Biblical Archaeology and Identity: Israel Finkelstein and his Rivals

During the 1990s and in the early 21st century, a new current in biblical archaeology became dominant. A new school from Tel Aviv University, led by Israel Finkelstein, Ze'ev Herzog and Nadav Na'aman, rejected the circular reasoning of traditional archaeology and presented a more mature and critical approach.

By Shimon Amit
Editor, HPS-Science.com
History, Philosophy and Sociology of Science
May 2016

Abstract

The article traces the sociopolitical and rhetorical aspects of the discourse in biblical archaeology in contemporary Israel. Through the article I will show that research and theoretical interpretations cannot be separated from identities and socio-political biases. Generally, Zionist archaeologists are much less skeptical towards the Bible than Palestinian archaeologists, pro-Palestinian *minimalists* or Israeli post-Zionists. Since the 1990s, a new school from Tel Aviv University has been developing and promoting a new paradigm of Low Chronology, which denies the existence of a United Monarchy in the days of the Judahite Kings David and Solomon. Despite the success of the new paradigm, a conservative school, whose prominent representatives come from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, challenges the new paradigm and tries to protect or update the old paradigm of High Chronology. The most controversial excavation sites today are the City of David site and the ancient city excavated at Khirbet Qeiyafa. The article analyzes the struggle between the schools about the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, as it reflects in articles, books, lectures, presentations, interviews and heated debates in the media.

Zionism and Biblical Archaeology

I will start with a brief review of the development of biblical archaeology against the background of the Judeo-Christian faith and the Zionist identity. Since the end of the 19th century, Christian archaeologists had excavated with a Bible in one hand and spade in the other. Archaeologists, such as William Foxwell Albright (1968) and Roland de

Vaux (1965), assumed that the sacred texts cannot be doubted. Their aim was to affirm the biblical narrative using archaeological finds, while interpreting these finds according to the biblical narrative.

The Bible was also a key element in shaping the national ethos by David Ben-Gurion, the leader of the Zionist movement and the first Prime Minister of Israel, and the vaguely secular Israeli establishment (Ben-Gurion, 1957; Sand, 2009: 105-115; Silberman and Small (eds), 1997; Abu El-Haj, 2002). The Zionist archaeologists who followed Albright, de Vaux and the Christian archaeologists - e.g. Yigael Yadin (1975), Benjamin Mazar (1974) and Yohanan Aharoni (1957) - were part of the ruling elite in Israel and they adopted the practice of Bible in one hand and spade in the other. Yadin was a Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Head of Operations during the 1948 war, the second Chief of Staff of the IDF and a Minister. Mazar was the president of the Hebrew University. Also, he was the brother-in-law of the second President of Israel Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and had close relations with Ben Gurion. Aharoni founded the Institute of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University. He and Yadin parted ways and became rivals. The rivalry between the departments of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University, which is described below, had begun here. Yet, despite the rivalry, both Yadin and Aharoni were determined to protect the biblical narrative, i.e. the foundation of the national ethos. In this sense, they represented the entire generation.

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Danger of Biblical Minimalism

Christian archaeology and Zionist archaeology were characterized by *Biblical maximalism*, that is, by the acceptance of the biblical narrative as a reliable and fundamental historical source to which all other evidence must be adjusted. This approach was challenged by the rise of a new paradigm in Europe of biblical scholars known as the *biblical minimalists*. The reaction of the *minimalists* was directed against noted biblical scholars, such as Albrecht Alt (1966) and Martin Noth (1960). Liberation Theology (i.e., the rejection of the Bible as a *privileged* text that justifies colonialism and imperialism) and the radical intellectual-political currents in the academy of the late 1960s were the background in which biblical minimalism appeared. The representatives of biblical minimalism, Niels Peter Lemche (1988; 2008: 316-317) and Thomas Thompson (1992; 1999) of the University of Copenhagen, along with Philip Davies (1992) and Keith Whitelam (1996) of the University of Sheffield, are very skeptical about the biblical narrative and criticize the

commitment of biblical scholars and archaeologists to the Judeo-Christian faith and to the Zionist identity. The minimalists separate the *mythical* Israel as depicted in the Bible from the *historical* Israel. They argue that the biblical narrative was shaped only after the Destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile (6th century B.C.E.), i.e. during the Persian Period (circa 5th-4th centuries B.C.E.) and even during the Hellenistic Period (circa 3rd-2nd centuries B.C.E.).

The attack of the biblical minimalists on the Judeo-Christian and Zionist biases of biblical archaeology and biblical studies caused an academic stir and the biblical minimalists were accused of anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli agenda (Thompson 2011; 2001; Dever, 2003; Whitelam, 1996: 46; Rendsburg, 1999). The above mentioned biblical scholars are not *anti-Semitic*, as some of their opponents claim. Yet their critique and rejection of biblical maximalism and Zionist archaeology are intertwined with their critique of the Zionist ethos and their pro-Palestinian views. In this respect, none of the combatants can claim to be *unbiased*. Research and theoretical assumptions cannot be separated from socio-political views and cultural identity. Thompson's view and work are clearly pro-Palestinians. For example, he was a director of the *Toponomie Palestinienne* project, which "criticized the Israelis for de-Arabicizing Palestinian toponomy and doing damage to this region's cultural heritage" (Thompson, 2011). Similarly, in his reply to Dever and others, Davies openly presents a pro-Palestinian agenda:

> The danger is thus that biblical scholarship is "Zionist" and that it participates in the elimination of the Palestinian identity, as if over a thousand years of Muslim occupation of this land has meant nothing (Davies, 2002).

Whitelam's work, as well, is explicitly pro-Palestinian, as appears from the subtitle of his book *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (1996). Following Edward Said, Whitelam argues that the discourse of biblical studies is "part of the complex network of scholarly work which Said identified as 'Orientalist discourse.' The history of ancient Palestine has been ignored and silenced by biblical studies because its object of interest has been an ancient Israel conceived and presented as the taproot of Western civilization." Whitelam complains that while the minimalist discourse is presented as political and ideological, the dominant discourse is presented as objective and unbiased. Moreover, Whitelam and others accuse biblical archaeologists, such as Israel Finkelstein, of being biased towards "the search for the national entity 'Israel' in the Late Bronze-Iron Age transition," thus

marginalizing and dismissing Canaanite areas which they do not see as important and relevant to the understanding of Israelite Settlement (Whitelam, 1996: 1-18).

Biblical archaeology is part of the war of narratives between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Zionist-Israeli and Arab-Palestinian identities play a major role in the construction of expectations, assumptions, theoretical biases and interpretation of data. The Palestinian side, of course, is biased towards biblical minimalism.

Palestinian archaeologists, such as Hani Nur el-Din and Jalal Kazzouh, reject the Zionist archaeology and identify continuity between the Palestinians and the Canaanites. Others, like Hamden Taha, do not accept this identification of the Palestinians with the Canaanites and claim that it is just a response to the Israeli practice of archeology (Draper, 2010 Eltahawy and Klein, 1998; Wallace, 2013). In 2000, archaeologist Khaled Nashef of Birzeit University established the *Journal of Palestinian Archaeology*, which challenges biblical archaeology in the name of the *silenced* and *deprived* narrative of the Palestinians. An example of how the Palestinian critique of biblical archaeology is intertwined with the Palestinian critique of Zionism can be found in the work of Nur Masalha (2007: 1, 10).

A New Phase in Biblical Archaeology

The disintegration of the *engaged* society, or the *enlisted* society as it is called in Israel, and the decline of socialist-Zionist collectivism during the late 1970s, enabled the rise of different narratives and discourses. For instance, the New Historians, some of them post-Zionists, challenged the Zionist narrative regarding the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the 1948 war and the Palestinian refugee problem.

During the 1990s and in the early 21st century, a new current in biblical archaeology became dominant. A new school from Tel Aviv University, led by Israel Finkelstein, Ze'ev Herzog and Nadav Na'aman, rejected the circular reasoning of traditional archaeology and presented a more mature and critical approach. In 1999, Herzog (today professor emeritus) published an article which initiated a fierce debate (Herzog, 1999). The debates over the new approach in biblical archaeology relate in many respects to debates over the work of the new historians, since both dispute the national ethos and myths and endanger the Zionist identity and the Jewish identity. In his article, Herzog summarized the conclusions of the

Tel Aviv School and attacked the approach that was shaped by the previous generation of archaeologists. According to Herzog, archaeological and epigraphic evidence disconfirms the stories of the Patriarchs and the Exodus, the Conquest of Canaan and the existence of the United Monarchy in the days of David and Solomon. Additionally, monotheism developed only during the late Monarchic period. Biblical historiography was one of the cornerstones in the construction of national identity of the Jewish-Israeli society, and therefore Herzog admitted that as a son of the Jewish people and a disciple of the biblical school, he feels the frustration on his "own flesh."[1] In this context, he indirectly related to the work of the new historians and estimated that Israeli society is ready to recognize the injustice that was done to the Palestinians, but is not strong enough to accept the archaeological facts that shatter the biblical myth.

