

# ISRAELITE ETHNICITY IN IRON I: ARCHAEOLOGY PRESERVES WHAT IS REMEMBERED AND WHAT IS FORGOTTEN IN ISRAEL'S HISTORY

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Earliest Israel remains *terra incognita*, literally and from the ground down. The Merneptah Stela Stanza VIII proclaiming Egyptian suzerainty in the southern Levant documents Israel as a noteworthy foreign enemy by the end of the thirteenth century B.C.E.<sup>1</sup> Except for this mention, neither contemporary epigraphic nor archaeological evidence explicitly points to a late-thirteenth-century B.C.E. "Israel." However, conservatively dated biblical and archaeological evidence has been invoked to attest to Israel in the twelfth to eleventh centuries B.C.E. Frank Cross and Tryggve Mettinger, among others, date the Bible's earliest testimonials, the Song of the Sea (Exod 15) and Song of Deborah (Judg 5) to the late twelfth or early eleventh century B.C.E.<sup>2</sup> Ironically, it was Israel Finkelstein, now leading a revisionist contingent, who claimed to validate the early dates with archaeological evidence. In his central highlands survey, Finkelstein identified as "Israelite" the hundreds of hamlets and farm-

A portion of this essay was presented before the Colloquium for Biblical Research at Duke Divinity School in August 2001. I wish to thank the members of the colloquium for their helpful criticisms and suggestions. This paper also greatly benefited from discussions with my husband, Mark Smith, of New York University, and with Ilan Sharon of The Hebrew University.

<sup>1</sup> Donald Redford, "Egypt and Western Asia in the Late New Kingdom: An Overview," in *The Sea Peoples and Their World: A Reassessment* (ed. E. Oren; Philadelphia: University Museum, 2000), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 121–24; Tryggve Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (trans. Frederick Cryer; Lund: Gleerup, 1982), 26–27.

steads founded in the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C.E.<sup>3</sup> Although the Iron I material culture, cultic practices, burial customs, and architecture continued Late Bronze Age "Canaanite" traditions, the founding population was readily identified as Merneptah's "Israel" and biblical "Israel."<sup>4</sup> Nearly two decades later, not a single feature of those settlements may be conclusively identified as exclusively "Israelite." Aside from the founding of new settlements in territory allegedly settled by Israel, nothing decisively links the new settlements to Merneptah's Israel or biblical Israel.

In view of this impasse, this article pursues an alternate route in search of ethnic Israel of the premonarchic period. After demonstrating the limitations of the Culture Area approach to ethnicity currently employed by most archaeologists, I will present the Meaningful Boundaries approach, stemming from Fredrik Barth's work. This model will, in turn, be expanded to incorporate Jonathan Hall and Stephen Cornell's work on a group's crafting of its history as a process that fosters ethnic identity. Based on the new model that weds archaeology and text, the Tell-Tale approach, datable archaeological features with biblically attested significance will be proposed to indicate the crafting of Israel's history from as early as the twelfth to eleventh century B.C.E.

The biblical and archaeological evidence of Israelite interaction with the Canaanites and Philistines shows that the process of formulating collective memory regarding the Philistines differed from that of fashioning reminiscences of the Canaanites. Two distinct literary processes may underlie the varying accounts.

## I. Two Archaeological Models of Ethnicity

### *Defining Ethnicity*

An *ethnos* is a group of people larger than a clan or lineage claiming common ancestry. While cultural or biological kinship may reinforce the bond, a fabricated "collective memory of a former unity"<sup>5</sup> or "putative myth of shared descent and kinship"<sup>6</sup> ultimately conjoins the various lineages. Primordial as

<sup>3</sup> Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> For examples, see William Dever, "Proto-Israelites" ("Ceramics, Ethnicity, and the Question of Israel's Origins," *BA* 58, no.4 [1995]: 200–213) and I. Finkelstein, "Israelites" (*Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*).

<sup>5</sup> Geoff Emberling, "Ethnicity in Complex Societies: Archaeological Perspectives," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 5, no.4 (1997): 301–4.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

well as circumstantial traits, both self-ascribed and promulgated by others, define the group. Primordial features are perceived by the group to have existed from the beginning; in other words, they are the "collective memory of a former unity" or a common heritage. Kinship, territory, or select traditions, including religion, often define the group's origins. In contrast to primordial traits, circumstantial factors are variously activated in response to changing situations. Material culture or relations with other groups exemplify circumstantial factors. Though self-ascribed identifying features may change, shifting social constructs distinguishing "us" from "them" shape continuing ethnic affiliation.<sup>7</sup> Ethnicity is, in A. Giddens's words, "a dialectic of 'structure' and 'agency.'"<sup>8</sup>

The quest for early Israel is a study of ethnogenesis. "Shared interests," often political or economic, spur often unrelated clans or lineages to amalgamate into the nucleus of an *ethnos*.<sup>9</sup> To define and legitimate itself, the resulting group asserts a (fabricated) common ancestry and adopts a culture legitimating the group's past, both real and alleged, spanning the distant to recent history. In other words, the formative group undergoes a conceptual shift; the "almost unconscious 'way of life'" becomes "tradition," and the emergent culture assumes an underlying "ideology of authenticity."<sup>10</sup> Such myths of ethnic origins serve to establish and perpetuate ethnic claims of ancestry and other primordial features such as territory.<sup>11</sup> "Shared institutions" are necessary to perpetuate the group after the initial reasons for affiliating have dissipated. These institutions function as the organizing mechanism for the group to achieve its interests, practice the culture, and maintain its identity.<sup>12</sup>

Geoff Emberling discusses the relationship between ethnogenesis and political states in second-millennium Mesopotamia. According to his schema, mobile or migrant groups may attain a distinctive identity in a new environment. Along with the autochthonous population, the various tribes, peoples, or groups adopt a history of "former unity" in the process of incorporation into a state. While the state is a political construct, in contrast to the allegedly kinship-

<sup>7</sup> For bibliography of literature on ethnicity, see Bruce McKay, "Ethnicity and Israelite Religion: The Anthropology of Social Boundaries in Judges" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1997), 33-59.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Mark G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. M. Brett; Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1996), 10.

<sup>9</sup> P. Spickard and W. Burroughs, "Introduction," in *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity* (ed. P. Spickard and W. J. Burroughs; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 8-9.

<sup>10</sup> Jack D. Eller, *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: An Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 30.

<sup>11</sup> Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Spickard and Burroughs, "Introduction," 10.

based ethnos, it may build on ethnic history to promote national loyalty and, in some cases, religious fidelity. Once incorporated within the state, the ethnos may be preserved and enhanced or suppressed to promote state interests, rendering state control and ethnic preservation potentially opposing forces. Generally, the degree of state control is inversely related to the power of the ethnos. With the dissipation or dissolution of state control, ethnic groups once again may reassert their influence.<sup>13</sup>

Emberling's discussion lays the groundwork for constructing the Tell-Tale paradigm for early Israel. In place of a single point of origin and unilinear trajectory, over the centuries early Israel amalgamated multiple constituent groups each with its own primordial features. Incorporating new populations into the evolving ethnos likely entailed retrojecting or incorporating some of their primordial traits into the "collective memory." Thus, primordial features may change comparable to circumstantial factors. Even the religion of early Israel, allegedly a primordial feature (Gen 17:1–8), underwent changes through time, as cogently presented by Mark Smith.<sup>14</sup> The deity worshiped and/or the name by which he was known is a parade example. Earliest Israel likely consisted of a federation of clans worshiping El as their chief deity. El and Yahweh converged when the people Israel became Yahweh's nation; thereafter worship of Yahweh and/or El defined Israel. The evolution from polytheism to monotheism provides a second example. Through the period of the judges and the monarchy, Israel worshiped Yahweh, El, Baal, Asherah, Astarte, the sun, the moon, and the stars.<sup>15</sup> Not until relatively late in Israel's recorded history, from the late preexilic and the exilic periods, does the biblical text express "unambiguous expressions of Israelite monotheism" (e.g., Isa 45:5–6).<sup>16</sup>

An expanding entity in the process of consolidation and state formation, early Israel repeatedly updated and revised its history to incorporate circumstantial features as well as select primordial features of new constituent groups. The process may be endemic to ethnic emergence. Jonathan Hall affirmed the importance of written and verbal discourse in constructing and maintaining ethnic identity in ancient Greece, and Stephen Cornell labeled the process

<sup>13</sup> Emberling, "Ethnicity," 304–10.

<sup>14</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 7–12.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Early History of God*, 145; Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger collect the relevant iconographic evidence in *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God: In Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (JSOTSup 265; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 226–33; Z. Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallax Approaches* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 648–52.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Early History of God*, 152–54; idem, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 151–54.

