

THE INTERNAL CONSISTENCY AND HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLICAL GENEALOGIES

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The general trend among scholars in recent years has been to treat the genealogies recorded in the Bible with an increased skepticism. Whereas past generations of scholars may have been ready to affirm the trustworthiness of at least some of the Israelite lineages, current research in this area has led to the opposite conclusion. Provided with parallels both from ancient Near Eastern documents and from the sociological and anthropological study of tribal societies of the present, most scholars today contend that the biblical genealogies do not constitute a reliable source for the reconstruction of history.¹ The current approach is that the genealogies may retain some value for the reconstruction of political ties on a national or tribal level,² but that in no way should they be taken at face value. This is especially true for those genealogies which purport to be from early Israelite times, such as the lineages of Moses or David.

In the present article I will offer some evidence which, depending on how it is judged, may stem the tide described above. The approach to be taken will differ from recent work on the subject, in that it will adduce no external evidence from either ancient or modern times. Instead, I will concentrate on the genealogies themselves, in particular those lineages of characters who appear in Exodus through Joshua. I anticipate one of the results of my analysis with the following statement: the genealogies themselves

¹ See especially R. R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, Conn., 1977).

² The following succinct statement of A. Malamat, "Tribal Societies: Biblical Genealogies and African Lineage Systems", *Archives européennes de sociologie* 14 (1973), p. 127, is representative of this view: "the Biblical genealogical lists ... were of impact on social and political, economic and religious planes".

reveal a remarkable internal consistency. Moreover, given their general concordance, the genealogies may be more historically reliable than recent scholarship has led us to believe.

One aspect of this internal consistency is that, with the one exception (on which see below), for each individual in Exodus through Joshua for whom we have a recoverable genealogy, there is a distance of 3-6 generations between that individual and one of Jacob's sons. This has been mentioned in passing before,³ but as far as I know no one has previously noted to what extent the various branches of the family tree are interconnected. It is these interconnections, which can be pieced together from a variety of biblical passages, that strengthen the internal consistency alluded to above.

It seems best to begin our survey with Moses, whose genealogy in Exod. vi 16-23 allows us to reconstruct the line Levi-Kohath-Amram-Moses. In short, he is three generations removed from Levi. The first individuals whose lives are coeval with that of Moses are his own family members. His brother Aaron naturally shares the same lineage, which we should now list as Levi-Kohath-Amram-Moses/Aaron.⁴ The children and grandchildren of Moses and Aaron are thus four and five generations, respectively, removed from Levi. Here we may mention by name Moses' sons Gershom and Eliezer (Exod. xviii 3-4), Aaron's sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar (Exod. vi 23, xxviii 1, etc.), and his grandson Phinehas (Exod. vi 25; Num. xxv 7), all of whom have roles to play in the narratives.

In addition, three of Moses' and Aaron's first cousins, who are obviously of the same generation as the two leaders, also appear in the Wandering narratives. In Lev. x 4 Mishael and Elzaphan are summoned to dispose of the bodies of Nadab and Abihu, and from Exod. vi 16-22 we are able to establish their line as Levi-Kohath-Uzziel-Mishael/Elzaphan.

One of the leaders of the revolt(s) discussed in Num. xvi 1-35 is Korah, and from Exod. vi 16-21 we can define his line as Levi-

³ See, for example, D. N. Freedman, "The Chronology of Israel and the Ancient Near East: Section A. Old Testament Chronology", in G. E. Wright (ed.), *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Garden City, New York, 1961), p. 206: "The several genealogies connecting the age of the Patriarchs with that of the Exodus average out at about four generations". See also C. H. Gordon, "Hebrew Origins in the Light of Recent Discovery", in A. Altmann (ed.), *Biblical and Other Studies* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 4.

⁴ In the reconstructed lineages, the hyphen (-) connotes filial relationship and the slash (/) connotes siblings.

Kohath-Izhar-Korah. The two other rebels, the brothers Dathan and Abiram, are also contemporaries of Moses. From two sources, Num. xvi 1, xxvi 5-9, we can determine this line as Reuben-Pallu-Eliab-Dathan/Abiram.⁵ Thus we have an excellent correspondence between the tribes of Levi and Reuben during the early portion of Israel's history.

Because of a small notice in Exod. vi 23 we are also able to link the tribe of Levi and the tribe of Judah. Here we learn that Moses' brother, Aaron, was married to Elisheba, the sister of Nahshon ben Amminadab. From Num i 7, ii 3, vii 12, we learn that Nahshon was a member of the Wilderness generation and thus we have corroborating evidence for the contemporary lives of Nahshon/Elisheba and Aaron. Nahshon is an ancestor of King David who, as we might expect, has the best preserved genealogy of all biblical characters.⁶ So from Ruth iv 18-22; 1 Chr. ii 5-15 we can reconstruct the line of Nahshon/Elisheba as follows: Judah-Perez-Hezron-Ram-Amminadab-Nahshon/Elisheba. Accordingly, there are five generations separating Nahshon/Elisheba from Judah. This datum also effects our understanding of Eleazar. Above we described his line as Levi-Kohath-Amram-Aaron-Eleazar, placing him four generations away from Levi. Now we must also list the line of Judah-Perez-Hezron-Ram-Amminadab-Elisheba-Eleazar, placing him six generations away from Judah. By extension, Phinehas who is five generations removed from Levi is also seven generations removed from Levi.

Two other members of the tribe of Judah also have genealogies which can be synchronized with that of Moses. the first of these is Achan, whose story is told in Josh. vii 1-26. He is clearly contemporary with Joshua and therefore also with Moses. His genealogy is preserved fully in Josh. vii 1, 18 where the line Judah-Zerah-

⁵ Num. xvi 1 mentions another individual, On ben Peleth, with the implication that Peleth is also a son (or grandson or descendant) of Reuben. Since he is never mentioned again, many scholars doubt his existence. Instead, they view the consonants *bn plt* as a scribal error for *bn plw*². See, for example, M. Noth, *Das vierte Buch Mose, Numeri* (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 104, 109 (= E. tr., *Numbers* [London and Philadelphia, 1968], pp. 118, 122). Regardless of how this issue is to be decided, from Num. xxvi 5-9 it is clear that the line of the famous rebels is Reuben-Pallu-Eliab-Dathan/Abiram.

⁶ See Malamet (n. 2), p. 136: "In this connection we should emphasize, however, that dominant tribal lineages (e.g. Judah), and royal or aristocratic pedigrees, have normally been transmitted with greater care and are thus deeper than their less important counterparts".

