptah inscription can be dated by 1220 B.C., which indicates that Israel was in the land by 1220 B.C. It's the earliest mention of Israel by any extra-biblical text.

c. Destruction Levels in Cities

The third thing, we also discussed, and that is the destruction levels in cities in the land of Canaan that date to the second half of the thirteenth century B.C., ca. 1250 B.C. A number of the cities mentioned in the book of Joshua have been excavated and destruction levels have been found in that period of time. But as we discussed earlier and as you recall from reading Merrill, it's only Jericho, Ai, and Hazor in the book of Joshua itself that are specifically stated to have been destroyed. I think the real question is whether these destruction levels can be identified with the conquest, or if they are from the later Judges period. These are the three categories of archaeological materials.

4. Contemporary Approaches to the Establishment of Israel in Canaan

Number 4 in your outline is: “Contemporary approaches to the establishment of Israel in Canaan.” I thought I’d give this as a handout just to save a little bit of time. Merrill discusses this material on pages 122-128 in his volume of *The Kingdom of Priests*. There is an ongoing debate on this issue of how and when Israel was established in the land of Canaan. There are three contemporary positions that are listed here: the traditional conquest model taken from the biblical material, a migration or infiltration model, and thirdly a peasant revolt model. If you look at modern biblical studies scholarship there is no present consensus. But the trend clearly among mainstream biblical scholars is to move away from the traditional conquest theory.

a. Conquest Models

So let’s look briefly at these three approaches. The conquest model is: Israel invaded the land from outside its borders, broke through resistance by a series of swift attacks, and then settled down to complete the occupation in the various areas. In the next paragraph I mention that some advocates of this view appeal to archaeological evidence of the destruction levels at 1250-1200 B.C., but that whole issue I think has been recently questioned. In that last paragraph on page 1, I note that in recent years a more nuanced version of conquest theory has been developed, in which the destruction levels of the late thirteenth century levels are not cited to support the view. Eugene Merrill and David Howard, who wrote a commentary on Joshua in the New American Commentary that is quite good, are among those who argue that only three Canaanite cities were destroyed: Jericho, Ai, and Hazor. Merrill comments, “Once one understands the *herem* applied only to populations and not to places and only to Jericho, Ai and Hazor.” And then I mentioned Bimson who works with a different model by lowering the date of the Middle Bronze Age, pushing the dating down to the 1400’s so that it could fit with the biblical model or the conquest model. So that’s the traditional conquest model with a couple variations.

b. Migration or Infiltration Model

The “Migration or Infiltration model” says, there was no real military assault on Canaan but rather a gradual infiltration by pastoral nomads from the deserts of the south and east. Those nomads lived on good terms with the Canaanites, even intermarrying with them. They did not get into serious conflicts until the eleventh century when they moved into the fertile plains. That thesis was originally proposed in 1925 and followed by Martin Noth (who was the one who developed Deuteronomistic history), and more recently by Miller, Yohanan Aharoni, and Moshe Kotavi. The real process of settlement was a peaceful transition on the part of nomads into sedentary life; only in the second stage did the Israelites occasionally engage in military action. Of course, if you take that view, you have to discount the description in the book of Joshua.

c. The Peasant Revolt Model

The “Peasant revolt model” is a third view that says there wasn’t an invasion from an outside kingdom, but rather it was an uprising within the land of Israel. George Mendenhall said there was no conquest in the usual sense, but that rural peasants unhappy with the Canaanite city-state system “rejected the only political ideology in favor of the covenant community of Yahweh.” He argues that there is no statistically important invasion of Palestine around 1200 B.C. There was no radical displacement of the population. There was no genocide. There was no large-scale driving out of the population, only a royal administrative shift. There was no real conquest of Palestine in the sense that has usually been understood. What happened instead, from the point of view of the secular historian interested in socio-political processes, may be a peasants’ revolt against the network of Canaanite city-states.

A further adaptation and modification of Mendenhall’s peasant revolt model is Norman Gottwald. The internal revolt model took a new turn with the propagation of Gottwald’s *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of Religion of Liberated Israel*. His other volume is *The Hebrew Bible: A Social Literary Introduction*. Gottwald looks at this from

a Marxist philosophical perspective. He agrees with Mendenhall that the origin of Israel can be traced to a revolutionary social movement within Canaanite society, but he departs from Mendenhall's original thesis in that he denies that the revolution was inspired at least to some extent by Yahwistic religious fervor. In fact, he argues that the order needs to be reversed. Yahwism only arose as a function of the revolution. It was the revolution that created the conditions under which Yahwism emerged. Religion thus becomes a function of class relations: the powerful justifying their superior position over the powerless to validate their class struggle. Mendenhall strongly rejected Gottwald's modification of the peasant revolt. That's the kind of research you find currently in textbooks and articles.

