

**Sept. 23: Rereading biblical texts: How successive generations keep what is old new (Tony B)**

Read for today: IB Ch. 2 The Emergence of Ancient Israel and Its First Oral Traditions (pp. 33-52) and indicated readings (Joshua 11; Judges 1; Exodus 2; 5-10, 15; Genesis 25, 27-35; Judges 5)

1. Context: The Emergence of Israel in Canaan (Or, what does the Bible say?)

- recap: Abraham as “Hebrew” of the hill country; some of his descendants go to Egypt in time of famine (Exod 1:7)
- the birth of Moses (Exod 2); parallels in story of Sargon, ruler of Akad ca. 2371-2316 BCE
- Yahweh reveals his divine name to Moses (3:13-15)
  - the origin of Yahweh: “the land of [nomad tribe] Shasu [named] YHW in the land of Seir”
  - Yahweh of the desert: see Deut 33:2; Judges 5:4-6; Habakkuk 3:3; Psalms 68:8-9
  - theophoric names: use Yahweh only after the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE
- the plagues of Exodus (chs. 5-10); victory song (ch. 15) foreshadows the “conquest” of Canaan
- Numbers 27 leadership transferred from Moses to Joshua; conquers east of the Jordan (Num 31-32)
- the “conquest” according to Joshua and Judges:
  - Joshua 2: the story of Rahab, the prostitute
  - Joshua 6: the fall of Jericho (“Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys,” 6:21)
  - Joshua 7-8: the fall of Ai (“The total of those who fell that day, both men and women, was twelve thousand—all the people of Ai,” 8:25)
  - Joshua 9: treaty with Gibeon
  - Joshua 10-13: various battles
  - Joshua 14-23: remaining lands allotted to the various tribes
  - Joshua 24: covenant renewal ceremony
  - Judges 1: failures to kill all of the Canaanites and Philistines
  - Judges 2: the angel of God declares, “You have not obeyed my command. See what you have done! So now I say, I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become adversaries to you” (2:2-3)
  - Judges 5: Song of Deborah (the oldest part of the Bible?)

2. “Israel” in the Iron Age (1300-600 BCE) (Or, what does archaeology and contemporary literature say?)

- the Merneptah stela boasts of victory over a people “Israel” around 1205 BCE (“Israel is laid waste, his seed is not”)
- 1300-1000 BCE approximately 300 new settlements sprang up in the hill country of Canaan

- villages comprised of four-room houses; no public buildings; no fortified walls; rudimentary settled life; also noteworthy is no pig bones found
- but: the homes and other aspects of life are Canaanite; note Canaanite names: Israel and Elohim (from “El”)
- peasant revolt or flight from Egyptian sovereignty?
- invasion of the Sea Peoples (Peleset=Philistines)
- hill-country Canaanites unite with Egyptian “Hebrews”

### 3. The Real “Conquest of Canaan”

- retreat of Egyptians leaves power vacuum; Sea Peoples decimate large cities
- the Israelites only really captured the highlands of Canaan, relatively easy land to conquer; could not take the major cities on the plain; why? (Judges 1:19)
- Philistine and remaining Canaanite cities eventually join Israel through treaties or later conquests
- text of Joshua ends with a meeting of the “twelve tribes”; adopt Yahweh as their god and the Exodus story as their myth of origins

### 4. Religious Accommodation in the Iron Age

- Israel as the bride of God; Canaanite religion as “prostitution” (e.g., Exod 34:15; Hosea 2:3; Ezek 16:15)
- Yahweh and his consort
- pillar Ashtart in Judea
- biblical reaction to the synthesis—the Curse of Ham (Gen 9:18-27); Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-16)