

# **KEBRA NAGAST**

## **NEW INSIGHTS INTO OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY**

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## SUMMARY

The Ge'ez *Kebra Nagast* was redacted in the 14<sup>th</sup> century C.E. by Aksumite clerics. It is a combination of two texts, the *Sheba* and the *Caleb Cycles*, respectively describing historical events in the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. and the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E. It is probable that the *Sheba Cycle* predates the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. and reached Aksum in an Arabic form, while the *Caleb Cycle* seems to be from the period just before the ca. 520 C.E. Aksumite invasion of Himyar. It was written in Ge'ez incorporating a Ge'ez translation of the *Sheba Cycle*.

The *Sheba Cycle* tells of the meeting between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, the birth of their son, his journey to Jerusalem, the theft of the Ark of the Covenant from Solomon's Temple, and the establishment of an Israelite state on the Ethiopian plateau ca. 950 B.C.E.

This story is supported by evidence in Ethiopia and Eritrea concerning ancient Judaic customs and beliefs, Judaic remnant groups, inscriptions, linguistic peculiarities and the cult of the Ark.

Most external commentators have dismissed the contents of the *Sheba Cycle* as fantasy. This attitude requires reassessment now that archaeology has seriously challenged the belief that the events of the *Old Testament* ca. 1400 - 586 B.C.E. occurred in Palestine. Evidence from Ethiopia, the contents of the *Sheba Cycle*, and Josephus's writings, extensive material from Arabia, the history of the Iron Age, recent work on place names and the Ark of the Covenant, as well as political and economic conditions in the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. Middle East all appear to support the hypothesis that West Arabia and to a lesser extent the Horn of Africa were until 586 B.C. the location of the Old Testament.

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### Chapters of the Kebra Nagast

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21a	21b	22	23
25	26	27	28a	28b	29a
31	32	33	34	35	36
37	38	39	40	41	42
43	44	45	46	47	48
49	50	51	52	53	54
55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63a	63b	64	65
67	68	69	70	71	72
73	74	75	76	77	78
79	80	81	82	83	84
85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93a	93b	94	95
97	98	99	100	101	102
103	104	105	106	107	108
109	110	111	112	113	114
115	116	117	COLOPHON		

	Sheba-Menelik Cycle ca. 920 B.C.E. (about 3000 years ago)
	Caleb Cycle ca. 520 C.E. (about 1500 years ago)
COLOPHON	Solomonid Restoration ca. 1314 C.E. (about 700 years ago)

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There are two main camps within *Old Testament* historical studies concerning the period from the captivity in Egypt (ca. 1400 BCE) until the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (ca. 586 BCE). One claims that the historical events of that period described in the *Old Testament* are true and that evidence supporting them is literally waiting to be unearthed; the other dismisses the *Old Testament* record as highly exaggerated or a fantasy. This study investigates the contents of the Ge'ez epic, *Kebra Nagast (The Glory of the Kings)*, and related evidence to offer a third possibility. It argues that the *Old Testament* gives an accurate account of the history of the Hebrew people and Israelite states ca. 1400-586 BCE, but the political agenda of Ezra's 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Jerusalem theocracy has clouded the issue. Therefore although most authorities believe that the *Old Testament* ca.1400 -586 BCE belongs to Egypt and Palestine, it appears far more likely that the true location was West Arabia and to a small extent the Ethiopian/Eritrean Plateau.

From about 540 CE, probably as a consequence of famine and plague following in the wake of a gigantic volcanic ash cloud sweeping west from the Pacific, the expansionary Aksumite empire of north-east Africa abandoned its imperial designs in South Arabia and quit its capital of Aksum ca. 615-630 CE.<sup>1</sup> Re-establishing its centre in the newly demographically dominant Cushitic-speaking Agaw region to the southeast the Christian Semitic-speaking Aksumite/proto-Ethiopian ruling house, further isolated from its Arabian links by the triumph of Islam, began a precarious expansion into the African interior. Military and other reverses were followed by a temporary transfer of power to the Agaw Zagwe dynasty ca. 1137-1270 CE.<sup>2</sup> Zagwe rule was terminated by Yekunno-Amlak, heir to a Semitic-speaking royal house that claimed descent from the Israelite King Solomon and Makeda, Queen of Sheba, and allegedly had ruled the DMT/Aksumite/Ethiopian state from its inception ca. 1000 BCE until interrupted by the Zagwe.\*

According to traditions, in the final years of the Zagwe several ancient and influential documents made their way into the kingdom. These were kept hidden because their content challenged the legitimacy of the Zagwe, who, despite the Christian zeal of Lalibela, their most renowned ruler, claimed descent from the Hebrew prophet Moses.<sup>3</sup> Among these documents was part or all the material which eventually made up the *Kebra Nagast*, which emphasised that the Semitic-speaking kings were God's chosen rulers.

The *Kebra Nagast* is a Ge'ez document drawn up between 1314 and 1321 CE by five Aksumite clerics under the leadership of a senior church official named Isaac.<sup>4</sup> It has 117 sections, usually referred to as *Chapters*, and is about 30,000 words in length. Isaac stated that his team's task had been commissioned by Yabika Egzi, the governor of Aksum during the regency of Amda Seyon. The purpose of the *Kebra Nagast* was to prove that the king of Ethiopia (Aksum's successor) was doubly divinely ordained as both the inheritor of the Israelite royal tradition and as the world's most respected Christian monarch, the guardian of the True Faith (Monophysitism) as decreed at the 323 CE Council of Nicaea.<sup>5</sup> The *Kebra Nagast* was used until 1974 to legitimise the rule of the emperors of Ethiopia.

The *Kebra Nagast* is a compilation of two texts of similar length which will be referred to as the *Sheba Cycle* and the *Caleb Cycle*. There is general agreement that the *Sheba Cycle* consists of Chapters 22 to 28A, 29B - 34A, 35-43, 45-63A, 84-93A and 94 of the *Kebra Nagast*. However, it is likely that Chapter 2 IB, the description of the Queen of Sheba, should also belong to the *Sheba Cycle* to form the opening paragraph. The *Caleb Cycle* consists of Chapters 1-21a, 63b-83, 93b, and 95-117a.

\*My belief is that the Hebraic –Israelite state of D'MT did not give way to Aksum B.C.E. as generally accepted but probably lasted as a rival state up until the reign of Queen Yodit, "the last Hebrew Queen" (died ca.970 CE) and then became the nucleus of the Zagwe kingdom.

Chapter 117b and the colophon at its conclusion were written by Isaac's team, who may also have been responsible for the historical inaccuracies in Chapters 113 and 116, interpolations in Chapters 30, 33, 52 and the text of Chapters 44 and 59.

The *Sheba Cycle* is a story free of any Christian content, about 14,000 words in length, almost half the content of the entire *Kebra Nagast*, and is set in the tenth century BCE. It begins with the journey of Makeda, Queen of Sheba, to the court of King Solomon in order to experience his wisdom and accomplishments at first hand. Impressed by what she learned, she abandoned her sun-worshipping religion and adopted Solomon's faith. Just before she left, Solomon tricked her into bed intending to father a son to rule her land. The queen bore a son named Bayna Lehkem (son of the Wise Man) better known as Menelik, at a place the *Kebra Nagast* names as Bala Zadisareya. The *Kebra Nagast* states the queen bore the child in her mother's country as she was journeying back to her own country. Legend places the location at the Mai Bela stream near Tsa'edakristyan (White Christian) 12 km outside Asmara in Eritrea.<sup>6</sup> The Queen of Sheba at the start of the *Sheba Cycle* lives in Arabia. At the end of the story, world-weary and cynical, she seems to have moved to Ethiopia.

At the age of 22 Menelik went first to govern Gaza, ceded to his mother by Solomon, and from there passed on to Jerusalem. Solomon failed to persuade him to remain but ordered the first born of the Israelite ruling elite to accompany Menelik to establish a new Israelite kingdom in his own country. The young men selected for this task conspired under the leadership of Azariah, son of the High Priest Zadok, to steal the Ark of the Covenant to sustain them in their new land. A complex plan involving drugged offerings and a wooden box to replace the Ark achieved this end. The theft was not discovered until Menelik's party was out of reach. Azariah convinced Menelik to accept the situation and together they established a new Israel in the land of the Queen of Sheba.

The *Kebra Nagast* contains 364 references, allusions or possible influences linked to passages from 32 books of *The Old Testament* - for instance, 62 to the *Book of Genesis*, 37 to *Exodus*, 49 to *Deuteronomy* and one to *Ruth*. There are 176 links to quotations from 20 books of the *New Testament*, 41 from *Matthew* alone. Jewish sources, such as the *Targum*, *Talmud*, *Midrashim*, the *Zohar*, rabbinical commentaries, Josephus and Ben Sira account for 77 references. The *Qur'an* is linked to 28 references, Islamic commentators 5; *Old Testament* Apocryphal writings 105 (from 21 books), mostly from the *Cave of Treasures* (16) and *Enoch* (18); and New Testament Apocryphal writings 25 (20 books). Text in the *Kebra Nagast* is also linked to works of 28 early church fathers, such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, while other parts are connected to the *Nicaean Creed* and miscellaneous works such as Ethiopian liturgical texts. Almost all these references are to be found in the *Caleb Cycle*.<sup>1</sup>

Shahid has argued convincingly that the *Caleb Cycle* was written some time before the Aksumite King Caleb's 520 CE's invasion of Himyar, South Arabia.<sup>8</sup> The *Caleb Cycle* is overwhelmingly concerned with the 323 CE Council of Nicaea, the fortunes of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century CE Monophysite Christianity, the Jewish risings in Himyar and Mesopotamia and the alliance with Byzantium. The *Caleb Cycle* does not mention Caleb's success against the Jewish Himyarite leader Yusuf As'ar Yath'ar (Dhu Nuwas) nor the insanity of the Byzantine ruler Justin II (571 CE), both events which would have been used by a polemicist to bolster the Monophysite cause.

The final part of the *Kebra Nagast*, the *Colophon*, contains a passage which has bedevilled analysts. It states:

'In the Arabic text it is said: "We have turned [this book] into Arabic from a Coptic manuscript [belonging to] the throne of MARK the Evangelist, the teacher, the father of us all. We have translated it in the four hundred and ninth year of mercy....."

