Old Testament Introduction
The Bible’s Buried Secrets
Chapter 8, Bible-Merneptah Intersection

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/bibles-buried-ecrets.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qalTJzk4kO0>

***About the Video***

What is for the most part an exact copy of the video script follows. There are a few places where individual speakers could neither be heard nor understood: for this we apologize. Every effort was made to be precise: there were just spots that defeated us. Since this is a quote in its entirety it seemed unnecessary to mark it with quotation marks. The notation for each speaker is tedious enough: Narrator, Reader, etc. If you discover bothersome errors, please reply to this website and point them out. You may verify the script more easily by starting to replay it where the “time” stamps indicate discussion begins. The second of the above links is free from advertising and thus easier to use.

***Overview***

The Merneptah Stele adds little or nothing to the intersection. The biblical provenance paints a complete picture by itself. The Israelites do have a presence in the hill country, but it is never an absolutely commanding one. As time passes the various Canaanite coalitions tend to become stronger; while the Israelite forces weaken.

The timing of the Jabin and Sisera oppression (1212-1193 BC), followed by the Deborah, Barak, and Jael victory (1193-1154 BC) in the valley of Jezreel is an ideal fit with the date of the Merneptah Stele (1208 BC): so, we wish that it were possible to establish intersection between the Judges record and the monument claim for this/these event(s).

The dates for the return of the Ark fit well with David’s career. There is no evidence to suggest that the Israelites are natives: they are decisively settlers. Those who have sought an intersection have produced none: yet, here it is, unfolded before our very eyes.

***Script***

The Bible-Merneptah Intersection (time 9:10)

Quote:

N: Scholars search for intersections between science and Scripture. The earliest is a victory stele of the Egyptian Pharaoh Merneptah from 1208 BC. Both the stele and the Bible place the people called the Israelites in the hill country of Canaan, which includes modern day Israel and Palestine. It is here between two of history’s greatest Empires that Israel’s story will unfold.

Peter Machinist:[[1]](#endnote-1) The way to understand Israel’s relationship through the superpowers, Egypt and Mesopotamia on either side, is to understand its own sense of its fragility as a people. The primary way in which the Bible looks at the origins of Israel is as a people coming to settle in the land of Israel, it’s not indigenous, it’s not a native state.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Unquote.

***Intersection***

“Intersections between science and Scripture”, can only be found in the fact that both the Creator, and the God Who speaks, are the same person: it is this fact alone that compels us along what would otherwise be an often frustrating and usually fruitless task. We labor for decades, even scores of years, with no results of which to speak; then, a sudden breakthrough in archaeological discovery makes all the years of toil worthwhile.

While there are gainsayers on both sides of this issue, we are not able to escape the fact that it is our Creator Who speaks to us. It is out of a sense of duty and love to Him, as well as a sense of duty and love to our fellow humans, who have to live on this ball of dirt; which drives us continually, to seek that elusive goal of an intersection between science and Scripture.

Unfortunately, Merneptah has not provided us with any such satisfactory conclusion, at least thus far. Future discoveries of evidence may change that whole picture.

**Location**

It is not true that “Both the stele and the Bible place the people called the Israelites in the hill country of Canaan.” The so-called proofs of the Merneptah Stele are dubious indeed. The evidence from the Amarna letters is far more convincing.

First of all, the Merneptah Stele does not cite any precise location markers within the hill country. The location markers that are identified are for cities on the sea coast and in the western plain, not in the hill country.

An interesting related fact is that the Egyptian forces were well known charioteers. They also employed infantry. It is unlikely that they would have risked their chariot forces in the hills where chariots are at a disadvantage. It is equally unlikely that they would have marched an infantry over such a great distance to deal with what, for Egypt, must have been a petty irritant at the time.

