

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE AND THE T.E.A.T.

The Tell el – Amarna tablets provide us with the description of wars and the invasion by certain tribes of the land of Canaan; Furthermore we learn that the region of Sidon was conquered at that period by Aziru¹. In some tablets the name appears as Aziru son of Abd Ashera (Abdi Ashirta)². The name "Aziru" and "Abd Ashera" (Abdi Ashirta) are generally identified as proper names, therefore Aziru is supposed to be the son of a certain man called Abd Ashera (Abdi Ashirta). They are also identified as Amorites³. Mercer⁴ believes Aziru to be an Amorite prince. son of a man called Abdashera who was hated by his contemporaries and was an enemy of the king of Egypt. Conder believes Aziru to be a proper name of an Amorite person who betrayed the king of Egypt, and the letters of this Aziru to the king of Egypt he assembles in a special chapter entitled "The Amorite Treachery"⁵. According to Barton⁶ "The kings of the Amorites during this period were Ebed Ashera and Aziru". Elsewhere in his book (p. 442), Barton conjectures that "if the Asirta, Abd Asratu, etc. 'ebed' were dropped out of the phrase 'sons of Ebed Ashera' there

1 tablet 118, lines 23, 30.

2 Conder transcribes the name as Abd Ashera, whereas Mercer and Knudtzon render it Abdi Asirta, Alod Asrata, etc.

3 Conder, TEAT

Albright, The Amarna Letters From Palestine, CAH, ch. 20, vol. II, pp. 5, 6
Jack, The Date of The Exodus In The Light of External Evidence, p. 177.
Lods, Israel, P. 152.

D'horme, Les Pays Biblique Au Temps d'el – Amarna, RB. 1909, pp. 59; 70.

– Les Nouvelles Tablettes d'el–Amarna, RB 1924, p. 7.

– La Question Des Habiri, RHR. 1938, p. 170.

– Les Habiru et Les Hebreux, JPOS. 1924, p. 164.

Contenau, La Civilisation Phénicienne, p. 49.

Campbell, The Amarna Letters and Amarna Period, BA. 1960, p. 8.

Kapelrud, Interpreters Dictionary Of The Bible – Phoenicia.

Berard, Les Phéniciens et L'Odysée, p. 208.

Slouschz, Sefer hayam, p. 68 (Heb.); Motzaei haivrim, p. 42. (Heb.).

Aharoni, Eretz Israel bitkufat hamikra, p. 150. (Heb.).

Bondi, The Origins In The East, p. 34 – article in "The Phoenicians", Bompiani 1988.

Swiggers p. Byblos dans Les Lettres d'el Amarna; Stu. Ph. 1985. pp. 54–55

4 Mercer, TEAT

5 Conder, TEAT

6 Barton, Archeology And The Bible, p. 153

would remain 'sons of Ashera' or 'sons of Asher'", referring to the conquest of the tribe of Asher.

The biblical narrative of Israel's settlement in Canaan refers initially to the conquest of the east side of the Jordan River under the leadership of Moses. The first conquests are of the lands of Sihon the Amorite king and of Og king of Bashan. This conquest is recorded in the Bible as follows: "And we took the land at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites that were beyond the valley of the Arnon unto mount Hermon" (Deut. 3: 8). Their land is settled by the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Menashe (Nu. 32). Then the Israelites cross to the west side of the Jordan. Before crossing the Jordan we find the Israelites camping "...in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho...from Beth-Jeshimot even unto Abel-shittim" (Nu. 33: 48-49). "And Israel abode in Shittim..." (Nu. 25: 1). Here Moses died and was buried "in the valley in the land of Moab" (Deut. 34: 6). From Shittim Joshua sent the spies to Jericho (Jos. 2: 1), and from Shittim the Israelites crossed the Jordan to conquer the west side of Canaan (Jos. 3: 1).

Some verses allow us to infer that the encampment of the Israelites in Shittim lasted from two to three months. Aharon, the high priest, died on Mount Hor "in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month" (Nu. 33: 38). and in "the fortieth year in the eleventh month on the first day of the month that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, in Moab" (Deut. 1: 3-6). In the plains of Moab the children of Israel mourned Moses for thirty days (Deut. 34: 8). On the tenth day of the first month the people of Israel came up out of Jordan and encamped in Gilgal (Jos. 4: 19). Therefore at least two and a half months must have elapsed from the time Moses spoke unto Israel in Moab (Shittim) until they crossed the Jordan. And about eight and a half months from the time of Aharon's death. During their journey from Mount Hor to Shittim the Israelites encamped eight times (Nu. 33: 39-49). Thus we shall not be at fault if we add about one month to the said period of two months. This means the children of Israel stayed in Shittim for only two or three months. After crossing the Jordan, the Israelites "encamped in Gilgal in the east border of Jericho". (Jos. 4: 19). From Gilgal they went out to attack Jericho, Ai, and Beth-El. It was to Joshua in Gilgal that the Gibeonites came (Jos. 9: 6), and from Gilgal Joshua went up to fight Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem. Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth and Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon (Jos. 10: 9). The text informs us that at the end of the battle "Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal" (Jos. 10: 15).

This battle is followed by the conquest, one after the other of the cities Makkeda, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron and Debir (Jos. 10: 28-40). These cities were destroyed and the Bible points out "so Joshua smote all the country

of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh–barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon. And all these kings and their land did Joshua TAKE AT ONE TIME...And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him unto the camp to Gilgal" (Jos. 10: 40–43) (emphasis–N. G.). Thus, after the battles Joshua and the sons of Israel return to Gilgal. The Israelites do not settle in the conquered places, but return to Gilgal which most probably served as assembling center as well as a religious and political one. Some verses allow us to estimate approximately. the number of years that Gilgal served as a center for the Israelites.

In Jos. 4: 19 we read: "And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho". Thus they reached Gilgal on the forty first year after leaving Egypt, in the first month of the year. In Jos. 14: 6 – 10 we read: "Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephuneh the Kenezite said unto him...forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh–barnea to espy out the land: ...And now, behold, the Lord had kept me alive as said, these forty and five years...". As we know, the spies were sent from the desert of Paran (Nu. 13) where the Israelites had arrived on the second year after the Exodus (Nu. 10: 11–12). Hence, about six years must have elapsed from the crossing of the Jordan until Caleb addresses Joshua in Gilgal (45–40 + 1 and two months). Evidently this is about the number of years that Gilgal served as center till this was transferred to Shiloh. For we read thereafter: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled at Shiloh" (Jos. 18: 1). From now on all the activities of Joshua and the Israelites are linked with Shiloh. In Shiloh Joshua apportions the country by lot to seven tribes (Jos. 18; 19: 51; 21: 2;), it is from Shiloh that the children of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Menasseh departed to return to the Gilead (Jos. 22: 9), and it is to Shiloh that the "whole congregation of the children of Israel" gathers to go up to war against the tribes of Gad, Reuben and the half of Menasseh (Jos. 22: 12). From the biblical text we learn that after Shiloh, and still within Joshua's lifetime, Shechem became a place of holiness to God, and a national center for the Israelites: "And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem..." (Jos. 24: 1). "So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord" (Jos. 24: 25–27).

To sum up: From the biblical account it is clear that the Israelites while penetrating deeper into the country and advancing in their conquest of the land, established different centers: Shitim, Gilgal, Shiloh and Shechem. These centers form reference points for the conquest; moreover the entire process

will be more comprehensible if reviewed in the order of these points.

At Shitim, the Israelites, after the death of Moses and Aharon, organised for a military assault upon the west side of the Jordan. Who are their leaders? According to the biblical narrative "Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the Children of Israel" (Nu. 32: 28). Elsewhere there is more detail: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Elazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun. And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide⁷ the land by inheritance. and the names of the men are these: ...". We learn therefore that we deal here not with just a single leader, as would appear at first sight, but with a leadership comprised of twelve men holding the function of chiefs (princes) and leaders of their tribes, who are, at the same time, subject to a higher dual authority consisting of Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun, neither of whom exercises power alone; the first being a religious leader, and the second a military leader⁸. With this leadership the Israelites cross the Jordan and centre upon Gilgal, from whence they go out to conquer the towns of Jericho and Ai (Jos. 6: 8). After the conquest of these towns, follows a description of a campaign against the confederation of Adoni-Zedec, king of Jerusalem, Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon. Joshua defeats them and finally seizes them as they hide in a cave (Jos. 10: 16–28). Then follows the conquest of Makkedah "And that day Joshua took Makkedah...he utterly destroyed them, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain: and he did to the king of Makkedah AS HE DID UNTO THE KING OF JERICHO" (Jos. 10: 28) (my emphasis – N. G.). From Makkedah he goes on to Libnah and conquers it: "...and he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it; but did unto the king thereof AS HE DID UNTO THE KING OF JERICHO" (Jos. 10: 30, emphasis – N. G.). From Libnah he goes to Lachish, but here the biblical account varies: "And the Lord delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, which took it on the second day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein, according to all that he had done to Libnah" (Jos. 10: 32). Here the addition of "as he did unto the king of Jericho" is lacking. The account refers only to "all the souls" "all that he had done to Libnah". This same variation is also found in the account of the conquest of Eglon, which follows that of Lachish; "and they took it on that day, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he

7 Hebrew – yinhalu, meaning to inherit, to conquer.

8 A dual leadership as of two judges can be found at a later period in Carthage

had done to Lachish" (Jos. 10: 35). From Eglon Joshua goes up unto Hebron: "And they took it and smote it with the edge of the sword, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon; but destroyed it utterly, and all the souls that were therein" (Jos. 10: 36–38). From Hebron he returns to Debir: "And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof, and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king" (Jos. 10: 39). Why this variation? Is it of any significance? . On the face of it the addition "...And he did to the king...as he did unto the king of Jericho" seems to imply the kings' death, but why does the text reserve this expression only for certain kings while not using it with others, although their death is mentioned? Does any difference exist between what was done to the king of Jericho and what was done to the other kings?