Zabdi-Carmi-Achan is recorded, and is partially preserved in 1 Chr. ii 6-7 where the line Judah-Zerah-Zimri-Carmi-Achar can be reconstructed.⁷ Recognizing that Zabdi and Zimri are probably variant names of the same individual and that Achar is but a pun on the name Achan (cf. Josh. vii 26), we can conclude that Achan is four generations removed from Judah.

The other relevant Judahite is Bezalel, the master craftsman appointed by Moses to construct and beautify the Tabernacle. His genealogy in 1 Chr. ii 19-20 (a portion of which occurs in Exod. xxxi 2) produces the line Judah-Perez-Hezron-Caleb-Hur-Uri-Bezalel. Thus Bezalel is six generations removed from Judah.

The key to linking the Levites with the Judahites was the marriage of Aaron and Elisheba recorded in Exod. vi 23. Fortunately, the Bible records another such intertribal marriage which permits us to develop a synchrony between the tribes of Judah and Joseph. I refer to 1 Chr. ii 21 which informs us that Hezron (grandson of Judah) married the unnamed daughter of Machir (grandson of Joseph). This marriage produced Segub, and he is the father of Jair (1 Chr. ii 21-2). According to Num. xxxii 41 Jair took control of part of Transjordan during the lifetime of Moses.⁸ Jair's lineage is therefore Judah-Perez-Hezron-Segub-Jair, which makes him four generations removed from Judah, or Joseph-Manasseh-Machir-daughter-Segub-Jair, which places him five generations away from Joseph.

There is another individual descended from Joseph whose life was contemporaneous with that of Moses, namely Zelophehad whose five daughters petitioned Moses for their father's inheritance in Num. xxvii 1-11. The genealogy of Zelophehad recorded in Num. xxvii 1 produces the line Joseph-Manasseh-Machir-Gilead-Hepher-Zelophehad-daughters. This makes Zelophehad five generations removed from Joseph and his daughters are six generations away.⁹

⁷ 1 Chr. ii 6-7 does not link Carmi with Zimri directly but it seems to be implied. Cf. S. Yeivin, *The Israelite Conquest of Canaan* (Istanbul, 1971), p. 189, n. 17. Yeivin's work, it should be noted, included the best treatment of the Israelite genealogies available (Appendix A, pp. 126-233). All material I am discussing may be found there in clearly presented and expertly annotated charts.

⁸ In all likelihood, he is also the minor judge referred to in Judg. x 3-5.

⁹ The MT at 1 Chr. vii 15 appears to make Zelophehad the second son of Manasseh, an impossibility. The entire section seems hopelessly irreconcilable with the information in Num. xxvi 29-33, xxvii 1.

At this point it is worth-while to summarize our information. Moses and Aaron are three generations removed from Levi. All the characters whose lives are depicted in Exodus through Joshua as being coeval with those of Moses and Aaron, and for whom we have genealogies, are three, four, five, or six generations removed from their tribal fathers. The following is a comprehensive list:

Moses	3	(Levi)	Phinehas	5/7	(Levi/Judah)
Aaron	3	(Levi)	Dathan	3	(Reuben)
Mishael	3	(Levi)	Abiram	3	(Reuben)
Elzaphan	3	(Levi)	Elisheba	5	(Judah)
Korah	3	(Levi)	Nahshon	5	(Judah)
Gershom	4	(Levi)	Achan	4	(Judah)
Eliezer	4	(Levi)	Bezalel	6	(Judah)
Nadab	4	(Levi)	Jair	4/5	(Judah/Joseph)
Abihu	4	(Levi)	Zelophehad	5	(Joseph)
Eleazar	4/6	(Levi/Judah)	Z.'s daughters	6	(Joseph)
Ithamar	4	(Levi)			

In addition, the reader will want to use the family tree presented in Figure 1.

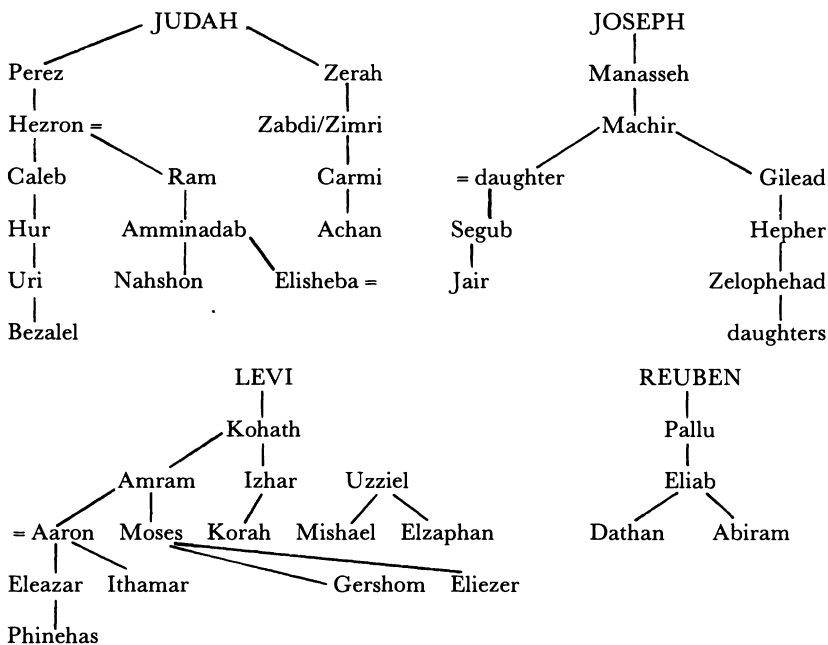


Figure 1. Biblical Genealogies

Note: Equal signs (=) appear next to Hezron and the daughter of Machir to denote their marriage, and next to Elisheba and Aaron to denote their marriage. For reasons of space limitations, Aaron's first two sons Nadab and Abidu are omitted from the chart.

I stated at the outset that an internal analysis of these biblical genealogies reveals a certain consistency. A glance at the above list might suggest the contrary, but two factors need to be taken into account. First, it is clear that people whose lines overlap need not all be the same age. The group which left Egypt, even if we speak only of the adults, could have included people ranging from age 20 to 70 and even older. They all would not all be the same number of generations away from Jacob's sons. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the people who are only three generations removed from their tribal fathers are specifically what we might call the elder statesmen of the time. It is probably that Moses and Aaron were considerably older than others of the Exodus/Wandering generation(s). The former's 120-year lifespan (Deut. xxxiv 7) is obviously an idealized figure, but it nonetheless reflects a ripe old age at time of death (cp. Gen. vi 3). Aaron, of course, is depicted as being even older than Moses (Exod. vii 7). Their first cousins Mishael and Elzaphan are by definition of the same generation. This leaves Korah, another first cousin of Moses and Aaron, and Dathan and Abiram, as Israelites of the time who were three generations from one of Jacob's sons. It can hardly be coincidental that they are the challengers to the authority of Moses and Aaron. In other words, the only people who are three generations away from the tribal fathers are specifically the leaders, their first cousins, and the leaders of the revolt(s). We expect these individuals to be older than the general population, and indeed their genealogies reflect exactly this.

