

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions which are submitted are in no way considered to be final and definitive. The preceding study of the problems and the various interpretations given them has pointed out several areas where the divergent views might be in harmony with each other. As has been evident in the preceding chapters, no conclusion can account for all of the material and answer all of the questions satisfactorily.

Concerning the tribal participants of the Egyptian sojourn and exodus, it may be concluded with a great deal of certainty that the accumulative result of the various inconsistencies and diverse biblical statements as listed is that only a portion of the Israelites went into Egypt.

Since the extra-biblical material is of no substantial aid in identifying the particular tribal participants, the biblical account becomes the only source of information. The division of the tribes into three groups (Leah, Rachel, and concubine) seems natural and valid. In view of the evidence which would locate Sinai in Seir, away from the Sinai peninsula, there would seem to be no reason to identify the Leah and Rachel tribes with a distinct geographical place of Kadesh and Sinai respectively. Nor does it seem necessary, in light of the nomadic and migratory nature of the Israelites, to define the descent into Egypt as an either-or matter in reference to the Leah and Rachel tribes. The predominant conclusion of the scholars that the concubine tribes were at least partially of alien stock can readily be accepted as valid.

As Albright and Rowley have indicated, there is no reason why the historicity of the account of Joseph's sojourn should

be questioned. Meek, on the other hand, has given good reasons for identifying the Levites with Egypt. Albright's identification of Levi with the tribes in Egypt has led him to conclude that all the Leah tribes were there. However, in and of itself, the presence of Levi would not necessitate the presence of all the Leah tribes. That the Simeonites went with the Levites to Egypt is possible though not conclusive. Thus, the tribes which went to Egypt would include the Joseph tribes, the Levites, and perhaps Simeon. The other Leah tribes, with Judah being the strongest and largest, were located in the Negeb and territory of the Kenites. The concubine tribes evidently remained in the highlands of the north and central hill-country.

In reference to the tribal participants of the conquest of Palestine, the conclusions are somewhat more tentative. First, in addition to the summary remarks which were made above (pp. 62–63) on the equation of the *Habiru* with the Israelites/Hebrews of the conquest, it may be stated that the probability is that the *Habiru* of Amarna cannot be equated with the Israelites of the conquest, although there is a possibility that they might. This would seem to be more accurate than the obverse statement that the probability is that they can be equated although there is the possibility that they were not. This would not exclude though a relationship or identification of the patriarchal *‘ibrīm* with the *Habiru*.

Any identification of the tribal participants of the conquest and their respective activities must take into consideration (1) the fact that the accounts in Joshua and Judges do not relate the events of the same historical situation; (2) that, aside from Jericho, all archaeological evidence would indicate that the conquest of Canaan occurred in the thirteenth century: central Palestine at the beginning and southern Palestine at the

end; (3) that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that there was a “dual” conquest, *i.e.*, a movement westward across the Jordan and a movement northward from the Negeb.

If the conclusions of Wright and Kaufmann (in reference to the historical accuracy of Joshua and the accounts in Judges being a continuation of Joshua) can be accepted, the following reconstruction of the tribal activity is possible. The Joseph and Levi tribes, who had come to adopt Yahwism through Moses’ contact with Jethro his Kenite kinsman, made the exodus from Egypt, perhaps under Rameses II. In Kadesh / Sinai they joined their kinsmen of the Leah tribes who had adopted Yahwism through their close interconnections with the Kenites.

The movement was then north according to the basic traditions of Joshua. From the highlands of central Trans-Jordan, the tribes of Joseph, Levi, and Leah—having united with the more distantly related and partially alien concubine tribes—made the assault westward and the wars of extermination were commenced. Towards the end of this conquest the tribes received their lots and the wars of occupation and settlement were begun, namely, the tribal wars as recorded in Judges. The strategy of Judah may have demanded a movement from the south into their territory, and subsequently the northward thrust from Kadesh.

This possible reconstruction of events would account for the earlier destruction of towns in central Palestine as over against the slightly later destruction of the towns in southern Palestine. It would also account for the separate westward and northward movements of the conquest, as well as the two distinct types of military activity in Joshua and Judges.

A final conclusion which would account for all the material is at present not available. The following statement

of Albright (*Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 329) seems to summarize the present state of biblical scholarship:

The probability is that the actual course of events was closer to the Biblical tradition than any of our critical reconstructions have been, and that some vital clues still elude or search.