

The Authenticity of the Book of Judges

Bill Cooper

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For

Ross Rosevear

in gratitude for the many years of industry and expertise
that he has poured into managing and building up both the CSM
and its Genesis Expo in Portsmouth

Thank you, Ross!

About the Author

Bill Cooper is a Vice President and Trustee of the Creation Science Movement in England. He also serves as Adjunct Professor of Providential History and Apologetics on the Master Faculty at the Institute for Creation Research School of Biblical Apologetics (Dallas, Texas). He is the author of *After the Flood* (1995); *Paley's Watchmaker* (1997); *William Tyndale's 1426 New Testament* (old spelling ed. British Library. 2000); *The Wycliffe New Testament of 1388* (British Library. 2002); *The Authenticity of the Book of Genesis* (CSM. 2012); *The Authenticity of the Book of Daniel* (2012); *The Authenticity of the Book of Jonah* (2012); *The Authenticity of the Book of Esther* (2012); *The Chronicle of the Early Britons* (2012); *Old Light on the Roman Church* (2012); *The Authenticity of the New Testament Part 1: The Gospels* (2013); *The Authenticity of the New Testament Part 2: Acts, the Epistles and Revelation* (2014); *After the Flood 2nd edition* (2014); *Foxe's Actes & Monuments 1463* (2014); *Paley's Historicity of St Paul (Horae Paulinae 1790)* (2014); *The Wycliffe New Testament (1388) original spelling* (2014); and *The Authenticity of the Book of Joshua* (2015). He has authored numerous technical articles on Creationism, Palaeoanthropology, Bible Apologetics, the Reformation and the History of the English Bible. Graduating with Honours at Kingston University (England), he went on to obtain both his PhD and ThD from Emmanuel College of Christian Studies (Springdale, Arkansas). He lives in England, is married to Eileen (for more than 40 years now), has two daughters, numerous foster children, four fine grandsons and a granddaughter.

Cover pic: A Syrian king of ca 1400 BC, from *Nordisk Familjebok*, 1876.

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Introduction

This book is not a commentary as such on the Book of Judges. It is rather an examination into the question of the Book's authenticity as an historical document. It looks into the question of the Book's early writing, and into its integrity and truthfulness as an historical record. Of particular consideration will be the many microscopic details which will tell us either way if the Book of Judges is authentic or not. These corroborative details are the ones that the critics seem to miss all the time. They will happily disparage Judges, just as they do the rest of the Bible, with baseless allegations of late composition, error, misinformation, propaganda, or just plain fraud, whilst referring to each other for their evidence and authority. But they will not even attempt to deal with the finer evidences that shout the Book's authenticity. That's where this present study comes in.

The accounts of certain of Israel's Judges will be examined. Each period of jurisdiction is documented in the Book of Judges, and these records were brought together (under God) when the Book of Judges was finally compiled - the period of the Judges being closed in the 11th century BC when King Saul began to reign. These accounts will then be compared with whatever archaeology has discovered, including the contents of the Tell El-Amarna Tablets, a rich source of contemporary documentation that we have already encountered in our study of the Book of Joshua in this series. The Tell El-Amarna Tablets are a source of immense embarrassment for the 'higher critics,' which is why they at first denigrate, and then steer well clear of them. I don't blame them. If I were a critic, I'd do the same. But here, we don't ignore them. We make full and fair use of their contents wherever and whenever they touch upon events and personages that appear in the Book of Judges. Meanwhile, exactly when was the Book of Judges written? Is it as ancient as it claims to be?

Chapter One: The Early Writing of the Book of Judges

As with all the studies in the Authenticity series, we have to begin with the question of date of composition. So we proceed in this present case immediately to asking, when was the Book of Judges written? – not by whom necessarily, but certainly when? If it was written nearly a thousand years after the events that it pretends to treat of, and as the critics so often allege, then we would be wasting our time in any further study – which is the entire purpose of the allegation, of course. The Book of Judges would be nothing more than a propagandist's forgery, of some antiquarian interest no doubt, but worthless as a truly historical document, and even more worthless as a Book of Scripture. So the question is important. When *was* the Book of Judges written?

The Internal Evidences

According to Jewish tradition, the Book of Judges was written by the prophet Samuel. That is why it is listed - along with Joshua (also allegedly by Samuel) - amongst the former prophets in the Tanakh, the Jewish Bible. Samuel could not have written Joshua, however, because Joshua tells us that at the time of its writing, Rahab was still alive (Joshua 6:25). Rahab would have to have been about 400 years of age to be still alive in Samuel's day, a fact that must rule him out as the writer of Joshua. With Judges, though, it is a different matter. It could easily have been written by Samuel. It certainly dates from his time, as witness the following synchronism:

“...the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem, but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin unto this day” (Judges 1:21).

That was the state of play in Samuel's day, because Jerusalem was not to fall entirely to the Israelites until David's reign, and Samuel died before David became king (1 Samuel 25:1).

Moreover, there are repeated statements in Judges (17:1; 18:1; 19:1; & 21:25) that there were no kings over Israel “in those days,” strongly implying that there was a king over Israel when these statements were written. That king can only have been Saul if the Jebusites were still holding Jerusalem. So with these evidences, we can say that it is very likely indeed that Samuel was the man through whom God gave us the Book of Judges. That would place the authorship of Judges at around 1010 BC at the very latest, and probably somewhere between 1030-1020 BC. Now that is some 600 years earlier for the writing of Judges than when the critics would have us believe the Book was written, so what further evidence do we need for its early writing? Not much, it would seem, but the following microscopic snippets are far too valuable to be omitted. The critics omit them for obvious reasons, but we must not.

Among these snippets are certain names provided for us throughout the Book of Judges. Now, it is unusual to use names as date indicators, for many names span several centuries. John and William, for example, span many centuries in English history, and David goes back some 3,000 years. Adam goes back 6,000 years! All other cultures and languages have names that are used across centuries and even millennia, and Hebrew is no exception to this rule. However, there are certain names in the Book of Judges which are peculiar to Canaan, and which are not found in records later than the 14th-11th century BC timeframe of the Book of Judges. We shall look at these names now, but it is important to note that no 5th-century BC forger could have been aware of them, for by his day these records had been buried and out of sight for upward of a thousand years or more.

In all, there are 49 personal names in the Book of Judges, and of them the following ten names occur in records earlier than the time of the Judges (14th century BC), but never later. These records include the Ugarit texts, the Ugaritic language becoming extinct long before the Book of Judges was written; the Nuzi texts of the 14th century BC; and the Tikunani Prism of ca 1550 BC. So, briefly, let's begin with Jael (Judges 4 & 5). Her name appears in

identical spelling in the Ugaritic texts.¹ Then there is Sisera (Judges 4 & 5), a name which appears in the Ugaritic texts as *zi-za-ru-wa*.² Then we meet with Purah (Judges 7:10-11), which name is found on the Late Bronze Age Tikunani Prism of 1450 BC as *pu-ra-an-ti*; in the 14th-century BC Ekalte Text as *pu-ra-me*; and in Urartian inscriptions as *pura*.³ Zalmunna (Judges 8:5-21) is a name which is known to the Hurrians as *zalmi*; and in Ugarit as *za-al-ma-na*.⁴ Then we have Sheshai (Judges 1:10), a name registered at Nuzi as *she-sha-a-a*.⁵ Likewise, Talmai (Judges 1:10) is a name known at Nuzi as *tal-mu-ia*.⁶ Delilah (Judges 16:4-18) was a name known at Ugarit as *da-li-li*.⁷ Zeeb (Judges 7:25) is a name known at Mari as *zi-ba-an*.⁸ Zebul (Judges 9:28-41) is likewise known from Ugarit as *zi-bi-li*.⁹ And finally, Kenaz (Judges 1:13) is found in Ugarit as *ka-na-zi*.¹⁰

Bearing in mind that these records range from the 16th century BC to the 14th, and that none of these ten names appear in records later than the 14th century BC – the time when the Book of Judges begins – then that is pretty impressive evidence for the early writing of the Book of Judges. What forger of the 5th century BC would have known anything about them? He might have had one lucky guess, maybe even two. But not ten. The odds against that happening by chance are staggeringly high, so high indeed as to place it well within the realms of impossibility. No. When we encounter these names in the Book of Judges, then we are as certain as we possibly can be that we are reading a document of proven antiquity. This is certainly no late forgery.

Nor can it be an early forgery concocted by Samuel. Assuming that it was indeed written between 1030-1020 BC, these names had been lost to view some 400 years previously, so Samuel – or whoever the Book's compiler was – was clearly not making the names up out of his head. Being the last of Israel's Judges, he relied (under God) on documents that were themselves written out in the times of previous Judges and therefore in his care and keeping, and he was therefore compiling an authentic account of events based, not on hearsay or

invention, but on authentic eyewitness reports. We shall come to see shortly how accurate these documents were, but it is clear if only from the names they contained – names unknown at any time later than the 14th century BC – that the documents were indeed eyewitness accounts dating from the times of which they speak.

But there's much more to it than just a matter of names, for there are no less than six words in the text of Judges that occur only once.¹¹ They are found nowhere else in all literature. Critics know them as '*hapax legomena*,' (sing. *hapax legomenon*. Gk. 'a thing once said'), and they can present the translator with a problem or two. In the end, of course, the translator has to make a reasonable guess as to the meaning of the word, but our question here is, why are they there at all? Why would a forger invent a word (or in the case of Judges, six words) which would mean nothing to his readers?

One critic in particular has come to serious grief over one of Judges' *hapax legomena*, focussing her attention on Judges 4:18.¹² The word in the Hebrew text that bothers her is '*bass^emika*,' which, given its context, is usually translated as 'covering' or 'mantle.' But Wilkinson wishes to put forward the idea that Sisera lay down, not because he was exhausted and covered by a blanket, but was instead overwhelmed by the strength of Jael's perfume, and she is more than happy to butcher the Hebrew text in order to demonstrate this strange fancy, suggesting that we replace '*bass^emika*' with a concoction of her own, namely, '*bosem ykh*.' Quite what was in this '*bosem ykh*' and what it was supposed to smell like, we may best imagine, but we are assured by our critic that it would have had a "devastating effect upon a man fresh from the rigors of combat."¹³ Devastating indeed, but not as devastating as the violence inflicted upon the Hebrew text by such nonsense.

But why butcher the text at all? As the original meaning of '*bass^emika*' is something that we can only guess at, why not suggest that it means simply a rank perfume that Jael floored him

with, instead of a mantle that she put over him? That would have been the better and wiser thing to do, and because *'bass^emika'* is a word found only here, such latitude of interpretation would at least be allowed some consideration. But to suggest that the Word of God should be broken up by a critic in order to make it amenable to his or her pet notion shows scant regard for the sanctity of that Word, and a perilous indifference to the repeated warnings against such illicit tampering.¹⁴ But such is the nature of the beast. The twisting, altering, eroding, and ultimately the destruction of the Scriptures is what Bible criticism has always been about. But it's a dangerous game to play for the one who tries.

However, turning to the Amarna Tablets, in EA 252 (lines 16-19) we are presented with, according to Albright, a distinctively Hebrew proverb:

“Further, if ants are smitten, they do not receive (the smiting passively) but they bite the hand of the man who smites them.”¹⁵

Now the curious thing about Amarna Tablet EA 252, is that it is written in two different languages. Only 20% of its contents are Akkadian, some 40% is an admixture of Canaanite and Akkadian, and the remaining 40% is pure Canaanite.¹⁶ Clearly its source is not someone who is a native Canaanite, for then it would have been written solely in the standard diplomatic Akkadian language of the Amarna series. So, who exactly was the author of the letter who calls himself Labaya? Jastrow tells us. The name Labaya is the Canaanite cognate of the distinctly Hebrew name of Levi.¹⁷ In other words, this Labaya is a Hebrew of the tribe of Levi. It explains the facts that Labaya never claims to be king of anywhere, although he has taken over the town of Shechem (Shakmu), and is busy taking over other towns and cities, provoking complaints from Canaanite kings to the Pharaoh concerning him. His use of a distinctly Hebrew proverb is therefore a telling clue.

Furthermore, there is the surprising and frequent mention in the Amarna Tablets of the men of Judah – *ameluti ia-u-du* – and the armed men of Judah – *ameluti sabe ia-u-du*.¹⁸ Now the men of Judah feature heavily in the Book of Judges, and the fact that they also feature in the Amarna Tablets of the 14th-century BC shows the mention of them in the Book of Judges to be authentic, and not something that a later forger might have invented – a forger to whom the Amarna Tablets would have been unknown. They had long been buried and lost even as early as the time of Samuel (11th century BC), so even he could not have used them to weave a tapestry of lies and deception. But now we know when the Book of Judges was written, we now have to ask how accurate it is, and to answer that question, we must begin with Othniel, the first of Israel's Judges.

Footnotes to Chapter One

1. Hess, Richard. 'Israelite Identity and Personal Names from the Book of Judges.' *Hebrew Studies*. Vol. 44 (2003). p. 29, citing Grondahl's *Personennamen*, p. 142.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
11. Verses in Judges containing *hapax legomena* include: 3:16; 3:22; 3:23; 4:18; 5:28; and 16:16.
12. Wilkinson, Elizabeth. 'The Hapax Legomenon of Judges IV 18.' *Vetus Testamentum*. Vol 33. Fasc. 4 (October 1983). pp. 512-513.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Deuteronomy 4:2; & Revelation 22:18-19.
15. Albright, W F. 'An Archaic Hebrew Proverb in an Amarna Letter from Central Palestine.' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. No. 89 (February 1943). p. 31. The actual inscription reads: "sha-ni-tam ki-i na-am-lu tu-um-ha-shu la-a ti-qa-bi-lu u ta-an-shu-ku qa-ti awili sha yi-ma-ha-ash-shi" – which is not the usually pure Akkadian language of the Tablets.

16. Albright, W F. 'An Archaic Hebrew Proverb in an Amarna Letter from Central Palestine.' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. No. 89 (February 1943). p. 29.
17. Jastrow, Morris. 'The Men of Judah in the El-Amarna Letters.' *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol. 12. No. 1 (1893), p. 61.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-72.