To clear up this problem, let us see what happened to the king of Jericho. The biblical narrative of the conquest of Jericho (Jos. 6) has no detailed description of what happened to the king, but this can be clarified from verses elsewhere. We are told that Joshua was ordered: "And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king" (Jos. 8: 2). This order was carried out duly as we learn from the verse: "...When Adoni-Zedec king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it, as he had done to Jericho and her king so he had done to Ai and her king" (Jos. 10: 1). Therefore it is evident that the king of Ai suffered the same fate as the king of Jericho; concerning what was done to the king of Ai, the description is detailed: "So Joshua burnt Ai...And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until the eventide: and at the going down of the sun Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree, and cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raised thereon a great heap of stones, unto this day" (Jos. 8: 28–29). Thus we see that the king of Ai, after he was hanged, was buried under a heap of stones "AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE GATE OF THE CITY", and likewise this must have been the fate of the king of Jericho. On the other hand, the kings of Lachish, Hebron, Eglon, etc. were also hanged, but buried either in a cave in Makkedah (Jos. 10: 16–28) or elsewhere. The only difference subsequent to their death, compared to that of the kings of Jericho and Ai, was the latter's burial at the entrance of the gate of the city. The phrase "and he did to the king...as he did unto the king of Jericho" was probably inserted to indicate the burial of the king at the gate of his city. Accordingly this was done to the kings of Jericho, Ai, Makkedah and Libnah, though not to the kings of Lachish, Eglon and Hebron. However, the fate of the towns and their inhabitants was the same. Most probably the Israelite conquerors used to bury the kings of the conquered cities at the gates of their destroyed and burnt cities. Perhaps this had symbolic significance. It is

notworthy that in the Amarna letters, in a letter by Abdi-Hiba (Tablet 288)⁹, the writer mentions that "Turbazu has been killed in the gate of Zilu" (lines 41–42), and that "Iaptih-Ada is slain in the city gate of Zilu" (lines 45 – 46). As will be discussed later, there is the possibility that the Bible and the Amarna letters depict the same sequence of events.

After the conquest of the cities mentioned above, we read: "So Joshua smote all the land, the hill – country, and the South, and the lowland, and the slopes, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but he utterly destroyed all that breathed. as Jehovah, the god of Israel, commanded. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh–barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen even unto Gibeon.

And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at onetime, because Jehovah, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. And Joshua RETURNED and all Israel with him, UNTO THE CAMP TO GILGAL" (Jos. 10: 40–43).

It would appear from the foregoing that Joshua conquered the entire country in one action. But further consideration makes us realise that the blow administered by Joshua to "all the land, the hill country, and the south, and the lowland..." etc. refers only to the southern part of the country, and not to the whole of Canaan. This had taken place while the centre was still in GILGAL, for it was to Gilgal that Joshua and all the Israelites with him returned after the battle. The account is, therefore, of a single, continuous battle in which Joshua conquered a part of the southern region. Immediately after, the biblical account speaks of another battle against an alliance of kings headed by Jabin king of Hazor: "And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard thereof, that he sent to Jobab king of Madon, and to the king of Shimron, and to the king of Achsaph, and to the kings that were on the north, in the hill–country, and in the Arabah south of Chinneroth, and in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the west, to the Canaanite on the east and on the west, and the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite In the hill–country, and the Hivite under Hermon in the land of Mizpah." (Jos. 11: 1– 5). In this battle Joshua conquers the city of Hazor (Jos. 11: 10)."And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them did Joshua take." (Jos. 11: 12). The narrative continues: "So Joshua took all that land, the hill – country, and all the South, and all the land of Goshen, and the lowland, and the Arabah, and the hill – country of Israel, and the lowland of the same; from mount Halak¹⁰, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal–gad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon" (Jos. 11: 16–17)."So Joshua took, THE WHOLE LAND, according to all that Jehovah

9 The numbers of the tablets are according to Mercer, TEAT. and Knudtzon, TEAT. When different numbers are employed, this is noted.

10 in Hebrew ḥalak (חֶלֶק) means smooth, slippery, Har = mountain, since the biblical text has הַהָר הַחֶלֶק ha–har he–ḥalak, i. e. a noun preceded by a definite article, (ha–he= ה) it must be translated: the "slippery" mountain, and not mount Halak.

spake unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land had rest from war."¹¹ (Jos. 11: 23 –emphasis–N. G.). From this passage summing up Joshua's activities, and from the account of the conquest so far, it might be assumed that the Israelites had conquered the entire western part of Canaan in a single whirlwind campaign, after which "the land had rest from war". The expression "all the land" does not imply a reference to the whole country of Canaan, but only to the land (cities) which were at war with the Israelites. On the other hand, in the Bible the word war (Hebrew – milhama(מלחמה) is often taken to signify battle: "When Joab saw that the battle (Heb. – milhama) was against him..." (2Sam. 10: 9); "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle..." (Heb. – milhama) (2 Sam. 11: 15); "David asked of him how Joab did, and how the people fared, and how the war (Heb. – מלחמה milhama) prospered." (2Sam. 11: 7); "...and they set the battle (Heb. – מלחמה milhama) in array against them in the vale of Siddim" (Gen. 14: 8), and elsewhere (1Sam. 17: 2 ; Ju. 20: 20, 22, 34, 39). Therefore, the quoted passage from Joshua 11: 23 should be seen as summing up a battle (or battles) and not an entire war: Accordingly "and the land had rest from war" (Heb. – mil ama) really means – and the land was void of battles. And indeed the first sentence of chapter 12, continues to summarize the battles: "Now these are the kings of the land, whom the children of Israel smote, and possessed their land beyond the Jordan toward the sunrising, from the valley of the Arnon unto mount Hermon, and all the Arabah eastward" (Jos. 12: 1). From verse 7 onward there follows an account of the conquest on the west side of the Jordan: "And these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the children of Israel smote beyond the Jordan westward, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even unto mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir and Joshua gave it unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions; in the hill –country, and in the lowland, and in Arabah, and in the slopes, and in the wilderness, and in the South; the Hittite, Amorite, and the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: ". This account is followed by a detailed list of the kings who were killed and their cities taken (Jos. 12: 9ff); it includes only thirty one kings along with their cities, i. e. not the whole land of Canaan. Immediately after this accounting we read in chapter 13: "Now Joshua was old and well stricken in years; and Jehovah said unto him, Thou art old and well stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed" (Jos. 13: 1); " Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance unto the nine tribes, and the half – tribe of Manasseh, With him the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses gave them beyond the Jordan eastward." (Jos. 13: 7–8).

Thus, not all the country was conquered by Joshua, but only thirty –

11 The Hebrew text reads milhama (מלחמה).

one cities, after which the land rested from battle. This conquest took place under Joshua's leadership when the center was in Gilgal. When Joshua was old and stricken in years, with the conquest already in an advanced phase, only the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half tribe of Menasseh had received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan, whereas nine tribes and half of Menasseh had not yet received their inheritance, that is all the west part was not yet divided, although thirty – one cities had already been conquered. By the time the center was transferred to Shiloh, there still remained seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there: and the land was subdued before them. And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet divided their Inheritance" (Jos. 18: 1–2). From the above verses we learn that the conquests of Joshua so far described refer to a period when the center was in the Gilgal, and that this same center still existed when Joshua was "old and well stricken in years". Moreover, only two tribes and a half received their inheritance at Gilgal at the end of this period, while the remaining seven tribes got their inheritance at Shiloh.

Returning to chapter 14 we read: "And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the head of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them. By lot was their inheritance...Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him...Now therefore give me this mountain...for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out¹² ...And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance" (Jos. 14: 1–14). Caleb asks Joshua for Hebron to be given him, but this is before Hebron was even conquered, since his request is "if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out" From these verses it is quite evident that Joshua IN GILGAL agrees that Hebron be given as an inheritance to Caleb, though it still remains for Caleb to conquer it. We must remember that the consent of Joshua was needed for allotting the inheritances to the tribes, as indicated by the first verse of this chapter: "And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited..." etc. In this same sense we should interpret the verse "then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb...said unto him..." to mean that when the children of Judah came to Gilgal to receive their lot, Caleb son of Jephunneh, who was a Kenezite, asked personally for the city of Hebron, which was in the territory allotted

12 The Hebrew text reads "veorashtim" – וְהִירָשְׁתִּים future tense of the verb leorish להִירִישׁ – the meaning of leorish will be discussed later.

to Judah, to be given to him, this is in accord with: "And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron" (Jos. 15: 13).

This episode in Gilgal is followed by the account of the inheritance assigned to the tribes of Judah, Ephraim and half the tribe of Menasseh (Jos. chaps. 15; 16; 17). Immediately after this we read: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together in Shiloh..." (Jos. 18: 1). It is evident, therefore, that according to the biblical narrative the division of the inheritance started in Gilgal at the end of the "Gilgal period" when Joshua was "old and well stricken in years" with two and a half tribes receiving their inheritance in Gilgal. After this, the center was transferred from Gilgal to Shiloh where the division of the inheritance was continued among the seven remaining tribes which had not received their inheritances in Gilgal. The verse: "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh, ...and there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes, which had not yet received their inheritance" points up and draws the reader's attention to the continuity of the partitioning activity which had begun in Gilgal and which ended in Shiloh. The text also emphasizes that at Shiloh "they made an end of dividing the country" (Jos. 19: 51).

From chapter 18, Joshua, we learn how the partition was carried out. Joshua addresses the sons of Israel: "How long will you be remiss in going to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers given you? Assign from among you three men for each tribe: and I will send them, and they shall rise, and go through the land, and mark it out according to their inheritance; and they shall come back to me. And they shall divide it into seven parts: ...You shall therefore mark out the land in seven parts, and bring the description to me here, that I may cast lots for you here before the Lord our God... And the men went and passed through the land, and wrote it down by cities into seven parts in a book, and came back to Yeoshua to the camp at Shilo. And Yeoshua cast lots for them in Shilo before the Lord: and there Yeoshua divided the land to the children of Yisra'el according to their divisions" (Jos. 18: 3–11)¹³. Thus we are informed that the country was partitioned into seven sections and each tribe was apportioned its part by lot. It must be remembered that this took place when the areas assigned had not yet been conquered. This is confirmed by the fact that Hebron was conquered by Caleb after the city had been allotted to him, and by Joshua's statement: "Behold I have allotted unto you the nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun. And the Lord your God, he shall thrust them out from before you, and drive them from out of your sight" (Jos. 23: 4–5).

13 Translation – Koren Bible, Jerusalem 1969.

Concerning the conquest of the cities which had fallen to the lot of each tribe, we read in Judges 1: 1–3: "And it came to pass after the death of Joshua, that the children of Israel asked of the Lord saying, Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanite to fight against them, and Jehovah said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hands. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee unto thy lot...". We learn therefore that each tribe had to fight individually to conquer the cities that had fallen to its lot. However, there also existed the possibility of mutual assistance, as for instance, the tribe of Judah calling on the Simeonites for help. Accordingly the book of Judges (Chapter 1) records the conquests of each tribe separately: "And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Beth-el:", "And the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem" and so on. Whenever the text refers to the destruction (Heb. *lehorish*)¹⁴ of the Canaanite cities it lists the battles of each individual tribe. "Asher drove not out the inhabitants of Acco"..., "And Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants..." etc.

