Old Testament Introduction
The Bible’s Buried Secrets
Chapter 17, Hazor

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

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

***About the Video***

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

***Overview***

Why was such a supporting mass of information avoided or swept under the table? There is no dispute over the facts as stated. Ben-Tor’s logic is hard to refute. So why is the battle described as blitzkrieg and posed out of reported chronological sequence? If real evidence exists in the 14C dating of charred wheat for charred walls at Hazor, why not bring it out in the interests of science? We have showed that the idea of blitzkrieg is an insulting caricature of the Israelites. We have showed that the charred wheat does not establish the absence of Joshua at Hazor. We have showed that both the Southern Campaign and the Northern Campaign were initiated by massive Amorite and Canaanite coalitions, and not by Joshua. These coalitions freely chose to opt for war, rather than to sue for peace. We have showed that while Joshua’s campaigns were very effective, they in no way represent a total annihilation of enemy forces: their focus is limited to thirty-one kings and their pivotal city-states.

***Script***

Hazor (time 27:10)

Quote:

And if what the Bible describes as the greatest of all Canaanite cities, Hazor[[1]](#endnote-1) there is more evidence of destruction. Today, Hazor is being excavated by one of the leading Israeli archaeologists, Amnon Ben-Tor,[[2]](#endnote-2) and his protégé and co-director Sharon Zuckerman[[3]](#endnote-3).

Ben-Tor: I’m walking through a passage between two of the rooms of the Canaanite palace of the kings of Hazor. Signs of the destruction you can still see almost everywhere. You can see the dark stones here, and most importantly you can see how they cracked into a million pieces. It takes tremendous heat to cause such damage. The fire here was, I shall say, the mother of all fires.

N: Among the ashes, Ben-Tor discovered a desecrated statue, most likely the king or patron god of Hazor. Its head and hands are cut off, apparently by the city’s conquerors. This marked the end of Canaanite Hazor.

Question number one, who did it? Who was around? Who is a possible candidate? Well, number one, the Egyptians. They don’t mention having done anything in Hazor in any of the inscriptions of the time of Hazor. Another Canaanite city-state could have done it, maybe? But who was strong enough to do it? Who are we left with? The Israelites, the only ones involved who there is a tradition, they did it. So let’s say they should be considered guilty of the destruction of Hazor until proven innocent.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Unquote.

***Blitzkrieg***

The real purpose, in *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* (BBS) chain of logic, for introducing Hazor outside of its historic sequence, is to continue the development of the idea of blitzkrieg introduced in the BBS Jericho discussion.[[5]](#endnote-5) By presenting a “straw man” caricature of Joshua’s campaigns, BBS hopes to show that Joshua never existed. Eventually, in this chain of logic, Zuckerman’s voice will be raised against her mentor Ben-Tor, in order to make him seem like an unscientific old man. Then the weight of Finkelstein’s “evidence” will be brought to bear. At which point the proof that there is no historical Moses, Joshua, Exodus, Conquest, or even period of Judges will be complete: or so BBS will claim. There is only an idealistic, idealized, and imaginary Moses, Joshua, and the like: according to BBS.

We have everywhere showed that this chain of logic is severely flawed and, thus far, without any evidence. No one debates the destruction of Hazor, or its degree of severity: it is plainly there for all to see. But, the dating and interpretation of such destruction is clearly up for dispute. So, this is what we shall bring to the table.

There is no blitzkrieg by any dating or interpretation, so the false claim of blitzkrieg will fail in spite of other logical outcomes. Thus, the chain of logic that attempts to prove that neither Moses nor Joshua, nor any of their acts ever existed in history; that chain of logic is broken.

***Campaigns***

**Central**

In 1364 BC the Israelites entered Jericho; all the people were executed except for Rahab and her family; finally the city was burned with fire.[[6]](#endnote-6) After a first defeat at Ai, the battle was set in array in an ambush outside of the city; the city was entered and burned; the combatants were executed; finally all the other inhabitants were slain.[[7]](#endnote-7) After Ai, Joshua established a worship center at Ebal[[8]](#endnote-8) which will remain the Israelite worship center until Yahweh defects to the Philistines[[9]](#endnote-9) and David restores the Ark to Jerusalem.[[10]](#endnote-10) At this point Joshua returned to Gilgal[[11]](#endnote-11) where he made an alliance with the city-state Gibeon, without any battle or destruction.[[12]](#endnote-12) This sequence of events constitutes Joshua’s so-called Central Campaign.