Finkelstein and the School of Tel Aviv undermined the traditional chronology of biblical archaeology and replaced it with the theory of Low Chronology. According to this view, the transition from late Iron I to early Iron IIA took place in the late 10th century B.C.E., i.e. after the days of David and Solomon. The great United Monarchy did not exist. In the days of David, Judah was a small, unfortified tribal kingdom and Jerusalem was a small "village." There were only about 5000 adult males in Judah of the 10th century B.C.E. At most, the population of Judah was no more than few thousand people (Finkelstein, 1996; Finkelstein, 2005; Finkelstein, 2006-2007; Finkelstein and Silberman, 2001: 142).

A rival group of conservative archaeologists, whose prominent representatives come from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, still sees the Bible as a reliable historical source for the Monarchic period and defends the theory of High Chronology. In comparison to the Tel Aviv School, the Jerusalem School is much closer to the previous generation of Zionist archaeologists. A collection of essays which presents the different views in this debate was published in 2001 (Levine and Mazar (eds), 2001).

Table 1 presents current views regarding the High/Low Chronology debate.

TABLE 1
High Chronology vs. Low Chronology and the Beginning of Iron IIA

Archaeologist	Theory	The beginning of Iron IIA	References

Israel Finkelstein	Low Chronology	Circa 900 B.C.E.	Finkelstein, 1996; Finkelstein, 2005
	Low Chronology	Updated view: Circa 940-920 B.C.E.	Finkelstein and Piasetzky, 2011; Toffolo et al., 2014, see also Finkelstein and Piasetzky, 2010
Ilan Sharon	Low Chronology	Circa 900 B.C.E.	Sharon et al. 2007
Amihai Mazar	High Chronology	Circa 1000 B.C.E.	Mazar, 1990
	Modified High Chronology	Updated view: circa 980 B.C.E.	Mazar, 2011
Yosef Garfinkel	High Chronology	Circa 1000 B.C.E., at least in Judah. A "**?**" regarding the existence of the United Monarchy and the beginning of the northern Kingdom of Israel	Garfinkel and Ganor, 2009: 4, 8; Garfinkel, 2011: 51; Garfinkel et al., 2012: 364, Garfinkel et al., 2015

In this section, and in the following sections, I will focus on the socio-political aspects of the debate between the supporters of Low Chronology and High Chronology. Amihai Mazar, professor emeritus from the Hebrew University and the nephew of Benjamin Mazar, tries to downplay the influence of sociopolitical aspects on the work of his colleagues from both schools: "All those involved are mainly secular folk who come from similar educational frameworks and hold similar political views which are not extreme. You will not find people from the extreme right or from the extreme left, but people situated somewhere in the middle. I don't think that considerations of political outlook are decisive." On the other hand, Aharon Meir from Bar-Ilan University claimed that "One of the problems is politics-related motivations." In relation to Eilat Mazar, an archeologist from the conservative School of Jerusalem and the

granddaughter of Benjamin Mazar, Meir said: "She will say that the work she is doing is not politically motivated, but you see where she gets her money [in part from the nationalist Elad association] and you see her worldview." Afterward he retracted his remarks and said that Eilat Mazar does not, after all, have a political agenda (Shtull-Trauring, 2011).

Indeed, most Israeli archaeologists belong to the mainstream of Zionism. However, this does not mean that their work is not influenced by socio-political and cultural aspects. Contemporary Zionist archaeologists are much less skeptical towards the Bible, in comparison to the pro-Palestinian non-Jewish minimalists in Europe, to the Palestinians themselves and to Israeli post-Zionists. Moreover, even between the Schools of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem there are differences that relate to sociopolitical issues, as Meir reluctantly admitted. Ze'ev Herzog is on one side: he identifies with the new historians and is more skeptical towards the Bible than the previous generation of Zionist archaeologists. Eilat Mazar is on the other side: her work reflects the nationalistic view and she carries on the legacy of the previous generation, as I will show below.

Sociopolitical views, theoretical assumptions and interpretation of evidence are interrelated. This can be seen by comparing Zionist and post-Zionist views. A prominent example is the work of Shlomo Sand, a secular, left wing, post-Zionist intellectual and a professor of history at Tel Aviv University. His controversial book *The Invention of the Jewish People* (2009) became a bestseller in Israel. Sand was heavily criticized by the representatives of the Zionist elite, e.g. historians Anita Shapira, Israel Bartal and Yoav Gelber (Shapira, 2009; Karpel, 2012; *Haaretz*, 2012; Gelber, 2012). The question about the boundaries of scientific fields and the tension between different specialties are part of the debate. Sand's rivals claim that he has no authority to rule on these issues, since he specializes in the intellectual history of France and the relationship between film and history.

It is important to note that in this debate a clear distinction cannot be found between the following aspects: (a) the Zionist or post-Zionist worldviews of the different rivals and (b) their approach to history, to the appearance and development of nationality, to the Bible and biblical archaeology and to the question of whether the Jews today are the direct descendants of the Jews from the Second Temple period or whether the Palestinians are, partially, their descendants. All these issues and aspects are an integral part of the same debate. The goal of Sand, for example, is to expose how "adherents of Jewish nationalism" moved the Bible from

the theological shelf to the historical shelf and "began to read it as if it were reliable testimony to processes and events" (Sand, 2009: 127).

Is it surprising, then, that Sand is more skeptical about the biblical narratives than the Zionist intellectuals, including the Tel Aviv School, and supports the biblical minimalists? Sand thinks that the work of "the pioneers of the Tel Aviv school," "offers attractive conclusions." Their arguments, which attempt to explain why the Bible could not have been written before the end of the 8th century B.C.E. are "fairly persuasive." However, Sand rejects the main theme in their works, according to which the stories of the Bible were shaped and edited, to a large extent, by the interests and views of the kingdom of Judah at the days of King Josiah (7th century B.C.E.). Sand argues that their explanations are anachronistic. Although *The Bible Unearthed* of Finkelstein and Silberman (2001) is "rich and stimulating," Sand observes that the book "depicts a fairly modern national society whose sovereign, the king of Judah, seeks to unify his people and the refugees from the defeated kingdom of Israel by inventing the Torah." Finkelstein, Silberman and their colleagues, according to Sand, project modern society and techno-culture on the illiterate peasant society of the 7th century B.C.E. In ancient times the king did not depend on the goodwill of the people or the *political* opinions of the masses, but on ensuring a loose ideological dynastic consensus among the administrative class and a narrow stratum of landed aristocracy (Sand, 2009: 123-124). Sand concludes:

> Explaining the origin of the first monotheism in the context of widespread propaganda conducted by a small, marginal kingdom seeking to annex the land to the north is a very unconvincing historiographic argument. However, it might be indicative of an anti-annexationist mood in early twenty-first-century Israel (Sand, 2009: 124).

Thus, according to Sand, it is more probable that only administrative chronicles and vainglorious victory inscriptions composed by court scribes, e.g. Shaphan the scribe of Josiah, preserved in the archives of kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel. "We don't know, and never will know, what those chronicles contained," admits Sand. In the vast expanse of theoretical interpretation, Sand prefers to side with the biblical minimalists, or the *Copenhagen-Sheffield school*. Monotheism and the Bible were created as a result of the encounter between the Judean intellectual elites and abstract Persian religion. The absence of the monarchy freed the scribes and priests and enabled them not only to

praise but to criticize even the founder of the dynasty-David (Sand, 2009: 124-128).

Finkelstein's Apology and the Scapegoats from Sheinkin Street

In a lecture to students and professors at Tel Aviv University, Finkelstein quoted the concern of Christian archaeologist Roland de Vaux for the Judeo-Christian faith. Finkelstein asked rhetorically whether he is committed to this view. He immediately clarified that he is not committed to this view: neither in terms of identity and faith nor in terms of research (Finkelstein, 2006-2007: Lecture 1). In a similar way, Finkelstein empathized with the previous generation of Zionist archaeologists, but at the same time drew the line between them and the new generation:

> There was a deep need here to create a culture and to give roots to people of different nationalities who came from many different places, and archaeology was a potent tool for that purpose. Everyone was mobilized in the effort on the basis of a deep inner conviction, and there is nothing wrong with that. Yadin saw history repeating itself: the conquest of the land then and now, and the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon then and now, this time taking the form of a democracy in the Middle East. The archaeologists played between past and present, and they cannot be criticized for that (Finkelstein in Shtull-Trauring, 2011).