This, left to itself, indicates that the *Sheba Cycle* was originally a Coptic document from Egypt translated into Arabic in 409 CE (Arabs had been migrating into Egypt since 539 BCE).<sup>9</sup> This passage could not refer to the *Caleb Cycle* which was in part a bitter attack on the Council of Chalcedon of 452 CE. However, the *Colophon* continues,

‘.....in the country of Ethiopia, in the days of GABRAL MASKAL the king, who is called LALIBELA, in the days of Abba George, the good bishop. And God neglected to have it translated and interpreted into the speech of ABYSSINIA. And when I had pondered this - Why did not ABAL’EZ and ABAL-FAROG who edited (*or* copied) the book translate it? I said this: It went out in the days of the ZAGUA, and they did not translate it because the book says: Those who reign not being ISRAELITES are transgressors of the Law. Had they been of the kingdom of Israel they would have edited (*or* translated) it. And it was found in Nazret.’<sup>10</sup>

Since Lalibela reigned ca. 1200 CE, this passage has caused much confusion and been called into question by several commentators unable to accept that the *Kebrā Nagast* as a whole was translated from Arabic.<sup>11</sup> The Ge’ez of the *Caleb Cycle* is often of a very high literary standard and does not resemble the sort of text associated with a translation. In contrast, the *Sheba Cycle* contains many instances where the text has evidently been mistranslated from Arabic, confirming that the *Sheba Cycle* was indeed a separate Arabic text before becoming part of the Ge’ez *Kebrā Nagast*. When the *Kebrā Nagast* came to the attention of western scholars in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries all major researchers, Bezold, Nöldeke, Praetorius, Zoltenberg, Guidi, Dillmann and Cerulli noted that the *Sheba Cycle* contained so many Arabic influences that it must have been translated from that language into Ge’ez. Zoltenberg found that some Arabic proper names had been transcribed directly into Ge’ez while Bezold and Guidi made a list of Arabic loan-words and passages to enable researchers to understand some sections of the *Sheba Cycle*. Examples included food and utensils in Solomon’s feast for the Queen of Sheba, place names, the meaning of Makeda, the queen’s name, as *not thus* and unusual grammatical constructions arising from Ge’ez authors struggling with an imperfect knowledge of Arabic.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas the *Sheba Cycle* can stand alone, the *Caleb Cycle* cannot. In Chapter 21A the *Caleb Cycle* introduces the *Sheba Cycle* and when it resumes in Chapter 63B it uses the events of the *Sheba Cycle* when discussing Solomon’s relationship with his wife, Pharaoh’s daughter. The *Caleb Cycle* belongs to the late 5<sup>th</sup> century or early 6<sup>th</sup> century CE and was written in a political and religious atmosphere where the Jewish Himyaritic king and the Monophysite Axumite monarch were not only fighting for South Arabian domination but also to prove, by force of arms, that they were the divinely ordained inheritors of Solomon and Sheba’s legacy.<sup>13</sup> Its content is very much influenced by the fanatical Monophysite Nine Saints who had fled persecution in Byzantium in the late 5<sup>th</sup> century and established a permanent Monophysite stronghold in Ethiopia and did much to encourage the Negus to create a Christian Monophysite empire encompassing Ethiopia, Arabia, Egypt, the Levant and Asia Minor as far as Armenia, as well denigrating the Israelite Beta Israel (“Falasha”) as *Christ Killers*. The *Colophon* of the *Kebrā Nagast* is ambivalent but it seems most likely that the Ge’ez translation of the *Sheba Cycle* was accomplished before 520 CE and then used by Ge’ez speakers as a basis on which to add the *Caleb Cycle* in the same way as the *Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy* is written around the ancient *Poem of Moses* and *Blessings of Moses*. Isaac’s team probably produced a new copy of the combined Sheba and Caleb texts with interpolations and comments in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. Alternatively, if the *Sheba Cycle* was not in fact translated before 520 CE, Isaac’s team may have discovered it in rough draft; a Ge’ez *Caleb Cycle* filed together with Arabic or partly translated *Sheba Cycle*.

Whatever the history of the *Kebrā Nagast*, the *Sheba Cycle* belongs to a pre-Christian era. This

assumption should not however rest on Biblical similarities. As Hubbard noted:

‘The *Old Testament* elements of the Sheba cycle are so woven are into the narrative of the *Kebra Nagast* that it is no easy chore to extricate them. That is to say that the brevity of the biblical account can be a hindrance to, as well as a help in, this examination, because this brevity makes it hard to ascertain whether a motif represents a literary source or is merely as amplification of the concise biblical account.’<sup>14</sup>

The events described in Chapters 21B to 26 (the beginning of the *Sheba Cycle*) are summarised both in *1 Kings 10:1-13* and in Flavius Josephus's first century CE Greek text *The Antiquities of the Jews*. The similarity between the *Sheba Cycle* and Josephus is so striking that it is most probable that either both works stem from an earlier document now lost such as the *Acts of Solomon* or an ancient version of the *Sheba Cycle* itself. The *Sheba Cycle* and Josephus cover the same topics although the order is not quite the same.<sup>15</sup> Josephus does not, however, mention Solomon's seduction of the Queen of Sheba but *Kings* seems to allude to it. Neither *Kings* nor Josephus refers to the disappearance of the Ark let alone the establishment of Menelik's successor state. The *Sheba Cycle* states that Solomon ceded Gaza/Gezer to Sheba while *1 Kings 9:16* states it was given to Solomon by an unnamed Egyptian pharaoh as dowry when Solomon married his daughter. Josephus states the queen that visited Solomon was queen of Ethiopia and also Egypt. The *Sheba Cycle* clearly distinguishes between the Queen of Sheba and Solomon's Egyptian queen but its account, like that of Josephus, seems to suffer from extraordinary geographic references. In particular, the *Sheba Cycle's* account of Menelik's escape with the Ark and Solomon's pursuit seems to make complete geographic nonsense.

Arab and Ethiopian scribes would have possessed a basic knowledge of Middle East geography. If they had not, later editors would have corrected their work. This is in fact what happened. The redactors of the *Kebra Nagast* took the *Sheba Cycle* text and realised its geography was bizarre so they inserted helpful points that unfortunately exacerbated the situation. Whether or not the Archangel Michael assisted Menelik and his followers to leave by air, Chapter 52 states the first part of their return journey was from Jerusalem to Gaza. From Gaza they passed to the border of Mesrin (translated as *Egypt*) where they reached the river of Ethiopia, a journey of a single day instead of the usual thirteen. There Menelik was told about the theft of the Ark of the Covenant. Next they came to the Sea of Eritrea (the Red Sea), crossed the sea, arrived opposite Mount Sinai and travelled on from there to Ethiopia. If this account as it stands is taken seriously, the journey would have gone from Jerusalem to Gaza and then down to the Nile to the Takkeze river junction where they then crossed the Red Sea over to Arabia where they arrived in Ethiopia (*sic*). This doesn't make any sense and neither does the account of Solomon's pursuit. Solomon's troops, on discovering the theft of the Ark, rode out for Mesr (translated as *Egypt*) where they were informed Menelik's party had left nine days earlier. Some of the troops reported back to Solomon that Menelik had taken three days from Jerusalem to the Takkeze. Meanwhile the remaining force continued the pursuit to the Red Sea. Solomon himself then joined the chase and reached Gaza (*map 1*). After that he returned in sorrow to Jerusalem. Chapter 59 of the *Kebra Nagast* is an interpolation. It states that Solomon met a messenger sent from Alexandria by the Egyptian Pharaoh who informed him that he had seen Menelik's party pass through Cairo which they had reached after three days from the river of Egypt. This section can be disregarded because Alexandria and Cairo were respectively founded 600 and 900 years after Solomon. The Christian Arabic account of the *Kebra Nagast\**, the only document that shares the story of the theft of the Ark, does not describe Menelik's route.

\*The Christian Arab account was compiled in 1584 C.E. (Bezold, *Kebra Nagast*, XLIII) by the Alexandria Coptic Church in Egypt, which appointed the Ethiopian popes up until 1952. It reiterates the belief that Solomon's immorality led to his kingdom and God's blessing pass to the king of Abyssinia.

However, these detailed references to the escape and pursuit, in addition to Josephus's account and other points in the *Kebrā Nagast* elaborated upon below, are vital clues to a much larger issue - the historical veracity of the *Old Testament*. This paper argues that the geography of the *Kebrā Nagast* is correct and that mainstream interpretation of the *Old Testament* geography is not. The *Old Testament* consists of twenty-four sacred scrolls or books. The first four were probably written and housed in the First Temple during Solomon's reign (ca. 950 BCE) to imitate practices elsewhere in imperial Middle Eastern states such as Assyria and Babylon. The Hebrews already had a precedent by placing *Ten Commandments*, most likely inscribed on graphic granite,<sup>16</sup> in the Ark of the Covenant. The remaining twenty books were most probably compiled around the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, some by editing older texts, and all were canonized in stages in a process completed ca. 200 BCE.

The Hebrew of the *Old Testament* appear originally to have been a group of several tribes. Their name ('bry/'brym/'bryym/'bryt) is mentioned only 17 times in the *Old Testament* and comes from the name of their common ancestor, *brm h-'bry*, or Abraham the Hebrew, who lived around 1800 - 1400 BCE. Canaanite and Hebrew were written without vowels so the word *Hebrew* would appear as 'hr which in General Semitic can mean *those who crossed over*.

The original language of the Hebrews is unknown for they adopted the language of the Canaanites.<sup>17</sup> Traditionally vowels were omitted in written texts as they were considered sacred. Hebrew died out ca. 400 BCE and the *Old Testament* was vocalised by Aramaic-speaking Masoretic scholars ca 500-950 CE in Galilee and Babylon. Modern research has concluded that the Hebrew of the *Old Testament* is artificial, being overwhelmingly a merger between Hebrew consonants from ancient poetry and 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE prose and Aramaic vowels from the 6<sup>th</sup>-10th century CE.<sup>18</sup> The Masoretes encountered severe linguistic difficulties in their vocalisation<sup>19</sup> and admitted that in about 350 places they were unable to make sense of the text.<sup>20</sup> Most controversial of all is the vocalisation of place names, in particular *msrm* as Egypt, *ks* as Ethiopia/Sudan and *hyrdn* as the River Jordan. Despite this, it is generally accepted that the Masoretic *Old Testament* retains the meaning of the original traditions.

The *Old Testament* tells of the Hebrews being enslaved by the Egyptians for more than four hundred years. Then, over 600,000 in number and led by a charismatic leader named Moses (ca. 1400-1200 BCE), they made an epic escape (the *Exodus*). After forty years of wandering they entered the *Promised Land* under Joshua, only one of the two survivors of the original host. There they overwhelmed and then merged with the Canaanites as *Israelites*.

The *Old Testament* states that even during the days of the Exodus there was a fratricidal struggle among the Hebrews as one group associated with a demanding xenophobic monotheism fought to eliminate the religious beliefs of another group who revered the El, the Canaanite high god, symbolized by the Golden Calf; and Ba'al, a deity of life and fertility. This struggle continued to polarize the 12 tribes of Israel thereafter and eventually transformed the *Old Testament* from a general historical account into an allegedly divinely inspired constitution for Ezra's ca. 450 BCE Jerusalem theocracy.<sup>21</sup>

After a period of rule by *judges* (ca. 1200-1050 BCE) the Israelites established a kingdom under Saul. This was replaced by a strong, centralized and eventually extremely wealthy state under David and his son Solomon (ca. 1000-925 BCE). Solomon undertook a massive public works program, including the construction of the First Temple. However, the kingdom split after his death and Judah, the southern kingdom, associated with Solomon, the Temple and strict monotheism, declined. Israel, the northern kingdom that was a centre for the Samaritans as well as syncretic practices linked to El and Ba'al, prospered because of its control over trade routes. Israel's King Omri (ca. 885- 874 BCE) built a capital at Samaria with public buildings that reputedly eclipsed Solomon's. Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BCE. Hilkiah, the high priest of Judah's resurgent Zadokites, was instrumental in convincing Judah's King Josiah (ca.640-609 BCE) to massacre Israel's priestly class.<sup>22</sup> It is probable that Judah took over at least part of Israel's control of trade routes but then fell to the Babylonians in 597 BCE. A brief rebellion brought brutal retaliation

in 586 BCE and the forced deportation to Babylon of its leading citizens.

Exiled Israelite assistance for the Persians in overrunning Babylon was rewarded in 520 BCE when the Persian ruler Cyrus allowed some exiles to establish a settlement on the site of modern Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, an ancestor of Christ and of the House of David. A power struggle resulted in a theocracy taking charge (10% of the new settlers were priests) and around 450 BCE the Prophet Ezra, Hilkiah's descendent, created an uncompromising fundamentalist state in the monotheist tradition. This theocracy refused to reconcile with the Samaritans and laid the foundations of modern Judaism. Muslim traditions testify to this division, emphasising that Ezra's followers chose to distance themselves from the Israelites as a whole.<sup>23</sup>

Egyptian records make no mention of the Hebrews let alone the large demographic loss of the Exodus. Biblical scholars looking for the earliest records of the Hebrews have grabbed at dubious linguistic straws such as *hapiru*, *'pr* and *'prm* unconvincingly to "prove" the Hebrews (*'br*) were known in ancient times to the Egyptians and the Ugaritic speakers of Syria.<sup>24</sup> Biblical Hebrew, supposedly a Canaanite dialect which had existed alongside and been heavily influenced by Egyptian, irrespective or not if the Hebrews had retained vocabulary from the captivity, contains words from southern India<sup>25</sup> but nothing indisputably identifiable from Egyptian.<sup>26</sup>

Most *Old Testament* commentators believe that the Hebrew force that Moses' successor, Joshua, led into the Promised Land quickly overwhelmed the Bronze Age Canaanites with their iron weapons and their advent ushered in the Palestinian Iron Age.<sup>27</sup> If Joshua's force had indeed been Iron-Age warriors, they could not have come from Egypt. Pharaoh Ramses III (ca. 1187-1166 BCE)'s defeat of the so-called *Sea People* spared Egypt the political upheaval of Iron Age conquest and massive technological change.<sup>28</sup> If Egypt did not possess Iron-Age smelting technology in 1166 BCE, the Hebrews could not have left it between one to three hundred years earlier bearing with them Iron-Age technology which enabled them to defeat the Canaanites.