Chapter Two: Othniel and the Twice-Wicked King

“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves. Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Cushan Rishathaim eight years. And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Cushan Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Cushan Rishathaim. And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.” (Judges 3:7-11)

It is amazing how many commentators will tell you that Cushan-Rishathaim is a made-up name or is untraceable, either because the Book of Judges is a fraud, or because the name was deliberately coined by the writer(s) of Judges for the sake of making a pun. ‘Rishathaim’ is rightly said to be a Hebrew word meaning ‘doubly wicked’ or ‘twice evil,’ but then we are told that it was concocted that way in order to rhyme with Aram-Naharaim, the district over which this Cushan is said to have ruled. But even that is not the end of the matter, for the name Cushan is itself portrayed as a fictitious name, forged out of either of the words Cushite or Cassite. In other words, there was no such king, and the Book of Judges is wrong to say that there was.

Malamat complains (i.e. assures us that the Book of Judges is false) because the name is not found amongst the Cassite kings of Babylonia,¹ Babylonia in his view being synonymous with Aram-Naharaim, but that is because he was looking at king lists, not only from the wrong place (Babylonia), but from around 1200 BC, which is some two hundred years later

than the beginning of the Judges period when Cushan Rishathaim ruled. This would bother a conservative scholar, but not a liberal it seems.

The fact that the Book of Judges places Othniel, and hence Cushan Rishathaim, at the beginning of the Judges Period (early 14th century BC) matters not a fig to Malamat or his school.² He is quite ready to ignore any factual statement of the Bible in order to put forward some theory or other to prove the Bible false. But as even he must eventually have realised, it is important to look within records of the right period and the right place, otherwise you are bound not to find the name you're looking for. So we must turn to records of the correct time - the early 14th century BC - and as soon as we do that, we come across the name Cushan. Buried deep inside the Amarna Tablets where it seems so far to have strangely eluded the notice of every critic for the past 125 years, here it is in its Canaanite spelling:

“Let the king, my lord, ask his deputy whether our fathers have [not] brought it [grain] since the days of Ku-zu-na, our father.”³

The letter (EA 224) was written by Shum-Adda, ruler of Shamhuna,⁴ who claims a certain Ku-zu-na (Cushan) as his famed ancestor. While this cannot be the Cushan which interests us here, it does prove beyond any doubt at all that when the Book of Judges names a certain king of Mesopotamia (Heb. *melek aram*, i.e. king of Aram-Naharaim) as Cushan, then it is not just making up the name as is so often alleged. Malamat is wrong, it seems, and the Bible is right - as is so often the case.

But even that is not all. The name even has a feminine form, *Kashsha-rishat*,⁵ which indicates that the rabbinic commentators upon whom so many modern commentators depend, were rather over-interpreting the name Cushan Rishathaim when they tried to explain its meaning in esoteric terms. It would seem that the Biblical implication that Cushan Rishathaim is simply a name *not* loaded with esoteric meanings, but a straightforward name pure and

simple, is again correct. It even had a feminine form. But amongst the recorded kings of early 14th-century BC Aram-Naharaim, is there none that supplies a close match with this Cushan Rishathaim? Maybe we ought to do what our critics should have done years ago, and look at the early 14th-century lists and see.



Fig.1 North Syrian King of ca 1400 BC

As we do so, we find in the Assyrian lists the name of Eriba-Adad I.⁶ If we ask why the Assyrian lists should be important in this enquiry, the answer is simple. Aram-Naharaim, over which Cushan Rishathaim ruled, embraced Assyria and modern Northern Syria (what we would call north-west Mesopotamia). But why else should Eriba-Adad I be important to this enquiry? Again, the answer is simple. He ruled from 1392-1366 BC, the very period in which Othniel, the first Judge of Israel, flourished. But there is further (more microscopical) evidence than this, circumstantial though it be, but important nonetheless.

We have seen that the Hebrew name Cushan Rishathaim means Cushan the Doubly Wicked, or Cushan the Twice Evil, and this is not only an unusual epithet for a king, it is also unique,

and there must have been something blatantly notorious about him for him to have earned it. So, what of this Eriba-Adad I of Aram-Naharaim who ruled at precisely the same time as Cushan Rishathaim of the Book of Judges? Is there anything about him and his public persona that could have earned him this name amongst the Israelites? As it happens, there certainly is, and it was blatant, self-proclaimed and very public.

Every king has a royal seal, and Eriba-Adad I was no exception. These devices were not just for show. They were imbued with meaning, and were designed specifically to show the world the nature of the king with whom they had to treat. But there was something new about this royal seal which thereafter brought about a departure from the traditional design of royal seals amongst the Assyrians, and it is this. On that seal (impressions of which appear on several contracts of the time) is an heraldic device depicting two winged demons either side of a tree (the Tree of Life), above which is a solar disc, and in the adjoining panel a two-headed demon clutching two other demons by their ankles (see figs. 2 and 3 below).⁷



Fig. 2 Royal Seal of Eriba-Adad I



Fig. 3 Line Drawing of Eriba-Adad's Seal

The two-headed demon so prominent on the seal is doubtless the 'twice-wicked one' which the king worshipped, and the inference is very clear and obvious. This was a king who worshipped demons - one (the double-headed) in particular - and who blazoned that fact abroad for all to see. That is doubtless why the Israelites knew him as Cushan the Doubly Wicked, or Twice Evil. The epithet is neither a pun nor a contrived rhyme on the name of his kingdom as the rabbis and many a commentator since have alleged. It is something far more powerful and sinister than that, and the writer of Judges was perfectly right to record the fact. This was not just a matter of Eriba-Adad worshipping the false gods of Assyria, as all who came before him had done. He was a demon-worshipper, and devoted especially to the worship of a two-headed demon, which is why he recorded that fact on his royal seal, and why the Hebrews named him, Cushan Rishathaim.

This then was the king whom Othniel (under God) defeated so roundly in battle. But that battle had an aftermath, not just for the Israelites to whom it brought peace for forty years, and who were now free of Cushan's yoke, but for the Assyrians themselves. That somewhat surprising aftermath is seen most clearly in two of the Amarna Tablets, EA 15 & 16, both of which were written by the son of Eriba-Adad I (i.e. Cushan Rishathaim) himself no less, namely Ashur-uballit I, and their contents are most revealing.⁸

His first letter (EA 15) is a simple note, wishing health and prosperity to Pharaoh's household, his chariots (*a-na^{isu} narkabati-ka*) – even though Pharaoh didn't have any⁹ - and his troops (*sabe-ka*) – which Pharaoh wasn't lending out to anyone - telling Pharaoh that he is sending him a “beautiful chariot” (*isu narkabta damikta^{ta}*), two horses (*2 sise*), and “a date-stone of genuine lapis lazuli” (*abnu u-hi-na sha abnu ukne bane*).¹⁰

All very nice and friendly. However, he begins his second letter (EA 16) to Pharaoh most unwisely, ignoring the usual protocol of obsequious grovelling which exercised the kings of Canaan whenever they addressed Pharaoh. He is certainly not the dirt under Pharaoh's shoe, nor is he his stable-boy and minion. Not a bit of it. He presents himself to Pharaoh as the “Great King” (*sharru rabu*), and “your brother” (*ahu-ka-ma*) - Pharaoh's equal in other words! It was not the best nor yet the wisest way to present yourself if you wanted Pharaoh's help. Pharaoh (in his own eyes) was not just a king. He was a ‘god,’ and no man was his equal.

If that had been Ashur-uballit's only solecism, it might – for political expediency - have been forgiven, but he then goes on to pour scorn on the gifts that Pharaoh has sent to him in return for the ones that Ashur-uballit had sent him (and which are listed in his first letter EA 15):

“Is such a present that of a Great King? Gold in your country is dirt; one simply gathers it up. Why are you so sparing of it? I am engaged in building a new palace. Send me as much gold as is needed for its adornment.”¹¹

Pharaoh must have been unable to believe his ears when this was read out to him. The royal supplicant then goes on to demand that as two of his predecessors had once been given twenty talents of gold as a diplomatic gift, then he, being their equal, should likewise receive of Pharaoh's hand twenty talents of gold. The miserable sum that Pharaoh had sent, was not enough to pay his messengers' wages for the journey to and from Egypt, he opined, and continued:

“If your purpose is graciously one of friendship, send me much gold.... Are our messengers to be always on the march with (only) such results?”

He then rounds off his epistle with a display of contempt for the Pharaoh's messengers whom he had made to wait outside in the sun:

“If staying out in the sun means profit for [me] the king, then let him stay out and let him die right there in the sun, (but) for the king himself there must be a profit.... They [your ambassadors] are made to die in the sun!”¹²

And it is on that note that Ashur-uballit finishes his letter to Pharaoh, the 'god' of Egypt. It is very clear indeed from this that Ashur-uballit didn't have the faintest clue about the terms on which international diplomacy is conducted and relationships built up. Did he truly not know that ambassadors' persons are as inviolable as his own royal person, or the person of him who had sent them? Or did he simply not care? Maybe he didn't. His approach to Pharaoh is breathtaking. He makes demands like a spoiled brat, and behaves like the criminal gangster that he truly was. Assyrian kings were without exception men of the most gross and rapacious

violence, and when they could not be violent, they would try to impress the world by strutting and posturing like Mussolini, and by threatening all around them like a schoolyard bully. They ruled by brute force, entirely ignorant of the ways of diplomacy, and Ashur-uballit was no exception.

Amenophis IV, Pharaoh of Egypt, the recipient of his demands, was of another mould altogether, and he rightly treated this bully-king with disdain. He could afford to. He had recently witnessed the trouncing of the feared Assyrian army led by Eriba-Adad I (the Cushan Rishathaim of the Book of Judges and this supplicant's father) at the hands of a Hebrew rabble led by Othniel, a man who wasn't even a king, but a Judge! And he was of no mind to join hands with Assyria and take on the Hebrews himself - especially when his ambassadors had been left to perish in the Assyrian sun by the very king of Assyria, Ashur-uballit I, who was now seeking an alliance with him.



Fig. 4 Amenophis IV

But let us now consider what had happened to bring about this extraordinary situation.

Assyria had clearly suffered a serious setback at the hands of Othniel, and its repercussions echo loudly in the letters of Ashur-uballit. Momentarily at least, Assyria had lost its way on the international scene. It is as if Ashur-uballit had been surprised to suddenly find himself king, and he simply didn't know how to behave – the very scenario one would expect in the event of a surprise defeat.

In all, this is a great deal to have discovered about a king (Cushan Rishathaim) whom the critics say did not exist. Some of them get themselves into a hopeless muddle saying it:

“The identity of this king is uncertain. Because he was defeated by a S Palestinian hero, Othniel, some have understood Cushan-rishathaim to have been an Edomite chieftain, assuming ‘Aram’ as an error for ‘Edom’ and Rishathaim as perhaps ‘chief of the Temanites’”¹³

Wonderful, isn't it? The Bible has to be in error because the critics can make neither head nor tail of an extra-Biblical historical record which is there for all to see, and which a two-year-old could have made sense of. But what does all this tell us about the historical accuracy – the very authenticity – of the Book of Judges' account concerning Othniel, Judge and Deliverer (under God) of Israel?

Is the name of the king whom Othniel defeated, fictitious? As we have seen, no. It is not fictitious, and if we take the trouble to consult the records belonging to this time in history, the king is easily identifiable. Given his royal seal, which is how kings proclaimed themselves to the outside world in those days, we can even see the reason why he earned the name that the Book of Judges gives him.

Does the account of Othniel defeating this king in battle dovetail neatly into the wider historical scene? As we have seen, yes it does. And not only does it dovetail laterally into that scene, it also explains its otherwise anomalous – if slightly amusing – aftermath.

Now these are hallmarks of authenticity that are simply not to be found in myth or fable.

Myths, fables, and legends are what they are for the very reason that they cannot be verified from the historical record. Only authentic accounts can achieve that verification, and the Book of Judges' account of Othniel is shown by such verification to be authentic. It's not rocket science. It's just a matter of looking in the right places, gathering the facts, and then joining up the dots.

Footnotes to Chapter Two

1. Malamat, A. 'Cushan Rishathaim and the Decline of the Near East about 1200 BC.' *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. Vol. 13. No. 4 (October 1954). pp. 231-242.
2. Kraeling (p. 39) plumps for an even later date than Malamat – 1150 BC. Tæubler, embroiled in JEPD and running round in circles, eventually gives up the whole question as hopeless.
3. EA 224:10-18: “*ia-ash-al-me sharru beli-ia^{amelut} rabisi-shu shum-ma tu-ub-ba-lu-na^{amelut} a-bu-tu-nu ash-shum ume^m Ku-zu-na^{amel} a-bi-nu*” - see Mercer, *The Tel El-Amarna Tablets*, vol 2, p. 616; & Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln*, p. 762.
4. EA 225:3 “*sha-mu-adda amelim sha-am-hu-na*” - see Mercer, p. 616; & Knudtzon, p. 764. Shamhuna is a town of uncertain location.
5. Ball, J C. *Expository Times*. XXI (1910) p. 192; & Garstang, *Joshua Judges*, p. 264.
6. Gelb, I J. 'Two Assyrian King Lists.' *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. Vol. 13. No. 4 (October 1954). p. 227: “Eriba-Adad (I) son of Ashur-bel-nisheshu 27 years he ruled.”
7. Nissen, H J & Heine, P. *From Mesopotamia to Iraq: A Concise History*. 2009. University Of Chicago Press. pp. 85–86.
8. He signs himself: *ilu ash-shur uballit shar matu ilu ash-shur* – “Ashur-uballit, king of the land of Ashur.” (EA 15:3 & 16:3) – see Knudtzon, pp. 124-126. On the Assyrian king lists, he is: “Ashur-uballit (I) son of Eriba-Adad (I) 36 years he ruled” (Gelb, I J. 'Two Assyrian King Lists.' *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. Vol. 13. No. 4 (October 1954). p. 227).
9. In Amarna Letter EA 1, Pharaoh calls down blessings on the king of Babylon (whom he pointedly calls his brother), his household, his horses and his chariots, and he assures Babylon that all is well with his own household, “... my magnates, my horses,

the numerous troops...”, pointedly omitting any mention of chariots of his own. The reason why he had no chariots to write about is fully explained in the Book of Exodus, chapter 14.