"narrativization" as practiced by Native Americans.<sup>17</sup> Over the centuries, Israel supplemented, redefined, reinterpreted, and perhaps expunged or forgot primordial as well as circumstantial traits and features in crafting its "collective memory."

This more flexible understanding of ethnicity provides greater latitude in moving from Merneptah's Israel to premonarchic and monarchic ethnic Israel. At each stage, a group considered itself "Israel," yet the defining features may have significantly differed. Textually and archaeologically attested traits from Iron II need not have pertained in Iron I. This proviso also helps bridge the widespread abandonment of "Israelite" highland rural settlements in the eleventh to tenth century B.C.E. and discontinuities in material culture (see below).

Viewing early Israel as an *ethnos* raises several questions. What circumstantial "shared interest," in contradistinction to the primordial "common heritage," forged the bonds for Iron I Israel? After the initial impetus for affiliation ceased, what "shared institutions" perpetuated group identity? Is it possible to discern within the group's recorded narrative either episodic components or literary processes signifying authors/redactors constructing a history, the process of which fostered ethnic identity?

#### EXCURSUS: THE MEANING OF "ISRAELITE AND PHILISTINE

Before reviewing the models of ethnicity currently employed in archaeological studies, use of the terms "Israelite" and "Philistine" requires qualification. Biblicists and archaeologists share limitations in distinguishing and interpreting internal variability. For biblical scholars, texts such as the various tribal accounts, conquest narratives, and judges' episodes are all regarded as "Israelite" by virtue of their inclusion in the recorded history, though they may have originated with distinct groups later incorporated into the Israelite nation. The same limitation in distinguishing internal variability plagues the interpretation of archaeological finds. Settlements and material culture in the Iron I central highlands (1200–1000 B.C.E.) are all attributed to a single culture and people, variously labeled "Proto-Israelite" (William Dever) or "Israelite" (Israel Finkelstein, Amihai Mazar). Studies of inter- and intrasite variability lack the necessary quantities of data and refinement of analysis to distinguish different peoples resident in the highlands. For convenience, archaeologists resort to the acknowledged misnomer "Israelite" for all central high-

<sup>17</sup> Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 2; Stephen Cornell, "That's the Story of Our Life," in *We Are a People*, ed. Spickard and Burroughs, 43–44, and see n. 1 for bibliography on the link between identity and narrative.

lands territory and material culture. The term “Philistine,” the biblically perceived dominant culture among the Egyptian-attested Sea Peoples, functions similarly for the territory and material culture of the coastal plain from roughly the Yarkon River south to Gaza.

*The Culture Area Approach:  
Distinguishing “Israelites” from “Canaanites”*

Current archaeological studies of Israelite ethnicity employ the anthropological paradigm known as the Culture Area approach.<sup>18</sup> According to this model, the *ethnos* is identified with “a complex of cultural traits common to a population inhabiting a specific environmental zone.”<sup>19</sup> As is evident from the above discussion of ethnicity, systemic difficulties compromise the explanatory value of this model. Difficulties include (1) distinguishing cultural complexes of traits and delimiting their boundaries; (2) identifying features of ethnic rather than economic, social, or political origin; and (3) allowing for variability in the complex of traits through time and space. A further limitation of this approach is the difficulty in demonstrating the meaning or significance of the isolated traits for the members of the group. Without meaning, the traits cease to function as part of the “cultural complex.” Fortunately, texts—in our case the Bible—testify to what constituted a meaningful trait (though documentation was not intended to be comprehensive), at least in retrospect.

Israel Finkelstein’s work is illustrative of this approach. In 1983 he claimed to have identified early “Israel” in his Tel Aviv Ph.D. dissertation entitled “The Izbet Sartah Excavations and the Israelite Settlement in the Hill Country.”<sup>20</sup> Nearly twenty years later, not a single feature of the highland settlements attributed to early Israel may be conclusively identified as exclusively “Israelite” or as distinguishing “Israelites” from neighboring peoples such as the “Gibeonites” or “Canaanites.” Despite growing evidence to the contrary, Culture Area advocates continue to promote the “pillared” or “four-room” house and “collar-rim” store jar as traits of the Israelite cultural complex. Abstinence from pork, recently added to the list, is also problematic (see below). None of these traits was exclusive to a conservatively delimited Iron I highland Israel and so is not necessarily a marker of an ethnic Israelite individual or family.

<sup>18</sup> William Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); I. Finkelstein and N. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*.

<sup>19</sup> Emberling, “Ethnicity,” 297.

<sup>20</sup> Finkelstein extended the scope of his studies in his subsequent works (*The Archaeology of the Period of Settlement and Judges* [Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing, 1986] and *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*).

Furthermore, texts are mute as to whether or not Israelites considered house plans and store jars meaningful cultural traits; only abstinence from pork appears in the collective memory (Lev 11:7–8; Deut 14:8). The silence of the texts regarding the significance of house plans and collar-rim store jars plus their relatively restricted distribution favors an economic or functional rather than an ethnic impetus and no subsequent importance.

To topple the reigning paradigm, the distribution of pillared houses and store jars and the absence of pork in the diet will be shown both temporally and spatially to exceed the parameters of early Israel. At newly founded Iron I (ca. 1200–1000 B.C.E.) highland sites, settlers commonly constructed a pillared house, commonly referred to as the “four-room” house. These square to rectangular dwellings enclosed a rear broadroom and a front courtyard divided by one or two longitudinal rows of pillars (1.1–1.8 m. high) demarcating side rooms often paved with flagstones. Low arched doorways, occasional troughs between the pillars, and the flagstone paving suggest that the side rooms sheltered animals. Ovens and hearths in the central courtyard attest to cooking and baking, leaving the back room for storage and sleeping. Many houses likely had at least a partial second story.<sup>21</sup>

While this house type may have predominated in the Iron I highlands, it was not the exclusive model at sites including Afula, Tell el Far‘ah (N), Ai, Bethel, Beth Shemesh, or Tell Beit Mirsim.<sup>22</sup> Houses at Tell el-Far‘ah (N), Bethel, Beth Shemesh, and Tell Beit Mirsim, all continuously populated from the Late Bronze Age into the Iron I, lacked pillars and at 100–200 m. sq. covered more than double the floor space of the Ai and Khirbet Raddana pillared dwellings. The simplistic equation between Israelites and pillared houses is without foundation. At highland sites generally considered Israelite, such as Ai

<sup>21</sup> For an extensive discussion and bibliography, see John Holladay, Jr., “House, Israelite,” *ABD* 3:308–18; Lawrence Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1–35.

<sup>22</sup> Afula IIIB House XXVIII (twelfth century), see Moshe Dothan, “The Excavations at ‘Afula,” *Atiqot* 1 (1956): fig. 3; Ai Houses 17, 152, 207 (twelfth to eleventh century), see J. Marquet-Kraus, *Les Fouilles de ‘Ay (et-Tell) 1933–1935: Resurrection d’Une Grande Cite Biblique* (Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 45; Paris: Guethner, 1949), pl. XCVII; Bethel House 35 (end of thirteenth to beginning of twelfth century) (twelfth century), see Frank Braemer, *L’Architecture Domestique du Levant A L’Age Du Fer* (Editions recherche sur les civilisations 8; Paris: A.D.P.F., 1982), 201–2; Tell Beit Mirsim B2 House SE 12/3, see William F. Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim*, vol. 3, *The Iron Age* (AASOR 21–22; New Haven: ASOR, 1943), 19–21, pls. 2 and 11a; and Braemer, *L’Architecture Domestique*, 28–29, 181–82; Beth Shemesh III Houses 24 and 28 (twelfth to eleventh century), see Elihu Grant, *Ain Shems Excavations 1928–1931* (Biblical and Kindred Studies 3, 4; Haverford: Haverford College, 1931), pl. XXV; and E. Grant and G. E. Wright, *Ain Shems Excavations (Palestine)* (Biblical and Kindred Studies 8; Haverford: Haverford College, 1939), 51–55, fig. 6; and Braemer, *L’Architecture Domestique*, 198–99; Tell el Far‘ah (N) Houses 163 and 180 (eleventh to tenth century), see Braemer, *L’Architecture Domestique*, 211–17.

or Bethel, either Israelites constructed houses of differing plans or non-Israelites resided there as well, in which case the settlements should not be considered exclusively Israelite. If Israelites chose from among various house models, then the pillared house may be a function of socioeconomic considerations rather than ethnicity.