Furthermore, with the exception of the minor characters Mishael and Elzaphan, the Bible records the deaths of these men as occurring during the Wandering period (Num. xvi 32, xxxiii 38; Deut. xxxiv 5). The notion that everyone of the Wandering generation(s) (except for Joshua and Caleb) died in the wilderness (see Num. xiv 26-35) must refer only to the elderly or more probably should be understood as an epic tradition. We have mention of such people as Aaron's son Eleazar and his grandson Phinehas in the book of Joshua (xvi 1, xxii 13, etc.) and obviously there must have been others like them who made the transition from wandering in the wilderness to settlement in Canaan. Accordingly, it may be fairer to play down those people on the above list who are three generations removed from their tribal father and emphasize instead their descendants, such as Eleazar, Phinehas, Gershom, and Eliezer.

These individuals, four or five generations removed from their ancestor Levi, were presumably much closer in age to people like Achan, Bezalel, Jair, and Zelophehad.

A second factor which needs to be introduced here is the question of the overlapping of generations. People of the same age need not *a priori* be of the same generation. We are all familiar with such examples from our own personal experiences.¹⁰ Moreover, from the prosopographic material available from the ancient Near East we are able to reconstruct several cases of overlapping of generations. One example is the family of Puḫi-šenni of Nuzi, depicted in Figure 2. One line of descent brings us to his grandson Umpiya; another line brings us to a great-great-grandson Tieš-urḫe. Yet, from a document such as JEN 668 we can determine that these two individuals were contemporaries.¹¹

A second example is the case of Nesaramun vi, an individual who lived during the reign of Osorkon III of Egypt (787-759).¹² His genealogical tree is displayed in Figure 3. Through each of his parents he is descended from the couple Djedthutefankh i and Tashepenbast (the former was a prophet of Amun and the latter was a sister of Osorkon I [924-889]). Yet on one side he is four generations removed from this couple and on the other side he is six generations removed.¹³

If we turn to a more famous family tree, that of the royal family of England, we note similar instances of the overlapping of generations.¹⁴ Among the most notable examples is the heritage of the

¹⁰ I refrain from presenting the information from my own family tree, which has many such examples. The erstwhile editor of this journal has already illustrated the point from his family; see J. A. Emerton, "Did Ezra Go to Jerusalem in 428 B.C.?", *JTS*, NS 17 (1966), p. 14.

¹¹ For details see M. P. Maidman, "The Teḫep-Tilla Family of Nuzi: A Genealogical Reconstruction", *JCS* 28 (1976), pp. 127-55, in particular p. 153. For additional material see now A. H. Friedman, "Toward a Relative Chronology at Nuzi", in D. I. Owen and M. A. Morrison (ed.), *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians* 2 (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1987), pp. 109-29.

¹² For the dating of the Egyptian pharaohs of the 22nd and 23rd Dynasties, I follow K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100-650 B.C.)* (2nd edn, Warminster, 1986), p. 588.

¹³ See further M. L. Bierbrier, *The Late Kingdom in Egypt (c.1300-664 B.C.): A Genealogical and Chronological Investigation* (Warminster, 1975), p. 68. I am grateful to Professor G. E. Kadish of the State University of New York at Binghamton for calling my attention to this valuable book.

¹⁴ The following information concerning the British royal family is excerpted from a small pamphlet published by Pitkin Pictorials, namely P. W. Montague-Smith, *The Royal Line of Succession* (London, 1974). The data may also be found, of course, in much larger reference works.

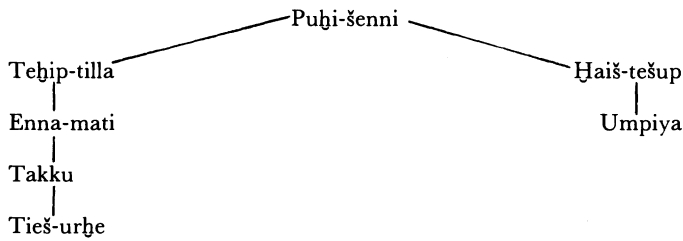


Figure 2. Family Tree of Puḫi-šenni of Nuzi

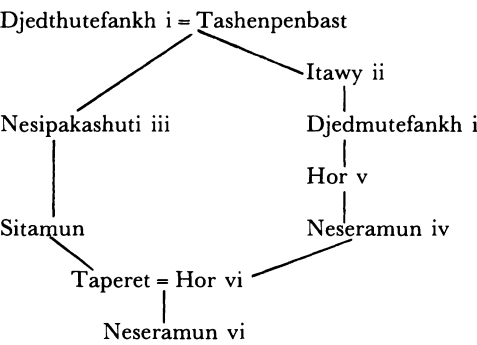


Figure 3. Descent of Nesperamun vi from Djedthutefankh i and Tashenpenbast

present Prince of Wales. Charles is descended from king Christian IX of Denmark (d. 1906) and his wife Queen Louise (d. 1898) through both his mother and his father, and yet by a different number of generations. Through Queen Elizabeth II he is five generations removed from the Danish royal couple and through Prince Philip he is four generations removed.

The lineage of Henry VIII is another interesting case. Through both his parents he is descended from his predecessor Edward III. However, through his mother Elizabeth he is eight generations removed from Edward, but through his father Henry VII he is only six generations away.

As a third instance of the overlapping of generations in the British royal family I present the case of Richard Duke of York, who challenged the rule of Henry VI, only to die at the Battle of Wakefield in 1460 during the War of the Roses. His ancestry also twice leads to Edward III, but through his mother Anne Mortimer he is five generations removed and through his father Richard he is only three generations away.