10. Knudtzon, p. 126 & Moran, 38.

11. Moran, p. 39. The letter was translated by Grayson (*Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*).

12. Ibid. Translated by Grayson, parentheses [] mine.

13. Kraft, C F. *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1, p. 751. The treatment accorded to Othniel by *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (p. 191) is sadly typical of the nonsense that is generated by the critic. All historicity is denied the account in Judges (3:7-11), with everyone in it reduced to being nothing more than literary foils and devices manufactured purely for the purpose of conveying a moral. No effort whatever has been put into the question of whether the account is historical or not. The reader is merely assured that the latest scholarship has shown that everything in the Book of Judges is stuff and nonsense. Shameful.

Chapter Three: Ehud, Eglon and the Door



Fig. 5 Ehud slaying Eglon (ULB Darmstadt, Hs 2505, fol. 55r.)

“And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the City of Palm Trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man left-handed....” (Judges 3:12-14)

On the surface, there doesn't seem to be much that we can say about Ehud and his time as Judge of Israel. Archaeology, we are led to believe, is silent concerning him, and rather than assume that we are looking at an historical figure here, it is surely much more realistic to believe that the 'Deuteronomist' editor – an imaginary figure much loved by the critics – who wrote the Book of Judges, was simply making a statement about monarchy, an institution of

which he heartily disapproved. Such, at least, is some of the misguided nonsense that is served up in our commentaries these days. However, a closer look reveals a more historical scene altogether.

Archaeology has, in fact, a great deal to say about Ehud, and it is well worth looking at. Its scope ranges from the archaeological dig which has uncovered Eglon's palace at Jericho, down to the microscopical evidence concerning how Ehud managed, as he left, to lock behind him the door to the chamber in which he slew King Eglon. Critics have used the seeming impossibility of his locking that door as a great stick with which to beat this part of the Book of Judges, but here – and using archaeology rather than surmise – we will show how he did it, and thus demonstrate how the account of his locking that door is entirely authentic. Tellingly, he could not have performed the feat later than the time in which the Book of Judges sets him, which also says something about the early composition and authenticity of this account. A later forger, even a 'Deuteronomist' editor, could not have known what we are about to discover. But more on that in a moment.

Eglon's Name

Meanwhile, how authentic is the name Eglon? No Moabite inscription has yet been unearthed bearing his name, and critics are of the considered opinion that it is made up, a fiction to act as a literary foil against which the hero Ehud can parry. However, what the critics fail to mention is the fact that the name Eglon appears in Assyrian inscriptions, where it is rendered Ik-la-nu, or alternatively, Ig-la-nu.¹ In other words, the name Eglon is a known name, seemingly shared by more than one person in history, and therefore not a fiction at all. Ig-la-nu is, moreover, letter-for-letter the Hebrew name, Eglon (עגלון).

To pull off his forgery, our 'Deuteronomist' editor would have to have seen Ig-la-nu in an Assyrian inscription, and then, having thought it a good name for one of his characters,

cleverly transposed it into Hebrew for his lie. But then, why should he have bothered? There were plenty of other names at his disposal. To have picked any one of them would surely have been easier than learning Akkadian and its written cuneiform, and then travelling hundreds of miles across desert wastes in search of an inscription with a suitable name upon it that he can borrow. It beggars belief, but this is the scenario which we are required to imagine if we are to believe what the critics tell us. To be brief, the Book of Judges mentions Eglon, a name which is also found in Assyrian inscriptions. Therefore the name Eglon is independently authenticated. When the Book of Judges speaks of Eglon, it therefore speaks of a truly historical character under the truly historical name that he bore.

Eglon's Palace at Jericho



Fig. 6 The remains of Eglon's palace at Jericho (Photo: Garstang 1940)

Likewise, when the Book of Judges speaks of Eglon's palace at Jericho, it speaks true. There was indeed such a palace at such a place, and its remains have been duly excavated (Fig. 6). Its discoverer, John Garstang, did not at first know what the ruins were of.² It was clearly a palace of some sort, yet it stood alone on Jericho's mound, with no contemporary buildings to be seen anywhere near it. But then, once he had analysed the pottery whose style was

exclusive to the ruins under examination and their date, he was able to state unequivocally that this was Eglon's palace precisely where the Bible says it was.

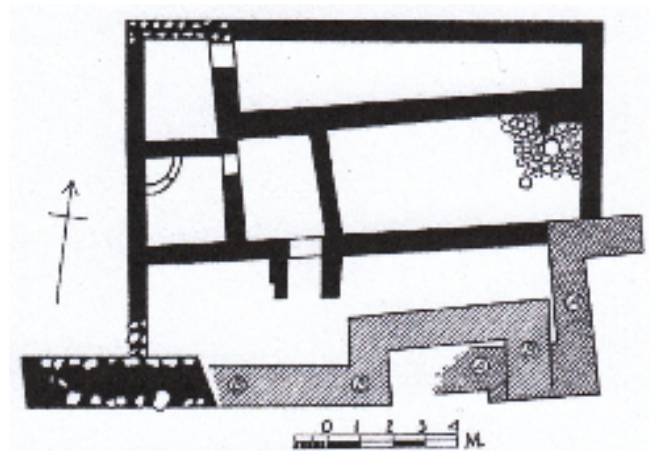


Fig. 7 Floor plan of Eglon's palace (Garstang)

But now that we have Eglon's palace as well as his name, is there a record anywhere, independent of the Book of Judges, which speaks of his rallying the Ammonites and Amalekites to an alliance with his Moabite forces to wage war against Israel, and especially to oppress the southern tribes of Israel? As it happens, there is, and it comes down to us from the reign of Seti I of Egypt who ruled from 1290-1279 BC, a contemporary of Ehud and Eglon. He reports:

“The vanquished Shasu plan rebellion; their tribal chiefs are gathered together, rising against the Asiatics of Southern Palestine.... and they disobey the laws of the Palace.”³

This corresponds precisely with the Moabite invasion of Israel under Eglon:

“It is instructive to compare closely the text of this historical record with that of the biblical [*sic*] episode previously quoted [Judges 3:12-14]. The parallelism is complete. Each record tells of a combine of border tribes from the south-east and beyond Jordan menacing the southern highlands. Moreover, they agree closely in date if we accept the basis of Israelite tradition, and they may well refer to one and the same episode, to

which the ruins of the Middle Building [i.e. Eglon's Palace] on the site of Old Jericho bear material witness."⁴

Locks, Bolts and Bars

“Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her.... Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her.” (2 Samuel 13:17-18)

In these two verses from 2 Samuel 13, we have a scenario – dating from the 11th-10th centuries BC - in which a woman is expelled from a room and the door bolted against her from the inside. We are plainly to infer from this that she herself could not have bolted the door behind her as she left the room (the bolt being on the inside and she on the outside); and neither could she have unbolted the door from the outside to gain entry. That much is plain and simple. The very purpose of such bolts is to keep out unwanted visitors. It puts control of the door firmly in the hands of whoever is within the room, and denies control of entry to any who happen to be outside the room. But now we come to the strange matter of Ehud bolting a door behind him as he leaves the room after slaying King Eglon, a door moreover which was a privacy door whose bolt would naturally have been, for that reason, on the inside but which Ehud locked from the outside – a feat which the critics say was impossible.

How the critics have taken the Bible to task over this statement is an education. Some, indeed – Wiese, Moore, Glaser, Budde, and Perles among them⁵ - have seriously proposed that we change the Hebrew text in order to ‘correct’ what is an obvious and clear mistake. But as we shall see, such corrections are quite uncalled for. Archaeologically, the Hebrew text that we have is spot on. Ehud really was able to bolt the door behind him as he left, and here's how.

It all has something to do with what is known to archaeology as the Homeric door. It is a design of doors and their locking mechanism which dates from Homer's time – hence the name – which is around the 13th-12th centuries BC, the period in which Eglon and Ehud flourished in other words. It was soon replaced by a design favoured in Egypt and which is the type of lock mentioned in those verses from 2 Samuel 13, which denied to anyone leaving the room the ability to lock or unlock the door once they are outside. Intriguingly, the Homeric design might well have fallen out of favour as a direct result of Eglon's assassination and the ability that it gave his assassin (Ehud) to leave the scene and lock the door behind him. That the Homeric door fell out of use and favour at this very time in history is perhaps just too much of a coincidence. But how did the Homeric door work?

The Book of Judges itself gives us a clue, although our knowledge of the Homeric door's mechanism comes directly from archaeology. A German scholar named Hermann Diels made such locks his special study,⁶ and his illustration of the Homeric door's locking mechanism is given below (see Figure 8). In that illustration is plainly seen the leather strap or thong that runs from the bolt inside the door to two apertures on the outside, allowing a person leaving the room to pull the bolt across from the other side of the door as he leaves. As the bolt completes its travel, pins drop down and lock it in place, requiring anyone wishing to enter again to have a suitable key which can raise the pins. Then, with the pins raised, he is able to slide the bolt back by pulling on the other end of the thong. This key is exactly what Eglon's servants required according to the Book of Judge's account (3:25), and this same account also explains how Ehud was able to lock the door behind him.

The authenticity of the Book of Judges' account is seen in this. The word used in the Hebrew for the action of locking the door that Ehud performed as he left the room, is 'nol' (נָלַךְ), a word which, when used a verb, means 'bolted;' but which, when used as a noun, means a

leather sandal which was tied to the foot by leather straps or thongs. In other words, it was by means of a leather strap or thong that Ehud was able to pull the inside bolt across from the other side of the door. That corresponds precisely with what we know from archaeology of the Homeric door's locking mechanism (see Fig. 8), a mechanism which was operated from the outside of the door by means of a leather thong, and which, not surprisingly, fell out of use in this part of the world immediately after the assassination of Eglon.

Interestingly, the Egyptian design of lock which replaced it is still in use in parts of Lebanon today after more than three thousand years.⁷ But the important thing about the Homeric door's design lies in its ability to be locked by an attendant leaving the room, thus affording the king a degree of privacy; a privacy which can only be disturbed by an attendant in charge of the key which will unlock the door again. We can see in Diels' illustration how the strap or thong allows the door to be both locked and unlocked simply by an attendant pulling either end of the strap; but importantly only being able to unlock the bolt once the requisite key has been inserted to lift the pins retaining the bolt. This is what Eglon's servants are recorded as doing in the Book of Judges:

“Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked [בָּלְטָהּ – bolted] them. When he was gone out, his [Eglon's] servants came; and when they saw that, behold, the doors of the parlour were locked, they said, Surely he covereth his feet [i.e. goeth to the loo] in his summer chamber. And they tarried till they were ashamed: and, behold, he [the king] opened not the doors of the parlour; therefore they took a key, and opened them: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth.” (3:23-25)

So, what does all this tell us about the authenticity of the Book of Judges' account concerning Ehud bolting the door (on the inside) behind him as he left the room? Are we looking here at

a fictitious thing, made up out of the fancies in someone's head who lived hundreds of years after the events that they have so fraudulently forged for us? Or are we not rather looking at an account which can be tested even on the microscopical level, and which proves itself authentic in every detail?

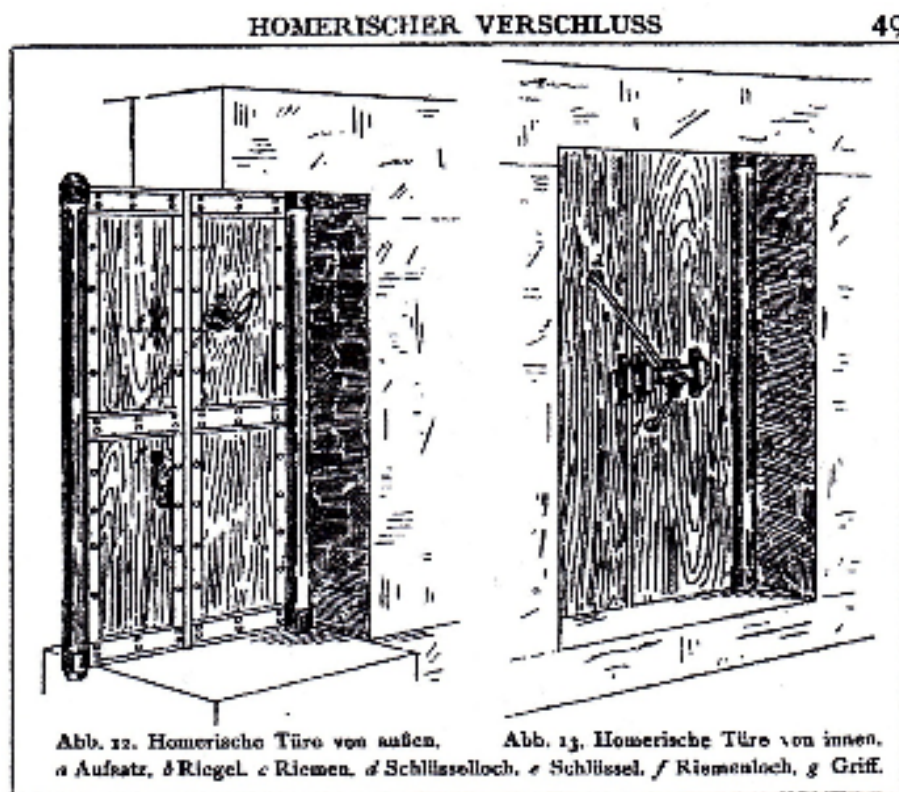


Fig. 8 Hermann Diels' diagrams (Abbildungen 12 & 13) of a Homeric lock. 1920.

The Book of Judges account of Ehud and Eglon is certainly no work of fiction. Nor is it an account which is accurate only to a degree. It is rather an account that is verified both internally and externally by good and reliable evidence - evidence with which any court of law would be delighted. The critics have done their level best over the centuries to debase and debunk the account, but all to no avail. As one of their own number, Emil Kraeling, was finally compelled to admit - albeit with something of an understatement:

“It appears, therefore, that in the nucleus of the Ehud story v. 14-26, we have a fairly reasonable account of what transpired, and that most of the difficulties which scholars have found in it are of their own making.”⁸

I couldn't have put it better myself.