The distribution of pillared houses was also not restricted to Israelite sites; pillared houses were erected at the Late Bronze II and Iron I sites of Tell Ta'anach, Izbet Sartah, Tell Batash, Tell es-Shariah, Tel Masos, Sahab, and Medeinet Mu'arradjeh on the Kerak plateau, arguably non-Israelite sites.<sup>23</sup> Ironically, the excavators' identification of many of these sites as Israelite rests solely on biblical testimony; archaeological remains suggest otherwise. Thus falls the first pillar, or material culture attribute, distinguishing ethnic Israelites from Canaanites and other peoples resident in the highlands.

William F. Albright identified the collar-rim store jar as a highland feature; Yohanan Aharoni held the form to be exclusively Israelite.<sup>24</sup> Date and distribution, however, negate Aharoni's qualification.<sup>25</sup> Collar-rim store jars are now known from sites outside of and predating Israelite control, in the lowlands (Tell Keisan, Tell Nami, Aphek, Tell Qasile, Megiddo, Beth Shan) and on the Transjordanian plateau (Sahab, Tell el-Umeiri, the Amman-Hesban region).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Tell Ta'anach twelfth-century pillars in a partial structure and the Drainpipe Structure, see Paul Lapp, "The 1968 Excavations at Tell Ta'anek," *BASOR* 195 (1969): 34–39; and Braemer, *L'Architecture Domestique*, 286; Izbet Sartah II (end of eleventh century), see M. Kochavi and A. Demsky, "An Israelite Village from the Days of the Judges," *BAR* 4, no. 3 (1978): plan p. 26; and Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 75–78; and Braemer, *L'Architecture Domestique*, 238–39; Tell es-Sharia Str. VIII, E. Oren, "Esh-Sharia'a (Tel Sera'), *EAEHL* 4:1064–65, plan on p. 1066; Tel Batash VII, LBII "Burnt Building," see G. Kelm and A. Mazar, "Three Seasons of Excavations at Tell Batash-Biblical Timnah," *BASOR* 248 (1982): 9–13; Tel Masos Str. III House 74 (end of thirteenth to mid to late twelfth century), Str. II Houses 2, 88, 167 and 1065 (late twelfth to eleventh century), see A. Kempinsky and V. Fritz, "Excavations at Tel Masos (Khirbet el Meshash): Preliminary Report of the Third Season, 1975," *TA* 4 (1977): 138–42; and Braemer, *L'Architecture Domestique*, 251–55; M. M. Ibrahim, "Third Season of Excavations at Sahab, 1975 (Preliminary Report)," *ADAJ* 20 (1975): 69–82; J. Sauer, "Iron I Pillared House in Moab," *BA* 42, no. 1 (1979): 1.

<sup>24</sup> W. F. Albright, "Further Light on the History of Israel from Lachish and Megiddo," *BASOR* 68 (1937): 25; Yohanan Aharoni, "New Aspects of the Israelite Occupation in the North," in *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck* (ed. J. A. Sanders; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 264–65.

<sup>25</sup> See the summary in Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 280–82.

<sup>26</sup> For bibliography, see Israel Finkelstein, "Pots and People Revisited: Ethnic Boundaries in the Iron Age I," in *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present* (ed. N. Silberman and D. Small; JSOTSup 237; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 224–25; for Tell al-Umayri, see Larry Herr, "The Settlement and Fortification of Tell al-Umayri in Jordan During the LB/Iron I Transition," in *The Archaeology of Jordan and Beyond: Essays in Honor of James A. Sauer* (ed. L. Stager, J. Greene, and M. Coogan; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 167–79.



A suggested mode of dispersal also precludes use of the jar as an ethnic marker. Based on distribution, Doug Esse proposed itinerant kin-based potters, likely Israelites, selling collar-rim store jars to Israelites and Canaanites alike.<sup>27</sup> If Esse is correct, the general availability of collar-rim jars shatters the myth of their restricted ethnic use. Thus falls the second pillar or attribute of ethnic Israel's identity manifested in material culture.

Zooarchaeologists seemingly rescued the early Israelites from obscurity. The apparent abstinence from pork in fulfillment of the biblical injunction (Lev 11:7–8; Deut 14:8) was embraced as the elusive marker of Israelite ethnicity.<sup>28</sup> Brian Hesse and Paula Wapnish tabulated percentages of pig bones among faunal collections from Israel, Syria, Iraq, eastern Anatolia, and Egypt, spanning the ninth to the first millennium.<sup>29</sup> Relevant to this discussion are their findings from second- and first-millennium Cisjordan. Their efforts are hamstrung by the small number of faunal assemblages analyzed, samples of widely varying size (from 47 to 3,950 bones), and the variability of intrasite distribution depending on context. Isolating the results of southern Levantine sites, five Middle Bronze Age sites demonstrated “intense exploitation” of pig, from 8 to 34 percent of identified animal bones in domestic debris. Late Bronze Age sites yielded “scant” Late Bronze Age evidence, with the sole highland site of Shiloh yielding a mere 0.17 percent (one bone). Pig was rare but present in Iron I highland sites: 0.7 percent at Shiloh, one bone each at Ai and Khirbet Raddana, and “some” from the City of David (none from the Ophel). By contrast, the pig samples of 18 and 19 percent respectively from Iron I Tel Miqne and Ashkelon constitute incontrovertible evidence of Iron I Philistine pork consumption. At all Philistine sites analyzed, Ashkelon, Tel Miqne, and Tell Batash, pig exploitation decreased through the centuries, beginning in the eleventh century B.C.E. Overall, Hesse and Wapnish's results demonstrate reliance on pig in the Middle Bronze Age, with greatly diminished use from the Late Bronze Age through the Persian period except for Iron I Philistia, with a return to pork as a dietary

<sup>27</sup> Douglas Esse, “The Collared Store Jar: Scholarly Ideology and Ceramic Typology,” *SJOT* 2 (1991): 99–116.

<sup>28</sup> Diana Edelman, “Ethnicity and Early Israel,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Brett, 49; Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know*, 113; Finkelstein, “Pots and People,” 228–30; Finkelstein and Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 119; Larry Stager, “The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185–1050 BCE),” in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (ed. T. Levy; New York: Facts on File, 1995), 344.

<sup>29</sup> Brian Hesse, “Husbandry, Dietary Taboos, and the Bones of the Ancient Near East: Zooarchaeology in the Post-Processual World,” in *Methods in the Mediterranean: Historical and Archaeological Views on Texts and Archaeology* (ed. D. Small; Leiden/New York: Brill, 1995), 197–232, esp. 217–30; Brian Hesse and Paula Wapnish, “Can Pig Remains Be Used for Ethnic Diagnosis in the Ancient Near East?” in *Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past*, ed. Silberman and Small, 238–70.

mainstay in the Hellenistic and later periods.<sup>30</sup> Based on these findings, those who seek to identify Israelites on the basis of abstinence from pork are hampered by the single Late Bronze Age highland site with a "trace" of pig, which precludes distinguishing the Iron I highland "Israelites" from their predecessors.

A further limitation of the Culture Area approach is its inability to bridge the mid-twelfth- and eleventh-century B.C.E. highland abandonment and discontinuity in material culture. Entire regions of Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah, and the Shephelah were abandoned not long after having been settled.<sup>31</sup> Finkelstein's 1997 claim that "over 90% of the Iron I sites [in the central highlands] continued to be inhabited, undisturbed, until the eighth century BCE" is not borne out by excavations, others' surveys, or his own earlier work in the territory of Ephraim.<sup>32</sup> Of the few Iron I sites excavated, many were abandoned either briefly or permanently (Mt. Ebal, Izbet Sartah, Shechem, Shiloh, Ai, Khirbet Raddana, Tell en-Nasbeh, Giloh, Umm et-Tala, Jebel el-Habun/Allon Shevut, Tell Beit Mirsim). Tell el-Far'ah (N), Khirbet ed-Dawwara, and Izbet Sartah lasted into the tenth century B.C.E. before being abandoned. Only five highland sites supported continuous settlement into the Iron II period (Bethel, Tell el-Ful/Gibeah, Gibeon, Jerusalem, Tell er-Rumeideh/Tel Hebron).<sup>33</sup> Survey results also challenge Finkelstein's purported continuity of settlement. Archaeological surveys of Ephraim found, on average, a 36-percent Iron I site abandonment rate, with rates as high as 50 percent in the east and 44 percent along the south central ridge.<sup>34</sup> Avraham Faust's focus on rural settlement paints an even bleaker picture than that presented by Finkelstein. According to Faust, Iron II villages were not established before the demise of their Iron I

<sup>30</sup> Brian Hesse and Paula Wapnish, "Pig Use and Abuse in the Ancient Levant: Ethno-religious Boundary-Building with Swine," in *Ancestors for the Pigs: Pigs in Prehistory* (ed. S. Nelson; MASCA Research Papers in Science and Archaeology 15; Philadelphia: Museum Applied Science Center for Archaeology, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1998), 123–35.