The two (differing) biblical accounts, 1) The individual tribal campaigns; contrasting with 2) the combined, all-out one time campaign under the leadership of Joshua, led many scholars to consider them as two different and contradictory accounts of the same campaign¹⁵. They believe that the account of a combined, all-out campaign is a later idealisation by the editor of the book of Joshua, while the reality was that of a conquest carried out by means of slow and steady infiltration. According to Burne¹⁶, the differing accounts represent a combination of several traditions to form a single unified account. Alt and Noth totally reject the account of the conquest, and see it as an aetiological story, i. e. a story created at a later period to explain an existing custom or name (of place etc.). Noth discredits the conquest narrative as given in the book of Joshua and regards it as having no historical value whatever; the same tendency is evident among many scholars today. There are various reasons for these opinions: On the one hand, a number of verses in the book of Joshua report that Joshua "took the whole land", "and the Land had rest from war", these verses

14 Translated: drive out.

15 Wright, *Biblical Archaeology Today*, BA. 1947, p. 13; *The Literary and Historical Problem of Joshua 10 And Judges 1*, JNES, 1946, pp. 105 – 114.

Biblical Archaeology, pp. 69–70.

Lods, *Israel*, pp. 12; 380.

Burney, *Israel Settlement In Canaan*, 1921, pp. 15–17.

Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua*, pp. 100–103.

Bright, *A History of Israel*, pp. 117–118.

Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp. 23; 45.

Liver, *Iyunim besefer Yehoshua*, pp. 46–47 (Hebrew).

Aharoni, *Iyunim besefer Yehoshua*, p. 8 (Hebrew).

16 Burney, *ibid.* pp. 16–27.

are generally understood to mean that the whole land of Canaan was conquered by Joshua in a single campaign¹⁷; yet we have already noted that this is clearly a misinterpretation. On the other hand, the partition of the land by lot has been understood to have taken place after the conquest of the allotted cities¹⁸. Since the text states that the Israelites "lo horishu – "לא הורישו" (translated in A. V.: "did not drive out") the inhabitants from many cities, this was understood to imply that they failed to conquer these cities. Therefore it was assumed that the list of the allotted cities is a purely arbitrary list introduced by later editors.

It was deduced from certain verses that some of the cities were conquered in separate battles by different leaders. In Joshua 10: 36–39 we read "And Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him unto Hebron and they fought against it; and they took it... And Joshua returned and all Israel with him, to Debir, and fought against it, and he took it..." etc., while elsewhere (Jos. 15: 13–17; Ju. 1: 10–13) it is related that Hebron was conquered by Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Debir by Athniel the Kenezite. Verses as the above, together with differing descriptions of campaigns, have led scholars to regard the conquest narrative of the book of Joshua as containing a mass of discrepancies and contradictions. Further substantiation of this is provided by the apparent similarity of phrasing of various segments of the text taken as evidence that the books of Joshua and Judges were composed at the end of the 7th century and at the beginning of the Second Temple period. Another similar factor is the date of the conquest which is linked to the date of the Exodus (generally taken as being c. 1200 B. C. the Raamses – Merneptah period). This topic has not yet been treated here but will appear in a chapter on the Exodus.

The account of the conquest as single combined campaign, under the leadership of Joshua, relates (evidently) to a campaign when GILGAL was yet the center of the Israelites, that is to the first period of the conquest. By contrast the conquest by each single (individual) tribe took place subsequent to the death of Joshua after the center had been transferred to SHILOH. What we have here are different accounts of two separate campaigns. The reasons for believing that we have different accounts of the same conquest were outlined above; we must assume that they result from a misunderstanding the biblical text. Turning to Joshua 21: 10–14 we read: "...which the children of Aaron, being of the families of the Kohathites who were of the children of Levy, had: for theirs was the first lot. And they gave them the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron in the hill country of Judah, with the suburbs thereof round about it. But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for his possession. Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs to be a city of refuge

17 For example see: Bright, *ibid.*, p. 117; Liver, *ibid.*, pp. 46–49.

18 For example see: Bright, *ibid.*, p. 117.

for the slayer...". The Hebrew text reads: **ויהי לבני אהרן ממשפחות הקהתי מבני לוי...לבני אהרן הכהן נתנו את - עיר מקלט הרצח את־חברון ואת מגרשיה**

It will be seen that the Hebrew verse includes the letter waw (ו) that is a conjunctive (=and), which literally translated reads: "AND TO the sons of Aaron the priest they gave the city of refuge Hebron and its suburbs". This means that additionally to the children of Aaron of the families of the Kohathites—the Levites. – the children of Aaron the priests also received their lot. Verse 19 enumerates all the cities given to "children of Aaron THE PRIESTS". Quite evidently, these cities were given to the children of Aaron THE PRIESTS, (note: plural Heb. **הכהנים** – Hakohanim – priests), who did not include the Levites. One should remember that the families of the Levites were merely attached to the families of Aaron the priest. Numbers 3: 9–12, informs us of the prevailing sacerdotal hierarchy

1. Aaron and his sons were "consecrated to minister in the priest's office"
2. The Levites performed the service of the tabernacle and accordingly "keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel to do the service of the tabernacle" (Nu. 5: 5–9).

It should be understood, therefore, that Hebron was partitioned into three sections:

1. to certain families of the Kohathites sons of Aaron, who were nevertheless Levites, attached to the family of Aaron
2. to Caleb the son of Jephuneh.
3. to the PRIESTS (not Levites), the actual sons of Aaron.

From the statement that "...the fields of the city, and the villages thereof gave they to Caleb..." etc., it is to be understood that the name Hebron does not apply to just one city, but to a whole region which was divided into three parts. The fact is that Caleb asks Joshua: "...now therefore give me this mountain...for thou heardest in the day how the Anakim were¹⁹ there and that the cities were great and fenced...And Joshua blessed him and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephuneh Hebron for inheritance" (Jos. 14: 12–14). Hence "this mountain" in which there are great and fenced cities is called Hebron. The name Hebron thus indicates not just one city but an entire region that includes a number of cities. In fact, we are told that the Israelites took Hebron "and all the cities thereof" (Jos. 10: 37) and that David and his men "dwelt in the CITIES of Hebron:" (2Sam 2: 3; emphasis N. G.).

It is obvious that the biblical text refers to the conquest of different areas in a region called Hebron, and that there is no contradiction whatsoever in the biblical narrative. In the same manner we have to understand the conquest of Debir "and all the cities thereof" (Jos. 10: 39) and the conquest

¹⁹ The original Hebrew text reads "are".

of Jerusalem, Josephus remarks that: "...the lower town they mastered in time and slew all the inhabitants but the upper town proved too difficult to carry through..." (Ant. V-124), whereas regarding Hebron he writes: "...This town they gave to the Levites as a choice boon, along with a tract of two thousand cubits; but of the rest of the land they made, in accordance with the behests of Moses, a present to Caleb" (Ant. V, 126)²⁰.

According to the above data, we understand the conquest of the land of Canaan to have been as follows: When the center was in Gilgal, the Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, managed to conquer part of the country (i. e. thirty-one cities and their suburbs) in an all – conquering single campaign comprised of several battles. After these, the land was quiet for some years. At the end of this period, when Joshua was already aged, the land was partitioned among the tribes by lot. The partition also included cities not yet conquered. It began in Gilgal where two and a half tribes received their lot, after which the center was transferred to Shiloh where the partition was resumed by allotting land to the seven remaining tribes. With the death of Joshua the fighting recommences. The center is now in Shiloh, and now each tribe, under the leadership of its chief (prince) fights alone or with the aid of another tribe to conquer the cities allotted to it.

The book of Joshua (chaps. 15–18) enumerates the cities allocated to each tribe, whereas Judges 1 briefly describes the separate campaigns for their conquest. Thus it emerges that there is no conflict whatever between chapter 1, Judges, and the account of the battles in the book of Joshua since we are concerned here with different battles fought at different periods.

If each tribe was expected to fight by itself to conquer the cities allotted to it, then, the tribe to which the region of Sidon was allotted would have to engage by itself in the conquest of that region. In Joshua 19: 24–32 we read: "And the fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families. And their border was Helkath, and Hali, and Beten, and ACHSHAPH, and Allamelech, and Amad, and Mishal, and it reached to CARMEL westward, and to Shihor – libnath; and it turned toward the sunrising to Beth–dagon, and reached to Zebulun, and to the valley of Iphtah – el northward to Beth – emek, and Neiel; and it went out to Cabul on the left hand, and Ebron, and Rehov, and Hammon, and Kanah, even unto great SIDON; and the border turned Ramah and to the fortified city of TYRE; and the border turned to Hosah; and the goings out thereof were at the sea by the region of Achzib; Ummah also, and Aphek, and Rehob: twenty and two

20 Loeb translation – One may note that S. Yeivin (*Mekhkarim betoldot Israel veartzo*, 1960, pp. 135, 145). believes there is no contradiction between the books of Joshua and Judges but that the same events are narrated from different points of view. in these two books.

cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families..."

From the above it emerges that the region of Sidon was awarded to the tribe of Asher; yet we read in Judges (1: 31–32) that "Asher...drove not out²¹ the inhabitants of Acco, nor the inhabitants of Sidon, nor of Ahlab, nor of Achzib, nor of Helba, nor of Aphik, nor of Rehob; BUT THE ASHERITES dwelt among the Canaanites the inhabitants of the land, for they did not drive them out". This verse has been taken to indicate that the tribe of Asher was not successful in conquering the mentioned Canaanite cities, since they did not drive out their inhabitants, but settled among the Canaanite population. Various Bible translations give it this sense.²² Thus Renan; "Asher did not conquer the cities awarded to him" and cites this particular verse in proof of his assertion²³. In many scholarly books²⁴ this verse still serves as proof text that the tribe of Asher did not conquer the region of Tyre (Zor) and Sidon. Moreover, similar verses concerned with other tribes were likewise seen to indicate that these particular tribes, also failed to conquer the cities allotted to them. Albright²⁵ notes: "Excavations at Gezer, Taanach, Megiddo, and Beth – Shan were not calculated to throw any direct light on this question since all of these towns remained in Canaanite hands during the periods of the Judges, according to explicit Hebrew tradition".

Before attempting to clarify the meaning of the verse in Judges, let us first examine the interpretation of the verb "lehorish" – להוריש. This verb is usually taken to derive from "lareshet" – (לרשת Hebrew for "inherit") Hence Judges 1: 31–32, whose Hebrew text includes the word – (להורישlehorish),

21 The Hebrew reads "lo horish" – "לא הוריש".

22 The Vulgate translates: "Asher quoque non delevit..." ('destroy, annihilate').

23 Renan, *Histoire Du Peuple D'Israel*, Tome I, p. 253.

24 Barrois, *Manuel D'Archeologie Biblique*. 1953, II, p. 94.

Meek, *ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

Autran, *ibid.*, p. 63.

Wright, *Epic Of Conquest*, BA. 1940 (3), p. 27.