**Southern**

After or even because of Gibeon, Joshua was compelled to face the Amorite Coalition, engaging their armies: Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon.[[13]](#endnote-13) Finally, Joshua continues to the south, engaging their city-states: Makkedah,[[14]](#endnote-14) Libnah,[[15]](#endnote-15) Lachish,[[16]](#endnote-16) Gezer,[[17]](#endnote-17) Eglon,[[18]](#endnote-18) Hebron,[[19]](#endnote-19) Debir,[[20]](#endnote-20) from Kadeshbarnea to Gaza, from Goshen to Gibeon.[[21]](#endnote-21) Then Joshua and the Israelite armies returned to Gilgal a second time.[[22]](#endnote-22) These battles conclude Joshua’s Southern Campaign.

**Northern**

Joshua did not, at this time and without provocation, unilaterally launch his Northern Campaign against the Canaanite Coalition: Hazor, Madon, Shimron, Achshaph, the northern mountains, the southern plains, Chinneroth, the valley, Dor to the west, the Canaanites on the east and on the west; as well as other enemy allied states: the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Hivites,[[23]](#endnote-23) all in league with Hazor.

***Caricature***

These campaigns have been caricatured as a blitzkrieg. It is not only insulting to compare Israelites with Nazis, it is a rather anti-Semitic claim; it is also grossly untrue. Joshua caries out his campaigns at a rather leisurely pace, all things considered (1364-1354 BC). After Ai, he pauses to establish a center for worship. He makes allies. He returns to camp. He does not initiate either the Southern Campaign or the Northern Campaign. All of the city-states involved knew of Joshua’s alliance with Gibeon; all had an opportunity to sue for peace; all chose war as their preference. Joshua does not begin the Southern Campaign until the Amorite Coalition attacks his allies at Gibeon. Now, he has no choice but to fight. Joshua does not begin the Northern Campaign until the Canaanite Coalition is arrayed against him. Again, he has no choice but to fight. These massive coalitions could have sued for peace; yet, they did not.

Neither was Joshua a wanton destroyer. He evidently only used fire as a means of suppressing further combat. The list of cities that Joshua burned includes Jericho, Ai, and Hazor. Other cities were not burned.[[24]](#endnote-24)

***Effectivity***

It is easy to overstate the effectiveness of Joshua’s campaigns. They were effective: they destroyed the armed combatants that they engaged, and the city-states that they faced. They did not destroy the armed combatants that fled from the battle, the reserves that never entered battle, or the non-combatants that went into hiding. They did not engage enemy allies such as Egypt to the south, or Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Hivites to the north; not in their power centers. Only those specific units which were sent into battle were engaged.

The survivors, together with the supporting enemy allied states constitute a massive body, easily able to regroup, rebuild, rearm, and repopulate in the vacuum left as Joshua returned to Gilgal, leaving no armies of occupation behind.

Joshua’s completed task was the elimination of thirty-one kings, their command and control structure, and most of their active forces.[[25]](#endnote-25) The record shows that Joshua left a considerable amount of work undone.[[26]](#endnote-26) Joshua established a peace that may have lasted ten years from 1364 to 1354 BC, and possibly a little longer.

***Dating***

We have not yet located data for 14C dating of burned wheat at Hazor. Statements such as “3,400-year-old wheat”[[27]](#endnote-27) or “wheat from some 3,400 years ago”[[28]](#endnote-28) are not really helpful. We need to have access to the raw data to learn anything useful. The number 3400 could be calculated from the year of discovery, possibly 2012, in which case, this number would mean 1388 BC. More likely 3400 means 3400 BP, which would then be in relationship to the standard base of 1950, which yields a crude idea of 1450 BC.

Moreover, a great amount of wheat was found, so we can only hope that at least one-hundred random samples were taken and tested using the same sort of high precision equipment as was used at Jericho. If we have one-hundred samples we expect a calculation of the mean, the Standard Error of the Mean (SEM), and possibly a report of the confidence interval at 95%. The method and accuracy of equipment calibration would also be nice to know. When all relevant, known errors are added to the SEM by vector addition, we would have hoped to get a picture with which we can deal more exactly.