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Bloch-Smith and Beth Alpert-Nakhai, "A Landscape Comes to Life: The Iron Age I," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62, no. 2 (1999): 70, 73, 77–78.

<sup>32</sup> Finkelstein, "Pots and People Revisited," 223; idem, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*; Avraham Faust, "Abandonment, Urbanization, Resettlement and the Formation of the Israelite State" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the ASOR, Boulder, Colorado, November 2001; forthcoming in *Near Eastern Archaeology*).

<sup>33</sup> For charts summarizing comparative stratigraphy of Iron I and Iron II sites, see Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), table 6, p. 301, and table 7, pp. 372–73.

<sup>34</sup> Avi Ofer, "'All the Hill Country of Judah': From a Settlement Fringe to a Prosperous Monarchy," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (ed. I. Finkelstein and N. Na'aman; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, Israel Exploration Society; Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1994), figs. 4 and 5. Percentages for Ephraim were tabulated from survey data in Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 140–77, 187–91.

counterparts, so that no rural settlements existed in the late eleventh/early tenth century B.C.E.<sup>35</sup> Archaeologists attribute the abandonments to incipient urbanism as an economic strategy and to the threat of Philistine incursions and Canaanite reprisals,<sup>36</sup> but a corresponding growth in highland urban centers is not immediately evident. Waning highland settlement corresponded to growth in coastal and Shephelah towns, regions generally recognized as beyond or of contested Israelite control in the late twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C.E.<sup>37</sup>

If twelfth- to eleventh-century B.C.E. material culture traditions continued into the tenth century B.C.E. and later, despite the widespread abandonments, then archaeological evidence could more convincingly be adduced in support of identifying the Iron I highland settlers with ethnic Israel. However, even William Dever and Israel Finkelstein (in his more conservative period) conceded discontinuities in the archaeological record. Not until the eleventh or tenth century B.C.E. did pottery, settled areas, burial practices, demographic patterns, and architecture coalesce into forms continuous through the sixth century B.C.E.<sup>38</sup> Much twelfth- to eleventh-century B.C.E. material culture did not bridge the abandonment gap, so material culture must cautiously be used in support of identifying the Iron I highland settlers with later Israel.

In sum, not a single "Israelite" trait identified by proponents of the Culture Area approach—pillared houses, collar-rim store jars, or pig abstinence—was exclusive to a conservatively delimited Iron I highland Israel. The relatively restricted distribution of these traits favors a functional rather than an ethnic rationale. In general, Iron I highland architecture, diet, material culture, subsistence adaptation, language, and even cultic features continued Late Bronze Age practices or were attested in neighboring regions. Not until the beginning of Iron II, following the mid-twelfth- to late-eleventh-century B.C.E. abandonments, did the demographic patterns and cultural traits emerge that would continue until the demise of the Israelite kingdom in 586 B.C.E. Aside from the founding of new settlements in territory allegedly conquered and settled by Israel, none of the features commonly cited either decisively links highland residents to biblical Israel or distinguishes Israelites from their highland neighbors.

<sup>35</sup> Faust, "Abandonment, Urbanization, Resettlement."

<sup>36</sup> William Dever, "Archaeology, Urbanism, and the Rise of the Israelite State," in *Urbanism in Antiquity: From Mesopotamia to Crete* (ed. W. Aufrecht, N. Mirau, and S. Gauley; JSOTSup 244; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 182; Juval Portugali, "Theoretical Speculations on the Transition from Nomadism to Monarchy," in *From Nomadism to Monarchy*, ed. Finkelstein and Na'aman, 203–17.

<sup>37</sup> Bloch-Smith and Nakhai, "A Landscape Comes to Life," 78.

<sup>38</sup> William Dever, "Ceramics, Ethnicity, and the Question of Israel's Origins," *BA* 58, no. 4 (1995): 206–10; Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 332.

## II. The Meaningful Boundaries and Tell-Tale Approaches: Distinguishing "Israelites" from "Philistines"

Beginning in 1969, Fredrik Barth broadened the discussion of ethnicity to include an examination of boundaries or significant features that differentiate groups.<sup>39</sup> Building on Barth's work, rather than simply isolating traits specific to a region or a population, recent studies identify and map a complex of traits that the ethnic group deems significant and that distinguishes the *ethnos* from others. Ethnicity is better viewed as a "process of identification and differentiation, rather than . . . an inherent attribute of individuals or groups."<sup>40</sup> The level of sophistication attained in biblical and archaeological studies enables proceeding beyond the acknowledged misnomers based on ethnic traits that lack attributed significance. Biblical texts confer significance on archaeologically attested traits; archaeology supplies a date and a context for specific features preserved in redacted texts. Considered together, biblical and archaeological testimonies provide witness to the characteristics that the Israelites considered significant and that differentiated them from others. Rather than pillared houses and collar-rim store jars, which lack attested significance for early Israel, Israel should be defined on its own terms (as filtered through later generations) rather than as a modern scholarly construct.

A second ethnicity model, the Meaningful Boundaries approach, involves identifying a complex of features of demonstrated significance, as noted in the "collective memory," defining Israel in relation to others. Rather than attempting to differentiate Israelites from Canaanites, with whom both the Bible and archaeology indicate they shared a material culture, the Israelites may be distinguished from another adversary, the Philistines. The rival Philistines' practices and material culture are readily discernible from that of highland settlers, including the Israelites, and so constitute an ideal foil.<sup>41</sup>

The current pejorative meaning of "Philistine" expresses the opposite of what is known of the twelfth- to tenth-century B.C.E. culture through excavation. Philistines constructed urban sites (e.g., Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron) with

<sup>39</sup> Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (ed. F. Barth; Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 14–15.

<sup>40</sup> Emberling, "Ethnicity," 306.

<sup>41</sup> Introductions to the Philistines are provided by Trude Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1982); Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 300–328; *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition: Thirteenth to Early Tenth Centuries BCE* (ed. Seymour Gitin, Amihai Mazar, and Ephraim Stern; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1998); *The Sea Peoples and Their World: A Reassessment* (ed. Eliezer Oren; University Museum Monograph 108, University Museum Symposium Series 11; Philadelphia: University Museum, 2000). Tell Qasile, while cited as an exemplar of Philistine practices, may have been established by another constituent group of the Sea Peoples.

blocks of houses framed by an orthogonal street plan (Qasile). Temples, of evolving plans, were situated within residential areas (Qasile). Comparable monumental buildings and temples are unknown from the highlands in this period. Distinctive building techniques and central pillars to support roof beams, together with plastered benches along the room perimeter, free-standing round hearths (Qasile, Miqne, Ashkelon), and keyhole-shaped hearths (Qasile, Miqne, Ashkelon) distinguished Philistine structures from their highland counterparts.<sup>42</sup>

Iconography and material remains exhibit distinctive Philistine cultic, military (discussed below), dietary, and even personal-grooming and hygiene features and practices. Numerous objects, some with (distant) links to Aegean prototypes, contemporaneously appeared at Cypriot and Levantine sites: Mycenaean IIIC:1b or Philistine Monochrome pottery followed by Philistine Bichrome pottery with distinctive forms and decoration, incised cow scapulae (musical instruments?), and unbaked clay "loom weights." From these objects and botanical and zoological remains, we learn that Philistines dined on pork and beef served with sauces rather than on the highland diet of stewed sheep or goat.<sup>43</sup> Following Aegean custom, they diluted their wine with water and imbibed from bell-shaped bowls. Distinctive cultic practices are evidenced by the "Ashdoda" figurines (enthroned female and male figures), kernoi with mourning women or floral or faunal figures attached, conch-shaped vessels, and the temple architecture mentioned above. In contrast to the Israelites, Philistines were clean-shaven (as depicted in the Ramesses III Medinet Habu reliefs) and bathed in stone or ceramic tubs (Ashdod, Tel Miqne, Ashkelon).<sup>44</sup>

Archaeology establishes the twelfth to tenth centuries B.C.E. as the contentious period between the highland Israelites and the Philistines. If one equates the sudden appearance of quantities of Myc IIIC:1b pottery with Sea Peoples/Philistines settlement, one can conclude that migrants reached the southern Levant in the twelfth century B.C.E. with dates ranging from Lawrence Stager's ca. 1185 B.C.E. to Israel Finkelstein's mid to late twelfth century B.C.E.<sup>45</sup> The spread of Philistine Bichrome wares in the later twelfth

<sup>42</sup> Israel Finkelstein, "The Philistine Settlement: When, Where and How Many?" in *The Sea Peoples and Their World*, ed. Oren, 166–74. Philistine architecture and architectural elements are conveniently summarized in Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 317–23.