When Finkelstein was asked about the concern that his theory will serve those who deny the Zionist argument, he presented a more mature and critical version of Zionism than his predecessors:

> The debate over our right to the land is ridiculous. As though there is some international committee in Geneva that considers the history of peoples. Two peoples come and one says, `I have been here since the 10th century BCE,' and the other says, `No, he's lying, he has only been here since the ninth century BCE.' What will they do - evict him? Tell him to start packing? In any event, our cultural heritage goes back to these periods, so this whole story is nonsense... And let's say that there was no exodus from Egypt and that there was no great and magnificent united monarchy, and that we are actually Canaanites. So in terms of rights, we are okay, aren't we? (Finkelstein in Lori, 2005).

In his books, lectures and interviews Finkelstein always emphasizes that he strongly believes in the "complete separation" between faith, tradition and archaeological research. Finkelstein does not rule out the theology of the Bible, which is incredibly *exciting* to him. It is important to Finkelstein that his Israeli audience would know how much he is proud of the Jewish tradition and does not try to undermine it. Through an extraordinary outburst of creativity, he claims, the inhabitants of Judah in the late Monarchic period produced the founding document of Judaism and Christianity. Nonetheless, since identity is a threat to objectivity and research is a threat to identity, Finkelstein's solution is to insist on the above separation which "releases the tension" (Finkelstein, 2006-2007: Lecture 13).

Yet, despite Finkelstein's claims, the sociopolitical dimension did not disappear from biblical archaeology. The separation of the identity of the researcher from his field of study is impossible. Finkelstein and his rivals continue to blame each other for being affected by sociopolitical views. On the one hand, as we saw before, minimalists, like Whitelam, accuse Finkelstein of magnifying the Israelite settlement in the search for the national entity 'Israel,' while marginalizing the Canaanite areas. On the other hand, as we will see below, conservative Zionists accuse Finkelstein and the Tel Aviv School of conspiring with the minimalists. Finkelstein and his conservative rivals present their own work as *objective* and *unbiased*, but the debate between them exposes sociopolitical views and cultural values.

Finkelstein repeatedly clarifies that his work poses no threat to Zionism or Judaism. Rhetorically, he presents himself to the Israeli audience as one of the people who shares their values and concerns. In the Hebrew introduction to *The Bible Unearthed* (Finkelstein and Silberman, 2001), Finkelstein and Silberman explain to the reader that the identification of the Jewish reader with the biblical text must be separated from the scientific study of the text: faith, tradition and research exist in parallel dimensions. According to the authors, Israeli society has matured. The idea that the legitimacy of Israel depends on the accuracy of the biblical depictions is childish. It does not matter whether in the 10th century B.C.E. Solomon ruled a large kingdom or a small village and few territories. There is no doubt that the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel existed already in the 9th century B.C.E. Moreover, the political use of ancient history may become a double-edged sword. The assertion that the Israelites are descendants of the Canaanites may sound like heresy, but Finkelstein and Silberman believe that it pulls the rug out from under the

assertion that the roots of another group can be found in the Canaanite's world.

This rhetorical move of Finkelstein and Silberman is politically aimed at minimalist arguments, such as the *silencing* argument of Whitelam, and the Palestinian narrative. Finkelstein and Silberman add that as a democratic, liberal and open society, Israel must deal with its past and support the freedom of research which is far more important than magnificent palaces from the 10th century B.C.E. The book was written, according to the authors, out of deep respect for the biblical "truth," which deals with the reality, needs and difficulties of the people of Judah at the end of the Monarchic period and during the Persian Period.

One of the main themes of Finkelstein's theory is that the biblical narrative is largely shaped by apologists, i.e. the apology for King David's behavior or the apology of the *second Deuteronomist* who had to explain the destruction of the First Temple and the Kingdom of Judah and the Babylonian exile (Finkelstein, 2006-2007; Finkelstein and Silberman, 2001). At times, Finkelstein finds a connection between now and then:

> 'The kings of Israel were scoundrels,' the people of Judah said, 'but as for the people there, we have no problem with them, they are all right.' They said about Israel what an ultra-Orthodox person would say about you or me: 'Israel, though he has sinned, is still Israel' (Finkelstein in Lori, 2005).

Ironically, when Finkelstein talks about biblical apologetics, he creates his own apology. His mother's family came to Palestine in 1860, his father's family nine decades ago. In an interview with Haaretz he clarifies that he is not a secular yuppie nihilist from Tel Aviv or a post-Zionist leftist, using exactly the same accusations that ultra-orthodox Rabbis, politicians from religious parties, right wing politicians or old puritan Zionists, use against Sheinkin Street, its culture and people (*Sheinkinaim* plural of *Sheinkinai*), which have become the symbol of secular Tel Aviv:

> What didn't they say about us? That we are nihilists, that we are savaging Western culture, undermining Israel's right of existence. One person used the expression 'Bible deniers'... I am not some kind of gentile nihilist Sheinkinai... So what will I do, leave? Where am I supposed to go? To Grodno?... Maybe it's more quiet and pleasant in Boston or Paris, but if you live here, then you at least have to be part of the ongoing historical experience and understand its power. If you live here only for the parties on the

> beach on Thursday night, then it would be better if you didn't live here, because this is a dangerous place. Anyone who thinks that Tel Aviv is a type of Goa has missed the point completely (Finkelstein in Lori, 2005).[2]

Already Ben-Gurion, who was a puritan Zionist, called Tel Aviv and Haifa, "the contemporary Sodom and Gomorrah," in a letter he sent in 1955 (Sima, 2012). Anyone familiar with the Israeli discourse can notice that the only thing Finkelstein forgot to say about his scapegoats from Sheinkin Street is that they eat Sushi. Usually, when ultra-orthodox Jews use the term "gentile" in this context, their next move is to send the opponent to convert to Christianity. Finkelstein is far from orthodoxy, but, as a patriot who is committed to the Jewish tradition and whose work does not undermine Judaism or Zionism, he does have to give an account to real and imaginary others. One of them is Adam Zertal (1936-2015) who represented the old generation of Zionist archaeologists. It was Zertal who counted Finkelstein, Herzog and their school among the *Bible deniers*, a term that has connotations of *holocaust denial* (Zertal, 1999; Zertal 2000).

The Excavations at the City of David

Eilat Mazar, an archaeologist from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Shalem Center, is a follower of the Zionist-maximalist approach which was shaped by her grandfather Benjamin Mazar: "One of the many things I learned from my grandfather was how to relate to the Biblical text: Pore over it again and again, for it contains within it descriptions of genuine historical reality" (Mazar, 2006b: 20). Mazar is guided by a maximalist reading of the Bible. Her Jewish-Zionist identity shaped her theoretical assumptions, expectations and the importance she gives to the finding of the great kingdom of two national and international mythical heroes - David and Solomon. Mazar claims that her work reveals "the importance of the Bible as a marvelous historical source that embodies a wealth of authentic historical accounts." For her, both the Bible and the remains of the construction in Jerusalem "are engraved in the root of our existence and from them we suckle our national strength." She defines her archaeological work as "a personal umbilical cord between me and the ancient history of the people of Israel in the Land of Israel. You can call it, if you wish, national strength from a personal aspect" (Mazar, 2006a).

The excavations at the old city of Jerusalem, and the City of David site south of the Temple Mount are directly connected to national and international politics and they are in the focus of the media. Even a simple discovery can trigger the national propaganda machine. For instance, in September, 2013, Mazar announced that her expedition at the Ophel, a site located between the Temple Mount and the City of David, had found gold treasure from the late Byzantine period (around the 7th century CE). The treasure includes a gold medallion with images of a menorah (the national symbol of the state of Israel), a shofar, and a Torah scroll, and it immediately became a major topic in the news (Reinstein, 2013; Hasson, 2013b). The news reports on the discovery were followed by the usual talkbacks about the *Jewish right* to the land and the Palestinian *fiction*. Right wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Mazar and congratulated her. The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs published the discovery, as it usually does in cases of archaeological finds that relate to Jewish history in Israel. According to the publication, Netanyahu said to Mazar:

> This is a magnificent discovery. Nationally, it attests to the ancient Jewish presence and to the sanctity of the place; this is as clear as the sun and it is tremendous... This is historic testimony, of the highest order, to the Jewish people's link to Jerusalem, to its land and to its heritage (Netanyahu; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

In December 2013, Netanyahu told the audience of a convention of the Likud party about his meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister a few hours earlier:

> I showed him the seal of an official of King Hezekiah, a seal that is found next to the Western Wall … and I say to him, "Look, there is a name on this. It is written in Hebrew, and it's a name you know - Netanyahu!" And I tell him, "This is from almost 3,000 years ago, but you know my first name dates back almost 4,000 years" (Netanyahu in Verter, 2013).