Alas, such is not the case. We are perfectly pleased with the employment of AMS, where errors within a 28-year range (σ = 7) or better are expected. With better sampling, we might expect errors within a 6.8-year range (σ = 1.7): that’s how good the AMS equipment is. Instead, we are confronted with eighteen pieces of data, presented as having a common history; that, when evaluated, prove to be the product of two very distinct process. Other anomalies accumulate. Finally, we are assaulted by a tree ring calibration, which, as presented, defies every law of statistics and reason. Here at Hazor, we at last have an hope of taking 100 or more random samples; having, in our hands, for some time now, completed radiological studies. Instead, we have silence. Is this a practical joke? Are the results so bad that they defy every hypothesis of archaeology: LC, MC, MCC, HC? Are authorities afraid or hesitant to publish the data? Why?

Because we are dealing with a mean and its SEM, dates falling within the confidence interval are said to be confirmed; while dates falling outside of the confidence interval are not confirmed. This does not mean that dates falling outside of the confidence interval are rejected; it only means that no confirming statistical evidence was found. In such a case, there is no reason to believe that the biblical dating is not an accurate description of the events in question.

We’re not done yet. Once the mean and its error-corrected confidence interval is known, it must still be calibrated against the INTCAL 13 calibration curve, the “wiggles”. Since 3400 BP is the same approximate size as our Jericho evidence, we apply the same evaluation methods. 3400 BP – 1950 = 1450 BC. Applying, our mean wiggle offset of 210, we find: 1450 BC + 210 = 1660 BC calibrated. Finally, we apply error, which we tentatively decided must be around ± 37, yielding a 95% confidence range of 1586-1734 BC. For readers who have not read our Jericho report, be advised, such a conclusion is a totally unfounded, unsubstantiated, blind shot in the dark, silly wild guess. Nevertheless, if such a range could ever be made credible, it would firmly establish that when Joshua was at Hazor (1364 to 1354 BC) was nowhere near these seeds at that time they were burned: he was three hundred years too late for the fire.

While there is no statistical reason to believe that Joshua did not attack and burn Hazor in 1364-1354 BC. There is no remaining evidence that Joshua did attack Hazor either: not from any 3400 BP seeds. Nor is there any evidence that Barack defeats Jabin in 1193 BC. Based on the non-existent data, imagined by a rumor of 3400 BP wheat, analyzed by a fallacious and defective method, we are 95% confident that the burned wheat discovered at Hazor does not date from the age of Barack or Joshua.

What we do not know is if this wheat was backpacked or mule-packed in from Timbuktu, or what its actual randomized measurements, might be.

Our statistical calisthenics have established the BP mean behavior of average burned wheat; they say nothing about the behavior of an individual grain, less about the pot, and even least about the adjacent wall. Sorry folks, statistics just don’t work the way we intuitively want them to work. So, it all boils down to a bet and calculating the odds. This bet, made without any real evidence, is worse than no bet at all.

Lacking further detail, Ben-Tor has the better bet by far. Our safe bet is that we are looking at pieces of Joshua’s walls at Hazor; elsewhere we have Omride features; just as Yadin dated them; and six chambered gates, just as Solomon designed them. Elsewhere, we also have the remains of Barak’s destruction, we’re just not wise enough to sort them out. Yet, it’s all here, mixed together in one site covering a span of history nearly one thousand years long or more (1850-884 BC) and somebody actually expects us to sort that out using 14C dating on a handful of grain pots, without any measurements, or without any confidence in the method of sample location.

Let’s do some critical thinking here. Where were these grain pots discovered? Above that specific strata is most likely younger, and below that specific strata is most likely older, provided that the whole tell developed at the same rate. Well, we already know that this is not the case, don’t we? Hazor is a large place,[[29]](#endnote-29) and parts of it fell into disuse, or otherwise developed at different rates.

Proposed destructions by Seti I (1290-1279) and Ramesses II (1279-1213), are both later than Joshua. While not completely excluded by the 1734-1586 span, they are almost as unlikely as Barak in 1193 BC.