<sup>43</sup> Hesse, "Pig Lovers and Pig Haters," table 3.

<sup>44</sup> Vassos Karageorghis, "Cultural Innovations in Cyprus Relating to the Sea Peoples," in *Sea Peoples and Their World*, 271–74.

<sup>45</sup> The thesis of this article does not hinge on absolute dates; whether beginning early or later in the twelfth century, Philistine aggression galvanized an Israelite opposition. Israel Finkelstein dates the advent of Philistine pottery in the southern Levant to the end of Ramesses VI's reign or later, lowering the dates of Philistine Monochrome pottery to 1135–1100 B.C.E. and Philistine

and/or early eleventh century B.C.E. indicates distant trade and, where the pottery occurs in significant quantities in conjunction with other "Philistine" features, appropriation of and settlement in adjacent territories to the north in the Yarkon River Valley (Tell Qasile, Aphek, Jerishe, Jaffa, Azor), to the east into the Shephelah (Gezer, Tell Batash, Beth Shemesh, Tel Sippor, Tell es-Safi, Tell Beit Mirsim), and to the southeast into the northern Negev (Sera, Haror, Tell el-Far'ah [S]).<sup>46</sup>

According to biblical accounts, Israelites fought Philistine invasions and forays during the periods of Samuel, Saul, and David, dated between the late twelfth and early tenth centuries B.C.E. in conformance with the archaeological evidence. Hostility, but not warfare, toward the "uncircumcised" neighbors formed the backdrop for Samson's fatal attraction to Philistine women (Judg 14:1–3; 16:1, 4) and *ʿibrīm* resorting to Philistine metalsmiths to sharpen their agricultural implements (1 Sam 13:19–20). By the time of Samuel, Israel and Philistia were at war. Both territory and subservience entailing slave labor were at stake (1 Sam 4:9; 17:9). With the exception of Saul's fatal foray to the Jezreel Valley, Philistines and Israelites battled for territory in southern Ephraim, Benjamin, western Judah, and through the Shephelah (1 Sam 4:1–11; 7:7–14). Saul defended the territory of Benjamin (1 Sam 13:4–7; 14:31) and David of Bethlehem initially battled on behalf of Judah (1 Sam 17:1–52; 23:1–5). Territorial disputes then shifted northward for control of the Jezreel Valley (1 Sam 28:1–29:11; 31:1), but following David's coronation, the battleground reverted to the vicinity of his new capital in Jerusalem and control of the mountain passes providing access to it (2 Sam 5:17–25).

James Flanagan, Steven McKenzie, and Baruch Halpern, among others, question the veracity of the biblical accounts of David and the Philistines. The chronological sequence, specific "Philistine" forces involved in each battle, and the relationship that fluctuated between antagonism and alliance are among the subjects of scrutiny.<sup>47</sup> Irrespective of David's origins and means of achiev-

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Bichrome pottery to the eleventh and beginning of the tenth century. Finkelstein's dates have, in turn, been challenged by Shlomo Bunimovitz and Avraham Faust, Susan Sherratt, and Baruch Halpern. To review the debate, see Dothan, *Philistines and Their Material Culture*, 2; Finkelstein, "Philistine Settlement," 159–80; idem, "Philistine Chronology: High, Middle or Low?" in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, ed. Gitin et al., 140–47; S. Bunimovitz and A. Faust, "Chronological Separation, Geographical Segregation or Ethnic Demarcation? Ethnography and the Iron Age Low Chronology," *BASOR* 322 (2001): 1–10; Susan Sherratt, "'Sea Peoples' and the Economic Structure of the Late Second Millennium in the Eastern Mediterranean," in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, ed. Gitin et al., 306 n. 30; and Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 454–55.

<sup>46</sup> Dothan, *Philistines and Their Material Culture*, 25–90, 295–96; Stager, "Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan."

<sup>47</sup> James Flanagan, *David's Social Drama: A Hologram of Israel's Early Iron Age* (Social

ing power, the Bible describes wars between Israel and Philistia during the reigns of Saul and David for domination and control of the Shephelah and strategic mountain passes leading into the highlands, the Yarkon River Valley, and the Jezreel Valley.<sup>48</sup> The religious message is evident. In every case, faith in Yahweh and divine assistance (1 Sam 7:5–10; 14:1–15; 17; 23:1–5; 2 Sam 5:17–25) enabled Israel to defeat their more numerous and better equipped enemy. However, Saul and David's battles to free and defend their capital cities of Geba/Gibeah and Jerusalem respectively demonstrate the seriousness of the Philistine threat and precariousness of Israel's very existence.

Is it possible to identify the Israelites who opposed the Philistines in the twelfth to eleventh/early tenth century B.C.E.? Based on biblical and archaeological information about the Philistines and their culture, biblical narrative and legal passages identify four distinguishing traits of Israelites from their own perspective: circumcision (1 Sam 18:25–26; 31:4; 2 Sam 3:14), maintaining a short beard (Lev 19:27; Deut 14:2), abstinence from eating pork (Lev 11:7–8; Deut 14:2), and military inferiority (1 Sam 13:5, 19; 17). Circumcision and a military imbalance explicitly figure in the Israelite-Philistine accounts. Maintaining a short beard and abstaining from eating pork as traits distinguishing Israelites from Philistines are known only through archaeology. Circumcision is a clear-cut distinction. In describing Sea Peoples among the Libyan invaders, Merneptah singles out the “[Sher]den, Shekelesh, Ekweh, of the countries of the sea, who had no foreskins,” omitting the Peleset/Philistines, in conformance with the biblical characterization of the Philistines as uncircumcised.<sup>49</sup> Distinctions in facial hair treatment are evident from Ramesses III's Medinet Habu depictions of clean-shaven Sea Peoples<sup>50</sup> in contrast to the Israelite short beard, as depicted in Ramesses II or Merneptah's depiction of the siege of Ashkelon at Karnak.<sup>51</sup> Later depictions of the Israelite king and messengers on

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World of Biblical Antiquity Series 7; Sheffield: Almond, 1988); Steven McKenzie, *King David: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 144–59.

<sup>48</sup> Seymour Gitin conveniently quantified Israel's animus toward the Philistines. Excluding the Canaanites, of the 919 biblical references to Israel's foes, 423 (46%) relate to Philistia, 273 (30%) to Egypt, 164 (18%) to the transjordanian nations and Amalek, and 59 (6%) to the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon (“Philistia in Transition: The Tenth Century and Beyond,” in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, ed. Gitin et al., 163 n. 4).

<sup>49</sup> James H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Dynasty* (1906; repr., New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), 249 §588. Saul Olyan discusses circumcised/uncircumcised as one example of a polarity or binary pairing distinguishing Israel from others (*Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000], 64–68).

<sup>50</sup> Medinet Habu I, *Medinet Habu VIII; I. Earlier Historical Records of Ramesses III* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), pls. 37, 39, 44.

<sup>51</sup> Larry Stager, “Merneptah, Israel and the Sea Peoples: New Light on an Old Relief,” *Eretz Israel* 18 (1985): \*56–64; biblical proscriptions against cutting facial hair imply a beard (Lev 19:27;

the ninth-century B.C.E. Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser and of a dignitary on an eighth- to seventh-century B.C.E. sherd from Ramat Rahel illustrate the enduring style of trimmed beards.<sup>52</sup> Tjekker/Sikil and individual Sea Peoples captives were bearded on the Medinet Habu relief, but in general the presence or absence of facial hair may have served as a highly visible marker of Israelite as opposed to Philistine affiliation. Razors for shaving facial hair are known from Egypt, but are thus far unattested for Philistia. The Israelite injunction to abstain from pork products, meaningful in the context of the twelfth- and eleventh-century B.C.E. pork-consuming Philistines, has been discussed above.

Biblical accounts repeatedly stress Israelite military inferiority relative to the Philistines. Philistine superiority is attributed to control of metalsmithing (1 Sam 13:19, the unspecified metal could be copper, bronze, or iron) and greater numbers of chariots (1 Sam 13:5) and armaments (1 Sam 17:5–7a). “No smith was to be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines were afraid that the *‘ibrîm* would make swords or spears” (1 Sam 13:19). In the legendary duel, the Philistine warrior Goliath wore a helmet, a breastplate of scale armor, and greaves on his legs, all of bronze. He carried a bronze javelin slung from his shoulders and a spear with a massive iron head.<sup>53</sup> Goliath’s challenge was answered by an Israelite lad, David, armed only with a slingshot and a stick (1 Sam 17:5–7). While the description of Goliath’s armor may well be an anachronistic description intended to glorify David, biblical passages consistently portray the Philistines as better equipped than their Israelite enemies. Philistine troops wielding swords (1 Sam 14:20), spears (1 Sam 17:7; 2 Sam 21:16), and bows and arrows (1 Sam 31:3) fought in infantry, cavalry, and chariotry units (1 Sam 13:5; 2 Sam 1:6) against Israelite troops on foot, equipped only with bows and arrows (1 Sam 13:22).