Such examples could easily be multiplied, but these several lineages from world history from antiquity to the present will suffice for our purpose. Most instructive are those cases of persons who are descended from the same individuals through two different lines of unequal length. Charles's four/five generations from Christian IX affords a parallel to Jair's four/five generations from Judah/Joseph, which equals five/six generations from Jacob. Henry VIII's six/eight generations from Edward III, Richard Duke of York's three/five generations from the same king, and Naserarum vi's four/six generations from Djedthutefankh i and Tashepenbast all serve as parallels to what might otherwise be considered flaws in the inner consistency of the biblical genealogies, namely, Eleazar's four/six generations from Levi/Judah which equals five/seven generations from Jacob, and his son Phinehas' five/seven generations from Levi/Judah which equals six/eight generations from Jacob. Clearly, one individual, be it Henry VIII and Richard Duke of York in late medieval English history or Eleazar and Phinehas of the early Israelite priesthood, could descend twice from the same ancestor and yet have lineages of unequal length with a difference of two generations within a relatively short span.¹⁵

To return, then, to the point made earlier, we can affirm that the numerous individuals from the books of Exodus through Joshua listed above all are three to six generations removed from their tribal fathers (or if we include Phinehas' maternal descent from Judah we have one instance of seven generations). The lives of all these people, from the oldest generation of Moses, Aaron, etc. to the younger generations of Zelophehad's daughters, Phinehas, etc., could all have coincided at a certain point in time. Furthermore, the cases of Jair and the father and son Eleazar and Phinehas, with their double descents of different lengths, are also explicable. All this, especially when one considers the controls of the two inter-tribal marriages of Aaron and Elisheba and of Hezron and the daughter of Machir, points to the remarkable inner consistency of the biblical genealogies.¹⁶

¹⁵ Naturally, over the course of hundreds of years even greater unequalness can occur. For example, Henry VIII is also 19 generations removed from Rhodri Mawr the Great of Wales (reigned 844-878) on his father's side and 23 generations removed from the same ancestor on his mother's side.

¹⁶ The factors described in the preceding paragraphs have been noted by scholars working on genealogies from other parts of the world. Note the following remarks of D. H. Jones, "Problems of African Chronology", *Journal of African*

Earlier, I stated that there is one exception to the fact that everyone coeval with Moses is 3-6 generations removed from one of Jacob's sons. This exception is Joshua, whose genealogy in 1 Chr. vii 20-7 produces the line Joseph-Ephraim-Beriah-Rephah-Resheph/Telah¹⁷-Tahan-Ladan-Ahmmihud-Elishama-Nun-Joshua, thus making him ten generations removed from the tribal father. It so happens that this list also includes Elishama ben Ammihud who occurs in Num. i 10 as the Ephraimite prince.¹⁸ It is obvious that Joshua's ten-generation span cannot be dovetailed with the 3-6 generation span of his contemporaries. This probably holds for Elishama's eight-generation span as well, notwithstanding the one side of Phinehas' ancestry which places him seven generations from Judah.

Is there a solution? Perhaps not, but one may be worth suggesting. Num. xxvi 35 implies that Ephraim had a son Tahan, the same name that occurs midway through Joshua's genealogy in 1 Chr. vii 20-7. Possibly the Chronicles material is faulty (as a look at the entire section might suggest; see n. 17) and we should identify the Tahan of 1 Chr. vii 25 with the Tahan of Num. xxvi 35. This leaves us a Joseph-Ephraim-Tahan-Ladan-Ammihud-Elishama-Nun-Joshua line, making Joshua seven generations removed from Joseph and Elishama five. This conveniently solves the problem, since it makes Joshua's descent from Joseph the same as Phinehas' maternal descent from Judah and it makes Elishama five generations from Joseph in perfect accord with others of the wilderness generation. This solution, however, is based solely on a strictly hypothetical reinterpretation of the Chronicles genealogy, and certainly a methodologically sounder approach should be used.

Unfortunately, none presents itself, especially given the data available. We may, however, wish to consider the problem of Joshua's lineage in the greater context of the problem of the person himself. This is not the place to enter into details, for it is well

History 9 (1970), p. 168: "Almost exact contemporaries can fall into different generations. The same individual is not uncommonly found in a different generation along different lines of descent".

¹⁷ I interpret 1 Chr. vii 24-5 to mean (a) that Rephah and Sheerah were siblings, son and daughter of Beriah, and (b) that Resheph and Telah are brothers (cf. LXX) with one of them being the father of Tahan.

¹⁸ Unfortunately, of the 24 individuals listed in Num. i 5-15, xiii 5-15, only Elishama ben Ammihud, Joshua bin Nun, and Nahshon ben Amminadab have genealogies which link them to a tribal father.

known that scholars have questioned the historicity of the Joshua traditions. The Chronicles genealogy may have arisen by simple attaching Joshua bin Nun to Elishama ben Ammihud based on the respective lists in Num. i 5-15 and xiii 5-15.

I am the first to admit that this a convenient way to eliminate the problem of Joshua from my attempt to demonstrate the inner consistency of the biblical genealogies. But the opposite approach—to claim that Joshua's genealogy invalidates all the others¹⁹—is less attractive. To this point I will return later, but first we must discuss two other problematic genealogies.

There are no other biblical people of the era of Moses whose recoverable genealogies lead to the age of the patriarchs. There are, however, two individuals of the Davidic period who have recorded genealogies which link them with Levi, to wit, Samuel and Zadok, Samuel's line in 1 Chr. vi 18-23 of Levi-Kohath-Izhar-Korah-Ebiasaph-Assir-Tahath-Zephaniah-Azariah-Joel-Elkanah-Amasai-Mahath - Elkanah - Zuph - Toah - Eliel - Jeroham - Elkanah - Samuel leaves him nineteen generations removed from the tribal father. This genealogy cannot be reconciled with the material already gathered. For example, Samuel is an older contemporary (by at least one and more likely by two generations) of David who is but ten generations away from Judah.

However, there are problems with the Samuel genealogy: (a) there are three individuals named Elkanah in 1 Chr. vi 18-23; (b) Ebiasaph and Assir are father and son in 1 Chr. vi 22, but in Exod. vi 24 they are brothers, sons (along with Elkanah) of Korah; (c) 1 Chr. vi 18-23 is very much at variance with Samuel's genealogy in 1 Chr. vi 7-13 which is garbled and too difficult to reconstruct; and (d) it is impossible for Samuel to be sixteen generations away from Korah, of the generation of Moses and Aaron, when both Jonathan and Phinehas, their respective grandsons and thus only two generations away, are alive shortly before the rise of Samuel (see Judg. xviii 30, xx 28).