The *Old Testament* narrative speaks of Joshua conducting a violent invasion. Archaeology in Palestine would therefore show a clear break ca. 1400-1200 BCE as a bronze age culture, typified by small political groupings and a settled agricultural population, was dramatically overwhelmed and reconstituted into two centralised iron-age states dominated by a huge alien pastoralist population undergoing urbanisation, engaging in massive public works and international trade. Easier to reveal would be the evidence of the later destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem.

The archaeological evidence totally contradicts the *Old Testament* narrative. Ancient Palestine was a peripheral region, of little or no economic or strategic interest to the highly organized and powerful states of Egypt, Mesopotamia or Syria. It did indeed have a mostly self-sufficient bronze-age sedentary agricultural economy but this was not replaced by any large powerful centralised political unit. Society was based on small urban centers and hamlets whose rulers were petty chiefs or headmen. When David and Solomon allegedly created a powerful and wealthy united kingdom Palestine endured a lengthy period of drought which brought regular famine, a 20% decrease in rainfall and the decline of the neighbouring Ugaritic and Mycenaean civilizations. The population abandoned the interior and moved to the coastal areas where they established smaller more sustainable agricultural communities.<sup>29</sup>

The cities of Jericho, Hebron and Jerusalem figure prominently in the *Old Testament*. Archaeologists have failed to link the modern sites of the same name to the *Old Testament* account. Kathleen Kenyon concluded that Jericho was deserted from the beginning of the 15th century to the 11th century BCE and had fallen long before Joshua.<sup>30</sup> Avi Ofer concluded that Hebron was abandoned around 1500 BCE, almost certainly because the climate had dried up.<sup>31</sup> Therefore when Joshua was supposed to have invaded the Promised Land ca.1200 BCE he would have found at Hebron a handful of nomads roaming the ruins of a bronze age city. Israel Finkelstein discovered nothing of significance at the site believed to be Shiloh, the reputed Israelite tribal centre for the cult of the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>32</sup>



Jerusalem is Palestine's greatest archaeological disappointment. Solomon allegedly constructed the First Temple, the Royal Palace (which took twice as long to build as the Temple), the Treasury, the Judgment Hall in which he placed his ivory throne; a palace for the daughter of pharaoh, his most prestigious wife; and a large structure which is translated as the *House of the Forest of Lebanon*. No trace of any of these exists. The archaeological record has revealed that Jerusalem at the time of Solomon was one of about 100 small unfortified villages in a very poor agricultural area inhabited by a people indistinguishable from other Canaanites, who led a marginal existence herding goats, sheep and oxen; nor has anything been found at the supposed site of Samaria to suggest it was of any political or economic significance in Omri's time.

Attempts to link small public works to the *Old Testament* record are unconvincing. The famed so-called *Tunnel of Hezekiah* owes its identity to a passage in the *Old Testament* where Hezekiel is credited with building a pool and *aqueduct* on the *west* side of the city. There are no remains of an aqueduct; the tunnel (which could of course be described as a kind of aqueduct) is on the *eastern* edge of Jerusalem<sup>33</sup> and the inscription within a piece of unvocalised graffiti open to all kinds of interpretation.<sup>34</sup>

Pritchard, writing nearly 30 years ago, stated:

'The so-called cities of Megiddo, Gezer, Hazor - all said to have been built by Solomon - Gibeon, the site of Solomon's holocausts, and Jerusalem itself, were in reality more like villages and surrounded by circumambulatory ramparts of roughly hewn stone. Within were relatively small public buildings and frequently poorly constructed dwellings with clay floors...compared with the culture...of Phoenicia, Assyria and Egypt, the 'magnificence' of the Age of Solomon is parochial and decidedly lacklustre.'

The nature of the archaeological evidence prompted commentators such as Miller and Hayes to reason that the *Old Testament* account is accurate in terms of local standards:

'Solomon was probably an unusually wealthy and powerful ruler by the standards of Early Iron Age Palestine. Yet viewed in the broader context of the ancient Middle East, he is to be regarded more as a local ruler over an expanded city-state than as a world class emperor.'<sup>36</sup>

By the early 1990's some archaeologists had become disillusioned with the *Old Testament* as a blue-print for excavation in Palestine. Thompson, writing in 1992, emphasised that excavations around Jerusalem had found no evidence of significant settlement in the time of David and Solomon's powerful and wealthy united kingdom. Conditions for such a state began to emerge a century later but Jerusalem only became a relatively important urban centre around 650 BCE.<sup>37</sup> Thompson dismissed the notion that the area had any monarch on the scale of Saul, David and Solomon as 'out of the question.' Thompson, elaborating on Noth's assertion in 1930 that the *Torah* (the first five books of the *Old Testament* containing the Law of Moses) was compiled in 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE,<sup>38</sup> concluded that the first *ten* books of the *Old Testament* were *invented* by priests in Jerusalem during Persian rule in about 450 BCE. Thompson suggested that the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests in the Middle East brought together in exiled captivity broken remnants of disparate peoples from former petty tribal groups and city-states united by the Aramaic language and eventually a relatively enlightened Persian administration. Thompson believed that the Jerusalem settlement of Ezra (ca. 450 BCE) was an administrative measure creating a well-organised urban theocracy in an imperial outpost. He envisaged that the religion of the new settlement was originally Persian based but then absorbed various traditions to create a mythical history with an fraudulent Holy Book for an invented people, the Jews. In late 1999 Professor Ze'ev Herzog, a leading Israeli archaeologist, fully aware that his conclusions undermined the *raison d'etre* of the State of Israel, concurred with Thompson stating:

‘During the period when the conquest (of Joshua) would have taken place, there were no cities there, and of course no walls to bring down.... not one site(has been) identified that could correspond to the biblical picture.’

Thompson's archaeological conclusions have not been seriously challenged and there is indeed significant controversy surrounding the *Book of Deuteronomy* and the *Book of Ezekiel* to support his hypothesis that at least part of the *Old Testament* was the work of a cynical self-serving 6-5\* century BCE priesthood. The historical events described in the *Old Testament* cover the period ca.1400 until ca.400 BCE, from Moses to Queen Esther of Persia. There is not much difference between the language of the earliest books and the latest ones. The *Song of Solomon* contains vocabulary dating it to the Babylonian captivity five hundred years after Solomon's reign. This supports Thompson's view that most of the *Old Testament* unvocalised text dates from the 6-5\* century BCE. However, the *Old Testament* contains passages in archaic language: the *Song of Moses* (Exodus 15), the *Song of Deborah* (Judges 5), the *Blessings of Jacob* (Genesis 49), the *Blessings of Moses* (Deuteronomy 33), the *Oracles of Baarlam* (Numbers 23-4), the *Poem of Moses* (Deuteronomy 32) and *Psalm 68*. They include different terms than later Hebrew, for example words for *gold, listen, know, be, man, judge see, do/make, wine, strike and become angry*. It seems that these passages are songs and poems from oral traditions.<sup>40</sup> The Samaritan sect acknowledges only the canonical authority of the first five books of the *Old Testament*. The *Book of Deuteronomy* is almost certainly the "lost" fifth book of the *Torah* "discovered" in the Temple during Josiah's reign (ca.640-609 BCE). It takes two archaic texts associated with Moses and uses them to authenticate "divine" laws which have been interwoven with them concerning the upkeep of the temple and authority of the priests, clauses that would have been totally out of place in the nomadic existence of the Exodus. Acceptance by the Samaritan priesthood would have come before the resurgent Zadokite priesthood under Hilkiah incited Josiah to annihilate them. Given this and the problems of Masoretic vocalisation, it is difficult to accept Thompson's hypothesis that the *Old Testament* is an invented text; more so because if the *Old Testament* was indeed a 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE forgery why would the priesthood have chosen to write most of it (some later parts are in Aramaic) in a nearly extinct or dead unvocalised language several passages of which were archaic and others indecipherable? The logical conclusion is that the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE priesthood of the Ezra tradition expanded ancient sacred texts to give divine sanction to their recently established Jerusalem settlement, which was not located in the original territory of Joshua's conquest nor part of David and Solomon's kingdom.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike *Josephus* and the *Kebrā Nagast*, the Islamic *Qur'an* and non-canonical Jewish traditions link Solomon and the Queen of Sheba to magical fantasies, in particular the role of the hoopoe in discovering the land of Sheba and carrying messages to the queen.<sup>42</sup> While these might bolster the school of thought that dismisses the *Old Testament* as fiction, the *Qur'an* gives a side to the story omitted both by the *Old Testament* and the *Kebrā Nagast*, namely that the queen did not so much come to see Solomon out of intellectual curiosity but more under duress.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, the *Qur'an* other but neighbours. Thirdly, although the *Qur'an* belongs to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE and is overwhelmingly a Bedouin religious and political statement it takes for granted a long and close relationship between Arabs and Israelites in Arabia stretching back to the time of Moses.

This paper supports the theory that the *Old Testament* up until the Babylonian captivity took place in West Arabia, not Palestine. Archaeological investigations in Palestine had a haphazard and now much criticised beginning, based partly on 5 century BCE self-serving theocratic agenda but more on Edward Robinson's mid 19<sup>th</sup> century identification of sites using similarities between Arabic and Hebrew place names; and the subjective field work of William Albright (1891-1971).<sup>44</sup> Kamal Salibi, using the 1977 Saudi Government's *Al-Mug'am al-gugrafi li'l bilad al-'Arabiyyah al-Aa'udiyah* (*Gazette of Place Names*), produced an alternative location for the events of the *Old Testament* in an area stretching from Medina to the southern Saudi province of Asir.<sup>45</sup> Although his suggestions have been mostly ridiculed or ignored by Biblical historians, including those who have dismissed

the *Old Testament* as fantasy,<sup>46</sup> there is evidence to support his claim.