Egypt simply had bigger fish to fry: in the west the Meshwesh were on the rise and would ultimately prevail; the Amarna letters reveal the steady growth of dissatisfaction with and unrest over Egyptian administration;[[3]](#endnote-3) Egypt failed, for all its grandeur, power, and show, to suppress the pirates that plied their trade along the Via Maris; Egyptian commitment to expensive monuments of self-adulation and self-praise, coupled with an elaborate and expensive priestly class, weakened more than one dynasty; other people, not just Israelites, chafed under the cruel Egyptian oligarchy.

After all is said and done, the whole remark is limited to two lines on the Stele: barely an unimportant afterthought, a mere annoyance, a nuisance, a triviality… Israel is, “the Mouse that Roared”.

The bottom line is that we don’t really know where Yano’am is: so, until a firm archaeological site for Yano’am is discovered, this issue of location must remain a question mark.

**Identification**

Second of all, the Merneptah Stele does not cite any certain identification of Israel. The Egyptian word sounds a little bit like Israel; yet, it took a long time for the experts to even guess at that possibility. Worse yet, this Egyptian word also sounds like Jezreel. Israel is a distinct possibility; but, it is far from a certainty. We would prefer that it were a certainty: for that would substantiate a good deal of Israelite history. Alas, no such substantiation is there. Israel is not known either.

**Obliteration**

Furthermore, as a third point, we haven’t got the first clue what, “Y\_\_\_’s seed was obliterated,” might possibly mean. To the modern mind, this seems to refer to ethnic cleansing: Y\_\_\_’s tribes were wiped out. On the other hand, it may refer to Y\_\_\_’s grain or seed storage supplies, indicating that Y\_\_\_’s food is now gone: they are reduced to famine, have no seed to plant, and now must struggle just to survive, having been reduced to a basic society of hunter-gatherers, living “rough” in the mountains. Or seed may refer to something else entirely. We do not know what we do not know.

**Dearth**

There is no use trying to squeeze unwarranted conclusions from evidence that isn’t there. In short the Merneptah Stele neither proves nor disproves the existence of Israel at all; nor does it establish the existence of any ethnic group in the hill country: the hill country is simply not mentioned. Now if any firm identification of and location for Yano’am[[4]](#endnote-4) can ever be established, and if confirmation of the uncertain Egyptian word translated Israel[[5]](#endnote-5) were ever found, our analysis would necessarily change. We would love to have the Merneptah Stele’s archaeology confirm the presence of Israel in the hill country. With the extant state of knowledge, such confirmation from Merneptah simply does not exist.

***Superpowers***

The Bible certainly places the Israelites in the hill country. It is not true that the Bible presents the Israelites as in control or dominant in that hill country. So, when Machinist says, “it’s not a native state,” the point is well taken. We agree, [Israel is] “not a native state.” That being said, it seems to contradict the claim that we are able to, “place the people called the Israelites in the hill country of Canaan.”

**Substantiation**

If such claims as, “here between two of history’s greatest Empires that Israel’s story will unfold,” to which great empires do we refer? For Machinist, this obviously means, “Egypt and Mesopotamia.” Yet, *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* never develops an archaeology of Mesopotamia, so this is a strange claim to make and not follow through on that claim.

**Organization**

The Amarna letters paint a picture of several nations to the north and east: Amurru (Amorite), Arzawa, Ashkelon, Beit Shemesh, Byblos, Cyprus, Gath, Gazu, Hatti, Hurrian, Jebusite, Magidda, Mitanni, Retjenu (Aramean), Sidon, Ugarit… while most of these are city-states, they were certainly not amalgamated nations… indeed, the modern concept of nations could not exist among much of this list during this era. Nor was Mesopotamia a homogenous entity: Akkadians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Elamites, Kassites, Persians, Sumerians, and others all vied for power in Mesopotamia… many of these were also organized as city-states. Only Egypt entertained the illusion of the twin nations: yet, the plethora of ever changing dynasties assures us that this was more talk than fact.