***Zuckerman Hypothesis***

Does the Zuckerman hypothesis hold water? What was discovered at Hazor? There was “one archaeological stratum … shows signs of catastrophic fire…. evidence of violent destruction by burning…. a scorched palace from the 13th century BCE[[30]](#endnote-30) in whose storerooms they found 3,400-year-old ewers holding burned crops.” Nobody disputes this evidence: it’s quite visible. Nevertheless, the same analysis of evidence excludes Zuckerman’s 13th century BCE date. Fortunately, for Zuckerman and everybody else involved, there is no reason to take such non-analysis seriously: we only state it to lampoon it.

Again, some critical thinking is required. As with the Chicago fire, once the blaze starts, the whole city burns to the ground. Former residents watch helplessly as the whole site goes up in smoke. Given their primitive firefighting capabilities there is nothing they can do except wring their hands in frustration. We must not think of these people as ignorant; surely, they understood the costs of fire. Because of this extreme cost, the disgruntled residents of Hazor have very little motive to burn their own house and security down around their own ears. It is very unlikely that they actually did so. The Zuckerman hypothesis does not hold water. Burning a city was an extreme measure, even for the invading Israelites: its only advantage was to delay a counterattack.

***Conclusion***

Why was such a supporting mass of information avoided or swept under the table? There is no dispute over the facts as stated. Ben-Tor’s logic is hard to refute. So why is the battle described as blitzkrieg and posed out of reported chronological sequence? If real evidence exists in the 14C dating of charred wheat for charred walls at Hazor, why not bring it out in the interests of science? We have showed that the idea of blitzkrieg is an insulting caricature of the Israelites. We have showed that the charred wheat does not establish the absence of Joshua at Hazor. We have showed that both the Southern Campaign and the Northern Campaign were initiated by massive Amorite and Canaanite coalitions, and not by Joshua. These coalitions freely chose to opt for war, rather than to sue for peace. We have showed that while Joshua’s campaigns were very effective, they in no way represent a total annihilation of enemy forces: their focus is limited to thirty-one kings and their pivotal city-states.

[[31]](#endnote-31)

1. Part of the dating for Hazor is prescribed by the Amarna letters. According to the Egyptian chronology, Amarna is only an official capital from 1351-1332 BC, during the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, and two years afterward. If Yahweh made a believer out of some Egyptians in 1406 BC, Akhenaten may have received his henotheism from his immediate ancestors. In any case, if the Egyptian chronology is correct, nineteen years of Hazor’s vassalage to Egypt is fixed in time. That vassalage is at least this large and doubtless much larger, so when Joshua attacks Hazor shortly after 1364 BC, he is most likely attacking an Egyptian satellite state: according to the Amarna record, “EA 148 specifically reports that Hasura’s king had gone over to the Habiru, who were invading Canaan.” This is too close to the Joshua and Judges chronology to escape our attention.

We have dated the first battle of Hazor at 1364-1354 BC, and the second battle of Hazor at 1193 BC, one-hundred-sixty-one to one-hundred-seventy-one years later. If EA 148’s Hasura is identical to Jabin, and Habiru means Hebrews or Israelites, then we have strong evidence for the presence of Israelites as a powerful force in the Promised Land. This evidence is at least as sound and as strong as the Merneptah Stele, so we wonder why it was not discussed.

There is no need to conflate the first and second battles of Hazor: for it is no more difficult to believe that two wars were fought against the same militarily strategic city over one-hundred-sixty years apart, than to believe that two wars were fought over Europe, only twenty-five years apart: WWI (1914), WWII (1939). Hazor was very likely, the most strategically important city in the north, and it would make no sense at all if it were not immediately rebuilt, refortified, and reoccupied.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tel_Hazor>

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0008_0_08609.html>

<http://www.netours.com/content/view/126/26/>

[http://community.worldheritage.org/articles/Hazor\_(archaeological\_site)](http://community.worldheritage.org/articles/Hazor_%28archaeological_site%29)

<http://archive.archaeology.org/9805/abstracts/hazor.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazor>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letters>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhenaten>

<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/news/scorched-wheat-may-provide-answers-on-the-destruction-of-canaanite-tel-hazor/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archaeology_of_Israel>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Israelite_campaigns> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Amnon Ben-Tor, a professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Works: Horvat Usa (1963), Tel Yarmuth (1970), Azor (1971), Athienou, Cyprus (1971-1972; with T. Dothan), Tel Qiri (1975-1976), Yoqne‘am (1977-1979; 1981; 1987-1988), Tel Qashish (1978-1979; 1981-1985; 1987), The Selz Foundation Hazor Excavations in Memory of Yigael Yadin (1990-present). Ben-Tor’s observation is well taken. Who did it? By default Israel defeated both Jericho and Hazor.

