

Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Lecture 7B

Joshua: Jericho, Ai

III. C. The Conquest of Canaan – Joshua 5:13-12:24

1. Taking of Jericho

We're down to C. under III., which is "The conquest of Canaan: Joshua 5:13 to 12:24." 1. under that is "The conquest of Jericho in Joshua 6." I'm sure you're all familiar with the story of the taking of Jericho. It was certainly a very unusual and miraculous way in which the Lord gave the city to Israel. I think 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.

You'll notice in chapter 6, in the second verse, the Lord says, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men." The taking of Jericho was not the result of military strategy, overpowering force, or a long siege; but the city was given into the hands of the Israelites by God when the Israelites obeyed what might have seemed to be rather senseless and odd instructions. You'll notice in verse three, they are told: "March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in." So, you march around the city once each day for six days, and then on the seventh day you march around it seven times, and blow the trumpets and shout, and the wall of the city's going to fall. But that's exactly what happens! Look at verse 20: "When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city."

2. Herem – Devoted and Accursed – Set Apart Devoted to the Lord [destroyed or put into the Lord’s Treasury]

But what you find is that the people are told that the city is to be possessed only to be devoted to the glory of God, and I think this is equally the case with the rest of the land. You find that explained in 6:17-19. There’s a translation issue here which centers around the Hebrew word *herem*. You may be familiar with it, but notice verse 17: “The city and all that is in it are to be—” NIV says “devoted”—that’s *herem*— “to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house will be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. But keep away from the devoted things [that’s the same word, *herem*], so that you will not bring about your own destruction [“own destruction” is the same word, *herem*] by taking any of them.” Any of the *herem*. The word occurs again. “Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction [*herem*] and bring trouble on it. All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.” So that word *herem* occurs five times in those three verses. The basic idea of *herem* is to set something apart from personal use to be devoted to the Lord. That can be done in two ways: either by being destroyed, or by being put into the treasury of the Lord. In this case, the inhabitants and the cattle were to be killed and destroyed while the gold and the silver were to be put in the treasury of the Lord. Then an additional commandment is given later, at the end of the chapter, where you read: “Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: ‘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.’”

I want to make some comments on that but I missed the importance of *herem*, referring to your citations page 52. Let’s go back to that for a minute, just to elaborate a little bit further on it. On page 52 of your citations are two paragraphs from Francis Schaeffer’s book *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History*. He says, “The city shall be accursed,” quoting from Joshua 6:17. This NIV says, “The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord.” See, that’s the *herem* word again. You may ask, is it “devoted to the Lord” or “accursed”? The translation is different, but that’s part of the difficulty of

translating the word *herem* . Schaeffer says “accursed” represents only a part of what this word means. 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. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent.” In this way Joshua gave the command for her protection. Joshua’s commands to the people make it absolutely clear that the city was devoted. “But as for you, only keep yourselves from the devoted things, lest when you take of the devoted things you make the camp of Israel accursed in trouble. But all the silver and gold are holy unto Jehovah; they shall come unto the treasury of Jehovah.” And then here’s Schaeffer’s comment: “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.”

3. Cursed Jericho Not to Be Rebuilt & Ahab

So there’s that additional comment on the devoted thing, but then you get back to that curse at the end of the chapter that Joshua places on anyone who rebuilds this ruined city of Jericho. We find that the city was not rebuilt for a long period of time, but in 1 Kings 16:34, in the time of Ahab, it was rebuilt. 1 Kings 16:30 says, “Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him.” Then it lists some of his evil acts: “He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and he did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.” Then as almost the climax of his evil acts you read in verse 34: “In Ahab’s time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun.” That’s a reference back to what Joshua said in

6:26: “Anybody who rebuilds it will lay the foundations at the cost of his firstborn son, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son.” Ahab reigned from 874 to 852 B.C., so you’re in the 800s when this is fulfilled.