Firstly there is linguistic evidence that supports the notion that West Arabia was once inhabited by Hebrew speakers. There are several major Arabic dialects in West Arabia, each containing sub-groups. The main groups are Yemen, Himyar, 'Azd, North Yemen, Hudhail, Hijaz and Tayyi'. Chaim Rabin noted in 1951 the 'surprising similarities and parallelisms of West-Arabian with Canaanite.'<sup>47</sup> Rabin's generation took for granted that the homeland of the *Old Testament* and Hebrew/Canaanite was

Palestine and he therefore remarked 'A northern origin (of West Arabian) would certainly supply the easiest explanation.' Rabin took the Yemeni dialect of Arabic and found a number of words similar to Hebrew such as *devil, lord, furrow, wooden poker, firewood, thick clay, a small axe, to romp, to hoe, sycamore, deep river gorge, to sit and to shine*. He stated 'the list is too long to be taken as mere coincidence.'<sup>48</sup> Rabin drew attention to other similarities to Hebrew from the North Yemen dialect's use of *dha* as a question marker and the construction of the demonstrative *that* without an article *alan* or *the* both in Canaanite and in North Yemeni as 'too remarkable to be accidental.'<sup>49</sup> When reviewing Hudhail, a dialect just west of Mecca, Rabin observed that with sound changes 'the resemblance to Canaanite developments is striking.'<sup>50</sup> He dismissed the notion of a certain sound change as being general to Semitic, emphasising that it was specific to West Arabia and Canaanite/Hebrew.<sup>51</sup> In the case of Tayyi', the language of a Yemeni tribe who migrated to the northern central part of Arabia, Rabin noted similarities with Canaanite which led him to conclude 'We must therefore assume that part of least of the West Arabians remained in close enough contact with speakers of Canaanite to be affected by a sound change which took place within that language. This is not the place to work out the historical implications of this, especially as it affects the darkest part of Arab history.'<sup>52</sup> Finally he found the same use of *dhu*, a relative particle in Tayyi' which brought 'the Tayyi' dialect into clear connection with at least one of the constituent elements of the Hebrew language.'<sup>53</sup> Rabin was clearly puzzled by the similarities he encountered between the dialects of West Arabia and Canaanite/Hebrew. The evidence suggested that Canaanite/Hebrew had once been spoken in West Arabia as far south as the Yemen border.

The most convincing linguistic piece of evidence supporting an ancient Hebrew presence in West Arabia concerns the Ge'ez (Ethiopic) word for the Ark of the Covenant. Ethiopia is obsessed with the Ark. The *Kebrā Nagast* claims the Ark was stolen and brought to their country during Solomon's reign. Today the Ark (or perhaps the Sinai Tablets of the Law) is believed to be housed in a small chapel in the cathedral compound in Axum.<sup>54</sup>

The Ge'ez word for the Ark is *tabot*, taken from the Medina dialect word *tabut*. The Hebrew word is *tebhah*. Nöldeke referred to the Medina word as 'an atrocious monstrosity.'<sup>55</sup> This remark requires elaboration. The Hebrew word *tebhah* evolved into Palestinian Aramaic *tebhutha/tebhotha*. Aramaic loan words which have endings (suffixes) in *ah* change to *ut* in Arabic. In conventional thinking that places the Hebrew language of ca. 1000 BCE in Palestine, the word *tebhah* would have evolved there into Aramaic *tebhutha* or *tebhotha*. The Aramaic-speaking Jews would then have passed the word on to the Arabs, who would have adopted it as something like *tebhuthut* or *tebhothut*. However, the Medina and Mecca Arabs used *tabut* which meant that they had taken the word before 400 BCE directly from Hebrew *tebhah* and put their own suffix *ut* on it, making *tabut*. That is why Nöldeke, the noted Semitic language scholar, was perplexed. The evidence showed that Hebrew must have been spoken in the Medina region before the Jews adopted Aramaic and that made no sense to him. Rabin concluded that 'Ethiopic (Ge'ez), then, must have received the word (*tabut/tabot*) somehow via West Arabian, through channels as yet unknown to us.'<sup>56</sup> This supports the hypothesis that the Ark itself was from West Arabia, from where it was, as narrated in the *Kebrā Nagast*, stolen and taken to Ethiopia. It is significant that the Rwala Bedouin of Saudi Arabia not only claim Jewish ancestry but shared a long tradition with other Bedouin of carrying an Ark into battle which lasted up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup>

The *Kebrā Nagast* not only speaks of the theft of the Ark but of the founding of an Israelite

kingdom in Ethiopia. Inscriptions from the Aksum area dating from at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE testify that four rulers of Sheba, three of whom associated queens with their rule, reigned over a mixed population of Shebans (*sb*) and Hebrews (*'br*), who were also referred to as the *reds* and the *blacks*, terms still used in the area respectively to denote Semitic and Cushitic speakers.<sup>58</sup> Ethiopia is the only area where inscriptions have been discovered referring to ancient Hebrews, but an unstudied Hebric-Judaic remnant named *Yebr* (unvocalised *'br*) still exists around Hargeisa in northern Somalia.<sup>59</sup>

Arabia has many oral and written traditions of an ancient local Israelite presence, particularly in the Medina-Mecca-Khayber area where they were known to exist in large numbers in Mohammed's time and even later; and the Yemen. Medina's old name *Yaihrib* appears to have been Egyptian in origin and Khayber's Hebrew.<sup>60</sup> Most commentators used the Palestine yardstick to make judgements, assuming that the events of the *Old Testament* took place there. Torrey argued that Islam owed much to an ancient local Jewish presence but found the the pattern of settlement hard to accept. It would be logical to see a tapered pattern of Jewish settlement stretching from Palestine through the Arabian Peninsula with larger settlements nearer Palestine. Torrey summarized the evidence 'The investigator is disappointed by the scarcity of Israelites in one place [northern and central Arabia], and scandalized by their apparent multitude in the other [Yemen]'.<sup>61</sup> Torrey concluded that 'In the absence of a plausible theory of extensive immigration, the hypothesis of converted Arab tribes seemed the only recourse.'<sup>62</sup>

Others disagreed. Margliouth believed that the Arabs and Israelites had a common origin in Arabia,<sup>63</sup> a view recently supported by DNA tests.<sup>64</sup> Evidence exists from Sabaeen and Minaen inscriptions ca.1000 BCE of monotheism, a theological innovation usually associated with Judaism, but which may have evolved out of a local pagan cult.<sup>65</sup> The early part of the *Old Testament* most probably occurred in a volcanic region, which points to the *Ring of Fire* of northern Yemen. Another commentator, Kamal Salibi, noted that the Masoretic vocalisation of *hyrdrn* as *Jordan* is nowhere associated in the *Old Testament* with a river. Instead it should be vocalised to read *ridge* a reference to the vast escarpment that rises from the West Arabian coast.<sup>66</sup>

Margliouth dismissed the notion of an ancient Jewish political presence stating that if 'a Jewish kingdom ever held sway in South Arabia, it left little impression on the North Arabian mind.'<sup>67</sup> Any Israelite kingdom, intrinsically linked to a briefly triumphant exclusive Hebrew elite claiming God's divine favour could not serve as a model for an Arab state so long as the divine message was for Jews alone, who, after Ezra, made conversion a difficult process. It is evident from the *Old Testament* account that the ten tribes of Israel, the northern kingdom, were, in the view of the Judaeen priesthood, either pagan or syncretic. The *Old Testament* very much reflects the views of the priestly class and the court circle of Judah, the southern kingdom, and cannot be accepted as the outlook of the population as a whole. From their point of view the Israelite states were the creation of unpopular foreign invaders with a over-demanding alien religion. It is most probable that when Judah was overwhelmed and its leadership deported, the majority of its subjects did not regret it.

Economic logic and the Queen of Sheba story suggest that Solomon must have controlled important trade routes. The brief zenith of the two Israelite states indicate they were opportunist entities, taking advantage of the fluctuating political fortunes of powerful neighbours.

In the years preceding the rise of the Israelite states, the Egyptians had failed to inflict a decisive victory on the Assyrians and withdrew to Africa. The Libyans were encroaching into western Egypt while the Sea Peoples devastated the Levant and the Delta. Copper and silver supplies were cut off. Official documents of the period frequently bore a sentiment reflecting widespread pessimism 'I am all right today; tomorrow is in the hands of God.'<sup>68</sup> In about 1075 BCE Egypt was split into two states with capitals at Tanis in the Delta under the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty, and Thebes in the south under priests. As for the Assyrians, they spent the period of David and Solomon's reigns combating Aramaean population movements. Authorities agree that if Solomon's state did exist, it would have taken advantage of the Egyptian withdrawal from Asia and Assyrian domestic disorder.

It would therefore have been centred in an area controlling valuable resources or trade routes. Palestine had neither. The area to the north, known as Phoenicia, had a long history of commercial activity. The Egyptians established control over the area around the 15<sup>th</sup> century BCE and when they withdrew the Phoenicians enjoyed some freedom until the Assyrians moved against them in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Although their southern border was Palestine, the Phoenicians had no record of Solomon's kingdom, nor did trade between the Phoenicians and Egyptians pass through Palestine. It was sea-borne and the Phoenicians traded widely not only throughout the Mediterranean, but also as far as Britain and West Africa. Since the Phoenicians had a hold on the trade of the Near East, the only alternative for Solomon's state to gain wealth would have been to the south, in Arabia.

While the origin of the substantial ancient ruins in the Hijaz and Asir provinces of Saudi Arabia are a mystery, and no evidence is forthcoming in Palestine to support the *Old Testament* account, there is no controversy about the existence of the realm of Sheba nor of the camel-borne frankincense and gold trade that gave it wealth. Obermeyer, describing the situation ca. 1000 BCE, the era of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, wrote:

‘The major role of camel caravans in the rise of markets, the funding of kingdoms, and the forging of a political network across South Arabia cannot be overstated... the caravan trade became the thread which wove together the royal cities of (South Arabia) ...to connect with Palestine and Egypt. The route covered some 1500 miles, and journeys which took months were undertaken at what must have been enormous cost, including custom duties, expenses for the hiring of scribes, carriers and cameleers, to say nothing of the negotiations and payments for tribal protection and watering rights.’<sup>69</sup>

Looking at the evidence solely from the Yemen, archaeologists have concluded that Sabaean (Sheban) civilisation should be divided into three main periods, the *Ancient*, being the 1,000 years before The Common Era; the *Middle* from the time of The Common Era till the 4th century CE; and the *Late*, from the end of 4th century until the 6th century CE.<sup>70</sup> Most of what is known about the Sabaeans (Shebans) dates from centuries *after* the time of the Queen of Sheba when Marib was the centre of the Sabaean state. In the first part of the Ancient period, the time of the Queen of Sheba, the population of Yemen was organised in small social and political units called 's<sup>2</sup> °b (singular s<sup>2c</sup>b). These 's<sup>2c</sup>b were small autonomous or independent political entities with a centre where communal decisions were taken, for instance on the maintenance and control of the irrigation system, and where the local religious cult leader organised ceremonies. The title of the ruler was either *mlk* (king or queen) or *bkr* (first bom) and exercised authority over a village serving as the local market, administrative and religious cult centre. It appears that around the time of the Queen of Sheba, the Sabaeans created a large confederation of the 's<sup>2c</sup>b whose leader was known as the *mkrb SB*. The title of *mkrb* referred to a priest-king or priestess-queen.<sup>71</sup> The Queen of Sheba was most probably the leader of the Sabaean religious cult. The *Kebra Nagast* records her description of the state religion:

‘We worship the sun like our ancestors also did. We revere the sun as the most important deity. There are some amongst us who acknowledge other deities from nature such as rocks and trees, while others have carved figures representing divine forces. We worship the sun because .....she lightens the darkness and banishes fear. We call her “Our Queen” and “Our Creator.”’<sup>72</sup>

It appears that while the Sheban state evolved from local initiatives, the Sabaean/Sheban royal house was from the north. There are indications that the Sabaeans in the past were in the Hijaz area of modern Saudi Arabia.<sup>73</sup> A number of Lihyanic (Old South Semitic) inscriptions have been

discovered in the region between Khayber and Taima dating from at least the 6th century BCE. Some researchers have identified this area with biblical Dedan and it later became the northernmost frontier of traders from the Yemen in the early Common Era. Philby, in his book on the Queen of Sheba, believed that her realm was located in northern Arabia<sup>74</sup> during Solomon's time and the Sabaeans or more likely their ruling house did not move south until the 7th century BC probably as a result of Assyrian expansion. Support for this theory comes from Pirenne who suggested that the Judaic groups in north-east Africa were descendants of refugees fleeing the Assyrians; and the Tigre inscriptions testifying to a mixed Sheban/Hebrew population.<sup>75</sup> The nature of the political confederation in the early Yemen confederation suggests that a ruling elite may have originated in the north and became suzerains of an already resident intensely tribal population. A core of Sabaeans ruled non-Sabaeans 's<sup>2c</sup>b' who were referred to as *w-gwm*, meaning other communities who were not Sabaeans. The Sabaeans/Shebans were known as s<sup>2c</sup>b *Saba'* and appear on inscriptions as *SB* (as in Tigre) or '*SB'N*'.<sup>76</sup> Salibi's suggestion that the Queen of Sheba's capital was Khamis Mushait in Asir, the Saudi province north of the present Yemen border (see below.)