The Medinet Habu depictions of Sea Peoples battling Egyptians corroborate the biblical portrayal of heavily armed, professional Philistine warriors. Battling from ships, the warriors, clothed in a helmet and body armor/ribbed corselet, held small round shields and wielded spears, lances/pikes, or Aegean

21:5; Deut 14:1). Israelites grew facial hair, shaving only, according to Saul Olyan, to announce publicly a change in status (“What Do Shaving Rites Accomplish and What Do They Signal in Biblical Ritual Contexts?” *JBL* 117 [1998]: 611–22).

<sup>52</sup> Line drawings of both depictions appear in Philip King and Lawrence Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2001), illustrations 132, 134a–e.

<sup>53</sup> Steven McKenzie disputes an early date for Goliath’s armor. The helmet, in particular, is compared to Assyrian helmets, which, lacking a nosepiece, would have enabled David to strike his opponent in the forehead (*King David: A Biography*, 74–75). A decorated vase from Mycenae attests to similar armaments and armor in the twelfth century. Marching warriors, clad in helmets with nosepieces, coats of mail, and leg guards, carry a long spear (Trude Dothan and Moshe Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* [New York: Macmillan, 1992], photo on p. 47).



long swords for hand-to-hand combat. On land, Philistines armed with two spears attacked from a chariot drawn by two horses. Troops on foot entered battle in phalanges of four men, three with a long, straight sword and a pair of spears, and the fourth armed with a sword. All four carried a small round shield and wore a plain upper garment, perhaps a breastplate. Families traveling in heavy carts were guarded by a warrior equipped with a small round shield and a long dagger or sword.<sup>54</sup> The biblical and Egyptian accounts of battle share propagandistic purposes. Both glorify the local warrior/s (and their god/s) who defeated enemy forces, and so they might be given to exaggeration. However, both attest to well-provisioned, professional Philistine fighting forces.

Not surprisingly, amassing Iron I evidence of metallurgical activity and armaments tempers the picture of Israelite and Philistine capabilities and provisions.<sup>55</sup> No site has yet yielded incontrovertible evidence of the primary production of iron and perhaps even bronze; metallurgical activity was probably limited to recycling, repair, and smelting. Iron I bronze workshops, indicated by metal-encrusted crucibles or fragments and tuyere/claypipes for bellows, were concentrated along but not limited to the coast (Tel Dan Str. VI-IVB, Tel Harashim, Acco Area A/B, Megiddo K-5, Tell el-Oreme V, Beth Shan Str. VI, Tell Deir 'Alla Phase B, Khirbet Raddana, Tell Qasile, Tel Mor Level VI, perhaps Ashdod XI, Tel Miqne/Ekron, Beth Shemesh III, Tell es-Zuweyid/Anthedon levels N and M, Tel Masos, Yotvata, Timna).<sup>56</sup> Metalworkers labored throughout the country, from Dan to Timna. Of the seventeen metallurgical workshops, Philistines operated Tell Qasile and Tel Miqne, while Israelites operated Khirbet Raddana. The biblical contention that "no smith was to be

<sup>54</sup> *Medinet Habu VIII:I*, pl. 37.

<sup>55</sup> The catalogue of weapons is primarily compiled from Yohanan Aharoni, *Investigations at Lachish: The Sanctuary and the Residency (Lachish V)* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology, 1975), 116–17; Dothan, *Philistines and Their Material Culture*; Allan Emery, "Weapons of the Israelite Monarchy: A Catalogue with Its Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Implications" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1999); Francis James, *The Iron Age at Beth Shan: A Study of Levels VI-IV* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1966), fig. 104; see also articles in *NEAEHL* (1993); K. Ohata, *Tel Zeror II* (Tokyo: Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan, 1967), 40–41, and *Tel Zeror III* (1970), 73; S. Sherratt, "Commerce, Iron and Ideology: Metallurgical Innovations in 12th–11th Century Cyprus," in *Cyprus in the Eleventh Century B.C.* (ed. V. Karageorghis; Nicosia: A. G. Leventis Foundation and University of Cyprus, 1994), 76–77; Ephraim Stern, "Discoveries at Tel Dor," in *Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past*, ed. Silberman and Small, 133; Olga Tufnell, *Lachish III (Tell ed-Duweir): The Iron Age* (London/New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); and Jane Waldbaum, *From Bronze to Iron* (Göteborg: Paul Åströms, 1978).

<sup>56</sup> For bibliography, see Trude Dothan, "Tel Miqne-Ekron: The Iron Age I Philistine Settlement in Canaan," in *Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past*, ed. Silberman and Small, 100; Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, 104; Z. Meshel, "Yotvata," *NEAEHL* 4:1517–18; Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 359; and Waldbaum, *From Bronze to Iron*, 60.

found in all the land of Israel" (1 Sam 13:19) appears to be an exaggeration. The "archetypal" Iron I "Israelite" village of Khirbet Raddana had a bronze smelting or casting workshop. Bronze slag-encrusted crucibles, tuyeres of various sizes, plus an iron blade and bronze daggers, armor scale, needles, javelin points, plow points, a small arrowhead, and spearheads dispel the image of the highland fighter lacking metal weapons dependent on the Philistine enemy to sharpen his plow point.<sup>57</sup> Khirbet Raddana, while currently unique in its highland metallurgical capabilities and armaments assemblage, highlights the discrepancy between the biblical portrayal and the situation on the ground.<sup>58</sup>

Published weapons (including multipurpose blades), admittedly few in number, considered in conjunction with highland smelting/casting sites undermine or at least qualify the biblical assertion of a Philistine metallurgical monopoly and superiority in armaments.<sup>59</sup> Though conclusively identified Israelite (Bethel, Ai, Khirbet Raddana, Tell en-Nasbeh, Giloh, el-Khadr, Beth Zur, tenth-century B.C.E. Beersheba) and Philistine sites (Ashdod, Tel Miqne-Ekron, Beth Dagon, Tell el-ʿAjjul/Gaza, Tell Qasile [questionably Philistine]) are few in number, virtually every site yielded weapons. Tabulated numbers of armaments and armor (table 1) demonstrate that neither side held an unambiguous advantage. Philistines possessed iron weapons before the Israelites, perhaps the basis for the expressed Israelite inferiority. However, by the eleventh century B.C.E. the Israelites gained the advantage in numbers of weapons in iron as well as bronze. In general, Israelites utilized and probably produced weapons requiring less metal and technological sophistication.

<sup>57</sup> J. Callaway and R. Cooley, "A Salvage Excavation at Raddana, in Bireh," *BASOR* 201 (1971): 9–19; Robert Cooley, "Four Seasons of Excavation at Khirbet Raddana," *Near Eastern Archaeological Society Bulletin* 5 (1975): 5–20; J. A. Callaway, "Raddana, Khirbet," *NEAEHL* 4:1253–54.

<sup>58</sup> Recent excavations have added to the list of possible casting or smelting sites dating from the end of the Late Bronze Age and early Iron I. Significant courtyard/outdoor ash deposits are reported from thirteen Iron I sites. At many of these sites, the ash layers, typically of relatively short duration, immediately preceded or were linked to the earliest Philistine/Sea Peoples settlement. While sacrifice and kilns for baking or pottery production generated a good deal of ash, the recycling of copper or bronze into new implements, executed with crucibles in and near habitation areas, likely produced the ash. Situated along the coast (Acco, Shiqmona, Tel Nami, Tel Dor, Tell Qasile, Tel Mor, Tell es-Zuweyid), in the Shephelah (Gezer, Beth Shemesh, Lachish), in major valley systems (Dan, Yoqneam, Beth Shan, Tell Deir ʿAlla), and at sites with Philistine connections (Tel Miqne-Ekron, Sera, Tell el-Farah [S], Tel Masos), these casting and smelting sites likely benefited the Philistines and lowland residents more than the highland Israelites.

<sup>59</sup> The vast majority of twelfth-to-tenth-century B.C.E. metal weapons derived from sites attributed to Canaanites, Egyptians, Sea Peoples other than the Philistines, or mixed populations. The limited number of settlements included without major sites such as Jerusalem, Ashkelon, and Gath render the results merely suggestive. The double designation Sea Peoples/Philistine hedges identification of sites bordering different Sea Peoples territories, as, for example, Tell Qasile, which lies on the border between the Philistines and the Tjekker/Sikil.