– The Literary And Historical Problem Of Joshua 10 And Judges 1, JNES. 1946, p. 109

Phytian – Adams, *Mirage In The Wilderness*, PEQ. 1935, p. 75.

Wiener, *The Conquest Narratives*, JPOS. 1929, p. 1.

Kaufman, *The Biblical Account Of The Conquest Of Palestine*, pp. 58; 91.

Petrie, *Palestine And Israel*, pp. 39 – 40;

Lods *Israel*, p. 381.

Garstang, *Joshua – Judges*, p. 241;

Sayce, *The Early History Of The Hebrews*, p. 246 – 248.

Slouschz, *Hébreu – Phéniciens et Judéo – Berbères*, p. 76.

Burney, *ibid.*, pp. 18; 22. ;

Braver, *Haaretz*, p. 320. (Hebrew)

Aharoni, *Eretz Israel In Biblical Period*, P. 18: *Eretz Israel In the Late Canaanite Period: The Settlement of Israelite Tribes In Upper Galilee*, p. 69 (Hebrew)

25 Albright, *Archaeology and The Date of The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine*, BASOR, 1935, (58), p. 10.

was understood to indicate that Asher did not – "lehorish" – the inhabitants of Acco...Sidon etc., that is, he did not inherit their land; and it was therefore translated "Asher did not drive out..."

In Judges 1: 33 we read that "Naphtali drove not out (the Hebrew reads "lo horish" – לא הוריש) the inhabitants of Beth–Shemesh, nor the inhabitants of Beth–anath; but he dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth–Shemesh and Beth–anath became subjects to task work". It is evident therefore, that the tribe of Naphtali subjugated the Canaanite inhabitants as well as the inhabitants of Beth–Shemesh and Beth–anath, for the latter "became subject to task work"; this means that Naphtali conquered their cities. However the verse reads that he "drove not out" (Hebrew: lo horish – לא הוריש) their inhabitants. Joshua 13: 8–13 tells of the conquest of the entire eastern part beyond the Jordan and we are told, inter alia, that the Reubenites and the Gadites conquered the cities of the Geshurites and of the Maacathites, but though the text clearly speaks about the conquest of their land, we read there: "nevertheless the children of Israel drove not out (Hebrew: lo horish – לא הוריש) the Geshurites, nor the Maacathites; but Geshur and Maacath dwell in the midst of Israel unto this day".

In Judges 1: 31 we read that Asher drove not out (Hebrew: lo horish לא הוריש) the inhabitants of the city of Rehob, but from Joshua 21: 31; and 1 Chronicles 6: 59 we learn that this city was handed over to the Levites, that is, it was conquered, nevertheless we learn that Asher did not drive out (Hebrew: lo horish – לא הוריש) their inhabitants. Therefore, the above verses plainly indicate that "lehorish" cannot be translated "drive out". The same verb "lehorish" but in its future plural form "torishemo – תורישמו" is found in Exodus 15: 9, where we read "torishemo yadi" = my hand will lehorish them. However, though elsewhere this verb is translated "drive out", here it is rendered "destroy": "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword, my hand shall DESTROY them". Why was the translator not consistent here and render lehorish – "drive out" as he did elsewhere?

Nothing can better demonstrate the absurdity of translating lehorish as "drive out" than rendering the lehorish of the quoted verse in this sense. For if the Israelites were running away because they wanted to leave Egypt, why then should the Egyptians run after them in order to drive them out? . Ibn Ezra explains – torishemo – "destroy them, as see also lo horisho". So also Onkelos. (Aramaic translation). In Deut. 28: 42, we encounter the word "yeyaresh" (3rd person future of "lehorish"). translated "possess". Onkelos, Rasag, (Seadiah ben Joseph) and Ibn Ezra construe – "to destroy". In Numbers 33: 50–55 we read: "And the Lord spake unto Moses. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye are passed over Jordan into

the land of Canaan; then ye shall drive out (Hebrew: *veorashtem*—...והורשתם second person plural, imperative form of "lehorish") all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, ...And ye shall dispossess (Hebrew: *veorashtem*) the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: ...But if ye will not drive out (Hebrew: *torishu* תורישו— second person plural, future form of lehorish) the inhabitants of the land from before you: then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides...". This is translated in the Vulgate:

"Quando transieritis Iordanem intrantes terram Chanaan, DISPERDITE... cunctos habitatores terrae illius..." that is, the Hebrew verb lehorish is translated by the Latin *disperдите* meaning "to ruin, squander, annihilate". Onkelus (Aramaic), translates: *vetetrahun*; and Rabbi Saadia Gaon (Rasag) translates (to Arabic) *fatakardahom*; both versions mean: "to annihilate". Rashi however construes— to drive out. Ibn Ezra explains "torishemo— to destroy, like in the verse —if you will not torishu ". The command to Moses to lehorish all the inhabitants of the land from before them, is cited in other words (*varia lectio*) in Joshua 9: 24ff, where we read of Joshua reprimanding the Gibeonites for their trickery saying: "Wherefore have you beguiled us, saying we are very far from you; when you dwell among us?", and the Gibeonites answer Joshua: "because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the Lord thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land and to DESTROY²⁶ all the inhabitants of the land from before you". This instruction which is a mere repetition of the above cited command to Moses (Nu. 33: 50–55), confirms beyond all doubt that "lehorish" from before you" means to destroy. (annihilate).

The same command to Moses is found in yet another version in Joshua 11: 14–15 where we read: "And all the spoil of these cities and the cattle, the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves; but every man THEY SMOTE WITH THE EDGE OF THE SWORD, until they had DESTROYED them, neither left they any to breath. As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua, and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the lord commanded Moses". The same relation recurs in Joshua 11: 20 "...that he might DESTROY them, as the Lord commanded Moses".

Josephus (Ant. IV, 305) writes: "When they had utterly vanquished the land of Canaan and destroyed its whole population"; and elsewhere (Ant. V, 49): "...the Gibeonites. . yet resolved not to implore mercy of Joshua; for they did not think to obtain any tolerable terms from a belligerent whose aim was the extermination of the whole race of the Canaanites".

It is evident therefore, that the verb lehorish means 'to destroy, to

26 The Hebrew reads "lehashmid = להשמיד to annihilate, instead of "lehorish" as in the verses in Nu. 33: 50–55.

annihilate', and not "drive out". This is corroborated by several verses in the Bible that refer to the Israelite settlement in Canaan, e. g.: "The Horites also dwelt in Seir afore time, but the children of Esau succeeded them; and they DESTROYED them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; AS ISRAEL DID UNTO THE LAND OF HIS POSSESSION, which Jehovah gave unto them" (Deut. 2: 12). "They did not destroy the peoples, as Jehovah commanded them" (Ps. 106: 34); "Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them" (Amos. 2: 9); "As for all the people that were left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites...whom the children of Israel were not able utterly to destroy" (1Kn. 9: 20–21); "But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth; But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee" (Deut. 20: 16–17). In these verses the words "destroy, consume" translate the Hebrew "lehorish".

To sum up: lehorish is not to be translated or understood as "inherit" (Hebrew – yarosh יָרוֹשׁ) or "drive out", but rather, as seen above, as "destroy, annihilate".²⁷ Deut. 2: 12; "The Horites also dwelt in Seir afortime, but the children of Esau succeeded them; and they destroyed them...and dwelt in their stead..." etc. clearly shows that annihilation of populations was customary of old days, the Amonites destroy the Rephaim, the children of Esau destroy the Horites, and Caphtorites the Avites, etc. (Deut. 2: 16–25).

As will be seen below the Hebrew verbs "yarosh" – (יָרוֹשׁ to inherit), and "lehorish" להוֹרִישׁ (to destroy, to annihilate) are both likely to be related to the same noun – "rosh" – ראש (= head). The former "yarosh" means to become the head, that is, the head (master) of a property, house etc., i. e. to inherit; whilst the latter lehorish signifies 'to behead', 'to decapitate', to annihilate, a common practice in antiquity.²⁸ Given that lehorish means to "annihilate", 'exterminate' we must interpret the biblical statement that the tribe of Asher did not lehorish the inhabitants of Acco, nor the inhabitants

27 S. L. Gordon in his Hebrew Bible commentary, glosses lehorish – 'to destroy, 'though he cites no reason for this. On the other hand Ibn Genah (– Abu'lwalid Merwan – Hebrew grammarian) in his book "The Roots" (Hebrew – Berlin 1896, p. 206 gives lehorish as to destroy ("because it is incorrect to explain the sentence 'to inherit them from before you,' as deriving from the verb to inherit since it does not fit in either with 'from before you' nor with 'from before them'").

With regard to lehorish and torishemo meaning to "destroy" because both derive from rosh (= head). I have dealt with, as far back as 1952 and 1962 in two booklets also entitled "Who were the Phoenicians".

28 David cuts off Goliath's head (1Sam. 17: 57); The Philistines cut off Saul's head and send it throughout their land. (1Sam. 31: 9); See also: 2Kn. 10: 7; 2Sam. 20: 22.

of Sidon, ...etc. as meaning that Asher did not exterminate them. This does not, however, imply that he did not subjugate them, or that he did not take over their land. On the contrary, the conclusion of the verse²⁹: "...but the Asherites dwelt among the Canaanites...for they did not 'lehorish' them" evidently means that the sons of Asher subdued the Canaanites. It is quite unreasonable to assume that the Canaanites allowed Asher – their enemy, to settle amongst them³⁰. The verse makes the point "that he did not 'lehorish' the inhabitants..." that is, he did not exterminate them and evidently this is to clarify why the Canaanite element continued to exist in the territory of the tribe of Asher. Further corroboration is supplied by: "And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Ju. 3: 5), which summarizes the wars of the Israelites in Canaan, notwithstanding the fact that the preceding chapters repeatedly emphasize their victory over these nations. Most probably certain cities capitulated on condition that their inhabitants not be destroyed, and it is to these cities that the text alludes when it says that the Israelites did not lehorish them, that is did not destroy them.

Biblical evidence clearly shows that the tribe of Asher conquered the region of Tyre and Sidon, yet owing to erroneous translation and misinterpretation of the word lehorish this was entirely disregarded.

On the other hand, the el-Amarna tablets report that this region was conquered by Aziru.

Who, therefore, had first conquered this area, Aziru or Asher? Or, perhaps, was this one and the same conquest?

To answer this, let us try to establish the dates of these two conquests.