**Oversimplification**

The whole region (Anatolia, Levant, Northeast Africa, Babylonia, and more (for which we remain incredibly ignorant of the facts, and naïve in our understanding of those facts); this region is a seething political complex of control, intrigue, and power; which simply cannot be reduced to “Egypt and Mesopotamia”, as is the all too common assumption. Scholars who go this way are just being too lazy to bother us with the trivial details: it’s just easier to pass off as “Egypt and Mesopotamia”. Even this is an unbalanced comparison: for Egypt is a nation, Mesopotamia is a large land mass, while Israel is an assortment of thirteen ethnically related tribes: there is no basis of comparison or contrast other than size.

***Fragility***

Even so, we are even more interested in Machinist’s remark, “The way to understand Israel’s relationship … is to understand its own sense of its fragility as a people. Such a fragility seems to be an even more important theme that was never developed.

**Joshua**

We have showed in a previous chapter that Joshua left much of the work unfinished at his death at the ripe age of 110.[[6]](#endnote-6) The Israelites maintained some degree of momentum throughout the next generation after Joshua, but then they seemed to have fallen apart through inconsistency of leadership.[[7]](#endnote-7)

**Causes**

What where the causes of such uncertainty of leadership? Yahweh was their leader and it is impossible that He lacked sufficient power to complete the conquest of Canaan. The Israelites simply broke covenant with Yahweh: first, they stopped trusting Him; then, they stopped obeying Him. Consequently, Yahweh stopped leading and protecting the Israelites.[[8]](#endnote-8) Without Yahweh’s leadership and protection, the Israelites were no match for the Canaanites with their iron chariots, their skills at archery[[9]](#endnote-9), as well as backing from Anatolian, Levantine, Northeast African, Mesopotamian, or other world powers.

***Substance***

In spite of such horrendous breaches of faith, Yahweh continued to show mercy: for whenever His punished children cried, He stopped the punishment which they had brought upon themselves.[[10]](#endnote-10) So the whole struggle for the settlement of Canaan lapsed into a downward spiral of repentance and defeat, which would last for over three centuries.[[11]](#endnote-11)

* Eight years of Mesopotamian domination under Chushanrishathaim.[[12]](#endnote-12)
* Forty years of deliverance under Othniel.[[13]](#endnote-13)
* Eighteen years of Moabite domination under Eglon.[[14]](#endnote-14)
* Eighty years of deliverance under Ehud.[[15]](#endnote-15)
* Shamgar
* Twenty years of Canaanite domination under Jabin.[[16]](#endnote-16)
* Forty years of deliverance under Deborah, Barak, and Jael.[[17]](#endnote-17)
* Seven years of Midianite domination under Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah, and Zalmunna.[[18]](#endnote-18)
* Forty years of deliverance under Gideon.[[19]](#endnote-19)
* Three years of Abimelech’s insurrection[[20]](#endnote-20)
* Jotham
* Twenty-three years of deliverance under Tola[[21]](#endnote-21)
* Twenty-two years of deliverance under Jair[[22]](#endnote-22)

This appears to cover a three hundred-one year period. However, Jephthah in his contention with the Ammonites, claims that this period is only three hundred years long.[[23]](#endnote-23) This calls the historicity of the period in question because: 1. the count is off by one year; 2. no space is left for Joshua or the elders who outlived Joshua.

***Theory***

**Fiction**

One solution is to assume that the account is not historic. But why would a scribe writing at a later date (say 500 BC), fabricate an historic record in which he makes an error of simple addition. There is a tendency among those who falsify records to perfect and correct errors, not to make them.

**Overlap**

A second solution is to assume that the account is not intended to be sequential. All of these reigns are thought to be regional and overlapping in this view. This is the usual solution to the problem; it may not be denied that this is a possibility. This is a period of great uncertainty, for both Canaanites and Israelites: so, the last thing we may do, is speak with certainty about it.