The time of the conquests, you know, you go back to the early/late date of the Exodus discussion: either in the 1400s or the 1200s. If you’re in the 1200s, that’s a 400 year period of time. If you go for the early date, which I’m inclined to think it is, that would mean the city was not rebuilt for 600 years. You may wonder why the Lord placed that curse on anyone who would rebuild the city of Jericho. That’s never explained in the biblical text, so any explanation we might give is inferred. It seems to me that what the Lord intended was for those ruined walls of the city of Jericho to remain as ruined walls in perpetuity, in order to be a monument to the fact that Israel received the land by God’s grace. They marched around that town and the walls fell down! Remember, the Lord had told Joshua, “Get those twelve stones as a memorial” to the way in which he delivered them across the Jordan River by drying the water up. It seems to me that this is another memorial: the ruins of the walls of Jericho are a reminder that when Israel came into the land of Canaan, they received that land as a gift from God. It’s not their military might that’s going to get them the land of Canaan. So he wanted those walls as a perpetual testimony to the fact that “this is my land, I am giving it to you.” He didn’t want the walls rebuilt or the gates rebuilt.

Ahab, I think, as a ruler who turned away from the Lord, was not a true covenantal king. He was not a king who found his security by following the Lord, walking in obedience to the Lord, and claiming the Lord’s promise for the protection of the nation. He did not feel that this open city (that is, a city without walls) on the southeastern frontier of the northern kingdom was a strength but rather a liability. We know from some extra-biblical information that at that time that Ahab was threatened by Mesha king of Moab. Mesha took a city called Medaba, which was right across the Jordan from the city of Jericho. It seems that Ahab felt a liability in that southeastern frontier of the northern kingdom and decided, “I need to refortify that city in order to keep the security for the northern kingdom.” But he did so at the cost of Hiel of Bethel’s firstborn son, as

well as his youngest son.

4. Archaeological Evidence at Jericho

a. Early Work on Jericho

So, those comments are about the taking of the city of Jericho. I want to make a few comments about archeological findings that relate to this chapter. We discussed this to some extent when we talked about the date of the Exodus. Jericho comes into that discussion because Garstang said the walls of Jericho fell around 1400 B.C., so it became an argument for the early date of the Exodus. The mound of Jericho is a very well-defined mound; there's no question about the site identification. If you go east from Jerusalem down the Jordan valley, Jericho is, to this day, a very visible site. It's about 10 miles northwest of the where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea. We can picture the map: where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea, right about 10 miles northwest of that is this mound. About a mile to the west of the site of Jericho, there's a ridge about 1500 feet high that goes up into the highlands of the central part of the land of Canaan. That western ridge of the Rift Valley is cut by gorges that give access into the center of the land of Canaan. Jericho is of strategic significance because it guards the entrance into those passes that lead out into the central highlands. There was a good water source there, there was good soil, and it was in a strategic location recognized very early as having enormous significance.

Excavations were begun on the mound in the early 1900s by the Germans, under a man named Ernst Sellin, and he worked on the mound for several years, 1907-1909. In the 1930s, an Englishman, John Garstang, worked further on the mound. Then in the 1950s, Kathleen Kenyon, also English, did further excavations on Jericho. What the Germans and Garstang and Kenyon all found out was that this site had a very long history. The oldest tower found dates about 9000 B.C., from the Neolithic Stone Age. My wife and I visited Jericho some years ago; we drove down from Jerusalem. When you get to the outskirts of the modern site (the ancient site is off to the side of the modern site), there's a sign when you come into Jericho that says, "The oldest town on earth." That

may be an exaggeration, but not by much. It's a site that has a history going back to 9000 B.C. which is a pretty unique.

The excavation showed that in the Early Bronze Age (3000 to 2000 B.C.) it was a very important walled city. Just to give you an idea of the setting, that parallels the time of the pyramid age in Egypt. If you get down to the latter part of the Bronze Age, this is the same as Ur of the Chaldeans and the third dynasty of Ur, where Abraham was from in southern Mesopotamia. So it was an important city at that time. It was destroyed between 2300 and 2000 B.C. We don't know exactly who the agent of that destruction was, but I might say here that the walls of that period in time were ones that Garstang initially thought were from the time of Joshua. His view was later revised. In the Middle Bronze Age, 2000 to 1500, you again get a well-built city with strong walls. It grew to the greatest size it ever attained. You're now in the patriarchal period, from 2000 to 1500 B.C., as far as what's going on in the land of Canaan. At the end of the Middle Bronze, it again was violently destroyed, and again you wonder who the agent of the destruction was. We don't know. Some people used to speculate that it was the Hyksos. The Hyksos were prominent rulers of Egypt for a period of time, and they were driven out of Egypt about 1570 B.C. They ruled in Egypt from about 1750 down to 1570, but about 1570 they were driven out of Egypt. Where did they go? Did they come up into the land of Canaan? Possibly. Did they attack Jericho? It's possible, but we're not certain. But again, it was destroyed at the end of the Middle Bronze Age.