The Queen of Sheba herself, despite mention in the *Kebrā Nagast*, the *Old Testament*, the *Qur'an*, numerous traditions and inscriptions of three other queens of Sheba on the Ethiopian plateau, is regarded as a historically more nebulous figure than Solomon and it is not unusual for commentators to refer to her as 'mythical'.<sup>77</sup> A survey of Arabian, Jewish, Persian and Ethiopian traditions appear to stem from a common source. Her father was not a king but a government minister, her mother a foreigner with magical powers. She had links with both Arabia and Africa and became queen at a young age. She was extraordinarily intelligent and beautiful.<sup>78</sup> Later she became a symbol of a world women had lost following the consolidation and centralisation of Iron Age states.<sup>79</sup>

Obermeyer argued, 'I would strongly question from an evolutionary perspective the presence of queens (let alone a matrilineal society) in South Arabia, or anywhere else, with enough political clout to have done the things related to her.'<sup>80</sup> Yet della Vida<sup>81</sup> and Montgomery<sup>82</sup> emphasise democratic and gender aspects that distinguished early Sabaeans from their Mesopotamian and Israelite contemporaries. The hostility of Jewish and Muslim commentators to the Queen of Sheba was motivated by her intellectual challenge of Solomon, which not only threatened what they felt was the natural order but also symbolised an alternative path to the authoritarian male directed politico-religious societies of Judaism and Islam. The Agaw also seem to have accepted female rulers with equanimity<sup>83</sup> and the passage in the *Kebrā Nagast* which states that the Queen of Sheba agreed to surrender the throne and decree that women would never rule again<sup>84</sup> could be an interpolation directed against the Zagwe dynasty which allegedly took power through the actions of a woman.<sup>85</sup> The Tigre inscriptions testify that there were other queens of Sheba after Makeda. It is not possible to assess how far the drive by some commentators to deny Makeda's existence is directed by an urge to question the credibility of certain political, gender and theological aspects contained in the *Sheba Cycle*. As Lassner's work testifies, that is a massive subject of its own inextricably entwined with the issue of women's empowerment.<sup>86</sup>

The *Old Testament* record concerns the court circle and priesthood. The priestly class of Sabaea did not develop sacred texts like the Mosaic Law. Nevertheless traditions say the Queen of Sheba converted to the Israelite religion and that Solomon ruled Yemen for 23 years. Whatever the truth, a militant messianic Jewish state did emerge in the area in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE under Dhu Nuwas, whose early successes appear to have been due more to long festering local factors rather than his maternal Jewish Mesopotamian links.<sup>87</sup>

The Sabaeans contracted in the same period that Judah fell (586 BCE) to Babylon. The religious and political effects of the loss of imperial prestige, reflected in the Israelite syncretism that disturbed Ezra and the Babylonian exiles in the 5th century BCE, was paralleled in Sabaea by loss of respect for *Almaqah*, a moon god whose prestige seems to have replaced the sun god of Sheba's day; and the transformation of the Sabaeans into an area sharing a common culture and association with a long established localised political institution whose earlier power had

considerably waned.<sup>88</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that the respect accorded to the Sabaeen ruling dynasty, like the House of David, stemmed from the early Ancient period when it was at its most powerful and prosperous. This matches the Biblical account of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem, when it was clear that her realm had considerable wealth, and the situation nine hundred years later when Pliny spoke of a South 'sacred class' of 3000 families who controlled the incense trade.<sup>89</sup>

Not only were there similarities between Sabaea and Solomon's expansionary kingdom indicating that their societies were affected by similar social, economic and political forces during the same period, but they also interpreted the meeting between their monarchs as a major historical event. Given economic logic, the logistics of the camel caravan trade and the presence of substantial watering places in the north, such as Khayber, Mecca and Medina, it is inconceivable that a middleman state did not evolve along the trade routes in that area during the period of Egyptian and Assyrian contraction.

An Arabian setting would explain why Israel, the northern kingdom, prospered when it split away from Judaeen control after Solomon's death and then became the target for Assyrian aggression. Solomon is credited in taking control of Taima, an important cross roads for trade coming from the east and south.<sup>90</sup> Had his kingdom been located in Palestine, Judah, the southern kingdom, would have been more strategically placed after Israel broke free. However, it was *Israel*, not Judah, that benefited from the spilt and this indicates it was in a geographically more advantageous position than Judah, most probably situated around Medina and Khayber, where it could control Taima.

The Yemeni Jews have several traditions about their origin although genetically they are identical to Yemeni Arabs.<sup>91</sup> Some say they are descendants of Jews sent to Sabaea/Sheba by Solomon while others say their ancestors left Judah forty-two years before the destruction of the First Temple and spurned the prophet Ezra's call to return to rebuild it, foreseeing further torment. Other traditions say the Yemeni Jews are descendants of Jews who fled from Palestine after the two risings against Roman rule that were brutally crushed in the first and second centuries CE.<sup>92</sup>

The most widely known Hebraic-Judaic group in Ethiopia is the Beta Israel, often referred to as *Beta Israel* or *Kayla*. Recent research suggests that the Beta Israel were originally 'loosely affiliated groups in north-western Ethiopia' that evolved into 'a clearly defined ethnic-religious entity.'<sup>93</sup> Like the Yemeni Jews they have traditions of a number of migrations. The Beta Israel leader, Abba Ishaq, confided that some of his people came during Solomon's time, others after Jeremiah.<sup>94</sup> Ullendorf recorded a Beta Israel tradition that their Cushitic Agaw ancestors once lived in Arabia<sup>95</sup> while Leslau noted in 1951 that they retained ancient Israelite liturgy in Agaw,<sup>96</sup> which they recited but, having adopted Amharic, no longer understood. The Beta Israel believe that the *Sheba Cycle* is a true account of how their ancestors came to Ethiopia and that their priests are from the House of Levi.<sup>97</sup> Their neighbours, the Qemant, have been described as a pagan Hebric-Judaic peasantry and they, like the Orthodox Churches of Ethiopia and Eritrea, accept the *Sheba Cycle* as fact.<sup>98</sup>

The extent of Israelite religious influence in the pre-Christian Aksumite empire is unknown but some commentators have estimated that before the arrival of Christianity in the fourth century CE half the population of the Aksumite empire adhered to some form of Judaism or Judaic-Christianity.<sup>99</sup> Besides *tabot*, the word for the Ark, Ge'ez contains other Hebrews words including the one for Friday which 'is more Jewish than it is in Hebrew' for its meaning *evening* or *sunset* implies the 'day of preparation' for the Jewish Sabbath.<sup>100</sup> Ethiopian/Eritrean Orthodox Christianity contains so many Hebraic-Judaic practices<sup>101</sup> that it is generally accepted that there must have been a some sort of Hebraic- Judaic or Judaic-Christian religious presence at the Aksumite court,<sup>102</sup> an opinion backed by the discovery of Aksumite coins bearing the inscription *King of Zion*<sup>TM</sup> Salibi, citing Islamic traditions, suggests it may have been Nazarene Judaism, allegedly founded in Najran on the Yemen border ca. 400 BCE.<sup>104</sup>

Commentators on the Beta Israel and Orthodox Christianity have written from the standpoint that the *Old Testament* occurred in Palestine. Secondly, they reached their conclusions before archaeological evidence emerged pushing back the date of the pre- Aksumite *DMT* period to the time of Solomon and Sheba.<sup>105</sup> Iron working existed in the Aksum area ca. 1000 BCE<sup>106</sup> and the inscriptions concerning kings and queens of Shebans ruling a mixed population of Shebans and Hebrews in the same area have been linked to the period 1000-500 BCE.<sup>107</sup> Hardly any academic work has taken into account the question of Salibi's Saudi place names, discussed below.<sup>108</sup> Fourthly, although research has been undertaken on the Beta Israel and Qemant, and note taken of peripheral groups who may or not be related to them, nothing has ever been written on a people who may have the key to much of the mystery of the origins of the Hebraic-Judaic element in the Horn of Africa. The Beta Israel and the Qemant were confined to the Semien mountains and the Gondar area next to Lake Tana, far from Tigre. What is surprising is that a sizeable Hebric-Judaic population still remains in Tigre and Eritrea but has until now escaped mention in any publication let alone formal study. These are the *Latos*, a highly significant group of Tigrinya-speakers enjoying considerable economic and political power in Eritrea. They possess priests known as *Kes* and a secret society, based in Himbirti near Asmara, called *Kansha*, that maintains genealogical records.<sup>109</sup> The *Latos* claim to have been the first inhabitants of highland Eritrea, in particular the former province of Hamasien with its dynastic centres of Hazega and Tse'azega. They explain that their influence is the reason the Christianity of the area has always been so heavily Judaic. It was this area that supported Ewostatewos, a 14 century holy man, in his fight to retain and revere Judaic practices in Orthodox Christianity.<sup>110</sup> There is an unsubstantiated belief that the presence of the *Latos* distinguished the area from Christian Tigre, a factor recognised by Menelik II when the Italians sought control over the area; and later engendered a sense of Eritrean nationalism during the time of Haile Selassie.<sup>111</sup> The *Latos* tended to covert to Roman Catholicism or Protestant creeds in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a further mark of their separate identity to the Orthodox Church, which supported Haile Selassie. Despite this, past *Latos* migration patterns from the area were towards the Beta Israel communities in Ethiopia. The *Latos* issue is highly contentious given the volatile political-religious nature of the Horn of Africa and its external, in particular Israeli, linkages. The *Latos* are relatively prosperous and their numbers reportedly include many of the Eritrean administrative and political heirarchy including the president himself. Ewostatewos's monastery at Debra Bizen is just below Asmara, and the Mai Bela memorial to the Queen of Sheba is also in *Latos* territory. Hamasien has ancient iron and gold deposits, excellent agricultural land and rainfall and controls the route to the coast as well as access to the Antseba valley, the ancient trade route to the alleged land of Punt.<sup>112</sup> Very little archaeology has been undertaken in Hamasien but is it clear that already published conclusions on the Beta Israel and Hebric-Judaic elements in Orthodox Christianity would be very different if the *Latos* had been considered.

Salibi hypothesised that Moses led the Hebrews to freedom from an Egyptian military colony that straddled an important Arabian trade route. My own belief is that the Red Sea crossing was from Eritrea to Yemen on a temporary land bridge formed by volcanic activity. Arab traditions speak of such an event and that when the Indian Ocean eventually broke through the flood caused large destruction and loss of life. The path of the Exodus followed a near circular route, passing south to the Yemen and then up the Red Sea coast before breaking across the Tihama escarpement near Taif and entering the Promised Land near Medina where the Hebrews linked up with Aramaean elements of 'all Israel'. Taking advantage of Egyptian and Assyrian weakness, David and Solomon expanded their state southwards to Sheba, which Solomon may have annexed.