**Counting**

A third solution is to assume that the account uses ascension dating in which the final year of the predecessor is also counted as the ascending year of the successor, so that one year is counted twice: this is known to be a common method of calculation among some nations.[[24]](#endnote-24) By reducing each number by exactly one, we arrive at a different counting method, non-ascension dating. Both dating methods were in use over the span of Israel’s history. This yields a sum of two hundred-ninety years, which allows ten years for the life of Joshua and the elders who outlived Joshua.

**Longevity**

This makes a great deal of sense. Joshua served as Moses’ chief assistant for forty-two years. It does not stand to reason that Moses entrusted such a task to a person many years his junior.[[25]](#endnote-25) Nor does it stand to reason that Joshua lived long after Moses died: he is an old man who has just actively participated in seven or eight violent battles.[[26]](#endnote-26) The elders who outlived Joshua were his own age, his contemporaries: so ten years is more than adequate to account for these deaths.[[27]](#endnote-27) All of them had endured the forty years in the wilderness; as well as two years of combat in Transjordan. Many of them were sixty when they crossed the Jordan. In spite of the longevity of Moses (120), and Joshua (110), we have no reason to doubt that an age of seventy was quite old (Psalm 90:10, the Psalm of Moses).

**Credibility**

In any case, we see no real reason to doubt that the number three hundred is historically accurate, or that the whole account is accurate. We cannot prove that the resolution to the problem is found in overlapping reigns or in correcting for ascension counting methods, or some combination of both. Neither is there any good statistical reason to doubt the provenance; nor does any evidence exist that would refute such provenance and its historicity. Three hundred years sets the date to 1064 BC.[[28]](#endnote-28) This suggests that the exaggerated claim of Merneptah (1208 BC) may have been carried out by the forces of Jabin and Sisera (1212-1193 BC) in the valley of Jezreel, the perfect location for chariot battles: where ultimately Jabin and Sisera were defeated by Deborah, Barak, and Jael (1193-1154).

**Hypothesis**

If this theoretical analysis, which is now our working hypotheses, can ever be showed to hold water, we now would have a nearly exact “intersection” between science and the Bible: for our range of error cannot be more than 4-15 years, according to this hypothesis. Given the deviation and perplexity of the statistics of biblical dating, this is hitting the nail exactly on the head, this is an out-of-the-park homerun. Now, if it can only be substantiated, and when?

**Hazor**

In direct conflict with this hypothesis, is the fact that Hazor shows signs of internal destruction. Nor is there any evident reason to connect Hazor with Yano’am.

***Philistines***

After Jephthah, the spiral of repentance and defeat continues: the year is 1064 BC.

* Eighteen years of combined Philistine and Ammonite domination.[[29]](#endnote-29)
* Six years of deliverance under Jephthah.[[30]](#endnote-30)
* Seven years of deliverance under Ibzan.[[31]](#endnote-31)
* Ten years of deliverance under Elon.[[32]](#endnote-32)
* Eight years of deliverance under Abdon.[[33]](#endnote-33)
* Forty years of Philistine domination, the first eighteen being contiguous with the Ammonites.[[34]](#endnote-34)
* Twenty years without deliverance under Samson, contiguous with the Philistines first twenty years.[[35]](#endnote-35)
* Twenty years without deliverance under Eli, contiguous with the Philistines last twenty years.[[36]](#endnote-36)
* Yahweh and Samuel defeat the Philistines at the end of the period of the Judges. The Philistines will regroup and rise up against the Kings: yet, the Kings comprise a new era.

**Transjordan**

In the east, with the Ammonites attacking Israel; while at the same time the Philistines were oppressing Israel in the west: Israelites were afraid to walk the streets. In the east, the whole sequence of Judges 12 suggests that Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon were successful at defeating the Ammonite side of the coalition: this may have been sufficient to discourage the Philistines from many more great advances. We have now reached 1020 BC.