In the Late Bronze Age, which is the period that interests us, being the time of the book of Joshua, the city was again occupied. However, from what the archeologists tell us, there's very little left on the mound from that period of time. Garstang had argued that the city had been destroyed about 1400 B.C. in that Late Bronze Age. Kathleen Kenyon contested that, and spoke of "a tremendous denudation of the upper strata of the mound from this period of time." It seems that a lot of this level was eroded away during that 400 to 600 year period when the city was largely uninhabited after it had fallen to Joshua, between Joshua and Ahab. It was for all intents and purposes an uninhabited site during that time.

b. Work of K. Kenyon on Jericho

Now look at your citations on page 51. James Kelso in his *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* article on Jericho says, "In 1952 Kathleen Kenyon began a work on the mound; after five years of her work, the archeological picture is clearer, and the following conclusions now seem valid. Most of the mound is 16th century B.C. or earlier; indeed the major depth of the mound is mainly Neolithic." In other words, most of the mound belongs to prehistoric times, and the last big city was something of 300 years earlier than Moses. Unfortunately she has found that the small amount of the upper levels which had escaped destruction by wind and rain were those areas already worked by the Germans and Garstang. "Jericho was built of mud brick and this quickly disintegrates by wind and rain. The same winds which furnished the draft for Solomon's smelters at Ezion Geber had already blasted their way through the mud bricks of Jericho. One year the English excavations were flooded by heavy rains; even in the Neolithic area, stream channels were found cutting into parts of the mound. Therefore it seems unlikely that anything new can be learned of 13th century Jericho from the mound itself, although nearby tombs might prove very helpful in the future." Then notice this last sentence: "One of the major tragedies of Palestinian archeology is that the Germans excavated Jericho when archeology was still an infant science." The Germans got in there in the early 1900s and disturbed this area of the mound before methods had been developed for excavation, so this information is lost.

Go down to the next paragraph, a paragraph there from Kenyon on page 51 of your citation. She says, "Occupation of the site started in the Meso-lithic period. There was a continuous development in that stage in the town of the pre-pottery Neolithic period of 8000 B.C., successfully occupied by two different groups of people, whereafter there was a very much lesser occupation by Neolithic people at that time. Late in the 4th millennium, there was continuous occupation until the town was destroyed"—notice her dates here— "about 1580. It was probably reoccupied about 1400 B.C. From the time of this period, almost nothing remained."

Now, we talked about this when we talked about Jericho earlier. If you take John

Bimson's thesis in his book *Re-dating the Exodus Conquest* where he moves the dating of archeological periods—I'm pretty sure, at the end of that Middle Bronze Age down into the next century, into the 1400s. That would move that 1580 destruction level down, say, to 1400. Then you're pretty close to the early date for the Exodus based on 1 Kings 6:1. So, that debate, as I've mentioned before, is an ongoing thing. If Kenyon is correct about that 1580 date being a destruction level, and then you link her 1580 date with Bimson's revision of the dates of archeological periods, it fits with an early date theory.

c. Recent Work of Bryant Wood

However, as I mentioned earlier, Bryant Wood has come into the picture more recently. I gave you that handout on Jericho with a summary of this *BAR* article in your bibliography. Going back into Kenyon's own excavation's reports, he argues that there's good evidence that the city was destroyed in the 1400s and that her dating is wrong there. So, the debate goes on.