The el-Amarna tablets in which Aziru's conquest is mentioned were sent to Amenophis III and Amenophis IV. According to Petrie the period of the reign of Amenophis (Amenhotep) III, is c. 1413–1372 B. C.,³¹ while Breasted has c. 1411–1375 B. C.³². According to Garstang³³ c. 1375 B. C. is the last year of Amenophis (Amenhotep) III, whereas the wars mentioned in the Tablets refer to the years c. 1380–1365. B. C. . In the preface to his book Mercer dates most of the EAT. to between c. 1411–1358 B. C.³⁴ According to Breasted,³⁵ we can safely assume that of thirty six years of Amenhotep III's reign, thirty four passed eventless, and moreover he claims that the wars mentioned in the el-Amarna tablets took place in

29 Ju. 1: 27– 36

30 For unmentioned reasons the statement that "he settled amongst the Canaanites" is regarded by Burney as proof that the Canaanites were not subjugated and that Asher merely settled amongst them. see: Burney, *Israel Settlement In Canaan*, p. 22.

31 Petrie, *Revision of History, Ancient Egypt*, March 1931.

32 Breasted, *Histoire de L'egypte*, 1926, Tome II, p. 363.

33 Garstang, *Joshua – Judges*, p. 253.

34 Mercer. *TEAT*, Toronto, 1939.

35 Breasted, *ibid.* p. 363.

either the last year or the last two years of his life, that is., the wars began between c. 1377–1375 B. C. (according to the chronology of Breasted,) or between 1379–1377 B. C. (according to Petrie's chronology). Hence, this is also the approximate date of Aziru's conquest of the region of Sidon.

Next let us examine when according to the Bible it was that the tribe of Asher fought its wars of conquest. The Bible states that the Exodus took place four hundred and eighty years before the erection of the Jerusalem Temple, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign³⁶. Since the reign of Solomon is considered to have begun in c. 970 B. C.³⁷, this means that the Exodus took place in $970 - 4 + 480 =$ c. 1446 B. C.³⁸. If we then add the number of years elapsed from the time of the Exodus till the beginning of the wars conducted by the tribe of Asher in Canaan, we shall arrive at the approximate date of its conquest of Sidon

According to the Bible, the Israelites wandered for forty years in the desert until they reached settled land. However, it must be borne in mind that the war of the tribe of Asher which led to the capture of Sidon followed immediately Joshua's death³⁹, that is more than forty years after the Exodus. The Bible does not specify exactly the number of years, but these can be deduced approximately from certain verses: We read in Joshua 24: 29 that Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten. Further we read that when Caleb the son of Jephunneh asked Joshua to annex the city of Hebron to his lot, he told him: "Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of Jehovah sent me from Kadesh–barnea to spy out the land; ...And now, behold Jehovah hath kept me alive, as he spake, these forty and five years from the time that Jehovah spake this word unto Moses. And Now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old".⁴⁰ Also we are told that Joshua was sent to spy out the land together with Caleb; and, moreover, we know that both were leaders (princes) of their tribes⁴¹, and that both survived all the rest of the spies. From this may be concluded that both were approximately of the same age. As we know that Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten, and the spies were sent to spy out the land from the desert of Paran when Caleb was forty years old, it will be seen that a period of seventy years had elapsed

36 1Kn. 6: 1 ; 2Chr. 33: 2

37 See CAH. (Solomon). Some scholars differ by a few years in their dating ; Oesterly and Robinson (A History of Israel) – 976 B. C. Wardle – 974 B. C. (EB. 1929, article– Solomon).

38 A number of different theories on dating the Exodus in later periods (Raamses II – Merneptah period), are current, but as stated in my introduction, I deliberately refrain from basing myself on theories but depend on epigraphic texts only. This question will be discussed more fully below; in the meantime we refer solely to epigraphic sources.

39 Ju. Chap. 1.

40 Jos. 14: 7–11.

41 Nu. chap. 13

between these two events. The Israelites reached the desert of Paran in the second month of the second year after leaving Egypt⁴²; hence, according to our computation, seventy – one years must have passed from the time of the Exodus until the death of Joshua, which means that about thirty – one years elapsed from the time of Israel's entry into Canaan until Joshua's death, at which point the war of the tribe of Asher against Sidon began. This inference finds support in two paragraphs in Josephus⁴³, one of which says of Joshua that "he died having lived one hundred and ten years; of which he passed forty in the company of Moses receiving profitable instructions, and after his master's death had been commander in chief for five and twenty years", and the other (Ant. V, 115) that "after Joshua dismissed the multitude to their several provinces Joshua himself abode at Sikima. Twenty years later in extreme old age, having sent for the chief notables of the cities...and so, after this address to the assembled company he died...". Shalit⁴⁴, in a note to this paragraph, writes: "Therefore according to Josephus it emerges that Joshua and Caleb were of the same age, for Joshua lived one hundred and ten years, twenty of which since the end of the conquest of the land. In other words, when the conquest was over he was 85 years old, like Caleb".

In addition, we may deduce from the account in Josephus that about seventy – one years passed from the Exodus until Joshua's death. Thus the wars of the tribes following immediately after Joshua's death must have started in c. 1374–5 B. C. (i. e. from the date of the Exodus c. 1446 plus 71 years and two months. Therefore the conquest of the region of Sidon by the tribe of Asher also occurred about this date, which is contemporaneous with that of the conquest of Sidon by Aziru (see above.)

According to both sources – the Bible and the TEAT – neither of the two conquests of Sidon preceded the other, but both Asher and Aziru evidently conquered the same region at the same time. Seemingly, there appears to be a conflict between the two sources. The tablets mention Aziru son of Abd–Ashera (Abdi–Ashirta) as conqueror of Sidon, whereas the Bible reports that the tribe of Asher conquered the same region at this very same period of time. How is one to resolve this issue? .

The Amorite letter Z or the S is known sometimes to represent the Hebrew letter SH (Shin). Conder, referring to the name Akizzi in the EAT, notes that "as the Amorite Z or S seems sometimes to represent the Hebrew SH, this name might be compared with the Philistine Achish"⁴⁵. The same applies also to Aziru, in which the Z can be seen to represent the Hebrew SH, yielding the pronunciation "Ashiru". Be it noted that the name Aziru appears in the

42 Nu. 13: 26 ; 10: 11–12.

43 Ant. V, 117

44 Ant. book V–117, note 110 (Heb. translation, Shalit.).

45 TEAT Note 2, p. 11.

EAT. also as Azira and Aziri.

Many names in the TEAT. reappear in the Bible in slightly modified form. Thus in the tablets we have Abimilki, Kinaani, Kinaana, Kinaanu, Lakisi, Lakisa, Gazri, Shakmi, Shakmu, Beit –Shani, Beit–Shana, Seiru, Seiri, Askaluna, Adumu, etc., whereas in the Bible these are without their suffix – Abimelech, Knaan (Canaan) Lakish, Gezer, Shechem, Beit – Shan, Seir, Ashkelon, Edom, etc. Accordingly the suffix of these names is perhaps only indicative of the genitive form. and thus the name Aziru in the TEAT. would be transcribed in the Bible Ashir or Asher, which is remarkably similar to the name of the tribe of Asher. This resemblance coupled with the fact that the TEAT ascribe the conquest of the region of Sidon to Aziru–Ashir, while the Biblical evidence points to the tribe of Asher as conqueror of the same area, in the very same period, leads to the inference that Aziru and Asher are in fact the same entity. However this inference raises certain difficulties.

Aziru is commonly thought to signify:

1. A personal name.
2. An Amorite.
3. The son of a person named Abd–Ashera (Abd–Ashirta)⁴⁶.

However, Asher in the Bible signifies:

1. The name of a tribe.
2. An Israelite.
3. An offshoot of Asher the son of Israel (Jacob).

How can these discrepancies be explained?:

To examine each point in turn:

1. Aziru is considered to be a personal name, because in many TEAT it appears in singular form⁴⁷. We find repeated references to "Aziru the son of Abdi Ashirta (Abd Ashera)". "this man Aziru" etc, . and this has led scholars to regard Aziru as the personal name of a single person, the son of a man named Abd Ashera. But is there, in such phrases, any confirmation that Aziru is indeed a personal name?

In many tablets one reads about the "Gaz people",⁴⁸ and there is no dissent whatever that the reference here is to a group of people and that the term "Gaz" does not represent a personal name. However, though Gaz usually denotes "Gaz" people in the plural, it sometimes appears in singular form, as "the mighty Gaz man", "this Gaz man"⁴⁹. In a letter to the king of

46 Mercer and Knudtzon write Abdi–asirta, Conder spells it Abd–Ashera. Lods (ISRAEL p. 152) writes: "in the period of Tell el–Amarna one of the most notable princes of the Syrian region was called Abd – Asirta or Abd–Asratu, that is, the servant of Ashera":

47 For example: Conder, TEAT tablet B. 61 last line. BM 19, line 8. Mercer 107 line 26.

48 For example see: tablets 74; 77; 82; 83; 108.

49 Tab. 71, line 21.

Egypt, Rib–Adi writes: "Why dost thou sit and hold back, so that HE takes thy cities the Gaz– MAN the dogi".⁵⁰ Again there is the verse "neither did Asher drive out..., which in the Hebrew appears in the singular: "Asher lo horish – "אֲשֶׁר לֹא הוֹרִישׁ" though there can be no doubt that it refers to the people of the tribe of Asher. It is a common biblical linguistic usage for the singular to serve in place of the plural: "And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, thus saith thy brother Israel ".⁵¹ Here Israel "saith" is singular in the Hebrew original ("amar– , "אמר" and likewise "Israel thy brother"; "...and Israel abode"⁵² in Kadesh"⁵³. In Samuel one reads: "And the men of Israel, when they saw the man ,fled from him, and were sore afraid. And the men"⁵⁴ of Israel said..."⁵⁵. As already stated, the singular serving in place of the plural, is common biblical usage especially when in reference to a nation, a tribe or a single group of people, and still obtains today. Hence, in the el – Amarna tablets Aziru in the singular form should not be read as definite proof to denote a single person since, quite possibly, it may in fact refer to a single unit or tribe.

2. It is generally accepted that Aziru is an Amorite. This view is based chiefly on verses that tell of Aziru dwelling in Amurri, e. g.: "Aziru the son of Abd Ashera who comes from Amurri land..."; "Azira in the land of Amurri"; etc In a letter by Rib–Adi king of Gubla to the king of Egypt he asks the latter for help against Abd–Ashera, and informs him: "Knowest thou not that the land of Amurri day and night strives for archers"⁵⁶. The fact that in many tablets Aziru is named the son of Abd–Ashera (Abdi Ashirta), and that Aziru and Abd–Ashera are both found in the land of Amurri, has led scholars to infer that Aziru is the son of a man called Abd–Ashera (Abd–Ashirta) and that Aziru, like his father Abd–Ashera, was an Amorite.

Assuming that the tablets indeed indicate an Amorite by the name of Aziru, what confirmation is supplied by the tablets themselves for such an assumption? In a tablet sent by Rib–Adi to the king of Egypt⁵⁷ he assures the king that "if one regent would make common cause with me, then I would drive Abdi–Asirta out of Amurri". As pointed out, Abd–Ashera is considered by scholars the father of Aziru, and both are thought to be Amorites. If this is indeed the case, why then does Rib–Adi need to assert: ' to drive him' "out of Amurri"?