d. John Bright's Various Positions

Now if you turn to page 4, I think this is interesting. John Bright's *History of Ancient Israel* has been a standard textbook on the history of ancient Israel. John Bright was the Old Testament professor at Union Seminary in Virginia, a southern Presbyterian seminary. He is now retired. His book *The History of Ancient Israel* went through 4 editions. I have three columns here reflecting the first edition 1960, second edition 1972 and his third edition in 1981. Notice the way his view changes over the period of twenty years from 1960 to 1981. In 1960, he says of the conquest, "In the latter half of the thirteenth century there took place, as archaeological evidence abundantly attests, a great onslaught on western Palestine." Down a few lines, "There is no reason to doubt that this conquest was, as the book of Joshua depicts it, a bloody brutal business. It was the holy war of Yahweh by which he would give his people the land of promise." That is pretty much a reflection of what you read in Joshua. If you go to the 1972 edition, notice what he says: "My earlier presentation has been revised in light of the important article of G. E. Mendenhall." Now Mendenhall was the advocate of the peasant revolt model. He says, "Though Mendenhall has perhaps expressed himself incautiously in places, in any event, whatever the size of the group coming from the desert may have been, and it may have

been larger than Mendenhall seems to think, its crucial role was the threat.” Then he speaks of the violent convulsions and then says in the underlying sentence, “In view of the complexity of the evidence, you cannot undertake to reconstruct the details of the action by which this was accomplished. But there is no doubt that it was as the Bible depicts it as the holy war of Yahweh.”

Then go to his 1981 edition. Notice the first line. “The presentation offered here follows in all its essentials the work of G. E. Mendenhall.” In other words, he moves from basically the description in Joshua through a semi-Mendenhall view to pretty much adopting Mendenhall’s view. That is pretty typical of where the discussion has moved. In mainstream biblical studies you will find this peasant revolt a pretty popular viewpoint, but you cannot harmonize that with what is said in the book of Joshua. But I think you should be aware of that position.

Go to the top of page 5 in that third edition of Bright: “There is no reason to doubt as the Bible depicts it as bloody and brutal. It was a holy war of Yahweh.” Go back to page 4: “Indeed it is not impossible the uprisings against the city lords on the part of individual tribes and groups of tribes had been taking place before the time of the Yahwist, but it was the new faith that drove the configuration out of control and provided the catalyst that brought Israel together as a people. The process of conflict was of long duration which we cannot reconstruct in detail.” So Yahweh is bought into even this peasant revolt view. I’m not sure they solved that. I think what drives this is trying to use sociological models to recreate history rather than accepting the text of the book of Joshua as a legitimate historical source. The direction in Old Testament studies is that anything that is going to be said historically has to be based on archaeology. You don’t go to the biblical text to find historical information, rather you go to archaeology. You use archaeology to reconstruct the sociological situation as much as possible. But they don’t go to the biblical text as a primary source of historical information.

If you take a history of religions worldview, there is a different period of development reflected in the Old Testament biblical material than in the New Testament

biblical material. There is an Old Testament God of violence, war and bloodshed and a New Testament God of love, mercy and grace. And some people use that model. We'll talk further about that when we look at the *herem*.

Minimalist and Historically Reliable Positions

There is a lengthy discussion going on right now between the people who support a generally historically reliable text. I'm not talking about those of the evangelical world. I was at a meeting several years ago in which one scholar was debating with some minimalists who were arguing that even in the time of David and Solomon there was no united kingdom. It was just a small social organization. They pretty much want to get rid of the ninth and tenth centuries and the imperial history. Dever was saying he did not want to identify himself as a fundamentalist resting on Scripture, which says Solomon was a mighty ruler with a vast empire. He did not want to be labeled as a fundamentalist. In this reading he said, "I don't give a fig whether Solomon existed as the Bible describes him or not. But the fact of the matter is, archaeological evidence tells us that he did." And he said we have to get rid of all post-modern presuppositions because the archaeological evidence is pretty much the way the Bible describes it. So the post-modern hermeneutic does come into this—not only among evangelicals, but among mainstream scholars who are working with the scientific evidence coming out of the ground with archaeological findings. It's a complex situation. K. A. Kitchen talks about historical reliability of the Old Testament and has written an excellent book on it. But there are post-modern people out there saying the archaeological evidence is not valid and they prefer their own theoretic reconstructions.

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Re-narrated by Ted Hildebrandt