**Table 1**  
**Twelfth- to Tenth-Century B.C.E. Bronze and Iron Armaments**  
**and Armor from "Philistine/Sea People" and "Israelite" Sites**

Weapon Type	<i>Philistine</i> <sup>1</sup>			<i>Israelite</i> <sup>2</sup>		
	Total # of weapons	# of diff. sites	Bronze/Iron	Total # of weapons	# of diff. sites	Bronze/Iron
Arrowhead	6	2 <sup>3</sup>	4/2	11 + 26 <sup>4</sup>	4	26 + 4/7
Knife/blade	11	3	0/11	5	3	0/5
Dagger	-	-	-	5	3	4/1
Sword	2	2	1/1	-	-	-
Spearhead	2	2	2/0	5	3	5/0
Spear butt	1	1	1/0	1	1	0/1
Javelin head	-	-	-	4 + 3 <sup>4</sup>	3	3 <sup>4</sup> + 3/1
Lancehead	-	-	-	2	1	0/2
Armor scale	-	-	-	2	1	2/0
Total	22	5	8/14	35 + 29 <sup>4</sup>	8	29 <sup>4</sup> + 18/17
<p><sup>1</sup> "Philistine" sites include Ashdod, Tel Mique-Ekron, Beth Dagon, Tell el-'Ajjul/Gaza, and Tell Qasile.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> "Israelite" sites are restricted to the central highlands (excluding valley sites that continued from the Late Bronze Age, e.g., Dothan) plus tenth-century Beersheva (Bethel, Ai, Khirbet Raddana, Tell en-Nasbeh, Giloh, el-Khadr, Beth Zur, Tel Beersheva).</p> <p><sup>3</sup> Twenty-six arrowheads and three javelin heads from el-Khadr.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Quantities cited as "multiple" or "a few" in the excavation report are counted as 2 in the tabulation.</p>						

Israelite sites yielded a greater number of projectile points (heads for an arrow, spear, javelin, or lance); points required a minimal amount of metal and were mounted on inexpensive wooden shafts. Philistines brandished a slightly greater number of blades. Combining knife/blade, dagger, and sword—as the identification is subjective (except in the case of the long Aegean sword)—Philistines wielded thirteen blades against Israel's ten. Producing blades required significantly more metal and expertise than fashioning points. Israel's weapons afforded the advantage of fighting from a distance, with metal-tipped arrows to shoot and metal-tipped shafts to thrust or throw. Philistine blades and chariots were better suited for hand-to-hand combat.

Israelites wielded a greater number of metal or metal-tipped weapons, but other factors gave the Philistines an edge: the Cypriot and coastal locus for smelting, casting, and trade in metals; Cyprus as a source of copper; coastal sites' control of exports into the interior; more elaborate and extensive bronze workshops; and new types of weapons introduced into the region from the Aegean. All these circumstances afforded the Philistines greater resources and easier access to metallurgists and their products than were available to Israel. In addition, chariots gave the Philistine forces enhanced mobility. Archaeological evidence for chariots, though limited, is both direct and indirect. Corroborating the Medinet Habu depictions of Philistines attacking from chariots, miniature bronze chariot wheels and a full-size chariot linchpin lay on the floors of cult rooms in the Tel Miqne-Ekron Monumental Building 4111.<sup>60</sup> Ashkelon yielded an additional full-size bronze linchpin. In effect, the Bible simplified but accurately documented relative Philistine superiority in metallurgy and armaments.

### *Iron I Ethnic Israel Revealed*

The Tell-Tale approach poses several questions regarding ethnic identity. What primordial features or "common heritage" unified the *ethnos*? Both putative kinship and a special relationship to a distinctive god who acts throughout history appear to have been early Israelite primordial features.<sup>61</sup> However, both features also evolved through time obfuscating, if not obscuring, their initial formulation. Worship of the god El, as indicated by the theophoric name "Israel," probably functioned as a primordial feature.<sup>62</sup> Exogenous use of the name by an Egyptian pharaoh supports the contention that by the end of the thirteenth century B.C.E. a southern Levantine people, of international notoriety, worshiped El. While specific corroborating archaeological evidence is lacking, archaeology does attest to the continuity of Bronze Age cultic practices into the Iron Age, likely including the worship of El, at least for the northern part of the country.<sup>63</sup> However, evolution of the deity worshiped is evident in the aforementioned convergence of El and Yahweh. Variant kin-based tribal lists (Gen 49:1–27; Num 1:5–16; Deut 33:1–29), the artificially conjoined lineages,

<sup>60</sup> Trude Dothan considers the miniature wheels to belong to cultic carts rather than chariots, but the accompanying linchpin bolsters the chariot identification ("Initial Philistine Settlement: From Migration to Coexistence," in *Mediterranean Peoples in Transition*, ed. Gitin et al., 158).

<sup>61</sup> Peter Machinist's discussion of Israel's distinctiveness does not include kinship ("The Question of Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay," in *Ah Assyria . . . : Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (ed. M. Cogan and I. Ephal; ScrHier 33; Jerusalem: Magness and Hebrew University, 1991), 196–212, esp. 207.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 142–43.

<sup>63</sup> See the summary in Bloch-Smith and Alpert-Nakhai, "Landscape Comes to Life," 117–18.

perpetuated the primacy of kinship while acknowledging changes in constituent groups. The later biblical "collective memory," which regarded kinship, cult, and territory as primordial unifying factors, simplified, perhaps obscured, and may even have superseded the true unifying features of the Israelite *ethnos* in the twelfth to eleventh centuries B.C.E.

What circumstantial features including shared interests fostered the formation of ethnic Israel? The impetus for affiliation of Merneptah's Israel remains obscure. Mycenaean IIIC:1b (Monochrome) pottery and Philistine Bichrome Ware in conjunction with other distinctive Philistine/Sea Peoples material culture signal Philistine/Sea Peoples coastal settlement in the twelfth century B.C.E. and subsequent expansion through the Jezreel and Yarkon River Valleys, the Jerusalem corridor, the Shephelah, and the northwestern Negev. Whether Israelite-Philistine conflict dated from the early or later twelfth century down into the late eleventh or tenth century B.C.E., the antagonism likely fueled ethnic affiliation in the pre- and early monarchic phases of Israel's existence.<sup>64</sup> Most of the newly settled highland rural population abandoned their typically unfortified, isolated hamlets. In the absence of highland urban growth, the whereabouts of the displaced population remains uncertain as the expanding Shephelah and coastal settlements would not be the expected relocation choice. Philistine aggression perhaps spurred a regional affiliation of the remaining settlers to muster an army of sufficient size to counter Philistine open-field battle tactics and pincer operations.<sup>65</sup> Perceived vulnerability, expressed in terms of military inferiority, may have been an aspect of the confederation's circumstantial self-identity. This perception—exaggerated either contemporaneously or in retrospect—strengthened belief in a god fighting alongside his troops, actualized through carrying the Ark into battle (1 Sam 4:3b). A supreme commander bold enough to initiate battle by killing a Philistine prefect (1 Sam 13:4) was appointed to marshal and command a larger military than had been formerly recruited. The elevation of the supreme military commander to king created a "shared institution" perpetuating group identity. As the first king of Israel, Saul centralized administrative functions, recruited a standing army, and promoted belief in Yahweh the warrior god fighting on Israel's behalf.<sup>66</sup> Decades later, the Jerusalem temple would begin to function as a second shared institution.

<sup>64</sup> Stager, "Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan," 332–48.

<sup>65</sup> Many studies stress the Philistine military threat as the impetus for Saul's rise, but without mention of specific battle requirements, e.g., John Bright, *A History of Israel* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 180–85; and Siegfried Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 131–32.

<sup>66</sup> Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1996), 266–86.

Israel's ongoing incorporation of primordial and circumstantial features into the "collective memory" constitutes an additional literary facet of the Tell-Tale approach. Jerome Bruner and Stephen Cornell identified the crafting of the group history or narrative as a factor that fosters ethnic identity. Cornell's "narrativization" entails three ongoing processes (in no set order): (1) selection—choosing episodic components of the narrative; (2) plotting—linking events to each other and linking the group to those events; and (3) interpretation—assigning significance to events and plot in defining the group. Ongoing incorporation of recent events and their meaning into the narrative updates the collective memory to sustain and validate the group through changing circumstances. The resulting narrative furthers group identity insofar as the selection, plotting, and interpretation take ethnic boundaries into account and use ethnicity as the "key organizing principle." Validity and historicity of events are inconsequential to the narrative. The importance of the narrative lies in its power to explain events, and the group's relations to those events and other peoples; in other words, to provide meaning in life for the group.<sup>67</sup>

Cornell elaborated on Bruner's contention that individuals construct ordered narratives to find meaning in times of difficult or unexpected events.<sup>68</sup> As formulated by Cornell, narrative functions as a mechanism to promote and sustain ethnic bonds through periods of "rupture." In ethnic terms, changes in individual or group situations that call into question a group's identity—their primordial and/or circumstantial traits—are periods of "rupture."<sup>69</sup> For Israel, the stages of incorporation and consolidation preceding the viable political state were just such a critical time during which Israel likely updated and revised its narrative history.