Salibi's Saudi place name hypothesis was undertaken in ignorance of the *Kebrä Nagast* and its geographical references. If the escape of Menelik's party with the Ark is plotted on a map showing the place names of Hijaz and Asir the geography of the *Sheba Cycle* is no longer ridiculous. Jerusalem may have been a single city, an area or both on the highland ridge south of Taif, astride the trade routes. The *Old Testament* Sinai was a volcano in north Yemen and the area contains, unlike



Palestine, graphic granite, reputedly used for the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. <sup>113</sup>

According to Salibi, the City of David and Zion would have been separate locations. More important, so far as the *Sheba Cycle* and related traditions are concerned, Asir contains three large ancient sites in the vicinity of modern Khamis Mushait with the unvocalised names of *ks*, *sb* and *msrm*, names which translated from the vocalised *Old Testament* mean *Ethiopia*, *Sheba* and *Egypt*. If Moses was a West Arabian the *Qur'anic* and *Old Testament* traditions that he led the Egyptian (*msrm*) army against Ethiopia (*ks*) and married an Ethiopian (*ks*) woman would make perfect sense in Asir as would Josephus's statement that the queen who visited Solomon ruled Ethiopia (*ks*) and Egypt (*msrm*). Gaza (*gz*) was most probably the present strategic settlement marking a Saudi administrative boundary near the Red Sea coast.

Saudi hostility to the implications of such research has led to the destruction of some of these sites. <sup>114</sup> If Salibi is correct, the kingdom of Judah straddled the highlands of southern Saudi Arabia and bordered the realm of Sheba somewhere in Asir. Salibi, unaware of a reference in the *Sheba Cycle*, identified 'the brook of Egypt' as a wadi on the present Yemen border, <sup>115</sup> and Sinai in north Yemen, <sup>116</sup> not realising that both were reference points in the story of Menelik's escape (*see map*).

The probability that ancient Israel and Judah were in Arabia and place names of the *Old Testament* refer to Arabian settlements rather than Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt shed light on strange passages in the *Old Testament*. These include the Assyrian campaign against Shabako's Cushites who had come to Israel's assistance. The Assyrians avoided Judah and attacked Cush, an inconceivable scenario if Israel and Judah were in Palestine as would be Zerah the Cushite's attack on Jerusalem. <sup>117</sup>

The *Sheba Cycle* is the only ancient source explaining not only the fate of the Ark of the Covenant but also the disappearance of Zadokite priestly house from Jerusalem during the stewardship of Azariah. Secondly, the *Torah* listed in the *Sheba Cycle* does not contain the details that were included in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE texts that emphasised the self-serving "divine" laws concerning the financing of the Temple and its priesthood. This indicates that the *Sheba Cycle* has a pre-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE origin and the original Mosaic *Torah* was a far simpler affair. <sup>118</sup> Thirdly the coincidence of time spans concerning Solomon's alleged control of the Yemen <sup>119</sup> and Menelik's conception and coming of age - both 23 years - lends weight to the Islamic tradition that the queen had to surrender her Arabian lands to Solomon. Next, there is what the *Sheba Cycle* does *not* mention. While it tells of Solomon's vision of the sun leaving his kingdom to shine over the land of Sheba, <sup>120</sup> nothing is said about the catastrophes that followed Solomon's death and the eventual destruction of both Israel and Judah, events which any Aksumite chronicler would have used to prove his point. The text is very much pre Ezra-ite, lacks the totalitarianism of 5<sup>th</sup> century Jerusalem and its veracity is at least to some extent supported by the Sheban royal names and *sb* and *'br* inscriptions in Tigre. Finally there is Salibi's research plotting the movements of the Ark of the Covenant, incognizant of the *tabot* linguistic paradox and the details of the *Sheba Cycle*.

The Ark of the Covenant was constructed during the Exodus and deposited at Shiloh in the Promised Land. It was captured by the Philistines who returned it after holding it responsible for plague. Eventually it was housed in the Temple of Solomon in the City of David. While some commentators ascribe the disappearance of the Ark to the Egyptian or Babylonian invasions, Haran concluded that the Ark disappeared during the reign of Manasseh (ca. 687-642 BCE). <sup>121</sup> If the Zadokites had been blamed for the loss of the Ark in Solomon's reign it was certainly in their interests to implicate Manasseh, whose syncretism they violently attacked when they resumed control of the Judaeen court under Josiah (ca. 620-609 BCE) after a three hundred years absence. It is significant that the *Old Testament* account, compiled by the Zadokites, is silent on the Ark's fate as well as the reason for the Zadokite fall from grace in the time of Azariah. Salibi, although controversially rewriting the *Old Testament* account in a vocalised Hebrew he feels to be more accurate, nevertheless placed Shiloh near Medina (*tabut* is the Medina word for the Ark) and the Ark's final resting place before its disappearance in a City of David situated a short distance north-

east of Abha in Asir, Saudi Arabia, very close to Khamis Mushait, his location for Sheba's capital.<sup>122</sup> So far as the *Sheba Cycle* is concerned this is an interesting coincidence (*map 2*) and is also supported by the linguistic, textual, inscriptional and other evidence discussed above.

Interpretation of Arabian and Ethiopian evidence related to the history of early Judaism has been deeply influenced by writers' attitudes towards the location of the events in the Old Testament. Commentators such as Rabin, Nöldeke and Quirin, while unquestioning that Solomon's kingdom was sited in modern Israel and Palestine, nevertheless placed emphasis on evidence that was at variance with this assumption. Unfortunately other writers were not so painstaking. Newby, writing about Arab traditions of an ancient Jewish presence in West Arabia, identified Abraham Geiger's 1833 publication *What did Muhammed receive from Judaism?* as influencing the pattern of future research on the relationship between Judaism and the rise of Islam. 'Geiger' wrote Newby 'assumed that Judaism was a fixed system with a standard against which all Jews could be measured and against which religious ideas found in Islamic writings could be judged for their origins within Judaism.'<sup>123</sup> This unquestioning attitude is reflected in Torrey's remark, 'The fanciful tales told by the Arab traditionalists [about ancient Judaism] are all worthless',<sup>124</sup> Shelemay's dismissal of the *Kebra Nagast* as an 'origin myth',<sup>125</sup> Kaplan's racial arrogance in dismissing the *Sheba Cycle* as "engaging, at points even amusing,"<sup>126</sup> Ullendorf's curious glossing over of the *tabut* controversy<sup>127</sup> and perhaps Schneider's omission to translate the Tigre 'br inscriptions.<sup>128</sup>

The scorn poured on Salibi, the attempt to marginalise Thompson<sup>129</sup> and the assassination of A1 Glock<sup>130</sup> are all reminders that the minimalist and alternative location theories of *Old Testament* history not only challenge orthodoxy but undermine the *raison d'être* of the State of Israel and trigger sensitivities in Saudi Arabia. While the reluctance of the minimalist movement in *Old Testament* archaeology to consider the alternative location theory may be influenced by political, theological, or career considerations, the contradictions within minimalism will eventually undermine its credibility. Should the alternative location hypothesis gain support, Israelite history will no longer serve as an external norm to judge the veracity of early Arabian and Ethiopian traditions. Instead, those same traditions such as the *Sheba Cycle* and the *Kitab al-Aghani*,<sup>131</sup> in a reversal of roles, will instead be utilised to reconstruct Israelite history.

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- Stothers estimated eleven cubic kilometres of pumice and ash were blown west by the March-October south-easterly monsoon. As often happens, sudden climatic change is followed by plague. Bubonic plague, possibly originating in Aksum (Munro Hay, *Aksum*, 92), reached Egypt in 541 CE and then, known as the *Plague of Justinian*, swept across Europe, decimating half the population. Plague was probably responsible for the Aksumite's inability to deal with the Himyarite rebellion. Caleb abdicated in 540 CE and soon afterwards Abreha's attack on Mecca was halted by plague. A massive demographic loss to plague appears the major reason for the Aksumite decision to relocate their centre in Agaw territory. Munro Hay, in a communication 4 July 2000, was sympathetic to this view.
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- Bernard Leeman**, *The Ge 'ez text of the Kebra Nagast* (University of Asmara 1997)
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- 7 **David Hubbard**, 'The Literary Sources of the Kebra Nagast' (Ph.D. thesis, St. Andrews University 1956)
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- 9 **J. Spencer Trimingham**, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic times* (Longman, London, 1979), 12-13
- 10 **Sir E. A. Wallis Budge**, *The Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelek I* (Oxford, 1932), 228
- 11 **Hubbard**, 'Literary Sources', 378-9
- 12 *Ibid.* 370, citing the following:
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1870)

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13 **Shahid**, 'Kebra Nagast'

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14 **Hubbard**, ‘Literary Sources’, 279

15

<b><u>Sheba Cycle</u></b> <b><u>Kebra Nagast</u></b>	<b><u>Josephus</u></b>	<b><u>1 Kings 10:1-13</u></b>	<b><u>Christian Arabic</u></b> <b><u>account</u></b>	<b><u>Qur’an 27:28,</u></b> <b><u>17:29, 27:37,</u></b> <b><u>27:38, 27:44</u></b>
<b><u>The Visit of the Queen</u></b>	<b><u>The Visit of the Queen</u></b>	<b><u>The Visit of the Queen</u></b>	<b><u>The Visit of the Queen</u></b>	<b><u>The Visit of the Queen</u></b>
			Account of one of the queen’s feet being like a goat but cured by Solomon	
				Solomon learns the Queen worships the sun and orders her to submit to him
				Solomon rejects her gift of gold and threatens her with invasion
				Solomon obtains the Queen’s throne and alters it
Came with gifts	Came with gifts	Came with large retinue and gifts		The Queen visits and is tested by a glass floor and the altered throne.
Amazed at the palace. Took up residence in the palace	Amazed by the palace		Stationed her retinue and troops in his castle	
Description of wonderful food and the queen given beautiful clothes. Amazed by sumptuous apartments. Saw how the table was prepared	Amazed by sumptuous apartments, shown the house known as the Forest of Lebanon, description of daily food and its preparation. Saw beautiful clothes of the servants	Impressed by his wisdom, palace, food, seat arrangements, attendants’ clothes, wine, burnt offerings said she was deeply impressed		
Experienced Solomon’s wisdom				
<b><u>Sheba Cycle</u></b> <b><u>Kebra Nagast</u></b>	<b><u>Josephus</u></b>	<b><u>1 Kings 10:1-13</u></b>	<b><u>Christian Arabic</u></b> <b><u>account</u></b>	<b><u>Qur’an 27:28,</u></b> <b><u>17:29, 27:37,</u></b> <b><u>27:38, 27:44</u></b>
Witnessed Solomon’s administration	Witnessed Solomon’s administration			
Witnessed daily burning of incense	Witnessed daily sacrifices			
Given daily food and clothes				
Had her questions answered		Questioned Solomon. Had all her questions answered		

	(Antiquities of the Jews ., VIII, vi, 6) Queen gave balsam roots to Solomon	Gave gifts of gold, and spices		
Converted to Solomon's religion	Believed things were better than expected and that the Hebrew were a blessed people	Acknowledged benign influence of Solomon's God		She submits to Solomon and adopts his religion
Seduced		Solomon reciprocated in official and <u>other ways</u> (my emphasis)	Seduced	
The birth of Menelik, his visit to Jerusalem, the theft of the Ark, the divine decision to make the Ethiopians the Chosen People instead of the Israelites			The birth of Menelik, his visit to Jerusalem, the theft of the Ark, the divine decision to make the Ethiopians the Chosen People instead of the Israelites	

- 16 Communication from **Professor Ian Plimer**, University of Melbourne, 31 August 1998
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- 18 **Angel Saenz-Badoillos**, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 77-8
- 19 **James Barr**, *Comparative Philology and the text of the Old Testament*, (Eisenbrauns, Indiana, 1987), 194-207
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- 21 **Karen Armstrong**, *A history of Jerusalem: one city, three faiths* (Harper-Collins, 1997), 29-36, 100-102
- 22 **Karen Armstrong**, *A history of God* (Mandarin 1993), 64-5
- 23 **Kamal Salibi**, *Who was Jesus? A conspiracy in Jerusalem*, (I.B.Tauris, 1998), 46
- 24 **Thomas L. Thompson**, *Early history of the Israelite people from the written and archaeological sources* (E. J.Brill, Leiden, 1992), 15,17, 136  
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- 26 **Barr**, *Comparative Philology*, 101-105, 111
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- 38 **Martin Noth** in his *Das System der zwolf Stamme Israels* (1930) argued that the Israelites were a loosely affiliated group of related tribes who made a covenant with Joshua. Noth believed the Old Testament was compiled ca. 450 BCE under Ezra's Jerusalem theocracy

- 39 **Ze'ev Herzog**, 'Deconstructing the walls of Jericho' *Ha 'aretz*, (October 29, 1999)
- 40 **Saenz-Badoillos**, *Hebrew Grammar*, 60-1
- 41 *Isaiah 31-32, 37:22b, Kings 19:21b, 30-31, Micah 4:9 and Zechariah 9:9* appear to refer to new settlements rather a return to the original cities
- 42 **Jacob Lassner**, *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: boundaries of gender and culture in postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), 97-102
- 43 *Qu'ran 27:15-44; Lassner, Queen of Sheba, Appendix D, Targum Sheni to the Book of Esther, 165-66*
- 44 **Edward Robinson** *Physical Geography of the Holy Land* (John Murray, London, 1865)

The American Biblical scholar Edward Robinson, of the Union Theological Seminary in New York, visited Palestine in 1837/8 and 1852 to identify the locations of the *Old Testament* he used the Hebrew text of the *Old Testament* and his knowledge of Arabic, a close relative of Hebrew, to identify probable *Old Testament* sites. Robinson reasoned that since place names rarely change and Arabic was close to Hebrew, it was likely that if an Arabic name of a modern settlement was similar to a Hebrew Biblical name, it marked the site of the location mentioned in the *Old Testament*.