After all, it is self–evident that if Abd – Ashera is an Amorite and lives in the land of the Amorites, that is, lives in his own land, one would expect

50 Tab. 91, lines 3–5 ; see also Tab. 112, line 46.

51 Nu. 20: 14.

52 In Hebrew, the singular is employed.

53 Ju. 11: 17

54 The Hebrew reads: "Ish Yisrael" =man of Israel, in the singular.

55 1Sam. 17: 24

56 Tab. 82, lines 47–50

57 Tab. 85, L. 68–69.

Rib–Adi to state: straightforwardly "to drive Abd–Ashirta out from his land" or "subjugate him".

In another tablet⁵⁸, Rib–Adi writes to the king of Egypt: "and let the king my lord know that Amurri long (day and night) for the departure of the archers, in the day when the archers come Amurri will join themselves unreservedly to the king, my lord" (i. e. to fight against Abd – Ashera and Aziru – N. G.) In yet another tablet⁵⁹: "behold on the day that thou comest all the country will rally to the king". A similar message is found in tablet 73⁶⁰: "dost thou not know of the land of Amurri that it is an abode of mighty men? Therefore, behold now are they not friendly with Abdi Asirta. But what does he do to them. And so they wait day and night for the departure of the archers and (say) 'we would join with them' and all regents strive to do this to Abdi Asirta". On the other hand, in tablet 13 BM.⁶¹ Rib – Adi informs the king about Aziru who makes war against him,⁶²: "All who are in the land of the Amorites have gathered " (i. e. to fight against Rib–Adi–N. G). If Aziru is an Amorite this means that all the Amorites unite with Aziru against Rib–Adi, while in the preceding verse, all the Amorites, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, will unite to fight against Aziru. There is a flagrant contradiction here. Looking at another tablet of Rib–Adi to the king of Egypt.⁶³ we find that Rib–Adi informs the king: "Behold Aziru, a son of Abdi – Asirta is with his brother in Dumassqa". In many tablets sent by Akizi from Qatna, Akizi informs the Egyptian king: "The people of Qatna, my servants that Aziru takes and puts them out of the land of my lord".⁶⁴ Consequently, the conquest of Damascus was considered a Hittite one; In fact Conder⁶⁵ even assembles and publishes all the tablets that refer to the conquest of Damascus and that were sent by Akizi from Qatna, under the title "The Hittite Invasion of Damascus."

If Aziru is indeed an Amorite, it follows that his "brother" who fights with him in Damascus was also an Amorite. How are we to explain that in the letters from Akizi he (the brother) figures as a Hittite, or at least served a Hittite king?

In letter 103⁶⁶, sent by Rib–Adi, we read: "the sons of Abdi–Asirta have entered Amurra, to them the whole land belongs". What is obvious from

58 Tab. 70, L. 23–30.

59 Tab. 129, L. 62 – 64.

60 Tab. 73, L. 14–25.

61 No. . of tablet according to Conder., according to Mercer and Knudtzon . No. 114

62 Line 21.

63 Tablet 107, L. 26.

64 The city of Damascus was considered to be Akizi's. . Tab. 55, L. 44 – 45.

65 TEAT

66 L. 9–12. Knudtzon translates here "sind eingedrungen in Amurra", that is, invaded Amurra.

his letter is that the "sons of Abd-Asirta" are not Amorites but have merely conquered the land of the Amorites. Moreover other letters supply further information about the conquest of the Amorite land. Thus in tablet 55⁶⁷ we read: "For six days has Azira in the land of Amurru remained and he will indeed take them if however in this year the troops of my lord do not go forth and do not take (them) they will subject themselves to Azira". In letter 142 (L. 24), Rib-Adi refers to "The enemies of the king who are in the land of Amurri". In tablet 156⁶⁸ Aziru writes to the Egyptian king: "and may he allow me to enter Amurri". A closer look establishes that the el-Amarna Tablets consistently refer to Aziru and Abd-Ashera (Abdi-Ashirta)" who is in the land of Amurri", or "coming from the land of the Amurri" etc., and then always attach the word "land" to their names. Hence we never read of "Aziru the Amorite" or "Abd-Ashera the Amorite". One may conclude therefore that Aziru and Abd-Ashera are in the land of the Amurri though no other significance attaches to this fact.

We can definitely establish that Aziru was indeed in the land of the Amorites, but there is no evidence whatever in the tablets to indicate that he was an Amorite. On the contrary, this is contradicted by other verses which can be clarified only by assuming that the name Aziru serves to denote the name of the tribe of Asher.

The tribe of Asher together with the other tribes settled in the cities they had conquered; we know from our earlier discussion (see above) that the first cities conquered by the Israelites were the Amorite cities. It is clear therefore, why Aziru, i. e. the tribe of Asher, is always characterized as "coming from the land of the Amorite" and not as "Aziru the Amorite". We are also now in a position to understand why it is said that "all who are in the land of the Amorites have gathered themselves": since this refers to Aziru, that is, to the people of the tribe of Asher who are in the Amorite land (and possibly also to a part or the remainder of the Israelite tribes). Further we can now understand why "The Amorite long for the archers" and "in the day when the archers come Amurri will join themselves unreservedly to the king", to fight Aziru. This evidently refers to the native Amorite population who had come under the subjugation of the tribe of Asher and of the rest of the remaining Israelites. Moreover, it is made plain now why in the letters sent by Akizi from Qatna, Aziru is seen as a Hittite, for he finds himself there with his "brother" (i. e. most probably another tribe which abode in an area of Hittite land) to whose aid Aziru had come. Finally we may also get some idea of letters nos. 103; 55, and 156, which tell of the sons of Abdi-asirta (Ashera) and Aziru who conquer the land of the Amorites.

3. It is generally agreed that Aziru was the son of a man named Abdi-

⁶⁷ L. 23-27.

⁶⁸ L. 13.

Asirta (Ashera), whereas, according to the biblical account, Asher was the son of Israel, that is Jacob. One reads in many tablets "Aziru son of Abdi-Asirta", though sometimes the name Abdi-asirta (Ashera) occurs by itself without linkage to Aziru. Occasionally, we have the sons (plural) of Abdi - Asirta⁶⁹; from which scholars concluded that Abdi-Asirta (Ashera) was a single person, with a son named Aziru, but with other sons besides.⁷⁰ Assuming that this Aziru is here correctly identified, what evidence is there, in TEAT to make this identification accord with our assumption. In one of the tablets⁷¹ by Rib - Adi there is the following passage: "No allies marched to Abd Ashera. But behold this Aziru has chosen all the men of blood". Obviously the subject initially is Abd Ashera but it later changes to Aziru. Abd Ashera and Aziru are in fact interchangeable. Passages such as the foregoing in which the writer begins with Abd Ashera (Abdi-Asirta) as the subject and ends with Aziru or Sa Gaz, or the other way round, are frequent in the TEAT⁷².

The suspicion that Aziru and Abd Ashera do not constitute two separate identities is increased with reading Tablet 75, sent by Rib-Adi⁷³ king of Gubla which states that Abd-Ashera killed "Aduna king of Irqata", while in tablets 140 (L. 10) and 139 we read: "Behold Aziru has killed Aduna king of Irqata". How are we to explain the fact that both Aziru and Abd-Ashera, who are supposed to be two different persons, killed the same man? Mercer already referred to this contradiction: "according to 140/10 Aziru killed Aduna, king of Irqata, but here this act seems to be ascribed to Abdi-asirta"⁷⁴. Does this mean that here also Abd-Ashera (Abdi-Asirta) and Aziru are identical? .

In another tablet⁷⁵ Rib-Adi begs the king of Egypt to send an army against Abd - Ashera, and writes among other things: "And to slay Abd-Ashera the king shall set him against them"; "THEM" in the plural refers to Abd-Ashera. In tablet 104⁷⁶ we read that "Pubahila, a son of Abdi Asirta has entered Ullaza to THEM belong Ardata...all cities belong to THEM" (emphasis -N. G.); here again the plural form is used for a supposedly single individual, but this time in reference to the supposed son of Abd-Ashera. How are we to explain the use of plural pronouns in reference to names of what are considered single persons? Taking all these facts together, it will no longer be possible for us to accept the supposition that Abd-Ashera is the name of a single person and the father of Aziru, as this leads to unresolved contradictions.

69 For example tab. 61 no. according to Conder. Tablets 108; 123; 132; 137; 138 according to Mercer and Knudtzon.

70 See Mercer tab. 60 note to line 2.; note to line 26 tab. 107. See also Lods, Israel, p. 152.

71 Tab. 18 BM l. 22-23 according to Conder: Tab. 132 -Mercer and Knudtzon.

72 For example tablets 79; 81; ; 88; 104; 116.

73 Tab. 75. L. 25

74 See note to line 25 tablet 75, p. 278. Mercer, TEAT

75 Conder, TEAT, tab. 44BM L. 16-17.

76 Lines 7-14.

Perhaps the facts can be explained otherwise: In many tablets one finds composite names of which "Abdi" comprises the first part of the name, e. g. Abdi-Adi (Ada)⁷⁷, Abdi-Uras⁷⁸, Abdi Rišha⁷⁹, Abdi-Hiba (or Hiva)⁸⁰. In regard to the last name, Mercer notes that: "Abdi Hiba consists of two parts: abdi – which is the Semitic for servant and Hiba which is the same as the word hepa, the name of the Hittite goddess".⁸¹

The name Abd-Ashera (Ašratu, Asirta) may be seen as a personal name; however, if the abd serves an adjectival function, as with the name Abdi-Hiba, then compound names such as "Aziru son of Abdi-Asirta" (or asratu) signify "Aziru son and servant to Ashera", this means that "son and servant to Ashera" refers to Aziru, thus reversing the meaning entirely⁸².

There are many examples in the biblical writings when the Hebrew "ben" (son), when joined to another word, has an adjectival function, thus ben – beliaal, ben-boshet, etc; the meaning here is therefore not of the son of a man named Beliaal or Boshet. In Hebrew beliaal means 'rascal' ', worthless', and "son of Beliaal" means a wicked person (yet, curiously enough, some Bible translations read "son of Beliaal")⁸³.

The foregoing view allows us to explain how in one tablet Aziru is reported to have killed Aduna king of Irgata, while in another Abdi-Asirta, i. e. Abd-Ashera, is said to have killed Aduna. We may now understand the text when it says "the sons of Abd-Ashera" that is servants of Ashera, i. e. a cognomen of Aziru, and not the sons of a man of this name. "Sons" (in the plural) of Abd-Ashera applies when speaking of the tribal people in general, whilst "son" (in the singular) of Abd-Ashera applies when dealing with a particular member of the tribe, or with the tribe as one unit. Sometimes it appears without the addition of "son", thus "Abd-Ashera" servant of Ashera, which is identical in meaning to 'son of Abd-Ashera', and also refers to Aziru.