**Cisjordan**

In the west, Philistine power ebbed and flowed; yet, for thirty-nine years the Philistines were the dominant power in western Canaan (1064-1025 BC). Samson defeats the Philistines many times; yet, is unable to overcome them (1064-1045 BC). After Samson, Eli[[37]](#endnote-37) confronts the Philistines (1044-1025 BC) and is defeated by them when the Ark is taken (early 1025 BC)[[38]](#endnote-38).

* The Ark delivers itself in seven months. Yahweh is absent with His Ark for seven months.[[39]](#endnote-39)
* Yahweh subdues the Philistines in response to Samuel’s prayer.[[40]](#endnote-40)
* Yahweh and His Ark remain in exile for twenty years.[[41]](#endnote-41)

**Ark**

Meanwhile, Saul becomes king (1050 ???-1010 BC)[[42]](#endnote-42); yet, while Saul has his victories, he is also beset by insurmountable moral defects.[[43]](#endnote-43) After the death of Eli (early 1025 BC), Samuel emerges as the great prophetic figure he is, he is the heir to Moses.[[44]](#endnote-44) The Philistines were no match for Yahweh, so after seven months, they set the Ark free (later in 1025 or early 1024 BC): at about the same time, Samuel defeats the Philistines by prayer at Ebenezer (later in 1025 or early 1024 BC). The Philistines remain inactive until they begin to engage Saul, toward the end of his reign. The Ark of the Covenant only seems inactive during this period: from 1024-1005 BC, the Ark resides at Kirjath Jearim. This picture suggests an ebb and flow progress of Philistine domination for thirty-nine years and more, which will not be terminated until the combined energies of Yahweh’s covenant renewal with David, Samuel’s prayer at Ebenezer, and David’s God-given military and political prowess finally emerge between 1010 and 1003, or later. The Philistines were temporarily defeated at Ebenezer around 1025/24 BC, not long after the Ark was captured, later the same, or early the following year.

**David**

In this turn of events, David makes important lifelong alliances with the Philistines, winning many of the Philistines away from Egypt; eventually making some Philistines his bodyguard. We ought not to think of this as due to David’s charm, singing, or wit; rather, Yahweh’s actions and David’s responding and obedient faith eventually brought many Philistines to see the futility of Dagon, and the reality of the Shəkinah, the Glory.

**Review**

To review: Thirty-nine years passed, until the Ark was taken, while the Philistines were defeated by prayer (1025 BC); the Philistines were not able to tolerate the Ark for a full year; another nineteen years passed with the Ark in a barn, when David brought the Ark back to Jerusalem around 1005 BC, five years, or so, into his reign.[[45]](#endnote-45)

The emphasis is not on Eli after his death; rather the emphasis is on the Ark. When Yahweh departs, He indicates the cessation of leadership under the Judges. When Yahweh returns, a new institution of government is formed, the government by Kings. Even Samuel is rejected.[[46]](#endnote-46) A new covenant is eventually established with David. The sequence is:

* David rules over Judea.
* Civil strife continues with Saul’s family and followers.
* David unites the nation.[[47]](#endnote-47)
* David takes Zion.[[48]](#endnote-48)
* David defeats the Philistines.[[49]](#endnote-49)
* David restores the Ark.[[50]](#endnote-50)
* Yahweh renews the Covenant with David.[[51]](#endnote-51)

Conclusion

The Merneptah Stele adds little or nothing to the intersection. The biblical provenance paints a complete picture by itself. The Israelites do have a presence in the hill country, but it is never an absolutely commanding one. As time passes the various Canaanite coalitions tend to become stronger; while the Israelite forces weaken.

The timing of the Jabin and Sisera oppression (1212-1193 BC), followed by the Deborah, Barak, and Jael victory (1193-1154 BC) in the valley of Jezreel is an ideal fit with the date of the Merneptah Stele (1208 BC): so, we wish that it were possible to establish intersection.