Netanyahu did not tell the visitor that the surname Netanyahu was chosen by his father, the right-wing Zionist historian Benzion Netanyahu, who was born in Warsaw as Benzion Mileikowsky. In fact, Hebraization of surnames is a key element in the construction of the national identity since the early days of Zionism. On November 17, 2013, Naftali Bennett, Economy Minister and leader of The Jewish Home party that represents the religious right wing and the settlers, gave an interview to CNN. When

asked about the settlements in the occupied territories, he waved an ancient coin and told Christiane Amanpour: "this coin, which says 'Freedom of Zion' in Hebrew, was used by Jews 2,000 years ago in the state of Israel, in what you call occupied. One cannot occupy his own home." [3] However, a month later, Bennett attacked the use of archaeology. When archaeology does not coincide with his political-religious agenda, it becomes a threat to Bennett's identity:

> In recent months, there is an organized, consistent and scheduled campaign to erase the Jewish identity of the State of Israel. Different organizations, along with Haaretz Newspaper are leading this campaign. Once [through] articles [claiming] that in fact there is no historical/archaeological basis to the connection between the Jewish people and its land. Once [through] an assault on students visiting Jewish heritage sites in Israel. And now [through] a concentrated campaign against circumcision (Naftali Bennett, Facebook, 26 December, 2013). [4]

The situation on the Palestinian side is not very different. At a conference in January 2014, in front of his Israeli colleague, Minister Tzipi Livni, the chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, told the audience that he is a descendant of the Canaanites who lived in the land thousands of years before Joshua and the sons of Israel destroyed Jericho (Beck, 2014; Yaakov, 2014). The media and pro-Israeli bloggers claimed that Erekat is actually a Bedouin, a descendant of the Huwaitat tribe from the Arabian Peninsula.[5]

Let us return to the excavations of Mazar. Based on previous excavations, and the Bible (2 Samuel 5), Mazar believes that King David's Palace is found at the City of David site. She claims that David's palace was built beyond Jerusalem's fortified walls due to the lack of space inside the city. When Jerusalem was attacked, David could have descended to the nearby Jebusite stronghold, i.e. the Fortress of Zion, as described in the Bible (Mazar, 2007; Mazar, 2006b).

The political-religious agenda of the two organizations that funded and supported Mazar's work, Shalem Center and Elad, are clear. Elad is a religious, ultra-right-wing association that promotes Jewish Settlement in the area (Rapoport, 2006). Doron Spielman, a director at Elad, admits: "When we raise money for a dig, what inspires us is to uncover the Bible—and that's indelibly linked with sovereignty in Israel" (Draper, 2010). The Shalem Center is a conservative, right-wing research institute with a strong religious agenda. The founders and directors of Shalem

Center are close to Prime Minister Netanyahu and the Likud party (Lanski and Berman, 2007; Nesher, 2013). Roger Hertog, the chairman of Shalem center's board who personally funded the excavations, told *The New York Times* that his aim was to show "that the Bible reflects Jewish history" (Erlanger, 2005). Or, as Daniel Polisar, the president of the center, explained the agenda to *National Geographic*:

> Our claim to being one of the senior nations in the world, to being a real player in civilization's realm of ideas, is that we wrote this book of books, the Bible. You take David and his kingdom out of the book, and you have a different book. The narrative is no longer a historical work, but a work of fiction. And then the rest of the Bible is just a propagandistic effort to create something that never was. And if you can't find the evidence for it, then it probably didn't happen. That's why the stakes are so high (Polisar in Draper, 2010).

The expedition at the City of David uncovered a Large Stone Structure which Mazar identified as King David's palace. Below the large structure there is a stepped-stone structure on a slope which was uncovered in previous excavations (the stepped-stone structure is the largest Iron Age structure in Israel). Mazar believes that the stepped-stone structure supported the palace. The stones of the palace were placed on an earthen landfill (the site was an open flat area, before the palace was built). Mazar dates the majority of the pottery found on the landfill to Iron Age I, or to the 12th-11th centuries B.C.E., the period before the conquest of Jerusalem from the Jebusites by David. The large stone structure, according to Mazar, was built later. A second phase of construction was discovered in two rooms in the northern section of the large stone structure. On the northeast edge of the building there may have been a third phase of construction. Pottery related to these phases was dated to Iron Age IIa, that is, 10th-9th centuries B.C.E. Hence the first phase of construction can be dated to "the beginning of Iron Age IIa, probably around the middle of the tenth century B.C.E., when the Bible says King David ruled the United Kingdom of Israel." Pottery from Iron Age IIb (8th-6th centuries B.C.E.) was found in the northeastern corner of the building, indicating that the building remained in use until the end of the First Temple period. In addition, the excavators have found a seal of Jehucal son of Shelemiah, son of Shovi, a man who is mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah as official in King Zedekiah's court (597-586 B.C.E.) (Mazar, 2007; Mazar, 2006b).

Mazar's conclusions are constantly under attack for being political. Robert Draper, a correspondent for *National Geographic*, describes an

incident in which Mazar noticed a tour guide, a former student of hers, who brings tourists to the site and explains to them that Mazar did not find King David's palace and that the excavations at the City of David are part of a right-wing agenda to promote the settlements and displace the Palestinians. Mazar confronted him. She got upset and angry. Following the incident, Draper observed that "In no other part of the world does archaeology so closely resemble a contact sport" (Draper, 2010).

When Mazar announced that she had found King David's Palace at the City of David site, Finkelstein defined it as a "messianic outburst" and said,

> Once every few years, they find something in Jerusalem that seems to confirm the biblical description of the magnitude of the kingdom in the time of David. After a while, it turns out that there is no real substance to the findings, and the excitement subsides, until the next outburst" (Finkelstein in Shapira, 2005).

The theoretical bias of the Jerusalem School in general and of Mazar in particular towards the maximalist position is depicted by Finkelstein as a "messianic outburst," with a wink to the religious psychosis known as the *Jerusalem syndrome*. In the case of Mazar this accusation directly relates to the Israeli political discourse and to the agenda of the religious right-wing organizations that supported her work: Shalem Center and Elad.

However, in practice the political criticism of Finkelstein on the research in the City of David site is relatively mild (Finkelstein, 2011). His critique comes from the political center in Israel today. First, claims Finkelstein, the Palestinian accusations regarding the City of David are sometimes uncritically accepted by the international media. The City of David site is not part of the Palestinian village of Silwan and tunnels are not being dug under the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Furthermore, the fieldwork in the City of David is carried out according to law and according to the standards of modern archaeology under the supervision of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Finkelstein complains that the village of Silwan in the east is built over unique, monumental Judahite rock-cut tombs from the 8th and 7th centuries B.C.E. He adds that the tombs are flooded with sewage and filled with garbage from Silwan, although he chooses not to refer to the state of the Palestinian villages and neighborhoods in East Jerusalem/Al-Quds. As the title of his op-ed promises, it deals with issues which are "beyond politics." Like Mazar and many others, he asserts that the greatest destruction to the archaeological heritage at the Temple Mount/ Haram al-Sharif is being caused by the underground construction

project of the Muslim Waqf. Yet Finkelstein is also not satisfied that the City of David and the visitor center of the site are ran by "a nongovernmental organization with a decidedly right-wing political orientation." He urges state organizations, such as the Israel Antiquities Authority and the Israel National Parks Authority, to find a way to supervise the management of the site (Finkelstein, 2011).

As I will show below, personally and epistemologically it is very important to Finkelstein to be at the center, and indeed his views reflect the Israeli political center. Eilat Mazar and Elad association are on his right; Shlomo Sand and Emek Shaveh association are on his left. Unlike the op-ed of Finkelstein, the reports of the left wing association Emek Shaveh, define the excavations at East Jerusalem/Al-Quds "as a means to control the village of Silwan and the Old City of Jerusalem." Emek Shaveh also claims that some of the archaeological activities in the region are supervised by Elad and do not meet the scientific standards, especially the sifting project of the debris which were removed from the Temple Mount during the construction work of the Muslim Waqf (Emek Shaveh Association, 2013; 2012).

The entire work of Eilat Mazar is aimed at protecting the biblical narrative from biblical minimalism as well as from the more moderate theory of the Low Chronology (this, of course, does not mean that her work is *unprofessional*, just as the work of Albright or the work of other archaeologists from the previous generations was not). Thus, the response of colleagues from Tel Aviv, who developed the theory of the Low Chronology, was expected: "The ostensible importance of this discovery and the media frenzy that has accompanied the excavation demand immediate discussion," wrote Finkelstein, Herzog and others (Finkelstein et al., 2007).