The solution to this problem is easy. Neither 1 Chr. vi 7-13 nor vi 18-23 is a genuine genealogy, for as 1 Sam. i 1 states Samuel was

¹⁹ See K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (London and Downers Grove, Illinois, 1966), p. 55; and A. Malamat, "King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies", in W. W. Hallo (ed.), *Essays in Memory of E. A. Speiser* (New Haven, Conn., 1968) (= *JAOS* 88.1), p. 170.

an Ephraimite and not a Levite. During the period of the Judges and at the beginning of the monarchy, non-Levites could operate as priests (Judg. xvii 5; 2 Sam. viii 18, xx 26, etc.), and Samuel was such an individual. During the post-Exilic period, when Chronicles was compiled, there was a need to give Samuel a Levite genealogy and the result is 1 Chr. vi 7-13 and vi 18-23.²⁰ But that this is not a trustworthy genealogy is clear from the variants, from the number of generations he is removed from Levi, and from 1 Sam. i 1 where he is properly called an Ephraimite. In fact, 1 Sam. i 1 offers us a clue as to how 1 Chr. vi 7-13 and vi 18-23 were formed. The Zuph-Toah-Elihu-Jerahmeel-Elkanah-Samuel line was simply lifted from the book of Samuel and placed (with variants) in Chronicles immediately after another Elkanah.²¹

Zadok's genealogy occurs twice, in 1 Chr. v 30-4 and vi 35-8, without variation: Levi-Kohath-Amram-Eleazar-Phinehas-Abishua-Bukki-Uzzi-Zerahiah-Meraioth-Amariah-Ahitub-Zadok, making David's priest thirteen generations removed from Levi. (The genealogy in Ezra vii 2-5 adds another link, Azariah, between Meraioth and Amariah, making Zakok fourteen generations removed from Levi.²²) This is not impossible to reconcile with David's being ten generations away from Judah, but by restricting the discussion to the end of Zadok's lineage a problem does arise. Zadok cannot be eight generations away from Phinehas (see the above discussion regarding Samuel). If Phinehas was active at the end of the period of the Judges, i.e., just before Eli and Samuel,

²⁰ R. de Vaux, *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament II* (Paris, 1960), pp. 217, 258 = E. tr., *Ancient Israel* (London and New York, 1965), pp. 361, 391.

²¹ Wilson (n. 1), pp. 21-6, 133-4, has shown that the greatest depth of an ancient Near Eastern genealogy is ten generations and that lineages among modern tribal groups rarely exceed twelve generations. Accordingly, Samuel's genealogy, with a 19-generation depth is readily suspect. J. J. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* (Sheffield, 1981), p. 88, cites Samuel's (actually his grandson Heman's) genealogy to adduce that there were nearly twenty generations between the Exodus (the era of Korah) and David (contemporary with Heman), and then uses this datum to establish a 15th-century date for the Exodus. But to employ Samuel's genealogy without recognizing the critical problem of his Ephraimite origin, and, more importantly, to disregard all the other genealogies I have cited is a misjudgement by Bimson and a misapplication of the biblical record. I agree that the genealogies may be used for historical reconstruction, but not in the uncritical manner employed by Bimson. For my own position, see briefly the Excursus below.

²² Still another, even more peculiar, variation occurs in 1 Chr. ix 1; Neh. xi 11, where Zadok appears as the son of Meraioth and the grandson of Ahitub.

Zadok, who comes only a generation or two after Samuel, cannot be eight generations after Phinehas.

The solution seems to lie in the theory that Zadok was a Jerusalemite priest before David's conquest, a Jebusite holdover who continued to function in the Jerusalem shrine when David made it the focus of Israelite religious life.²³ As such, he was not a Levite to begin with, and just as Samuel needed an invented Levite genealogy, so did Zadok. The symmetry of the Zadok line in 1 Chr. v 28-41, with twelve generations of priests from the Wandering to the building of the Temple and twelve generations from then to its reconstruction after the Exile, makes the list look suspect and partly artificial.²⁴ We should conclude that Zadok's genealogy may be accurate to some extent, but that a direct link back to Aaron and Levi is an invention to justify the Zadokite line's authority in post-Exilic times.²⁵

To sum up, Chronicles offers Levite genealogies for both Samuel and Zadok but neither is defensible. Samuel was an Ephraimite who engaged in priestly duties and Zadok was probably a non-Israelite priest who continued serving the Jerusalem shrine after David's conquest. Neither is descended from Levi, and their genealogies in Chronicles merely reflect an attempt to legitimize their service. In all probability, the lineages of Samuel and Saul were attached to already existing Levite lists and thus they occur nineteen and thirteen (or fourteen) generations removed from Levi. That this cannot be the case has been shown through internal

²³ See most importantly H. H. Rowley, "Zadok and Nehustan", *JBL* 58 (1939), pp. 123-32; as well as A. Bentzen, "Zur Geschichte der Šadokiden", *ZAW* 10 (1933), pp. 173-6; C. E. Hauer, "Who Was Zadok?", *JBL* 82 (1963), pp. 89-94; R. W. Corney, "Zadok", *IDB* 4 (1962), pp. 928-9; and de Vaux (n. 20) II, pp. 235-6 (= E. tr., p. 374). The attempts by F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), pp. 207-15, to refute this theory are unsuccessful, suffering most of all from circular reasoning (especially on p. 208).

²⁴ De Vaux (n. 20) II, p. 237 (= E. tr., p. 375). Yeivin (n. 7), p. 183, n. 14, writes: "... in the absence of any contradictory evidence, it would seem justifiable to accept this lineage at its face value". But such a position is untenable in the light of the contradictory evidence here presented.

²⁵ The Ahitub father of Zadok in the Chronicles lists and in 2 Sam. viii 17; 1 Chr. xviii 16 may be his actual father, or it may be the Chronicler's attempt to link Zadok with Ahitub ben Phinehas ben Eli (1 Sam. xiv 3) and thus place him in a legitimate Levite line. The former is more probable since Chronicles reads Meraioth-Amariah-Ahitub-Zadok and not Eli-Phinehas-Ahitub-Zadok. Cf. "Ahitub", *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2 (1971), col. 466. Also, my comments in n. 21 about the length of Samuel's genealogy are apposite for Zadok's genealogy too.

evidence and by comparisons with David's genealogy which places him only ten generations away from Judah.

There are no other characters after Joshua who have genealogies which link them to the patriarchal period. None of the Judges appears in the Chronicles lists.²⁶ Saul, the first king, has a lengthy pedigree: Aphiah-Becorath-Zeror-Abiel-Kish-Saul (1 Sam. ix 1²⁷), and we are told that he is a Benjaminite. But the links in the chain from Apiah back to Benjamin are wanting.