Footnotes to Chapter Three

1. Tallqvist, Knut L. *Assyrian Personal Names*. 1914. Helsingfors. (*Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae*. Tome 43. No. 1). p. 95.
2. Not having realised the full import of the ruin in his *Story of Jericho* (1940), Garstang revised and updated his findings in: 'The Story of Jericho: Further Light on the Biblical Narrative.' *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*. Vol. 58. No. 4 (October 1941). pp. 368-372. Though no Biblical fundamentalist, Garstang was one of those rare scholars who were more than happy to admit the fact whenever archaeology vindicated the Biblical record. Kraeling (see below) was another.
3. Garstang, 'Further Light,' p. 372.
4. Ibid.
5. Kraeling, Emil G H. 'Difficulties in the Story of Ehud.' *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Vol. 54. No. 4 (December 1935). pp. 207-8.
6. Diels, Hermann. *Antike Technik*. 1920. Verlag BG Teubner. Leipzig und Berlin. p. 49.
7. Kraeling, 'Difficulties in the Story of Ehud.' p. 209.
8. Ibid., p. 210.

Chapter Four: Shamgar and the Philistines

“And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel.” (Judges 3:31)



Fig. 9 Shamgar (ca 1360. Darmstadt, Hs 2505, fol. 31r)

Shamgar is something of a surprise. It would be easy to think that he was an Israelite by birth and a Judge of Israel, whose appearance after Ehud in Judges 3:31 was merely a continuation of the list and narrative of other, preceding Israelite Judges. But Shamgar, it appears, was nothing of the kind. The Book of Judges itself does not call him a Judge, nor even an Israelite, but says only that, by defeating the Philistines, “he also delivered Israel.” To paraphrase, he “incidentally” delivered Israel by slaughtering the Philistines.

To emphasise the fact that he was not considered to be a Judge of Israel, Judges 4:1 continues its narrative of what had happened after Ehud was dead as if Shamgar had not existed. In other words, Judges 3:31 is a Scriptural parenthesis, as it were an aside which is there for a very good reason which we are about to look at. So, who was Shamgar exactly, what was he, and, more to the point, is the Book of Judges’ account of him authentic?

These are questions that have thrown the critics into fits of confusion. So much so that many of them are constrained to propose that his story was invented, has been lifted from elsewhere in the Bible, his name changed, and all sorts of other scholarly contortions in order to explain his appearance at this place in the Judges' narrative.¹ But the question that they should have addressed is this. Is Shamgar known to us from the extra-Biblical records of the time? Was he a living, breathing historical character? The question is easily answered.

The name Shamgar is known to us from Assyrian inscriptions, where we are also given the royal title associated with it: *sa-an-ga-ar shar mat hatte al/mat garga-mish-a-a*, i.e. Sangar (for Shamgar) king of the Hittites in Carchemish.² This inscription dates from the reign of Shalmaneser III of Assyria who reigned from 859-824 BC, and so clearly cannot refer to our Shamgar, the Shamgar of the Book of Judges. The same name and title, however, appear in an earlier inscription of Ashurnasirpal concerning another Shamgar who was also a Hittite king;³ and even though again this cannot be our Shamgar because he belongs to a slightly later timeframe, nevertheless, both inscriptions show that the name Shamgar is historically authentic. The writer of Judges was not, as Danelius suggests, making it up.⁴

Moreover, the Book of Judges provides Shamgar with what has long been thought to be a thoroughly pagan patronym, "the son of Anath (a goddess)," of which much has been made by the critics, but which is explained more fully and sensibly by Albright:

"It appears not to have been noticed so far that the phrase Shamgar ben Anath, Jud. 3:31; 5:6, does not mean "Shamgar son of the goddess Anath," or the like, but simply "Shamgar of the city Beth Anath," in accordance with an almost universal Aramaean, Assyrian, and Hebrew idiom."⁵

The city of Beth Anath lay within the territory of Naphtali in the northernmost reaches of Israel, so once again we are led to this part of the country for the name and title of Shamgar,

and to this period of time (late 14th century BC) into which the Book of Judges places him. The critics, of course, maintain that Shamgar has been lifted out of a later account of some anti-Philistine hero, be it Samson or even one of David's henchmen, Shammah, (both of whom are known to have entertained less than neighbourly feelings towards the Philistines), and was transplanted here into Judges 3:31:

“There are indeed few passages in literature which are so clearly no part of the original document: and we can hardly doubt that it has been inserted from some other source, or from another part of the book, in order to provide an explanation for the allusion in Deborah's Song.”⁶

But that leaves them with a serious problem.⁷ Had the account of Shamgar truly originated from a later time, then how comes it that Deborah speaks of him as one who lived before her (Judges 5:6)? Why should she – how *could* she - hark back to someone who hadn't yet been written about? It is all very strange. And what would be the point of including Shamgar at all in the Book of Judges, seeing that he wasn't even a Judge nor yet an Israelite? Surely our forging redactor, whom the critics have named the 'Deuteronomist' editor, could have come up with something a little more imaginative – a little more convincing – than that?

The truth of the matter is that the account of Shamgar has been included in the Book of Judges and has occupied its present place from the very beginning for the simple reason that it is yet another hallmark of the Book's authenticity. It is one of those numerous points at which we can test the narrative for accuracy, historicity, and integrity.

Shupak provides us with one authenticating piece of evidence for Shamgar's historicity from the records of Egypt, namely an inscription from the time of Rameses II (1304-1237 BC) concerning one Ben Anath to whom Rameses gave his daughter in marriage, only to discount the possibility of this being our Shamgar and him defeating the Philistines by saying that the

Philistines had not yet begun to “menace the coast of Palestine” at that time - that time being the 14th-13th centuries BC.⁸ But is he right? The answer is no, he isn’t. He isn’t right at all.

As far back as Genesis 26:1, we have the Hebrew Bible referring to “Abimelech, the king of the Philistines,” in an account set in the time of Abraham (the 19th century BC), some 600 years before our Shamgar was even born or thought of. So how can Shamgar and the Philistines be anachronistic when the Philistines date as far back as Abraham? And Genesis is perfectly clear (21:34) that the Philistines had their own territory in Canaan as early as the time of Abraham. Isaac had dealings with the Philistines (Genesis 26:6-16) and even dwelt in their land for a time, prospering amongst them. In other words, the Philistines had been around for centuries by the time our Shamgar, the Shamgar of the Book of Judges, came along. So how the critics can bring themselves to say that Shamgar was too early to be able to slaughter the Philistines is a mystery. He wasn’t too early at all, and the Book of Judges is perfectly right in saying of him that he was in fact able to engage in battle with the Philistines.

The critics have also had a merry old time with the statement by Judges that Shamgar slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad, as if this was some legendary feat by a solitary Hercules-type figure and therefore a most unlikely event. But there are certain points to be considered here. The Book of Judges does not say that he slew his victims in open battle. They could easily have been captives taken during a battle. In which case they would have been bound securely and herded together. That they would then be put to death is nothing extraordinary, nothing extraordinary at all. Even today in Syria and Iraq, captive prisoners are routinely slaughtered in their hundreds, so frequently in fact that it barely makes the news any more. Ancient monuments of the time, from both Egypt and Assyria, show pictures of such prisoners being put to death, one such monument from Egypt famously showing bound *Philistine* prisoners awaiting their fate.



Fig. 10 Bound Philistine prisoners taken by Rameses III

The Book of Judges' account of six hundred of Shamgar's Philistine prisoners being put to a tortured death with an ox-goad is therefore not at all unlikely, considering how the Assyrians used to skin their prisoners of war alive, impale them en masse, or burn them in great heaps. And we have, moreover, this matter of simple idiom to consider.

Look at any tourist guide for the Tower of London, and you will doubtless read that it was built by William the Conqueror. Even po-faced history books often use that phrase. But are we seriously supposed to understand by these words that William the Conqueror mixed the cement and laid the stones himself, cutting the wood for the joists and floorboards as he went along? No, of course we're not. When we read that phrase, we understand instinctively that it was built at his command and by his authority. We understand that William the Conqueror himself never so much as dirtied his hands on the project, but that the Tower of London was actually built by others, though at his command. We understand exactly the same thing when we read that Isembard Kingdom Brunel built the Great Western Railway, or that the Emperor Hadrian built the wall that bears his name. In other words, the Philistines can very easily have been put to death at Shamgar's command, he specifying that in each case an ox-goad be used

perhaps for the purpose of impaling them (see Fig. 11 below),⁹ rather than Shamgar himself personally hitting a great host of angry Philistines with the thing. And this, unlike the critics' mockery of the scene, does no violence at all either to the Hebrew text or its meaning. It is simple and plain common sense, nothing more, nothing less.

It serves the critics' cause, of course, to portray the episode in a ridiculous light, stating with great audacity to the uninformed reader that for one man alone to slay six hundred Philistines in battle when all he had was an ox-goad to fight against six hundred shields, swords, spears, and knives, is simply incredible, and that anyway the account of Shamgar has been imported from elsewhere in the Bible, namely a later book or account. Interestingly, they seem never to be able to agree which part of the Bible that was, although in the world of the higher critics (as they like to call themselves) that is no drawback at all. In fact it increases their ability to confuse and mislead their readers, giving them the ability to move the goalposts at will.

Thus, as with so much of the Bible, a simple and honest reading of Judges 3:31 reveals an account of integrity, historical accuracy and authenticity which fits seamlessly into the wider narrative of Judges.



Fig. 18.—Ploughmen.—Fac-simile of a Miniature in a very ancient Anglo-Saxon Manuscript published by Shaw, with legend “God Spede ye Plough, and send us Korne enow.”

Fig. 11 An ox-goad in use [pic. Public domain]

Footnotes to Chapter Four

1. One of the more destructive critics to comment on Shamgar is George Moore:
‘Shamgar and Sisera.’ *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. Vol. 19 (1898). pp. 159-60. His powers of invention almost fail him, yet critics have ever since relied on his ‘wisdom’ for their own presumptuous nonsense, which has then been passed on to the public through the universities, schools and media.
2. Tallqvist, Knut L. *Assyrian Personal Names*. 1914. Helsingfors. (*Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae*. Tome 43. No. 1). p. 192.
3. Pinches, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, p. 321.
4. Danelius, Eva. ‘Shamgar ben Anath.’ *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. Vol. 22. No. 3 (July 1963). pp. 191-193.
5. ‘Contributions to the Historical Geography of Palestine.’ *The Annual of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem*. Vol. 2/3 (1921/1922). p. 20.
6. Macalister, R A Stewart. *The Philistines: Their History and Civilisation*. 1914. British Academy. London. p. 41.
7. Shupak makes a brave contribution in this area: ‘New Light on Shamgar ben Anath.’ *Biblica*. Vol. 70. No. 4 (1989) – but comes to grief by trying to portray Shamgar as an Egyptian mercenary, which is not how the Book of Judges portrays him at all.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 518.
9. Fig. 11 above shows an ox-goad in use. It consisted of a 10 foot long wooden pole tipped with an iron spike, the perfect ready-to-hand implement for impaling a man.

Chapter Five: The Three Sons of Anak

One item that scoffers use as a stick with which to beat the Bible is the frequent mention in its earlier Books (Judges included) of men and tribes of gigantic stature, particularly among the Canaanites. Unfortunately, this has grown today into an industry of photographic hoaxes, the internet being filled, it seems, with ‘photoshopped’ images of human skeletons being excavated by archaeologists who are presented at only a fraction of their true size.¹

There is an agenda behind this, of course, namely that of discrediting any genuine finds of larger than normal remains that may happen to surface in the future, so we clearly cannot use such ‘examples.’ We are constrained here to using instead surviving ancient monumental, literary and inscriptional accounts of the giant populations of the Middle East to test the authenticity of the Book of Judges when it speaks of such ‘abnormal’ populations.

Among the populations of Canaan mentioned by Judges is that of the Anakim. They were by no means an insignificant people, warranting no less than twelve mentions in the Bible, and, as we shall see, mentions in records outside the Bible as well. Judges 1:20 mentions specifically the “three sons of Anak,” which is itself a hallmark of the Book’s authenticity for reasons that will soon become apparent. But exactly who were these three sons of Anak? The Book of Numbers is the first to give us their names, or at least the names that the Hebrews knew them by:

“And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were.” (Numbers 13:22)

Judges 1:10 then goes on to tell us that these same three individuals were eventually slain by the men of Judah, giving us the same names of “Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai.” Ten verses later (1:20), they are merely referred to as the “the three sons of Anak.” These references are

of immense significance. We have already seen back in Chapter One of this present study that the names of Sheshai (*she-sha-a-a*) and Talmai (*tal-mu-ia*) also appear in the Nuzi tablets.² That alone would be remarkable enough, but we even have the Egyptian forms of the names of three other, earlier, sons of Anak. Found amongst 18th-19th-century BC ‘execration texts,’ they are as follows:

“The Ruler of Iy-'anaq [the land of Anak], 'Erum, and all the retainers who are with him; the Ruler of Iy-'anaq, Abi-yamimu, and all the retainers who are with him; the Ruler of Iy-'anaq, 'Akirum, and all the retainers who are with him....”³

The Egyptian execration texts were curses written on pottery which was then ceremonially dashed to the ground, it being the hope that just as the cited victims’ names were broken and destroyed, so would the victims themselves perish. Evidently, these three named rulers of the Anakim were no friends of the Egyptians. Later, the Egyptians of Joshua’s day were no doubt grateful for the fact that the Israelites had slaughtered their successors.