Finkelstein and his colleagues rejected Mazar's interpretation of the finds at the City of David and her conclusions. Their alternative interpretation is based on three assertions: (1) the walls unearthed by Mazar do not belong to the same building (2) the more elaborate walls may be associated with elements uncovered in the 1920s and can possibly be dated to the Hellenistic period (3) there are at least two phases in the construction of the stepped-stone structure that supports the slope: the lower part is earlier, possibly dating to the Iron IIA in the 9th century B.C.E., while the upper part, which connects to the Hasmonaean First Wall upslope, can be dated to the Hellenistic period.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel vs. the Kingdom of Judah

It is more than ironic that the controversy between the School of Tel Aviv (the city that represents secular Israelism) and the School of Jerusalem (the city that represents conservative Judaism) revives in a new form the rivalry and struggle between the two ancient kingdoms: the northern Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah. In general, the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is much more conservative than the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University. Intellectual trends of new history, postmodernism and post-Zionism are much more common in Tel Aviv than Jerusalem. It was not an accident, then, that the new current in biblical archaeology developed in the biblical archaeology department at Tel Aviv University, while the biblical archaeology department at the Hebrew University is dominated by a more conservative current. In the ancient world the Kingdom of Judah, which was destroyed after the Kingdom of Israel, eventually had the upper hand in the writing of *history*. Today there is a renewed struggle over the rewriting of history. The biblical struggle is revived on new ground which is made of carbon-14. Finkelstein speaks in the name of the Forgotten Kingdom of Israel: "Here is the dilemma: How can one diminish the stature of the 'good guys' and let the 'bad guys' prevail?" (Finkelstein, 2005: 39; Finkelstein, 2013). Yosef Garfinkel, on the other hand, tries to protect the "achievements of the Kingdom of Judah" (Garfinkel, 2012-2013).

Over the last few years, the focus of the debate is on Khirbet Qeiyafa**,** a site overlooking the Valley of Elah, twenty miles southwest of Jerusalem. Excavations at the site exposed a small fortified city from the early Iron Age. The expedition that worked in Qeiyafa between 2007 and 2013 was directed by Yosef Garfinkel of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Saar Ganor of the Israel Antiquities Authority**.** Garfinkel believes that Qeiyafa was one of three centers of the kingdom of David and Solomon, in addition to Jerusalem and Hebron. Did the United Monarchy exist? Garfinkel argues that the question will be decided through sites in Northern Israel. He rejects the Low Chronology of Finkelstein in Judah by identifying Qeiyafa as a Judahite city and questions the analysis of Finkelstein, who lowered the date of finds in the northern sites from the time of David and Solomon to the end of the 10th century B.C.E.- the beginning of the 9th century B.C.E., i.e. to the rise of the northern kingdom of Israel and the Omride Dynasty (Garfinkel and Ganor, 2008a; Garfinkel, 2011; Garfinkel, 2012-2013). Other suggestions have been made regarding the identity of Qeiyafa. Na'aman (2008) suggested that Qeiyafa is a Philistine site. Later Na'aman (2012) suggested that Qeiyafa

is a Canaanite site. Finkelstein and Fantalkin (2012), as well as Levin (2012), suggested that Qeiyafa is an Israelite site.

Despite the differences between the biblical scholars from Copenhagen and Sheffield and the archaeologists from Tel Aviv, Garfinkel puts all his rivals together and defines them as developers of *Minimalist Strategies*. First they suggested the "Mythological" Paradigm and questioned the existence of David. Yet, according to Garfinkel, this paradigm collapsed after the discovery of the Tel Dan stela in 1993-1994, since the inscription mentions the "House of David" only 100–120 years after the reign of David. Garfinkel rejects other interpretations of the text, which he defines as "paradigm-collapse trauma" as well as the claim that the existence of the Davidic dynasty does not prove the existence of David. After the collapse of the first paradigm, "a new strategy was developed by the minimalists," the "Low Chronology" Paradigm which, according to Garfinkel, was disconfirmed by the dating of Khirbet Qeiyafa. Instead of giving up, the minimalists adopted another strategy: the "Ethnographic" Paradigm. According to this strategy, the inhabitants of Qeiyafa were not Judahites but Philistines, Canaanites or Israelites from the Kingdom of Saul (Garfinkel, 2011; Garfinkel, 2012-2013).

Biblical archaeology is a discipline in which the political, cultural and religious aspects are clearly evident. In a lecture to students, Garfinkel put things on the table:

> What does it matter whether or not Qeiyafa is Philistine? Right? So it is Philistine; it does not affect us... Even if it is the northern Kingdom of Israel; it had been destroyed; it does not affect [us]. Judah, with the Bible, with monotheism, with all these things - they actually continue to this day. Therefore, this issue, which is actually the most important and the main contribution of the Land of Israel to the world history and culture, is always under attack. Because why should anybody care about the Canaanites [or] Philistines? All of these things had already passed. Interesting. Notice, then, that it is not an accident that the disputes focus on the kingdom of Judah because it is actually the most important thing that happened in this place throughout human history (Garfinkel, 2012-2013: Lecture 11).

Rhetorically, each side of this debate presents its own work as a proper scientific work, while claiming that the other side is biased by *extra-scientific* factors and interests and driven by improper ideological considerations. Members of the Tel Aviv School portray members of the

Jerusalem School as *maximalists-fundamentalists*, while members of the Jerusalem School portray members of the Tel Aviv School as *minimalists-deconstructivists*. Finkelstein, the leading archaeologist from the Tel Aviv School, defines the work of his group as "view from the center" – "a balanced look" at the issues. Personally and epistemologically, it is very important to Finkelstein to be part of the mainstream: "Everyone wants to be at the center. How do you know you're truly at the center? When you are getting kicked from both sides...when you are getting kicked from both sides, you should be satisfied. It is a good place, when you are getting it from both sides" (Finkelstein, 2006-2007: Lectures 1& 13). The implicit assumption of Finkelstein is that the center is unbiased and always remains as it is. Politically, the mainstream and the hegemonic discourse tend to be transparent. To expose their political bias one has to confront them with local and foreign alternatives.

Finkelstein places himself between minimalism which is beyond its peak and Zionist maximalism whose adherents refuse to admit that the archaeological data do not coincide with the biblical depictions of the First Temple period. Two of his main rivals from Jerusalem are Garfinkel and Eilat Mazar. About Garfinkel's interpretations of the finds at Khirbet Qeiyafa, Finkelstein wrote: "This uncritical attitude to the text expresses a 21st century relic of the pre-Spinoza approach to the Hebrew Bible" (Finkelstein and Fantalkin, 2012: 48). About Mazar's conclusions from her work in the City of David, he wrote that they are "based on literal, simplistic readings of the biblical text and are not supported by archaeological facts" (Finkelstein, 2011). Finkelstein and his colleagues accuse her of ignoring the entire evidence of biblical archaeology and biblical studies: "The biblical text dominates this field operation, not archaeology." They complain that Mazar ignore "30 years of research on the Book of Genesis and the patriarchal narratives," while interpreting "Genesis as reflecting Middle Bronze Age realities" (Finkelstein et al., 2007: 160-162).

Power, authority, academic politics and budgets also play a role in the struggle between the schools of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. When Garfinkel was accused by Yuval Goren and Oded Lipschits from Tel Aviv University of digging at Tel Socoh without a permit, he denied it and claimed that ever since he destroyed the *minimalist* theories of the Tel Aviv School by finding a fortified city in Qeiyafa, the archaeologists of this school are trying to harass him and "instead of having scientific debate they use dirty tricks." Garfinkel described Finkelstein as a dictator and claimed that he is behind this persecution: "The Tel Aviv school is

trying to obstruct us. Don't think that they have scientific freedom there. Finkelstein organizes them. Where does Yuval Goren have a budget for a dig if not from Finkelstein's budgets?" Finkelstein denied it (Hasson, 2011; Shtull-Trauring, 2011). Still, the four-million-dollar research grant that Finkelstein received was used by Garfinkel in the rhetorical battle: "He doesn't even use science—that's the irony. It's like giving Saddam Hussein the Nobel Peace Prize" (Garfinkel cited in Draper, 2010).