Let me just read you one other quotation here. Look at page 53. It applies to another thing we're coming to in a minute; but look at the middle of page 53, "Biblical Exodus Re-dating is Flawed," in *BAR* since 1987. Hugh Calperan is arguing here against Bimson's re-dating of the Middle Bronze Age—moving that date down. He says, "The biblical account of conquest was written late in the 7th century BC"—in other words, in the 600s; very late—"and fails to link the conquest to any events that external sources permit us to date. So by taking elementary precautions against skepticism about the biblical text, by pressing one's eyelids down tightly on the cheekbone, one can pretend that the book of Joshua is the unvarnished, untarnished truth, and that it all occurred in the 15th century BC. Israel conquered Canaan in a single decisive campaign. But B. and L."—now B. and L. were Bimson and Livingston; David Livingston is someone who bought into Bimson's re-dating of the archeological period—so he says, "what B. and L. have done is to afford unquestioning credulity to your own highly idiosyncratic reading of the biblical conquest of Canaan. B. and L.'s smorgasbord approach is attractive because it masquerades as a defense of the Bible, but it is not. B. and L. dismiss much

biblical evidence; in the end, they embrace picking and choosing. Their textually arbitrary, historically unconvincing, archeological improbable hypothesis hides its warts behind a veneer of benevolent piety. Piety has its benefits, no doubt, but it also has its price; and the going price for B. and L.'s piety is about 200 years of Israelite history." That's his debate. Now I read you that paragraph to just show you some of the kind of almost vitriolic language that is used against people that attempt to defend the reliability of the conquest stories—the conquest of Jericho.

5. Failure at Ai & Achan's Sin

a. Initial Attack

So those are comments on Jericho. Let's move on to the attack on Ai in Joshua 7 and 8. In Joshua 7:1-5, you read that Joshua "sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, 'Go up and spy out the region.' So the men went up and spied out Ai. And when they returned to Joshua, they said, 'Not all the people have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men; there are only a few men there.'" Verse four: "So about three thousand men went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries, and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted and became like water." So they sent that small force up there because they didn't think there would be significant opposition, and they were defeated!

Joshua wonders, why? You read in verse 6: "Joshua tore his clothes and fell face down to the ground, and the elders of Israel did the same." Joshua said in verse 7: "Ah, Sovereign LORD, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan!" (This is after that the remarkable crossing.) "O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this; they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?" The Lord's response is: "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned; they have violated my

covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the [*herem*] devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction.” (That’s *herem*, by the way—liable to destruction.) “I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.”

b. Achan’s Taking of Devoted Things

So they find out that this man Achan had taken from the things that were to be devoted to the Lord, which he had explicitly commanded them not to do. Now look down to verse 20: Achan says, “I have sinned against the LORD. This is what I have done: when I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them.” So he and his family were taken and stoned, and we read in verse 26: “Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day.” There’s another memorial. This time it is a reminder of divine judgment against sin. There was the crossing of the river and the fall of the walls of Jericho—reminders of God’s grace; now here’s a reminder of what happens when you disobey God.

So after that, in chapter 8, a new force was taken out and sent up to Ai, and this time they were successful. You read in verse 19b, “They entered the city, captured it and set it on fire. The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising against the sky.” We won’t go into any of the strategy in order to do that, but they take the city, and you read in verse 25: “Twelve thousand men and women fell that day—all the people of Ai. For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai.” Then verse 28: they “burned Ai and made it a permanent heap of ruins and he hung the king of Ai on a tree.”

c. Archaeology of Et Tel & Debate Identifying the Site as Ai

Now this is a case where there's a lot of discussion again about the way in which archeological research relates to the biblical text. In the 1930s, there was a mound that was currently known as "Et-Tel" that was thought to be the site of Ai, and it was excavated. Those who worked on that mound tell us that the city was destroyed about 2200 B.C. and was not occupied again, except for a very small Iron Age I cell at about 1200 to 1050 B.C. So if this site was not occupied from 2200 down to 1200, that raises problems for correlating those archeological findings with what we're told in Joshua 7 and 8. That question has been around since the second half of the 20th century, and continues to this day. There have been various proposals to try to harmonize the archeological findings with the biblical description.