<http://archaeology.huji.ac.il/depart/biblical/amnonb/amnonb.asp> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Sharon Zuckerman (1965-2014) little bibliography. Works: Hazor.

<http://archaeology.huji.ac.il/depart/biblical/sharonz/sharonz.asp> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Tell el-Qedah is not to be confused with other sites with the common name of Hazor. The Amarna letters are dated between 1388 and 1332 BC. This fits very well with Joshua defeating Jabin and his city and burning parts of it (Joshua 11:1), yet being unable to retain control and possession of it. Hazor and Tells like Hazor were able to regain control under a successor, Jabin II, and recover with the help of their Egyptian and other allies (Judges 4; Psalm 83:9). Little-by-little the Israelites were able to settle and reconquer the land. In this process, most of the Israelites quickly compromised and politicized their religion. Not until David, was this conquest completed in Judea (1010 BC), and in the monarchy (1003 BC). Solomon later rebuilds and refortifies the city.

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

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

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

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian_language> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Discussed in <https://www.swrktec.org/> Chapter 16, Jericho [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Joshua Chapter 6, especially verses 20, 23, 24 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Joshua Chapters 7 and 8, especially verses 8:16-18, 19, 21, 24-27 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Joshua 8:30-35

Northeast of Nablus, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Ebal>

South-southeast of Nablus, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Gerizim>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nablus>

East-southeast Nablus about 3 miles, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shechem>

Khirbet Seilun, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiloh\_(biblical\_city)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shiloh_%28biblical_city%29)

North of Nablus about 20 to 25 miles, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaria> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. 1 Samuel 4:11 to 6:12 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. 2 Samuel 6:1-19 [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. In the plains of Jordan, adjacent to Jericho, at an unknown location, possibly Khirbet en-Nitleh or Khirbet El Mafjir, Joshua 4:19; 5:10 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Joshua Chapter 9

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gibeon\_(ancient\_city)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gibeon_%28ancient_city%29) [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Joshua Chapter 10

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amorites> [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Joshua 10:28 [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Joshua 10:29 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Joshua 10:31 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Joshua 10:33 [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Joshua 10:34 [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Joshua 10:36 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Joshua 10:38 [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. This concluding polygonal construct defines the general area of conquest. Joshua 10:41 [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Joshua 10:43 [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Joshua 11:1-15 [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Joshua 11:13 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Joshua 12:31 [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Joshua 13:1 [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/biblical-archaeology-places/scorched-wheat-may-provide-answers-on-the-destruction-of-canaanite-tel-hazor/> [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/israel/a-3-400-year-old-mystery-who-burned-the-palace-of-canaanite-hatzor-1.453095> [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. This is an area in excess of 200 acres; in contrast one square mile, which is also called a section of land, amounts to 640 acres. So this is a little less than one-third of a section in area, or a rectangle about 0.3125 miles wide and 1.00 miles long, or a 0.559 miles square, or a circle 0.631 miles in diameter, or 193.6 football fields. It is impossible to maintain uniform terrain over such a great area. The upper city amounted to roughly 30 acres; while the lower city covered more than 175 acres. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. This is actually a considerable error. The 14C dating centers on a 1450 BC date, which can only be made older by further calibration; the biblical date hinges on a 1364-1354 BC date, which is barely thirty-six years into the fourteenth century. Doubtless the writer wanted to support a Ramesses II (1279-1213 BC) Exodus and Conquest. That being said, even the 1279 BC date is eliminated by the 95% confidence interval 1734-1586 BC. A 1213 BC date is completely incompatible with the Hazor evidence, so unless the Ramesses II dates are completely in error, we are 95% confident that Ramesses II is not the pharaoh of either the Exodus or the Conquest. The scorched wheat dates in the mid-fifteenth century and calibrates to the mid-seventeenth century in our mock calculations. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)