The convergence of textual and twelfth-to-late-eleventh/early-tenth-century B.C.E. archaeological evidence makes it possible to identify significant Israelite ethnic traits vis-à-vis the Philistines. Circumcision, sporting a short beard rather than a clean-shaven face, and abstaining from eating pork, none of which may have been exclusive to Israel, differentiated Israelites from Philistines and so likely functioned as circumstantial ethnic markers.<sup>70</sup> Each of these traits was given significance and, by a later time, codified into law. Arguments regarding the dating of the pork prohibition illustrate a possible scenario regarding the codification of these features into law. Hesse and Wapnish's results establish Iron I or the Hellenistic period as the original context for pork abstinence as a distinguishing Israelite feature; only in those two periods was

<sup>67</sup> Cornell, "That's the Story of Our Life," 43–44.

<sup>68</sup> J. Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 39–40.

<sup>69</sup> Cornell, "That's the Story of Our Life," 45.

<sup>70</sup> Lawrence Stager identified the pork taboo and circumcision as Iron I "cultural markers" distinguishing Israelites from Philistines ("Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan," 344).

pork consumed by a neighboring population providing a meaningful context for pork abstinence or absence from the diet (whether initially for functional or religious reasons).<sup>71</sup> While Leviticus and Deuteronomy date from the exilic period or later, the distinction between the Iron I highlands, where pig was rare, and the pork-purveying Philistines along the coast provided a meaningful context for pork abstinence as an Israelite trait in the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C.E.

Hesse and Wapnish's reservations regarding the use of their data for ethnic studies raises a critical point. For the Meaningful Boundaries and Tell-Tale approaches, an evolving complex of traits signifies identity and distinguishes the group from others. Not every group member must adopt all traits in order for them to function as ethnic indicators. This contrasts with the Culture Area approach, in which individual identity is tied to static presence or absence criteria. Hesse and Wapnish argue that identifying pork abstinence as an ethnic marker ignores the complexities of the archaeological record. Pig consumption or avoidance was not an exclusive ethnic trait. Not all Philistines consumed pork; pig, while prevalent at Ashkelon, Tel Mique-Ekron, and Timna/Batash, was absent from Tell Qasile (though the absence may be due in part to excavation of primarily cultic areas). Conversely, while Israelites avoided pork, so did almost all other societies in southwest Asia during the Iron Age.<sup>72</sup> To quibble over specific sites obscures the big picture. Pork consumption was widespread in twelfth- and early-eleventh-century B.C.E. Philistia and rare in Israel. Not eating pork distinguished Israel from its Philistine enemy during contentious times, while other peoples' dietary preferences were irrelevant.

Archaeology makes it possible to date Israelite military conflict with the Philistines plus pork abstinence and wearing a short beard as contextually meaningful practices to the twelfth to eleventh/early tenth centuries B.C.E. Though the received version of the "collective memory" dates from centuries later, the events, or episodic components of the narrative, and select personal practices, or "ways of life," date from the early Iron Age. Hence, it may be suggested that the process of "narrativization," of forming the "collective memory of former unity" began in the twelfth or eleventh century B.C.E. "Narrativiza-

<sup>71</sup> Hesse and Wapnish argued for an exilic or postexilic date for the pork taboo based on the relatively brief span of Philistine pork consumption, the presumed loose federation of early Israel unlikely to adhere to a dietary restriction (no adherence necessary as pork was not available), and passages such as Isa 65:3-4 and 66:1 and 2 Macc 6:18-20 and 7:1 ("Can Pig Remains Be Used," 261-63). Jacob Milgrom assigned Levitical legislation, including the pork prohibition (Lev 11:7-8), to preexilic Priestly legislation (P1) predating the eighth-century B.C.E. H stratum and the comparable Deuteronomic legislation (*Leviticus 1-16, 17-22, 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3, 3A, 3B; New York: Doubleday, 1991, 2000, 2001), 3-13, 63, 691-97, 1345).

<sup>72</sup> Hesse and Wapnish, "Pig Use and Abuse," 128-29.

tion" as a facet of early Israelite ethnicity dovetails nicely with Karel van der Toorn's notion of "Torah as the icon of Israel." Perhaps the Deuteronomists were able to elevate the narrative in place of idols or images in part because of its acknowledged role in ethnic Israel's formation and perseverance. The narrative, which promulgated divine acts and enfranchised disparate groups into the unity of Israel, was transubstantiated into the "embodiment of God's Word."<sup>73</sup>

If, as postulated by this model, Israel incorporated various groups each with its own primordial and circumstantial features, then in the early stages of assimilation a variety of traits might be attested among the constituent groups. So, for instance, some might bury their dead in nearby cave or chamber tombs, while others returned to distant ancestral burial grounds.<sup>74</sup> This study focuses on the *ethnos* that defined itself in opposition to the Philistines and on select circumstantial traits of that population that were incorporated into and ultimately were retained in the Israelite "collective memory."

### III. Variant Literary Processes in the Crafting of Israel's History Grounded in Archaeological Evidence

Two different literary trajectories or narrative processes may underlie accounts of Israelite interaction with the Philistines and with the Canaanites. In the case of the Philistines, Iron I archaeological remains substantiate individual "way of life" injunctions and the somewhat exaggerated stories of Israelite–Philistine interaction in Judges and 1 Samuel. Biblical accounts of Philistine superiority in metallurgy, simplified to the point of declaring that there was "no smith in Israel," find confirmation in the physical remains. There was no need later to fabricate stories detailing this phase of ethnic Israel's evolution.

Regarding Israelite–Philistine relations, the texts mirror the archaeological remains with only slight distortion. By contrast, the presentation of Israelite–Canaanite interaction in the Bible shows little or no continuity of memory about the twelfth and eleventh centuries B.C.E. The distinctive material culture and practices of the neighboring Canaanites and the demographic changes and material culture disruptions preserved in the dirt are not reflected in the biblical texts. Two possible explanations may account for this discrepancy. Mark Smith suggests that the early history between Israelites and (other?)

<sup>73</sup> Karel van der Toorn, "The Iconic Book: Analogies between the Babylonian Cult of Images and the Veneration of the Torah," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. Karel van der Toorn; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 229–48, esp. 239–43.

<sup>74</sup> In response to Raz Kletter, "People without Burials? The Lack of Iron I Burials in the Central Highlands of Palestine," *IEJ* 52, no.1 (2002): 28–48.



indigenous peoples was displaced and forgotten. In this case, later authors, relying on the vaguest of memories, construed an early history based more on an Iron II than an Iron I reality. Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic Historian created a serviceable construction of "Canaanites" with minimal ties to the archaeologically attested past.<sup>75</sup> An alternative understanding of "Canaanite" proposed by Karel van der Toorn also resolves the apparent discrepancy. From as early as the reign of Saul, with the designation of Yahweh as the national god, Yahweh-El worshipers ("Israelites") employed "Canaanite" as a "derogatory" appellation for the Baal devotees among them. As "Israelites" and "Canaanites" shared a common background and material culture, they would have been indistinguishable archaeologically except in facets of religion.<sup>76</sup> While van der Toorn dismisses ethnic distinctions between the two groups, religion frequently functions as a primordial ethnic feature. Differences between the two may have been contentious, particularly if, as van der Toorn suggests, Yahwists adopted the national cult while Baal worshipers rejected monarchic religion and persisted with family-based Baal worship. According to this scenario, the Bible faithfully records religious beliefs as the sole feature distinguishing Israelites from Canaanites, but still appears ignorant of the late Iron I disruptions.

Faint traces of the Iron I Israelite *ethnos* are discernible in material remains interpreted in conjunction with biblical testimony. Early Israelites likely perceived their distinctiveness not in the pillared house and collar-rim store jar (or if they did, they failed to record it or identify the features' subsequent import) but in the short beard, refraining from eating pork, circumcision, and military inferiority. Through momentous centuries, crafting the "collective memory" to incorporate such select features of new groups and changing circumstances both shaped and consolidated the *ethnos*. In conjunction with texts, archaeology furthers our knowledge of Philistines, Canaanites, and Israelites, for it elucidates ascribed significant features of early Israel and preserves both what was remembered and what was forgotten in Israel's "collective memory."

<sup>75</sup> M. Smith, personal communication.

<sup>76</sup> Van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel*, 328.

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