Having thus excluded the lineages of Samuel and Zadok from consideration, we may repeat our previous claim that with the exception of Joshua, all individuals of the Exodus-Wandering-Conquest narratives who have genealogies linking them with the Patriarchs are 3-6 generations removed from their tribal fathers. In my own mind, with no evidence to the contrary, I would translate this consistency as evidence of general accuracy and historical reliability. Robert Wilson himself has admitted the following:

All our evidence also indicates that in fact genealogies may contain accurate information and may be potentially valuable sources for the modern historian. In many cases we found agreement in the various versions of a given genealogy and therefore have no reason to question its accuracy... In conclusion, then, we may say that genealogies may be used for historical research but that they cannot be used uncritically. Each individual genealogy must be examined, and an attempt made to assess the reliability of each of its components ([n. 1] p. 200).

In the above investigation of the pertinent biblical genealogies, I believe I have adhered to Wilson's guidelines. Genealogies which

²⁶ The *New American Bible* and *New English Bible* and Yeivin (n. 7), pp. 96-9, try to see Ehud ben Gera in the Benjaminite genealogy in 1 Chr. viii 1-7. Judg. iii 15 reads *ʔehūd ben-gērāʔ*. 1 Chr. viii 2 lists among the sons of Bela the firstborn of Benjamin *gērāʔ waʔābī(y)hūd* which the *NAB* and *NEB* interpret as Gera father of Ehud. Further along, in 1 Chr. viii 6, there occurs a certain *ʔehūd* (with *het*), which may be a scribal error for *ʔehūd*. It is possible that the judge Ehud is intended here but the problematic passage does not permit us to reconstruct a certain genealogy. If we accept the *NAB* and *NEB* division of *waʔābī(y)hūd* into **ʔābīʔehūd*, then the line is Benjamin-Bela-Gera-Ehud. But it is difficult to imagine that Ehud is only three generations removed from Benjamin. 1 Chr. vii 6-10 yields a line of Benjamin-Jediael-Bilhan-Ehud, though this is probably not the judge Ehud because he too is three generations away from Benjamin and the patronymic does not accord with Judg. iii 15.

²⁷ On the slight variation in 1 Chr. viii 33, ix 39, see P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel* (Garden City, New York, 1980), pp. 172-3, 256.

have been demonstrated to be problematic, such as Samuel's and Zadok's and perhaps also Joshua's, have not been accepted at face value. The others, however, stand up to the test. Some will undoubtedly disagree with me, and argue that I have been uncritical in the evaluation of our sources. There is a large amount of evidence pointing to the unreliability of the Chronicles material especially. But the majority of the genealogical material considered has come from the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Ruth. David's and Nahshon's line appears in Ruth, Achan's line in Joshua. The Levite material, the lines of Aaron/Moses and their children, Mishael/Elzaphan, and Korah, comes from Exodus. The lines of Dathan/Abiram and Zelophehad appear in Numbers. Of all the characters discussed, only Jair and Bezalel (and Elishama) have Chronicles as the sole source for linking them with the Patriarchal age.

Let us also consider the following point. Not only are the genealogies generally concordant, but as just noted they appear in a variety of sources. If the lineages all occurred in one source, we would have to question the idea that consistency translates to reliability, because it would have been easy, for one writer to compose all the genealogical material in a consonant manner. But instead we are dealing with multiple sources.

For example, let us assume as many authors as possible for the various sources we have cited. How is it that Author A who wrote Ruth places Nahshon five generations away from Judah, that Author B who wrote Josh. vii places Achan four generations away from Judah, that Author C who wrote Num. xxvii places Zelophehad five generations away from Joseph, that Author D who compiled Exod. vi places Aaron/Moses, Mishael/Elzaphan, and Korah three generations away from Levi, and that Author E who compiled Num. xxvi places Dathan/Abiram three generations away from Reuben? Then, if we add the Chronicles material, how it is possible that Author F who compiled still further genealogies places Bezalel six generations away from Judah and Jair five generations away from Joseph? This is all too coincidental to be a fabrication and untrustworthy.²⁸

²⁸ Naturally, some will argue that Author C, D, and E are one and the same, namely, the Priestly source, usually dated to Exilic or post-Exilic times and thus presumably as unreliable as Chronicles. But if the so-called P genealogies are mere inventions, we would expect some consistency in the number of generations. But

One argument which is usually brought forward concerning the unreliability of the genealogies is that they reflect considerable telescoping. To bolster this contention the example of Joshua *vis-à-vis* Moses is nearly universally cited.²⁹ But we should ask why this comparison is always used: because it is the only one which can be used. The only other two possibilities are Samuel and Zadok, but as most scholars recognize and as I have discussed above, their genealogies from Chronicles reflect doctoring to justify their priestly service to Israel. This leaves only Joshua's genealogy which can be advanced.

We are therefore left with a choice. Either (a) Joshua's genealogy is accurate and those of Bezalel, Nahshon/Elisheba, Achan, Jair, Zelophehad, Aaron/Moses and their children, Mishael/Elisheba, Korah, and Dathan/Abiram have all been telescoped, presumably independently by different authors, or (b) these genealogies are correct and Joshua's is inaccurate. It is plain that there is no choice; we must opt for (b). Joshua's genealogy is still in need of an explanation, and I have attempted to deal with this problem above. One of my arguments was that several generations were added between Ephraim and Tahan in the list in 1 Chr. vii 20-7. This is the opposite of telescoping, a type of genealogical fluidity known as lineage growth (see Wilson [n. 1], pp. 30-1). Other examples of this occur in Chronicles. We have already suspected lineage growth for the genealogies of Zadok and Samuel, and another example is Ebiasaph who is listed as Korah's great-grandson in 1 Chr. vi 7-8 as against Exod. vi 24 where he is Korah's son.

Telescoping does occur in the Bible, but only in late works, e.g., in 1 Chr. v 38-41; Ezra vii 1-5, where clearly a number of generations has been deleted. The same holds for Esth. ii 5 where, assuming Ahasuerus to be Xerxes I (485-464 B.C.E.), it is difficult to

this is wanting, e.g., Zelophehad is five generations away from Judah, the others are three generations away from either Levi or Reuben. Some would consider Author B to be the Priestly source as well, but here again we lack consistency, namely Achan is four generations removed from Judah. Moreover, Josh. vii 18 which also records Achan's genealogy is usually seen as JE. Of course, all this assumes a continuation of the traditional Pentateuchal sources in Joshua, a point not universally accepted. Moreover, we have the controls of Nahshon's genealogy in Ruth, Bezalel's and Jair's in Chronicles, and the two intertribal marriages, all of which still makes the agreement of these genealogies too coincidental to be a fabrication and untrustworthy.