The dates for the return of the Ark fit well with David’s career. There is no evidence to suggest that the Israelites are natives: they are decisively settlers. Those who have sought to unveil an intersection have failed to do so.

If the working hypothesis had been, the period of Judges is not history; which it cannot be history if it is written in stages paralleling Torah (950 – 850 – 600 – 500 BC): then the conclusion must be that the evidence provided by Merneptah Stele, taken by itself, failed to refute the idea that Judges is not history. If the working hypothesis was, the period of Judges is certainly history: then the conclusion can only be that the Merneptah Stele evidence, taken by itself, failed to disprove the hypothesis that Judges is history. You decide.

[[52]](#endnote-52)

1. Peter Machinist, a professor at Harvard Divinity School with no special qualifications in archaeology.

<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/exodus/who-was-moses-was-he-more-than-an-exodus-hero/> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. What will later be contested here is whether or not Israel is an indigenous people, or foreign immigrating settlers. Machinist develops a mild case for the immigration scenario, but Dever will mount a much more strongly worded opposition to it: Dever will attempt to turn Israelites into poverty stricken indigenous Canaanites, in part the survivors of the collapse of Hazor, circa 1208 BC. Even though Dever’s position lacks factual support, his argument is presented with much greater force; and that, most convincingly, seemingly conclusive….

Nevertheless, *argumentum ex silentio* and *argumentum ad ignorantiam* prove nothing either for or against any hypothesis.

Careful attention to the correct statistical formation of hypotheses in their null or alternate form readily exposes such errors. The failure of *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* to correctly formulate and carefully word hypotheses, exposes a sloppy disrespect for science. To call this science is insulting. In this context, credible and noteworthy scientists are quoted in support of issues in ways with which they may not completely agree. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Judging from the amount of groveling, such administration was more a matter of oppression and tyranny than of mutual respect. Egypt respected only itself: it was happy to accept the gift of foreign wives, yet refused to reciprocate in kind.

Fascinatingly, each of the Amarna letters specifies an exact location for the author of the letter. The 'Apiru are here, there, and seemingly everywhere: yet, they are not conquerors, they are irritants. It is this ubiquity of a powerful presence falling short of mastery that most closely matches Joshua’s plans to occupy and settle the land (Joshua 13-24), as well as Israel’s faltering attempts to execute these plans. There is nothing left to doubt about locations in Amarna. The name 'Apiru, however, is far from certain. It is this fact, that we know of no other power force active in Cisjordan, which could possibly be the 'Apiru, other than the Israelites, who were often known by the misnomer of Hebrews; it is this fact that forces the conclusion: the conclusion is reached by default. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. What we need here is quite a bit more than Redford says so, as much as we respect Redford. We need a dig in the central highlands, or elsewhere, which has present on its site, the undeniable reference to the name, Yano’am.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yokneam>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yanun>

Janoah, E9 on the map, 2 Kings 15:29, is unlikely to be the right place.

<http://www.bible-history.com/geography/ancient-israel/israel-old-testament.html>

<http://www.bibleandscience.com/archaeology/exodus.htm> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. What we need here is confirmation from other Egyptian, Israelite, or other monuments or artifacts, which unmistakably show that the Egyptian word on the Merneptah Stele is commonly used for ethnic or national Israel. Strong lexical meaning cannot be established on a hapax legomenon: so, where else is this term used? [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Joshua 24:29-31; Judges 2:6-9 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Judges 1; 2: 10 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Judges 2:1-3; 11-15 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Evidently, combat level archery skills were not common among the Israelites prior to David. On the other hand, the Philistines and Egyptians were renowned archers. 2 Samuel 1:18; Psalm 18:34 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Judges 2:16-23; 6:8-12 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Judges 3:1-8 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Judges 3:8 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Judges 3:11 [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. A Moabite coalition with Ammonites and Amalekites, Judges 3:11:13-14 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Judges 3:30 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Judges 4:3 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Please do not overlook the lengthy Todah, Judges 5:31 [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. A Midianite coalition with Amalekites, and the children of the east (desert people from Jordan to the Euphrates), Judges 6:1 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Judges 8:28 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Abimelech is a nasty piece of work, Judges 9:22. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Judges 10:2 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Judges 10:3 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Judges 11:25 [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Some nations counted this way, while others did not. The use of zero was unknown among the ancients. Not until around 400 BC, six centuries after the period of Judges was ended, was zero known to be used as a place marker. The mathematical use of zero as an integer is not discovered until well after 400 AD.