A small remnant of the Anakim evidently survived the Israelite purges of these early years, and here is where it gets interesting. You see, the Hebrew “...giants, the sons of Anak,” (*nephilim bene 'Anaḳ* of Numbers 13:33) are called *jabbarun* in the corresponding passage of the Koran (Sura v. 25), and *jababirah* elsewhere, both words being the plural of the Arabic "jabbar" (giant – cognate to the Hebrew *gibbor*).⁴ The significance of which is the mention by Pliny of a certain ‘Gabbara,’ a giant from Arabia who was in the service of the Emperor Claudius, and who stood at a colossal 9 feet 9 inches, the largest human being alive at that time as far as the Romans were aware. In his general discussion of giant men, Pliny writes:

“It is believed from records that the body of Orestes, when taken up by direction of the oracle, was seven cubits long. And that great poet, Homer, who lived almost a thousand years ago, did not cease to complain that men's bodies were less of stature

even then, than in old time. The annals do not deliver down the bulk of Navius Pollio; but that he was of great size appeareth by this, that it was taken for a wonder, that in a great crowd of people running together he was almost killed. The tallest man that hath been seen in our age was one named Gabbara, who in the days of Prince Claudius was brought out of Arabia; he was nine feet high, and as many inches. There were in the time of Divus Augustus two others, named Pusio and Secundilla, higher than Gabbara by half a foot, whose bodies were preserved for a wonder in a vault in the Gardens of the Salustiani.”⁵

The body of Orestes which Pliny mentions, was measured at seven cubits, which equals some 12 feet in our terms;⁶ whilst those of Pusio and Secundilla were some 10 feet 3 inches in height. It is a great pity that Pliny did not discuss them at greater length, though it is worth mentioning that the Romans were very exact in measuring things. If they tell us that Gabbara stood at 9 feet 9 inches, and Pusio and Secundilla at 10 feet 3, then we can rely on the exactness of those measurements. The Romans were not fools, and Pliny treasured his own reputation as a scholar too much to be caught out in a lie. After all, when he wrote his account, there were many hundreds in Rome still living who would have seen and spoken with these giants - and many rival scholars (Pollio and Livy among them) who would have delighted in exposing Pliny as a fraud or a fool had he got his facts wrong. The fact that that never happened should tell us something.

But returning to the Egyptians, they knew another giant people of Canaan under the name of Shosu, and they have left both written and monumental evidences of the size of these people. In the Anastasi Papyrus (Papyrus British Museum 10247 – see Fig. 12 below), we have this written description of the Shosu:

“The narrow defile is infested with Shosu concealed beneath the bushes; some of them are of four cubits or of five cubits from head to foot, fierce of face, their heart is not mild, and they hearken not to coaxing.”⁷

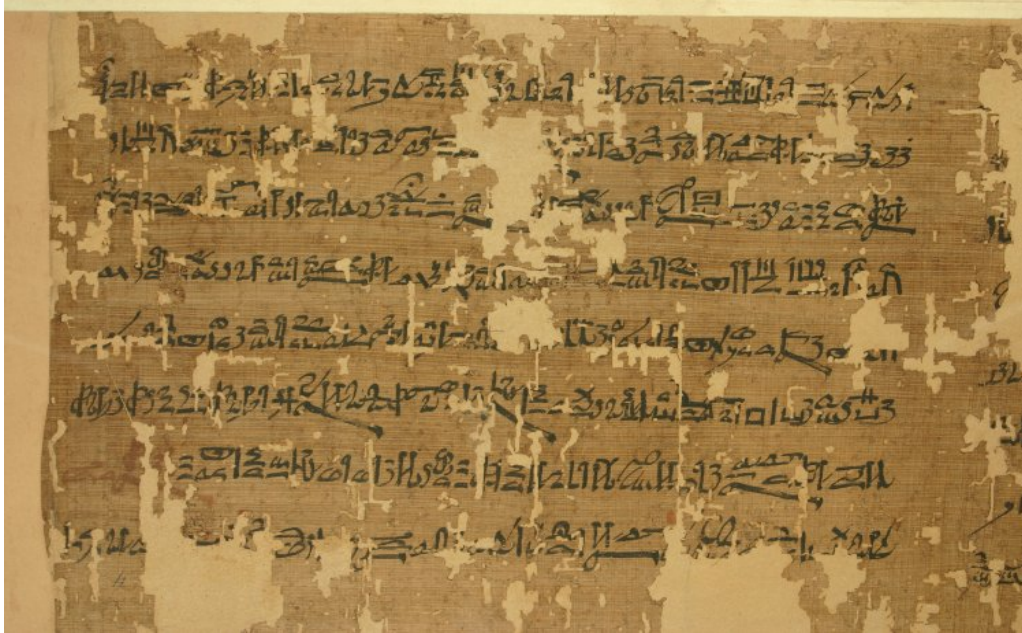


Fig. 12 Anastasi Papyrus (pBM 10247.15)

According to this account, the Shosu stood at anywhere between four and five cubits tall. The cubit used here (the Egyptian royal cubit) was one of 20.62 inches, making the Shosu stand between 7 feet and more than 8 feet 6 inches tall. But the modernist school, for this and other reasons, has attached to this papyrus the label of ‘a satirical letter’ – a ‘letter’ that is some 27 feet (8 metres) long by the way! - so can we trust its statements concerning the Shosu? It seems that we can, for this is not the only depiction of these people. There is a stone monument that shows the size of Shosu prisoners taken captive at the Battle of Kadesh against that of the ordinary Egyptian soldiers who are torturing them. The difference between them is impressive (see Fig. 13 below).⁸

Now it has to be said that the Egyptians, ever a foe to the Israelites, had absolutely no interest in vindicating or corroborating in any way the Hebrew Scriptures. So how comes it that the

Egyptian records and the Hebrew Scriptures are in complete agreement that giant peoples once populated the land of Canaan? If what the critics have been saying were in any way true, there would be no such agreement. Yet here we have it, both written and pictorial evidences from Egypt that testify to the Bible's authenticity. Perhaps some critic would like to explain.



Fig. 13 Giant Shosu 'spies' being beaten by their Egyptian captors (Battle of Kadesh)

But there is some startling physical evidence as well from this part of the world concerning giant human beings. Recently, the German magazine, *Bild*, published an article entitled: '*Das Geheimnis des Gruselfinger aus Agypten*' – 'The Mystery of the Creepy Finger from Egypt' – the "creepy" nature of the find being that this mummified finger was an astonishing 38cm or 15 inches in length!⁹



Fig. 14 The gigantic mummified finger reported by *Bild*

There are innumerable depictions in Egyptian art of men who are of gigantic stature when compared to those standing next to them, one of the more remarkable sequences of such depictions being seen in the paintings from the Rekhmire tomb. Below, in Fig. 15, we see giant men walking next to a giraffe, and beneath that, in Fig. 16, from the same sequence, we see giant men towering over the horse that is walking next to them. The Egyptians were clearly no strangers to such populations. They wrote about them, and carved and painted pictures of them.



Fig. 15 Giant men walking alongside a giraffe (Rekhmire tomb painting. ca 1475 BC)



Fig. 16 Giant men depicted towering above a horse (Rekhmire tomb painting)

The Egyptians were not alone in this, however. The Assyrians also depicted men in their own monuments who were of gigantic stature next to those around them, or towering over large animals that would usually tower over men of normal stature. There are two examples of such depictions on the Black Obelisk of Shalmanesr III (see Fig. 17 below).

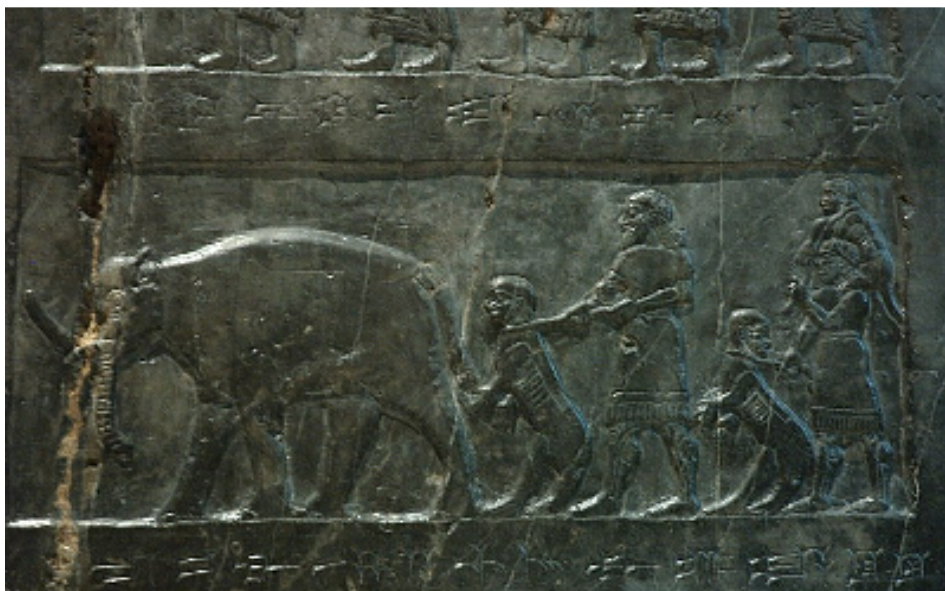


Fig. 17 Gigantic men depicted on the Black Obelisk walking behind an elephant

Two panels above this depiction shows two men walking with camels, the first man being of normal stature, but the one bringing up the rear being considerably larger, more than equalling the camel in height (see Fig. 18 below).



Fig. 18 Panel showing one normal size man leading, and a gigantic man following

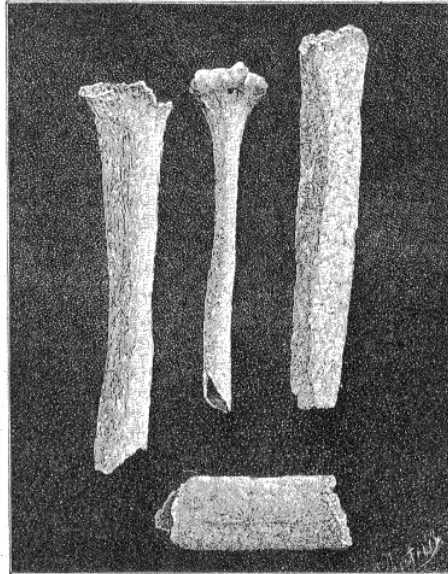
But why should we be surprised at these things? Like dragons - like the Great Flood itself - giants are known to every culture under the sun. Virtually every nation on earth remembers a time when they were neighbours to, or lived amongst giant populations, and the Israelites were no exception. Giant peoples were known to them under various names: The Nephilim, the Rephaim, the Tzuzim, the Anakim, to name a few, all of whom were noted by the Israelites for their great stature; and even amongst later scholars and writers of the classical world we find mention of similar gigantic peoples. Homer, Lucretius, Virgil, Juvenal, Pliny, and even po-faced Augustine of Hippo all write of them.

Whether they were writing truth or fable, however, may be judged by the mention of gigantic peoples which have appeared in more modern times, and which have been written about and lectured upon by 'establishment' anthropologists and archaeologists. Note the following report which appeared in *The Princeton Union*, on October 11th 1894:

“In a prehistoric cemetery recently uncovered at Montpellier, France, while workmen were excavating a waterworks reservoir, human skulls were found measuring 28, 31 and 32 inches in circumference. The bones which were found with the skulls were also of gigantic proportions. These relics were sent to the Paris academy, and a learned ‘savant’ who lectured on the find says that they belonged to a race of men between ten and fifteen feet in height.”¹⁰

The ‘learned savant’ of the article was Dr Georges Vacher de Lapouge (1854-1936), and his findings were corroborated in full by Dr Paul Valéry, a colleague of his at the University of Montpellier between 1886 -1891.¹¹ Would these men - these revered figures of the establishment – have willingly thrown away their careers and reputations for a stupid hoax? It seems not, for six months later, this same report appeared again in another journal, there having been plenty of time for the facts to be checked.¹² And then, out of Castelnau in France appeared this report:

“In the year 1890, some human bones of enormous size, double the ordinary in fact, were found in the tumulus of Castelnau (Herauld) [France], and have since been carefully examined by Prof. Kiener, who, while admitting that the bones are those of a very tall race, nevertheless finds them abnormal in dimensions and apparently of morbid growth. They undoubtedly re-open the question of ‘giants’ of antiquity, but do not furnish sufficient evidence to decide it.”¹³



Les trois pièces osseuses attribuées au géant de Castelnaud.
Au milieu, humérus perforé de taille normale.

Fig. 19 Photo of the giant bones found at Castelnaud (1890)

The photo taken of the bones at the time of their discovery (see Fig. 19 above) shows clearly the immense difference in size between them and the ‘normal’ modern human femur placed between them. Kiener’s staid and learned paper on the remains may be read to this day,¹⁴ and it is notable that neither in the case of the Montpellier remains, nor yet those of Castelnaud, has any serious attempt been made by anthropologists or archaeologists to dispute the simple facts of the case. In other words, the facts are unarguable. These are indeed the bones of gigantic human beings who stood up to 15 feet in height.

As for the most famous giant in all history - Goliath - what can we say of him other than this? - his name has been discovered inscribed on a potsherd in the ruins of his hometown of Gath (Tel es-Safi, Israel) dating to within 70 years of his slaying by David, i.e. to about 950 BC (see Fig. 20 below).¹⁵ Interesting, isn’t it, when we consider what the critics have been saying all these years.



Fig. 20 The name Goliath on a potsherd from his home-city of Gath

Footnotes to Chapter Five

1. The harm done to the subject is seen very clearly in the complaint reported here:
http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2007/12/071214-giant-skeleton_2.html
2. Hess, Richard. 'Israelite Identity and Personal Names from the Book of Judges.' *Hebrew Studies*. Vol. 44 (2003). pp. 32-33.
3. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 328.
4. "The Hebrew "nefilim bene 'Anak" (Numbers 13:33) are called "jabbarun" in the Koran (sura 5:25), and "jababirah" in other works, both words being the plural of "jabbar" (giant). In the Koran (*l.c.*) giants are mentioned in connection with the twelve spies sent by Moses to explore the land of Canaan. According to Mas'udi, the giants were of the Amalekite race. The Arabian writers speak particularly of 'Uj (Og) ibn 'Unk (Og with the Neck)..." *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*. 1901. For the full quote, see:
<http://www.studylight.org/encyclopedias/tje/view.cgi?n=6657>
5. Holland, Philemon. *Pliny's Natural History* (orig. tr. 1601). 1847-8. George Barclay. London. p. 200. For those who like their Pliny in Latin (and who doesn't?), he writes:
"Orestis corpus oraculi iussu refossum VII cubitorum fuisse monumentis creditur. iam vero ante annos prope mille vates ille Homerus non cessavit minora corpora mortalium quam prisca conqueri. Naevii Pollionis amplitudinem annales non tradunt, sed quia populi concursu paene sit interemptus, vice prodigii habitum. procerissimum hominum aetas nostra Divo Claudio principe Gabbaram nomine ex Arabia advectum novem pedum et totidem unciarum vidit. Fuere sub Divo Augusto semipede addito, quorum corpora eius miraculi gratia in conditorio Sallustianorum adservabantur hortorum; Pusioni et Secundillae erant nomina."
6. The Egyptian royal cubit used by the Greeks, was 20.62 inches. Thus, seven of these cubits equalled 144.34 inches which is just over 12 feet. But the full account by

Herodotus says this: "...the Lacedaemonians were no nearer discovering the burial-place [of Orestes] than before, though they continued to search for it diligently; until at last a man named Lichas, one of the Spartans called Agathoergi, found it. The Agathoergi are citizens who have just served their time among the knights. The five eldest of the knights go out every year, and are bound during the year after their discharge to go wherever the State sends them, and actively employ themselves in its service. Lichas was one of this body when, partly by good luck, partly by his own wisdom, he discovered the burial-place. Intercourse between the two States existing just at this time, he went to Tegea, and, happening to enter into the workshop of a smith, he saw him forging some iron. As he stood marvelling at what he beheld, he was observed by the smith who, leaving off his work, went up to him and said, "Certainly, then, you Spartan stranger, you would have been wonderfully surprised if you had seen what I have, since you make a marvel even of the working in iron. I wanted to make myself a well in this room, and began to dig it, when what think you? I came upon a coffin seven cubits long. I had never believed that men were taller in the olden times than they are now, so I opened the coffin. The body inside was of the same length: I measured it, and filled up the hole again." *The Histories*. Clio. 68.