²⁹ Kitchen (n. 19), p. 55; Malamat (n. 19), p. 170; and Wilson (n. 1), p. 197, n. 127.

believe that Mordecai is but three generations removed from the deportation of Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) in 597 B.C.E.³⁰ Similarly in the New Testament, e.g., Matt. i 12-17 where one can hardly expect but eleven generations to separate Zerubbabel and Jesus (cp. Luke iii 23-7 where twenty generations separate the two).³¹ Even Zelophehad has had his genealogy shortened in 1 Chr. vii 15; he obviously cannot be the son of Manasseh. So there are examples of telescoping, but I submit that none can be demonstrated in early sources such as the Pentateuch.³² We should also keep in mind the observation of D. P. Henige who has exhaustively studied genealogical material of Africa in particular and of the world in general. He writes: "The incidence of the artificial lengthening of kinglists and genealogies and the concomitant development of an exaggerated notion of the length of the past are much more common than telescoping".³³ With all this in mind, we are left to conclude that Joshua's genealogy has been expanded (and that perhaps Joshua himself is only a secondary addition; see above, p. 195), and that the genealogies of Moses etc. are accurate.

At this juncture there is another issue which may be introduced. It should be noted that the various individuals discussed above are all descended from either Reuben, Levi, Judah, or Joseph. In fact, if we look at all the material from the birth of Jacob's sons through the Conquest, we note that with two exceptions (on which see below) the characters who have roles to play in the stories are the same four sons, their brothers Simeon and Benjamin, and descendants of these six tribal fathers.

In Genesis alone the following items should be noted. Reuben brings mandrakes home to his mother (xxx 14), has an affair with Bilhah (xxxv 22), tries to save Joseph from his brother's scheming

³⁰ I realize, of course, that the whole genealogy is suspect since the author undoubtedly wanted to pit a "ben Kish" against an "Agagite".

³¹ Here we may even detect the reasons for telescoping, namely, Matthew's desire to have three uniform lineages of fourteen generations each.

³² References such as Laban ben Nahor in Gen. xxix 5 and Jair ben Manasseh in Num. xxxii 51; Deut. iii 14, are not attempts at true linear genealogies, rather they are phrases imbedded into narratives which merely highlight the most famous individual at the head of the family tree. In these cases *ben* is not intended as "son", but as "grandson, descendant". So although these citations do skip intervening generations, I would not liken them to the post-Exilic examples of Mordecai, Jesus, etc. In these latter cases, true genealogies are attempted with telescoping no doubt having taken its effects.

³³ *The Chronology of Oral Tradition* (Oxford, 1974), p. 38.

(xxxvii 21), volunteers to be Benjamin's guardian (xlii 37), and is explicitly referred to as Jacob's son (xlviii 5). Simeon and Levi avenge the rape of their sister Dinah (xxxiv 25), and the former is imprisoned in Egypt (xlii 24) and also explicitly referred to as Jacob's son (xlviii 5). Judah also tries to save Joseph (xxxvii 26), also offers himself as surety for Benjamin (xliii 8-9), then intercedes to save Benjamin (xlv 14-34), is the one sent ahead by Jacob before the patriarch's trip to Egypt (xlvi 28), and he has an independent story concerning him, his sons, and his daughter-in-law (xxxviii). Joseph, of course, is the centerpiece of a long narrative (xxxvii, xxxix-1). Benjamin also plays an important role in the story (xlii 36, xliii 29, 34, xlv 12, xlv 14, 22), and he has an independent birth story (xxxv 16-18).

In the books following Genesis, I have already made mention of Moses, Aaron, Mishael, Elzaphan, Korah, Gershom, Eliezer, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar, Phinehas, Dathan, Abiram, Nahshon, Achan, Bezalel, Jair, Zelophehad and his daughters, and Joshua. Here we may add Miriam of the tribe of Levi (Exod. xv 20; Num. xii 1, etc.), Caleb ben Jephunneh of the tribe of Judah (Num. xiv 6, etc.), and Zimri of the tribe of Simeon (Num. xxv 14). (The only exceptions to this long list are two Danites: Oholiab ben Ahisamach [Exod. xxxi 6] and Shelomith bat Dibri [Lev. xxiv 11], to be discussed in the Excursus.) All other individuals mentioned by name appear only in contexts where all twelve tribal fathers or all twelve tribes are listed together (Gen. xxix 31-xxx 24, xxxv 22-6, xlix 3-27; Exod. i 1-5; Num. i 5-15, xiii 4-15, etc.), but they never appear in the narratives.

This dichotomy between the two sets of six sons dovetails perfectly with the manner in which they are treated at birth. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Joseph, and Benjamin are the six sons born early to Leah or to Rachel. The other six, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, and Zebulun, are born late to Leah or to the handmaidens Bilhah and Zilpah. In the past, scholars have spoken of such groups as the Leah tribes, the Rachel tribes, the handmaiden tribes, etc., but I do not believe that the point just made has ever been noticed before. To relate this fact to the question of the genealogies and their presumed reliability requires a goodly amount of hypothesizing and speculation. With that disclaimer, however, I shall proceed with a plausible reconstruction.

Early Israel consisted of twelve tribes each of which had an eponymous ancestor. Six of these ancestors were the sons of one man, the patriarch Jacob,³⁴ who in turn was the son and grandson of the patriarchs Isaac and Abraham. Certainly, not every member of these tribes could trace a direct lineage back to Jacob, but the leaders of the tribes presumably could. To this group little by little other non-related tribes began to link themselves, so that by the time of the Judges they were twelve in number.³⁵ These tribes, even their leaders, could not claim descent from Jacob, and accordingly their eponymous ancestors play no part in the stories about the patriarch. But their eponymous ancestors were depicted as sons of Jacob, albeit in the reduced role of the handmaidens' offspring or as a second set produced by Leah. Once the league was fully established, material such as Gen. xxix 31-xxx 24, xlvii 8-25; Exod. i 1-5, etc., was formulated and the result was Israel's idealized or schematized history as presented in the Bible.

We may wish to go further and suggest that only the primary set of tribes experienced the slavery in Egypt and Exodus from it. Scholars have already theorized that not all Israel participated in this history,³⁶ and this would accord with that view. Furthermore, examples of such tribes are among those in the secondary list. Papyrus Anastasi I, dated to the end of the 13th century B.C.E., refers to a tribe named *ʾšr* which apparently is to be identified with biblical Asher.³⁷ If we assume, with most scholars, that the Israelite entrance into Canaan had not yet occurred at this time, then we would have confirmation of a tribe which became associated with Israel after the period of the Exodus and Wandering. Similarly, C. H. Gordon and Y. Yadin have argued persuasively that biblical Dan was originally the Denyen/Danuna/Danaioi of other ancient sources which became a member of the Israelite nation at a relatively late stage.³⁸

³⁴ Does this explain why in Gen. xlvii 2 Joseph presents only five brothers to Pharaoh?