Following our assumption that Asher and Aziru are identical, we are led to conclude that Asher was servant to Ashera. Yet, this appears to be a contradiction, for Asher is a son of Israel and the Israelites are worshippers of Jehovah.

77 Tablet 120 . Lines 32–36.

78 Tab. 170.

79 Tab. 176a.

80 Tab. 285, L. 4.

81 See Mercer TEAT p. 285 note to line 2. ; See also Albright, Palestine In The Early Historical Period, p. 127.

82 Lods, Israel, (p. 152) states in respect of the Amarna Tablets that "one of the princes in the region was Abdi Asratu that is a servant to Ashera"

83 1. Sam. 25: 17 "for he is such a son of Belial"; (A. V.); 1Sam 2: 12, "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial" (A. V.) (they were either the sons of Eli or the sons of Belial). i. e. they could not be the sons of both. Gideon Bible (N. Y. Nelson) translates Belial as "worthless". L. Segond in his French translation writes "mechant" (wicked).

How is this contradiction to be resolved?

Compared phonetically, the names "Asher" and "Ashera" are remarkably similar. It is easily possible therefore that Asher may have been derived from "Ashera", and scholars in the past have tried to link these two names⁸⁴. According to the biblical account, the sons of the tribe of Asher were, like all the other Israelites, descendants of Jacob, who is of course a forefather of the Israelite nation, and who was also named Israel because he "hast striven (– שָׂרִית – sarita, past tense of the Hebrew verb saro –to strive) with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (Gen. 32: 28). The story of Jacob wrestling with the angel of God is not in keeping with the general tenor of the biblical narrative. The Bible tells us about the worship of one god, the God who selects Jacob and regards him as his chosen son⁸⁵; yet the text here speaks of the angel of God wrestling with Jacob. Why does the angel wrestle with Jacob, God's chosen? The biblical explanation for this is far from satisfactory, the impression gained is that this story is a disguise for something other. Renan⁸⁶, claims that the biblical explanation of the name Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל) is completely imaginary. He thinks the real explanation is that since the Hebrew letters Shin (שׁ) and Sin (שׂ) were identical in antiquity, the name probably read "Yeshar – El", that is, it articulates Jacob's servitude toward El=God.

In I Chronicles⁸⁷ occurs the name Asarel (אַשְׂרֵאֵל) elsewhere⁸⁸ we find a variant of this name – Asriel (אַשְׂרִיאֵל). Both names are phonetically closely similar to the name Israel. We know that in Arabic the name Israel is written with and sounded as A (– א– Aleph) instead of I (י –Yod). Hence, the name Asarel may well have been an archaic form of the name Israel; possibly the name Yesarela 1 (יִשְׂרָאֵלָה Chr. 25: 14) should be seen as an intermediate form of Asarel and Israel.

It is evident that in the names "Asarel" and "Asriel" the element "el" is a recurring form to which another element is joined. Substitution of the two different elements gives us the names "Asera –El" and "Aseri–El". Given that the Hebrew letters "Shin" and "Sin" are interchangeable, one reads "Ashera–El" and "Asheri–El", that is: " Ashera is the god "(Ashera el); and "my Ashera is the god" (Asheri el). Most probably the name Israel originally was Asarel (Ashera–El), a derivation of Ashera, which eventually was changed to Israel; Moreover, for reasons yet to be stated, the story of Jacob's wrestling with the

84 Burney attempts to link most of the Israelite tribal names to the names of deities, as for instance: Asher to Ashera, Gad to the "Phoenician" deity Gad. Dan to Dan etc. Burney, *Israel Settlement In Canaan*, pp. 54–55. See also: Patai, *The Goddess Ashera*, JNES, 1965, pp. 1–2; Petrie, *Palestine And Israel*, p. 38.

85 See: Is. 41: 8 ; 45: 4.

86 Renan, *Histoire du Peuple D'Israel*, tome I, p. 106. About the identity of the letters Sin and Shin see Gesenius *Hebrew grammar* p. 33§ 6 i.

87 1 Chr. 4: 16.

88 Nu. 26: 31; Jos. 26: 2; 1Chr. 7: 14.

angel was introduced to disguise the real meaning of the name Israel. We may now also understand why one of the Israelite tribes was called Asher; which is most probably derived from the name Ashera.

From the above, it appears that the sons of Israel worshipped the Ashera, and that the name Israel derives therefrom. However, what is the Ashera, and what does the worship of the Ashera betoken?

In Deut. 16: 21, the sons of Israel are commanded: "Thou shalt not plant thee an Ashera of any kind of tree beside the altar of Jehovah thy God which thou shalt make thee", the Hebrew literally translated reads "Thou shalt not plant thee an Ashera any tree beside the altar of Jehovah..."⁸⁹. It is clear therefore that the Ashera is a tree, and that the cult of the Ashera must be that of tree-worship. This is confirmed by the story of Gideon who cuts down the Ashera that is by the altar of Baal and with the wood thereof offers a burnt offering (Ju. 6: 25–27). Robertson Smith⁹⁰ likewise cites this verse from Deuteronomy, and states that the Ashera "must have been either a living tree, or a tree like post" (p. 188), that is an object of worship. He argues against certain Assyriologists who claim that the Ashera was a goddess. (ibid. 189). In Genesis (21: 33) we read of Abraham: "And Abraham planted a Tamarisk tree in Beer-Sheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah". The fact that these two acts are linked together in the biblical text, shows that they are closely interrelated: Abraham plants a tree and at the same time calls on the name of God. This plainly illustrates the worship of the Ashera, as shown above. In Genesis 35: 2–4 we read: "Then Jacob said unto his household and to all that were with him. Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, ...and Jacob hid them under the oak⁹¹ which was by Shechem". Jacob buries the idols under the terebinth tree, which clearly shows that Jacob's household worshipped idols, and we may suspect that the terebinth was Jacob's personal deity. This act of Jacob can be seen as having symbolic significance: that is, he buries the foreign gods under his personal deity. Likewise we are told of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, that she "died and she was buried below Beth-el under the oak".⁹² (Gen. 35: 8). This burial under the oak tree leads us to assume that for Jacob the oak was sacred. In Joshua 24: 25–26 we read: "So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God: and he took a great stone, and set it up there UNDER THE OAK⁹³ THAT WAS BY THE SANCTUARY

89 "לא תטע לך אשרה כל-עץ אצל מזבח יהוה אלהיך" (Lo tita lekha ashera kol etz etzel mizbakh yehova eloheka)

90 R. Smith, *The Religion of The Semites*, p. 188, (pp. 185–196). See also: Oesterly and Robinson, *Hebrew Religion*, p. 59.

91 In the Hebrew original "ela – אלה" terebinth tree.

92 In the Hebrew original "alon – אלון" = oak tree.

93 In the Hebrew original "ela – אלה" terebinth tree.

OF JEHOVAH". Also, we read in Judges 9: 6: "And all the men of Shechem assembled themselves together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem". These verses inform us of the fact that in Beth-el there stood an oak tree near the house of God, or as the text puts it THE oak (with the definite article). In Shechem there was THE terebinth tree (with the definite article), whilst in Beer-Sheba there was a tamarisk. it is interesting to note that according to the biblical account, Abraham and Isaac lived in Beer-Sheba, whilst Jacob lived in Shechem and Beth-el. It is known that these three places constituted important centers in the life of the Israelite nation, and the trees in these centers are qualified in the Bible by the definite article, as well known and well recognized objects. Accordingly it may be inferred that the Tamarisk was Abraham's and Isaac's deity, while the Terebinth and Oak were Jacob's deities. It is noteworthy that the narrative of Jacob's descent into Egypt states that he "came to Beer-Sheba and offered sacrifices UNTO THE GOD OF HIS FATHER ISAAC". Why does the text here refer to and emphasize, "unto the God of his father"? At any rate, if the God of Isaac is the same god as for Jacob, it would be logical for the read: "and offered sacrifices to God" or "his God". But seeing, as stated, the oak and the terebinth, (i. e. Jacob's deities), were located in Shechem and Beth-el, whilst the tamarisk (i. e. the deity of Abraham and Isaac) was located in Beer-Sheba; it may well be understood that on his way to Egypt Jacob passed through text to Beer-Sheba where the tamarisk tree of his father and grandfather was planted, and there he would pray to this deity which is not his own but that of his father⁹⁴ Likewise it may be understood that the verse, "seek ye me, and ye shall live; but seek not BETH-EL, nor enter into GILGAL and pass not to BEER-SHEBA"⁹⁵, clarifies that Beer-Sheba, Beth-El and Gilgal were places of pilgrimage involving pagan-worship.

Jacob calls his god "El Shaddai"⁹⁶ – "אל שדי" and presumably Shaddai was the name of the Israelite deity till the time of Moses, as stated in Exodus⁹⁷: "And God spake unto Moses and said unto him, I am Jehovah; and I APPEARED UNTO ABRAHAM, UNTO ISAAC, AND UNTO JACOB AS GOD ALMIGHTY (the Hebrew here is EL SHADDAI – (אל שדי) BUT BY MY

94 Gen. 46: 1. Various jewish commentators such as Rashi(Solomon ben Isaac), Ramban (Nahmanides). Sforino, and Rashbam (R. Shmuel ben Meir), noticed the problematic nature of this sentence and tried to clarify it in different ways. Nahmanides even stresses that it is suitable to write: "to the god of his forefathers"

95 Amos, 5: 4–5.

96 See: Gen. 43: 14 ; 48: 3 . The name "El Shaddai" occurs in the Hebrew text but is transcribed in the Vulgate "Deo Omnipotente" In the Septuagint "Pantocrator", and in English "God Almighty".

97 Ex. 6: 2–3.

NAME JEHOVAH I WAS NOT KNOWN TO THEM". Offord⁹⁸ equates this name to the Assyrian or Sumerian name Shaddu which he believes to mean mountain, and therefore ventures that El Shaddai perhaps means: "God of the mountains". Maclaurin interprets it along similar lines⁹⁹. Most biblical exegetes believe that the name is a derivation of the Hebrew verb – שָׁדַד *shadad* = to plunder, to rob; and therefore El Shaddai = Omnipotent, which produces the translation for instance "God Almighty", as in the Vulgate. Robert¹⁰⁰ suggests that the name is derived from the Hebrew "shad" = שֶׁד *shed* breast, and accordingly El Shaddai = "God of Fertility".