**William Foxwell Albright** (1891-1971) was the father of Biblical archaeology. Born in Chile of Methodist missionaries, he took his doctorate in Semitic languages at Johns Hopkins University and in 1919 became Fellow of the American School of Oriental Research, Jerusalem, then Director the following year. When he finally retired in 1958 he had established himself as the leading authority on Biblical archaeology, having undertaken excavations in Palestine, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. A pioneer in the science of dating pottery, his greatest contribution was however in his emphasis on submitting Biblical research to the combined disciplines of archaeology, linguistics and topography. He uncritically used the Hebrew *Old Testament* as his guide.

Albright was a talented archaeologist and philologist but he was not an historian. Research into the origins and history of the Semitic-speaking peoples was still in its infancy and Albright was able to speculate without challenge on a scale which would completely unacceptable today. Prominent researchers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century such as the German Albrecht Alt (1883-1956) and Albright himself professed a high respect for the authenticity of oral traditions. However this reverence extended only as far as *Old Testament* traditions associated with their own Christian background.

Albright was aware of criticism of over-enthusiastic amateurs and made some commentary on the archaeological methodology he had encountered:

It is frequently said that the scientific quality of Palestinian archaeology has been seriously impaired by the religious preconceptions of scholars who have excavated in the Holy Land. It is true that some archaeologists have been drawn to Palestine by their interest in the Bible, and that some of them had received their previous training mainly as Biblical scholars. The writer has known many such scholars, but he recalls scarcely a single case where their religious views seriously influenced their results."

**Albright, W.F.** *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1949), 219



- Yet Albright's own attitude towards his professional work was encapsulated by the title of one of articles in 1942: *Why the Near East needs the Jews*. He saw archaeology as a means to strengthen the Jewish claim on Palestine.
- 45 **Thompson**, *Early history*, 12-3 (criticism of Albright's methods)  
 Salibi, *The Bible*, 167  
**Kamal Salibi**, *Who was Jesus? A conspiracy in Jerusalem* (I.B.Tauris, 1998), 267
- 46 *Newsweek*, September 10, 1984, page 74  
**Salibi, Kamal** *Secrets of the Bible People* Interlink, New York, 1988, Preface  
*Middle East Journal* Summer 1988, 42, pp. 511-513  
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- 47 **Chaim Rabin**, *Ancient West Arabian* (Taylor's Foreign Press, London, 1951), 2-3  
 48 Ibid., *West Arabian*, 28  
 49 Ibid., *West Arabian*, 76  
 50 Ibid., *West Arabian*, 83  
 51 Ibid., *West Arabian*, 84  
 52 Ibid., *West Arabian*, 199  
 53 Ibid., *West Arabian*, 205  
 54 *Exodus* 25 states the Ark of the Covenant was a gold covered wooden box about 115 x 69 x 69 cm in size with a solid gold lid surmounted by two cherubim facing each other with wings uplifted. Ecclesiastical Ethiopian art does not depict the Ark in this manner, only as a silk-covered house shaped box.  
**James C. McKinley**, *New York Times* 27 January 1998, reported that monks who have seen what is guarded in the Ark Sanctuary in Aksum say that it is a smooth mirror-like tablet about 76 cm long and 3.5 cm thick resting in a 7.5 cm deep unadorned gold box with a hinged lid. They say the tablet sometimes looks like water and has shone at night.  
**Roderick Grierson** and **Stuart Munro-Hay**, *The Ark of the Covenant*, (Phoenix, 1999) discuss the nature of the Aksumite relic in depth.
- 55 **Rabin**, *West Arabian*, 109  
 56 Ibid., 110  
 57 **Grierson** and **Munro-Hay**, *Ark*, 176-83  
 58 Rodolfo Fattovich, 'Remarks on the pre-Aksumite period in northern Ethiopia' *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 23 (1990), 15-17  
 Richard Schneider, 'Deux inscriptions subarabiques du Tigre' *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 30, (1973), 385-87  
 Richard Schneider, 'Documents epigraphiques de l'Ethiopie', V *Annales d'Ethiopie*, 10 (1976), 81-93
- 59 Information from the family of **Moktar Hassan** a 2<sup>nd</sup> year Sociology and Anthropology Somali student at the University of Asmara 1997.
- 60 **Charles Cutler Torrey**, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (Ktav Publishing House, New York 1967), 13  
 Moses, in Arab tradition, was associated with Medina.  
 Lassner, *Queen of Sheba*, 227 quoting J. Horowitz, 'Jewish proper names and their derivatives in the Qur'an', *HUCA* 2 (1925), 167-69 states that the personal name of Sulayman [Solomon], before Islam, existed only among the Jews of Medina.

- 61 **Torrey**, *Jewish Foundation*, 21  
62 Ibid.  
63 **D. S. Margliouth**, *The relations between Arabs and Israelites prior to the rise of Islam*, (Schweich Lectures, 1921), 27  
64 **M. F. Hammer et al**, 'Jewish and Middle Eastern non-Jewish populations share a common pool of Y-chromosome biallelic haplotypes', The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (Washington DC) May 9, 2000  
65 South Arabian inscriptions also speak of a single deity, *the God*, named Rahman (the Merciful One). The Prophet Muhammed tried to make his followers refer to the One True God as *Rahman*, but eventually abandoned the attempt as they were too used to *Allah*. **Torrey**, *Jewish Foundation*, 55, describing inscriptions from a South Arabian monument associated with Rahman noted,
- “Here we find clearly indicated the doctrines of the divine forgiveness of sins, the acceptance of sacrifice, the contrast between this world and the next, and the evil of “associating” other deities with the Rahman.”
- 66 **Salibi**, *The Bible*, 83-96  
67 **Margliouth**, *Relations*, 81  
68 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry for the history of Dynastic Egypt (Vol. 18, 1988), 161  
69 **Gerald Obermeyer**, 'Civilization and Religion in Ancient South Arabia' *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies*, Vol. 1, No 1, Spring 1999 (Amman, Jordan), 39  
70 **Andrey Korotayev**, 'Ancient Yemen: some general trends of evolution of the Sabaic language and Sabaean culture', *Journal of Semitic Studies* Supplement 5, (Oxford 1995), 1-8  
71 **Obermeyer**, 'South Arabia', 43-46  
**Gus W. van Beek** in Pritchard (ed ), *Solomon and Sheba*, 61 71.  
72 **Bernard Leeman**, *The Queen of Sheba and Biblical Scholarship*, Queensland Academic Press 2005 quoting *Kebrā Nagast*, Chapter 27. Budge translated the sun god as male. The Hebrew word for Holy Spirit, *Ruah (Breath of God)* is also a female noun.  
73 **Torrey**, *Jewish Foundation*, 18-19  
74 **H. St John Philby**, *The Queen of Sheba* (Quartet Books, 1981), 130  
75 **Munro-Hay**, *Aksum*, 65 quoting J. Pirenne, 'La Grece et Saba apres 32 ans de nouvelles recherches' paper read to the *Colloquium Arabie Preslamique et son environnement historique et culturel* (Univ. of Strasbourg 24-27 June 1987)  
76 **Bernard Leeman**, *The Queen of Sheba and Biblical Scholarship*, 61-62  
77 **Ernst Axel Knauf**, *Midian: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palastinas und Nordarabiens am Ende des 2. Jahrtausend V. Chr* (Otto Harrassowitz, 1988). Knauf pointed out in a communication to this writer on 29 June 1999 'In *Midian* you would read, concerning the Queen of Sheba, that she never existed'.  
**Obermeyer**, *South Arabia*, 39, referred to “the mythical South Arabian Queen of Sheba” but later (communication of 16 Sept. 1999) explained his reasons (see text for reference 80).  
78 **Lassner**, *Queen of Sheba*.  
Appendix E, Pseudo Ben Sira, 167

- Appendix F, The Yemenite Tale of Saadia Ben Joseph, 168 Appendix J,  
*Passages from al-Kisa 'i*, 209
- Budge**, *Kebra Nagast*, Chapter 21
- 79 **Lassner**, *Queen of Sheba*, argues that the Jewish and Islamic denigration of the Queen of Sheba was inspired by a fear that she challenged the natural order by questioning Solomon's wisdom.
- Leeman, *Queen of Sheba* (forthcoming) believes that to ensure the Queen of Sheba did not serve as a role model for other women, every aspect of her life was called into question, including her existence.
- 80 **Obermeyer**, communication 16 Sept. 1999
- 81 **G. L. della Vida**, 'Pre-Islamic Arabia'. In *Arab heritage*, ed. N. Faris, (Princeton University Press, 1944), 31
- 82 **J. A. Montgomery**, 'An enactment of fundamental constitutional law in old South Arabia', *Proceedings of the American philosophical society* 67 (1928), 211
- 83 **Munro-Hay**, *Aksum*, 14-15, 100-101
- 84 **Budge**, *Kebra Nagast*, Chapter 87. Despite the queen's instructions, Menelik stated that he would still obey her.
- 85 **Conti Rossini**, *Storia*, 340
- 86 **Jacob Lassner**, *Queen of Sheba*, 76
- 87 **Korotayev** 'Yemen', 4-5
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- 88 **Korotayev**, 'Yemen', 85-9
- 89 **Obermeyer**, 'South Arabia', 40
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- 91 **Batsheva Bonne-Tamir**, *Genetic diversity among the Jews: diseases and markers at the DNA level* (Oxford 1992), page 81
- 92 *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, entry for the Yemeni Jews
- 93 **Kaplan**, *Falasha*, 2
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- 96 **Wolf Leslau** *Falasha Anthology*, (Yale 1951), xxi
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- 101 **Ullendorf**, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 97-115
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- 103 **E. Littmann**, *Deutsche Aksum Expedition*, Berlin, (1913), Vol. I, 50
- 104 **Kamal Salibi**, *Jesus*, 62-3
- 105 **Fattovich**, *Remarks*, 16
- Munro-Hay**, communication 4 July 2000, "Nowadays D'MT can perhaps be pushed back to 800 [BCE], but that of course is what is attested, which must have derived from some earlier roots"
- 106 **D. W. Phillipson**, 'The excavation of Gobedra Rock-Shelter, Axum', *Azania*, 12, 1977, 53-82
- 107 **Fattovich**, *Remarks*, 15
- Schneider**, 'Deux inscriptions', 385-87