7. Gardiner, Alan Henderson. *Egyptian Hieratic Texts*. 1911. Leipzig. p. 25. Earlier in the book, Gardiner tells us: "The Papyrus Anastasi I (Pap. Brit. Mus. 10247) was purchased for the British Museum in 1839 from Signor Anastasi, the Swedish Consul in Egypt. It measures $8\frac{1}{4}$ metres in length; its height is 20.5 cm., i.e. it is of the normal height of literary papyri of the second Theban period. Both in respect of size and of calligraphy the papyrus is one of the finest specimens of a Ramesside book." Some 'letter'!

8. An interesting discussion of these people is given in Raphael Giveon's, 'The Shosu of the Late XXth Dynasty.' *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*. Vol. 8. (1969-1970). pp. 51-53.
9. <http://www.bild.de/news/mystery-themen/mystery/in-aegypten-gefunden-23053704.bild.html>
10. *The Princeton Union*. 11th October 1894. p. 2. A pdf of the page may be seen online at: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016758/1894-10-11/ed-1/seq-2/#words=skulls+Montpellier+France&date1=1894&date2=1896&searchType=advanced&lccn=&proxdistance=5&state=&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=&phrasertext=&andtext=montpellier+france+skulls&dateFilterType=yearRange&index=1>
11. "J'ai aidé Lapouge, en 1891, à mesurer six cents crânes extraits d'un vieux cimetière. J'avoue que la recherche de l'indice céphalique et la répartition de ces malheureuses têtes, en dolichocéphales, mésatycéphales (mésocéphales) et brachycéphales, ne m'a pas appris grand chose, mais parmi toutes les choses que j'ai apprises et qui ne m'ont servi de rien, ces vaines mesures ne sont pas plus vaines que les autres". (Boissel J. 1989, « Paul Valéry et Georges Vacher de Lapouge à Montpellier (1888-1893) », Cahiers Paul Valéry, VI, Revue des Lettres Modernes Minard, Paris 1954-1965 no 938-945, pp. 29-44). Source : Conservatoire national des arts et métiers <http://cnum.cnam.fr/CGI/fpage.cgi?4KY28.35/15/70/536/0/0>
12. 'Giants of Prehistoric France.' *The McCook Tribune*. 8th March 1895. p. 3. A pdf of this page may also be viewed online at: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94056415/1895-03-08/ed-1/seq3/#words=skulls+Montpellier+France&date1=1894&date2=1896&searchType=advanced&lccn=&proxdistance=5&state=&rows=20&ortext=&proxtext=&phrasertext=&andtext=montpellier+france+skulls&dateFilterType=yearRange&index=0>

13. 'A Race of Giants from Old Gaul; From the London Globe.' *The New York Times*. 3rd October 1892.
14. Lapouge (de) G. 'Le Géant Fossile de Castelnau.' *La Nature*. 1890. Vol. 888. pp. 11–12.
15. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/9997587/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/scientists-find-goliath-inscribed-pottery/

Chapter Six: Samson

““The Samson narrative fits rather badly in a canonical context, causing considerable embarrassment for some commentators.” Indeed, many a reader has shaken his head in bewilderment, frustrated in trying to find religious or moral virtue in the tale.”¹

It is clear that the Scriptures can be read in one of two ways. They can be read with Christ, in which case they will make eminently clear sense; or they may be read without Him, in which case they will make no sense at all. The Bible says of itself that its Gospel is nonsense and foolishness, but tellingly, only to those who perish (1 Cor. 1:18). Our critic has clearly chosen to read the account of Samson in the Book of Judges without Christ, which is why he can make no sense of what he reads. It is a situation in which many find themselves.

They have no excuse for their predicament, for God Himself has provided us with many witnesses to the Truth of what He tells us in His Word. In the case of Samson, archaeology is the main witness, and we shall see just some of the corroborative evidence that supports the integrity and the authenticity of what the Book of Judges tells us about him. According to that witness, Samson is no mythological invention. The stamp that the living breathing man named Samson made on history is seen very clearly in the archaeological record so that no man can be left in any doubt that Samson lived at the time Judges says he lived, and in the place where Judges says he lived. It is as simple and as straightforward as that.

Take for an example the seal that appears as Fig. 15 below. Its discovery was reported thus:

“Tel Aviv University researchers recently uncovered a seal, measuring 15 millimetres (about a half-inch) in diameter, which depicts a human figure next to a lion at the archaeological site of Beth Shemesh, located between the Biblical cities of Zorah and Eshtaol, where Samson was born, flourished, and finally buried, according to the book

of Judges. The scene engraved on the seal, the time period, and the location of the discovery all point to a probable reference to the story of Samson, the legendary heroic figure whose adventures famously included a victory in hand-to-paw combat with a lion.”²



Fig. 21 The ‘Samson’ Seal from Beth Shemesh (Photo: Raz Lederman)

Professor Shlomo Bunimovitz, one of the co-directors of the dig goes on to tell us:

“While the seal does not reveal when the stories about Samson were originally written, or clarify whether Samson was a historical or legendary figure, the finding does help to "anchor the story in an archaeological setting," says Prof. Shlomo Bunimovitz of TAU's Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations. Prof. Bunimovitz co-directs the Beth Shemesh dig along with Dr. Zvi Lederman. "If we are right and what we see on the seal is a representation of a man meeting a lion, it shows that the Samson legend already existed around the area of Beth Shemesh during that time period. We can date it quite precisely.... The seal was

discovered with other finds on the floor of an excavated house, dated by the archaeologists to the 12th century BCE.”³

It is gratifying in the extreme to see such evidence being uncovered, and in Samson’s own hometown too. But this is not all the physical evidence that is available to us. Perhaps the most famous event in Samson’s life is right at its close when he brought down the temple of Dagon in Gaza. There is not a critic in the land who accepts the account as true, but the Book of Judges tells us plainly what happened:

“And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.... And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein.” (Judges 16:26 & 29-30)

That the entire weight of a temple should rest upon just two pillars, and those pillars so close together as to enable a man to stand between them and push them apart, is a great difficulty for the critic. Until recently, there were no known remains of such a structure. But that was soon to change. In 1972, just outside Tel Aviv in Israel, archaeologists uncovered the first remains of a Philistine temple to Dagon. Part of what they uncovered was the stone threshold, a detail which is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, (1 Samuel 5:4-5 to be precise).⁴ But by far the most astonishing find were the bases of the two pillars (which stand seven feet apart) upon which had rested the entire weight of the temple. This came as a profound shock to the critics – so profound that they have ever since not failed to let it go unmentioned. The detail of the pillars’ bases is to be seen in Fig. 16 below:



Fig. 22 The temple of Dagon at Tell Qasile, near Tel Aviv, Israel

The above ruins are reported by Dr John Roskoski of Associates for Biblical Research.⁵ But the ruins at Tell Qasile are not the only remains of a Philistine temple to Dagon to be uncovered, for even more recently, on the 5th February 2015, the following report appeared in the Jerusalem Post:

“Archeologists have uncovered a Philistine temple and evidence of a major earthquake in biblical times, during digs carried out at the Tel Tzafit National Park near Kiryat Gat. The site is home to the Philistine city of Gath, the home of the ancient warrior Goliath. Prof. Aren Maeir, of Bar-Ilan University's Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology, said on Wednesday that the temple may shed light on the architecture in Philistia at the time when Jewish hero Samson purportedly brought the temple of Dagon down upon himself. Maier said the architecture of the Philistine temple, the first ever found at Gath, sheds light on what the temple of Dagon would have looked like, in particular the two pillars that anchored the center of the structure. “We’re not saying this is the same temple where the story of Sampson occurred or that the story even did occur,” Maeir said. “But this

gives us a good idea of what image whoever wrote the story would have had of a Philistine temple.”⁶

In other words, the writer of the Samson account knew exactly what a Philistine temple looked like, because he had lived at the time in which they stood. And he knew all about their supporting pillars. The photo accompanying the article (see Fig. 17 below) shows exactly the same detail as that of Tell Qasile, namely the two bases of the pillars upon which the weight of the temple rested. In other words, Philistine temples to Dagon were built to a pattern. Some were larger than others (the one at Gaza which Samson pulled down was certainly larger than those of Tell Qasile and Kyriat Gat), but architecturally they conformed to the standard floor plan.



Fig. 23 The remains of the Philistine temple at Gath. Photo: Richard Wiskin

The most remarkable thing about the excavation of the Kyriat Gat temple (Fig. 17), is the evidence of a truly massive earthquake which, archaeologists estimate, would have had to register a massive 8 on the Richter Scale to cause such evident and explosive damage.⁷ Did the earthquake occur at the same moment when Samson pulled down the temple at Gaza? We do not know. The Bible makes no mention of it, but it is an intriguing possibility. The timeframe and nature of the damage is entirely consistent with that event.

But even that is not all, for the Book of Judges gives us yet more information which this time can be tested on a more microscopic level:

“But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.” (Judges 16:21)

This remarkable verse, so easily overlooked, contains several points of detail which can be tested archaeologically, and which show unequivocally that the account is authentic in every point. To begin with, it is identical to the treatment later meted out by Nebuchadnezzar to King Zedekiah when he was taken into captivity:

“Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains [bound him with bronze fetters – Heb. *banne hushtayim*], and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.” (Jeremiah 52:11)

The blinding and binding of prisoners, then working them to death, is a Mesopotamian invention adopted by the Babylonians and Assyrians and, as here, emulated by the Philistines. The last mention of the practice in extra-Biblical records is to be found in the Assyrian inscriptions of Esarhaddon (680-669 BC), which means, by the bye, that it was unknown by the time the so-called ‘Deuteronomist editor’ would have made up the tale according to the critics. But what interests us is the detail of the cuneiform inscription which records the punishment:

“Perhaps the most illuminating parallel to the biblical texts is found in an inscription of Esarhaddon, in the form of a letter to the god Asshur. It contains the account of the siege of Uppuma, centre of the land Shubria. When Rusa, its rebellious ruler, realizes that he has no chance of escape, he tries to save his life by means of a symbolical act

of surrender. Afraid to come out in person, he sends his messengers with a statuette (*salmu*) wrapped in sackcloth (*bashamu*), bound with fetters (*biretu*) and holding a grinding slab (*eru*) as if ready to do a grinder's work (*epesh arraruti*). The meaning of the scene is unmistakable: as a future prisoner Rusa realizes that he will be subjected to forced labour, i.e. milling, symbolized here by the miniature grinding slab.”⁸

The interesting detail here is that the Hebrew words translated ‘prison house’ in the Samson narrative (Judges 16:21 – *beth hasirim*) exactly correspond to the Assyrian *bit asiri*, denoting a place of confinement in which flour was milled. It is the kind of detail of which a later forger would have been unaware, but which becomes an unmistakable hallmark of authenticity for the Book of Judges’ account of Samson and how the Philistines treated him.

But do we know just when the Samson account was first written? Is it early and genuine as the Bible claims, or late and worthless as the critics suggest? The questions are easily answered. We have already seen that the verse - Judges 16:21 - could not have been written after the 7th century BC, because the practice of blinding and binding prisoners for forced labour in a mill died out with the Assyrians who ceased to exist in that century. But we can go much further back than that. You see, by the time 1 Samuel 6:17 was written in the 11th century BC, the Philistines had set up a league of five cities – the Pentapolis – through which they governed the territory about them. These cities were Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron; whereas the Samson account knows of only three such cities, namely Gaza (Judges 16:1-3 & 21), Ashkelon (Judges 14:19) and (by implication at least) Ekron.⁹ Clearly then, the Samson account was written before the 11th-century BC founding of the Philistine Pentapolis. In other words, we may safely conclude that it was written out both as and after the events in it occurred, namely in the 12th century BC.

Footnotes to Chapter Six

1. Greenstein, 'The Riddle of Samson.' *Prooftexts*. Vol. 1. No. 3 (Sept. 1981). p. 237.
2. American Friends of Tel Aviv University. "Ancient seal may add substance to the legend of Samson." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 13 August 2012.
<www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/08/120813103403.htm>.
3. Ibid.
4. "And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day."
5. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/07/24/Between-the-Pillars-Revisiting-Samson-and-the-House-of-Dagon.aspx>
6. <http://www.jpost.com/Features/In-Thespotlight/Temple-found-in-Philistine-home-of-Goliath>
7. Ibid.
8. Toorn, Karel van der. 'Judges XVI 21 in the Light of the Akkadian Sources.' *Vetus Testamentum*. Vol. 36. Fasc. 2 (April 1986). pp. 248-9.
9. Judges 1:18-19 groups Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron together, and Timnath (Judges 14:1-2), where Samson fell in love with a certain daughter of the Philistines, was a Philistine town linked to Ekron, its close neighbour. Gath and Ashdod had yet to be added to the ruling cities of the Philistines. Intriguingly, only three Philistine lords are recorded as present at Gaza (each seemingly accompanied by a thousand - Heb. *helep*, a military contingent) when Samson brought down the temple. These would have

been the lords of Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron. Later, in 1 Samuel 6:18, five lords of the Philistines are recorded, namely those of Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron, i.e. they were the lords of the Philistine Pentapolis. Hence, the Samson narrative predates the 11th century BC in which the Pentapolis was founded. (The reader will have noticed that five lords of the Philistines are mentioned as early in the Book of Judges as chapter 3:3. But this is part of the summary contained in Judges 3:1-4 which covers the whole period of the Judges of Israel. Verse 5 of that chapter then takes up the story where it left off, resuming the narrative of the Judges of Israel in a more particular chronological sequence).