³⁵ Also by this time or soon afterwards Levi had ceased to exist as a true tribal unit and Joseph had developed into two independent tribes Ephraim and Manasseh.

³⁶ R. de Vaux, *Histoire ancienne d'Israel II* (Paris, 1973), p. 62 = E. tr. *The Early History of Israel* (London and Philadelphia, 1978), pp. 745-6.

³⁷ For discussion see A. H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* (London, 1947) I, pp. 192-3*.

³⁸ C. H. Gordon, "The Mediterranean Factor in the Old Testament", *SVT* 9 (1963), p. 21; and Y. Yadin, "And Dan, Why Did He Remain in Ships?" in

These are broad outlines, and I repeat they are hypothetical and perhaps even speculative, but the basic conclusions of my research into the biblical genealogies support this reconstruction of the origins of the people of Israel. More firmly grounded is my earlier contention that the inner consistency of the biblical genealogies points to their general veracity and that they may act as a reliable guide for historical research.³⁹

EXCURSUS:

The Danites in Exod. xxxi 6; Lev. xxiv 11

Above (p. 202) it was noted that there are two exceptions to the fact that the individuals who appear in the Exodus-Wandering-Conquest narrative all come from Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Joseph, and Benjamin. They are Oholiab ben Ahisamach, Bezalel's assistant in Exod. xxxi 6, and Shelomith bat Dibri in Lev. xxiv 11, both from Dan. This may seem totally to weaken the argument advanced above, but if the appearance of the two Danites in these narratives can be otherwise explained then the thesis may stand.

In a forthcoming article I propose to date the Exodus from Egypt during the 12th century. One of the arguments I will bring is the evidence of the biblical genealogies. Since Nahshon is a fifth-generation ancestor of David (see Ruth iv 20-1), and since an

Western Galilee and the Galilean Coast (Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 42-55 (in Hebrew) = E. tr. (with the same title) in *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology* 1 (1968), pp. 9-23, and J. G. F. Best (ed.), *The Arrival of the Greeks* (Amsterdam, 1973), pp. 55-74. See also my contribution to Y. L. Arbeitman and G. A. Rendsburg, "Adana Revisited", *Archiv Orientalní* 49 (1981), pp. 150-2.

³⁹ One example of this would be to demonstrate that there was no great span of time separating the period of the Patriarchs and the period of the Slavery and the Exodus. Rather, as the genealogies indicate, there was a span of only several generations, a point which is also made in Gen. xv 16. The books of Genesis and Exodus are presented as a continuum and there is no chronological break assumed in them. If the events of the book of Exodus are to be dated to the Ramesside age, as most scholars believe, then the events of the book of Genesis would be dated to the Late Bronze Age. This would be tacit confirmation of the Late Bronze date for the Patriarchal period proposed by C. H. Gordon, "The Patriarchal Narratives", *JNES* 13 (1954), pp. 56-9; and O. Eissfeldt, "Palestine in the Time of the Nineteenth Dynasty", *Cambridge Ancient History* II/2 (3rd edn, Cambridge, 1975), pp. 312-14.

average generation equals 30 years,⁴⁰ then Nahshon would have been alive about 150 years before David. If David is to be dated to c.1000 B.C.E., then Nahshon may be dated to c.1150 B.C.E.

My candidate for the Pharaoh of the Exodus would be Ramesses III, under whose reign Egypt was attacked by the Sea Peoples coalition which included the Philistines and the Denyen/Danuna/Danaioi (see conveniently *ANET*, p. 262). An allusion to this war occurs in Exod. xiii 17. These events could have been a propitious occasion for the Israelites to leave Egypt.

More to the point, whereas the Philistines eventually became the arch-enemy of Israel, the Denyen/Danuna/Danaioi eventually linked up with Israel to become one of its tribes (see the sources cited in n. 38). This process began already at the time of the Wandering, and indeed the *ʿēreb rab* of Exod. xii 38 and the (*ʿā*)*sap-sūp* of Num. xi 4 refers to non-Israelites among the people of the Wilderness generation. In this way we can account for the presence of two Danites in the Wandering period. Admittedly, there is no solid evidence to substantiate this proposal, but it is coincidental that the only two people not from the early Leah or Rachel tribes both come from Dan.

Furthermore, it may not be coincidental that one of these two Danites is an artisan-craftsman, namely Oholiab who assists Bezalel in the construction of the Tabernacle. If we accept the identification of the Danites and the Denyen/Danuna/Danaioi, then this group of Israelites would have Aegean origins. It so happens that the peoples of the Levant recognized their debt to the Aegean world in the areas of artisanry and craftsmanship. The god of arts and crafts at Ugarit, Kothar-wa-Hasis, has his home on *kptr* (*UT* ʿnt [= *CTA* 3]: VI: 14). And the Hebrew word for the capital of a pillar (Amos ix 1; Zeph. ii 14) or the knobs on the golden lampstand (Exod. xxv 31, xxxvii 19, etc.) is *kaptôr* betraying the origin of the items so called. The consensus is to identify Ugaritic *kptr*, Hebrew *kaptôr*, Egyptian *kftw*, and Akkadian *kaptaru* with Crete in particular or the Aegean world in general.⁴¹ In short, we may see in

⁴⁰ For this figure see the exhaustive research conducted by Henige (n. 33), pp. 121-44.

⁴¹ See J. Vercoutter, *L'Égypte et le monde égéen préhellénique* (Cairo, 1956), passim; *CAD* 8 [K] (1971), p. 191; W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (2nd edn, Garden City, New York, (1957), p. 216; and R. W. Hutchinson, *Prehistoric Crete* (Harmondsworth, 1962), pp. 106-11. The most recent and most comprehen-

Oholiab a skilled Aegean craftsman who brought his talents to work for Israel.

sive treatment of the subject is J. Strange, *Caphtor/Keftiu: A New Investigation* (Leiden, 1980), I disagree with his conclusion that *kpt̄r/kaptôr/kft̄yw/kaptaru* is to be identified with Cyprus. These terms may occasionally have referred to the Aegean area in general, but Crete is the locale usually attended. See G. A. Rendsburg, "Gen. 10:13-14: An Authentic Hebrew Tradition Concerning the Origin of the Philistines", *JNSL* 13 (1987), p. 90, n. 3.