The Little Dutch Boy who Put his Finger in the Leaking Dike

There are world wars on Qeiyafa, says Garfinkel to students, while comparing himself to the little boy who put his finger in the leaking dike to prevent the flood (Garfinkel, 2012-2013: Lecture 1). Garfinkel identifies biblical minimalism as a byproduct of postmodernism, deconstructivism and the idea that there are no absolute truths. The aim today changed from research to the destruction of old paradigms. Everyone wants to create a new paradigm (Garfinkel, 2012-2013: Lecture 1). Since Finkelstein is identified by Garfinkel as a minimalist, he uses against him the same accusations:

> The problem with Finkelstein is that he never agrees with what anyone else says. He always has to be original. And he always has to have a different paradigm. If I say that your coat is gray, he will say it is dark brown [Garfinkel laughs]. If I had said this was a Philistine city he would say it is Judahite (Garfinkel in Shtull-Trauring, 2011).

Finkelstein is not exactly a minimalist, and he is certainly not a postmodernist-deconstructivist intellectual, but when Garfinkel portrays Finkelstein as a *radical nihilist* he puts himself in the *balanced unbiased center*. In response to the above quote, Finkelstein claims that Garfinkel presents a "paranoid attitude" and as always he tries to portray Garfinkel as a *maximalist-fundamentalist*: "There is no difference between Garfinkel and Yadin and Albright. The situation has only gotten worse" (Finkelstein in Shtull-Trauring, 2011).

Garfinkel is rushing to blame everyone else for trying to stand out, to be unique and original, by destroying old and dominant paradigms and inventing new ones. But this is exactly what Garfinkel himself is doing. Through his work in Qeiyafa, Garfinkel is trying to destroy what he calls *the paradigms of minimalism*, especially the current paradigm of the Low Chronology that Finkelstein and his colleagues developed. If Garfinkel is

not doing this for the sake of the old maximalist position that is no longer valid[6], then he is doing this in order to promote a new paradigm which presents a soft modified version of the maximalist position. In a presentation on Qeiyafa, Garfinkel and Ganor used a photomontage of an old cemetery followed by the title: "the Low chronology is now officially dead and buried" (Garfinkel and Ganor, 2008b). Similarly, in an article titled *The Birth and Death of Biblical Minimalism*, Garfinkel asserted that "Finkelstein is not only the founding father of the Low Chronology, but also its undertaker" (Garfinkel, 2011: 50). In their article on Qeiyafa, Finkelstein and Fantalkin linked the "morbid language" of Garfinkel with eschatological motives. One can say that the article is an attempt to resolve the anomalous data from Qeiyafa in the framework of normal science. In fact, Finkelstein and Fantalkin clarify that a single anomaly cannot destroy the existing paradigm:

> The idea that a single, spectacular finding can reverse the course of modern research and save the literal reading of the biblical text regarding the history of ancient Israel from critical scholarship is an old one. Its roots can be found in W.F. Albright's assault on the Wellhausen School in the early 20th century, an assault that biased archaeological, biblical and historical research for decades. This trend—in different guises—has resurfaced sporadically in recent years, with archaeology serving as a weapon to quell progress in critical scholarship. Khirbet Qeiyafa is the latest case in this genre of craving a cataclysmic defeat of critical modern scholarship by a miraculous archaeological discovery (Finkelstein and Fantalkin, 2012: 58).

Summer 2013 was the final excavation season of Garfinkel and Ganor in Qeiyafa. During the press conference, Garfinkel and Ganor announced that they had found King David's Palace. More accurately, they have found two or three rows of stones stretching across 30 meters. According to their estimations, the palace was about 1,000 square meters in size and at least two stories high. Garfinkel asserts that "There is no question that the ruler of the city sat here, and when King David came to visit the hills he slept here." The palace was destroyed due to the construction of a large Byzantine building in the same location 1,400 years after the palace was built. Garfinkel's rivals doubted the dating of the palace, its connection to King David and the identification of Qeiyafa as a Judahite city. Finkelstein indirectly referred to Mazar, who claimed several years before that she had found King David's palace in Jerusalem: "This reminds me of the fairy tale of the little girl who cried wolf. Yesterday they found King David's Palace in Jerusalem, today it's in Qeiyafa,

tomorrow they'll find it ... who knows where. Such statements exhaust the public's attention." Jacob L. Wright from Emory University responded in a similar way: "The most certain way to create a buzz is to claim that you've found something related to the reign of King David." He added that there were other local kings and warlords in the 10th century B.C.E. highlands (that only later became part of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah). For him, the automatic attribution of finds to King David is a kind of "an impoverishment of the historical imagination" (Garfinkel, 2013; Hasson, 2013a; Fridman, 2013).

Nonetheless, the issue cannot be reduced to questions about the immediate benefit from headlines in the media, fame, academic status and funding of research. Garfinkel is not a classical maximalist, but he is still biased towards the maximalist reading of the Bible. Historically and archaeologically, we know little about King David. Yet, through a series of theoretical leaps, Garfinkel comes to the conclusion that Qeiyafa is not only Judahite city from the 10th century B.C.E., but the city of Sha'arayim. The following step of Garfinkel is to contend that if there is a palace in the city, it must belong to King David and now it is clear that "when King David came to visit the hills he slept here."

The theoretical lenses through which Garfinkel interprets data and finds were designed by the School of Jerusalem and its research tradition. Garfinkel's academic education and career revolves around the Hebrew University's institute of archaeology. His initial research project focused on prehistory, but when Amihai Mazar and other biblical archaeologists retired, Garfinkel was called to duty. In 2004 he was appointed head of the Biblical Archaeology department.

As I noted before, Garfinkel admits that the kingdom of Judah is very important and controversial, since it affects us today. Indeed, if "Judah, with the Bible, with monotheism...[that] actually continue to this day" affects us, then in Garfinkel's case his Zionist-Jewish identity and patriotism influence his aspirations to find certain things and interpret finds in a certain way. Garfinkel is committed to confirm and protect what he calls in his lectures "the material and intellectual achievements of the kingdom of Judah," against the minimalist attempts to "strip" the kingdom of Judah of these achievements by claiming, for example, that the United Monarchy of Judah and Israel during the days of Kings David and Solomon did not exist, urbanization and the establishment of the kingdom of Judah occurred only at the end of the 8th century B.C.E. and monotheism developed only during the Persian or Hellenistic eras. Garfinkel speaks passionately against the minimalists who try to "erase"

these achievements. Finkelstein, of course, is identified as one of them. Garfinkel mocks the Low Chronology paradigm by claiming that, according to Finkelstein, Kings David and Solomon were just Bedouin Sheikhs who ruled over a small village. Garfinkel is willing to admit that each individual claim of the minimalists sounds reasonable, but all of them together create an "odd trend" (Garfinkel, 2012-2013: Lectures 11 & 12). In this respect, Garfinkel really is, as he defined it, the little boy who put his finger in the leaking dike.

Conclusion: The Separation of Research from Identity

Let us examine again Finkelstein's argument about the separation between research, tradition and belief:

> I am a great believer in a total separation between tradition and research. I myself have a warm spot in my heart for the Bible and its splendid stories. During our Pesach seder, my two girls, who are 11 and 7, didn't hear a word about the fact that there was no exodus from Egypt. When they are 25, we will tell them a different story. Belief, tradition and research are three parallel lines that can exist simultaneously. I don't see that as a gross contradiction (Finkelstein in Lori, 2005).

Finkelstein, of course, exaggerates, but if there is a complete separation between research, tradition and belief, why wouldn't he tell his daughters that there was no exodus from Egypt? Because research is a threat to identity. In this case, Finkelstein's theory is a direct threat to conservative Zionist and Jewish identities. In fact, the threat is mutual: research is a danger to identity and identity is a danger to objectivity. Therefore Finkelstein's solution is to insist on a separation which "releases the tension" (Finkelstein, 2006-2007: Lecture 13).

As I have tried to show, Finkelstein's insistence on separation is a rhetorical tool used in his apology to calm the fears of the Israeli-Jewish public as well as a rhetorical tool used against his rivals in the heated debates about Low and High Chronology. What Finkelstein actually says is that he was able to reconcile his research and theories with his socio-political and cultural views as a secular/traditionalist Jewish Zionist. He states, for example, "I have very strong views concerning identity and historical background. I do not panic" (Finkelstein in Feldman, 2006). In other words, Finkelstein does not panic because his views and theories - which epistemologically and socially are guided by a "view from the

center" (Finkelstein, 2006-2007: Lectures 1& 13; Finkelstein, 2011) - are in harmony with each other. It does not mean that his theories do not put in danger the identities of others, e.g. the views of conservative Zionists, dominant conservative currents among orthodox Jews and, of course, ultra-orthodox Jews.