Chapter Seven: Critics - Tampering with the Evidence

We come now to a most disturbing but telling matter regarding one of the Bible's critics altering records and tampering with a most important body of evidence. This evidence, if made public, would have greatly exonerated the Biblical record in the public's eyes, and the Bible - particularly in its earlier Books - would by no means have suffered the derogation and ridicule that it has undergone for the past 125 years or so. I refer in particular to the Amarna Tablets and the very strong witness that they bear to the records contained in the Books of Joshua and Judges. The Biblical names that those Tablets bear have been deliberately expunged and altered so that they are now unrecognisable in any of the modern translations, and the chief culprit behind this nefarious deed is Jorgen Knudtzon, a Norwegian scholar who first arranged the order of the Tablets so that they could not be made to correspond with the order of events laid out in Joshua and Judges, and who set the text of their transliteration that has become the standard of reference since it was first published more than 100 years ago.¹ What follows is the nature of the fraud.

We have already seen how Jastrow, writing in 1893, brought to light the fact that the Amarna Tablets referred to the 'men of Judah.'² He also brought to light the Biblical names of Heber, Malchiel and Levi, all which appear in the Tablets, and which bear vital testimony to the historicity of the Books of Joshua and Judges when they mention these names. That Jastrow, of all people, should have published these facts is all the more extraordinary when we consider how he had previously, publicly and vociferously renounced the Old Testament in its entirety along with Judaism in general. He was, in every sense, a hostile witness:

“Dr. Morris Jastrow, Jr., assistant lecturer at Rodef Sholem Synagogue, Broad and Mount Vermont Streets, where his father is rabbi, caused a sensation among the congregation on Saturday by announcing from the pulpit that he had renounced

Judaism and resigned his position. He said the place had been offered him without solicitation on his part. A man could be a Jew, but need not necessarily believe in the doctrine of Judaism, which demanded a belief in the divinity of the Ten Commandments, the Divine authorship of the Scriptures, and that Judaism had a special mission among the nations. To this he could not subscribe, and refused to retain a position demanding adherence to such doctrines. Judaism was a religion of dogmas, and as such he could not accept it. Dr. Jastrow, Sr., announced that he would reply to his son's statement at some future time."³

In short, Jastrow was no friend of the Old Testament, and wherever he could, he would deride and dismiss it. But on this occasion at least, he was honest enough to publish the fact that the Amarna Tablets contained names within them that appeared also in the Bible, the appearance of the names greatly exonerating the historical reliability of its Books. But was Jastrow the only scholar around who had discovered these facts? By no means. He was accompanied by Scheil;⁴ Winckler and Abel.⁵ There were others, of course, and they all independently read in the Tablets of the men of Judah - *ameluti ia-u-du* - and of the armed men or warriors of Judah - *ameluti sabe ia-u-du*.⁶

The importance of the reading *ia-u-du* is seen in the fact that the very same name is found in the Assyrian inscriptions of Sargon, Sennacherib and Esarhaddon.⁷ Like the Amarna Tablets themselves, these Assyrian inscriptions are written in Akkadian, and in all instances *ia-u-du* refers to the people or men of Judah. So how is it then that one can search in vain for the name of Judah in any of the later translations of the Tablets? Well, as I said, it is all down to the fraudulent alteration of the Tablets' readings that was carried out by Knudtzon, and here's how he did it.

He took the reading *ia-u-du*, and changed it without warrant to *su-u-du*.⁸ This he translated into German as *Sudu-Leute*,⁹ (Sudu-people), thus entirely expunging the name of Judah.

English translations have since rendered *su-u-du* as Suteans, defined by Moran as:

“... name of an ancient tribe that by the Amarna period had acquired a more general sense and designated roaming and often dangerous bands.”¹⁰

But was Knudtzon’s substitution of *su-u-du* for *ia-u-du* deliberate or incidental? It was deliberate, and here’s how we know. To begin with, Knudtzon was clearly irritated by the reading *ia-u-du* and the corroboration that this lent to the Biblical record, for as a footnote to his reading *su-* for *ia-*, he put: “Oder *zu*; nicht *ia!*” – “Or *zu*; not *ia!*”¹¹

The exclamation mark betrays Knudtzon’s irritation at the reading *ia-u-du*, even though that had been the standard reading given independently by every competent scholar before him. Moreover, the sign for *ia-* appears eight times in the surviving text of EA 169 - (twelve times in Jastrow’s reconstruction) - and Knudtzon had been perfectly happy to give *ia-* as its reading on six of those occasions. Yet, when it comes to the word *ia-u-du*, he changes his reading of *ia-* to *su-* so as to alter the word to *su-u-du*, thus concealing the name of Judah and its corroboration of both the Books of Joshua and Judges. This is because the reading, which had the Amarna Tablets speaking of the men of Judah, did not marry well at all with his thoroughly modernist paradigm, and it therefore had to be rejected in favour of an invention of his own, the ‘Sudu-Leute’ – or ‘Sudu-people.’ This phrase was perpetuated by Mercer in his 1939 two-volume English translation of Knudtzon’s edition,¹² and so it has passed into the realm of academe with uncritical acceptance. But the designation is false – utterly false. It was, and still is, a criminal and fraudulent alteration of the text.

Knudtzon was also responsible for expunging the all-important name of Jericho from the Amarna Tablets. Conder was the first to find the name of Jericho on an Amarna Tablet which

was known to him as 102 B, but which today is called EA 286. He read (on line 6 of the Tablet): “*icalu, ca-ar Irhu zabbatu*,” which translates as, “They have prevailed, they have taken the fortress of Jericho (*Irhu*).”¹³ This again raised Knudtson’s hackles, who once more took it upon himself to alter the reading so that the name of Jericho was replaced by the reading *si-* for *irhu* thus: “*i-ka-lu ka-ar-si-ja*.”¹⁴ Mercer again perpetuates this reading in his English translation, though, feeling uncomfortable with it, he marked the substitution with a cautionary footnote: “This [sign] must be *si-*.”¹⁵ Quite why it must be *si-* and not *irhu* is not explained, but once more the student, the public, the universities, and the media are wilfully misinformed that the name of Jericho does not appear in the Amarna Tablets, and hence the Bible is in error when it speaks of Jericho’s fall.

In no other profession on earth would Knudtson and his colleagues have been allowed to get away with such practice. He was not the only one to try his hand at it, although his efforts have clearly had a more lasting and damaging impact than most on Bible scholarship. Had his substitution of *su-* for *ia-* been truly an innocent error, then he would have read the sign *ia-* as *su-* on the other six occasions of its appearance in the text (which would have given him a problem or two in translation!). But its occurrences only when the sign appears for the name of Judah is systematic, and is therefore deliberate. This was an act of fraud.

Thousands, if not millions, have been deceived by the fraud over the past 100 years or so, and this, as far as I am aware, is the first occasion on which this particular fraud has been brought to light. It is a shameful and disturbing statement of affairs concerning the world of Bible criticism, and it is worse for the fact that it is not the only instance of such fraudulent manipulation of the evidence. It is far-ranging, and volumes could be written on the subject.

Footnotes to Chapter Seven

1. Knudtzon, Jorgen. *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln. 2 Teile. Erster Teil: Die Texte. Zweiter Teil: Anmerkungen und Register.* 1914. Leipzig. Hinrich'ssche Buchhandlung.
2. Jastrow, Morris. 'The Men of Judah in the El-Amarna Letters.' *Journal of Biblical Literature.* Vol. 12. No. 1 (1893), pp. 61-72.
3. *New York Times.* 7th December 1886.
4. Scheil, V. 'Tablette d'el-Amarna de la collection Rostovicz.' *Memoires publiees par les membres de la Mission archaeologique francaise au Caire.* 6 (Paris, 1892). pp. 297-312.
5. Winckler, H. & Abel, L. 'Der Thontafelfund von El Amarna.' *Mitteilungen aus den Orientalischen Sammlungen, Konigliche Museen zu Berlin.* Hefte 1-3. 1889-90. Berlin.
6. The tablet containing the reading was known to Jastrow, Scheil, Winckler and Abel as Berlin 39, which today is known as EA 169. The reading *ameluti ia-u-du* appears on line 29 of EA 169, while *ameluti sabe ia-u-du* appears in line 25 of that tablet.
7. See Knight, George. *Nile and Jordan, being the archaeological and historical inter-relations between Egypt and Canaan, from the earliest times to the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.* 1921. James Clarke & Co. London. pp. 219-222, for an interesting and impartial discussion of this issue.
8. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln*, p. 674.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 675.

10. Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, p. 393. The translation of EA 169 used by Moran, is that from Izre'el's *Amurru*.
11. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln*, p. 674.
12. Mercer, Samuel A B. *The Tell El-Amarna Tablets*. 1939. MacMillan. Toronto. 2 vols. pp. 536-537.
13. Conder, *The Tell Amarna Tablets*. 1893. MacMillan. London. p. 140.
14. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna Tafeln*, p. 858.
15. Mercer, p. 706.

Chapter Eight: The Displacement of the Canaanite Populations

We know from the Biblical record that the Israelites did not slaughter all the Canaanites, but drove many out of the country, and even allowed a significant number to remain and live among them. But the greater number were driven out of Canaan altogether, and this forced displacement must have had an impact on the surrounding countries that suddenly found themselves playing host to these migrant populations. Therefore, if the Books of Joshua and Judges are an accurate account of the subject, then we would expect to find mention of these migrating refugees in one or two records and monuments of the time (15th-11th centuries BC); and while it hurts the critics for us to say so, that's precisely what we do find.

Our first look at this evidence is the following curious item:

“... we possess one testimony belonging to this period of a direct and positive character, which is among the most curious of the illustrations that profane sources furnish of the veracity of Scripture. Moses of Chorene, the Armenian historian, Procopius, the secretary of Belisarius, and Suidas the Lexicographer, relate that there existed in their day at Tingis, (or Tangiers,) in Africa, an ancient inscription to the effect that the inhabitants were the descendants of those fugitives who were driven from the land of Canaan by Joshua the son of Nun, the plunderer. It has been said that this story “can scarcely be anything but a Rabbinical legend, which Procopius may have heard from African Jews.” But the independent testimony of the three writers, who do not seem to have copied from one another, is an argument of great weight; and the expressions used, by Procopius especially, have a precision and a circumstantiality which seem rather to imply the basis of personal observation. “There stand,” he says, “two pillars of white marble near the great fountain in the city of Tigisis, bearing an inscription in Phoenician characters and in the Phoenician

language, which runs as follows.” I cannot see that there would be any sufficient reason for doubting the truth of this very clear and exact statement, even if it stood alone and were unconfirmed by any other writer. Two writers, however, confirm it - one of an earlier and the other of a later date; and the three testimonies are proved, by their slight variations, to be independent of one another. There is then sufficient reason to believe that a Phoenician inscription to the effect stated existed at Tangiers in the time of the Lower Empire; and the true question for historical criticism to consider and determine is, what is the weight and value of such an inscription. That it was not a Jewish or a Christian monument is certain from the epithet of “plunderer” or “robber” applied in it to Joshua. That it was more ancient than Christianity seems probable from the language and character in which it was written. It would appear to have been a genuine Phoenician monument, of an antiquity which cannot now be decided, but which was probably remote; and it must be regarded as embodying an ancient tradition, current in this part of Africa in times anterior to Christianity, which very remarkably confirms the Hebrew narrative.”¹

As our author says, the fact that there are three independent witnesses to this inscription speaks volumes for its authenticity. That it should be written in the Phoenician language, and in Phoenician characters is exactly right, as is the occurrence of Joshua not only being named in person, but being called a plunderer and thief. Neither Jew nor Christian would ever have named him so, but that is exactly how the Canaanites knew him. Witness the Amarna Tablets.² The only pity is the fact that the settlers don’t give us their own name.

But another curious item of evidence arises further along the Mediterranean out of the soil of Cadiz in Spain. It is in the form of a Phoenician sarcophagus (see Fig. 24 below). It was excavated in 1877 from underneath the site of the city’s Roman theatre and resides today in the Fine Arts and Archaeology Museum of Cadiz.³



Fig. 24 Phoenician sarcophagus unearthed at Cadiz, Spain.

Interestingly, the sarcophagus is 86.25 inches, or 7 feet 2.25 inches, in height (2.19 metres); and some 84.5 cms, or 33.25 inches across the shoulders. Its owner clearly stood well above the average height for people of the Middle East, which is consistent with what we read in Egyptian records of the Shosu for instance, and with what the Books of Joshua and Judges tell us regarding the stature of many of the Canaanites. Moreover, a close examination of the Museum's official photograph of the sarcophagus, reveals the fact that the deceased had seemingly six toes on each foot, a genetic aberration that was common among the peoples of Canaan who were of more than usual size.⁴

What caused the Phoenician expansion overseas is usually put down to a simple desire to trade, but local pressures caused by population displacement were the more likely cause, and these pressures we can trace back to the general displacement of Canaanite populations which occurred earlier during the Israelite, or Hebrew, invasion of Canaan. It's hardly rocket science, but it is an area of the subject which the critics have been keen to avoid.⁵ That that expansion should occur in this part of the earth - Canaan - in the centuries both during and after the years of the Hebrew Conquest, is just too much of a coincidence.

The sheer number of Phoenician colonies required the shipping overseas from Canaan of a considerable population to man and manage them. Let's just briefly look at the list of colonies set up by the Phoenicians to judge the matter. Some of them became major players in the political world of the 1st millennium BC, and were not merely outlying trading posts. This was a serious exercise in nation-building abroad. The colonies so far known about include, in alphabetical order, these in North Africa: Bizerte; Carthage (founded before the city of Rome and perhaps her greatest challenger); Chellah; Constantine (Algeria); Essaouira; Hadrumetum; Hippo Regius; Iulia Constantia Zilil; Kelibia; Kerkouane; Leptis Magna; Leptis Parva; Lixus; Tangier (home to the inscription cited above); Thapsus; Thymiaterium; Thyna; Tripoli; Utica, Tunisia; and finally Volubilis.