There was a French Old Testament scholar by the name of Vincent who suggested that Et-Tel, or Ai, was a military outpost of Bethel, and that the conquest of Ai was really not the conquest of a city but the overrunning of a military outpost of Bethel. If it was simply a military outpost of Bethel, you wouldn't expect much evidence left of the occupation of the site. Well, that's an interesting suggestion, because Joshua doesn't say anything about the taking of Bethel. Was Ai a military outpost of Bethel? I don't think you can harmonize that with the text. If you go to chapter 12, where you have that list of kings taken, you read in verse 9: "the king of Ai, near Bethel, one"—one king. You go down to verse 16: "the king of Bethel, one." There was a king of Ai, and there was a king of Bethel. It doesn't sound like Ai was a military outpost of Bethel.

You will find another suggestion in your citations on page 52. This paragraph is from Finegan's *Light of the Ancient Past*. He talks about this problem of harmonizing archeological data with the biblical account, and he says the most probable explanation is this: "The difficulty at this point lies in the confusion between Ai and Bethel. The site of the latter city, that is, Bethel, is less than one and a half miles distance from Ai and is known as Beitin; that is to say, in modern site identification Beitin is thought to be Bethel. Excavations were conducted there by joint expeditions by the American School of Oriental Research and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary under W. F. Albright and

James Kelso. Bethel was found to have been occupied first after the destruction of the Old Bronze Age city of Ai until it existed as a well-known town sometime in the Middle-Late Bronze Ages. Sometime in the 13th century the city was consumed by tremendous conflagration that left behind solid masses of burned brick, ash and charred debris. There could be little doubt that this destruction represents the conquest of the city by the children of Israel.” That’s a fact. In the next paragraph he says, “It may be noted that in the book of Joshua no account is given of the capture of Bethel, while on the other hand, in the later account of Judges, the taking of Bethel by the house of Joseph is narrated, but nothing is said of Ai. Therefore, it may be supposed”—[and this is Albright’s view, and a number of others]—“that at a later date the tradition of the sack of Bethel was attached, erroneously but naturally, to the nearby ruins of Ai.” In other words, how do we deal with the seeming inconsistency in archeological findings at Et-Tel and the biblical account of the taking of Ai? Well, whoever wrote this history got the story of the destruction of Bethel confused with the story of the destruction of Ai. What you’re really reading in chapters 7-8 is about Bethel, not about Ai. Of course, that means the biblical text is not reliable.

If you look at page 53 in your citations, both Free and Kitchen at the bottom of the page discuss this problem. I think they go in a direction that’s the most sensible one. Free says, “The recent solution that has been offered in the research of J. Simons, that Et-Tel is not to be identified with Bethel/Ai”—in other words, this site identification is the problem. It’s the wrong site identification; Et-Tel is not Ai, so any excavation done at Et-Tel is not telling you anything about Ai. “He [that is, J. Simons] offers four objections to this identification. One, Et-Tel was not particularly near Beitin or Bethel; Joshua 12:9 indicates that Ai is beside Bethel. Two, Et-Tel is a large site, whereas Joshua 3 describes the people as few. Three, Et-Tel was not a ruin in the post-conquest period, whereas Joshua indicates Ai was. And four, there’s no broad valley to the north of Et-Tel with Joshua 11 in case they’ve missed the men of Joshua’s troops.” So, Free is arguing for a faulty site identification. If Et-Tel is not to be identified with Ai, then the indication that Et-Tel was not in existence in 1400 B.C. has no bearing on the biblical history. Or, if

Vincent's suggestion that Ai was a fortress in which little or nothing remains is correct, again the biblical narrative offers no difficulty. But it does offer difficulty with the mention of a king of Ai and a king of Bethel. So he says, "In view of such possible solutions, it's inadvisable to insist the Bible must be wrong."

K. A. Kitchen is very similar at the bottom of the page: he says "Excavations at Et-Tel have failed to produce any proper evidence of occupation there after the Early Bronze Age, apart from a small Israelite settlement in 1200-1050. The site assertion sometimes creates controversy; this situation suggests that Et-Tel is not Ai, but another ancient site, perhaps Beit Aven, and that Ai must be looked for somewhere else in the area near Et-Tel.