Why is it so important to Finkelstein to close the "growing and intolerable gap between what is taking place in archeology today and what the public knows" (Finkelstein in Feldman, 2006)? Because archaeology is not only shaped by identities, but it is also a formative force that shapes identities. The books Finkelstein writes for the general public, his lectures and interviews, are part of struggle on the identity of Israel. In his vision, the development of the Zionist-Jewish identity must continue in a liberal-democratic course:

> Israel's strength is determined, first and foremost, from being an open, liberal, democratic society, which can deal with its recent and distant past. In this respect, free, dynamic and vibrant research today is much more important than magnificent palaces from the 10th century B.C.E. (Hebrew introduction from 2002 to Finkelstein and Silberman, 2001).

In a similar way, Finkelstein's work and his scientific authority as reflected in TV programs are used by atheist activists in the struggle on the identity of Israel:
(a) See, for example, the Youtube videos of ScienceReasonIsrael, especially the following video on the exodus from Egypt: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTxBNVVxXd0 (8 September 2013).
(b) See also the following publication: http://www.daatemet.org.il/articles/article.cfm?article_id=10 , of *Daatemet*, an atheist organization whose aim is to undermine the orthodox interpretation of the Scriptures, which have "become a political tool in the hands of self-interested fundamentalists who lay claim to having exclusive ownership of this legacy" http://www.daatemet.org/aboutus.cfm.

In conclusion, Finkelstein emphasizes the separation again and again just because in practice it does not exist. No one can really separate his identity from questions about his identify. To be truly critical one has to acknowledge that his identity and theories are interrelated rather than proclaiming to be *objective* and *unbiased*. The pretense of objectivity should be replaced with intersubjectivity.

This article is a short version of a larger article:
Israel vs. Judah: The Socio-Political Aspects of Biblical Archaeology in Contemporary Israel:
http://hps-science.com/science-politics/israel-vs-judah

References

Abu El-Haj, Nadia (2002) *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press).

Aharoni, Yohanan (1957) *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in the Upper Galilee* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University).

Albright, William Foxwell (1968) *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (London: University of London, Athlone Press).

Alt, Albrecht (1966) *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*. Translated by R.A. Wilson (Oxford: B. Blackwell).

Beck, Eldad (2014) 'Kerry: Israel's security - an Illusion, Boycott is in the Doorway,' *Ynet.co.il* (1 February). Available at http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4483419,00.html.

Davies, Philip (1992) *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (Sheffield: JSOT).

Davies, Philip (2002) 'Minimalism, "Ancient Israel," and Anti-Semitism,' *Bibleinterp.com*. Available at http://www.Bibleinterp.com/articles/Minimalism.shtml.

Dayan, Moshe (1978) *Living with the Bible* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson).

Dever, William (2003) 'Contra Davies,' *Bibleinterp.com*. Available at http://www.Bibleinterp.com/articles/Contra_Davies.shtml.

Draper, Robert (2010) 'Kings of Controversy: Was the Kingdom of David and Solomon a Glorious Empire—or Just a Little Cow Town? It Depends on which Archaeologist You Ask,' *National Geographic*

(December). Available at http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2010/12/david-and-solomon/draper-text

Emek Shaveh Association (2013) 'From Silwan to the Temple Mount: Archaeological Excavations as a Means of Control in the Village of Silwan and in Jerusalem's Old City – Developments in 2012,' *Alt-arch.org*. Available at http://alt-arch.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Frm-Sil-to-Tmpl-Mnt-English-Web-.pdf.

Emek Shaveh Association (2012) 'Archaeology on a Slippery Slope: Elad's Sifting Project in Emek Tzurim National Park,' *Alt-arch.org*. Available at http://alt-arch.org/en/archaeology-on-a-slippery-slope/.

Erlanger, Steven (2005) 'King David's Palace Is Found, Archaeologist Says,' *The New York Times* (5 August). Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/05/international/middleeast/05jerusalem.html?pagewanted=print.

Feldman, Maya (2006) 'Breaking with Tradition,' *Ynet.co.il* (16 October). Available at http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3314122,00.html.

Finkelstein, Israel (1996) 'The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View,' *Levant* 28 (1): 177-187.

Finkelstein, Israel (2005) "A Low Chronology Update: Archaeology, History and Bible," in Thomas Levy & Thomas Higham (eds), *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science* (London: Equinox): 31-42.

Finkelstein, Israel (2006-2007) *Ancient Israel: Archaeology, the Bible and What Happened* (A course at Tel Aviv University). Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQGul9OYI7s&list=PLL6llhM6ViT1x4kNxJpFy3DMjPgmw1bRu.

Finkelstein, Israel (2011) 'In the Eye of Jerusalem's Archaeological Storm: The City of David, Beyond the Politics and Propaganda,' *The Jewish Daily Forward* (26 April; issue of May 06, 2011). Available at http://forward.com/articles/137273/in-the-eye-of-jerusalem-s-archaeological-storm/.

Finkelstein, Israel (2013) *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature).

Finkelstein, Israel & Alexander Fantalkin (2012) 'Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Unsensational Archaeological and Historical Interpretation,' *Tel Aviv* 39: 38-63.

Finkelstein, Israel & Eli Piasetzky (2010) 'Khirbet Qeiyafa: Absolute Chronology,' *Tel Aviv* 37: 84–88.

Finkelstein, Israel & Eli Piasetzky (2011) 'The Iron Age Chronology Debate: Is the Gap Narrowing?' *Near Eastern Archaeology* 74 (1): 50–54.

Finkelstein, Israel & Neil Silberman (2001) *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press).

Finkelstein, Israel, Lily Singer-Avitz, Ze'ev Herzog & David Ussishkin (2007) 'Has King David's Palace in Jerusalem Been Found?' *Tel Aviv* 34 (2): 142-164.

Fridman ,Julia (2013) 'Crying King David: Are the Ruins Found in Israel Really his Palace?' *Haaretz.com* (26 August). Available at http://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/.premium-1.543216.

Garfinkel, Yosef (2011) 'The Birth and Death of Biblical Minimalism,' *Biblical Archaeology Review* 37: 46–53, 78.

Garfinkel, Yosef (2012-2013) *The Beginning of the Kingdom of Judah* (A course at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem). Available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4F51-_98Gc&list=PLcysIED5sYMl_oEKBtB8_jfn2afyftm73.

Garfinkel, Yosef (2013) *Khirbet Qeiyafa Project 2007-2013: Final Summary of Field Results by Excavation Area and Season*. Available at http://qeiyafa.huji.ac.il/Reports/Seven_Seasons_of_Excavations.pdf.

Garfinkel, Yosef & Saar Ganor (2008a) 'Khirbet Qeiyafa: Sha'arayimn,' *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8: Article 22.

Garfinkel, Yosef & Saar Ganor (2008b) *Khirbet Qeiyafa: An Early Iron IIa Fortified City in Judah*; presentation at the 2008 ASOR meeting. Available at http://www.judaea.ru/upload/files/ASOR_2parts.pdf.

Garfinkel, Yosef & Saar Ganor (2009) *Khirbet Qeiyafa: Excavation Report 2007-2008* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society).

Garfinkel, Yosef, Saar Ganor, Michael Hasel & Guy Stiebel (2009) 'Notes and News: Khirbet Qeiyafa, 2009,' *Israel Exploration Journal* 59: 214–220.

Garfinkel, Yosef, Saar Ganor & Michael Hasel (2012) *Footsteps of King David in the Valley of Elah* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books and Chemed Books).

Garfinkel, Yosef, Katharina Streit, Saar Ganor & Paula J. Reimer (2015) 'King David's City at Khirbet Qeiyafa: Results of the Second Radiocarbon Dating Project,' *Radiocarbon* 57 (5): 881-890.

Gelber, Yoav (2012) 'How and When the Land of Israel was Invented? They Say, There is a Land,' *Haaretz.co.il*. (27 September). Available at http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/study/1.1829868.

Haaretz (2012) 'Comments Following the Interview with Shlomo Sand,' *Haaretz.co.il* (8 June). Available at http://www.haaretz.co.il/magazine/1.1724795.

Hasson, Nir (2011) 'The University of Tel Aviv and The Hebrew University in Excavations War,' *Haaretz.co.il* (11 March). Available at http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/science/1.1166225.

Hasson, Nir (2013a) 'Archaeologists are Divided: Has King David's Palace been Found?' *Haaretz.co.il* (18 July). English version available at http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/.premium-1.536594.

Hasson, Nir (2013b) 'Ancient Golden Treasure Trove Found at Foot of Jerusalem's Temple Mount,' *Haaretz.co.il* (9 September). English version available at http://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/.premium-1.545965.

Herzog, Ze'ev (1999) 'The Bible. There are no Finds in the Field,' *Haaretz* (29 October). Available at http://www.hayadan.org.il/Bible-no-evidence-291099/.

Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013) 'PM Netanyahu on the Gold Treasure Uncovered in Jerusalem,' *mfa.gov.il* (9 September). Available at http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2013/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-on-the-gold-treasure-uncovered-in-Jerusalem-9-Sept-2013.aspx.

Eltahawy, Mona and Amy Klein (1998) 'Palestinian Dig Unearths Canaanite Homes,' *Reuters* /*Jerusalem Post* (4 August). Available at http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-16487322.html.

Karny, Yoav (2010) 'Yossi Garfinkel, Detective of History,' *Yoavkarny.com*. (9 January). Available at http://yoavkarny.com/2010/01/09/%D7%99%D7%95%D7%A1%D7%99-%D7%92%D7%A8%D7%A4%D7%99%D7%A0%D7%A7%D7%9C-%D7%91%D7%9C%D7%A9-%D7%94%D7%99%D7%A1%D7%98%D7%95%D7%A8%D7%99/

Karpel, Dalia (2012) 'Author of 'The Invention of the Jewish People' Vents Again,' *Haaretz.co.il* (26 May). English version available at http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/author-of-the-invention-of-the-jewish-people-vents-again.premium-1.432371.

Kuhn, Thomas (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Lanski, Na'ama and Daphna Berman (2007) 'Storm in a Neo-Con teapot,' *Haaretz.co.il* (29 November). English version available at http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/week-s-end/storm-in-a-neo-con-teapot-1.234226.

Lemche, Niels (1988) *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: Jsot Press).

Lemche, Niels (2008) *The Old Testament between Theology and History* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press).

Levin, Yigal (2012) 'The Identification of Khirbet Qeiyafa: A New Suggestion,' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 367: 73-86.

Levine, Lee & Amihai Mazar (eds) (2001) *The Controversy over the Historicity of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Yad ben Zvi – Dinur Center).

Lori, Aviva (2005) 'The Greatest Spin in History,' *Haaretz.co.il* (26 February). English version ['Grounds for Disbelief'] available at http://www.haaretz.com/grounds-for-disbelief-1.10757.

Masalha, Nur (2007) *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (London: Zed Books).

Mazar, Amihai (1990) *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday).

Mazar, Amihai (2011) 'The Iron Age Chronology Debate: Is the Gap Narrowing? Another Viewpoint,' *Near Eastern Archaeology* 74 (2): 105-111.

Mazar, Benjamin (1974) *Canaan and Israel: Historical Essays* (Jerusalem: Bialik).

Mazar, Eilat (2006a) 'Patriotism and National Security in Israel,' *The Sixth Herzliya Conference* (24 January). Available at http://www.herzliyaconference.org/?ArticleID=2097&CategoryID=258.

Mazar, Eilat (2006b) 'Did I Find King David's Palace?' *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32 (1): 16-27.

Mazar, Eilat (2007) *Preliminary Report on the City of David Excavations 2005 at the Visitors Center Area*. Translated by Ben Gordon. (Jerusalem: Shalem Press).

Na'aman, Nadav (2008) 'In Search of the Ancient Name of Khirbet Qeiyafa,' *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8: Article 21.

Na'aman, Nadav (2012) 'Khirbet Qeiyafa and the Philistine-Canaanite Struggle in South Canaan in the Early Iron Age,' *Cathedra* 143: 65–92.

Nesher, Talila (2013) 'With the Support of Sa'ar, Shalem Center was Recognized as Academic Institution,' *Haaretz.co.il* (3 January). Available at http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1899517.

Noth, Martin (1960) *The History of Israel* (New York: Harper and Row).
Rapoport, Meron (2006) 'The republic of Elad,' *Haaretz.com* (23 April). Available at http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/the-republic-of-elad-1.185892.

Reinstein, Ziv (2013) 'Gold Treasure Including a Model of Menorah was Discovered Near Temple Mount,' *Ynet.co.il* (9 September). Available at http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4427447,00.html.

Rendsburg, Gary (1999) 'Down with History, Up with Reading: The Current State of Biblical Studies,' *McGill University Department of Jewish Studies Thirtieth Anniversary Conference* (expanded version). Available at http://jewish30yrs.mcgill.ca/rendsburg/.

Sand, Shlomo (2009) *The Invention of the Jewish People*. Translated by Yael Lotan. (London: Verso).

Shapira, Anita (2009) 'The Jewish-People Deniers,' *The Journal of Israeli History* 28 (1): 63-72.

Shapira, Ran (2005) 'A Debate of Biblical Proportions,' *Haaretz.co.il* (8 September). English version available at http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/a-debate-of-biblical-proportions-1.169365.

Sharon, Ilan, Ayelet Gilboa, AJ Timothy Jull & Elisabetta Boaretto (2007) 'Report on the First Stage of the Iron Age Dating Project in Israel: Supporting a Low Chronology,' *Radiocarbon* 49:1–46.

Shtull-Trauring, Asaf (2011) 'The Keys to the Kingdom,' *Haaretz.co.il* (21 April). English version available at http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/the-keys-to-the-kingdom-1.360222.

Silberman, Neil (1993) *A Prophet from amongst You: The Life of Yigael Yadin: Soldier, Scholar, and Mythmaker of Modern Israel* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley).

Silberman, Neil & David Small (eds) (1997) *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press).

Sima, Gil (2012) 'Ben-Gurion Stated: Rechovot is Part of Tel Aviv,' *Mynet.co.il* (16 December). Available at http://www.mynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4318985,00.html.

Thompson, Thomas (1992) *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill).

Thompson, Thomas (1999) *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic books).

Thompson, Thomas (2001) 'A view from Copenhagen: Israel and the History of Palestine,' *Bibleinterp.com*.
Available at http://www.Bibleinterp.com/articles/copenhagen.shtml.

Thompson, Thomas (2011) 'On the Problem of Critical Scholarship: A Memoire,' *Bibleinterp.com*.
Available at http://www.Bibleinterp.com/opeds/critscho358014.shtml.

Toffolo, Michael, Eran Arie, Mario Martin, Elisabetta Boaretto & Israel Finkelstein (2014) 'Absolute Chronology of Megiddo, Israel, in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages: High-resolution Radiocarbon Dating.' *Radiocarbon* 56 (1): 221-244.

Vaux, Roland (1965) 'Method in the Study of Early Hebrew History,' in J. Hyatt (ed), *The Bible and Modern Scholarship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon): 15-29.

Verter, Yossi (2013) 'From the Palestinians to His Own Coalition, Netanyahu Faces a Year of Decisions,' *Haaretz.co.il* (27 December). English version available at http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/1.565698.

Wallace, Jennifer (2013) 'Archaeology and the Israel-Palestine Conflict,' *ISN* (January). Available at http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Special-Feature/Detail/?id=143890&contextid774=143890&contextid775=143886&tabid=1452426438.

Whitelam, Keith (1996) *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (New York: Routledge)

Yadin, Yigael (1975) *Hazor: The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson).

Yifa, Yaakov (2014) 'Israel Said Set to Accept Kerry's Framework Proposals,' *The Times of Israel* (2 February). Available at http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-said-set-to-accept-kerrys-framework-proposals/?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter.
Zertal, Adam (1999) 'Go to Mount Ebal - says Herzog's rival, Adam Zertal,' *Haaretz*

(11 November). Available at http://www.hayadan.org.il/go-to-eival-mt-sais-zertal-111199

Zertal, Adam (2000) *A Nation is Born: The Altar on Mount Ebal and the Emergence of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth).

Endnotes

[1] Translations from Hebrew are mine, although in many citations below I have fully or partially used the English translations that appear in the news websites.

[2] Finkelstein says in Hebrew "gentile nihilist Sheinkinai," although in the English version of the interview it was translated into "yuppie nihilist," a phrase which is much more subtle and intelligible to the non-Israeli reader.

[3] See the end of the interview with Bennett: http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/523/195.html.

[4] https://www.facebook.com/NaftaliBennett/posts/671099339578404.

[5] See, for example: http://elderofziyon.blogspot.co.il/2014/02/erekats-latest-lie-my-family-was-in.html#.VSz9V_mUftt http://elderofziyon.blogspot.co.il/2014/02/saeb-erekat-admits-he-is-jordanian.html#.UxY2LWDNvyc http://www.assawsana.com/portal/pages.php?newsid=167478.

[6] Garfinkel compares the Bible to the *Bag of Lies*, a famous collection of tall stories that describes the days of the Palmach (the elite fighting force of the Jewish community before the establishment of the State of Israel). One should not take the stories in the *Bag of Lies* literally, but they contain a grain of truth about geographical locations and the relations between the Jews, Arabs and the British. In a similar way, claims Garfinkel, the Bible can be used as a guide in the search for facts and clues about facts (Karny, 2010).