The name "Shaddai" will be better understood if we recall that in ancient Hebrew the letters "Shin" (SH – שׁ) and "Sin" (S – שׁ) are interchangeable, so that "Shaddai" might equally read "Saddai". In the biblical text one often meets the word "saddai" in place of "Sadeh" (Hebrew; field); "And he did eat the increase of the field"¹⁰¹; "Let the field exult and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy"¹⁰²; ...and the beasts of the field"¹⁰³ etc¹⁰⁴.

We may now conclude that El Shaddai mean God of the field (or fields), and moreover since we already know that Abraham and Isaac worshipped the tamarisk whereas Jacob adored the terebinth and the oak, all trees of the field, the connection between the name "Shaddai–Saddai" and the trees – the oak, terebinth and tamarisk – becomes quite clear. The name "El" (God) most probably derives from *alah* (terebinth) and *alon* (oak), but over time the original deity concept became enlarged and more abstract¹⁰⁵. Incidentally it may be noted that for the people called Phoenicians, "Alonim" (plural of *alon* = oak) signified the plural of "El" (God)¹⁰⁶.

From the information given in the TEAT, we may now conclude:

1. Aziru conquered the region of Sidon in c. 1375 B. C.
2. The name Aziru should not be regarded as the personal name of any individual, but possibly serves as the name of an entire group or of a tribe.
3. Aziru appears to be present in the land of the Amorites but there is no evidence whatever to indicate that he was an Amorite. Moreover, if we were to accept the Amorite theory this would lead to serious contradictions.

98 Offord, *Babylonian And Hebrew Theophoric Names*, PEQ. 1916.

99 Maclaurin, VT. 1962, (12), p. 444.

100 Robert, *La Revelation Du Nom Divin Jehovah*, RB. 1894, p. 162.

101 Deut. 32: 13; the Hebrew text here reads "saddai – שָׁדַי".

102 Ps. 96: 12. In the Hebrew text, field reads "saddai".

103 Ps. 8: 7. In the Hebrew text the word field reads "saddai"

104 Ps. 104: 11; Jer. 4: 17. In the Hebrew text, field reads "saddai"

105 On "Ela" and "El", see also: Zimmerman, *El and Adonai*, VT. 1962, p. 190.

106 See: Contenau, *La Civilisation Phénicienne*, p. 89; Cook, *Phoenicia*, EB. 1929; CIS. no. 3, I. 9, 22.

4. The belief that Abdi-Asirta (Abd-Ashera) is a personal name has no basis whatever. There is evidence for seeing it as signifying a 'servant of Ashera' ; moreover, the text implies that Aziru was a worshipper of the Ashera, but not that he was the son of a man of this name.

As against this, we may conclude from the Bible:

1. It was the tribe of Asher which conquered the region of Sidon in this same period (c. 1375 B. C.).
2. The tribe of Asher together with the rest of the Israelites settled in the Amorite land, since the Amorite cities were the first to be conquered by them.
3. The tribe of Asher, like all the other Israelite tribes, worshipped the Ashera which evidently represented a tree-cult; the name Asher is derived from the name of this deity.

It has been shown that the name Aziru, in Hebrew transcription, produces Ashir – Asher. As the identity between the two names, is absolute, and political events, as reported in TEAT and Bible, closely interconnect and overlap, our notion that Asher and Aziru are identical entities goes beyond mere conjecture .

Additional points to the above:

1. According to the biblical account the war of the tribe of Asher began after Joshua's death, and as noted above, about thirty – one years elapsed from the time of entry of the Israelites into the land of Canaan until the death of Joshua. However, in the el-Amarna Tablets the exact period of the wars is not mentioned, though in a letter from the people of Tunip to the king of Egypt¹⁰⁷ one reads (line 13): "and now for TWENTY YEARS we have been sending to the king...". Further in the same letter (lines 40–44) we read: "Tunip thy city weeps, and her tears are running and there is no help for us. We have been sending to the king for TWENTY YEARS but not one word has come to us from our lord". Hence the period when Tunip was at war lasted at least twenty years, which correlates with the chronology of the Israelite wars, as shown earlier.
2. The accounts of the wars in the TEAT and the Bible. are remarkably similar, In each case, the earliest conquests are of the Amorite cities, and proceeds from there. Both accounts depict the invasion as utterly devastating and destructive in its effect on the cities of the land¹⁰⁸. Campbell, Haynes, Conder, Headlam and others¹⁰⁹ previously pointed

107 Tab. 59 (41 BM – Conder).

108 For instance; Tab. 185, lines 16–37.

109 Haynes, *The Date of The Exodus*, PEF. 1806, pp. 251–252.

Conder, *The Hebrew of The Tel el Amarna Letters*, PEF. 1891–2 p. 251.

Headlam, *PEQ.* 1931, p. 128.

Meek, *The Israelite Conquest of Ephraim*, *BASOR*, 61, pp. 17–19.

to certain parallels in the two accounts.

3. We saw that in the biblical Hebrew "lehorish" denotes to "annihilate", "exterminate", and therefore, if it is written that Asher did not "lehorish" the inhabitants of Sidon, we can take it that he did not exterminate them. However, he did conquer the city, which of course led to the capitulation of the enemy but not necessarily to his annihilation. At the same time, the TEAT tells us of a treaty of capitulation between the city of Sidon and Abd-Ashera (whom we have identified as the sons of the tribe of Asher).¹¹⁰
4. Many names of cities, whose destruction is mentioned in the TEAT also occur in the Bible in the list of cities destroyed by the Israelites during their invasion of Canaan e. g. Ashkelon, Hazor, Gezer, Megiddo, Beit-Shan, etc. Hence, if we reject the theory that Aziru's and Asher's conquests are in fact the same conquests, this obliges us to admit that these cities were destroyed twice over within a very short period of time¹¹¹ (within the space of 200 years, at most)¹¹². Barton, quoting Paton, makes just this inference¹¹³. He states "that there were two conquests, one in the el-Amarna period and the other about 1200 B. C." However there is no archaeological evidence, for this inference; on the contrary, archaeological findings Campbell, *The Amarna Letters and The Amarna Period*, BA. 1960 (3), p. 11. utterly disagree with it. To quote Prof. Yadin on the subject: "There is decisive evidence that the above mentioned Canaanite cities were destroyed in the same archaeological period. They were destroyed, burned, and not rebuilt by their settlers. This fact is not disputed. In what consists the difference of opinions between archaeologists? It is in the ultimate determination between the different dates"¹¹⁴
5. Certain names in the TEAT resemble names appearing in the Bible. Tablet 104 mentions "Pubahila son of Abdi-Asirta". Possibly this is a corruption of the name Pedahel who was the contemporary prince of the tribe of Naphtali¹¹⁵. As noted above, each prince stood at the head of his tribe in the war of the conquest of the land. Another name "Iliap"¹¹⁶ phonetically echoes the Hebrew name "Eliab"; which is the name of the contemporary prince of the tribe of Zebulun; that is in full Eliab son of

Yeivin, *Kibush Haaretz*, Maarakhot 24–25, Feb. Mai. 1945 (Heb).

110 Tab. 83, Lines 24–27.

111 Headlam dealt with this in the Sixtieth Annual General Meeting, PEQ. 1931, p. 128.

112 If we accept that the Exodus occurred c. 1200 B. C.

113 Barton, *The Habiri Of The El-Amarna Tablets And The Hebrew Conquest Of Palestine*, JBL, 1929 (48), p. 144.

114 *Iyunim Besefer Yehoshua*, p. 76 (Hebrew).

115 Nu. 44: 28.

116 Tablet 168, L. 12.

Helon¹¹⁷. (The letters P and B are interchangeable in Semitic languages, as in Parzel=Barzel=iron, etc.)¹¹⁸

6. In Tablet 256 occur the three names Benenima, Tadia, and Jasua. Hallock believes, and is followed in this by some scholars, that the name Benenima should perhaps be equated with Benjamin while Jasua is possibly equivalent to the Hebrew name Joshua but as he states¹¹⁹ "this, too, is far from certain." We are told in the Bible that Jacob called his son Benjamin, yet his mother "called his name Ben-Oni" (Gen. 35: 18). The Oni of the name Ben-Oni indicates the possessive pronoun in Hebrew, that is, "my Ben-Onim"¹²⁰, which means that in its original form the name was Ben-Onim, If written " Benonim" we discover a remarkable resemblance between 'Benonim 'and 'Benenima.'

The name Tadia is probably related to the Hebrew word toda = praise, thanks; from which the name Yehuda (Judah) is said to derive.¹²¹

The resemblance between the names Jasua and Yehoshua (Joshua) is quite obvious.

7. In Tablet 288¹²² sent by Abdi-Hiba from Jerusalem to the king of Egypt, the writer points out that "Turbazu has been killed in the gate of Zilu..." and so also with "Iaptih-Addi". There is biblical support for the view that the Israelites used to hang the kings of cities at their town gates; these quotations from Abdi-Hiba might well reflect this.¹²³
8. It is noteworthy that in the TEAT there are names such as Rib-Addi, of which the suffix is Addi-Addu (i. e. the deity Addad), whereas subsequent to the period of the conquest these names are linked to the prefix "Baal". Contenau already pointed this out earlier.¹²⁴

In the Tablets there is talk of local kings,¹²⁵ whereas after the period of conquest we read about judges (in Sidon).

117 Nu. 7: 24.

118 see Gesenius: Hebrew – Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament, p. 689.

119 See Mercer, TEAT, Excursus VII, The Habiri and The Sa Gaz In the Tell el-Amarna Tablets, by F. H. Hallock p. 843, L. 13–17, and notes

120 Onim (אֹנִים) In Hebrew – strength, grief, sorrow.

121 Gen. 29: 35.

122 Tab. 288, L. 41–46.

123 Albright identifies Zilu with Sile, east of Kantara. (Albright, The Town Of Selle (Zaru) In The Amarna Tablets, JEA 1924, pp. 6–8), which seems a curious identification given that Abdi- iba sends his letter from Jerusalem, and the Sile that Albright mentions is on the border of Egypt very far from Jerusalem. What connection could Abdi- iba of Jerusalem possibly have with the region of Kantara, and for what reason would he send to the king of Egypt a message informing him about events in this city, considering that Kantara is close to the border of Egypt and at a considerable distance from Jerusalem? . Far more logical to accept Conder's identification with the city of Shilo, situated as it was not far from Jerusalem, which explains why it is mentioned in the letters of Abdi- iba.

124 Contenau, La Civilisation Phénicienne, p. 97.

125 For example: Tablets 46; 66; 88; 147.

In Deut. 3; 9. we read "Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion and the Amorites call it Shnir". We realise therefore that according the Bible Sidonians are not Amorites.

Having established, on the basis of the above evidence, that Sidon was conquered by the tribe of Asher and that this conquest is the same as the conquest of Aziru in the el-Amarna period, (c. 1375 B. C.), the inevitable question arises: When did the Exodus take place? .