I might say there's a pretty serious problem with this kind of site identification. There are mounds all over the land of Canaan. There are no sign-posts saying, "This was this or that ancient city." You have all these mounds, you dig into them, and there's a lot of rubble. You read about place names in the Bible—how do you connect the biblical place name with some mound? It's not an easy business. Albright, way back in 1920s and 30s, rode around Canaan on a donkey and made site identifications: "Well, this is this site, that is that, Bethel is there," and many times he had good reasons to make them; but in many cases he identified them incorrectly. Kitchen says, "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. Jericho and Ai are lessons in negative evidence. The absence of the expected body of remains of the Late Bronze Age date does not automatically imply that the biblical narratives are mistakes of an etiological tale."

Kitchen's dictum is, "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." Just because you don't have the evidence you might wish to have doesn't mean the biblical text or some other text is necessarily wrong. "The circumstantial realism of topographical allusions and of Joshua's leadership suggest otherwise, as does the analogy of archeological failure to produce remains coordinating with other indisputable ancient

evidence or written documents.”

d. Livingston’s Identification Alternative Site

Now, since Kitchen and Free made those comments about site identification, a man named David Livingston began investigating this. You will find some entries in your bibliography under this heading. Look on page 12 in the middle of the page in your bibliography. Livingston wrote an article in the *Westminster Theological Journal* in 1970 entitled “The Location of Biblical Bethel and Ai Reconsidered,” and then another article a year later, “Traditional Site of Bethel Questioned,” and another article in 1994, “Further Consideration on the Location of Bethel at El-Bireh.” What Livingston does in those articles is suggest that we need a new site identification, not just for Ai but also for Bethel. The traditional view was that Bethel was Beitin and Ai was Et-Tel. Livingston makes a case, with lots of arguments and evidence that I don’t want to get into, that we should relocate both of those to different sites. He suggests that Bethel is perhaps at the site El-Bireh, instead of Beitin, and that Ai is either here at Khirbet el-Macatir or Khirbet El-Bireh. If you look at a map, you can see that Beitin is here, El-Bireh is here. So you see, those sites are all in pretty close proximity to each other. The question remains: Which mound is which site?

On the excavations I would like to make just a couple of quick comments. From the excavations, that Livingston has done up to this point at Khirbet Nisiah as Ai, he has found that occupation of that site ceased at about the time of the transition from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze Age. In other words, you’re there at that 1500 period. And again, if you go over that 1500 period, as Bimson argues, it would fit. Bryant Wood, who wrote that article about Jericho, has been excavating in recent years at the other site, El-Machatir. He has come up with some very interesting findings. He found that El-Machatir was a fortified site dating to the time of Joshua, in the 1400s. It’s the only fortified site in that Late Bronze Age—Late Bronze Age is 1500 to 1200 B.C.—it’s the only fortified site of the Late Bronze Age between Jerusalem and Shechem that has been discovered so far. Now, Shechem is way to the north. So this was a significant site, and

he is continuing to excavate there. It will be interesting to see what he comes up with, but it certainly is a possibility, and if evidence turns up that maybe this is Ai, it could solve the problem.

e. Question on Identifying Bethel as Beitin [El Bireh)

On the other issue of changing the traditional location of Bethel from Beitin to El-Bireh—the interesting thing at Beitin is, in excavations done there, they’ve never found evidence for the high place that was constructed by Jeroboam I. After the division of the kingdom he put up an altar at Bethel and another at Dan. They’ve never found evidence of that. No excavations have been done at Bireh, so there’s a site that also may prove interesting to see, if it is ever excavated in the future. The problem is political. Bireh is a Palestinian town on the West Bank. The highest point of the town, which would presumably be a place to look for Jeroboam’s high place, is the site of the house of the mayor of the town, who is Palestinian. So, I don’t think there is going to be any excavating at Bireh in the near future. But this question of Ai and how you relate the archeological findings to biblical accounts of Joshua’s taking of Ai is certainly an ongoing question.

Well we’re out of time. We’ll have to pick up here next time.

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