- Schneider**, ‘Documents’, 81-93
- 108 **Ali Mazrui** *The Africans*, (Greenwood, 1986), preface
- Bernard Leeman**, ‘The Queen of Sheba and Africa: a re-assessment of the Sheba- Menelik Cycle of the Kebra Nagast in the light of the Salibi hypothesis’ *African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific*, La Trobe University Conference paper (15 July 1994)
- 109 Communications from the family of **Richard Gibson** and **Sophia Abraham**; and Asmara, American, and Ethiopian informants 1996 onwards. The other name for the Latos is *Mai Bela*, after the stream where Menelik was born. These traditions appear stronger among Ethiopians and Diaspora Eritreans and Ethiopians than among Eritrean resident in Eritrea, maybe because local Eritreans are reluctant to link themselves to the Ethiopian Imperial past.
- 110 **Bernard Leeman** *Queen of Sheba* 179, 186
- 111 **Edward Ullendorf**, *The Ethiopians, an introduction to country and people* (Oxford University Press, 1960), 37, expressed a common perception at variance with the Latos theory when he stated, ‘Eritrea was always an artificial creation, for the people on both sides of the frontier are one in race and civilisation’.
- 112 **Kitchen, K. A.** *Punt and how to get there* *Orientalia*, 40, fasc.2, pp. 184-207 A location closer to the Nile is given by Alessandra Nibbi, *Ancient Egypt and some eastern neighbours* (Noyes Press, New Jersey, 1981). Nibbi argues that in Dynastic Egyptian times the area between the Nile and Red Sea coast was far removed from its present desiccation and that the Egyptian naval expeditions probably reached it through canals rather than by the Red Sea
- 113 **Plimer**, 31 August 1998
- 114 **Leeman**, ‘Salibi hypothesis’, 7
- 115 Letter from **Kamal Salibi**, 30 August 1988
- 116 **Kamal Salibi**, *Secrets of the Bible People, 193*
- 117 *2 Chronicles* 14:9ff
- 118 **Ullendorf**, *Biblical Hebrew*, 6. The *Torah* of Ezra’s theocracy was in Aramaic.  
The implications are that Ezra’s theocracy expanded the simple version of the *Torah* and then translated it from Aramaic into unvocalised Biblical Hebrew.  
**Leeman**, *Queen of Sheba*, 200-204, compares the *Torah* of the Queen of Sheba and Ezra’s later *Torah*.
- 119 **W. Montgomery Watt** in Pritchard (ed.), *Solomon and Sheba*, 95
- 120 **Budge**, *Kebra Nagast*, Chapter 30
- 121 **M. Haran**, ‘The disappearance of the *Ark*’ *Journal of the Israeli Exploration Society* 13, (1963), 46-58
- 122 **Salibi**, *Biblical Israel*, 272-6
- 123 Newby, Gordon Darnell, *A history of the Jews of Arabia from ancient times to their eclipse under Islam*, (University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 105-106
- 124 **Torrey**, *Jewish Foundation*, 13
- 125 **Kay Kaufman Shelemay**, *Music, Ritual and Falasha history* (Michigan State University, 1986), 17-18, 21; see also **Quirin**, *Beta Israel*, 45, 50
- 126 **Kaplan**, *Falasha*, 23
- 127 **Ullendorf**, ‘Hebraic-Jewish elements’, 233. Ullendorf, while referring to Rabin and Nöldeke, did not explain why he held a completely opposite

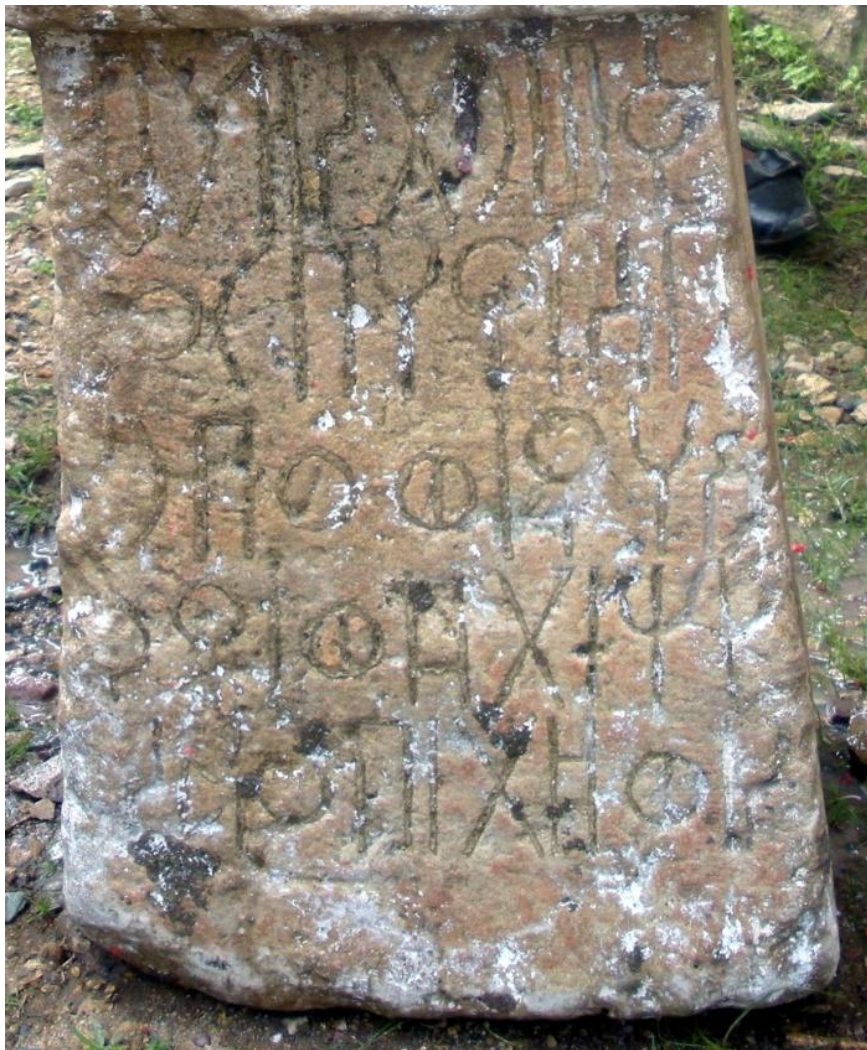
opinion on this major issue. He merely stated, 'the Ge'ez word was derived from 'Palestinian Jewish Aramaic *tebuta (tebota)* which is in turn a derivation from Hebrew *tebah*'.

128 Unfortunately **Dr Richard Schneider** has never responded to enquiries on this issue. He died in 2003.

129 **Thompson's** views on Biblical archaeology appear to have been the reason for excluding him from academic employment for some years.

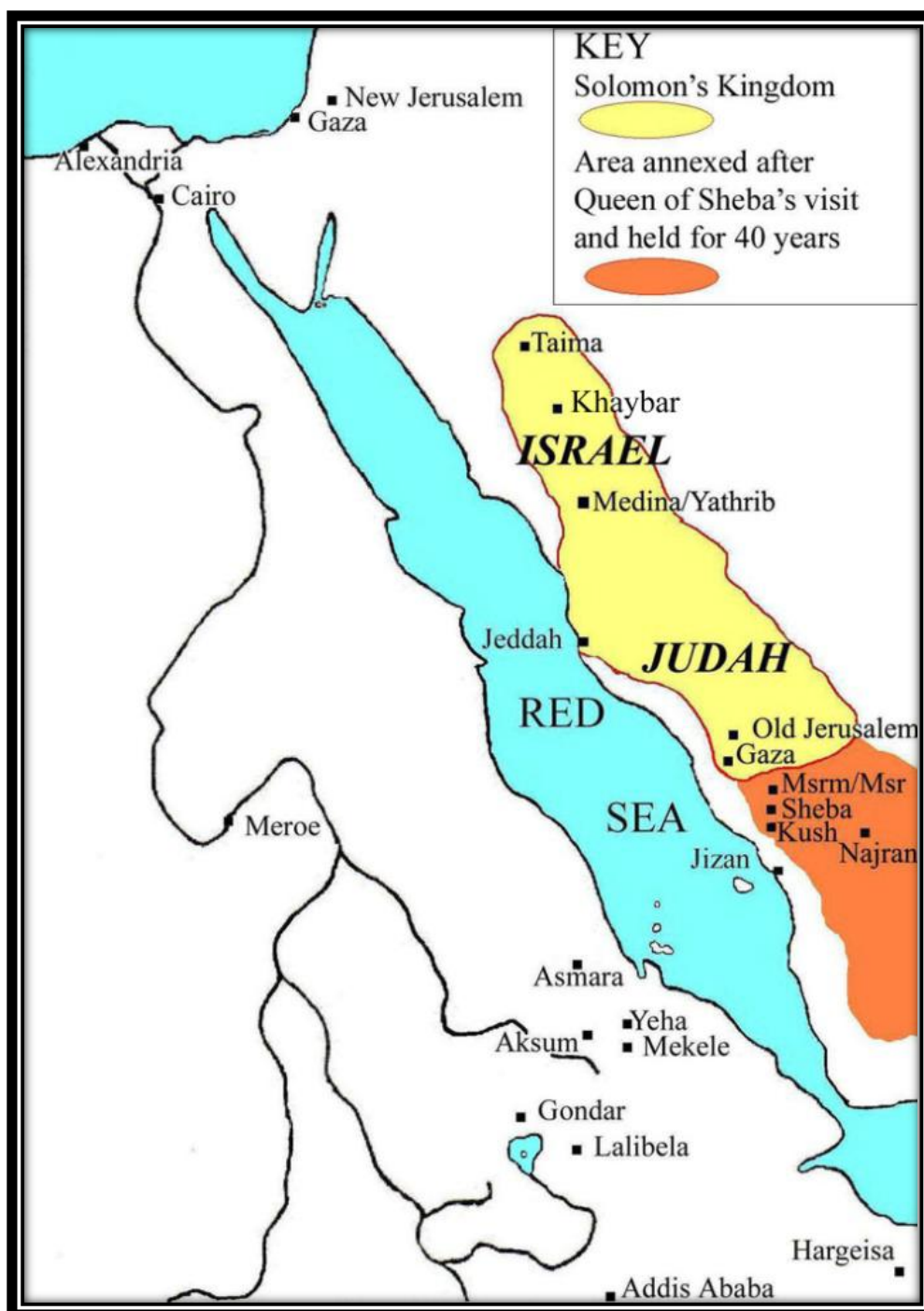
130 Communication from Birzeit University, 28 June, 1999. Glock stated that there was no Israelite history to excavate, only Palestinian.

131 **Newby**, *Jews of Arabia*, 14-1, quoting traditions that claimed the first inhabitants of the Hijaz were the Amelekites, who were slaughtered by Moses.



The oldest known inscription mentioning the Hebrew people 'BR- [line 3 reading right to left. Sabaean inscriptions are boustrophedonic = bi-directional] discovered on two ca.750 B.C. Sabaean/Sheban incense burners at Adi Kaweh, *Leeman photo 2009*

TRUE LOCATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PRE586 B.C.?



*The marked area is the region that contains the Hebrew/Canaanite vocabulary and syntax recorded by Chaim Rabin in Ancient West Arabian, the Old Testament place names noted by Kamal Salibi, iron deposits (David and Solomon were famous armourers), and an ancient Ark culture. It also straddles the lucrative incense, gold, precious stones and luxury goods trade routes from Sabaea (Sheba). This area was temporarily abandoned by Egyptian and Assyrian imperial control ca. 1000-925 B.C., the same years as the zenith of the Israelite states under David and Solomon.*



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3. *Ark of the Covenant: evidence supporting the Ethiopian traditions* (2011) updated 20141

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1. The Beta Israel (Falasha)
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3. The Kebra Nagast Part 1, the Sheba-Menelik Cycle in Ge'ez, transliterated Ge'ez, and English
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