Think of counting off the years of a king’s reign on your fingers: most of us would start with one; a few might want to skip counting that first year, and credit it to the previous king (unless the old king died on December 31, while the new king took office on January 1, in which case there would be no overlap). We are suggesting that most ancient people would count with an overlap, the way children count on their fingers.

This is the way the length of Jesus burial is counted (1-2-3); He was in the tomb for three days: this seems strange to the modern mind, since Jesus was only in the tomb for between 33-36 hours (assuming that He died exactly at the ninth hour (Mark 15:34-44, 3 PM; John 19:33, the Sabbath began with Vespers at 6 PM) and raised exactly at or before Orthros (3 AM). 9 + 24 + 0 = 33. The three days counted are the remaining nine hours of Friday, all of Saturday, and a few hours before early dawn on Sunday (Mark 16:2, He is already raised). 9 + 24 + 3 = 36. Or if early before daybreak is evaluated as Prime, then the maximum possible time of burial would be 39 hours… equals three days. 9 + 24 + 6 = 39. It is a massive anachronism to read modern mathematical concepts back into any part of the BC eras; yet this is how theories of Wednesday, and/or Thursday crucifixions are created. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. This proposal makes Joshua junior to Moses by twenty years. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. War with Amalek, the Transjordan battles, Jericho, twice at Ai, Bethel, two more in Cisjordan: a net sum of eight. If you don’t count Bethel, you get seven. If you become more detail conscious you might find even more. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. It is inconceivable that Joshua could be younger than 20 years old at the Exodus in 1406 BC, far too young to hold the office of national vice president; this would make Joshua 62 years old at the death of Moses and the Jordan crossing; Joshua is left with a maximum of 48 years to act in Cisjordan: he would be 58 years younger than Moses. We like our idea better: Joshua had 10 years to finish his work; he was 100 at the Jordan crossing, just after the death of Moses in the same year; he was 20 years younger than Moses; this makes Joshua 58 at the Exodus, a much more reasonable age for handling affairs of state. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. We have now abandoned the MT dates. Anyone who is not yet willing to go along with the LXX dates may simply add 40 years to most of the dates given. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Judges 10:7-8 [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Judges 12:7 [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Judges 12:9 [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Judges 12:11 [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Judges 12:14 [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Judges 13:1 [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Judges 15:20; 16:31 [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. 1 Samuel 4:18 [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Eli’s age is given as 90 (LXX), 98 (MT); he dies around 1025 BC, when the Ark was taken. This calculates to a birthdate of around 1114-1122 BC. His service of 20 (LXX), 40 (MT) years as high priest is either coterminous with the Philistine domination, and, in part with Samson (1064-1025 BC), or coterminous with the last half of the Philistine domination (1044-1025 BC). Readers will now realize that we have come to the opinion that the MT dates are corrupt: we are following the LXX dates. Eli’s administration may explain how the Philistines were able to prevail: for spiritual leadership throughout the period was utterly corrupt. 1 Samuel 4:10-22 [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. 1 Samuel 4:17-22; 6:1 [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. 1 Samuel 6:1 [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. 1 Samuel 7:13 [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. 1 Samuel 6:22-7:2 [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Saul’s dates are corrupted in MT, possibly deliberately (1 Samuel 13:1; 15:35). LXX has no dates. Acts 13:18-21 has ἔτη τεσσεράκοντα, which is neuter nominative or accusative without any clear reference. While Saul may have led the Joseph tribes for a gross sum of forty years, we believe he only led Israel at large for about fifteen years. There is no Old Testament evidence. The evidence here, in Acts, is not clear. We believe that Samuel and Saul labored together for ten years, until Samuel died. Then Saul floundered by himself for another five years, during which he consulted with Samuel’s spirit through the Witch of Endor, then finally engaged the Philistines at Gilboa, where he and Jonathan were killed. This, we believe, sufficiently explains Saul’s forty years, until somebody discovers a better solution.