Then in Sicily, we have the colonies of: Erice; Marsala; Mazara del Vallo; Motya; Palermo; and Soluntum.

In Spain, there are the Phoenician colonies of: Abdera; Almunecar; Barcelona; Cadiz (where the sarcophagus mentioned above was discovered); Cartagena; Huelva; Lebrija; Los Toscanos; Malaga; San Roque, Cadiz; Sexi; and Tarragona.

Further sites around the Mediterranean include: Cyprus; Cagliari; Foinikounta; Gozo; Guelma; Ibiza; Kition; Malta; Maurocastrum; Mogador Island; Myriandrus; Oea; Olbia; Sa Caleta; Setubal; Tarout Island; and Tripoli, Lebanon.

Phoenicians in the Americas

But even that was not the end of it, for out in the Atlantic, we have Lisbon in Portugal, and Cornwall in England (though Cornwall was never a colony as such. The Phoenicians merely visited regularly for the valuable Cornish tin). But even further out, on the other side of the Atlantic, we have in America inscriptions left behind by Phoenician colonists who were

blown off course across the Atlantic Ocean from the coast of Africa in the 1st millennium BC. The first inscription that we may consider is that which is known as the Bat Creek Inscription (see Fig. 25 below).

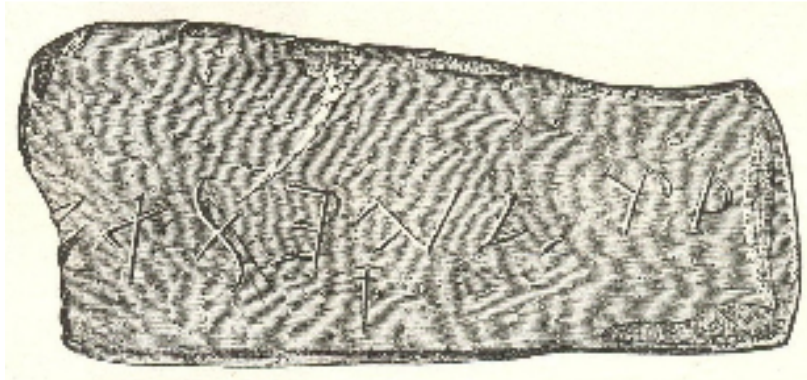


Fig. 25 The Bat Creek Inscription

The rumpus that was started by its discovery is an education in how things are dealt with when artefacts are discovered that fly directly in the face of what our evolutionary establishments want the public to hear. Immediately the cry went up of ‘fake’ and ‘fraud’, with all manner of learned scholars rushing to discredit the find – as well as the finder. What stuck in their craw was the observed similarity of the engraved characters to palaeo-Hebrew characters. Intriguingly, the archaeologist, Cyrus Thomas, who directed the dig, didn’t claim that it was palaeo-Hebrew, but, looking at the inscription the wrong way up, rather claimed that it was written in the Cherokee script – which, by the way, was not invented until 1821. He writes:

“No relics were found with any but No. 1 [skeleton], immediately under the skull and jaw bones of which were two copper bracelets, an engraved stone, a small drilled fossil, a copper bead, a bone implement, and some small pieces of polished wood.... The engraved stone lay partially under the back part of the skull and was struck by the steel prod used in probing. This stone is shown in Fig. 273. The engraved characters

on it are beyond question letters of the Cherokee alphabet said to have been invented by George Guess (or Sequoyah), a half-breed Cherokee, about 1821.”⁶

“Figure 273” of his report actually shows the stone upside down with its straight edge at the top.⁷ But soon its true character was observed, and when the renowned Hebraist Cyrus H Gordon got to work on the piece, he recognised its palaeo-Hebrew script immediately. He saw that it read (in English transcription) “LYHWD[M],” – “for the Jews”, or more strictly, I would suggest, “for the Judahites”.⁸ Needless to say, Gordon was panned for daring to publish such academic heresy, and yet to this day no one has managed to prove him wrong – not convincingly anyway.

The stone could not have been a forgery of any kind. It was discovered *in situ* acting as a headrest for the skull which lay upon it. And what would have been the point of such a forgery? The forger stood no chance of gaining either fame or fortune by it. On the contrary, it brought down merely disdain and hoots of derision upon the heads of any who would defend its authenticity. Cyrus H Gordon (of whom more later) would have known all too well the assassination attempt that would be made upon his own reputation and character, though being a man of rare courage and conviction, he published anyway.

Bat Creek, where the inscription was discovered, empties into the Little Tennessee River about 12 miles or so upstream from its estuary, and alongside the creek were the three mounds which were excavated by what was then the Smithsonian’s Bureau of Ethnology (see Footnote 6 below). It was in Mound 3 where the stone was found. But it is much further south that we encounter the site of the second Phoenician (or rather Canaanite) inscription, namely in Brazil, at a place known as Paraiba, and it is the Paraiba Inscription (see Fig. 26 below) that is the most informative. Like the Bat Creek Inscription, it is written in Phoenician characters, and it has been translated by Cyrus H Gordon. His translation reads:

“We are Sidonian Canaanites from the city of the Mercantile King. We were cast up on this distant shore, a land of mountains. We sacrificed a youth to the celestial gods and goddesses in the nineteenth year of our mighty King Hiram and embarked from Ezion-Geber into the Red Sea. We voyaged with ten ships and were at sea together for two years around Africa [Ham]. Then we were separated by the hand of Baal and were no longer with our companions. So we have come here, twelve men and three women, into New Shore. Am I, the Admiral, a man who would flee? Nay! May the celestial gods and goddesses favour us well!”⁹

A facsimile of the Paraiba text is given below (see Fig. 26), and comes from the hand of one Constantin Schlottman, who wrote his critique in 1874.¹⁰ The stone itself has been hidden away somewhere, so we are indebted to Schlottman for his work. Being a completely indifferent, if not exactly a hostile witness, his testimony is all the more valuable.

ሃኒሠጳጳጳጳ ሃነሠጳ ስጳጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ
 ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ
 ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ
 ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ
 ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ ሃነሠጳጳ
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Fig. 26 Facsimile of Paraiba Inscription

However, the question must be considered as to whether the inscription is a forgery or not, and here’s where things get really interesting. The Paraiba Inscription came to the public notice in 1874, and was immediately denounced as a forgery by many. One of the main

causes of this denunciation was the appearance in the text of ‘Aramaisms’ along with grammatical and syntactical ‘errors’ and ‘impossibilities’ which at that time were unknown in Phoenician and Canaanite inscriptions. (To ease the task of reading the inscription, Netto, the man who first informed the public of its discovery, had transcribed the characters into those of Hebrew). However, in time it was discovered that these ‘errors’ and ‘impossibilities’ appeared in fact to be nothing of the kind. Gordon tells us:

“The linguistic oddities which have cast suspicion on the text actually support its genuineness. No forger who knew enough Semitics to compose such a document would have committed so many apparent errors. Now that nearly a century has passed, it is obvious that the text is genuine, because subsequently discovered Phoenician, Ugaritic, and other Northwest Semitic inscriptions confront us with the same ‘errors’.”¹¹

Gordon goes on to point out in a very technical treatment of the text that all these doubts had been answered by discoveries in 1923, 1946, 1957, 1965, 1968 and so on. They were, in short, textual anomalies (I should say commonalities) that were entirely unknown to any Semitist or forger working in 1874. It would have been humanly and statistically impossible for him to have guessed them, or even to have committed them as errors through lack of knowledge. As Gordon concludes:

“To deny the authenticity of the Parahyba (sic) text is to attribute prophetic inspiration to the forger.”¹²

Later in the same issue, Gordon qualifies his remarks with further technical discussions, leaving the matter beyond any doubt that the Paraiba Inscription is a genuine Canaanite artefact.¹³ It can be nothing else, the point of all which is to show that the Phoenicians - ‘Phoenician’ and ‘Canaanite’ being synonymous terms - were compelled to journey far

around the world in their many, largely successful, attempts to set up colonies to relieve population pressures in their homeland, pressures which were due entirely to the earlier Hebrew invasion of that homeland under Joshua and his successors as recorded in the Bible.

There can be no effect without a cause, and that is especially true in the present case. Had the Hebrew invasion of Canaan along with its displacement of Canaanite populations not taken place precisely when and how the Bible says it did, then the Phoenician 'explosion' of the early 1st millennium BC would be impossible to account for. It is as simple and as straightforward as that. I will here leave the reader to ponder the ramifications of that.

Footnotes to Chapter Eight

1. Rawlinson, George. *The Historical Evidences of the Truth of the Scripture Records Stated Anew, with Special References to the Doubts and Discoveries of Modern Times*. 1859. John Murray. London. pp. 91-93.
2. For a detailed discussion of their disdain, see my *Authenticity of the Book of Joshua*, chapter two.
3. *Scientific American Supplement*. No. 832. 12th December 1891. New York. The article is based on a paper read before the Astronomical and Physical Society of Toronto, Canada. 18th April 1891.
4. http://www.saatchigallery.com/museums/FullSizeMuseumPhotos/ac_id/395/image_id/2632/imageno/
5. For a generalised discussion of the matter, see Albright, W F. 'New Light on the Early History of Phoenician Colonization.' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Vol. 83 (Oct., 1941), pp. 14-22. It is well to note that 'Phoenician' is merely a term by which the Greeks knew the Canaanites. The Phoenicians were, in fact, Canaanites. The name-change has allowed the later obscuring of the fact that the Phoenician expansion overseas was a Canaanite expansion. You can see why the modernists and critics have exploited the confusion.
6. Powell, J W. *Twelfth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 1890-1891*. 1894. Washington. Government Printing Office. p. 393.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 394.
8. Gordon, Cyrus H. *Before Columbus: Links Between the Old World and Ancient America*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1971. pp. 175-187.

9. Gordon, Cyrus H. 'The Authenticity of the Phoenician Text from Parahyba.'
Orientalia. Nova Series. Vol. 37. No. 1 (1968). pp. 75-80. And in the same issue:
'The Canaanite Text from Brazil.' *Orientalia*. Nova Series. Vol. 37. No. 4 (1968). pp.
425-436.
10. Schlottmann, Constantin. 'Die sogenannte Inschrift von Parahyba.' *Zeitschrift der
Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*. Vol. 28 (1874). pp. 481-487.
11. Gordon, Cyrus H. 'The Authenticity of the Phoenician Text from Parahyba.'
Orientalia. Nova Series. Vol. 37. No. 1 (1968). pp. 75-76.
12. Ibid., p. 76.
13. Gordon, Cyrus H. 'The Canaanite Text from Brazil.' *Orientalia*. Nova Series. Vol.
37. No. 4 (1968). pp. 425-436.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

So, how do we now view the Book of Judges? The evidence that we have examined here is only a small portion of what is available, yet already we are led to conclude by it that the Book of Judges is no forgery. It is not mere propaganda either. It is rather an historical record that is so precise and exact that it can be tested even on the microscopic level and still be found to be faithful to the historical record – utterly faithful. That is certainly not a property that belongs to any humanly-devised document, forgery or no.

What goes for the Book of Judges, goes also for any other Book of the Bible. I have been critically investigating the Books of the Bible for nigh fifty years now, and I never cease to be astonished at their accuracy. Even their unlikeliest statements turn out to be unnervingly accurate when they are investigated in any depth. Witness the account of Ehud bolting that door on the inside from the outside as he left the room (see Chapter Three above). More than one critic has suggested that we should butcher the Hebrew text in order to read that Ehud really made his escape by sliding down the royal privy, so impossible and unlikely did the account appear of him being able to bolt and lock that door from the outside. This argument is repeated even by some of our conservative scholars. And yet, when the evidence is examined in any depth, we find that the Hebrew text requires no alteration at all. What it speaks, it speaks truly - to the confounding of all its critics, conservative or liberal.

And what of Cushan Rishathaim, the king who never existed according to the critics, assuring us over many years that he is not to be found in any records anywhere of any time or kingdom? What are we to make of their claim? Just by looking at the records we were easily able to identify him with the Assyrian king, Eriba-Adad I, who ruled from 1392-1366 BC. Here was the double-demon-worshipping, twice-wicked, king that the Book of Judges tells us about. It does not use his throne name by which he is famous. But then, 2 Kings 15:19

doesn't know Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria by his throne name either, calling him just Pul instead, which was the name that the Babylonians knew him by. In short, the critics' claim that our Cushan Rishathaim was a fictional character, just doesn't hold up. What does hold up, thanks to the archaeological record in this case, is the Book of Judges' claim to belong to, and be part of, the inerrant Word of God.

The critics simply do not understand the nature of the Bible. This is why they consistently misinterpret and misrepresent it. Indeed, rather than concede that it is accurate in its statements, they will deliberately lie to convince the world - and themselves - of its falsity. In fact, so consistent is their lying that if they say that no evidence exists for this or that, we were best always to assume the opposite. Invariably, we will encounter the evidence which we were assured is non-existent, and with equal invariance we will find that that evidence corroborates the Bible even on the microscopic level where no forger can work.

When someone claims to have in their possession a certain artefact from ancient times, and a suspicion of forgery arises, the first thing that happens is that that artefact is placed under the microscope. This is because, no matter how genuine the item may appear when looked at with the eye, the forger - if it is a forgery - can never get the microscopic details right. If it is artificially stained in an attempt to give the appearance of age, then that staining will soon be chemically analysed and revealed to be fake. Likewise, if the staining is genuine, then that fact too will be revealed. And so it is with the Bible. The critics will always steer clear of the microscopic evidence because that is something which will always reveal their lie. They will denigrate the Scriptures in a more general sense, casting doubt upon this or that statement, and there they will leave it, confident that the public would never question their white-coat status as professors of this or doctors of that. Their commentaries on the Bible - which always seem to cost many times the price of the Bible they're commenting on - will carry the imprimatur of this or that university, and thus the public will be deceived, never thinking to

examine what the critics have been claiming all these years. The sad thing is that I don't suppose for one moment that the deception will ever cease. Not this side of Eternity anyway.

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