This could indicate that Yahweh gave Saul ben Kish to Israel as an additional punishment: after a four-hundred-fifty-year period. The four-hundred-fifty-year period is even more enigmatic: it appears to be some sort of rabbinic Scripture evaluator. The scribes seem to have developed a number of tests to guarantee that no copying error was made: this could be such a test. If we simply add the numbers from Joshua to Jephthah after Moses (311), Jephthah through Sampson (89), Sampson (20), Eli (20), and just throw in ten more years for Samuel, because there is no data for Samuel, we arrive at 450 (311 + 89 + 20 + 20 + 10 = 450), without any regard for what the numbers actually mean, a 354-year chronological span.

This may seem like so much arbitrary guess work; yet, this is the evidence Scripture gives us to resolve and understand. The larger truth is that Scripture is primarily concerned about the presence of God, the Shəkinah; the lives and dates of people are not nearly as important, according to the declaration of Scripture: if we lose our focus and shift it to mankind, we are watching the wrong thing. The 300 years from Joshua to Jephthah added up to 301, because we were never given dates for Joshua: we had to figure them out. We believe that the Judges until Jephthah coincide with the Ark because these Judges were obedient to God. We believe that there is an Ammonite and Philistine coalition: because, that’s what the Scripture indicates. In the east, the Judges were obedient to God. In the west, neither Samson, nor Eli is obedient to God. What matters most at this point is not that Samuel and Saul will continue; but rather that the Ark will take a twenty-year vacation: we are left to work out the details on our own. Our solution is a flexible one as long as we do not interfere with the twenty-year absence of the Ark, the firm date for David’s ascension (inauguration), or distort the sequence of events: this leaves us with very narrow windows of time to adjust by a year or two.

There is nothing to substantiate the idea that Saul was in office for forty years: and Acts is not perfectly clear on that matter. Acts simply says “forty years” without providing any other reference material. We personally doubt that Saul served more than about fifteen years: there is just no substantial data for the life of Saul.

The other dates in Acts 13:18-21 are equally problematic. They cannot be made to mesh with the Old Testament numbers. The word about may solve the riddle: it is possible that Paul does not intend to be precise. On the other hand, Paul may simply be reciting some standard rabbinic summary, since he is caught in a rabbinic argument. This could indicate that the standard rabbinical explanation for the seeming excessive length of Judges was due to overlaps: in which case the numbers easily add to 450, without amounting to any such a chronology in real time. In any case, there is insufficient evidence here to cast much doubt on the historicity of Judges. If either 14C dating or pottery dating could produce results within ± 50 years, we might be forced to draw a different conclusion. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. 1 Samuel 15; 1 Samuel 28:7-19 [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. 1 Samuel 7:15; 15:35; 25:1; 28:3 [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. <http://wayhome.org/DatingOldTestamentHistory.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kings_of_Judah>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_F._Albright>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwin_R._Thiele>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gershon_Galil>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Kitchen> [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. 1 Samuel 8:7 [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. 2 Samuel 5:3; Psalm 78:67-71 [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. 2 Samuel 5:7 [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. 2 Samuel 5:25 [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. 2 Samuel 6 [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. 2 Samuel 7; 23:5; Psalm 89; 132 [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
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